

# Hankikanto – Falling into the Anti/Natal Abyss #3

## On examining Anti/natalism with Tolkien

Theme music:

I see it now, it all comes back to me  
I had to leave them to this gloom  
Lest they fall for the procreative dream  
That nearly caught me in my bloom  
But I am back, and I will end their pain  
I am back, and I will set them free again  
What have we done to deserve this burden?

My name is Matti Häyry, I am an Antinatalist philosopher.

And my name is Amanda Sukenick, I am an Antinatalist activist.  
Welcome to the third episode of Hankikanto: Falling into the Anti/Natal Abyss!

## **Orkid (2017):**

Last episode, we began our discussion of the musical side of your many works, with an in-depth look at your first Rock Opera, Playing God, as well as its 2 associated, preceding projects, Rationality and the Genetic Challenge, & Test. We highly recommend that our listeners go back and visit, Hankikanto Falling into the Anti/Natal Abyss #2 On playing god with genetics, if they have not heard it already, as much context from that episode, will be referenced here today.

Today, we will be continuing our discussion of your musical endeavors, by moving on to what you have self-described as your ‘better’ Rock opera, the absolutely epic and profoundly beautiful, Orkid. I love Playing God, I must have listened to that album about 50 times now, however, there’s no denying that Orkid is really something special, an evolution of

nearly everything Playing God was and is - it's a masterpiece, there's really no other word for it.

Thank you. One reviewer in the Finnish metal magazine Inferno and Orkid's 7 000 Brazilian Facebook fans agree with you.

When did work on Orkid begin, in relation to when performances of Playing God were still taking place? Were you actively writing Orkid during the process of also writing Playing God, or was it written long before, or after? I know nearly nothing about what circumstances Orkid came to be.

I started developing ideas for a new rock opera during the early days of Playing God, 2011 and 12. There was clearly going to be material that would not be used in Playing God, and ideas, partly philosophical, partly musical, were brewing in my head. There was a time when I thought that we should abandon Playing God altogether and move straight on to something different. In hindsight, that would've been a mistake, but there you go.

I had already in 2010 written a song, then called Birth, that would become the beginning and the end of Orkid. The name was a reference to **not** doing **Death** Metal. I thought that I would be famous as the inventor of Death Metal's new and exciting competitor, Birth Metal. Any antinatal themes were pretty dormant at this stage.

In summer 2011, we had another legendary rock drummer visiting the Country House. Lee Kerlake (R.I.P.) was famous for the bands Uriah Heep – he performed with the band on and off until 2007 and made 17 studio albums with them. In between bouts with Uriah Heep, he played with Ozzy Osbourne and his band after Black Sabbath. With Ozzy, Lee played on the albums Blizzard of Oz and Diary of a Madman.

Lee had a lifelong beef with executive producers. First the Uriah Heep commercial boss Gerry Bron apparently ripped the band off their earnings and then Sharon Osbourne cut Lee and Bob Daisley, the bassist, off the proceeds of the two albums they had made with Oz.

I'm only telling this to explain why a rock legend like him would be working with nobodies from Finland. Money is a strong incentive when you're broke.

In 2011, I had sent Lee my song Birth – Lee and I knew each other from Uriah Heep tribute celebrations in Finland – and I had asked him to do something about it. He respected my ideas but presented a new song as an expression of his similar music ideas.

I had told him that this would be a rock opera about a warrior queen and a warrior princess and their mixed identities. He took the idea of a beautiful, masked princess and ran with that. What I and my studio master Lacce did with his idea is on the album and we'll talk about that in due course, I guess.

Also, at the same time, Tuija, my partner, whose family Country House we were using for all this, wrote a song about Lee and his Uriah Heep bandmate Ken Hensley. It was called The Wizard (as in what Ken was sometimes called) and the Bear (Lee's pet name). That also ended up on the Orkid album, albeit, of course, totally rearranged by Lacce and I. I've said this before, and I'll say it again, music is flexible. It can serve many different purposes.

As a historical detail, Lee and Ken started their career in the 1960s in a band called The Gods. Figures, for both Playing God and Orkid. They were the forerunners. All due respect. But gone now, like their beefs with producers.

One memory on that theme, though. In 2011, there was yet another Uriah Heep celebration in Finland. We were sitting outside in the sunshine, Lee, Ken, Tuija, and I. Lee and Ken were reminiscing their rancor days and I was getting impatient and hungry.

So I said, "I have one question about Gerry Bron." Ken squeezed his wine glass, nearly invisible in his enormous hand, and said, tentatively and with some trepidation, "All right, then?"

And I went on to ask, "Will Gerry Bron buy us lunch? And if not, I believe that the organizers will. Shall we move inside?" Relieved, Ken untightened his grip on the wine glass, and in we went.

But your question was about Orkid. Already during the making of Playing God, I had those ideas and those songs. In addition to them, my first song from 1974 and a couple of pieces from the early 1980s were waiting in line to be included. I'll tell all about them once we get there.

I had begun to suspect that at least some of the material for both Playing God & Orkid had been written around the same time, so I'm not surprised to hear confirmation of this. Impressive - that was clearly an explosively, musically creative period of your life. Given what we learned last episode regarding how much older songs like Peili & When the Apple Blossoms Bloom in the Windmills of Your Mind, I'll Be Your Valentine became woven into Playing God, it's also no surprise that older material would yet again find it's way into Orkid. But surely, not all of what would eventually become Orkid has these origins, so when did you start officially writing and developing new material for Orkid, as its own project?

The end production of the previous one, Playing God, had gotten out of my hand sometime during 2012. Tuija and I had moved from Manchester, England, back to Finland, and I was commuting between Helsinki and Manchester, a three-hour flight plus local travel and waiting times.

In England, the bosses had decided to take away my Doctoral Programme in Bioethics and Medical Jurisprudence, which I had created a few years earlier, and I had been demoted to a jurisprudence lecturer for BA law students. Four hundred essays to mark every other month, and a ton of tutorials with young people who definitely didn't want to know about philosophy of law. It was all a bit taxing.

Luckily, my current position, a philosophy professorship at a Business School, became available. I was too tired even to prepare an application, but Tuija stepped in, wrote it and submitted it. I was shortlisted, interviewed, and offered the job. From a university with an international ranking of 40 to one with 400, but, back to Finland and goodbye to the medieval British plumbing system. I accepted.

I began in fall 2013 and by that time Tuija had started touring with Corky in Europe and in the US, so the Country House was all mine for weeks on end. I managed to secure a year's research leave from my university, so I started writing Orkid.

All the new songs and the final libretto were born during that year and I committed the whole thing on tape in demo form, doing all the instruments and vocals myself. I then carried the thing – all the audio files – to studio master Lacce, and during 2014–2016 he turned it into Orkid – A Fantasy Prog-Rock Opera in Two Acts.

Most of the instrumental work was done in Lacce's studio. He played most of the guitars and some keyboards on top of my demos. Some of my original keyboards are still there, although it's hard to tell which ones. Every song had dozens, some of them hundreds, of tracks by the time we finished.

Jan Rechberger of the Finnish metal band Amorphis did the drums, and Lee Kerlake and Corky Laing added **their** drumming here and there. Phil Baker recorded many of the lead guitar parts, some with us, some in his home studio in Preston, England.

For the vocals, the arrangements were mixed. Phil sang his parts in Lacce's studio and so did Johanna Ahola-Launonen, Mikaela Mansikkala, Harri Väyrynen – all veterans of the Playing God performances by now – and Tuija and I. Bonnie Parker and Denny Colt recorded theirs in their own studio in Long Island, NY. Lacce sang a million harmonies on top of practically everything.

The studio had a heavy atmosphere of Magic Tobacco and that made me a passive something for the duration. We completed our work in fall 2016 and the CD was mastered in December and released in spring 2017 by Polite Bystander Productions.

Well, that was a long story – my apologies. But you asked and I like nothing more than talking about myself.

However, I was thinking, should we give the audience a musical break at this point? We could play what finally became the album's opening track, All in the Theme. It's already been mentioned as Birth, the first purpose-made song for this opera. I can explain it

later when we come to the track list. – But briefly, the world is emerging from the primordial chaos and Orkid the Warrior Queen recounts her story. It is one of failure, betrayal, and deception. In the intro, you can hear many of the musical themes that will be fully developed later.

Absolutely! What better way to begin the musical interludes of this episode, than with the very beginning of the opera! Let's hear it now.

[All in the Theme]

Excellent! And now that the beginning of the story is set through All in the Theme, I would like to begin delving into some of what helped to inspire the story, and the world, of Orkid.

Orkid is of course, a reinterpretation of sorts of Lord of The Rings, specifically The Silmarillion, and it's a complicated story that you detail in quite some depth during episode #65 of The Exploring Antinatalism Podcast. I'm assuming you as a massive fan of Tolkien, though perhaps I'm wrong - what is your history with the Lord of the Rings mythos, and what inspired you to create your own version of it?

People of my generation used to read Tolkien in our adolescence. Or not. The ones who didn't are now the salt of the earth. You know, bankers, lawyers, cattle farmers, politicians. The ones who did read Tolkien divided into two groups. Some like to think of it as a fairytale to be relived with your own children and grandchildren watching the films and the series based on it. Others continue to think and rethink what all that means, or could mean.

Act One of Orkid is Silmarillion, the mythological prehistory of the Lord of the Rings. Or, to be more precise, what I remembered of it when I wrote the story. I have a selective memory and that helps me both in philosophy and in my musical endeavors. A line here, a line there, and I'm on my way to doing something "original".

Act Two is a ... shall we say different ... interpretation of the Lord of the Rings trilogy. There are no Hobbits, and humans and dwarfs are only mentioned in passing, so the main struggle is between the Orcs and the Elves. My motivation, I think, was to turn Tolkien on

his head – to show the ugliness of beauty and the beauty behind ugliness.

Do you think that there are any whispers of Antinatalism within the work of Tolkien?

It seems to depend on the level of being that we are talking about. Immortals, gods, seem to be practically non-child-bearing. Elves, the firstborn, reproduce but at a slow pace – their lives are thousands of years long and they still have only a few children. Dwarves often have only one child and they don't seem to feel pressure to have more. Men and orcs proliferate like humankind does and Tolkien doesn't appear to have any views on this.

Interesting. One thing I've always wondered about the world of Tolkien, even long before I knew what Antinatalism was, or became an extinctionist - it always seems like Tolkien had envisioned a world in which extinction is impossible - perhaps some species will disappear, yes, but there seems to be no end of time, no end to life it's self... Would you say that that's an accurate or inaccurate perception?

Pretty accurate, I would say. I suppose I have always seen Tolkien's world as a predecessor of ours. Elves and dwarfs are gone now and we live in the time of the man predicted by Tolkien's narrative. Or maybe this is already another, post-man time, in which the nobles of the Lord of the Rings have degenerated into the current humankind with its foibles and weaknesses. But yes, life goes on unless we do something about it.

I'm sorry for this next question, because it's the dumbest question that I could possibly ask about Orkid, but I have to ask, just in case I'm on to something - I realize that the title, 'Orkid' references that the main characters are Orcs, but is there any significance to the fact that the name of the opera is 'Or-Kid'? As in, a nod to procreation - a 'Kid'? Also is there also any connection to the flower? Orkid seems to be a unique spelling of 'orchid', and I would very much like to understand why it was chosen?

It's not a dumb question at all. Let's see if I can answer it.

One thing is clear. There was no reference to kids. I only realized that connection or connotation later when someone suggested that my next album should be called Or-Teen. Indeed.

I'm not quite sure how I came up with the flower theme. My first idea had been to use the Finnish Kalevala mythology and the traditional female name Aino. If you twist it a little, you can see in it the word "ainoa", which means "the only one".

Aino in the Kalevala epos was chased by an old wizard called Väinämöinen or Väinö. Aino flees from him but Väinö will appear later in my story when we get to star constellations.

But the names. Since the idea was that there would be two female warriors in the story, I called the other one Aina. This is also a possible Finnish female name and it means "always". And the difference is minimal, just a letter. One ends in an "o", the other in an "a".

There is a Tolkien connection here. In the beginning, according to Silmarillion, there were Ainur, the holy ones, who sang the world into existence. The names of my queen and princess would have made them automatic members of the Ainur group.

Together, Aino and Aina would also have created a nice contradiction – how can there be two in succession if one is the only one and the other is always? If you can follow my train of thought.

I apparently assumed that no one **could** follow my train of thought. Early production files show that the project name, when it began to take shape, was Orchid – as in the proper spelling of the flower. For a brief while, it was also Orcid with a "c" but without the "h".

I abandoned both these versions simply because they produced all the wrong hits in net searches. The flower name hits the flower, of course. And an academic website had just been named Orcid with the "c" but without the "h".

Orkid with just the "k" didn't have those problems ten years ago. Later on, a Swedish artist and a Turkish sanitary pad company have snatched the brand name.



Perhaps I should have gone with yet another variation that, according to my files, was still the project name in 2014 – Örkid with two dots over the “O”. That would have tallied with the Finnish spelling of orcs, pronounced örkit, and in an English net search it returns only a couple of pseudonyms. I don’t know why I abandoned that. Perhaps because people don’t have that alphabet in their keyboards outside Scandinavia.

Anyway, now I’ve explained the “k” but not Orkid as an idea. My best guess is that it’s a combination of Tolkien and my original idea of the two masked warriors. Their war masks are terrible to behold and they are orcs. But when you remove the mask, you can see their flower-like inner beauty. Ta-dah, Orkid is born.

Though I’ve been unable to sleuth out their meaning on my own, I’ve wondered if there might be some greater story behind the names of several of the other characters in Orkid, namely, Philotheos, Thiamer, and Trahaldur? Do these names in fact also have any hidden significance, as Orkid does?

Yes, of course, the entire opera is about smoke and mirrors and hidden meanings.

The Orc Hight Priest is called Philotheos – Lover of God. It could have been Theophilus – which means the same – but it sounded more exotic this way. Also, I already knew that the part would be played by Phil Baker, so I couldn’t resist the inside joke – Phil, Philotheos. And he would remember his stage name.

The Elf Wizard is called Thiamer – Lord of Sulphur in some language that I’ve forgotten since. In the Lord of the Rings, Gandalf is known, among other things, for his fireworks in parties, so this is a reference to him. I’m mixing elves and wizards here, but that’s artistic license.

Thiamer’s Elf Companion and Bard is called Trahaldur. I like to give it a faux-Icelandic pronunciation, Trahaldür. Gollum’s official name in the Lord of the Rings is, of course, Sméagol. But Tolkien nerds know that behind that is another, older name, Trahald. I added the ur and that’s what he became, mixing elf and hobbit.

This elucidates much, thank you! Though, I'm alarmed now, because you've just made me realize my error in believing that both Thiamer & Trahaldur were of the Orkid people, and not in fact Elves!

Though the name of the opera is of course Orkid, the name of the band performing Orkid is officially, Visitors From Bellatrix. Bellatrix, I know, means "Female warrior". Who are the Visitors from Bellatrix, & where do they come from, and how did this come to be the name of the band?

The Visitors from Bellatrix are the protagonists of an opera trilogy, and Orkid is only the first part of this series. I'm working on the others, but it's slow going, with the day job at the university and all.

They are, in the back story of the trilogy, called by letters: I, J, K, and L. Orkid is K and Thiamer is L. I and J will appear later on in the saga – they are not a part of Orkid the rock opera.

They come from a star in the Orion constellation known as Gamma Orionis. or Bellatrix. The constellation is printed on the back of the Orkid t-shirt.

My relationship with Bellatrix stems back to my early military days. I was in the artillery, we needed to know where we are and where to fire, so it was essential to have a reliable way of locating places. No global positioning system (GPS) by satellites existed, so we used stars and their constellations.

One of the seven constellations we uses was Väinön viikate, in English Väinö's scythe, which is a clearly visible form in the fall night sky in Finland. This is the reference I promised earlier, telling about Aino the maiden and Väinö the wizard. His, Väinö's, scythe.

The Finnish version of the constellation is made of six stars in the Orion system – Rigel on the bottom, Alnitak, Alnilam and Mintaka or the Three Kings or the Three Sisters that form Orion's Belt in the middle, Betelgeuse at the top, and to the right of Betelgeuse, Bellatrix.

My artillery training was in the fall 1975, and I became familiar with Bellatrix and learned to find it even through mist and clouds. It was a natural choice then, when forty years later I was looking for a home star for my visitors.

Coincidentally, wasn't it also around this same time that you had first read The Silmarillion?

I read The Lord of the Rings when I was doing my national service. Silmarillion was published a couple of years later.

Why have the Visitors from Bellatrix come to earth? What is their mission?

They are here to complete a 40 000-year research project, studying reproduction on Terra – planet Earth. In Bellatrix, people have not had offspring in ages, because they are immortal and would have overpopulated their home star by reproduction. But they are interested in things, so the Bellatrix Science Council has granted the funding for I, J, K, and L.

In the intro part of the song All in the Theme, you heard how they may have created life on earth, with its potential to develop sentience and consciousness later. After that, they were supposed just to sit back and see how things evolve. But they are a bit over-anxious, like researchers sometimes are, and they get involved. The Ethics Committee of the Bellatrix Science Council will have something to say about that if and when they ever return and report.

The quest in the rock opera trilogy proceeds in three parts.

Orkid tells the prehistory along the lines of Tolkien's stories.

The second part, J and I, is a narrative from the biblical times to about now. After K and L, Orkid and Thiamer, have made a mess of things, J descends on earth to save humankind from the horrors of reproduction. Unfortunately, however, people nail him to a cross and misread his message.

In the third and final part, Luci, I come down to earth and probably try to save people by moving them into a virtual reality without pain and anxiety. But that's still a bit blurred and the story is constantly evolving, not least because of our Hankikanto sessions here. At the end of the final part, I remain on earth – or in virtual reality – and the others return to Bellatrix when the 40 000 years is up.

And if you are confused by now, that makes two of us. I don't know where all this is coming from. But I try to give it a voice the best I can.

I'm happily hanging on! But I confess, one thing I am a little confused about – when the Visitors from Bellatrix arrive on earth, are there already human beings on the planet? I know you say that they, 'created life on earth', but I wasn't sure if that meant life outside of the Orkids and the Elves? Have they also created people? And perhaps other non-human animals? When does the existence of humans begin in the world of Orkid begin?

Let's get our terminology calibrated first. I use the word "people" for orcs, elves, dwarfs, and men alike. And "men" are human beings – the gendered term is Tolkien's language, not mine.

The time of the arrival, then. We know that the Visitors are on a 40 000-year mission. We also know that they, we, are still here because I'm still here and I'm half of I. And we have an idea that the departure might be in the near future now.

Based on these, the Visitors arrived on earth 40 000 years ago, at the time when Neanderthals were starting to disappear and Homo Sapiens began to take over and spread

This seems to indicate that the Visitors did **not** create all life, or all sentience, on earth, only the lives and sentience of their own species. So the Tolkienesque story about the world coming to being is a mythological exaggeration.

But even by "just" creating their own species, Orkid and Thiamer operated on dangerous ground. It's easy to see why they did it. Although their primary study population is Homo Sapiens, they also wanted to see how hominoids made in their own image would behave on earth. That would give them nice comparative data. Only there are at least two ethical problems in this.

The first is that their lab animals – the Orkid People and the Elves – have to suffer the consequences of the experiment and their unwillingness to stop it in time. They saw early on how the earth's atmosphere affected their creations and that would have been

enough for science. But they then continued, maybe because they liked their images too much, and the events of the opera happen.

The wider problem is that they probably accelerated reproduction on earth. It stands to reason that Thiamer's elves were supposed to breed only among themselves not to contaminate the planet's ecosystem. But they couldn't control themselves or be controlled and so they produced offspring with everything that lives, thereby boosting the already strong reproductive strain in organisms.

In other words, although only Orkid blames herself in the opera, it is really Thiamer who is the biggest villain here. He is to blame, among other things, for the current human overpopulation, mass extinction of nonhuman species, and climate change. Whoops.

Excellent answer, this clarified so much, and for the first time now I feel as though I truly understand Thiamer's significance, as well as his villainy – that was a very important thing to be pointed out.

Is there any numerological significance to the number, 40,000?

Unless I was thinking about the Neanderthal disappearance, no.

In your story, the Orcs, are not at all like the classic Tolkien Orcs, they are, as you describe them in the recently unearthed Orkid trailer video, "They are all female, they are beautiful, they are wise and they are brave." How did the Orcs become the Orkids?

This is all based on the original idea of the beautiful warriors with their hideous masks. Masked, they are frightening, invincible soldiers, unmasked, they are beautiful flowers.

This is a gentle nudge into Tolkien's direction. Why associate physical ugliness to evil and good looks with good? He does that with orcs and elves. I turn it around.

Again from the Orkid trailer video, which I highly recommend every one go watch by the way, you say that, if Orkid were to be based on a headline, it would be something to the effect of "The visitors from Bellatrix prevent us from having babies, or, aliens from outer space have controlled human reproduction for thousands of years." -

So in other words, the Orkid people are Antinatalists?

It's complicated. Their leader, Orkid, is one of the creators of sentience and consciousness on earth. She and her collaborators did it out of scientific curiosity and meant no harm, but it had consequences. This would make her a blatant pronatalist.

On the other hand, as we'll see when we get to the songs, she does **not** allow reproduction among her people – and she fights her own urge to have offspring, caused by earth's atmosphere. In the personal quest, she seems to succeed in the end.

Mind you, there is a tense moment in the beginning of the story, when everyone seems to be in a reproductive frenzy, and only Philotheos the high priest remembers the rules of old, stating that procreation is not an option for immortals, which all Orkid people are (they can die in battle but not of disease or old age).

Should we listen to the song that shows this situation? It's the second one on the album, right after All in the Theme, and it's called Daughter to Our Queen.

Perfect timing, yes!

[Daughter to Our Queen]

Daughter to our queen beautifully establishes both the Antinatalism & the Natalism which are about to find themselves at war within the Orkid narrative, and all through such an infectious and rousing tune!

Yes, thank you. Musically, you cannot miss the reference to California Dreaming in the riff. All the leaves are brown / All the leaves are brown – ad infinitum. I thought that it was an appropriate nod to that direction – a bunch of happy hippies celebrating the wonderfulness of new life. But on with the story.

If earth's atmosphere causes a desire to procreate, I'm curious, why hasn't Philotheos succumbed to it at all?

Philotheos is the high priest. Maybe she has developed an iron-cast self-discipline against her own urges and that makes her stricter to others, as well.

Or it is possible that when Orkid made Philotheos, the formula, the modifications – I'll explain these in a moment – happened to be the

right ones, giving Philotheos a natural immunity against baby fever.

Or it might be a combination of these. As you will see, Orkid never did find the same formula again, unfortunately.

No wonder Philotheos is angry, she should have been an only child! Orkid got it right the first time. Was Philotheos created on earth?

Yes, all Orkid and Thiamer offspring, or copies to be more accurate, were created on earth.

And by comparison, the Elves in your story, are all male, and tyrannically natalist?

Yes, they propagate with everything that moves, except in the beginning the Orkid people. But they seem to have plans about reproducing with them as well, as they see Orkid struggle.

And we have seen that this is all related to the Visitors from Bellatrix research plan – Orkid tries to manage without procreating while Thiamer’s people are free to produce offspring.

But nothing is simple and certain in the storyline of Orkid because I alternate between points of view. The orcs have their ideas about the elves and the elves have their ideas about the orcs. I hide things behind those alternative views.

It **is** clear, however, that the driving dramatic force of Orkid is the conflict between the two peoples. From song five on, they are at war over reproductive rights.

Is earth’s atmosphere making the elves especially natalistic, where they may not have been on some other planet?

It seems to be a boost to their natural inclination. We don’t know about other planets because this has only been tried once, here. But it’s not **im**possible. Maybe Thiamer’s copies would have fared better on other planets.

Thinking of the real human world for a moment, and what the driving forces are behind human & non-human procreation - certainly, all sentient creatures are driven by the urge to have sex, and unless prevented, procreation is the natural result of those urges. But do you

believe that outside of those sexual drives, there is also a separate, natural urge to have children? Or is sex simply the way that biology has tricked us into performing procreative acts? Do you think the desire to have children is perhaps, mostly cultural, at this point?

This is a very good question. Critics of antinatalism certainly seem to think that there is a separate rationale – or several separate rationales – for having offspring. God has commanded us to fill the earth. Society and civilization would collapse without new people. Family lines would be broken. Childbearing is a natural need, whether you have the biological capacity or not. And children bring so much joy to our lives.

But apart from the egoistic joy they bring and the questionable natural need, I would say that this is a cultural phenomenon. Like you say, sex is an urge, and satisfying that urge was in the beginning a child-making automaton. Both women and men have, however, for a long time known ways of breaking the connection, either by abstinence or by contraception. That this has not always been allowed is down to cultural pronatalism.

In fact, to shift down a gear or two to accelerate, I don't think that pronatalism is just a feature of human culture. I think that human culture is a feature of pronatalism. Let me explicate that thought.

I mentioned, in episode 2 of Hankikanto, that my long-time ambition has been to write a book titled *Breeders' Morality: Its Nature, Implications, and Alternatives*. Never had the time to do it, but I'm reminded of it again now. The opening line, in my head, has for a quarter of a century been, "In the beginning, breeders created God." And by "breeders" I mean voluntary reproducers.

The logic, put in terms that I can understand myself, is illustrated by an imaginary conversation between a mother and a child. It goes like this:

Mother: I'm so sorry to tell you, but your grandma just died, She is with us no longer.

Child: Oh, no! That's horrible!



Mother: Well, yes, we'll miss her terribly, but she's all right. She's in a better place now.

Child: What better place? Wouldn't it be best for her to be here?

Mother: She's in heaven. It's a wonderful place. She'll be listening to her favorite music all day and the sun will always shine.

Child: That's all right, then, I guess. But if it's such a wonderful place, can I go there, too? I miss grandma.

Mother (thinking on her feet): Otherwise yes, and I would support it, but it's against God's will. You see, God created us all, and Heaven and Earth, and He doesn't want us to depart too soon. We have to live our lives here first and only then we get to go to the good place. You'll see grandma then.

Child: OK, I can live with that.

Mother (turning into the camera): Whew, that was a close one. Now we'll have to invent religion.

And then breeders went on to invent religion and culture and that's why cultures are inherently pronatalist. Quod erat demonstrandum.

An excellent point, well illustrated, and probably not at all far from the truth. God is truly the most nefarious of all the children of pronatalism. And I of course agree that procreation is a cultural phenomenon. Just for further sake of conversation though – the most common comeback I've encountered from people on this notion, is the idea that while there may be no separate drive to have children, that there is a natural Maternal Instinct - that women have a natural drive to care for other beings, and so that's the closest thing we have to an instinct to create children. I've certainly never noticed such a thing myself, and even if I did, there really is no need to create more need, in order to satisfy a desire to care for needs - plenty of need here already desperate for care... Regardless, what do you think of the supposed, 'Maternal instinct' and if it is real, is that the closest thing that exists to a natural drive to procreate?

As far as I know, the so-called maternal instinct is a myth. Women and men alike may learn to appreciate and care for their offspring quickly, but it's by no means a given. Some struggle to even like their children. My two cents say that this is just another cultural construction offered to us as a biological fact.

Agreed! Now leaving the real world behind yet again, back to Orkid -

Orkid, the Queen of the Orkid people, is the main character of the opera. Before we fully dive into the story of Orkid, I would like to first establish a few more historical facts about the project -

Live performances of Orkid, did not have anything close to the same kind of staging that *Playing God* did, and was presented live in a more concert like style - Fantastic video of this exists on YouTube, and our audience is more than encouraged to go watch it.

If you could eventually do so, what would you like to see happen visually with the Orkid project? I have of course already expressed to you what an incredible animated film I think it could be, or a live action Operatic film, but what does a fully realized visual version of Orkid look like in your mind?

I had in mind a theater stage setting on two levels. Upstairs, on the balcony, I would have had the band. Drums in the middle and either side of them two sets of keyboards. In the wings, three guitars and a bass. The guitars and the bass would have had bent-down heads so that they would have looked like birds of prey. The players on the left would have been right-handed and on the right left-handed for symmetry. They would have been silhouettes except for their solo parts, when they would have been in the spotlight.

In my YouTube versions of the songs marked with "Lyrics and illustrations" I give hints to how the visuals down on stage could have been set up. It's too complicated to explain in full, but I'll give you two examples.

You heard *All in the Theme*, the opening song. In that scene, Orkid the Queen would be standing by a big funeral rock, surrounded by burning lava everywhere else. Her high priest and key people

would be forming a semi-circle around her. This would also have been the set for the closing song, Here Comes the Dark. These are the bookends.

So, the show begins and ends in the same scene. Its real time is the end time, the opening is a peak to the end. And this scene, in the Tolkien world, would show the situation right after Frodo the Ring Bearer, with the good help of Gollum, has dropped the Ring into the pit in Mordor, destroying it. Expect that I wouldn't have given any hope after that. It ends there.

The second example is when, after the opening, we go back in time and the events start to unfold. Big stairs from the right and from the left to the big-decision square. Orkid people from the left descending, overjoyed by what they think their queen has done, that there would be a daughter. The high priest from the right descending, questioning the legality of any such scheme. The elf wizard and bard approaching the situation, descending from the right, after the high priest. And from there the three go to the queen's palace. And so on and so forth. I had it all figured out.

I didn't think beyond a stage performance, really. But I like your ideas – the animated film and the live-action movie – to bits. We can start work on them after we are done with these podcasts.

Orkid premiered at Golden Classics in Helsinki on January 19th & 20th, 2018 - were these the only two performances of Orkid?

Apart from a couple of previews in the build-up and an academic showing of the video in Paris in an academic conference, these were the only performances.

The resources are the challenge. However low-key you try to go, nine musicians and the gear alone will cost you, not to mention rehearsals, travel, subsistence, site, etc.

These live performances must have truly been something else to witness - it's a giant band, in an incredible location, playing epic song after epic song, I envy anyone who got to see it! Please tell me all about some of the press and reactions these shows received?

The premiere was advertised by the biggest newspaper in Finland, the Helsinki News, a day before. This was in a visible interview of me, the Renaissance Man, who bought his first electric guitar with money earned working in a sausage factory, who went on to become an Army Major and a notable brand philosopher in the 1980s and who has now written his second rock opera.

In other words, it was about me and my brand, not the show. I don't think that it persuaded too many people to come. Which may have been just as well because we had pretty much a full house on both days.

The main audience reactions were, in chronological order: Drunken customer during the intermission: "Why don't you let the guitar players rip it off?" My cousin Anne at the end of the show: "I'm so proud of you Matti!" Drunken customer after the show: "Now that was better with the guitars." A German reviewer in a blog post the next day: "Who and what is Orkid?"

We had a great time and all the musicians were on fire. Our visual director, Sai Sahill Sahni, filmed the whole show and I got what I wanted, a recording of a live concert performance, now on YouTube.

Yes, and once again, I would like to take a quick moment to insist that our audience go and watch the full video, there will be a link in the description – only 131 views since September 2<sup>nd</sup> 2019 - that is criminal! Reason alone for the red button to be pressed!... So go check it out!

Did you also play live during these shows? There are images of you playing the guitar and singing, and in video we can see you playing, but always highly obscured. I kinda know why, but why?

I was the warm-up act. Nineteen songs, the encore included, and a description of the opera's plot in between. I was careful to explain that I'm not a professional musician and that my most recent solo performance on stage had been my school Christmas do piano rendition of Holy Night, Silent Night fifty years ago.

No one threw anything sharp at me, so I guess it was OK.

19 songs?! May I ask what was included in those 19 songs that you played?

Four Finnish pop/rock classics; two English rock classics; eight older songs by me in Finnish, including Peili; and two in English; Vital Stream from Playing God, a new one called Annunciation from my next rock opera; and the first verse of Una furtiva lacrima from Gaetano Donizetti's opera L'elisir d'amore as an introduction to Peili, Complete with the story of my life and, as I said, the plot of Orkid. I had self-rehearsals for a year to get it all right.

There is no recording of my performance, but I have a demo of one song I wrote in Paris, France, in fall 1981, committed on tape ten years ago, and sang in the premiere. Should we hear it? It's called Newspaper and all my later academic studies into justice are kinda based on it.

I can't get over that, that is a giant, and versatile set list – that's more songs than there are in the opera itself! And with a lecture, and what sounds like a mini version of Hankikanto on top of it, no less – amazing! I completely respect your artistic & personal right not to have filmed it, but, happy that we still have some glimpses of it none the less, and I hope that it will not be the last time you do a solo show like that.

So now, yes, I'm very eager to hear Newspaper, let's have a listen -

[Newspaper]

Powerful song, Matti, extremely moving - it's beautiful, and the childlike innocence of the character is heartbreaking. Thank you so much for sharing it with me, and with our audience here on Hankikanto. Would you like to speak a little bit about what inspired this song, and perhaps how it later came to influence the beginning of your work on justice?

In Paris, I had all the time in the world, as my partner was working and I was just the accompanying person. I roamed the banks of river Seine and observed life there, especially the proud clochards living under the bridges. They seemed to have so little while the world outside was going into the 1980s consumerism – and they still managed to keep their pride and independence. That's where the character of the song came into life.

When I, later on, started my academic career, considerations of justice were for a long time an impediment to my progress towards antinatalism. My work concentrated on artificial reproduction, which was heavily criticized for its unnaturalness and ungodliness.

I, in my turn, heavily criticized that attitude. If everyone with the natural ability to bear offspring can have children, why exclude those responsible potential parents who need some biomedical help? That would be unfair, unjust.

I realized only much later that there are many different conceptions of justice and that the simple-fairness one that I was applying had all kinds of harmful implications. Now I have for ten years and counting worked on a better model, also again recognizing things like the identity, independence, and pride of the people who lived under the bridges in Paris all those years ago.

It would be a terrible crime not to take at least a moment to say a few words about the immense amount of talent that went into the creation & performance of this project, some of whom were also a part of Playing God - the entire cast is phenomenal, and everyone looks like they are having such a great time! I was particularly struck by the voices of Bonnie Parker & Phil Baker - your friend Mikaela Mansikkala is transfixing as well, and I likely could watch them do just about anything for hours at this point. Would you like to tell us anything about any of them, as well as the other members of the Orkid team?

**Bonnie Parker** sang the part of Orkid and also played bass on stage. A wonderful musician who had her own band in the 1980s and 90s (<https://youtu.be/V1sqniTQkXc>) in the heyday of hair metal and women breaking through. The backbone of the cast of both Playing God and Orkid and a super talent.

**Phil Baker** appears in the role of Philotheos the High Priest and played lead guitar both on stage and on the Orkid album. He is a brilliant musician and used to perform in the celebration bands Uriah Heep Legends and Corky Laing's Mountain (<https://youtu.be/9j17pYhbuHc>). A pillar of strength.

**Harri Väyrynen** sings the part of Thiamer and plays guitar on stage. An exquisite master of prog rock, he has performed in all

the Playing God and Orkid productions, adding his very special touch to the music. His own current band is Club Merano which he fronts (<https://youtu.be/ion3SfrLGTE>). Great talent.

**Denny Colt** is Trahaldur on stage and on the album. A great guitar player, she performed in Dee Snider's Van Helsings' Curse (<https://youtu.be/qh03yqhize8>), the Twisted Sister side project. Denny and Bonnie also front their own punk metal band TANG – fantastic music ([https://youtu.be/DZ9\\_SpCU0wQ](https://youtu.be/DZ9_SpCU0wQ))!

**Jan Rechberger** (known as Snoopy) is the long-time drummer of Amorphis – one of the best known Finnish metal bands. We were lucky to have him in the recordings and on stage, as Amorphis had a short touring break. His dexterity behind the kit is nothing short of awe-inspiring (<https://youtu.be/rwn9HryXHeM>).

**Johanna Ahola-Launonen** sings as People and played the keyboards on stage. There are a couple of organ solos on the album that I thought could never be done live, but she masterfully proved me wrong. She fronts a punk-ska band called The Beggars (<https://youtu.be/Msa3XGL1LHM>). A phenomenal multi-talent.

**Mikaela Mansikkala** sings as People on the album and on stage and has been one of the solid forces of this rock-opera saga since Playing God. As a versatile music maker, she roams the field of pop, and we even made a disco thing between us on animal rights ([https://youtu.be/bayHoc9W\\_F0](https://youtu.be/bayHoc9W_F0)). Good friend, great singer!

**Maria Hänninen** sang as People and played violin on stage. A multi-instrumentalist, she also plays guitar and bass and fronts her own hard rock band Mount Mary. Just recently, she collaborated with Michael Monroe of Hanoi Rocks on one of her albums (<https://youtu.be/RyuP2UV2M1Y>). A fantastic musician!

**Natasha Jane Julian** sang as People and completed the Orkid part of the stage. The performance was on two joint stages, one for the orcs and one for the elves. She is a singer of emotional ballads and, like all the others, writes her own music (<https://youtu.be/SYzmvisGOUA>). A veritable asset!

**Lacce Väyrynen**, the studio master doing all the magic, was partly heard on stage on a back tape run by Snoopy. I didn't have the resources to hire a philharmonic orchestra, so this was the solution. Lacce is an enormously gifted musician on his own right and his band Accu is well-known in Finnish dance music circles (<https://youtu.be/W0zEdr7brXo>). Respect, and then again, respect!

My apologies for the full list but when I mention one of them, I have to mention them all. Dear friends, fabulous musicians, and I've been lucky to collaborate with them.

I would like to spend some time fully dissecting the album, so let's begin

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**Act One - Beginning of the end**, with the first track -

### 1. All in the theme:

What is 'The Theme'?

It is Ainulindalë, the Music of the Ainur, described by Tolkien in the beginning of Silmarillion. The big god Eru Ilúvatar gives the lesser gods, the Valar, musical themes to be developed. Their sometimes discordant melodies birth to the visible world and its sentient species, elves and men.

The idea is deterministic and optimistic. Everything that happens, happens for a reason, and serves the greater good in the end, however bad things may look. So when the Orkid people sing "All in the theme / No turning back" they are reaffirming their faith to the inevitability of events.

Since I am not an optimist, however, that part of Tolkien is muffled here. The Orkid people are proceeding towards their inevitable fate, but there is no promise that it will be good.

What is the significance of West?

In Tolkien's world, the Valar and the elves originally live in eternal light in the West. Many of them migrate to the Middle Earth to witness the birth of the physical world and its creatures. The geographical connection between Middle Earth and the West is, later on, severed, but right until the end the Valar and the elves



have an opportunity to return to where they came from. This is what happens in the final scene of the Lord of the Rings.

Orkid has told her people a story like this about the creation of the world, fully knowing that it was she herself, who with the other Visitors from Bellatrix, sparked sentience, at least orc and elven sentience. into existence. She may have, at some point, fooled herself into thinking that she is not really to blame. In the Tolkien tale, sentience was the main god's, Eru Ilúvatar's idea, not that of the Valar. Maybe Orkid has reasoned that it was an inescapable part of her mission.

But by the end, by All in the Theme, she has apparently confessed to herself that she is to blame. Hence no honorable return to the West for her. And the West probably means Bellatrix, her home star. The thought of the Ethics Committee may not be that appealing.

At this starting point of the story, we find Orkid is thinking about her past, about the begging of time - what has just occurred to put her in this state of reverie?

The whole opera from song two to song fifteen, two thousand years, has just occurred. Remember, All in the Theme is part and parcel with the last song, Here Comes the Dark. Everything she knew would happen has happened, wars have been fought, blood has been shed, lies have been told, and a lot of suffering has been caused.

Was Orkid born being able to envision and see not only her own end, but the full narrative of all time and memoriam?

We have no idea of her birth back home in Bellatrix except that it must have been a long, long time ago. She knew when she set this world, or at least orc life on earth, in motion approximately what would happen. It was her research hypothesis. How it panned out must have been a bit of a shock to her, at least momentarily.

In Bellatrix, Orkid, or then K, presumably didn't have sentience in the sense of an ability to feel pleasure and pain. Some kind of a consciousness, yes, but a more intellectual or detached one.

Circumstances on earth are different and that must have been an unpleasant surprise for her.

Did Orkid create herself? Are her origins ever fully explained to us?

We don't know but probably she didn't create herself. In Bellatrix, she is just one of the immortals who were born a long time ago, back in the day of natural reproduction in the star. But that was so far in the past that Bellatrixians have lost all memory of it. This is why the Research Council funds the Visitors' science mission.

Orkid created the Orkid people, though, in her own image, give or take a few features here and there. This is not biological reproduction. She made copies of herself, most likely by non-destructive teleportation, and introduced some variety in individual cases. All the Orkid people are essentially Orkid, with accidental individualities shaped by the intentional manipulations and conditions on earth.

"I could see the thought of rings Hammered all too fast" Curious to know what the rings refer to here - I of course am well aware of what the rings are within the Lord of the Rings mythos, but in your story, do the 'rings' refer to beings created in haste?

The rings are the Tolkien rings. But note that Orkid sings about the "thought of rings". In the Orkid world, they may not be real at all, just a lie told by the elves. We'll get to that in the second act.

"I could see their bondage Not their due, not their fee." Does this mean that Orkid as their creator can see all that will befall her creations, but cannot comprehend the price? Meaning perhaps that she is blind to the suffering she is creating? And what is 'their due'?

Like any responsible creator, or scientist making experiments on animals, Orkid wants the best for the beings that she has made. Their due would have been a good life without suffering, but she couldn't provide that. Again, I refer to the surprise element that life on earth added to how the experiment panned out.

"Near now the dark, Where times at rest" Is Orkid at the edge of a type of extinction?

Maybe. She is envisioning the end of something. It could be the species she created. Or it could be something else. Ask again when we get to the very end of the story.

“Rectitude for me, Must remain unseen.” Why?

As I’ve said, she may have regrets. But she may also be bluffing. Maybe it’s a message to her audience in this end/opening scene.

“Living things innocuous hordes All seemed a form of harm Deep down knew much better ‘Cause the warrior in me Sensed it would be wiser Let them be - to be free.”

This refers to the one precaution in Orkid’s study protocol that she uses wisely. When the threat of reproduction comes too tangible, she has devised a plan to withdraw from her people and let them develop without her continuous influence. We’ll see how that goes as the story unfolds.

Then the story travels back 2000 years in the past -

## **2. Daughter to our queen:**

In this song, a rumor has emerged that Orkid has given birth to a daughter - a great sin in this world, and we are introduced to several other characters, Philotheos - “friend of God” - First creation of Orkid, high priest of the Orkid people, Thiamer the wizard, and Trahaldur - the bard.

In addition to these characters, we are also introduced to The People, who are extremely excited by the idea that Orkid has had a daughter. Who are The People? Are they a mix of humans, elves & other Orkid people amongst perhaps others? They seem to have forgotten the laws and rules of their world, and are now overcome by a kind of natalist fever - what has caused this? Why do they want the daughter of Orkid to exist so badly?

They are all Orkid’s clones, hence Orkid People. They live under the same reproductive pressure as Orkid herself, to her dismay. The modifications made to them in their creation have, however, removed the ability to know how and why things are developing like they are. And earth seems to call them to have children.

Also, they have, no doubt, heard stories about elves and other creatures that produce offspring, and some of them may think that that's what they should be doing, too. And ancient religion may have lost some of its grip – perhaps their society has become more secular over time. These might be the reasons for them to be so inordinately happy about the possibility of the first daughter.

They are of course forbidden to procreate with the Elves, but are some of them doing it anyway?

No. There is no Orkid DNA in our blood. Neanderthal, yes, Elven, yes, orc or Orkid, no.

There seems to be a distinction between beings who are 'created' in the world of Orkid, and beings who are 'Procreated'. Philotheos, though the first 'creation' of Orkid, is not none the less considered to be a child of Orkid? How would Philotheos not also be considered a daughter?

That's a nice semantic point. They are all Orkid's daughters in a way. But their creation happened a long time ago and they don't know the details. Now they seem to believe that the queen has actually had sex with someone – maybe one of the elves – has given or is giving natural, biological birth to an actual baby orc.

Philotheos is deeply pissed about this possible daughter of Orkid, "Immortals are not meant to breed", and while I of course admire Philotheos Anti-natal outrage, it's hard not to interpret her disgust as a kind of jealousy?

Interesting. I never thought about it like that. My interpretation is that Philotheos is the real thing – a high priest who is highly frustrated by the people's unlawful reaction and – worse still – the possibility that Orkid herself has gone and done something stupid.

If the Orkid society has indeed become secularized, the one jealousy that she might have is that her own position as the keeper of the faith is questioned.

Yes, this point you make about their having possibly become more secularized is not one I had considered at all, and that would indeed be an affront to her identity as a religious figure, and probably would spark some jealousy, I could see that for sure. Just to further explain why I felt

there might be some jealousy of another kind – I got the impression that as the first child of Orkid, Philotheos on some level, perhaps unconsciously, thinks of this new child is an unwanted sibling, and a competition for Orkid's love as a mother figure, and as a companion. Also, surely, as the first 'born' if there is any 'heir to our queen' it would be Philotheos, no? Perhaps Philotheos wishes, at least on some unconscious level to be the Princess, and the dearly beloved?

Yes, this is a very plausible explanation. It had not occurred to me because I think about relationships between people, for want of a better word, sociologically rather than psychologically.

Is there anything about the religion of the Orkid people that you would like to say?

They have the one rule – that they should not reproduce. And we can assume that they have warrior codes of honor and sisterhood and all that. And a Tolkien-like back story to hold it all together.

So Orkid is the one that made the rule against procreation, but now she wanted a 'reflection' and her friends have forbidden it. How did she lose that kind of control, to be reprimanded for rules she herself set?

The apparent loss of control is due to the precautions in the study protocol. In the beginning of the experiment, Orkid created a being who would be almost her equal in strength, in case something goes wrong and she herself needs to be retrained.

### **3. The one rule:**

I have a feeling that music time is approaching us again, as we move on to the third song of the opera, The one rule. So let's give it a listen, and then I'll ask you all about it.

[The One Rule]

During The one rule, Philotheos, Thiamer, and Trahaldur all confront Orkid about the existence of her 'daughter' but there is no true child of Orkid, only a reflection, a clone. Does this clone of Orkid exist as a literal mirror image of herself? Are mirrors ordinarily banned for immortals, lest they cause a procreative act?

Orkid feels from time to time an urge to reproduce, caused by earth's atmosphere. She handles this by another study-protocol precaution. She produces a near-exact copy of herself, just removing what she thinks is the "baby button" in her earthly constitution.

When Philotheos, Thiamer, and Trahaldur walk into the palace, they catch Orkid in the middle of the act, so that one of her stands in the transmitting end of the teleporter and another one of her appears in the receiver. This creates the mirror effect.

So, she is attempting to edit out her procreative desire by creating an altered copy through teleportation?

That's right. And she has done it many times before, always with temporary success.

Orkid says, "It's vital that we have this clone." and that "There must be something, Flesh of my flesh, Dawn of a new spring." Why does she believe this?

The lyrics actually go, "I felt this urge / There must be something / Flesh of my flesh / Dawn of a new spring". The emphasis is on "I felt this urge" – which means that her earth body is once again rebelling against her Bellatrix reason. The clone is vital to remove the threat.

Orkid is bullied into breaking the mirror, but declares that there must now be a 'War of wrath' as well as a funeral, which they do not even allow her to fully articulate. Why must there be a war after the breaking of the mirror?

First about the interruption. This is where one of the most profound lies in the story begins. One of the two breaks the other, as should happen in destructive teleportation, so all is going to Orkid's plan. No worries, no one has been forced to destroy their baby.

If you look at the words closely, you will see that the interrupted line in its entirety goes, "I will break the mirror / But the people must not know the sum / We'll have to go to war of wrath / Secure a decent funeral for my (and here she is interrupted)".

Or is she? The alternative is that she realizes that she is just about to expose a secret that her creations – and Thiamer’s – should not know. The unspoken word, judging by its counterpart earlier, “sum”, is “mum”. And that would reveal to Philotheos and Trahaldur that she is the so-called daughter. The cover of her clever research design would be blown.

We should keep in mind that Orkid is at her most vulnerable here. The urge has come over her, she has made the corrective move, she is new – being the copy – and perhaps temporarily disoriented. She is thinking on her feet, but she may realize just in time that the word “mum” should not be uttered.

Just seconds earlier, she has declared a “war of wrath” which is more in keeping of her general tactic. The Orkid People have tasted the sweetness of reproduction and have to be distracted. They are warriors, so what better way than go to battle.

You asked before what her final regrets are once the whole story has been told. Here is a key one. This moment sends her people to a thousand-year war and, even after that, to a diaspora of sorts. And it may ruin her scientific experiment.

I have a question to self here. Why am I still talking about Orkid after this event? Shouldn’t it be Daughter? Well, yes and no. The “daughter” survives in this scene, but the “daughter” has survived many scenes like this in the past. The original Orkid, if you’re a biological purist, hasn’t existed for quite some time. But they are all Orkid, as Philotheos realizes in the penultimate song, Identities.

This is a fascinating philosophical topic, by the way. Teleportation is the method of transport in science fiction like Star Trek. Captain Kirk, Lieutenant Uhura, and Mr. Spock walk into a beam. They are annihilated, their constitution read, and another version of them appears somewhere else, made of different molecules. Do we have an identity crisis here? I think we might have.

Now that you mention it, it really is, isn’t it? I’ve never really thought about it before, but teleportation has a lot of similarity to the conservation of matter and energy through both life and death. Part of being trapped in the cycle of sentience is, kind of like being stuck in a piecemeal,

identity-less, teleportation process throughout time, isn't it?... Like an odd form of reincarnation, but where no one self is ever able to rebuild and to be reborn again as a whole - all we can be assembled as, are little bits of each other, like Frankenstein's monster, made up of pieces of the dead, molecule by molecule, through birth... There's this great line from the Jello Biafra/NoMeansNo song, *The Myth is Real – Lets Eat*, which points out that when surveyed 64% of lowans, 'Want to be reincarnated as themselves.' I don't know if that's true, but what I imagine might, is that zerox machines begetting zerox machines the natural way is a disappointment, the homunculus is never good enough - I think most would much rather have a copy of themselves... Do you think that people would prefer cloning through teleportation over procreation, if they had the opportunity to use such technology?

I don't think so. It would be a way to avoid pregnancies and childbirth, but those could be handled better by artificial wombs. The main problem is that teleportation would, give or take, produce copies of us as we now are. So, if people want to have babies like themselves, then they would have to use reproductive cloning.

For the reincarnation urge of people in Iowa, teleportation would be slightly better, at least if we could add to this non-existing and improbable technology yet another non-existing and improbable feature – the modifications that Orkid is capable of making.

The trick would then be that every time our body starts malfunctioning, we teleport through a functionality filter and emerge on the other side younger, healthier, and stronger.

The identity question remains, however. Would it be me? But that would not be a problem for the lowans, who were looking to be reincarnated as themselves. Mission accomplished. But I wouldn't hold my breath waiting for the technology to come online.

#### **4. The mirror is broken:**

This is a beautiful song, and those of you who have been paying close attention to our Hankikanto series will know that we have already learned much about its history, and its various iterations. We played *The mirror is broken* in *Hankikanto: Falling into the Anti/Natal Abyss #2 On playing god with genetics*, and the same tune makes an appearance in



the opera *Playing God*, as a song called *Silent Dream*. The original version of the song, as you've spoken about previously, *Matti*, was called *When the Apple Blossoms Bloom in the Windmills of Your Mind, I'll Be Your Valentine*, and you wrote it in 1980.

I had previously interpreted *The mirror is broken* as being deeply sad and full of loss within the context of the story, but from what I now understand, *Orkid/Daughter* are much more clever than I suspected, and she is really putting on an act, lying, and getting ready to go to war.

And you have explained why, including that this decision would become a major point of regret for her, yet -

I suppose what I still don't understand is, what would have happened to *Orkid*, if she were to have been honest with *Philotheos* and the others about what has occurred? She has attempted to do the right thing after all, really, she has tried to edit out the procreative urge, which has befallen her due to environment, not personal fault - and this is perhaps something she could have made them understand?... And though I appreciate that her people needed a distraction from their new found pro-natal obsession... Why go to war over a lie, all for a birth that did not actually occur?

In the beginning, telling the truth to the People would have ruined the research protocol. Learning about the effects of earth's atmosphere to *Orkid*-like creatures is dependent on them not knowing that they are being studied.

Later on, if *Orkid* grew an affection to her lab animals, it was too late. Exposing the lie then would have forced the People to see her in a different light. Not as a generous creator, maker, keeper, but what she really is, a scientist who has had them under her microscope for we-don't-know how many millennia.

I see here a connection to the plight of adoptive parents. They may feel that they should tell the truth, but they may also fear the consequences. My child will never be the same again. Or something.

## **5. 1000 years:**

And so begins the 1000 year war – and I confess, for the longest time I didn't understand who exactly Orkid, Thiamer, Trahaldur & Philotheos were declaring war against, because at the time, I didn't know about the role deception & lies play within this story. Let's see if I've got it right this time - Orkid, Thiamer, Trahaldur & Philotheos have lied to The People. They have told them that the Elves are somehow responsible for the death of the daughter in an attempt to redirect their excitement about procreation to one of death?

Well, seeing to it that Trahaldur is an elf and Thiamer is the creator of all elves, we may have to assume that they left the premises before the target of attack was publicly declared. That Trahaldur later on describes the battles in neutral tones must be down to his role as the bard, the historian, who tells the story as he knows it was seen by the participants.

To keep up the antinatal spirit within the Orkid community, it has been necessary to tell tall stories about the evil elves who do the opposite – propagate and have biological offspring. For the most immediate reaction, it is good to make them think that the elves, jealous that the Orkid people might also start expanding, have killed an imaginary daughter. Baby killers! Shame on them.

Orkid knows that once the warrior side is restored, her people will stop thinking about reproduction and just do the fighting they are good at. It seems that if you muffle your reproductive instinct on earth, the instinct to be violent comes fore.

Yes, alright, well that explains Trahaldur and perhaps Orkid. But what about Thiamer? He may have left the premises at the time, and didn't hear the initial lie, but it would have become clear to him pretty fast, that his people were becoming the target of an ethnic cleansing - Why has Thiamer done this to his own people? Why did he become complicit in sentencing the Elves to 1000 years of death for something they did not do? It seems he has an investment in the behavior of the Orkids, that I don't fully understand?

We don't know what Thiamer thinks about the war. But we have two reasons for believing that he is not all that concerned.

First, Orkid and Thiamer share the scientific goals of their research endeavor. Rescuing Orkid's half and setting it back to track is important to the integrity of the project.

And secondly, ethnic cleansing is **not** on the agenda. Elves reproduce at the speed of light and they are already a part of all life on earth except the orcs by the time the war breaks out.

So, even with Thiamer planning to continue the Orkid conquest later, he can well afford a thousand years of bloodshed before he carries on with his plan.

When does Thiamer's story, as L, as a sequel the Orkid tale, take place? When you eventually tell that story, will it be the same time, but more from his perspective, or does his narrative in L not take place for a long time after? If his goal is to eventually replenish the earth, does he see this war as a purge of some kind, and for some purpose?

Thiamer will re-enter the story in the second act of Orkid and stay visible until the end when he may or may not be destroyed. Other than that, his story will not be told in this saga.

If the Elves who procreate constantly, are fighting the immortal Orkids who do not, then the Orkids must be massively more powerful than the Elves to survive a thousand years' worth of fresh troops being thrown at them, no?

Yes, well, the elves are immortal in the same sense as the Orkid people. They can die in battle but not of disease or old age. Since the Orkid people do not reproduce, their numbers are limited to begin with, so they have to be clever and do only what is absolutely necessary. No open-field bloodbaths. And even with every precaution, the Orkid population must be considerably smaller after the war. Their queen can, of course, make more at will, but we are not told if she does.

Oh interesting! So what kind of combat do they engage in? Are they snipers? Terrorist sneak attackers of some kind? There's references to swords and things like that, but do they have access to more advanced weaponry as well?

No, I'm thinking about traditional sword-and-shield action, just not all the time and all over the place.

Philotheos during the course of this war, has undergone a sort of identity transformation from priest into that of a warrior, "But if you looked in the eyes of the priest You could see a different longing" What has happened to Philotheos during the course of the 1000 year battle?

Nothing much. She has always been a warrior, like all Orkid people. The war just seems to stay with her a little longer and stronger than with the others. She is closest to Orkid and may have a premonition that this – the temporary defeat of the elves – is not all there is to it, not the final solution, so to speak.

Wow, that was the last answer I was expecting actually! You, being the creator of Philotheos, I of course defer to whatever you say is going on – Maybe I really do think of people in more psychological terms, huh... Philotheos seems to me, to be a character who is very rich in potential, for a more psychological reading though.

Well, if you say so. At this point in the story, your interpretation is as valid as mine. There's a layer of mist that we can't see through yet.

Ok, I'll keep that layer of mist in mind. These are the lyrics from the next song that made me think the things I have about her mental state – I was born to peace, I was sworn to god, For the field of glory that's nor par, I'm a warrior now, make no mistake, I've learned to know, Just what's at stake

For me, she's just making a comparison between the exhilaration of physical battle and the dullness of spiritual peace. And as for the "I'm a warrior **now**" – that I see only as a reaffirmation of the soldier status. She has always been that, also as a priest – which she still is – and in times of peace.

Even If she and Orkid are on speaking terms, (Which I wonder, are they? I imagine that they are not?) her relationship to her mother, sister, friend, partner, self, has suffered a major disappointment & become complicated. Her identity as a religious figure has been minimized. Her identity as a warrior has replaced those things, but now she doesn't

even have that... That sounds to my ears, like a person with major psychological conflicts?

Philotheos is on speaking terms with Orkid. They just disagree about the war. Is it over? Should it be continued? As simple as that. I don't see any major disappointments here. When all this started, Philotheos didn't want Orkid to reproduce. Orkid – apparently – didn't. They both agreed to go to war to distract the people. Now there's just the small matter of ending it.

Having said that, I agree with you on the identity issue. Philotheos seems to resist the change back to the old normal and this seems to be connected with her acquired, or fortified, identity as a soldier.

Also, does Philotheos know anything about the research project?

Officially and consciously, no. But she may have an inkling of an idea that something is going on behind the scenes.

## **6. After battle calm:**

I think this calls for music time! Let's listen to, After battle calm, now, and perhaps our audience can be the judge of all this. We could use the annotated one with lyrics for this one, if you don't mind.

[After Battle Calm \_\_\_<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=js9uBamLGDY> 0–5:51 & fade]

You know, the opening of this song is actually the very first thing I normally think of when I think of the opera, as it's the first thing we hear in the trailer video.

And Phil Baker sounds fantastic here - I'm glad for every bit of gender blindness you inserted into this story, and we'll talk more about that later, I'm sure.

Yes, we all know by now that Philotheos is female even though Phil Baker makes her sound surprisingly male, at least according to earth stereotypes.

So, there are now people in Philotheos head, who congratulate and reassure her – doesn't this point to some proof that Philotheos has gone insane? It suggests to me that part of her is trying to comfort herself with talk of glory and going home, when in fact the world she knew was

destroyed by what she believes was Orkid's act of procreation, and the war & the ensuing bloodlust that now consumes her - she cannot go home, because that world is gone...?

She has not gone insane. The voices in her head are just the other Orkid people trying to convince her that the war is over. They are in actual fact saying something less poetic and less flowery, but the message is distorted into this sentimental celebration by the warrior's own interpretation.

Ok, yes, that's perfectly plausible. So she hasn't actually gone insane, as you say, it's just her fellow Orkid folk trying to calm her, ok. I think she's lost, but not necessarily crazy.

We'll agree that she is confused for reason or reasons unknown.

And Philotheos isn't the only one! The smoke is still too thick for me to guess what's really going on, and finding my way amongst the fun house mirrors is proving to be a most delightful challenge! Let's keep going.

## **7. Ceremony of death:**

The time has finally come for the funeral of the clone.

Yes, and since the song is a nine-minute symphony, I don't think that we need to play it here. The content is pretty straightforward, except for one thing.

Who is the Prophet from the future?

And there, that is the one thing.

I honestly don't know. Remember, this is the song that Lee Kerslake and I wrote together and to which he provided the drumming. I'll have to break the fourth wall here to explain the character's existence.

We were in the studio and I left the room for a moment to bring in some coffee and sandwiches. The minute I turned my back, Lee slipped into the recording booth and did the part – nowhere to be seen in my original studio plan.

So, later on, I was faced with his lines, saying:

Angels that whisper / Enter your dreams / Full of nostalgia / Or so it seems / Answer your questions / One over one / First they are there / And then there / Gone...

Or, in his own voice:

[A clip of just that part fading in and out]

The studio master and I racked our brains for days trying to figure out what to do with this, and we finally found the solution you just heard. There was a good place in the music for the lines and I thought, what the hell, this is one of Lee's last recordings ever and the story line doesn't suffer that much, so let's keep it, whatever it is.

And no one will notice, it's such a fleeting moment, I thought. Trust you, of course, with your super-sleuth-powers, to pick it up. But there, that's the story.

I'm very happy that I asked this question now, that's a beautiful story, Matti. I don't know what it means either, but for whatever reason, he seems to have wanted to leave you a gift through those words, and they are all the more meaningful for the fact it was one of the last things he ever recorded. I think what you were making together meant something to him, and he was trying in his way to say goodbye? I don't know... But it's very good that it made its way on to the album. No super powers required to pick up on it, that moment really stood out.

That's a nice interpretation. His message. I'll buy that. A good memory, anyway.

The Herald and People say several names belonging to what I assume are the names of fallen soldiers during the war? Hawthorn, Milfoil – and then finally, Precious – is Precious supposed to be the Daughter? Or The Ring? Or both?

Hawthorn and Milfoil are the names of some of the Orkid people fallen in battle, that's correct. Precious is the Daughter – or what the people thought was the Daughter. We know better by now.

And the reference to the ring – Precious in the Tolkien tale as Gollum calls it – is intentional. I’m trying to mix metaphors and mess up viewers’ heads here. No finger-wearable ring in this story.

There’s an important detail in that sequence when Hawthorn, Milfoil, and Precious are mentioned. Just before this, Philotheos the high priest has said:

Now call their names twice / And they will all be free

Apparently, it’s customary in the Orkid funeral ceremony to do this – perhaps to liberate the still earth-roaming spirits of the deceased.

Now, Hawthorn and Milfoil get this double mention, first by the Herald and then by the responding choir. But after the Herald sings “Precious, your time has come” there is no answer. The music stops abruptly and another theme takes over.

And this, of course, signals that the so-called daughter is not dead. She lives on as Orkid.

Orkid sings – “Deception and loss mark our lives now / So futile their love, faith and trust in me / How could they see?” Is this Orkid beginning now to voice her regret in the lie she had told?

Yes. The war as such is not a source of great regret. The Orkid people are warriors and that hardship would have been endurable, even with the losses. But there is the deeper self-doubt concerning the whole research project and its continuation beyond the reasonable. This feeds into the next scene, the next song, that concludes Act One.

## **8. Dreamless night:**

Orkid goes into a deep sleep...

We of course played this song during Episode #65 of The Exploring Antinatalism Podcast - it’s one of the most brilliant of the entire album, I absolutely love this song.

Thank you! And all the more reason for our listeners to go and enjoy episode sixty-five, as well. Dreamless Night is, incidentally, one of the few songs in the opera that I can almost credibly sing, accompanying myself with an acoustic guitar. It kinda burnt itself



into my subconsciousness during the preparation period. I remember quite vividly how it started its journey into existence. I had stepped outside for a smoke at the Country House and when I came back in, the first line

I knew when the ravens came / That this would never end,  
complete with melody, popped into my head. I picked up the guitar and wrote the first draft in one sitting.

If I may indulge and say something about the process otherwise?

Yes please, go ahead.

Some songs are simple and just call for a singer-songwriter to have a moment of inspiration like I had with Dreamless Night. Most of them are different, especially when you are trying to create a Fantasy Prog-Rock Opera in Two Acts. You stop being a performer of any kind and turn into a composer.

Where do I put this? Where do I put that? Does the continuity work? Have I forewarned about this theme emerging now? What's the meaning of this melody here?

I drove the studio master crazy with these concerns. What does it matter, he used to ask in the beginning, that you want to introduce this theme here and not there?

Musically, the standard solution is this. Intro – verse – verse – chorus – verse – verse – chorus – solo – solo – solo – possible C-part – verse – verse – chorus – chorus – outro. Or however it goes. I never paid any attention to that. The studio master did.

It was a mighty battle, but I won most of the arguments, and got the prog-rock thing that I wanted. I may return to this in one of the songs later. For now, it's composition, I learned, not song-writing. For better or for worse.

It doesn't surprise me at all that this would be the case. It's composition yes, but it's also storytelling, and this isn't just one story you are trying to tell – it's a massive, complex, multi layered mythos, that lives only in your mind, which will eventually be told through several different entire operas – that requires a complex game of mental chess to get right. I

imagine that it must have been hard for your collaborator to understand, and it's no surprise that the professional philosopher/composer won most of the arguments – but no, this is a gigantic universe that only you know, one wrong move both musically or in story, and tremendous future narratives and themes are thrown off – it must have been both thrilling and an absolute nightmare, I can only imagine. The creative process you describe certainly seems to me like it would be the only way forward.

For how long does Orkid remain asleep?

It's not specified. But it's a long time, hundreds or thousands of years. We know this because the next time we see the Orkid people live, their culture has changed. They don't live in cities and palaces anymore but in the wilderness, hiding from the rest of the creation. They only have a faint memory of Orkid and the ancient battles – and considering that they are still the same immortal people, or what remains of them, that must have taken ages. I would go for thousands rather than hundreds of years.

Orkid seems to be mourning who she was, a self that did not wish to be driven by procreative urges, but she cannot help herself, “the heart of the beast keeps calling” I didn't realize until the day of the premier of our Episode #65, that ‘The beast’ refers to the desire to procreate – Orkid is a creature who is tortured by the desire to replicate, and is now exhausted from the chaos that it has caused.

And let's not forget the always-invisible-but-always-lurking back story of the research endeavor. Yes, the beast is the earthly desire to have children. And yes, much chaos has been caused. But also, the science may not be advancing. As I said, this is one of the precautions in the plan. If all goes wrong, withdraw from the situation.

The actual wording of the song, lines like

Time after time / Year after year / The heart of the beast keeps calling / Take your best choice / Make your mistakes / The deeper you'll find you're falling / It's not over until you have been it all

may indicate that Orkid sings this to Philotheos, not revealing everything but giving hints. In my own head, I have always seen

the exquisite guitar solo by Phil Baker as Philotheos trying to persuade her queen not to take this temporary departure.

My mind is racing trying to pull this apart, I see the clues but not their solution, and seeing as my track record on correct guesses has not been great so far, I will simply smile toothily and say nothing more for now!

There is a kind of Immortals version of Promortalism happening in this song I think - She cannot die, cannot choose the Offer I Could Not Refuse – which for those of you out there that don't know, is an idea you came up with in your article, *If you must give them a gift, then give them the gift of nonexistence* - a kind of alternative to euthanasia, in which the person still goes about the rest of their life as they would have otherwise, but as a disconnected avatar, or a type of zombie.... And so for her, sleep is the only, temporary oblivion – she can only suicide some time away being unconscious, and dreamless, as opposed to death?

For Orkid, it's never a question of finally exiting. She has to go back to Bellatrix and report to the Research Council. And she is immortal. But yes, obviously, when leaving this world completely is not an option, there are lesser measures – sleep, diving into your work, drugs, having a life, you name it. Orkid is in a bit of an existential crisis here, and this is her solution, well predicted and written to her research plan, or for the duration of the project, her life plan.

As for Promortalism, that will have to wait until further episodes of Hankikanto, where you will explain all these concepts to me. After all, I am but a novice here. An antinatalist, voluntary extinctionist, author, accidentally, of one of the arguments maybe, but a novice. You the man here.

Hah! Well, looking forward to sharing all of my useless trivia with you.

It probably isn't, but just in case, is sleep another way of creating a different copy? I wondered this only because Orkid is similarly disoriented after the clone was made.

No. The drowsiness later is just what you'd expect. Imagine sleeping a few thousand years and then waking up to what we are

about to hear in the beginning of Act Two. Wouldn't that make you a little disoriented?

When we get to episode – say – 117 of Hankikanto, I will tell you more about the disorientation that you will face when you are sent to earth from the stars. Plato the Greek philosopher from 24 centuries ago had something to say about that.

And doesn't it now seem like yesterday, with our sage here dragging on since the Neanderthal demise?

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### **Act Two - End of the beginning:**

When Orkid was performed live, was there an intermission between the two acts?

Yes, there was. Can't keep your audiences thirsty. And can't let them migrate in and out during the act.

Yes, good thinking!

### **9. Give me a break:**

And so begins act Two with the song, Give me a break – and here it comes!

[Give Me a Break]

At the beginning of Act 2, Orkid is still very much in her long slumber, but it seems at least, that her world has been suffering in great turmoil in her absence? What has happened to Orkids people since she has gone to sleep? What is this miasma of gloom they are now caught up in?

Nothing bad has happened to the Orkid people. They have moved out of their cities and now live a simpler life somewhere out of Thiamer's reach.

Thiamer and the elves have been trying to locate them, without success, for ages and, as a last resort, Thiamer wakes Orkid up and tries to sell her a story that her people are in distress.

Orkid's confusion is real, though. As I said, waking up from a sleep of millennia does that to you, even if you are from Bellatrix.

I can barely remain unconfused during the day after only 8 hours of sleep, let alone thousands, so yes, her disorientation does make perfect sense. And so, ok! Now I understand, another deception! Thiamer is trying to trick Orkid, and is fully emerging as our villain now.

In some of the very first words of Act 2, The Ring is once again mentioned, and it's existence seems to have become the motivation for species of all kinds, within this world.... But as you have hinted at before, is the Ring just another lie and piece of deception? A path to happiness that isn't real?

Thiamer and all the other species now in existence may believe that the orcs and their leader are in possession of some Rings of Power. Tolkien tells that story, and in it the orcs are bad and the elves and men and dwarves are fighting a good fight against them, to save the light in the world.

Or it might be that Thiamer has patiently created and perpetuated this lie to solicit everyone in his quest to find the remaining Orkid people. We can only assume that propagation is still on his agenda.

Is Thiamer's main concern the experiment? Or does he actually care about the lives of the beings he and Orkid have created?

It could be the experiment. Or it could have become an obsession for him. Or he might be getting impatient.

The opera's name is Orkid and I have a sense that Orkid is the more senior researcher here. She may know things that even Thiamer doesn't know. And Thiamer might be anxious that all his work has been in vain as his collaborator is just taking an endless nap, abandoning her duties.

We are briefly introduced to both the Black country people, as well as the Underground folk within this song – who and what are these people?

The Black Country People are imaginary. They are the orcs who allegedly have found the Ring of power and want to cling to it in their evil quest for world domination. A Tolkien vision utilized by Thiamer. The chanting in the beginning is a recording of different

voices, so to speak, and Thiamer and Trahaldur use it to wake Orkid up.

The Underground Folk are the Dwarves, always looking for magic to improve their own lot.

I believe this is the first time in the story that what is going on in the human world at the same time gets a mention, we hear from the humans, 'confident in reason and magic' that, "Thanks to reason, magic be / Rulers of all we shall be" So I take it that humanity, in seeing the chaos of the Elves and the Orkids, are beginning to make a move to take over?

Yes, the Secondborn of the Tolkien version, humans, are apparently gaining in strength, relying on science and magic.

This gives us a useful timing clue. Maybe this is already the time of the ancient high around the world. That would be a nice answer to those who say that humans could **not** have built the pyramids or invented mathematics. Maybe this is true and they had help from the elves who then disappeared. We indeed come from other stars. Or to be more precise, one – Bellatrix.

Said he, with the straightest of faces.

Well, you know, there are those ancient cave painting which supposedly feature aliens and UFO's - perhaps they were the first earthly portraits of the Visitors from Bellatrix? Some of those aliens do appear to be singing - so maybe you are on to something!

The case seems to be iron cast. Move over, old science!

## **10. Behold your people:**

And now we come to the next song on the album, Behold your people – listeners of Hankikanto will recognize some of this song as the theme music from the show – lets listen to Behold your people in its entirety, now.

[Behold Your People]

Thiamer and Trahaldur show Orkid what's become of her people, who are suffering terribly without her - why have The People become like this?

They haven't. A few songs later, we'll meet them as happy campers around their cozy little fire.

The intro to the song on the album – all the songs have short intros – is: “Through a Seeing Stone, Thiamer and Trahaldur show Orkid a vision of her people in distress.” So, “through a Seeing Stone” and “a vision”.

The Seeing Stone is, in Tolkien's terminology, a Palantír, used in The Lord of the Rings to communicate in real time over great distances. Thiamer must be in possession of one, or at least he is trying to convince Orkid that he is.

Whether the Palantír is real or not, the vision is false. Thiamer has obviously programmed the stone to show Orkid's people in a convenient light. “We are lambs led to our pending slaughter.” The proud Orkid people. In Thiamer's wet dreams.

I had not picked up on any of that at all! But it's all there, and it's true, and I should have seen it. When we hear from them again shortly, they do seem to be doing just fine, changed, in terms of how they live, as you spoke about before, but not at all suffering in the ways that Thiamer apparently wants Orkid to believe... What a sneaky bastard!

Indeed.

Listeners of the Hankikanto series, will recognize part of this song from the theme music of the show. And though of course, this song was not written for Hankikanto, I personally feel that the lyrics could not possibly fit the idea of the show better. When I had originally asked you what music we should use for the start of the show, you immediately suggested this song, and I was wondering if you would mind speaking a little bit about your thoughts regarding the significance of the lyrics, and how you feel they relate to the ideas behind Hankikanto?

There are different layers in the lyrics.

What the people are supposedly singing is inspired by Va, pensiero, the Hebrew Slaves Chorus from Giuseppe Verdi's opera Nabucco. I tried to load into it all the things that can make autonomous, sentient existence miserable. Life has no meaning.

There is no self-direction. There is no hope and no feeling. Even the memories of better days are blurred and unreachable.

To emphasize the cyclical nature of this meaningless existence I played two different time signatures on top of each other. The music proceeds in slow fours: Dah – Dah – Dah – Dah-Dah, bringing the rhythm down. The singing goes in double-tempo fives: Dah-Dah – Dah-Dah – Dah-Dah – Dah-Dah – Dah-Dah, trying to struggle forward but being held by the music. Forty bars and they reach the end of the part together. Finally, my music-theory lessons when I was eight started to pay off.

Thiameer, of course, is lying through his teeth. There is no actual struggle between the Orkid people and all the rest. But, even more to the point, Thiameer and Trahaldur are singing straight from the manual. Orkid was supposed to be woken up only if her people are in dire need. And that message is what they are trying to convey.

And then there's Orkid.

Orkid sings:

I see it now it all comes back to me

I had to leave them to this doom

Lest they fall for the procreative dream

That nearly caught me in my bloom

But I am back and I will end their pain

I am back and I will set them free again

Yes, our Hankikanto theme clip. But as you know by now only too well, almost everything in this story is deception. This is no exception, and two interpretations are possible.

One, Orkid really comes to her senses, understands the awfulness of the situation, shares her thoughts with Thiameer and Trahaldur, and resolves to free her people, as ordered.

But two, in the light of what happens before the end of the opera, she might be counter-lying. In this scenario, she already sees through Thiameer's lie, but is savvy enough not to reveal it. So she



plays along, declares her intent to save her people, and throws dust in Thiamer's eyes.

## **11. Covenant:**

Orkid & Thiamer devise a plan to free the Orkid people.

A great deal of this song is told to us through Trahaldur – And though probably an odd time to ask, it should be pointed out that Trahaldur is a very interesting, and highly mysterious character. I understand the role he plays as a bard and narrator of sorts for part of the story, but I was wondering if you could tell us more about him? He doesn't seem to have much of an identity of his own outside of being a voice for Thiamer – what exactly is his relationship to Orkid, Thiamer & Philotheos?

Trahaldur is mysterious. Bearing the name that in the Tolkien tale belongs to Gollum, he should have a more active role in the end games. In Orkid, he's reduced – or elevated – to the status of the Bard, the historian. He could find a place of his own in a spin-off series, but then, Tolkien already told that story.

The simple fact that we know about him is that he is Thiamer's right-hand man, like Philotheos is Orkid's right-hand woman. The way the narrative folded in this opera, Trahaldur remains a side-kick more than a well-specified, independent character. But he moves the story on in crucial places. Dramatically, he's indispensable.

What has happened to the rest of the Elves at this point?

Still alive and kicking, and also part-ancestors of everything else on earth, as they still are. The entire second act of Orkid is about Thiamer's attempt to have them breed with the orcs, so that his mission could be accomplished.

And, of course, if we pick up on one of my speculations just now, they may be busy building pyramids and laying the foundations of mathematics.

## **12. Through the black country:**

“Orkid struggles through the resistance offered by her people's willpower”

Orkid trudges through, “The Black Country” – What is this place? It is Mordor?

Yes, well done, it’s Mordor. Or Tolkien’s Mordor, borrowed by Thiamer. The circumstances there seem to be harsh, what with volcanos and hostile life forms. We don’t have Frodo the Ring Bearer or Master Samwise or Gollum in this saga, and Orkid goes through this predicament all on her own.

If I may, musically this is my Ravel’s Bolero. Which is why we don’t play it. It’s much like listening to paint dry. I use only one riff throughout the whole song. But there are hidden depths. The singing melody lines vary. Many of the themes introduced in the opening number of the opera reoccur. The Studio Master inserted a Finnish schlager melody in a guitar bridge. And I made Orkid sing the main riff of Black Sabbath by Black Sabbath on their first album – Black Sabbath.

Oh! Well what do you know, yes, I hear it now, that’s Black Sabbath from Black Sabbath’s Black Sabbath alright! Surprised also that you seem to think Bolero, or this, is at all boring!

In the power point presentation you’ve shared with me from your opening act, you say that, ‘Orkid begins the long journey against the willpower of her own creations, so essentially against her own will.’ Can you speak about what this means?

All her people are Orkid’s copies and their minds work pretty much in the same way. The Orkid civilization was never a democracy as such but the decisions – except Orkid’s teleportation-copy shenanigans were made together and accepted by all. All their wills were aligned.

Now, during Orkid’s long sleep, the same acute minds have developed into directions of their own, retaining their power. It may not be easy for Orkid to persuade them to voluntarily let her into their circle and listen to her – and she doesn’t want to force them.

“Strong and tight their circle” Have The People become the ring itself? As in – they are what has been precious this whole time?

Yes – and finally, we see the light. During their centuries or millennia in the wilderness the Orkid people have simplified their manners and now form a strong ring of warriors. In the next song – which we heard in episode #2 of Hankikanto – Philotheos actually uses the word to describe them.

Since the Orkid people do not live in total isolation from other species, the word must have gotten out and changed its meaning, resulting in the power ring to-be-put-in-your-finger idea.

### **13. Presence:**

Philotheos, on patrol, has allowed Orkid to pass through the barrier, not understanding however that it is in fact Orkid that she has allowed to live, at the great disgust of The People. But, she does not seem to know that it is Orkid? Has Philotheos lost the ability to know Orkid? At this point in the story, what form has Orkid taken? Has she temporarily metamorphized into something else visually?

To clarify, Philotheos does not let her in – Orkid has crossed the border inconspicuously. Philotheos sees her lying in the gutter, exhausted and unconscious. She has been rendered temporarily helpless by the mental resistance of the Orkid people. The resistance fills the air for her.

Philotheos does not recognize Orkid because thousands of years have passed and the memory has faded. This is a topic that philosophers have discussed in conjunction with considerable life extension. If we could live for a thousand years, what would we remember from our youth? Ideas, maybe. People's names, not impossible. Faces, improbable. The story here assumes this view.

Thank you for those clarifications. And yes, the fragility of memory as displayed by these immortal beings is something I've been thinking a lot about, and I will indeed ask you more about this a little later on. It should not surprise me, and does not, that this was a concept consciously being played with here.

### **14. Final push:**

Philotheos & Orkid have their final battle!

That's what the description says. But is it true? Should we play the song? I have quite a few musical remarks to make about it, and they would be kinda nonsensical if we don't all know what I'm talking about.

I think we had better hear it then

[Final Push]

With Thiamer and Trahaldur now present Philotheos and Orkid begin fighting. But the battle is odd, almost more of a dance, a strangely incestuous, yet masturbatory one if so, as Orkid is mother, sister, lover, friend & self, to Philotheos. Even Thiamer and Trahaldur ask, Are they making love in some disguise?

You keep seeing it in that perspective. It must be the psychology speaking again. But you are right, of course, something weird is going on in there.

What I see in my mind's eye here is a level field, up on a mountain – by a volcano, in fact. Thiamer and Trahaldur reach the plateau just when Orkid and Philotheos are circling each other, finding a way to attack. Both Thiamer and Trahaldur and the Orkid people comment on the proceedings, forming a dialogue. They first praise their own candidates but soon start to question their apparent lethargy, or inability to damage one another.

There is a perfectly understandable reason for this and both Philotheos and the People start to realize it little by little. In the beginning of time, Philotheos learned her sword skills from Orkid and then taught them to all others. They know each other's every move and this is why the battle begins to look as if it were choreographed. It is, in a way.

Philotheos feels this in her muscle memory, so she is the first one to recognize, if not Orkid, at least the familiarity of the situation. The battle becomes a dance and following its steps makes the People conscious of the same familiarity.

Thiamer and Trahaldur see this confusion and celebrate. You have the words there. And they are?

Now, this is the feel  
That makes them unreel  
Dance, dance to your doom  
Way right to the tomb

So Thiamer and Trahaldur see this as the beginning of the end for the Orkid rule or independence. They have a weakness that can be exploited. And the People have similar thoughts. And the words are?

Now, why do I feel  
That this tune makes me unreel?  
Dance, dance at my doom  
Way back to the womb.

In other words, they almost see what's happening. They are returning to the womb – to the beginning. And then the music changes again and Orkid sings:

This is the song you know  
This is the song we sang back home  
This is the song of queen  
Song of dream

And the Orkid people, mesmerized, start chanting along, showing that they have now surrendered to their mythological memories and to their past, brought back by dance and music.

But I promised to say something about the music in this scene. In Hankikanto episode two we played the stem song of all my rock-opera work, Peili – Your Eyes in the Mirror. It is in a crucial role here. And it got there by a pure coincidence.

When I was writing Orkid, I listened to Peili one night and accidentally pushed the wrong button, so that I heard the song in double speed. It sounded good and I made a mental note.

Now, before Thiamer and Trahaldur sing about the demise of the Orkid people, the instrumental piece there is Peili in quadruple speed. They then sing it in double speed. The melody is slightly different because that's what happens when you accelerate music and then slow it down again. And then the People sing the altered melody in Peili's normal speed.

When Orkid starts her part about "the song you know" she sings the intro guitar melody of Peili. And the People chant variations thereof. Composition, like I said. Using and recycling your materials. They last longer that way.

And still I'm not finished. What comes next is the original Peili guitar solo. That is Philotheos – Phil plays this on stage – putting up a fight. Now, here I can see a bit of simple psychology at work. With the howling guitar Philotheos seems to be shouting something like:

"And who do you think **you** are, coming back after all these years and assuming that we immediately succumb to your will? We've moved on, we have lives, go away, you have nothing to offer anymore."

For this part it was important for me to have Philotheos-Phil on guitar and Orkid-Bonnie on bass on stage. At the very end of the song, Orkid soothes Philotheos with a little bass melody and Philotheos seems to yield with the final guitar tunes.

Incredible. The imagery here is fantastic, I can see the chorus of the chanting Orkid people in my head. Through the beauty & familiarity of their combat, & through music and dance, the Orkid people have become whole once again – and the story begins to open its petals at last. And the love between Orkid & Philotheos, is now reborn now as well?

Yes, they are reconciled, but there is yet another twist in the tale, as we see right now.

## 15. Identities:

“Philotheos has lingering doubts about the identity of the queen”

She does. I know we played this song in ExAN #65, but it was one of your favorites and we are coming to the end of our story, so should we give it another airing?

Always happy for the opportunity to hear Identities again!

[Identities]

I like it more every time I hear it in fact!

Orkid sings -

Had I enslaved them

And that’s what I’d have done

There would have been no one to

Sing back the sun

I take it that this is another reference to the Valar? Are the Elves the ones that can sing back the sun? I take it that the Orkid people do not have this ability?

The reference is to a movie I like, Farinelli: Il Castrato. During a solar eclipse, the king of Spain asks his court opera singer Farinelli to bring back the sun by his song. The idea here is the same.

The most plausible explanation is that the elves have, figuratively speaking, hidden the sun from the Orkid people who have been forced to live in diaspora. Thiamer, being the elf leader, will not help them and cannot be confronted by anyone but Orkid. In this case, it is a Valar dispute, as you say. As the creators of the elves and the orcs, Orkid and Thiamer have to fight it out.

We have to assume that Orkid and Philotheos are having a private discussion here, not audible to Thiamer at least. He may still have his own plans about the future.

But what about the enslaving? Why would Orkid have enslaved her people?

Good question. She went, as you will remember, to her sleep of oblivion after the thousand-year war had ended and the big funeral had been held. I think that she foresaw that things would not change while she remains in charge. There would be another exposure, leading to another war or, worse still, her having to impose even stricter rules against procreation, the people rebelling, and what have you. If she had lost the trust of her people, there would have been no redemption, no hope.

Putting Philotheos in charge, on the other hand, worked. She led the people away from under fire and established a relatively good life for them. Only that now they have been found – as they eventually would have been anyway – and the situation calls for mightier solutions.

“Just see them right” – is something that Orkid says to Philotheos, unless I’m wrong?

Yes. But what it means is still open to two interpretations. Patience – all will be revealed at the end, which is nigh.

It is within Philotheos power, not Orkids, to free The People from their gloom?

Yes and no. The end half of the next song will have all the answers.

## **16. Here comes the dark:**

They all die, huh? They all fade into extinction, where they are safe?

Let’s go back to the beginning now. This last song is the latter half of the bookend double that started at the opening. In this, Orkid and Philotheos first repeat much of what was said before. We catch the action when the People, and Thiamer and Trahaldur, and Orkid and Philotheos, reaffirm their faith in the Ainulindalë, the Big Song. And this is how it goes.

[Here Comes the Dark – fading in from when they start singing “All in the theme”, maybe with a bit of the preceding guitar wailing, and continuing to the very end]



I had somehow forgotten to think of things in a circle here, this is the Beginning of the end, end of the beginning, but again, does this cycle now become broken through a kind of extinction here? Of at least perhaps some of them?

Many things are clarified here and some wiggle room remains.

Observe that Thiamer and Trahaldur are still with us, singing “All in the theme” with the People. They still think that this is just a celebration of the Orkid people coming to their senses and sexual encounters are now a possibility. They are wrong.

We return now to what Orkid said to Philotheos in Identities – the penultimate song. And that was:

Just see them right.

That’s the one. It seems that Orkid leaves the choice to Philotheos, recognizing their well-established partnership. The high priest is free to continue the life in the wilderness, but there is another option. Then, when Orkid starts singings the final line:

Here comes the Dark

Philotheos is the first one to respond, showing that she now understands how to remove to People’s plight, and is willing to go along with it, whatever it is.

And then the People, too, chant, “Here comes the Dark”, and conclude with the final line of the opera, “The Dark is here”. What does that mean?

The people repeating “Here comes the Dark” after Orkid and Philotheos means that they, too, are giving their consent to whatever solution their leaders have in mind.

As for the final line, “The Dark is here”. I leave its interpretation open. Here are the main alternatives.

Hollywood ending. The elves and their master Thiamer disappear and the Orkid people live happily ever after. Not my choice but had to give it to the audiences.

If not that, then the elves and the orcs both disappear. Thiamer may or may not – temporarily or permanently – lose his grip on world affairs. Orkid withdraws from earth, at least for the time being. The Bellatrix research project will be carried on by the remaining members. This is my choice.

Yes, I believe your preferred ending would be my choice as well, a happy ending just doesn't seem particularly acceptable! And what a stunning ending it is, answering so many questions, and yet leaving in it's wake so many more!

If the elves who had been hiding the sun are now gone, does the sun return now that they have left, even without them to sing it back? Was the sun hidden from the Orkid people only? Other species were not effected?

The hidden sun was a metaphor. Orkid used it in Identities to describe her people's plight – and it has now been removed. The orcs and the elves are gone. Times of the man are here.

Ah I see! If Orkid & Thiamer had indeed faced off, do you believe that Orkid would have lost?

Absolutely not. And in a sense, they did have their faceoff. It was not Thiamer's plan to annihilate elves and orcs, it was Orkid's. And she did it. Not by the sword, but by cunning.

I didn't think so, and yes, very true. I would be very interested in anything you would be willing to reveal about the future fate of both Orkid & Thiamer! If Orkid has withdrawn from earth, does that mean she has returned to Bellatrix? If Philotheos has accompanied her, did the other Orkid people as well? Are Trahaldur & Thiamer dead? Or in some other realm?

The research team, or what's left of it by then, will beam back to Bellatrix only when their 40 000-year project is completed. Orkid was already doubting her own homecoming in saying that she's not good enough for the West – in Tolkien, the land of the Valar, the gods. But I think that she will redeem herself in time.

All orcs and elves are gone. They are no more. They have ceased to exist. They will never see Bellatrix. And good for them. No more pain, no more anxiety.

This also means that Philotheos and Trahaldur are gone. But I have a lingering suspicion that Orkid's superior powers might have shielded Philotheos in the summoning of the dark. We'll see.

Orkid has withdrawn to earth's orbit and remains invisible until it's time for her to step in again. I have a feeling that she could assume the form of Mother Earth against The Man later on. And if so, it stands to reason that Thiamer sides with humankind, his heirs. But I don't know. All has not been revealed to me yet.

With the characters we know now gone, who are these remaining members who would carry on The Bellatrix research project? How would they know if it, if only Orkid & Thiamer knew previously?

Orkid and Thiamer are still around, only inactive for the time being. The other two team members, J and I, are still in orbit and they have seen all the events down on earth. Their work is yet to be done, and they have learned from Orkid and Thiamer's mistakes, we hope.

In future installments of the trilogy, will we ever see Orkid again?

In the final end scene, the remaining Visitors from Bellatrix must make their departure. If not sooner, we'll see Orkid and Thiamer then. All in the Theme.

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### **Conclusion:**

So when I first began preparing questions about Orkid, I came up with an interpretation of the story, and your intentions behind telling it, that I now know to be wildly wrong. Embarrassingly wrong in fact, oh well! Having now learned the error of my thinking, I did none the less want to spend a little bit of time analyzing some of what Orkid initially made me think about, before I had the full insider's scoop. However incorrect I may have been at the time, I don't think I will necessarily be the last

Antinatalist who might interpret the story in some of the same ways that I saw in in beginning.

Sounds good. Ask away.

For starters, I left the story feeling enormously sorry for Orkid. She had this procreative urge, an urge which of course I, as an Antinatalist, I do not condone, and have never felt. However, I'm not unaware of the fact that through cultural forces alone if nothing else, many women & others do in fact want to have children... And as much as I want to see people let go of their procreative addictions, I'm not so insensitive, that I can't at least understand how coming to an Antinatalists understanding would be a source of great sadness for those people - the creation of children is something that they expected in their lives, and they would mourn its loss... At the very least, I can bring myself to have some empathy for that...

Perfectly understandable. No one should, I seem to believe now, be forced into this. We need a cultural change – and that's unlikely. But yes, empathy is never wrong.

In fact, I promote it - lets mourn procreation, let's allow it to be mourned at the very least. Because, there is a profound sadness in finding ourselves in a world in which it's wrong to have children. We should, by design, exist in a reality where procreating as living things does not come at the costs that it does, is not unethical, and where it can be the great act of love that it's sold as. A world in which the Ponzi scheme of life, is not a scam...

Go on. I'm listening.

And this is precisely what I wish the feminist movement was doing with the subject of Antinatalism - a reckoning with the dangerousness of the womb, that procreation is an act of violence, and of the sacrifice that will pose to the identity of womanhood for a lot of individuals. And I thought you were in part sharing in that mourning, and that reckoning, through Orkid. That through what I took to be Orkid having been wronged, you were fighting for a kind of procreative justice that as an Antinatalist, cannot be in the real world, but represented a great disappointment for you in some way regardless.

I don't disagree with any of that. It's only that you seem to be much more people-friendly than I am. Still listening.

Now, part of what further fed this confusion, were two things. In both *Playing God* & *in Orkid*, there is a running theme in the idea of having a daughter. In *Playing God*, Mr. Cunningham quite literally has an ill begotten daughter, Sophie, and in *Orkid*, the 'daughter' plays a tremendous driving force within the story. In addition to this, during #65 of *Exploring Antinatalism*, you do speak at some length about a time in your life when you held some expectation of becoming a parent... And with the exception of the Antinatalists who had children before discovering Antinatalism, and the wonderful Antinatalist novelist Miguel Steiner, who did in fact adopt two children, his daughters, you are the only Antinatalist I know of, particularly the only male Antinatalist I know of, who has ever openly expressed seriously contemplating being a Father. And all of these things combined felt significant, their combination left a big impression on me...

I am without words here. So the fact that I, at the age of twenty-one, embraced, in a love-sick folly, the idea of having different-sex twins to display at the university, makes me special. But now I'm ruining your reflections. Please go on.

No, you aren't ruining anything, no worries – Let me attempt to explain better. What I'm trying to say, is that being unafraid to speak of examples in one's life that are of a more pro-natalist nature, and play with those ideas as themes in one's creative work, as an Antinatalist, is what's exceptionally rare – if, we measure it from the perspective of what the Antinatalist community typically says or does not say - and that's how I measure everything. I've been studying what comes out of the mouths of Antinatalists, for a long time now - Most Antinatalists would *never* admit to such feelings, most would have too much anxiety to say those kinds of things out loud. They don't write stories, or play characters who produce children, it just doesn't happen. And it's also significant, because - fully wearing my Antinatalist activist hat now – being able to do so, probably is a part of the right approach to take when talking to procreators about Antinatalism. You know what Antinatalist are not in the eyes of most? Relatable. Your ability to do so makes you a

more relatable Antinatalist in natalist eyes, than most. Does that make more sense?

Yes, I get your point now and it makes perfect sense.

Excellent! Well, the good news is that, long story short, I like the true interpretation much better! But how do you feel about the story being interpreted in ways that you did not intent?

We have been here before, with the theory of art that I root for. Creating art is the artists expressing their intuitions, articulating their emotions, to themselves, while letting others look over their shoulder. Experiencing art is the audience members looking over the shoulders and expressing their intuition and articulating their emotions to themselves.

There is no exclusive valid interpretation of the words and sounds and images produced. That's what they called during my aesthetic studies the "intentional fallacy". That we have to respect what we think the artist was thinking. Not so. Everyone is in possession of their own artwork. Guided by the execution, of course.

I'm reminded of my own experiences with Giuseppe Verdi's opera Tosca. There is one aria in it that steals the show, Cavaradossi's E lucevan le stelle – And the stars shine. The character is supposed to be tortured and maimed, yet he sings like an angel in your usual Luciano Pavarotti production, overshadowing the torments of the protagonist just before, immortalized by Maria Callas. I have seen several attempts at this.

But then, in Manchester Opera House, I saw the Chisinau Opera Company from Moldova perform Tosca. And, for the first time, it was Tosca. I'm not exactly sure what happened. Maybe the singer doing the Cavaradossi role was bad, or sneezy. But he sang badly, like a man in pain. That took away the aura of Lucevan le stelle and opened my eyes to Tosca, making the belief-defying 100-meter leap from the Castello degli Angeli into river Tevere in the final scene.

And that threw my mind back to the attempted-rape-and-successful-manslaughter scene before that is supposed to be the

key to Tosca – the story of the woman done hard by. Earth-shattering, and tears in the wrong place, maybe.

You asked me what I think about Orkid being interpreted in ways that I didn't intend. I'm not sure what I intended, I'm not sure what Puccini intended, or what he'd think about my Mancunian-Moldavian-Tosca experience. But I for one am more than pleased to have audience participation. The more the merrier. If someone feels it differently, but still weeps, my mission is accomplished.

Did I answer your question or did I just go off to an incomprehensible tangent? It's hard to tell sometimes.

Beautifully said, not incomprehensible at all! And I think we have a similar approach to the viewers as artists.

Interestingly, I had picked up on what I had called at the time a, 'profound gender fluidity to the entire story' - which I still feel to be true, it's there, and it's strong, but I had also missed the androgenous gender assignment between the characters and the artists who played them. I would really like to hear you speak about what you call the 'gender blindness, within Orkid?

I'm sorry to disappoint, but the arrangement was partly practical. I knew the people who could do the roles and I assigned them to their proper places. With songs like After Battle Calm, Phil Baker was the only one who could do a convincing job.

Having said that, I cherished the opportunity to mix genders like this. You may remember that I had already in the previous opera, Playing God, wanted to give the part of Mr. C, the evil villain, to a woman, without changing the character name.

I am embarrassed enough to know only Caucasian musicians, so this was a small gesture towards more inclusiveness. I may be going against the grain here, though. Is it cultural appropriation that I give the role a female orc to a human man? Oh, well...

No disappointment, and I really think those decisions in casting were very powerful choices.

In 2019, you took part in The First International Queer Death Studies Conference in Sweden, and I was curious if you feel that any of the gender blind themes in Orkid, or perhaps other elements, fit the overall concept of Queer Death? Depending on how Queer Death is defined, I can sort of see how it would?

Sorry, can't help you there. I had a one-hour crash course into Queer Death Studies three weeks before the conference and I have now forgotten everything I may or may not have learned.

My participation in that was a part of my trying to expand my horizons into animal rights stuff – which I've done before – and feminist studies – not so much, never really been invited to the party as an assumed CIS hetero male.

The next year, 2020, I would have gone to a Feminist Approaches to Bioethics meeting in Philadelphia – had my paper accepted and all – but then the Sneezing Plague prevented that and I turned my attention to other things. Well, the Sneezing Plague itself, the COVID-19 pandemic and its handling.

I know, and knew then, that the Queer Death Studies people boast a kind of antinatalism, so that was part of the attraction. But I haven't been able to fathom how exactly they do it. My bad, I'm sure.

Well, that makes two of us, but we'll get to their particular brand of Antinatalism another time, I'm quite sure.

When you were casting and rehearsing the cast of Orkid, I have no doubt they had a lot of questions about the story, and I imagine you spent a lot of time explaining the complexities of it to them – but did you spill the beans on any of these smoke and mirror details at that time? Did they know any of this? Do they know any of this? Were any of these elements fully revealed in your warm-up lecture? How much of these more hidden parts of the story, have you kept a secret up until now?

I never keep anything secret. I tried to tell the cast what the story – and the back story is. Their response: "Nice, Matti. Now, do we play this in E major, like in your demo, or in A major, which is better for my vocal range?"



And this means that the story is told here for the first time, apart from the live premiere synopsis.

And it makes me very proud to know that! This is a story that deserves to be told in it's entirety, and I want to thank you for being such a generous, and *patient* guide through revealing the secrets of your creation!

We spoke just slightly about this earlier in this episode, but there's a lot of really interesting commentary in Orkid on memory and immortality. The characters do not seem to have memories strong enough for the amount of time that they are able to live. In fact, they seem to forget things rather easily, very important things. Would you like to discuss this element of the characters a bit more?

We have no empirical data on the persistence of human memory beyond, say, 125 years. No one has lived longer. Old people seem to remember childhood events better than current affairs, but that may be up to our ageing processes.

For dramatic purposes, I just assumed, or postulated, that the Orkid people remember physical movements and tunes but not names and people. Without the help of written history, this seems to be the case regarding our species, collectively.

Has any attempt been made to share Orkid around within the vast number of Lord of the Rings/Tolkien enthusiast platforms online or elsewhere? The Tolkien fan base is gigantic, and it's hard for me to believe that there isn't a tremendous built-in audience for this opera out there within those circles?

No. What an idiot I've been. If I ever get a proper stage- or cinematic version done, that will be the ticket. Or perhaps infiltrating their sites and spamming them with this episode of Hankikanto?

Hell yes, we will do that for sure!

On the Orkid Facebook page, lots of your posts there saw some great attention, sometimes with hundreds if not thousands of reactions, and a significantly large portion of that attention coming from Brazil. How did Orkid find it's way into the hearts of so many Brazilian audience

members? Was the music featured on Brazilian radio anywhere, or something like that?

Some internet radio stations in Brazil picked it up and have played some of it. Mostly this was Facebook. I'd have to check, but I think that my Dreamless Night post has been viewed 30 000 times, with 3 000 likes. I may be wrong, but in that neighborhood.

For me, it was an opportunity to gather a fan base in Facebook. I spent two years, every day, inviting anyone who liked an Orkid post, to like the Orkid page, and reached 7 500. Anytime I want to put on an Orkid show in Manaus, I will have a potential audience of 500. And so on. Ain't I the economic genius?

In the Orkid trailer, you mention that the third installment of your rock opera trilogy you will be taking apart the bible, and the next one after that will be a take-down of Darwin's Origin of the Species - is that still your plan?

Amanda, Amanda, Amanda, You keep coming back to the trailer, and we are close to completion here, anyway, so why don't we just show that to the audience? They already know the story, but a bit of make-believe synopsis never did anyone any harm. I don't like my face in it, but what the hell? So, the trailer, or what do you think?

Yay!! Yes please, I would like nothing more! Here it comes.

[English trailer]

Thanks for letting us play it, Matti! There's so much great info in there! Also, 'A philosopher interested in reproductive technologies eh?

The philosopher interested in reproductive technologies was the best description of me when the trailer was shot. Remember, I had learned that I'm supposed to be an antinatalist only a year earlier. Hadn't sunk in yet, I suppose.

I know you have many future musical projects ahead of you, lots of ideas and many plans – what are you working on musically these days?

Musically, I work on many fronts. I've dabbled with a couple of EDM songs, penned one or two sad love songs in Finnish, and, as

you know, my most recent folly is an antinatal blues called snappily “Life is a sexually transmitted disease with a mortality rate of 100%”. I’m sure it will make me rich and famous.

The main task, however, is to complete the Orkid Trilogy. I have written quite a few songs for it but I’m still letting it simmer because the story told to me by The Powers of Music is unsettled.

What I do know is that in the next part I tell the Christian story of the Religious Man, as I said in the trailer.

I first present the Old Testament stories of The-Great-Flood-and-Noah’s-Arc and The-Tower-of-Babel as something that Mother Earth – possibly a reincarnation of Orkid – brought along to curb humankind’s – and possibly Thiamer’s – enthusiasm concerning technology and economic growth.

Halfway through, J descends to earth and gets crucified. I remain in orbit, mourning the loss of J, and humankind goes on, finding new ways to torment each other and themselves. I finally realize that I am I – and that I have my own mission. The gods – or whatever – celebrate this with the concluding song of this part, called Visitor ex Bellatrix.

Do you really want to know all this?

I wouldn’t have asked if I didn’t! Please, go on?

The third part is, and has always been, a return to the first rock operas I’ve been involved in – Test and Playing God. I come down to earth and try to clear up all the messes. Unsuccessfully, of course. And there’s a twist in the tale, one that was foretold to me three-four years ago.

Hold on to your hat again, and spoiler alert, and whatnot. The Visitors from Bellatrix. There are four, right? L (Thiamer), K (Orkid), J (the one to be crucified), and I. On earth, we bear the ancient sex features that we had before Bellatrix went child-free, a long time ago.

There were four sexes, and we won the research grant partly because we had the total inclusion. Thiamer and Orkid, as you

know, are male and female. J was neither – this is part of the reason that he actually died, but that’s a long story for another time. I was originally both.

But then this happened. I was planning the descend down to earth and executed it, but my duality played a trick on me. I – as I now am – came down as planned but my other half thought that it would be better to delay her entrance. She sided with Mother Earth, came down much later, and assumed a different approach from mine. She became an activist, while I remained the passivist I am.

My half says to me, in the song that I wrote about this three years ago, called No One’s Job:

I have no time to be your lover / I heard the call of Mother Earth / My end in life can be no other / I chose my time, delayed my birth / Why can’t you see / Our destiny / The end is near / The end is here

Which means that in my redoing of Test and Playing God I have to recognize that I is now two different entities. In the final scene of this all, the passivist I – and I have a song for this called Touch the Sea – has escaped to virtual reality while the activist part continues to march on for the good of humanity.

With the implication that neither of us will return to Bellatrix, and there’s at least one seat left for someone, maybe two, J being truly dead. So, at least Philotheos, but maybe also Trahaldur, will live on. I do not necessarily envy them.

There. Sorry. Quite a rant. But the Power of Narration took me over. I’m just the medium here. Apologies all around.

No apologies necessary, I’m grinning from ear to ear, and I can’t wait to see & hear it all unfold, thank you, Matti.

Do you have any concluding thoughts on Orkid? Is there anything regarding Orkid that we haven’t quite spoken about fully that you wish to say?

I only have this. The story of Orkid is, after this conversation, much stronger than it ever was. Many of the things I've said here have never been said before. Your questions prompted me to search my memory, and to consult my inner narrator, or historian. Enormous thanks for that! You are now truly a part of the Orkid saga. For what it's worth. How do you add a winking smiley in speech?

My absolute pleasure! The fact that Orkid has now come into even clearer focus for you, is the happiest result I could possibly ask for in doing this episode together, Matti, and I take great pride in my new found place within the history of this project, thank you! Well, you know, people mispronounce Efilist as Elf-ist all the time, so perhaps I can now interpret that as having been some sort of sign all along.

Signs are everywhere.

If I may, I wanted to make sure that we didn't end this episode without my saying a huge thank you to all the people along the way who helped you fully bring Orkid to life - so many amazing artists have added their talents into this masterpiece, and it's been a great joy for me to learn about each of them.

They are the best! Thanks to Bonnie Parker, Phil Baker, Denny Colt, Harri Väyrynen, Jan Rechberger, Johanna Ahola-Launonen, Mikaela Mansikkala, Natasha Jane Julian, Maria Hänninen, Lacce Väyrynen, Lee Kerlake, Corky Laing, Tuija Takala, Tuula Halén, Harri Haanpää, and Sai Sahill Sahni! Couldn't have done it without you all.

And, I hope it goes without saying by this point, but I really do love your music, Matti, you really are tremendously talented, and a very rare artist indeed. It's completely criminal that your sound doesn't have a much wider audience than it does, and I hope that this will change, and soon.

Thank you, Amanda.

Thank you, Matti! Luckily, this won't be the last time we will talk about your music, as well as get to hear more of it!

With the conclusion of this, our third episode of Hankikato, we now also close out our first session of the show! Thank you so much to everyone who listened, watched, and supported the first three episodes of

Hankikanto! Hankikanto will return with new episodes starting in September, and we will begin Season 2 by returning to our discussions of your academic work, this time, focusing on your impressive history on the subject of Animal Rihts! And following this, we will then be diving head first, into EFILism. Does anyone out there have any questions for both Matti & I concerning Animal Rights & and/or EFILism? If so, please submit them in the comments below, or write to me at [exploringantinatalism@gamil.com](mailto:exploringantinatalism@gamil.com)

For now, we bow out by saying that

I am Matti Häyry

and I am Amanda Sukenick and you have been listening to

Hankikanto:

Falling into the Anti/Natal Abyss.

All the best, and bye for now!

(However in the next episode, we will again return to our discussion of your academic work, visiting an important sibling subject to Antinatalism, and one that you have made a great contribution to, over a very long period of time – Euthanasia.)