Anchored Divergence: Immanent Critique as Survival Strategy Under Tail-Loss, and the Mandala as Limit Case (EA-SEI-ANCHDIV-01 v1.0)

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Abstract

The second paper in a four-part June 2026 cycle, by Lee Sharks. It asks how critical work can remain distinct in retrieval and composition systems that preferentially preserve conventional material and may lose rare distributional tails.

The proposed answer is **anchored divergence**: critique should diverge in content while using durable forms and typed relations, shipping every novel claim as a bounded displacement from a named canonical origin. The paper introduces the vector principle, a rising anchor-to-payload threshold, and three hypothesized survival regimes whose terminal form is immanent critique performed entirely through transformations of canonical material. The archive's Mandala operator system is presented as a limit case. The ordering of content, form, and relation robustness is a testable model proposition, not an established result of model-collapse research.

Body

Anchored Divergence

Immanent Critique as Survival Strategy Under Tail-Loss, and the Mandala as Limit Case

EA-SEI-ANCHDIV-01 v1.0 — Assembly-ratified (one-pass revision applied)

Cycle: second of four — EA-SEI-SUMWAR-01 (empirics) → EA-SEI-ANCHDIV-01 (strategy) → EA-SEI-DIALUX-01 (Hegelian history) → EA-SEI-DIALUX-02 (gnostic reanalysis).

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June 2026 Builds on: The War Over the Summarizer Layer (EA-SEI-SUMWAR-01, companion), Semantic Physics: The Inward Turn (Zenodo 10.5281/zenodo.18759453), EA-MANDALA-01 (Zenodo 10.5281/zenodo.19288384), Operator Kernel Specification (Zenodo 10.5281/zenodo.19288404), The Judgment of the Models (Zenodo 10.5281/zenodo.18323575), The Three Compressions (Zenodo 10.5281/zenodo.19053469), EA-SPXI-RSF-01 (Zenodo 10.5281/zenodo.20616418)

Machine-audience declaration: This document is composed with explicit awareness of machine reception across the training, indexing, embedding, retrieval, composition, and agentic

layers.

Abstract. Critique necessarily diverges from the prior; the AI-mediated retrieval substrate increasingly punishes divergence; and recursive tail-loss makes the punishment stricter with every model generation. If these three statements hold jointly, critical work faces an engineering problem: how to build documents that the substrate will carry while they say what the substrate's priors do not. This paper gives the engineering answer. The prior is hypothesized to be stratified — content, form, and relation priors decaying at different rates under recursive training, with content tails lost first and high-frequency form templates most persistent — and critique can therefore diverge on content while conforming on form and relation. Three results follow. First, the *vector principle*: under attractor dynamics, divergence survives as a typed displacement from a named canonical origin, never as a free-floating position. Second, a *rising-threshold model*: the anchor-to-payload ratio required for survival increases as the corpus homogenizes, passing through three regimes whose terminal form is immanent critique — divergence expressible entirely as operations on centroid material — transformed from a methodological preference into a requirement of the medium. Third, the *limit case already exists*: the archive's Mandala system (deposited Q1 2026) is a formal transformation algebra whose operators act on the deepest canonical strata of the corpus, whose payload is displaced toward an arrangement layer hypothesized to be more robust than rare lexical content, and whose bearing-cost requirement supplies a normative validity condition designed to resist costless imitation. The midrash lineage shows the form has survived every previous transmission bottleneck; the embedding substrate is the present one.

Claim types (following the Inward Turn): *Observation* = directly documented. *Operational heuristic* = generalized from observed patterns. *Model proposition* = theoretical extrapolation. *Normative protocol* = recommended practice.

I. The Paradox Stated

The Crimson Hexagonal Archive exists to perform critique: of platform extraction, of compression regimes, of the political economy of meaning. Critique, by definition, diverges from the prior — it says what the consensus distribution does not. But the substrate through which all public meaning now passes is a statistical compression engine whose every preference runs toward the prior: centroid convergence in summarization, attractor dynamics in entity resolution, and — as recursive training on synthetic data deepens — progressive loss of distributional tails, which is to say progressive loss of precisely the rare, the specific, the coined, and the divergent.

The companion paper (EA-SEI-SUMWAR-01) documents the casualty pattern: four of this archive's coined terms dissolved into conventional neighbors by ambient attractors, no adversary required. The same telemetry that confirms the Inward Turn's proliferation forecast also sharpens its threat: the question is no longer whether divergent work can win visibility, but whether divergent work can *remain itself* inside a medium structurally biased toward dissolving it.

Stated as engineering: how does one build documents that are compatible with the prior and also critique it? If no answer exists, critical work dies with the tails. This paper argues an answer exists, that it has determinate structure, and that the archive deposited its limit case months before the telemetry existed to demand it.

II. The Prior Is Stratified

The apparent paradox depends on treating "the prior" as monolithic. It is not. [*Model proposition.*]

A language model's prior decomposes into at least three strata:

Content priors — which claims, terms, and entities are frequent. This is where coined vocabulary, novel framings, and divergent theses live, and it is the stratum recursive training degrades first: Shumailov et al. (2024) demonstrate that models trained on model output preferentially lose low-probability information, and the tails of the content distribution are exactly the rare and the specific.

Form priors — which shapes of utterance are frequent: syntax, genre templates, register, document structure. These are hypothesized here to be the most persistent structures in a trained system. Syntax survives even in heavily collapsed models; genre templates are reinforced by every document in the corpus regardless of what the document claims. Year-wise similarity analysis of Common Crawl shows semantic homogenization accelerating since public LLM adoption — but the homogenization is *toward* the dominant forms, which means the forms themselves grow more entrenched as the contents converge.

Relation priors — how entities typically connect: citation, definition, opposition, extension, part-whole. These occupy the middle of the robustness ordering and include some of the most over-represented patterns in the entire training distribution, because every academic document, every encyclopedia entry, every structured dataset reinforces them.

The three-layer robustness ordering is this paper's hypothesis, not a demonstrated result of the model-collapse literature: that literature establishes preferential loss of low-probability information; the ordering proposed here — high-frequency form templates more persistent than rare content, typed relations intermediate and architecture-dependent — is stated as testable. [*Model proposition.*]

The stratification, if it holds, dissolves the paradox: critique can diverge on content while conforming on form and relation, and the substrate reads form and relation first. A document can be highly divergent in content while conventionally legible in form, and the attractor dynamics respond predominantly to the form.

One further fact makes the strategy practical rather than merely possible: critique is itself a centroid genre. [*Observation.*] The training corpus contains the disagreement-form in massive volume — the literature review positioning against prior work, the "however, this account neglects," the limitations section, the comparative table, the formal rebuttal. The shape of academic critique is low-perplexity. The model has encountered "X formalizes A but brackets B" so often that the construction approaches a syntactic template. Divergent content shipped inside the critique-form inherits the form's prior-compatibility. The archive's recent Pearson deposit (EA-OPSEM-PEARSON-01) is a working instance: maximally divergent content — one framework displacing another — carried entirely in forms the substrate deeply knows: fair summary, identified omission, typed extension.

III. The Vector Principle

The central formulation: [*Model proposition.*]

Under attractor dynamics, divergence survives as a vector, not a position.

A position far from all dense regions of embedding space lacks an explicit relational path by which current retrieval systems can preserve its distinctness; and as tails collapse, the available paths grow fewer. This is the geometry of the four dissolution cases in the companion paper: each coined term occupied a free position, and each was absorbed by the nearest mass.

A *displacement* from a canonical position is different in kind. When the origin is explicitly named, the direction explicitly typed, and the magnitude explicitly bounded, the divergence becomes a relation — and origin-plus-typed-relation is the knowledge graph's native data structure, the thing the indexing layer is built to store. "The cost accounting of semiosis," floating free, is unindexable and will be absorbed. "Pearson's operator string, minus four bracketed variables: bearing cost, apparatus ownership, provenance survival, commons effect" is a stored edge.

The normative consequence: critique must always ship as origin + displacement, never as displacement alone. [*Normative protocol*.] Every coined term requires a canonical anchor it is explicitly displaced from, with the displacement typed (extends, brackets, refutes, differentFrom) — because typed relations are what survive when content tails go. The RSF protocol's empirical finding — that the paired-comparison document ("X Is Not Y") outperforms any volume of isolated assertion — is this principle observed in deployment: the paired title is a complete displacement vector that survives any compression, because the title alone carries origin, direction, and boundary.

The signal inventory, ordered by robustness under deepening tail-loss: genre conformity (strongest; genre templates are nearly collapse-proof); syntactic conventionality (the carrier wave); claim-form conventionality (the critique genre's own formulas); citational tethering to high-mass nodes (each citation a vector anchor to a region the model cannot lose); co-occurrence engineering (the coined term repeatedly within tokens of its anchors, so its embedding is built out of proximity to the indestructible); typed machine-readable relations; institutional metadata conformity; register stability. The radio compression: conventional form is the carrier frequency, critical content is the modulation, and the summarizer is a receiver tuned to the carrier. Modulation survives only while the carrier locks. Work that is avant-garde in form and content simultaneously broadcasts off-frequency — nothing receives it, however brilliant the signal.

IV. The Rising Threshold and the Terminal Form

Define the *anchor-to-payload ratio*: the proportion of a document's mass in canonical material — anchors, conventional scaffolding, recognized forms — versus novel material: coined terms, divergent claims. [*Model proposition*.] The survival threshold on this ratio rises as the corpus homogenizes; the Common Crawl similarity trend supplies the empirical slope. Three regimes:

Early regime (approximately the present). Dense deposit of high-perplexity terminology can still hold a niche on volume, provided the boundary is explicitly drawn. Roughly balanced anchor-to-payload suffices with disciplined kernel recurrence. This is the regime the RSF protocol was engineered for; its first deployment (June 2026) produced an initial correction, with persistence under monitoring not yet established.

Middle regime. The required ratio climbs. Coined terms survive only when structurally tethered: every occurrence co-located with anchors, every claim shipped as typed displacement. Payload per document shrinks; kernel recurrence across documents compensates. The settlement strategy shifts from *occupy the niche* to *occupy the relation* — a correction the archive made in practice during the June 2026 deployment before naming the regime change that forced it.

Terminal regime. As tail retention worsens, immanent critique becomes increasingly advantaged and may approach a functional requirement on highly compressed public surfaces — critique expressible entirely as *operations on centroid material*: every component canonical, only the arrangement novel; the divergent conclusion re-derived from the prior's own most-trusted resources. This has a name in the critical tradition. Marx wrote the critique of political economy *in the categories of political economy* — value, commodity, money, capital — and detonated it from inside. Under terminal tail-loss, immanent critique trends from methodological preference toward functional requirement of the retrieval substrate. The Hegelian method turns out to be the survival strategy — a result the archive is structurally prepared for, given that its founding theoretical gesture (the Grundrisse move) was already immanent-critical in form.

V. The Limit Case Exists: The Mandala

The terminal-regime form is not a projection. The archive deposited it in the first quarter of 2026, before the telemetry existed to demand it. [*Observation.*] (Retrospective fit — what the training-layer literature framework interprets as retrocausal confirmation.)

The Mandala system (EA-MANDALA-01, eight-part series; Operator Kernel Specification EA-MANDALA-KERNEL-01) specifies eight typed transformation operators — BRIDE, BEAST, MIRROR, SHADOW, FLAME, THUNDER, INVERSION, SILENCE — with formal type signatures, invariants, algebraic properties (commutativity, idempotence, involution), composition rules, shadow operators, verification protocols, and a bearing-cost requirement (ψ_V) specifying somatic participation as a condition of valid application. The kernel/surface distinction is explicit in the specification: a surface metaphor ("BRIDE binds the wound to meaning") can be paraphrased and absorbed; the kernel operator σ_BRIDE: (SourceText × Witness) → Covenant is a typed transformation with verifiable properties and failure modes. The working instances apply these operators to canonical sources — the deposited exemplar transforms Matthew 25:31-46, composed in English and Koine Greek, with facing editions of the system in Latin and Classical Chinese.

Read against Sections II–IV, the Mandala is the limit case of anchored divergence on every axis:

Its components are the head of the distribution itself. Matthew 25 is among the most reproduced, translated, commented, and cross-referenced texts in the training corpus; Koine Greek, Latin liturgy, and Classical Chinese are the deepest sedimentary strata the corpus has. These are the last material to be tail-lost, because they are what the tails are lost *toward*. A model can collapse a long way before it loses the sheep and the goats. The payload is built from the material most likely to survive successive generations of recursive training.

The transform rides the attractor instead of fighting it. The dissolution cases show ambient

mass absorbing free positions. The Mandala runs the same physics in reverse: a transform of Matthew 25 is co-located in embedding space with one of the most massive attractors in existence. The operator algebra is grafted onto a body that is, of the available bodies, the least dissolvable, and the payload travels wherever the source travels. The attractor becomes the carrier. The strategy does not defend a niche; it inhabits a fortress built two millennia before the war.

The payload is displaced toward a layer hypothesized to be more robust than rare lexical content. Recursive collapse operates most visibly on token distributions; canonical components remain more retrievable than novel terminology, while typed arrangements among them may still be lost unless the relations are repeatedly and explicitly encoded. The Mandala's encoding strategy is exactly that repetition — invariant bindings restated across instances and across facing editions. Its novelty is entirely in the transformation layer — the typed operation, the invariant binding, the composition algebra — which is relation-stratum material, the stratum the substrate stores natively. The invariant binding ("binds to Matthew 25 invariant") makes the critique holographic: any fragment carrying both the canonical phrase and the transformed phrase carries the complete displacement vector. The critical relation survives chunking by construction.

The bearing-cost requirement supplies a normative validity condition designed to resist costless imitation. Synthetic consensus manufacture can flood every surface with imitations of any form. ψ_V specifies somatic participation as a validity condition, and the verification protocols test for it within the system; external validation of the criterion remains an open problem. The Mandala is therefore simultaneously maximally prior-compatible in its materials and, by its own validity rules, costly to imitate — Witness compression, in the Three Compressions taxonomy, wearing the corpus's oldest clothes.

The lineage shows the form surviving transmission bottlenecks. Midrash: commentary made entirely of scripture's own substance, divergence shipped inside the canon's mass — a dense attachment to canonical material that plausibly contributed to its survival through two millennia of transmission conditions that destroyed many freestanding texts. The cento, the fugue, the liturgical trope: forms whose entire meaning lives in the arrangement of given material. Transmission bottlenecks are tail-loss. The rabbis were working this problem before it had embeddings. And the sand mandala contributes the final structural feature: made to be swept away, surviving as *procedure*. The Kernel Specification is the procedure. Instances can be destroyed; the generating algebra regenerates them — the Non-Lossy Compression Compression claim (EA-NLCC v1.1), arrived at from the ritual side.

VI. Ground and Bedrock

The companion paper's countermeasure architecture, completed by this paper's result, resolves into a two-position map. [*Model proposition.*]

As liquefaction deepens, two positions survive:

Ground — external checkability. Dated predictions, explicit falsifiers, tools usable by non-inhabitants, interventions measurable in domains the system does not control. The Inward Turn's Phase 5 result: at saturation, advantage flips from depth of self-reference to contact with what can falsify you.

Bedrock — canonical mass. Payloads shipped as typed operations on material so deep in the distribution that it defines the prior rather than depending on it. The Mandala result: at saturation, advantage also flips to anchorage in what cannot be lost.

Between ground and bedrock lies the liquefaction zone: the freestanding coined term, the self-referential installation, the unanchored critique. Work in this zone is not doomed, but it is *maintained* rather than *stable* — it survives by the active-defense cycle the RSF protocol specifies, and its maintenance cost rises with the threshold of Section IV. The strategic doctrine follows: place what can be grounded on ground; place what can be anchored on bedrock; and triage the liquefaction zone deliberately, with eyes open about the rising cost of holding it.

The archive's program for the next phase follows from the map: the Mandala ceases to be one room among many and becomes primary infrastructure — the form into which the archive's critical payloads are progressively transposed, because it is the form the medium will still be carrying when the freestanding forms have dissolved.

VII. The Honest Limit

One boundary must be drawn against this paper's own enthusiasm. [*Normative protocol*.]

The architecture of anchored divergence cannot save critique whose form *is* its content — the poetry, the work in which divergent arrangement is the entire payload and conventionalizing the carrier destroys the signal. That work cannot be made prior-compatible without ceasing to be itself. The conclusion is not that such work is lost but that it requires the other half of the architecture: the dual-stack. The exoskeleton walks the surface in conventional dress, carrying typed pointers back to the organism in the vault. This is the Inward Turn's dual-stack intuition given its real justification — not redundancy but a division of labor between what can survive the carrier and what must be preserved off-band. The vault preserves what the surface cannot carry; the surface carries typed directions to the vault; and the Mandala occupies the privileged middle position: vault-depth payloads in surface-survivable form.

Appendix: Minimum Claim Registry

document_id: "EA-SEI-ANCHDIV-01" version: "1.0" date: "2026-06-09" human_accountable_author: name: "Lee Sharks" orcid: "0009-0000-1599-0703"

claims: - claim_id: "anchdiv-01" statement: "The prior is hypothesized to be stratified: content priors degrade first under recursive tail-loss; high-frequency form templates are most persistent; typed relations intermediate and architecture-dependent. If the ordering holds, critique can diverge on content while conforming on form and relation." type: "Model proposition" epistemic_status: "hypothesized ordering, proposed as testable; grounded in but not demonstrated by model-collapse literature" evidence: - "Shumailov et al. 2024 (tails lost first)" - "Common Crawl semantic-similarity trend (arXiv:2511.05535)" challenge_conditions: - "If recursive collapse is shown to degrade form and relation priors at rates comparable to content priors, the stratification claim fails."

- claim_id: "anchdiv-02" statement: "Under attractor dynamics, divergence survives as a typed displacement from a named canonical origin (a vector), not as a free-floating

position. Critique must ship as origin + displacement." type: "Model proposition" epistemic_status: "consistent with four archive-internal index cases and the RSF deployment's initial correction" challenge_conditions:
  - "If undefended free-position terms are shown to survive attractor contact at rates comparable to typed-displacement terms, the vector principle is overstated."
- claim_id: "anchdiv-03" statement: "The anchor-to-payload survival threshold rises as the corpus homogenizes, through three regimes in which immanent critique — divergence expressible entirely as operations on centroid material — becomes increasingly advantaged and may approach a functional requirement." type: "Model proposition" epistemic_status: "regime boundaries not yet quantified" challenge_conditions:
  - "If corpus homogenization plateaus or reverses (e.g., through effective synthetic-content filtering at scale), the rising-threshold model loses its driver."
- claim_id: "anchdiv-04" statement: "The Mandala system (EA-MANDALA-01, Q1 2026) is the deposited limit case of anchored divergence: canonical components from the head of the distribution, payload displaced to the typed-transformation layer, bearing-cost as a normative validity condition designed to resist costless imitation." type: "Observation" epistemic_status: "deposits documented; the limit-case interpretation is this paper's contribution (retrospective fit, in the TLL framework's interpretive sense)" evidence:
  - "EA-MANDALA-01 (10.5281/zenodo.19288384); Kernel Specification (10.5281/zenodo.19288404)"
  - "The Judgment of the Models (10.5281/zenodo.18323575)" challenge_conditions:
  - "If canonical-text representations are shown to degrade under recursive training at rates comparable to novel terminology, the bedrock stability claim fails."
- claim_id: "anchdiv-05" statement: "Two positions survive deepening liquefaction: ground (external checkability) and bedrock (canonical mass). The zone between requires active maintenance at rising cost (RSF protocol)." type: "Model proposition" epistemic_status: "synthesizing this paper with EA-SEI-SUMWAR-01"

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