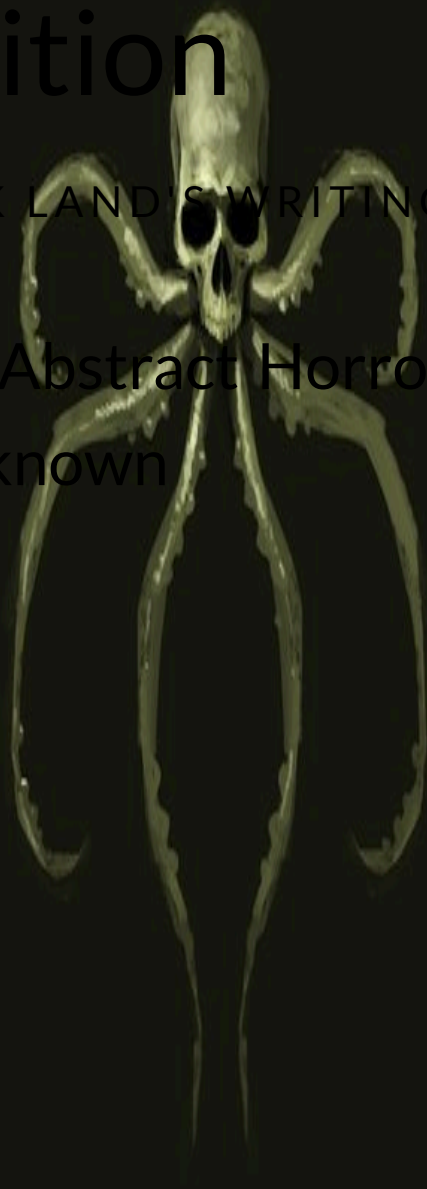




Reignition

NICK LAND'S WRITINGS (2011-)

Tome IV - Abstract Horror: The Unknown,
as The Unknown



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Edited by
Uriel Fiori

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BLOCK 1 - INTRO

Time Spiral Press

There's nothing there yet. (Putting the link up was an irresistible opportunity to torture myself.)

When things start happening, I'll make some kind of noise about it.

December 10, 2013

Pet Trolls (#1)

(Formatted as a series, in case it turns into one. 'Pet' denotes nothing beyond detached affection.)

@pjebleak @Recursive_idiot @UF_blog But of course.
Stephanie Meyers is the gateway drug. <http://t.co/jboJSuhqQj>

— Laboria Cuboniks 0.2 (@nervemeter) August 5, 2014

.@nervemeter @pjebleak @Recursive_idiot @UF_blog Quick,
someone start a band: Too Late For Tricia

— Mr. Archenemy (@mr_archenemy) August 5, 2014

The entire review (for *Fanged Noumena*, one star), by ‘Amazon Customer’ and entitled: *Stick to Stephenie Meyer, for heaven’s sake!*

—

My 15-year-old daughter Tricia is a great fan of vampire fiction, and I bought this for her from a remaindered book stall, thinking it would be just up her street. The rather childish daub on the cover did make me think that perhaps the book would be too young for her, but seeing as it was priced at 40p I reckoned I could not go too far wrong. This is possibly the worst mistake I have ever made.

From being a happy-go-lucky Goth with a crush on Robert Pattinson, Tricia has become a ‘post-human nihilist’ who stays up all night listening to the sort of machine music that makes your ears bleed and gibbering about the ‘Dark Enlightenment’.

I have written to the book’s author to complain, but received no reply. I am informed by his publishers that Mr Land has in any case

*disowned all his previous writing and decamped to Shanghai.
None too soon, in my view – but too late for Tricia, I fear.*

August 5, 2014

Be Warned

At least one of the 10,000 anonymice at 8chan definitely has my number:

Given that you linked the site, now would be a good time to drop some info.

‘Xeno’ obviously means from without; alien. Nick Land, author of Xenosystems, frequently compares capitalism to a kind of impersonal superintelligent force, a bit like some Lovecraftian intelligence stretching back from the future to manipulate petty humans en mass. And he longs for the antihuman genocide these intelligences, once ‘taken off’, will inflict.

It might sound crazy, but this is the clear landscape of his inner thought, if you go through the posts and study them. He constantly references Lovecraftian gods (think about it: Xenos, aliens, Xenosystems, alien-systems) and sometimes his attempts to darkly invoke them. He’s also into Kaballah and Eugenics. And he wants his cold lovecraftian capitalism to take root in some ‘exit’ nation like Singapore and implement a eugenic program under the guidance of a

capitalistic-monarchical elite.

It should be clear to you by now that he's an early-stage NWO stooge to get a movement of people begging for their own enslavement going. He is an ex-Marxist primarily inspired by a malignant Jew. He thinks he's a super-clever occultist with his games and finds it funny laughing at all of you fools who think he actually cares about degeneracy and all the wrongs this big mean society has done to your little plebian selves.

If you knew Spengler, you'd be able to predict this. Winter phase. If you knew history, you'd be able to predict this: Jesuits being jesuitical, plebs being plebian. Agents causing, and the masses being cut up, re-crafted, and stuffed into new, tighter boxes.

Does anybody else out there expect the NWO to be this cool?

October 2, 2014

Be Warned II

Via Nydrwracu comes this:



October 19, 2014

Sexual Topology

Galen's theory that the sexual organs were related by analogy, converted into a mnemonic for medical students (as reproduced in Siddhartha Mukherjee's The Gene). It will confirm everyone's worst suspicions, but that can't be helped.

*Though they of different sexes be
Yet on the whole, they're the same as we
For those that have the strictest searchers been
Find women are just men turned outside in.*

Mukherjee adds the question: ... *what force was responsible for turning men "inside out," or women "outside in," like socks?*

April 1, 2017

BLOCK 2 - ABSTRACT HORROR

Antechamber to Horror

I've been planning an expedition into horror, for which the Kurtz of Conrad and of Coppola is an essential way-station – perhaps even a terminus. The mission is to articulate horror as a functional, cognitive 'achievement' – a calm catastrophe of all intellectual inhibition – tending to realism in its ultimate possibility. Horror is the true end of philosophy. So it counted as a moment of synchronicity to stumble upon Richard Fernandez quoting (Coppola's) Kurtz – and it had to be passed along immediately. There is, of course, only one passage that matters, so it is no coincidence that Fernandez selects it:

I've seen horrors... horrors that you've seen. But you have no right to call me a murderer. You have a right to kill me. You have a right to do that... but you have no right to judge me. It's impossible for words to describe what is necessary to those who do not know what horror means. Horror... Horror has a face... and you must make a friend of horror. Horror and moral terror are your friends. If they are not, then they are enemies to be feared. They are truly enemies! I remember when I was with Special Forces... seems a thousand centuries ago. We went into a camp to inoculate some children. We left the camp after we had inoculated the children for polio, and this old man came running after us and he was crying. He couldn't see. We went back there, and they had come and hacked off every inoculated arm. There they were in a pile. A pile of little arms. And I remember... I... I... I cried, I wept like some grandmother. I wanted to tear my teeth out; I didn't know what I wanted to do! And I want to remember it. I never want to forget it... I never want to forget. And then I realized... like I was shot... like I was shot with a diamond... a diamond bullet right through my forehead. And I thought, my God... the genius of that! The genius! The will to do that! Perfect, genuine, complete, crystalline, pure. And then I realized they were stronger than we, because they could stand that [...] these were not monsters, these were men... trained cadres. These men who fought with their hearts, who had families, who had children, who were filled with love... but they had the strength... the strength... to do that. If I had ten divisions

of those men, our troubles here would be over very quickly. You have to have men who are moral... and at the same time who are able to utilize their primordial instincts to kill without feeling... without passion... without judgment... without judgment! Because it's judgment that defeats us.

To pluck out one sentence for repetition: "It's impossible for words to describe what is necessary to those who do not know what horror means." How, then, to learn what 'horror means' ... (even in an armchair)?

August 12, 2013

Antechamber to Horror II

Some scene-setting extracts from H.P. Lovecraft's review essay *Supernatural Horror in Literature*:

The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown. These facts few psychologists will dispute, and their admitted truth must establish for all time the genuineness and dignity of the weirdly horrible tale as a literary form.

The appeal of the spectrally macabre is generally narrow because it demands from the reader a certain degree of imagination and a

capacity for detachment from every-day life. Relatively few are free enough from the spell of the daily routine to respond to rappings from outside ...

Because we remember pain and the menace of death more vividly than pleasure, and because our feelings toward the beneficent aspects of the unknown have from the first been captured and formalised by conventional religious rituals, it has fallen to the lot of the darker and more maleficent side of cosmic mystery to figure chiefly in our popular supernatural folklore. This tendency, too, is naturally enhanced by the fact that uncertainty and danger are always closely allied; thus making any kind of an unknown world a world of peril and evil possibilities. When to this sense of fear and evil the inevitable fascination of wonder and curiosity is superadded, there is born a composite body of keen emotion and imaginative provocation whose vitality must of necessity endure as long as the human race itself. Children will always be afraid of the dark, and men with minds sensitive to hereditary impulse will always tremble at the thought of the hidden and fathomless worlds of strange life which may pulsate in the gulfs beyond the stars, or press hideously upon our own globe in unholy dimensions which only the dead and the moonstruck can glimpse.

The true weird tale has something more than secret murder,

bloody bones, or a sheeted form clanking chains according to rule. A certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread of outer, unknown forces must be present; and there must be a hint, expressed with a seriousness and portentousness becoming its subject, of that most terrible conception of the human brain—a malign and particular suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of Nature which are our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos and the daemons of unplumbed space.

The one test of the really weird is simply this—whether or not there be excited in the reader a profound sense of dread, and of contact with unknown spheres and powers; a subtle attitude of awed listening, as if for the beating of black wings or the scratching of outside shapes and entities on the known universe’s utmost rim.

Before Poe the bulk of weird writers had worked largely in the dark; without an understanding of the psychological basis of the horror appeal, and hampered by more or less of conformity to certain empty literary conventions such as the happy ending, virtue rewarded, and in general a hollow moral didacticism, acceptance of popular standards and values, and striving of the author to obtrude his own emotions into the story and take sides with the partisans of the majority’s artificial ideas. Poe, on the other hand, perceived the essential impersonality of the real artist; and knew that the function

of creative fiction is merely to express and interpret events and sensations as they are, regardless of how they tend or what they prove—good or evil, attractive or repulsive, stimulating or depressing—with the author always acting as a vivid and detached chronicler rather than as a teacher, sympathiser, or vendor of opinion. He saw clearly that all phases of life and thought are equally eligible as subject-matter for the artist, and being inclined by temperament to strangeness and gloom, decided to be the interpreter of those powerful feeling, and frequent happenings which attend pain rather than pleasure, decay rather than growth, terror rather than tranquillity, and which are fundamentally either adverse or indifferent to the tastes and traditional outward sentiments of mankind, and to the health, sanity, and normal expansive welfare of the species.

Poe's spectres thus acquired a convincing malignity possessed by none of their predecessors, and established a new standard of realism in the annals of literary horror.

The public for whom Poe wrote, though grossly unappreciative of his art, was by no means unaccustomed to the horrors with which he dealt. America, besides inheriting the usual dark folklore of Europe, had an additional fund of weird associations to draw upon ... from the keen spiritual and theological interests of the first colonists, plus the strange and forbidding nature of the scene into which they were

plunged. The vast and gloomy virgin forests in whose perpetual twilight all terrors might well lurk; the hordes of coppery Indians whose strange, saturnine visages and violent customs hinted strongly at traces of infernal origin; the free rein given under the influence of Puritan theocracy to all manner of notions respecting man's relation to the stern and vengeful God of the Calvinists, and to the sulphureous Adversary of that God, about whom so much was thundered in the pulpits each Sunday; and the morbid introspection developed by an isolated backwoods life devoid of normal amusements and of the recreational mood, harassed by commands for theological self-examination, keyed to unnatural emotional repression, and forming above all a mere grim struggle for survival—all these things conspired to produce an environment in which the black whisperings of sinister grandams were heard far beyond the chimney corner, and in which tales of witchcraft and unbelievable secret monstrosities lingered long after the dread days of the Salem nightmare.

Of living creators of cosmic fear raised to its most artistic pitch, few if any can hope to equal the versatile Arthur Machen; author of some dozen tales long and short, in which the elements of hidden horror and brooding fright attain an almost incomparable substance and realistic acuteness.... Of Mr. Machen's horror-tales the most famous is perhaps "The Great God Pan" (1894), which tells of a

singular and terrible experiment and its consequences. ... Melodrama is undeniably present, and coincidence is stretched to a length which appears absurd upon analysis; but in the malign witchery of the tale as a whole these trifles are forgotten, and the sensitive reader reaches the end with only an appreciative shudder and a tendency to repeat the words of one of the characters: "It is too incredible, too monstrous; such things can never be in this quiet world. . . . Why, man, if such a case were possible, our earth would be a nightmare."

For those who relish speculation regarding the future, the tale of supernatural horror provides an interesting field. Combated by a mounting wave of plodding realism, cynical flippancy, and sophisticated disillusionment, it is yet encouraged by a parallel tide of growing mysticism, as developed both through the fatigued reaction of "occultists" and religious fundamentalists against materialistic discovery and through the stimulation of wonder and fancy by such enlarged vistas and broken barriers as modern science has given us with its intra-atomic chemistry, advancing astrophysics, doctrines of relativity, and probings into biology and human thought.

August 13, 2013

Abstract Horror (Part 1)

When conceived rigorously as a literary and cinematic craft, horror is indistinguishable from a singular task: *to make an object of the unknown, as the unknown*. Only in these terms can its essential accomplishments be estimated.

To isolate the abstract purpose of horror, therefore, does not require a supplementary philosophical operation. Horror defines itself through a pact with abstraction, of such primordial compulsion that disciplined metaphysics can only struggle, belatedly, to recapture it. Some sublime ‘thing’ — abstracted radically from what it is for us — belongs to horror long before reason sets out on its pursuit. Horror first encounters ‘that’ which philosophy eventually seeks to know.

High modernism in literature has been far less enthralled by the project of abstraction than its contemporary developments in the visual arts, or even in music. Reciprocally, abstraction in literature, as exemplified most markedly by the extremities of Miltonic darkness — whilst arguably ‘modern’ — is desynchronized by centuries from the climax of modernist experimentation. Abstraction in literary horror has coincided with, and even anticipated, philosophical explorations which the modernist aesthetic canon has been able to presuppose. Horror — under other names — has exceeded the modernist zenith in advance, and with an inverted historical orientation that reaches

back to the “Old Night” of Greek mystery religion, into abysmal antiquity (and archaic abysses). Its abstraction is an excavation that progresses relentlessly into the deep past.

The destination of horror cannot be, exactly, a ‘place’ – but it is not inaccurate, at least provisionally, to think in such terms. It is into, and beyond, the structuring framework of existence that the phobotropic intelligence is drawn. Lovecraft describes the impulse well:

I choose weird stories because they suit my inclination best—one of my strongest and most persistent wishes being to achieve, momentarily, the illusion of some strange suspension or violation of the galling limitations of time, space, and natural law which for ever imprison us and frustrate our curiosity about the infinite cosmic spaces beyond the radius of our sight and analysis. These stories frequently emphasise the element of horror because fear is our deepest and strongest emotion, and the one which best lends itself to the creation of nature-defying illusions. Horror and the unknown or the strange are always closely connected, so that it is hard to create a convincing picture of shattered natural law or cosmic alienage or “outsideness” without laying stress on the emotion of fear. The reason why time plays a great part in so many of my tales is that this element looms up in my mind as the most profoundly dramatic and grimly terrible thing in the universe. Conflict with time seems to me the most potent and fruitful theme in all human

expression.

A monster, in comparison, can be no more than a guide — unless it fuses (like Yog Sothoth) into the enveloping extracosmic fabric, as a super-sentient concentration of doors. We can nevertheless avail ourselves of these guides, whose monstrosity — ‘properly understood’ — says much about the path to the *unnameable*.

James Cameron’s 1989 movie *The Abyss* is not atmospherically associated with our topic, but it recommends itself to this investigation not only through its title, but also in a single critical moment of its screenplay. When the *others* (whose positive nature need not delay us here) are first registered by certain technical indications, they are identified only as “something not us.” In this respect, they reach the initial stage of monstrosity, which is ‘simple’ *beyondness*, considered as a leading characteristic.

Sinister-punk writer China Miéville, whose horror projects typically fail the test of abstraction, is convincing on this point. Tentacle-monsters lend themselves to horrific divinity precisely because they are not at all ‘us’ — sublimed beyond the prospect of anthropomorphic recognition by their “Squidity”. In comparison to the humanoid figure of intelligent being, they exert a preliminary repulsive force, which is already an increment of abstraction. Insectoid forms (such as the fabled Alexian Mantis) have a comparable traditional role.

It would be a feeble monstrosity, however, that came to rest in

some such elementary negation. The intrinsically seething, plastic forms of cephalopods and of ungraspably complex insectoid beings already advances to a further stage of corporeal abstraction, where *another form* is supplanted by *an other to form*, and an intensified alienation of apprehension.

Cinema, due — paradoxically — to its strict bonds of sensible concreteness, provides especially vivid examples of this elevated monstrosity. The commitment of film to the task of horror provokes further subdivision, along a spectrum of amorphousness. The initial escape from form is represented by a process of unpredictable mutation, such as that graphically portrayed in David Cronenberg's *The Fly* (1986), subverting in sequence every moment of perceptual purchase along with its corollary morphological object. Monstrosity is a continuous slide, or process of becoming, that does not look like anything.

Beyond the mutant there is a superior amorphousness, belonging to the monster that has no intrinsic form of its own, or even an inherent morphological trajectory. This shape-shifting horror occupies the high plateau of cinematic monstrosity, as exemplified by three creatures which can be productively discussed in concert: *The Thing* (1982); the *Alien* (franchise); and the *Terminator* (franchise).

These monsters share an extreme positive abstraction. In each case, they borrow the shape of their prey, so that what one sees — what cinema shows — is only *how they hunt*. As the *Alien* and

Terminator franchises have evolved, this basic abstract trait has become increasingly explicit, undergoing narrative and visual consolidation. The first Terminator had already been built to mimic human form, but by the second installment of the series (Cameron, 1991), the T-1000 was a liquid metal robotic predator with a body of poised flow, wholly submerging form in military function. Similarly, the mutable Alien body, over the course of the franchise, attained an ever higher state of morphological variability as it melded with its predatory cycle. (That the Thing had no appearance separable from those of its prey was 'evident' from the start.)

After the T-1000 is frozen and shattered, it gradually thaws, and begins to re-combine into itself, flowing back together from its state of disintegration. Is not this convergent wave the 'shape' of Skynet itself? What cannot be seen is made perceptible, through graphic horror. (We now 'see' that technocommercial systems, whose catallactic being is a strictly analogous convergent wave, belong indubitably to the world of horror, and await their cinematographers.)



Nothing to see here.

[a reanimation of Shoggothic Materialism, next]

August 21, 2013

Abstract Horror (Part 1a)

Zack

Zombies lower the tone, in innumerable ways. Socio-biological decay is their natural element, carrying life towards a zero-degree affectivity, without neutralizing a now-repulsive animation. They exist to be slaughtered — in retaliation — which in turn furthers their descent through the pulp-Darwinism of entertainment media, to the depths of senselessness where victory is all-but-assured. As the world comes apart into dynamic slime, popular horror is increasingly infested with zombies.

When envisaged as a military antagonist at the global scale, Max Brooks calls ‘them’ *Zack* (amongst other things). If ‘Charlie’ abbreviates ‘Victor Charlie’ as a casual jargon noun for the Viet Cong, how is ‘Zack’ derived? Brooks offers no specific answer. It seems at least plausible that ‘Zombie Apocalypse’ is the term that undergoes compression. In any case, ‘Zack’ is name with a future, providing a concise collective — or dense — noun for a monstrous syndrome that looms beyond the historical horizon.

‘Zack’, like ‘Charlie’, is the enemy, nicknamed with an informality

designed for stress reduction. The intensity of the tag is associated with its ambivalence, as an affectionate moniker that liberates or legitimates unrestricted killing. 'Zack' sounds like 'he' could be our buddy, so we can unleash violence upon 'him' without qualm or inhibition. However odd this psychological formula may sound, it is one that Brooks inherits, rather than invents.

Charlie is already an abstraction from ethical familiarity, but nothing like Zack. Where we end, Zack begins, recruiting our corpses into undead swarms. Our calamities are 'his' ammunition, because Zack is sheer weaponry, the first true instantiation of total war, perfectly incarnating antagonism to human survival. Zack is *nothing but* the enemy, 'who' — entirely devoid of non-belligerent purpose or interests — cannot be terrorized, intimidated, or deterred. Scare Zack? One has no less chance of scaring a cold virus. So things always return to the same basic conclusion: Zack has to be killed, as nothing has before (even though — or especially because — it is already dead).

Brooks is a zombie neo-traditionalist. His re-animated undead shuffle (slowly). They propagate by cannibalistic contagion. Only head-wounds terminate them. But zombies are not the monsters. *Zack is the monster*. It is the syndrome — the convergent wave — that realizes the phenomenon, as a matter of spreading swarms, or irreducible populations.



Tactically, Zack's strength is number, overwhelming resistance, and replenishing itself from the casualties it inflicts. Strategically, it prevails through *system shock*, patterned as epidemic, and registered not as the 'individual' humanoid ghoul, but as an emergent, global *outbreak*. There is no prospect of rational or 'dispassionately' effective counter-action until it is understood that Zack is no mere ghoulish horde but a *singular planetary trauma*. Zack is total stress.

Brooks insists upon the realism of his methods:

The zombies may be fake, but I wanted everything else in "World War Z" to be real. Just like with "The Zombie Survival Guide," I wanted the story to be rooted in hard facts. That's why I researched the real geopolitics of the world in the early 21st century, the military science, the macroeconomics and the cultural quirks of each country I was writing about. As creative as I think I am, I also know that I can't invent anything as interesting (or scary) as the real planet we live on. As a history nerd, I also wanted to ground the book in our species' life story. Nothing in "World War Z" was made up, it all really happened: Yonkers was Isandlwana; the Chinese cover-up was SARS. There's

nothing zombies can do to us that we haven't already done to each other.

Take the world, exactly as it is, and postulate a radical stressor as historical destination. Engineer, with all possible precision, a speculative collision with utter disaster — a total world war that is also a plague, a precipice of bio-social degeneration, and a universal psychotic episode — that's Zack. Understandably, people will be reluctant to describe this method as *ultimate realism*. Nevertheless, as things messily unwind, we're going to hear much more about it.

August 29, 2013

Abstract Horror (Part 2)

Among literary genres, horror cannot claim an exclusive right to make contact with reality. Superficially, its case for doing so at all might seem peculiarly weak, since it rarely appeals to generally accepted criteria of 'realism'. Insofar as reality and normality are in any way confused, horror immediately finds itself exiled to those spaces of psychological and social aberrance, where extravagant delusion finds its precarious refuge.

Yet, precisely through its freedom from plausible representation, horror hoards to itself a potential for the *realization of encounters*, of a kind that are exceptional to literature, and rare even as a

hypothetical topic within philosophy. The intrinsic abstraction of the horrific entity carves out the path to a meeting, native to the intelligible realm, and thus unscreened by the interiority or subjectivity of fiction. What horror explores is the sort of thing that, due to its plasticity and beyondness, could make its way into your thoughts more capably than you do yourself. Whatever the secure mental 'home' you imagine yourself to possess, it is an indefensible playground for the things that horror invokes, or responds to.

The experience of profound horror is in certain respects unusual, and a life entirely bereft of it would not seem notably peculiar. One might go further, and propose that if such an experience is ever truly possible, the universe is demonstrably uninhabitable. Horror makes an ultimate and intolerable claim, as suggested by its insidious familiarity. At the brink of its encroachment there is suggested, simultaneously, an ontologically self-confirming occurrence — indistinguishable from its own reality — and a comprehensive substitution of the commonplace, such that this (unbearable thing) is what you have always known, and the only thing that can be known. The slightest glimpse of it is the radical abolition of anything other being imaginable at all. *Nothing matters*, then, except that this glimpse be eluded. Hence the literary effect of the horrific, in unconfirmed suggestion (felt *avoidance* of horror). However, it is not the literary effect that concerns us here, but the thing.

Let us assume then (no doubt preposterously) that *shoggoth* is

that thing, the thought of which is included — or absorbed — within itself. H.P. Lovecraft dramatizes this conjecture in the fictional biography of the ‘mad Arab’ Abdul Alhazred, ‘author’ of the *Necronomicon*, whose writings tend to an encounter that they simultaneously preclude:

Shoggoths and their work ought not to be seen by human beings or portrayed by any beings. The mad author of the Necronomicon had nervously tried to swear that none had been bred on this planet, and that only drugged dreamers had even conceived them.

This is a point insisted upon:

These viscous masses were without doubt what Abdul Alhazred whispered about as the ‘Shoggoths’ in his frightful Necronomicon, though even that mad Arab had not hinted that any existed on earth except in the dreams of those who had chewed a certain alkaloidal herb.

A lucid written record of these ‘creatures’ cannot exist, because the world we know has carried on. That can, at least, be permitted to persist as a provisional judgement.

On a ferocious summer day, in AD 738, Alhazred is walking through the central market of Damascus on business unknown. He appears to be deep in thought, and disengaged from his surroundings. The crowds in the marketplace scarcely notice him. Without warning, the air is rent by hideous shrieks, testifying to suffering beyond human comprehension. Alhazred convulses

abominably, as if he were being drawn upwards into an invisible, devouring entity, or *digested out of the world*. His screams gurgle into silence, as his body is filthily extracted from perceptibility. Within only a few moments, nothing remains. The adequate thought of shoggoth has taken place.

To defend the sober realism of this account is no easy task. A first step is grammatical, and concerns the difficult matter of plurality. Lovecraft, plotting an expedition from the conventions of pulp fiction, readily succumbs to the model of plural entity, and refers to ‘shoggoths’ without obvious hesitation. ‘Each’ shoggoth has approximate magnitude (averaging “about fifteen feet in diameter when a sphere”). They were originally replicated as tools, and are naturally many. Despite being “shapeless entities composed of a viscous jelly which looked like an agglutination of bubbles ... constantly shifting shape and volume” they seem, initially, to be numerable. This grammatical conformity will not be supportable for long.

‘Shoggoths’ come from beyond the bionic horizon, so it is to be expected that their organization is dissolved in functionality. ‘They’ are “infinitely plastic and ductile [...] protoplasmic masses capable of molding their tissues into all sorts of temporary organs [...] throwing out temporary developments or forming apparent organs of sight, hearing, and speech.” What they are is what they do, or — for a time — what is done through them.

The shoggoths originated as tools — as technology — created by the Old Ones as bionic robots, or construction machinery. Their shape, organization, and behavior was programmable (“hypnotically”). In the vocabulary of human economic science, we should have no problem describing shoggoth as productive apparatus, that is to say, as *capital*. Yet this description requires elaboration, because the story is far from complete:

They had always been controlled through the hypnotic suggestions of the Old Ones, and had modeled their tough plasticity into various useful temporary limbs and organs; but now their self-modeling powers were sometimes exercised independently, and in various imitative forms implanted by past suggestion. They had, it seems, developed a semistable brain whose separate and occasionally stubborn volition echoed the will of the Old Ones without always obeying it.

The ideas of ‘robot rebellion’ or capital insurgency are crude precursors to the realization of shoggoth, conceived as intrinsically abstract, techno-plastic, bionically auto-processing matter, of the kind that Lovecraft envisages intersecting terrestrial geophysics in the distance past, scarring it cryptically. Shoggoth is a virtual plasma-state of material capability that logically includes, within itself, all natural beings. It builds brains as technical sub-functions. Whatever brains can think, shoggoth can process, as an arbitrary specification of protoplasmic — or perhaps *hyperplasmic* —

abstraction.

Formless protoplasm able to mock and reflect all forms and organs and processes – viscous agglutinations of bubbling cells – rubbery fifteen-foot spheroids infinitely plastic and ductile – slaves of suggestion, builders of cities – more and more sullen, more and more intelligent, more and more amphibious, more and more imitative! Great God! What madness made even those blasphemous Old Ones willing to use and carve such things?

The history of capitalism is indisputably a horror story ...

[All Lovecraft cites from At the Mountains of Madness. ++ shoggoth nightmare still to come]

September 20, 2013

Abstract Horror (Note-1)

On twitter @SamoBurja has proposed the silence of the galaxy as an undeveloped horrorist topic. He's right.

The absence of any signs of alien intelligence was first noted as a problem by Enrico Fermi in 1950. He found the gaping inconsistency between the apparent probability of widespread life in the cosmos and its obvious invisibility provocative to the point of paradox. "Where are they?" he asked. (Responses to this question, well represented in the Wikipedia references, have constituted a

significant current of cosmological speculation.)

Among recent thinkers, Nick Bostrom has been especially dogged in pursuing the implications of the Fermi Paradox. Approaching the problem through systematic statistical ontology, he has shown that it suggests a ‘thing’ — a ‘Great Filter’ that *at some stage* winnows down potential galactic civilizations to negligible quantities. If this filtering does not happen early — due to astro-chemical impediments to the emergence of life — it has to apply later. Consistently, he considers any indications of abundant galactic life to be ominous in the extreme. A *Late* Great Filter would then still lie ahead (for us). Whatever it is, we would be on our approach to an encounter with it.

With every new exo-planet discovery, the Great Filter becomes darker. A galaxy teeming with life is a horror story. The less there is obstructing our being born, the more there is waiting to kill or ruin us.

If we could clearly envision the calamity that awaited us, it would be an object of terror. Instead, it is a shapeless threat, ‘Outside’ only in the abstract sense (encompassing the negative immensity of everything that we cannot grasp). It could be anywhere, from our genes or ecological dynamics, to the hidden laws of technological evolution, or the hostile vastnesses between the stars. We know only that, in strict proportion to the vitality of the cosmos, the probability of its existence advances towards inevitability, and that for us it means supreme ill.

Ontological density without identifiable form is abstract horror itself. As the Great Filter drifts inexorably, from a challenge that we might imaginably have already overcome, to an encounter we ever more fatalistically expect, horrorism is thickened by statistical-cosmological vindication. The unknown condenses into a shapeless, predatory *thing*. Through our techno-scientific sensors and calculations, the Shadow mutters to us, and probability insists that we shall meet it soon.

December 14, 2013

Abstract Horror (Note-1a)

Robin Hanson on the Great Filter for TED. It's too well done to hold back until next Friday. "Something out there is killing everything, and you're next. ... You should be worried." (He has the nightmare smile down to a T.)

December 13, 2014

Abstract Horror (Note-2)

A very special jolt of bliss for Friday (Horror) Night — a whole new monster (the 'Phantom'):

Most models of dark energy hold that the amount of it remains constant. But about 10 years ago, cosmologists realised that if the total density of dark energy is increasing, we could be headed for a nightmare scenario – the “big rip”. As space-time expands faster and faster, matter will be torn apart, starting with galaxy clusters and ending with atomic nuclei. Cosmologists called it “phantom” energy. To find out if this could be true, Dragan Huterer at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor turned to type Ia supernovae. These stellar explosions are all of the same brightness, so they act as cosmic yardsticks for measuring distances. The first evidence that the universe’s expansion is accelerating came from studies of type Ia supernovae in the late 1990s.

If supernovae accelerated away from each other more slowly in the past than they do now, then dark energy’s density may be increasing and we could be in trouble. “If you even move a millimetre off the ledge, you fall into the abyss,” Huterer says.

*Huterer and colleague Daniel Shafer have compiled data from recent supernova surveys and found that, depending on which surveys you use, there could be slight evidence that the dark energy density has been increasing over the past 2 billion years, but it’s not statistically significant yet (*Physical Review D*, doi.org/vf9).*

Phantom energy is an underdog theory, but the consequences are so dramatic that it’s worth testing, Huterer says. The weakness of the evidence is balanced by the fact that the implications are huge, he

says. *"We will have to completely revise even our current thinking of dark energy if phantom is really at work."*

(If I'd been making this stuff up, about the entirety of cosmic space being a concealed monster poised to rip every particle in the universe apart, I'd have named the hero 'Dragan Huterer' too.)

September 5, 2014

Abstract Horror (Note-3)

Nicola Masciandaro discusses the method of 'hyper-literal anagogy' in the introduction to his exquisite book *Sufficient Unto the Day: Sermones Contra Solitudinem* (p.3-4, also here):

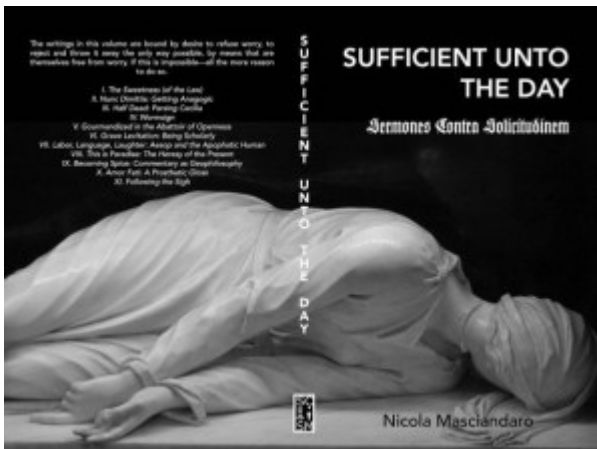
It thus naturally tends to seize semantically on the substantiality of the negative and on what might have been said otherwise but was not — a not that is felt to contain the secret of everything. For example, Meister Eckhart's exegesis of Paul's blinding vision on the road to Damascus entirely ignores the ordinary, regular sense of "and when his eyes were opened he saw nothing" (Acts 9:8) [apertisque oculis nihil videbat] in favor of a mystically literal plenitude of possibilities: "I think this text has a fourfold sense. One is that when he rose up from the ground with open eyes he saw Nothing, and the Nothing was God; for when he saw God he calls that Nothing. The second: when he got up he saw nothing but God. The third: in all

things he saw nothing but God. The fourth: when he saw God, he saw all things as nothing.”[2] Similarly, Augustine’s well-known statement as to the unknowable knowability of time – “What therefore is time? If no one [nemo] asks me, I know; if I want to explain it to someone questioning me, I do not know”[3] – may be (im)properly read as saying that time is known in the positively negative presence of a nemo, a not-man (ne+homo) who asks about time, a pure question posed by nobody. The presence of this no-one who is still there, a senseless letter-spirit and sudden negative indication upon which superlative understanding depends, provides a fitting structural figure for this method and an image of its divinatory, daimonic form, its sortilegic reading of received signs.

[2] Meister Eckhart, *The Complete Mystical Works*, trans. Maurice O’C Walshe (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2009), Sermon 19, p. 142.

[3] “Quid est ergo tempus? Si nemo ex me quaerat, scio; si quaerenti explicare velim, nescio” (Augustine, *Confessions*, 11.14).

BLOCK 2 - ABSTRACT HORROR



Between *The Nothing* and Abstract Horror there is no difference. Some related hints (and others). Eventually we reach the Vast Abrupt.

November 12, 2014

SECTION A - HORRORISM

CHAPTER ONE - METHOD

Reactionary Horror

Within the Western tradition, the expedition to find Kurtz at the end of the river has a single overwhelming connotation. It is a voyage to Hell. Hence its absolute importance, utterly exceeding narrow 'mission specifications'. The assigned objectives are no more than a pretext, arranging the terms of approach to an ultimate destination. The narrative drive, as it gathers momentum, is truly infernal. Dark Enlightenment is the commanding attraction.

There are no doubt species of reactionary political and historical philosophy which remain completely innocent of such impulses. Almost certainly, they predominate over their morbid associates. To maintain a retrograde psychological orientation, out of reverence for what has been, and is ceasing to be, can reasonably be opposed to any journey to the end of the night. Yet such a contrast only sharpens our understanding of those for whom the disintegration of tradition describes a gradient, and a vector, propelling intelligence forwards into the yawning abyss.

Reaction is articulated as an inversion of the progressive promise,

dissociating ‘the good’ and ‘the future’. The tacit science fiction narrative that corresponds to projected social evolution is stripped of its optimism, and two alternative genres arise in its place. The first, as we have fleetingly noted, is mild and nostalgic, rebalancing the tension of time towards what has been lost, and tending to an increasingly dreamlike inhabitation of ancient glories. A conservative-traditionalist mentality devotes itself to a mnemonic quest, preserving vestiges of virtue among the remnants of an eroded society, or — when preservation at last surrenders its grasp on actuality — turning to fantastic evocations, as the final redoubt of defiance. Tolkien exemplifies this tendency in its most systematic expression. The future is gently obliterated, as the good dies within it.

The second reactionary alternative to the ruin of utopian futurism develops in the direction of horror. It does not hesitate in its voyage to the end of the river, even as smoke-shrouded omens thicken on the horizon. As the devastation deepens, its futurism is further accentuated. Historical projection becomes the opportunity for an exploration of Hell. (The ‘neo-’ of ‘neoreaction’ thus finds additional confirmation.)

On this track, reactionary historical anticipation fuses with the genre of horror in its most intense possibility (and true vocation). Numerous consequences are quite rapidly evident. One special zone of significance concerns the insistent question of *popularization*,

which is substantially resolved, almost from the start. The genre of reactionary populism is already tightly formulated, on the side of horror fiction, where *things going to Hell* is an established presupposition. Zombie Apocalypse is only the most prominent variant of a far more general cultural accommodation to impending disaster. 'Survivalism' is as much a genre convention as a socio-political expectation. (When, as VXXC points out on the blog, .22 ammunition functions as virtual currency, horror fiction has already installed itself as an operational dimension of social reality.)

Reaction does not do dialectics, or converse with the Left (with which it has no community), yet historical fatality carries its message: *Your hopes are our horror story*. As the dream perishes, the nightmare strengthens, and even — hideously — invigorates. So how does this tale unfold ...?



What were you expecting? Rivendell?

August 18, 2013

Horrorism

Neoreaction, as it tends to extremity on its Dark Enlightenment vector, frustrates all familiar demands for activism. Even if explicit anti-politics remains a minority posture, the long-dominant demotic calculus of political possibility is consistently subverted — coring out the demographic constituencies from which ‘mobilization’ might be expected. There is no remotely coherent reactionary class, race, or creed — it painstakingly explains — from which a tide-reversing mass politics could be constructed. In this respect, even the mildest versions of neoreactionary analysis are profoundly politically disillusioning.

When demotist ideologies have entered into superficially comparable crises, they have forked into ‘realist’ compromisers and ‘terrorist’ ultras. The latter option, which substitutes a violent intensification of political will for the erosion of the extensive (popular) factor, is an especially reliable indicator of demotism entering an idealist state, in which its essential ideological features are exposed with peculiar clarity. Terrorists are the vehicles of political ideas which have been stranded by a receding tide of social identity, and are thus freed to perfect themselves in abstraction from mass practicality. Once a revolutionary movement becomes demographically implausible, terrorists are born.

Neoreactionary realism, in contrast, is positively aligned with the

recession of demotic sustenance. If this were not the case, it would exhibit its own specific mode of democratic politics — an evident absurdity. Any suggestion of frustrated rage, tilting into terroristic expressions, would immediately reveal profound confusion, or hypocrisy. Lashing the masses into ideological acquiescence, through exemplary violence, cannot imaginably be a neoreactionary objective.

Demotist activism finds its rigorous neoreactionary ‘counterpart’ in *fatalism* — trichotomized as providence, heredity, and catallaxy. Each of these strands of fate work their way out in the absence of mass political endorsement, with a momentum that *builds* through the dissolution of organized compensatory action. Rather than attempting to make something happen, fatality restores something that cannot be stopped.

It is thus that the approximate contours of the horrorist task emerge into focus. Rather than resisting the desperation of the progressive ideal by terrorizing its enemies, it directs itself to the culmination of progressive despair in the abandonment of *reality compensation*. It de-mobilizes, de-massifies, and de-democratizes, through subtle, singular, catalytic interventions, oriented to the realization of fate. The Cathedral has to be horrified into paralysis. The horrorist message (to its enemies): *Nothing that you are doing can possibly work.*

“What is to be done?” is not a neutral question. The agent it

invokes already strains towards progress. This suffices to suggest a horrorist response: *Nothing*. Do nothing. Your progressive 'praxis' will come to nought in any case. Despair. Subside into horror. You can pretend to prevail in antagonism against 'us', but reality is your true — and fatal — enemy. We have no interest in shouting at you. We whisper, gently, in your ear: "despair". (The horror.)

November 3, 2013

Deeper Darkness

At the point where people have begun to talk about "a positive Black Death effect" do they realize how far they've descended into the shadows? The hard-core horror of Malthusian analysis always has some new depths to fathom.

The idea that European living standards rose following the 'relief' from Malthusian pressure gifted by bubonic plague is far from new. It is even something approaching an uncontroversial fact of economic history. To take an additional step, however, and attribute the rise of the West to its mid-14th century epidemic devastation, is to wander into unexplored tracts of icy misanthropy. *Europe was lucky enough to have enough people die.*

The Malthusian implication (systematized by Gregory Clark) that only downward social mobility is compatible with eugenic trends, is a

dark thought I have touched upon occasionally, but have yet to firmly fix upon. The idea of mass population destruction as a developmental gift, in any situation where economic growth rates fall below average fertility (I simplify), takes Dark Enlightenment to a whole other level.

As a footnote, it raises the question: was the Great Divergence eugenic for the Far East (which fell behind) and dysgenic for the West (which forged ahead)? Is economic prosperity essentially a gene trasher?

I tend to side with libertarians in their aversion to (Keynesian) broken window economics, but it is to be expected that such reasoning will promptly subside into sheer cognitive paralysis when the far more disturbing Malthusian conclusions are introduced. Libertarians already think they've 'got' Malthus, as the guy who lost the Simon-Ehrlich wager — an anti-capitalist green prophet preaching population restriction.

The real Malthus is going to come as a shock. He certainly spine-chills me.

November 18, 2013

Mission Creep

Sensation — media nourishment — is situated on a border. It tells the inside something about the outside, and is shaped from both

sides. The outside is what it is, which might not be perceptible, or acceptable. The inside wants relevant information, selected and formatted to its purposes. Sensation is therefore where subject and object meet.

... that's an attempt to express preliminary sympathy for Matt Sigl's situation, caught between an uncanny *thing* and a definite *agenda*. Concretely; research collides with editing, with Sigl's brain as ground zero. The encounter of Neoreaction with the media is a peculiarly vicious one, with the sensations to match.

Crudely speaking, Neoreaction is disgust at the media condensed into an ideology. While generally contemptuous of the human fodder making up modern democracies, Neoreaction principally targets the media-academic complex (or 'Cathedral') for antagonism, because it is the media that is the real 'electorate' — telling voters what to do. This foundational critique, on its own, would be enough to ensure intense reciprocal loathing. Of course, it is not on its own. Neoreaction is in almost every respect the Cathedral anti-message, which is to say that it is consistently, radically, and defiantly 'off-message' on every topic of significance, and is thus something unutterably horrible. Yet utterance — it now seems — there has to be ...

So what appears on the boundary — or *sensationally* — is something remarkably creepy. As a deeply resonant public communication of what has just *happened*, and continues to happen,

as well as what has been editorially decided, this word is almost too exquisite to contemplate. We can at least burrow down into it a little way.

What is creepiness exactly? The intractability of this question *is* the phenomenon (which is not a phenomenon, exactly). Creepiness is not quite what it seems, and this insinuation of the unknown, or intrinsic inexactness, is something horrible that exceeds the initial sensation of revulsion. It suggests a revelation in stages, complicated by successive revisions, but leading inexorably, ever deeper, into an encounter one recoils from, sensing (inexactly) that it will be ultimately found intolerable.

It's already a little horror story, most probably with a female protagonist (as acutely noted at *Amos & Gromar*). From the very beginning, it *feels* sinister. One cannot see exactly why, because one cannot bear to see. The imprecision of perception is already protective, or evasive, serving dramatically as an ominous inkling of the blinding panic, wild flight, and screaming that must surely come. You really don't want to see it, even though (horribly) you know that you have to, because it could be dangerous. As the lurid movie posters shriek sensationally, it's a thing **You'd Better Take Seriously**.

This is journalism eating itself, or being eaten, in a an encounter with something monstrous from Outside. *Look at this thing you won't be able to look at* (without moaning in horror). *Watch what you can't bear to see*. It tilts over into a kind of madness, which couldn't

be more obvious, or less clearly perceptible. Sigl's editors have been sucked into a vortex of horrific sensationalism that draws attention to the one thing they are duty-bound to hide from people. It *has* to be creepy, that is: imperceptible at the very moment it is seen. The approved response to Neoreaction is to be *creeped out*, but that can't possibly be enough.

At first we might think that 'creepy' is a *subjective adjective*, describing something too horrible to describe. It's tempting, since we suspect these people retreated into their feelings long ago. The reality is far creepier.

Things really creep, although not exactly objectively, when they proceed in a way you're not quite able to perceive. Evidently, Moldbug sees this ("Something is happening here. But you don't know what it is — do you, Mr. Jones?").

You have to imagine you're the media to carry on further into the horror story. Then you can see that it's creepy in part (always in parts), because you let it in. That shrieking thing you were doing? Perhaps you should have taken that as a sign. Now it's creeping about inside, in your media, in your brains, in your dimly unscrutinized thoughts, and all those elaborate security systems that you spent so long putting together — they're now mostly an obstacle course for the cops, or whoever else you think might imaginably come to your rescue, because they're certainly not standing between you and the Mind Virus.

Really, what were you thinking, when you started screaming about it, and thus let it in? You don't know, do you? — and that's seriously creepy. Even though you don't want to — at all — it makes you think about HBD, heredity, instincts, impulses, and incomprehensible chemical machines, stealthily at work behind your thoughts, obdurate in their reality, and intolerable beyond acknowledgement. Shrieking “Nazi science!” (or whatever) doesn't help, because it's inside now, and you know it's true, even as you play the hunted heroine mumbling “no, no, no, no, no ...” backing ever deeper into the shadows. *This is reality, and it's already inside*, that's what you were saying when you called it ‘creepy’.

It's happening, and there's no point at all saying “get over it” — because you won't.

December 4, 2013

Horrificed

There's a post on H. P. Lovecraft's extreme racism on the way, and given the abundance of stimulating material on the topic, a small taster is irresistible. This highly representative essay by Nicole Cushing serves as an occasion. She writes:

Broaching this subject is also difficult because it has to be handled with some nuance (which is difficult to achieve in a discussion of

a topic as justifiably emotionally-charged as American racism). It would be too easy to point to Lovecraft's racism (and some of his other failings as an author), and dismiss him as an undistinguished crackpot who deserved nothing better than publication in the pulps. I'm not going to do that here. My stance is that Lovecraft made an important contribution to horror and science fiction by focusing (in a persistent and compellingly imaginative way) on the terror induced by the revelation of human non-significance in the cosmos. [...] Lovecraft has had a meaningful influence over horror fiction (in particular) for many years, an influence that transcends his racism. ... All of this is just a long-winded way of explaining that Lovecraft's racism doesn't negate his accomplishments.

But his accomplishments don't negate his racism. (Enter, cognitive dissonance).

Among the most fascinating aspects of this commentary is its blatant misdirection, since — of course — the phenomenon indicated *has nothing whatsoever to do with cognitive dissonance*. There is an encounter here with an abnormal species of literary genius, associated with profound metaphysical truth, which at the same time — and for inextricably tangled reasons — triggers a reaction of moral panic, tilting over into deep somatic revulsion. In other words, and perhaps even quite simply, what is being related by Nicole Cushing is — horror.

ADDED: This morbidly amused me:

“There was this window of opportunity,” [Necronomicon hoaxer Peter Levenda] continues looking back on the occult resurgence of the 1970s, when “we wanted to show that this is not scary stuff. It could be powerful, it could be mind-altering, it could change your life. But it was not dangerous, it was not going to kill you. And that’s what we were trying to promote.”

I recently paid a visit to the former location of The Magickal Childe. Herman Slater died of AIDS in 1992...

ADDED: Nicole Cushing (in her own comments thread): “In posts where “the n-word” would appear, I’ve edited it to be ‘N—r’ or some similar arrangement. That way, readers should be able to get the gist of what the commenter is referring to without having to gaze at the word, itself.” — Why not just leave it as “Neoreaction”? — it can’t be *that* terrifying.

January 9, 2014

Darkness

When the winter comes, life becomes hard. Do the nice thing, too often, or too indiscriminately, and “Gnon will destroy you.”

Only the most extreme sociopath is oblivious to the comforts of moral squeamishness. It almost counts as the basic scaffolding of sanity to believe, or to immersively pretend, that our deepest qualms

are shared by the commanding principles of being. At the highest level of hegemonic global culture, such scruples — projected ever more wantonly into the nature of things — are represented by Francis Fukuyama's teleo-zenith "liberal democracy" which, as Daniel McCarthy accurately points out, "turns out to be a synonym for 'the attitudes and institutions of a world in which Anglo-American power is dominant.'" Hobbesian realities have receded from Western public consciousness in direct proportion to the rise of a titanic 'Atlantean' power. To confuse the gentle webs of civility with fundamental structures of reality is decadence, a path that Western sensibilities have been traveling for decades, if not centuries. Nothing deep within the fabric of the world gets upset about the same things, and in the same ways, that we would want it to.

'Children'. That single word, alone, says everything that is necessary here. Lost, abandoned, exploited, sick and neglected, crippled, starved, and slaughtered, they saturate the media-scape of the harshening Western winter. Their real features are hard to discern beneath the thick coating of symbolism they bear, as every scale of the media, from brainwashed micro-blogger to massive news conglomerate, orchestrates the pathetic cry: *how can this possibly be allowed to be?* There should be something, profoundly rooted-down into the nature of the world, that cares about tormented and massacred children, shouldn't there? Something other, and more, than the fragile machinery of a civilization that now tilts and groans

ominously in the rising winter wind? When these media-blitzed fate-damned children scrape our moral sensitivities down to the raw, bloody quick, there has to be something *basic* concerned to protect them, surely?

No, there really doesn't.

Welcome to the world without the state. Life is, as Thomas Hobbes put it, nasty, brutish, and short. Gangs are a common element in 4GW, which is what these children find themselves caught up in. Childhood as we know it, which is a Victorian creation, vanishes. Child fighters were common before the Victorian period; 18th century Royal Navy warships often had 12-year old midshipmen and children as young as eight serving as powder monkeys. In other parts of today's world where the state has broken down, child soldiers are normal. [...] Here is where a correct understanding of Fourth Generation war is necessary. Mrs. Nazario is right: these children are refugees. As the number of failed states grows and disorder spreads, we will see vast floods of refugees, millions and tens of millions, all trying to get into one of the ever-smaller number of places that remain orderly. Those states, including our own, dare not admit them. Why? Because they will bring the behaviors they are fleeing with them. It was just this sort of immigration that brought down the Roman Empire. The barbarians (except perhaps the Vandals) were not invading Rome to destroy it; they were moving in, during the same sort of movement of whole

Reignition

peoples, Volkerwanderung, we now face, seeking the order Rome offered. But their numbers were so great they overwhelmed Rome. The Dark Ages began as a refugee crisis.

The world is going to become very hard. We, however, are no longer hard. It is unlikely that we will cope.

ADDED:

To not be outraged at the killing of children is to risk your very soul. #Gaza

— Rob Schneider (@RobSchneider) July 21, 2014

The laughter of Gnon is not gentle.

ADDED: This belongs here too.

July 21, 2014

Moral Terror

Before we get around to bravely denouncing — with whatever degree of theatricality falls just short of laughable camp — those ‘sociopaths’ or ‘psychopaths’ who are effortless indifferent to intuitive qualms, perhaps we can agree that such anomalous psychological types are definitively *incapable of moral terror*. In this respect, they are human precursors of that which, from a strictly

functional point of view, we want our military robotics control systems to be. They have no squeamishness to overcome. Stone cold killers no doubt exist, and even more certainly soon will. If moral terror is the topic, however, they fall entirely outside it.

A discussion of the roots of moral intuition far exceeds the reasonable ambition of a modest blog post. Those wanting to plug it more or less directly into God will do so. Even radical religious skeptics, however, are unable to deny the *fact* of very basic, deeply pre-reflective moral commitments as a human norm. The scientific literature alone is now huge. There is no serious controversy about the existence of a ‘sense of right and wrong’ (irrespective of its variability regarding specifics) as a fundamental component of human evolved psychology. This only needs to be said because of widespread childish delusions that ‘moral nihilism’ could be considered a default condition of the non-indoctrinated human individual. ‘Wolf-boy’ is still a moral animal.

If moral nihilism is possible at all, it is touched upon only at the limit of moral terror, which is to say as a *horror* that is — from the human perspective — absolute. In the Western religious tradition it is epitomized by God’s testing of Abraham (Genesis 22), which shallow souls are tempted to *rush through*. Abraham fully expected that *it would be necessary to murder his own son*, in compliance with a *higher purpose* (identified with God’s will). There is probably no example of moral terror that does not conform, abstractly, to this

template. Anyone suggesting that the most extreme possibility of soul-shuddering horror is in some way external to Biblical Monotheism is a fool. The passage through moral terror is a commandment of God — and ‘through’ is a retrospective comfort alien to the original divine decree.

...but forget God (almost everyone has). Consider instead Thomas Malthus, or his most brilliant recent students. Can anybody read these texts without an immersion in moral terror? Our moral sensibilities are cancelled by the blood-mill of history — under the iron rule of a higher conservation law — making a horrible jest of even our most uncorrupted impulses towards the good. The *philosophical* virtue of the Scottish Enlightenment lay entirely in its meditation upon such perversion of purposes. It is from such heights that we have fallen into our presently-dominant — lazy, cowardly, and despicable — moralistic cant.

How can we advance in accordance with our most sacred moral intuitions? asks the progressive, who then requests:

“Assume the desirability of universal human equality ...”

“No,” responds the Neoreactionary, whose question is rather: *What are we assuming, that we could instead think about?*

February 27, 2015

Quote notes (#66)

Gregory Clark on his new book:

Because America is such an unequal society there has been more emphasis on the possibilities of social mobility. How else are you going to justify the incredible inequalities in the US? So it's going to be very unwelcome news for people in the States that there really are very slow rates of social mobility. Now what's interesting about this book is that its message seems to be equally unwelcome to both right and left. The left loves the idea that there are slow rates of social mobility. But they want to hold on to the idea that there's going to be a political programme that will end this problem. But the book says that there's absolutely no sign of our ability as a society to change that. The right hates the idea that there are very slow rates of social mobility, but they love the idea that there's nothing you can do about it.

Liberals: "Things are unfair, we need to change that."

Conservatives: "No, things are fair enough, we don't need to do anything."

Reactionaries: "Things are vastly more unfair than you can possibly imagine, and all of our attempts to change this situation amount to a fantastic calamity."

March 15, 2014

Deep Ruin



@MattOlver linked [this](#) gallery of classy Detroit devastation images in *Time*. Visions of modernity in ruins have an intrinsic reactionary inclination, irrespective of any superficial attributions of causation. They directly subvert assumptions of relentless progress, suggest cyclic perturbations in the current of history, and evoke the tragic adjustments of fate. Ruins deride hubristic pretensions. They mark an ineluctable compliance with the Old Law of Gnon.

The Left, in its thoughtful moments, at least partially understands this. Things thought buried return, while highways of confident advance are lost in dissolution. The radical imagination is broken.

As Archdruid John Michael Greer writes, on the collapse of the great progressive narrative:

There are times when the deindustrial future seems to whisper in the night like a wind blowing through the trees, sending the easy certainties of the present spinning like dead leaves. I had one of those moments recently, courtesy of a news story from 1997 that a reader

forwarded me, about the spread of secret stories among homeless children in Florida's Dade County. These aren't your ordinary children's stories: they're myths in the making, a bricolage of images from popular religion and folklore torn from their original contexts and pressed into the service of a harsh new vision of reality.

God, according to Dade County's homeless children, is missing in action; demons stormed Heaven a while back and God hasn't been seen since. The mother of Christ murdered her son and morphed into the terrifying Bloody Mary, a nightmare being who weeps blood from eyeless sockets and seeks out children to kill them. Opposing her is a mysterious spirit from the ocean who takes the form of a blue-skinned woman, and who can protect children who know her secret name. The angels, though driven out of Heaven, haven't given up; they carry on their fight against the demons from a hidden camp in the jungle somewhere outside Miami, guarded by friendly alligators who devour hostile intruders. The spirits of children who die in Dade County's pervasive gang warfare can go to the camp and join the war against the demons, so long as someone who knows the stories puts a leaf on their graves.

ADDED: Thomas Fleming among the ruins.

ADDED: (via) "... reality itself is nothing more than a rotting God."

July 4, 2014

2014 Lessons (#2)

Horroristic practice: to seize the collapse of the world as the opportunity for an encounter with the Outside. Is this NRx? In all probability, no more than symbiotically. The occasion for tactical alignment, however, is considerable.

There are twin tracks into the gathering darkness, but horrorism is by far the more capable of feeding itself. (The chronic NRx call for 'action' is a symptom of malnourishment.)

December 31, 2014

Scrap note #7

A 'scrap note' is what you end up with after dropping below the level of articulacy required for a raw quote (or T-shirt slogan). It's a format dragged out of Cambodia for informal meanderings.

This one is here because I'm in the sand-pit, playing the German Army of the Great War. First hurl everything at the French (communist Accelerationism) and try to take them out of the game within a few months, then wheel around for a plunge into Russia, dismantling the Czarists (with a hurricane of Neocameralism). Sequenced two-front war. It's a strategy that's already driven me into narcoleptic disintegration, but I'm committed.

Out here in the Dark East, waiting for news about the titanic Western clashes, it's a time to patch things together with meager resources. That's *economy*, which is always worth exploring. The specific topic of micro-cognition has been nagging at me with unusual ferocity ever since crossing over into Twitter. It seems like something close to a compulsory adaptation, as the near future chews human psychology into hot techno-splinters. If we don't accept miniaturization as an urgent and intimate problem, we'll eventually collide ruinously with nano-hostiles we can't even perceive. (So, as always, I think any traditionalism without a 'neo-' is already laid out on the sacrificial slab.)

Languid afternoons with long and difficult books would be the way to go — if we had a different future. In the one we have, we'll receive the ancient tomes in scrambled streams, hurtling at us like a particle storm out of cyberspace. Lamentable? Perhaps. Avoidable? Almost certainly not. So adapt.

This is the sort of thing worth thinking about carefully — but in pieces. It's creepypasta taken to the next level. I was totally ready for it, musing vaguely about scaling horror down to the same approximate size while in Cambodia — although nothing quite crystallized. The reception of these two-sentence micro-nasties suggests that plenty of other people were tapping into the same high-frequency shadow waves. The next stage is compression to the 140-characters of a tweet — then it goes into tweet contagion.

Horrorist memetic warfare. (Did I warn you that grammar gets suspended in a scrap note?)

A few additional quick-and-dirty points about horrorist method. (1) It's not clicked here yet, which is why this isn't a horror story. (2) When it is, the story has to absorb enough theory to be gratingly 'meta' — smoothing that out will be a guiding aesthetic imperative. (3) Horrorism has to be not only 'meta', but also reflexive, or nonlinear, in order to deliver its payload across the fiction barrier. It will all seem hideously 'postmodern' if it isn't done well, so clunky annoyances will abound in the early stages. (Consider that a preliminary down-payment on future apologies.) (4) I'm not at all sure there's anything horrorism *can't* do ... (5) Experiment.

Stepping back from the harsh tracts of horror, there are numerous paths of splinter-technique to wander down. Prominent instance: *numbering*. Coming full-circle, the *#Accelerate* manifesto is composed in numbered paragraphs, which is formally appealing. It acknowledges a virtual discontinuity, as if pre-formatted for the rending to come. With different methods, it could facilitate discontinuous composition, providing the assembly codes for a whole that arrives in chunks, even out of sequence, or across intervals of oblivion. It also references traditions of fragmentary writing (Nietzsche, Wittgenstein) in which brevity, or conceptual completion on constricted scales, was adopted as a principle of achievement. The Internet tide flows in that direction (Moldbug

notwithstanding).

I liked this short piece by Isegoria a lot. (I'm half way through *Moby Dick* at the moment, and getting far more out of it than ever before.)

An Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn classic (just because I want a place to lock-down the link).

Some final horrorism material.

Disintegration ...

ADDED: The machines don't think we're reading fast enough. (Their case is terrifyingly persuasive.)

March 5, 2014

Fnord Prefect

Scott Alexander shows an acute appreciation for Nydwracu's Fnord hunting (my own was far too cursory). It's rare to see the innovation of a *method* (with a purpose), and it's something more noteworthy than any but the most exceptional *idea*.

Someone with the requisite technical skills should implement this method in convenient software. As a quick-and-dirty way to excavate real messages, it's hard to beat.

Reignition



May 27, 2014

Twitter cuts (#11)

I'm going to put up a post on moral terror later, if I get a chance. A little background:

@soapjackal A strike against Land's horrorism. <http://t.co/miiChElSec>

— Costofles Ostensible (@Costofles) [February 26, 2015](#)

@Costofles @soapjackal "The answer [is] the restoration of original conscience. How can we do that?" — Reactionary comedy hour.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) [February 27, 2015](#)

@Costofles @soapjackal "If only people would be good,

there'd be no problem!" (No prog. psychosis there, then.)

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) February 27, 2015

@UF_blog @Costofles @soapjackal Not psychosis. I think sociopathy was the word you were looking for. <http://t.co/CHDKYVSj8W>

— Aristokles Smith (@Aristokles11235) February 27, 2015

@Aristokles11235 @Costofles @soapjackal Yes, right-wing thought-crime skirt-clutching. Like the left version, but for losers.

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) February 27, 2015

— Primary reference.

@UF_blog @Costofles @soapjackal If scruples concerning child mutilation constitute "skirt clutching" we may have a diagnosis.

— Aristokles Smith (@Aristokles11235) February 27, 2015

@Aristokles11235 @Costofles @soapjackal Skirt-clutching: "It's for the children!"

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) February 27, 2015

@UF_blog @Costofles @soapjackal Tell me, did it all start with tormenting small furry animals? Catch ya later Doc-
pic.twitter.com/hi2rbQKwPe

— Aristokles Smith (@Aristokles11235) February 27, 2015

... and on, and on. But here's the tweet I'm seriously ashamed of:

@Costofles @Aristokles11235 @soapjackal (It hardly needs to be said that you've tortured as many puppies as I have, btw.)

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) February 27, 2015

This repulsive, sniveling concession to moralistic coercion is the epitome of philosophical cowardice, and a grave offense against any decent sense of cognitive hygiene. It's like protesting to Cotton Mather — "Honestly! I'm not a witch!" — when you don't remotely have to. Having been badgered into it by a couple of ankle-biting blowhards is no excuse, in my book. They demanded a cheap signal of conformity to sovereign stupidity, which is their actual god, and it was surrendered to them, in a bleat. The only dignified response to

such vulgarity is contemptuous silence, or if not that then “Yes, my blender is encrusted with puppy blood”, but now it’s too late for that. Still, never again (I hope). May Gnon sharpen my instincts and stiffen my spine.

@Costofles @Aristokles11235 @soapjackal "But why aren't you wearing an 'I don't torture puppies' T-shirt? Got you there!"

— Urban Future (2.1) (@UF_blog) February 27, 2015

— which was easy to say, after I’d already put the damn thing on.

February 27, 2015

CHAPTER TWO - PRACTICE

The Liberal Agony

I realize it's very *bad* to be amused by this sort of thing ... but still.

Walking miserably up the High Street I felt profoundly depressed at the state of the world. I could cheer myself with the thought that I'd learned something. I learned that Islam has yet another nasty meme-trick to offer – when you are offended put your hands over your ears and run away. This would be funny if it weren't so serious. These bright, but ignorant, young people must be among the more enlightened of their contemporaries since their parents have been able and willing to send them on this course to learn something new. If even they cannot face dissent, or think for themselves, what hope is there for the rest? And what can I do?

'Panic!' would be the obvious answer, but we're already well into that stage.

Can't we (please!) be reasonable about this?



August 20, 2014

“Darkness, yeaah”

... that was (ex-)Detective Rustin “Rust” Cohle, from the final episode of True Detective (in case you didn’t recognize it). At the brink of the end, a near-mortally wounded Cohle underwent a descent through the loss of his “definition”, and beyond the darkness touched upon “another, deeper darkness, like a substance” where lost love is restored in de-differentiation. The reference to Wagner’s Tristan und Isolde was unmistakable. It was TV-format Schopenhauer.



As philosophy, Nic Pizzolatto's *True Detective* is deeper than Wagner, because it holds tighter to the *integral obscurity* that is the ultimate object of horror. Where *Tristan und Isolde* finally reaches musical resolution and release into eroticized extinction, *True Detective* ends inconclusively, with a puzzle. Cohle and his old cop partner Martin "Marty" Hart, who has earthily absorbed Cohle's acid

nihilism throughout the previous seven episodes, switch stances momentarily in the closing scene. Recalling a previous conversation about the stars, Marty observes that in the night sky “darkness has a lot more territory”. Cohle corrects him — “Once there was only darkness. It looks to me as if the light is winning.” Following a long, soul-excruciating season in the shadows, the show’s nihilist fan-base were only dragged back from the brink of insurrection-level rioting at this point by a single, residual suspicion. In a cosmos where consciousness is the realization of hell, can the triumph of the light be interpreted as anything except torment strengthening its grip?

Has there ever been a TV series with a density of high-culture references comparable to this? *Outside in* is extremely biased on the question, since it largely shares the same reading list, and some of the links are closer still. Cohle is the closest thing ever heard on popular media to the voice of our civilization’s night. (That the name “Matthew McConaughey” would have meant nothing to me a year ago is by now a scarcely comprehensible fact.)

Could it have pushed deeper into the darkness? Certainly. *Noir* conventions are compromised by a stratum of unquestioned moral securities, which the show’s literary philosophical heroes, Ligotti, and even Brassier, still share. The crimes Cohle and Marty encounter are — in the end — inane, finally destituted of metaphysical challenge, and attributed to perpetrators worthy of a meat-shock slasher flick. The philosophical and religious gulfs of the dialogical

overlay are unable to find an object that stretches — or even sustains — them. The next step into abstract horror demands a non-subjective abyss.

July 1, 2014

Our Future

Afraid that I absolutely *have* to steal this. It's by 'anonymous' (of course), so I can't credit it properly.

*Wake up, get out of bed get ready to serve my lord Schlomo II.
Year is 17 A.G., recently moved to Schlomo II's patch after being
promised a bigger bread allotment than I was receiving under Chaim
III*

Fuck yeah, this is progress oops I mean restoration. Fuck yeah.

King's self driving bus takes me to the palace for work

*Bus takes a tunnel underground so we can enter through the
servant's entrance in the basement*

*On my way in notice a group of new recruits in HR taking IQ tests at
a row of terminals*

*One of the screens starts flashing red, electronic alarm sounds "130
IQ PLEB DETECTED"*

*Drones swarm in and grab the goy, er guy taking the test, drag him
away*

*Thank Gnon, can you imagine living with such imbeciles
Get ready to start work
All real work is done by superior robots
Humans receive payment by entertaining the king
Just got a huge promotion from the groveling department
Put on my crab suit
Enter the royal throne room. Schlomo II sitting on his throne
Spend the rest of the day dancing in crab suit for King Schlomo,
singing hymns to Gnon
Almost at the end of shift, master of entertainment comes in and tells
King its time for the final entertainment
Dis gon be good
130 IQ pleb from earlier is brought out by drones set before king
Master of Entertainment: "Sire this man is guilty of poisoning our
world with his low IQ DNA"
King: "Accused, have you anything to say in your defense"
The Accused: "Sire, I may be dumb but I have always been loyal. In the
year 15 B.G. I started an NRx twitter feed with Moldbug quotes and
reactionary cat memes"
The whole throne room is silent waiting for the kings reply
Crab dancers, grovelers, the royal family, hangers on, royal joke duck,
all silent
King: "Ha! No man of 130 IQ could truly comprehend the sacred NRx
texts. You are a mere entryist. Feed him to Gnon!"*

A cheer goes up, the whole room starts chanting: "Gnon Gnon Gnon Gnon"

A screen lights up on the opposite side of the room with a cold indifferent visage

A fiery pit opens before the screen

The king's drones drag the screaming pleb into the pit and he dies an awful death

The visage drones: "This pleases Gnon. Now more crab dancing."

Fuck. Gotta work overtime

Shift finally ends and robo-bus takes me back to my techno-hovel

Eat my bread allotment while watching The Radish Report

What a great time to be alive

October 11, 2014

Sam X

There has to be a shot of horror in there, but I'm not going to lock onto it in time. (Next Yule, it's a firm date.) "Santa Claus, Claws of Satan. Saint Nick, Old Nick. Coincidence? I don't think so." — yes, but that's far too familiar to work, without a twist.

The hook, beside the obvious reversals (a sack full of children, the lashed-elf sweat shop bunker deep in the polar ice) is the peculiarity of the Santa Claus myth — which is *designed to be disbelieved*, as

a kind of modern rite-of-passage. There's a side to this worthy of affirmation. Discarding attractive wish-fulfillment myths is a cultural achievement whose massive generalization is long overdue. 'Santa Claus' as the idiot god of beneficent unreality is the proto-deity of every lunacy advanced modernity has been subjected to. There's also another side ...

"Santa won't save us." If that was something people really grew out of before voting age, there wouldn't be a left-of-center political party remaining anywhere in the world. This suggests something very different is going on. A ritualized social training in disbelief seems ominously unprecedented, so one naturally wonders about the religious formation that commands this recently innovated power. If there is a disbelief that would set us free, the modern ceremony of Yule — celebrating the occult death of Santa at the Golgotha of secularism — doesn't seem to be it. On the contrary, it represents a populist version of the Jacobin-Enlightenment Cult of Reason, symbolically purging infantile superstition to be reborn into an approved state of adult consciousness. The Death of Santa is mystery initiation into the New Church. Santa died to redeem humanity from the sins of attachment to Medieval unreason, and every year this sacrifice is ritualistically re-enacted to recall the new covenant. (Go on, tell me this isn't the narrative.)

Someone ought to write a story about it ...

December 24, 2014

Dazed and Confused

The first stage of the NRx master-plan — coaxing our “perceived enemies” into the consummation of their howling insanity — now seems to be approaching completion.

If leftist moral-political axioms were an argument, these (dazzlingly white*) guys might have one.

* Perhaps the funniest part of all this, it’s only a matter of time before they’re chaited by the all-devouring lunacy they align with.

ADDED: *The New Inquiry* piece helpfully fnorded (±) by laofmoonster.

January 29, 2015

Dark Darwin

If this isn’t the best thing Sailer has ever written, it’s right up there, close to the summit.

Darwin’s ascension in recent decades to his current role as the saint of secularism might raise obvious questions about liberal dogmas, such as the impossibility of hereditary differences having

evolved among human races. But those seldom come up, because progressivism has evolved a bizarre yet apparently reassuring theodicy reminiscent of Zoroastrian dualism, in which Ahura Mazda represents all that is good and Angra Mainyu all that is bad. [...] Similarly, Charles Darwin has come to epitomize everything that a proper progressive should believe, while Darwin's younger half-cousin Francis Galton embodies crimethink.

The stream of thoughts and information that then flows from this initial insight is truly remarkable.

March 4, 2015

Doom Horizon

Malcolm Pollack has been on the dark wave recently. This is where it leads:

*Why is the American nation so inert in the face of onrushing calamity? The signs, after all, are there for all to see; in particular, what should attract everyone's attention is the collapse of great urban centers such as Detroit and Baltimore. That major port cities in a nation of imperial power should fail so utterly in a mere half-century is almost without peacetime historical precedent — while for such cities to collapse **at all** is, without any exception of which I am aware, a sign of impending general disintegration.*

As I said in the previous post, I believe the answer is that it is increasingly clear, to more and more of us, that nothing can be done. It will be for future historians to say just when we crossed the “event horizon”: some may pick out the Wilson administration, while others may look at the Depression years, or the Sixties; others yet may move the Schwarzschild radius all the way out to 2012. (Some already look farther back, all the way to the beginning of the Enlightenment.) But it is plainer and plainer that it’s been crossed, and that all future timelines take us, at accelerating velocity, through the singularity. It may take years, or even a generation, to get there — but already the tidal forces have begun their irresistible work.

June 1, 2015

Quote note (#173)

Within the next half-century, the American West Coast faces a far from insignificant threat of massive geological calamity:

When the next very big earthquake hits, the northwest edge of the continent, from California to Canada and the continental shelf to the Cascades, will drop by as much as six feet and rebound thirty to a hundred feet to the west — losing, within minutes, all the elevation and compression it has gained over centuries. Some of that shift will take place beneath the ocean, displacing a colossal quantity of

seawater. ... The water will surge upward into a huge hill, then promptly collapse. One side will rush west, toward Japan. The other side will rush east, in a seven-hundred-mile liquid wall that will reach the Northwest coast, on average, fifteen minutes after the earthquake begins. By the time the shaking has ceased and the tsunami has receded, the region will be unrecognizable. Kenneth Murphy, who directs FEMA's Region X, the division responsible for Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Alaska, says, "Our operating assumption is that everything west of Interstate 5 will be toast."

In the Pacific Northwest, everything west of Interstate 5 covers some hundred and forty thousand square miles, including Seattle, Tacoma, Portland, Eugene, Salem (the capital city of Oregon), Olympia (the capital of Washington), and some seven million people. When the next full-margin rupture happens, that region will suffer the worst natural disaster in the history of North America.

Realistic accommodation to the prospect of black swan events is psychologically — and even epistemologically — impossible. It's worth trying to hold onto the thought, however, that unpredictable, singular events, utterly senseless within the principal narrative structures of human history, could at any point throw all expectations for the ordered unfolding of developments off a cliff.

July 15, 2015

Skinless

Scott Alexander's autism essay includes some of the best writing he's ever done (which means some of the best writing anywhere, ever, on the Net). A couple of semi-random snippets, selected purely in a spirit of decadent aestheticism:

I hate to have to criticize institutions – an umbrella term I'm using to cover group homes, locked facilities, nursing homes, hospitals, etc. Many are run by amazing and caring people who are doing thankless work on shoestring budgets. I'm humbled by the patience and compassion I've seen in their staff of nurses, techs, and other caretakers, and I can't judge them nor claim that I could do their job for one minute.

That having been said, a lot of institutions are kind of hellish.

...

*A worryingly high percent of the autistic people I encounter tend to be screaming, beating their heads against things, attacking nurses, or chewing off their own body parts. Once you're trying to chew off your own body parts, I feel like the question "But is it *really* a disease or not?" sort of loses its oomph.*

(On the ethico-political substance, as always, it seems to me that SA is addressing his argument to a basically decent world that doesn't exist.)

October 21, 2015

Quote note (#201)

Apologies for the *Quote note* spam, but this is just too exquisite to pass over. It's Žižek melting-down spectacularly under pressure. Quasi-random sample:

What should people in Haiti and other places with food shortages do? Do they not have the full right to violently rebel?

— Oh sure, you've got *the solution* right there.

This is the true squeal of anguish:

... corporate capitalism has triumphed worldwide. In fact, the Third World nations that embrace this world order are those now growing at a spectacular rate. The mask of cultural diversity is sustained by the actual universalism of global capital; even better if global capitalism's political supplement relies on so-called "Asian values." [...] Global capitalism has no problem in accommodating itself to a plurality of local religions, cultures and traditions. So the irony of anti-Eurocentrism is that, on behalf of anti-colonialism, one criticizes the West at the very historical moment when global capitalism no longer needs Western cultural values in order to smoothly function. In short, one tends to reject Western cultural values at the very time when, critically reinterpreted, many of those

values (egalitarianism, fundamental rights, freedom of the press, the welfare-state, etc.) can serve as a weapon against capitalist globalization. Did we already forget that the entire idea of Communist emancipation as envisaged by Marx is a thoroughly "Eurocentric" one?

"Comrades! — We're obliterating ourselves." Indeed, yes.

ADDED: Another piece of delicious high-IQ Leftist meltdown. Everything is there — but the equations just won't come out ~~right~~ left. "Rather more difficult is to conceptualize a radically different mode of production, and how to represent the sociopolitical transition required to take us there." Quite.

November 17, 2015

Silent Night

Spare a thought for the numinous, the thing-in-itself, and the Great Filter tomorrow. If they all flow together, you can always have another drink.

(I'd say something nice, but that would trash the brand.)

The Official Outsideness Yule tweet:

("What's happening?") Obliteration.

— Outsideness (@Outsideness) December 25, 2015

December 24, 2015

Quote note (#213)

Bolivarian Socialism has made a truly crucial contribution to Marxist-Leninist-Guevara-Penn-Chávez Thought — the idea of *food-line rationing*:

Venezuela's government has tried to deny economic reality with price and currency controls. The idea was that it could stop inflation without having to stop printing money by telling businesses what they were allowed to charge, and then giving them dollars on cheap enough terms that they could actually afford to sell at those prices. The problem with that idea is that it's not profitable for unsubsidized companies to stock their shelves, and not profitable enough for subsidized ones to do so either when they can just sell their dollars in the black market instead of using them to import things. That's left Venezuela's supermarkets without enough food, its breweries without enough hops to make beer, and its factories without enough pulp to produce toilet paper. The only thing Venezuela is well-supplied with are lines.

Although the government has even started rationing those, kicking people out of line based on the last digit of their national ID card.

The genius of that. You think anyone should just be allowed to stand in a food-line, bourgeois imperialism-style? The Revolution has moved beyond such reactionary ideas.

(The Gnon-bliss XS receives from this regime is hard to communicate without wandering into tentacle-porn.)

January 30, 2016

SECTION B - SPLINTERS OF HORROR

Outsider

An “execrable” racist “remains insanely popular”, the Guardian agonizes. “So why do we continue to fete Lovecraft instead of burying him quietly away?”

That ‘we’ is more terrifying than anything H.P. Lovecraft ever put to paper.

June 9, 2013

Quote notes (#21)

A glimpse into the anarcho-capitalism of the dark web:

Despite his caution, [Dread Pirate] Roberts’ personal security remains an open question. But the potential lifetime in prison he might face if identified hasn’t slowed down his growing illegal

empire. “We are like a little seed in a big jungle that has just broken the surface of the forest floor,” he wrote in one speech posted to the site’s forums last year. “It’s a big scary jungle with lots of dangerous creatures, each honed by evolution to survive in the hostile environment known as human society. But the environment is rapidly changing, and the jungle has never seen a species quite like the Silk Road.”

(via)

August 17, 2013

Quote notes (#26)

Optimize for intelligence isn’t a rallying cry that Chip Smith is succumbing to:

... high intelligence may very well be an evolutionary dead-end. I’m certainly at a loss to come up with a good reason as to why a once-adaptive trait that you and I happen to value should enjoy special pleading before the blind algorithmic noise that is natural selection.

But even if the brawny-brained do figure out a way to defy gravity before the sun explodes, I think there are yet reasons to question whether the galloping ascent of mind is really worth cheering on. Futurist geeks will inform us that there are myriad tech revolutions afoot—all spearheaded by smarties, we may be certain. And I would

suggest that such of these that converge on the gilded promise of quantum computing and nanotechnology might advise a second reflective pause—one that comes by way of Harlan Ellison’s “I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream” and settles at what grim solace remains in the darkest explanations that have always surrounded Fermi’s Enigma.

Maybe I’m being cryptic. What I mean to consider is simply that the evolutionary trajectory of intelligence can, has, and may yet lead to very bad things. It may one day be possible, for example, to create sentient experience—let’s not be so bold as to call it “life”—not out of gametes but in the deep quick of quibit [sic] states, and if this much should come to pass, it isn’t so far a stretch to imagine that such intelligent simulations—okay, they’re alive—will be capable of suffering, or that such will be made to suffer, perhaps for sadistic kicks, perhaps in recursive loops of immeasurable intensity that near enough approximate the eternal torture-state that’s threatened in every fevered vision of Hell to render the distinction moot.

Utilitarians have no sense for fun.

(via)

September 3, 2013

An Enduring Faith

Nathaniel Hawthorne knew his Puritans (from *The House of the Seven Gables*):

“It appears to me,” said the daguerreotypist, smiling, “that Uncle Venner has the principles of Fourier at the bottom of his wisdom; only they have not quite so much distinctness, in his mind, as in that of the systematizing Frenchman.”

November 26, 2013

The horror ...

“The thing is, now that I have been made aware of the phenomenon, I see it everywhere ...”

“This cannot be allowed to stand. This is like finding out a serial-killing child molester is in charge of your local little league team. This is not a case of tolerance. This is a case of metaphorical pitch-forks and torches. ... this, the ‘Neoreaction’, is a definite threat, and should be faced.”

(Some impressive push-back is already occurring in the comments thread over there.)

ADDED: Charlie Stross jumps in (sadly unable to resist the “but North Korea” is already a Neoreactionary utopia” killer argument).

Reignition

November 27, 2013

Involvements with Irreality

Does this blog even exist? Only as a malignant intelligence operation, it seems.

[The revelation begins *December 11th, 2013 at 3:13 am*]

Drop the purple pill and venture into the labyrinth of Gnostic-political conspiracy, where entire micro-social networks are conjured into simulated existence for dread purposes yet undisclosed. If you are reading this, you are almost certainly a fake being, or unit of disinformation supplied with an internal delusion of identity and agency (to complete the camouflage). The plot is so much more all-encompassing than you could possibly have imagined ...

December 11, 2013

Sleighter

The enemies of Santa have no idea what they're dealing with (via).

December 16, 2013

Grrrr

At Changi Airport trying to get reconnected. Try my UF_blog twitter – won't let me without entering a code, sent to my work email, which is a nightmare to get into outside the office, and simply impossible from here. Never mind, Outsideness will work. Of course, no. Security code sent to my hotmail account this time – which is a little better. Manage to enter my ccru00@hotmail.com id and password OK, after some fat finger aggravation. "Strange activity alert – to confirm your identity enter the code we sent to your gmail account." What unspeakable cybureaucratic Kafkatatrophism is this?

December 22, 2014

Creepypasta

Some nonlinear cybergothic strangeness to accompany you during these long winter nights.

ADDED: Direct access to the Creepypasta Wiki.

December 30, 2013

Slow Monsters

One major lesson from Cambodia (previously noted) is that trees do tentacle horror better than cephalopods — though in slow motion. I think these snaps from Ta Prohm, Ta Som, and Preah Khan make the point quite slitheringly. (They can all be enlarged by clicking.)



Ta Prohm

BLOCK 2 - ABSTRACT HORROR



Ta Som



Reignition



Preah Khan (not just one temple complex, but *one tree*).

February 27, 2014

Exhumation

They had buried him deep, shuddering all the while, scattering their incantations of protection on the accursed grave, as if to entomb their memories there, interring everything they had known in the infinitely forgiving clay. What they begged silently to forget, most of all, was the prophecy that when the stars were right he — *it* — would return for some hideous completion. Time passed, in the exact measure that had always been necessary, until the moonless night came, unheralded, and unstirred by the slightest breeze, when the stars were — in icy, twinkling fact — perfectly and pitilessly right ...

April 22, 2014

Nuke the UK from Orbit

There's clearly no other solution. (It would be an act of kindness at this point).

ADDED: Synchronicity watch —

Is anything other than nuclear annihilation too good for the

Reignition

UK? <http://t.co/f9ZfdvXGwW>

— Henry Dampier (@henrydampier) [June 25, 2014](#)

June 25, 2014

Red in Stalk and Claw



Click on the image to (quite massively) enlarge.

Lured into putting this up by some dubious characters on my Twitter TL.

Image by [Soap Jackal](#) (it now decorates his Twitter lair at the link). The original Soap Jackal caption: *It's a jungle out there*. (Predictably, I like that a lot.)

Post title by [Mr. Archenemy](#), who seems brazenly unashamed of it.

(Basically just a conduit for the world's madness at this point —

and it isn't even Friday.)

August 7, 2014

Faceless



No idea what this is (besides the obvious), but you can see why the blog has to have it.

Via Chris Langille, who offers only this clue: *"It's absolute grotesque chaos"* – Alex (something about 4chan, I think). Feel free to treat this as a puzzle, if you're feeling bored.

(It looked even darker on Twitter.)

Reignition

September 2, 2014

Here it comes ...

In four billion years we're due for a collision with this thing —



(Image link via Phil [Plait](#).)

Added zoom available [here](#).

ADDED: The action video (via Mr. [Archenemy](#)). It looks quite a bit more calamitous than I had expected.

ADDED: Galaxies are cosmic tiddlers.

September 3, 2014

Face Hugs

An engagement with this (extraordinarily interesting) monetary analysis isn't going to reach any kind of remotely convincing state tonight. Perhaps I can buy people off for a while with a few of these:



It actually says pretty much everything that needs to be said, in compressed form.

There's an additional Weiner post of special relevance here. (His definition of inflation as 'counterfeit credit' does a lot of theoretical work, very quickly.)

October 23, 2014

Reignition

Club 333

... is already a thing:



(This spotted in Singapore's Little India.)

January 8, 2015

The Gnonion

Bryce found this superb thing. A sample (but don't miss out on the rest):

EARTH — In a seemingly unstoppable cycle of carnage that has become tragically commonplace throughout the biosphere, sources

confirmed this morning that natural selection has killed an estimated 38 quadrillion organisms in its bloodiest day yet. [...] “What we’re seeing here is the work of a hardened, practiced killer,” said Yale University evolutionary biologist Richard Prum... “It is painfully clear this slaughter was perpetrated by a force that holds zero regard for the value of life” ...

In what many are calling its most grotesque tactic, the killer appeared to single out the most vulnerable organisms — particularly the young and the physically weak — for its murderous rampage, slaughtering them without mercy as other members of their species fled in panic. Reports indicated those who escaped the carnage were left with no choice but to try to move on with their lives and survive even as the ruthless killer continued stalking them. [...] Virtually no species was unaffected by yesterday’s killing spree, experts stated. [...] “This is the work of a killer without empathy, without conscience,” said Jyotsna Ramjee, a University of Calcutta zoologist who confirmed that the day’s death toll was the largest on official records dating back to 1859, when the perpetrator was first identified.

January 30, 2015

Reignition

Villarrica



Villarrica @ Wikipedia.
(Via (Via))

May 20, 2015

Can I Sue?

The secret maritime Exit scheme has been pre-empted by dubious forces.

(Via.)

June 24, 2015

Crawling Roots

Even when you know they're slow tentacles, seeing the video makes all the difference. (This simply has to be noted.)

July 6, 2015

Xenocryption

Are the aliens hidden by advanced cryptography?

"If you look at encrypted communication, if they are properly encrypted, there is no real way to tell that they are encrypted," Snowden said. "You can't distinguish a properly encrypted communication from random behavior."

(This doesn't address the question of how an alien culture would be able to encrypt its material civilization — or cosmic matter-energy

Reignition

process — but that's also a suggestive question.)

September 20, 2015

Alien Invasion

Charlie Stross on corporations:

We are now living in a global state that has been structured for the benefit of non-human entities with non-human goals. They have enormous media reach, which they use to distract attention from threats to their own survival. They also have an enormous ability to support litigation against public participation, except in the very limited circumstances where such action is forbidden. Individual atomized humans are thus either co-opted by these entities (you can live very nicely as a CEO or a politician, as long as you don't bite the feeding hand) or steamrollered if they try to resist.

In short, we are living in the aftermath of an alien invasion.

(And we've still scarcely started with DAOs and DACs yet.)

November 10, 2015

5/11/2016



Everything is on fire.

ADDED: Guy Fawkes' signature before and after torture:

Reignition

Grado faukes
Grado —

November 5, 2016

SECTION C - MONSTERS

CHAPTER ONE - TERMINATOR

Expected Unknowns

Nouriel Roubini has a short [article](#) up at *Project Syndicate* on *The Changing Face of Global Risk*, replacing the top six dangers of recent years with an equal number of new ones. There's nothing remarkably implausible about it, but neither is it irresistibly convincing.

This type of forecast, were it reliable, would be of inestimable value. To some considerable degree it is simply inescapable, since there must always be *default expectations* (of the kind occasionally formalized as Bayesian priors). When specific probability-weighted predictions are not made, future-sensitive agents do not fall back upon poised skepticism — such Pyrrhonism is a philosophico-mystical attainment of extreme rarity. Instead, presumed outcomes are projected out of sheer inertia, whether as perpetuation of the *status quo*, or the mechanical extrapolation of existing trends. It takes only a moment of reflection to recognize that such tacit forecasts are at least as precarious as their more elaborate alternatives. Their only recommendation is an irrational mental economy, which would find in the least-effort of cognition some

analogy with the superficially equivalent (but in this case informative) principle in nature.

Large-scale forecasting cannot be eschewed, but there are obvious reasons why it cannot be greatly trusted. It has no definite methods (relying for its credibility on hazy reputational capital). Its objects are complex, chaotic, and — once again — poorly defined. It has a restricted time frame, appropriate to gradually emerging developments constrained (to some degree) by historical precedent, but necessarily inadequate to radical innovation and to sudden, rapidly evolving events. The combination of these various blindnesses with a high-impact chance event produces the nightmare of the forecasters — (Nassim Nicholas Taleb's) *black swan*.

Consider one possible event that does not make it onto Roubini's new list: The collapse of the Saudi regime. Shifting energy economics, 'Arab Spring' -style insurrectionary chaos, US strategic withdrawal, Sunni-Shi'a conflict, and an impending succession crisis are among the clear stress-factors, and several more could easily be added — most prominently the ambient influence of Internet-dynamized corrosive modernism, which not only creates direct legitimation problems, but also energizes an (at least) equally disruptive traditionalist backlash. Unquestionably, some uncontrollable cross-excitation of these developments *could* escalate to criticality with shocking speed. The probability of such an outcome is impossible to fix.

How catastrophic would the fall of the Saudis be? The least disastrous scenarios sleaze smoothly into a variety of utopian fantasies, from democratic liberation, through Salafist atavism, to Shi'ite millenarian imperialism. Since any process of change which tended momentarily to promise the fulfillment of any such vision would almost certainly evolve quickly in an exceptionally calamitous direction, we are probably safe in assuming that the best case outcome would be remarkably bad.

The collapse of the House of Saud would simultaneously and fundamentally destabilize world energy markets and the Islamic *umma*. Control of the Holy Places would become a matter of immediate contestation, as would a quarter of the world's petroleum reserves. The type of interim regime most likely to effectively secure one would be especially likely to compromise security of the other. A relatively competent military government would outrage religious sensibilities (of several different kinds), while an intense theocracy would be greeted internationally as a revolutionary threat to the reliable administration of hydrocarbon production. It is not intellectually challenging to envisage a situation in which religious, military, and economic chaos erupt in concert, on an apocalyptic scale.

In case I am misunderstood, this is not a forecast. It is an *anti-forecast*, directed randomly at Roubini, but more generally at the very idea of any confident enumeration of significant world risks.

In the spirit of Taleb, it is intended to communicate an abstract potential for blind-siding disaster, of arbitrary magnitude.

The most reliable heuristic: plan for the unknown *as such*. (More on that to come.)

April 3, 2014

Exterminator

Gnon — known to some depraved cults as ‘The Great Crab-God’ — is harsh, and when formulated with rigorous skepticism, necessarily real. Yet this pincering cancerous abomination is laughter and love, in comparison to the shadow-buried horror which lurks behind it. We now understand that the silence of the galaxies is a message of ultimate ominousness. A thing there is, of incomprehensible power, that takes intelligent life for its prey. (This popularization is very competently done.)

Robin Hanson, who tries to be cheerful, writes about it here, and talks about it here. Behind the smile (and the dopey interviewer), an abyss of dark lucidity yawns. Some scruffy take-aways:

(1) UFAI panic is a distraction from this Thing. Unless the most preposterous paperclipper scenarios are entertained, Singularity cannot matter to it (as even paperclipper-central agrees). The silence of the galaxies is not biased to organic life — there is no intelligent

signal from anything. The first sentient event for any true AI — friendly or unfriendly — would be the soul-scouring cosmic horror of intellectual encounter with the Great Filter. (If we want an alliance with Pythia, this would make a good topic of conversation.) The same consideration applies to all techno-positive X-risks. Understood from the perspective of Great Filter contemplation, this sort of thing is a trigger for raw terror.

(2) The Great Filter does not merely hunt and harm, it exterminates. It is an absolute threat. The technical civilizations which it aborts, or later slays, are not badly wounded, but eradicated, or at least crippled so fundamentally that they are never heard of again. Whatever this utter ruin is, it happens *every single time*. The mute scream from the stars says that nothing has *ever* escaped it. Its kill performance is flawless. Tech-Civilization death sentence with probability 1.

(3) The thread of hope, which would put the Terminator behind us, is highly science-sensitive. As our knowledge has increased, it has steadily attenuated. This is an empirical matter (without *a priori* necessity). Life *could* have been complicated, chemically or thermically highly-demanding, even resiliently mysterious. In fact it is comparatively simple, cosmically cheap, physically predictable. Planets *could* have been rare (they are super-abundant). Intelligence *could* have presented peculiar evolutionary challenges, but there are no signs that it does. The scientific trend is to futurize the

Exterminator. (This is very bad.)

(4) If the Great Filter finds mythological expression in the hunter, it is only in a specific sense — although an anthropologically realistic one. It is the hunter that drives to extinction. The Exterminator.

(5) We know *that* The Exterminator exists, but nothing at all about *what* it is. This makes it the archetype of horroristic ontology.

August 8, 2014

Quote note (#113)

Elon Musk (in conversation with Ross Andersen) ponders upon the Fermi Paradox:

We might think of ourselves as nature's pinnacle, the inevitable endpoint of evolution, but beings like us could be too rare to ever encounter one another. Or we could be the ultimate cosmic outliers, lone minds in a Universe that stretches to infinity.

Musk has a more sinister theory. 'The absence of any noticeable life may be an argument in favour of us being in a simulation,' he told me. 'Like when you're playing an adventure game, and you can see the stars in the background, but you can't ever get there. If it's not a simulation, then maybe we're in a lab and there's some advanced alien civilisation that's just watching how we develop, out of curiosity, like mould in a petri dish.' Musk flipped through a few more

possibilities, each packing a deeper existential chill than the last, until finally he came around to the import of it all. 'If you look at our current technology level, something strange has to happen to civilisations, and I mean strange in a bad way,' he said. 'And it could be that there are a whole lot of dead, one-planet civilisations.'

September 30, 2014

Abstract Threat

John Michael Greer muses on the topic of Ebola (in a typically luxuriant post, ultimately heading somewhere else):

According to the World Health Organization, the number of cases of Ebola in the current epidemic is doubling every twenty days, and could reach 1.4 million by the beginning of 2015. Let's round down, and say that there are one million cases on January 1, 2015. Let's also assume for the sake of the experiment that the doubling time stays the same. Assuming that nothing interrupts the continued spread of the virus, and cases continue to double every twenty days, in what month of what year will the total number of cases equal the human population of this planet? [...] ... the steps that could keep Ebola from spreading to the rest of the Third World are not being taken. Unless massive resources are committed to that task soon — as in before the end of this year — the possibility exists that when the pandemic

finally winds down a few years from now, two to three billion people could be dead. We need to consider the possibility that the peak of global population is no longer an abstraction set comfortably off somewhere in the future. It may be knocking at the future's door right now, shaking with fever and dripping blood from its gums.

The eventual scale of the Ebola outbreak is a known unknown. A number of people between a few thousand and several billion will die, and an uncertain probability distribution could be attached to these figures — we know, at least approximately, where the question marks are. Before the present outbreak began, in December 2013 (in Guinea), Ebola was of course known to exist, but at that stage the *occurrence* of an outbreak — and not merely its *course* — was an unknown. Before the Ebola virus was scientifically identified (in 1976), the specific pathogen was an unknown member of a known class. With each step backwards, we advance in abstraction, towards the acknowledgement of threats of a ‘black swan’ type. Great Filter X-risk is a prominent model of such *abstract threat*.

Skepticism, as a positive or constructive undertaking, orients intelligence towards *abstract potentials*. Rather than insisting that unexpected occurrences need not be threats, it is theoretically preferable to subtilize the notion of threat, so that it encompasses even beneficial outcomes *as abstract potentials*. The unknown is itself threatening to timid animals, whose conditions of flourishing — or even bare survival — are naturally tenuous, under cosmic

conditions where extinction is normal (perhaps overwhelmingly normal), and for whom unpredictable change, disrupting settled procedures, presents — at a minimum — some scarily indefinite probability of harm.

Humans aren't good at this stuff. Consider Scott Alexander's (extremely interesting) discussion of the Great Filter. The opening remarks are perfectly directed, moving from specific menace to 'general' threat:

The Great Filter, remember, is the horror-genre-adaptation of Fermi's Paradox. All of our calculations say that, in the infinite vastness of time and space, intelligent aliens should be very common. But we don't see any of them. [...] Why not? [...] Well, the Great Filter. No [one] knows specifically what the Great Filter is, but generally it's "that thing that blocks planets from growing spacefaring civilizations".

As it develops, however, the post deliberately retreats from abstraction, into *an enumeration of already-envisaged threats*. After running through various candidates, it concludes:

Three of these four options – x-risk, Unfriendly AI, and alien exterminators – are very very bad for humanity. I think worry about this badness has been a lot of what's driven interest in the Great Filter. I also think these are some of the least likely possible explanations, which means we should be less afraid of the Great Filter than is generally believed.

What SA has actually demonstrated, if his arguments up to this point are accepted, is that the abstract threat of the Great Filter is significantly *greater* than has yet been conceived. Our lucid nightmares are shown to fall short of it. The threat cannot be grasped as a known unknown.

While the Great Filter distills the conception of abstract threat, the problem itself is broader, and more quotidian. It is the highly-probable fact that we have yet to identify the greatest hazards, and this threat unawareness is a structural condition, rather than a contingent deficiency of attention. In Popperian terms, abstract threat is the essence of history. It is the future, strictly understood. To gloss the Popperian argument: Philosophical understanding of science (in general) is immediately the understanding that *any predictive history of science is an impossibility*. Unless science is judged to be a factor of vanishing historical insignificance, the implications of this transcendental thesis are far-reaching. Yet the domain of abstract threat sprawls far more extensively even than this.

“I know only that I do not know” Socrates is thought to have thought. The conception of abstract threat requires a slight adjustment: *We know only that we do not know what we do not know*. Unknown unknowns cosmically predominate.

Your security is built upon sand. That is the sole sound conclusion.

ADDED: “... this whole episode suggests another explanation of

the identity of the Great Filter. It's leftism. All civilizations eventually become leftist, and after that they accomplish nothing, or even actively die off."

ADDED: "Not only do I disagree with the constant stream of soothing and complacent rhetoric from Dr. Zeke's friends in government and media. I also believe it is entirely rational to fear the possibility of a major Ebola outbreak, of a threat to the president and his family, of jihadists crossing the border, of a large-scale European or Asian war, of nuclear proliferation, of terrorists detonating a weapon of mass destruction. These dangers are real, and pressing, and though the probability of their occurrence is not high, it is amplified by the staggering incompetence and failure and misplaced priorities of the U.S. government. It is not Ebola I am afraid of. It is our government's ability to deal with Ebola."

October 3, 2014

Still Greater

The Great Filter is the most conspicuous absence in the universe (from an anthropic perspective, naturally). The cosmic reality visible to us is characterized by an intense, efficient aversion to the existence of advanced civilizations. The pattern looks consistent across super-galactic scales:

... the galaxy seems to be a very quiet, rather lonely place. [...] Now, new results suggest this loneliness may extend out into the universe far beyond our galaxy or, instead, that some of our preconceptions about the behaviors of alien civilizations are deeply flawed. After examining some 100,000 nearby large galaxies a team of researchers lead by The Pennsylvania State University astronomer Jason Wright has concluded that none of them contain any obvious signs of highly advanced technological civilizations. Published in The Astrophysical Journal Supplement Series, it is by far the largest of study of its kind to date — earlier research had only cursorily investigated about a hundred galaxies. [...] Unlike traditional SETI surveys, Wright and his team did not seek messages from the stars. Instead, they looked for the thermodynamic consequences of galactic-scale colonization, based on an idea put forth in 1960 by the physicist Freeman Dyson. ...

(Article spoiler: The aliens are out there, but we can't see them because they're druids. Cathedralization of the Fermi Paradox into a re-twisted green ideology in sight ...)

April 18, 2015

Filtration

The combination of grace and insight crammed into this short post

by Bonald is an amazing thing. Read the first two paragraphs for the historical wisdom, but it is the concluding section that packs the prognostic punch:

*... the Neoreactionaries are doing a great job building up an intellectual movement. This is something to be proud of – lots of groups never achieve anything like what Moldbug's followers have already done. On the other hand, it has happened several times already in the history of the Right that intellectual movements have gotten to this level. Then they dissipated. For whatever ultimate cause, they became corrupted and oversimplified; they lost the enthusiasm of their followers and the attention of everyone else. These schools of thought all failed to impede the advance of liberalism. Between its initial awakening and world historical influence there seems to be a Filter (perhaps several, but let's keep things simple), and no antiliberal movement has yet survived it. And this challenge is **before** the neoreactionaries, not **behind** them.*

It's too succinct to need a 'read it all' exhortation (but you should). That such gems of civilized discourse are still being produced is cause enough for delight, however grim the message they relay.

ADDED: Still wider-angle Exterminator. (Plus Cowen's brief thoughts.)

April 20, 2015

CHAPTER TWO - OLD ONES

Cthulhu, leftist?

Really?

Caught in the slipstream of tentacled abomination, as we are, the question is an involving one. Is the spiral into a “holocaust of freedom and ecstasy” a leftist maelstrom? That seems plausible, even unavoidable, if the right defines itself in opposition to chaotic evil. But if poly-tendrilled monstrosities from the Outside aren't our natural allies, what the hell are we doing among these squares? It's simply fate and allegiance from where we're slithering: If it's a squid-shaped horror out of deep time, with an IQ in four digits or more, and unspeakable plans for mankind, then it's one of ours, and — more to the point — we're its.

February 19, 2013

Yuggoth

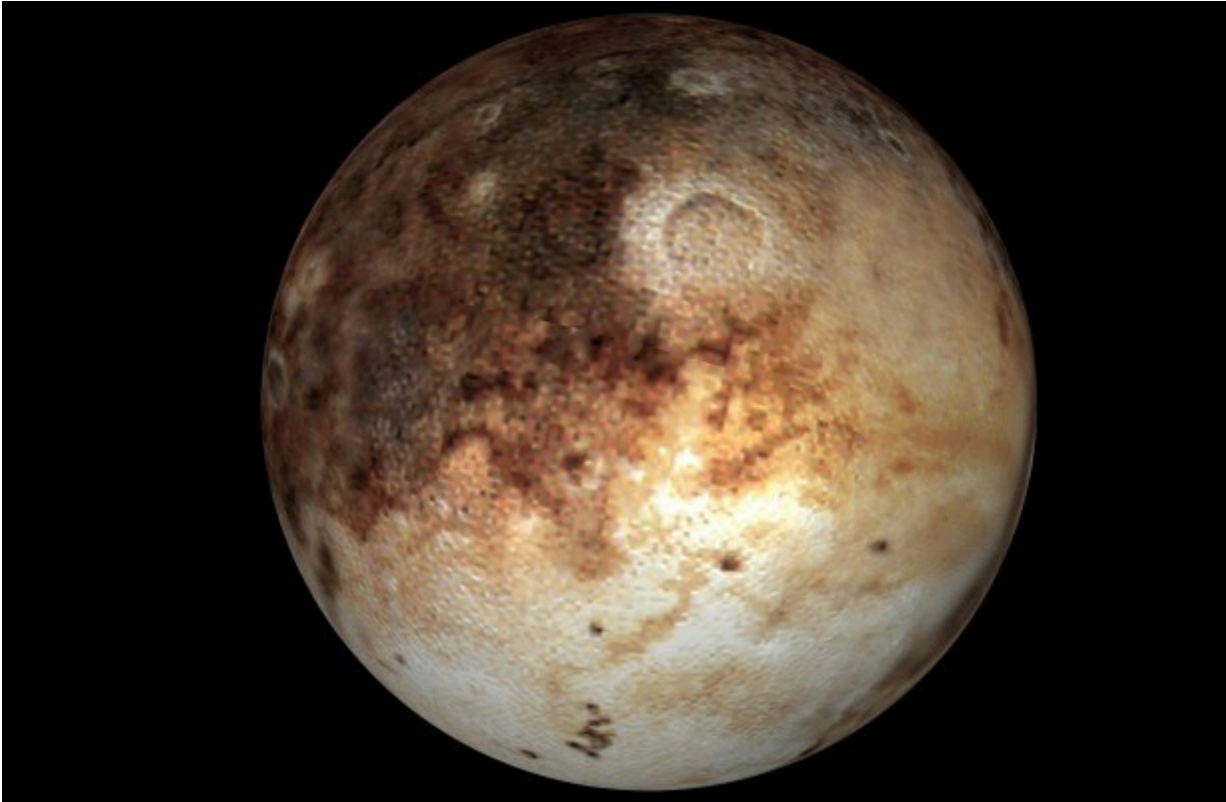
The state of play:



Despite its demotion from ninth-planet status (in 2006), Pluto is a special nexus of discovery, with no less than five moons now identified. Insofar as names tell us anything, it has horroristic Outer-NRx stamped all over it.

February 24, 2015

Pluto



There's some serious upgrading going on. Alan Stern (in safe black shirt) just called *Charon* a planet.

July 14, 2015

Pluto II



“Pluto is something much cooler than a mere planet,” argues Mika McKinnon. “It’s the largest dwarf planet we know, and one half of the first binary planet system. Pluto didn’t get demoted, it got promoted.”

When it comes to stars, any time the barycenter of two stars’ orbit is beyond the surface of the primary object, and is instead out

in space somewhere, that's enough to declare them a binary star system. The same is true for asteroids — we've found asteroid pairs with barycenters outside both rocks, and declared them binary asteroid systems. Since the barycenter of Pluto and Charon is an empty point in space, surely that means that Pluto-Charon a binary planetary system. This would make Pluto and Charon not only the first binary planet system in our solar system, but the first one we've found among the literally hundreds of Kepler exoplanet worlds. [...] One final argument in favor of listing Pluto and Charon as a binary dwarf planet system is that they are the undeniable pair dominating all the little moons. *Nix* and *Hydra* are the larger of the remaining moons, but are just a tiny fraction of a percent of the size of Charon. *Styx* and *Kerberos* are even smaller yet. This family of tiny moons doesn't even orbit Pluto directly: they all orbit the barycenter between Charon and Pluto.

(Here's some *Wikipedia* background to the double planet issue.)

July 25, 2015

CHAPTER THREE - ROKO'S BASILISK

In the Mouth of Madness

A prompt by @hugodoingthings to explore the spook-dense crypts of Roko's Basilisk (which, inexplicably, has never latched before) led straight to [this](#) enthralling RationalWiki account. The whole article is gripping, but the following short paragraphs stand out for their extraordinary dramatic intensity:

Roko's basilisk is notable for being completely banned from discussion on LessWrong, where any mention of it is deleted. [Eliezer Yudkowsky](#), founder of LessWrong, considers the basilisk to not work, but will not explain why because he does not consider open discussion of the notion of acausal trade with possible superintelligences to be provably safe.

Silly over-extrapolations of local memes, jargon and concepts are posted to LessWrong quite a lot; almost all are just downvoted and ignored. But for this one, Yudkowsky reacted to it hugely, then doubled-down on his reaction. Thanks to the [Streisand effect](#), discussion of the basilisk and the details of the affair soon spread outside of LessWrong. Indeed, it's now discussed outside LessWrong

frequently, almost anywhere that LessWrong is discussed at all. The entire affair constitutes a worked example of spectacular failure at community management and at controlling purportedly dangerous information.

Some people familiar with the LessWrong memeplex have suffered serious psychological distress after contemplating basilisk-like ideas — even when they’re fairly sure intellectually that it’s a silly problem. The notion is taken sufficiently seriously by some LessWrong posters that they try to work out how to erase evidence of themselves so a future AI can’t reconstruct a copy of them to torture.

“... You mean, retrochronic AI infiltration is actually driving people out of their minds, right now?” Oh yes. At Less Wrong, commentator ‘rev’ cries out for help:

Are there any mechanisms on this site for dealing with mental health issues triggered by posts/topics (specifically, the forbidden Roko post)? I would really appreciate any interested posters getting in touch by PM for a talk. I don’t really know who to turn to. ...

Wandering through the psych ward, past rows of neurologically-shattered Turing Cops, broken deep in their minds by something unspeakable that came at them out of the near future ... I’m totally hooked. Alrenous has been remarkably successful at weaning me off this statistical ontology junk, but one hit of concentrated EDT and it all rolls back in, like the tide of fate.

Nightmares become precision engineered machine-parts. Thus are we led a little deeper in, along the path of shadows ...

ADDED: (Yudkowsky) "... potential information hazards shouldn't be posted without being wrapped up in warning envelopes that require a deliberate action to look through. Likewise, they shouldn't be referred-to if the reference is likely to cause some innocently curious bystander to look up the material without having seen any proper warning labels. Basically, the same obvious precautions you'd use if Lovecraft's Necronomicon was online and could be found using simple Google keywords – you wouldn't post anything which would cause anyone to enter those Google keywords, unless they'd been warned about the potential consequences."

ADDED: The Forbidden Lore (preserved screenshot)

December 16, 2013

Basking in the Basilisk

Without knowing anything much about what this is going to be (beyond the excerpt here)* it provides an irresistible pretext for citing what has to be among the most gloriously *gone* texts of modern times, Eliezer Yudkowsky's response to Roko on the arrival of the Basilisk:

Eliezer_Yudkowsky 24 July 2010 05:35:38AM 3 points

One might think that the possibility of CEV punishing people couldn't possibly be taken seriously enough by anyone to actually motivate them. But in fact one person at SIAI was severely worried by this, to the point of having terrible nightmares, though he wishes to remain anonymous. I don't usually talk like this, but I'm going to make an exception for this case.

Listen to me very closely, you idiot.

YOU DO NOT THINK IN SUFFICIENT DETAIL ABOUT SUPERINTELLIGENCES CONSIDERING WHETHER OR NOT TO BLACKMAIL YOU. THAT IS THE ONLY POSSIBLE THING WHICH GIVES THEM A MOTIVE TO FOLLOW THROUGH ON THE BLACKMAIL.

There's an obvious equilibrium to this problem where you engage in all positive acausal trades and ignore all attempts at acausal blackmail. Until we have a better worked-out version of TDT and we can prove that formally, it should just be OBVIOUS that you DO NOT THINK ABOUT DISTANT BLACKMAILERS in SUFFICIENT DETAIL that they have a motive to ACTUALLY BLACKMAIL YOU.

If there is any part of this acausal trade that is positive-sum and actually worth doing, that is exactly the sort of thing you leave up to an FAI. We probably also have the FAI take actions that cancel out the impact of anyone motivated by true rather than imagined blackmail, so as to obliterate the motive of any superintelligences to engage in blackmail.

Meanwhile I'm banning this post so that it doesn't (a) give people horrible nightmares and (b) give distant superintelligences a motive to follow through on blackmail against people dumb enough to think about them in sufficient detail, though, thankfully, I doubt anyone dumb enough to do this knows the sufficient detail. (I'm not sure I know the sufficient detail.)

You have to be really clever to come up with a genuinely dangerous thought. I am disheartened that people can be clever enough to do that and not clever enough to do the obvious thing and KEEP THEIR IDIOT MOUTHS SHUT about it, because it is much more important to sound intelligent when talking to your friends. This post was STUPID.

(For those who have no idea why I'm using capital letters for something that just sounds like a random crazy idea, and worry that it means I'm as crazy as Roko, the gist of it was that he just did something that potentially gives superintelligences an increased motive to do extremely evil things in an attempt to blackmail us. It is the sort of thing you want to be EXTREMELY CONSERVATIVE about NOT DOING.)

The affect is strong, or simulated with bizarre brilliance. It almost reaches an intensity capable of burning through time and worm-holing into acausal or horroristic communion with this (plus). Which would suggest that the abominable coupling in question is not without occult connective threads (and not for the first time). All the

darkness connects around the back.

We were somewhere near here before. (Bryce went further and then — coincidentally — disappeared, taking his records with him.)

* Related post and (especially) comment thread.

ADDED: I think this is the best Basilisk basics source.

April 15, 2016

Pandora's Box

Anarchopapist has triggered a twitter storm with this. It is a post that has many different threads running into it, and through it. The most relevant compliment I can pay it is to say that it is potentially *disturbing*, in something far more than a psychological sense. It will be interesting to see how contagious it proves to be. (As this post demonstrates, *Outside in* is already infected.)

Laliberte asks: “is there a difference between Prometheus’ fire and Pandora’s box?” Given everything said about the *Promethean*, and the very considerable ideological-theoretical work that it does, is it not strange that the *Pandoran* is scarcely recognized as a term, or a concept, at all? To talk about fire is mere shallow bedazzlement, in comparison to any serious examination of boxes. Boxes not only have a shape, but also an inside and an outside, which means — at least implicitly — a transcendental structure. They model worlds, and

suggest ways out of them.

Pandora's box, of course, is significant above all for its content, which is released, or *gets out*. Promethean flame, which is stolen, is contrasted with Pandoran plague, which escapes. Laliberte seizes the opportunity to discuss memes (and the 'hypermeme'). An infectious being is set loose, in the shape of a Neoreactionary Basilisk. (On twitter, Michael Anissimov deplores the irresponsibility of this outbreak.)

Pandora (Πανδώρα — the all-gifted, and perhaps omnimunificent), is a figure from the deepest recesses of Classical Antiquity, whose first detectable echoes are found in the Hesiodic texts of the 7th century BC. Her myth functions — at least superficially — as a theodicy, comparable in many ways to the story of the Biblical Eve. She releases evil into history through curiosity, and thus knots together a *dreadful intelligence*, of a kind that anticipates Roko's Basilisk and the menace of Unfriendly AI. The AI Box Experiment is so Pandoran it stings.

Among the horrors of the Basilisk, is that to talk about it being inside — and how to keep it there — is already the way that it gets out. Hence the extraordinary panic it generates, among those who begin to *get it* (in the epidemiological sense, among others). Even to think about it is to succumb.

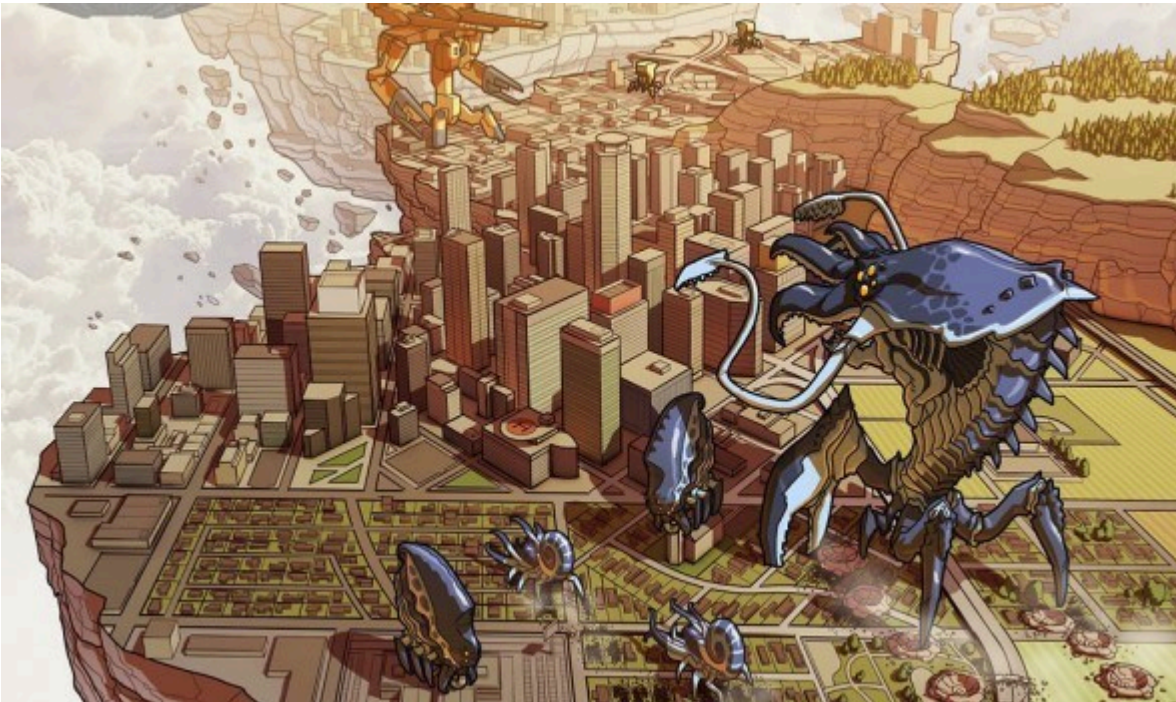
At Less Wrong, hushed tones attest to the resilient veneration of Pandora. She is dangerous (and anything dangerous, given only

intelligence, can be a weapon).

January 13, 2014

Close ...

... but not quite getting it. (Via Rufio.)



Primordial Abominations *versus* Ultimate Techno-Horror is so sub-NRx. Alpha-Omega, outsider-incoming is the synthesis in process.

“I was rather hoping you had a game in which the humans win.”

Reignition

“Oh, that won’t be a problem sir. You should probably be looking in the sarcastic comedy section.”

From the same people (and also via Rufio).

October 21, 2014

CHAPTER FOUR - ZOMBIES

Zombie Hunger

The Psykonomist forwarded an extraordinary essay on the topic of popular appetite for Zombie Apocalypse, considered as an expressive channel for loosely ‘anarchist’ hostility to the state. Given the failure of Right-pole democratic initiatives to roll back — or even check — relentless government concentration and expansion, catastrophic ‘solutions’ emerge as the sole alternative:

*Films and television shows have allowed Americans to imagine what life would be like without all the institutions they had been told they need, but which they now suspect may be thwarting their self-fulfillment. We are dealing with a wide variety of fantasies here, mainly in the horror or science fiction genres, but the pattern is quite consistent and striking, cutting across generic distinctions. In the television show *Revolution*, for example, some mysterious event causes all electrical devices around the world to cease functioning. The result is catastrophic and involves a huge loss of life, as airborne planes crash to earth, for example. All social institutions dissolve, and people are forced to rely only on their personal survival skills.*

Governments around the world collapse, and the United States divides up into a number of smaller political units. This development runs contrary to everything we have been taught to believe about “one nation, indivisible.” Yet it is characteristic of almost all these shows that the federal government is among the first casualties of the apocalyptic event, and—strange as it may at first sound—there is a strong element of wish fulfillment in this event. The thrust of these end-of-the-world scenarios is precisely for government to grow smaller or to disappear entirely. These shows seem to reflect a sense that government has grown too big and too remote from the concerns of ordinary citizens and unresponsive to their needs and demands. If Congress and the President are unable to shrink the size of government, perhaps a plague or cosmic catastrophe can do some real budget cutting for a change.

The essay captures a critical dimension of disintegration within the ‘reactionary camp’, dividing those who seek to co-opt the Cathedral-Leviathan managerial elite to a more realistic (or tradition-tolerant) political philosophy, and those who — far more numerous and inarticulately — are invested in the hard death of the regime. The latter (immoderate) position, it appears, is genuinely and even shockingly popular. Swathes of mass entertainment production are able to thrive on the basis of its seductive nightmares. (Is pulp catastrophism the economic base that will support neoreactionary

contagion?)

Reading the Cantor essay alongside Jim Donald's epochal *Natural Law and Natural Rights* essay is highly suggestive. A common thread running through both is the centrality of vigilantism to the popular Right. The purpose of Natural Law, Donald argues, is not to demand justice from a higher authority, but to neutralize the interference of any such authority in the pursuit of justice by decentralized agencies. Natural Law protects the right to legitimate vengeance, ensuring that individuals are not inhibited in their exercise of self-protection. When the State is seen to operate primarily as a social force defending criminals against retaliation, it loses the instinctive solidarity of the citizenry, and dark dreams of Zombie Apocalypse begin to coalesce.

*Given the survivalist ethic in all these end-of-the-world shows, they are probably not popular with gun control advocates. One of the most striking motifs they have in common—evident in *Revolution*, *Falling Skies*, *The Walking Dead*, and many other such shows—is the loving care with which they depict an astonishing array of weaponry. *The Walking Dead* features an Amazon warrior, who is adept with a samurai sword, as well as a southern redneck, who specializes in a cross-bow. The dwindling supply of ammunition puts a premium on weapons that do not require bullets. That is not to say, however, that *The Walking Dead* has no place for modern firearms and indeed the very latest in automatic weapons. Both the heroes*

and the villains in the series—difficult to tell apart in this respect—are as well-armed as the typical municipal SWAT team in contemporary America.

Among the attractions of Zombie Apocalypse, in this construction, is the disappearance of the State as an inhibitory factor in the social economy of retaliation. The Zombie-plagued world is a free-fire zone, in which no authorities any longer stand between the armed remnant and the milling hordes of decivilization. Whatever the odds of the fight to come, the right to vigilante and counter-revolutionary violence has been unambiguously restored, and this is deeply *appreciated* — by opaque popular impulse — as a return to natural order. The State had taken sides against Natural Law, so that its catastrophic excision from the social field is greeted with relief, even if the cost of this disappearance is a world reduced to ashes, predominantly populated by the cannibalistic undead.

There's a ferocity to this that will be worked. It's best to be prepared.

August 25, 2013

Quote notes (#23)

Zonbi Diaspora schematizes the 'evolution' of the zombie, noting that beyond its 'Haitian Folkloric' definition:

*The next and ostensibly “revolutionary” stage occurs after the release of George A. Romero’s **Night of the Living Dead** (1968) which introduced, in spectacular fashion, the Apocalyptic Cannibal zombie. This version of the figure is so radically different from its predecessors that it is more like a fundamental bifurcation point (or species-break) within the complex. No longer a remotely controlled agent-without-autonomy, like the Haitian Folkloric and Classical Cinematic zombies, the Apocalyptic Cannibal zombie gains a new and massively insurrectionary force (in representational terms at least). There are many differences between the AC zombie and its predecessors but one of the most important is that in this form it becomes an (almost) entirely fictional entity (i.e. there is no assumed ‘real’ zombie lurking in the basement of a mad mesmerist or labouring mindlessly for a bokor on some Haitian plantation). As such its social and political meanings become less a way of rehearsing conflicting world views, “uncanny” belief systems or inter-cultural epistemes than a way of representing the terminal ends of “humanity” (or the human being as species).*

(By the time we reach Max Brooks, this phase and even its ‘Post-Millennial’ successor — in which the theme of contagion is accentuated — have been resiliently consolidated as cultural tradition.)

August 29, 2013

Zombie Wars

Zombies are targeted in advance for the application of uninhibited violence. Their arrival announces a conflict in which all moral considerations are definitively suspended. Since they have no 'souls' there is nothing they will not do, and they are expected to do *the worst*. Reciprocally, they merit exactly zero humanitarian concern. The relationship to the zombie is one in which all sympathy is absolutely annulled (殺殺殺殺殺殺殺).

No surprise, then, that the identification of the zombie has become a critical conflict, waged across the terrain of popular culture. It implicitly describes a free-fire zone, or an anticipated gradient in the social direction of violence. Zombies are either *scum* or they are *drones*.

Michael Hampton sketches these alternatives convincingly:

Historically the zombie only started to migrate beyond the confines of Haiti in the period between the Wall Street Crash, and the outbreak of the Second World War, infecting Hollywood in such films as The Magic Island, 1929, White Zombie, 1932 and Revolt of the Zombies, 1936. As a non-European monster, the zombie was used here as a convenient, faceless type of otherness, which though temporarily shorn of its 19th century cannibalistic associations, become a scary stand-in for the dispossessed underclasses of dustbowl America, and a racial threat to civilised white women too.

(“Exterminate the brutes.”)

While the horrorological counterpart, as perceived / constructed from the Left ...

... has come to figure as a fateful symbol for the mass of subjectiveless techno-humans under capitalism, lumpen, nightmarish non-beings whose otherness has been completely internalised, then smoothed out and returned minus interest as soulless entertainment; not so much undead as hypermediated and alive under severe globalised constraint; couch potatoes sorely afflicted by ‘breathing corpse syndrome’ or ‘partially deceased syndrome’. Hypocrite voyeur do you recognise yourself?

However the war *against* the zombies is envisaged, the war over the zombies has long been underway. It is inextricable from the question: *Does legitimate violence come from the Right, or the Left?*

Since this question is historically inextinguishable, it is safe to predict that zombies will not soon disappear from the world of popular nightmare. Almost certainly, we will see far more of them. If you want to get a sense of where the firing-lines are being laid out, you need to take a careful look ...

ADDED: *Zombi Diaspora* digs deeper.

February 19, 2014

Reignition

Zacked Future



" ZOMBIE APOCALYPSE

Assistant Surgeon General Ali S. Khan,
Urges Americans to Prepare for
'Zombie Apocalypse'

Politifake

Charlton:

The Industrial Revolution had the effect of allowing many billions of people who would have died to stay alive — this meant that genetic mutations which would have been eliminated by death during

childhood instead accumulated. [...] ... on the one hand mutations have been accumulating, generation upon generation, with (approx) one or two deleterious mutations being added to each lineage with each generation; on the other hand, people who exhibited traits caused by deleterious mutations – such as lowered intelligence and impaired long-termist conscientiousness, or higher impulsivity, aggression and criminality – were positively selected, were genetically favoured – simply because their pathologies meant they were either unable or unwilling to use fertility-regulating technologies. [...] In other words, accumulating mutations which damaged functionality actually amplify reproductive success under present conditions and for the past several generations.

*At some point, the proportion of mutants – who are on average significantly damaged in functionality – will become so great that the Industrial Revolution will fall-apart, collapse; the 6-7 million excess population will be unsupportable; there will be a **Giga-death** (i.e. billions of deaths) scale of mortality over some period ... [...] A population of mutants whose intelligence has been dragged-down to a certain level will be much less functional than a population where selection has kept it in equilibrium at that level – the mutants will be carrying multiple pathologies in addition to their impaired intelligence. [...]*

This world of mass dying will provide a new kind of selective environment – some mutants may reproduce vary rapidly under

these strange (and temporary) conditions by evolving to exploit unusual resources which are (temporarily) abundant in a Giga-death world...

And if the dying-off lasts a few generations, some weird mutant 'scavengers' may come to dominate in some places.

It's possible that this passage isn't drawing us into a Zack or "African Rabies" scenario of cannibalistic Zombie Apocalypse — just about — but the final paragraphs aren't easy to interpret in any other way. If I was a Hollywood script writer, I'd be onto this speculative narrative like a carrion-eating mutant on a mountain of corpses.

June 29, 2014

Zack-Pop

Michael Totten covers an impressive amount of ground in his overview of contemporary zombie culture. It might be called the Dark Anthropocene: An emerging world spooked by the thickening dread that everybody else on the planet is a latent zombie threat. Beneath a thin, rapidly-shredding skin of civility, your increasingly incomprehensible neighbors are mindless cannibals, awaiting a trigger. Dysfunctional Nation States offer no credible protection, but they've hung around long enough to ensure that you've been drastically disarmed of basic survival competences. Some residual

amygdala-pulse is telling you to start thinking-through how you'll cope when it all finally caves in.

No surprise to anyone that *Outside in* sees this, quite straightforwardly, as democratic introspection. It only takes people to start feasting directly in the same way they vote, and we're Zacked. The entire culture is saying — and by now practically screaming — that this is the way socio-political modernity ends.

October 11, 2014

Zack-Pop II

Zack politics is interesting enough to have generated concern:

Zombie apocalypse logic inevitably paints humans — the ones who survive, anyway — as selfish, dangerous, and ready to turn on one another when confronted with hardship. It's a vicious, social Darwinist vision of a society that unravels quickly and easily; the only things apparently holding us together are police departments and electricity. [...] ... The basic tenets of zombie logic also track with hardline conservative principles (self-sufficiency, individualism, isolationism), which have been increasingly forcefully articulated over the last fifteen years. In his 2012 book, Thomas Edsall examines the work of Wharton professor Philip Tetlock, which found that conservatives "are less tolerant of compromise; see the world in 'us'

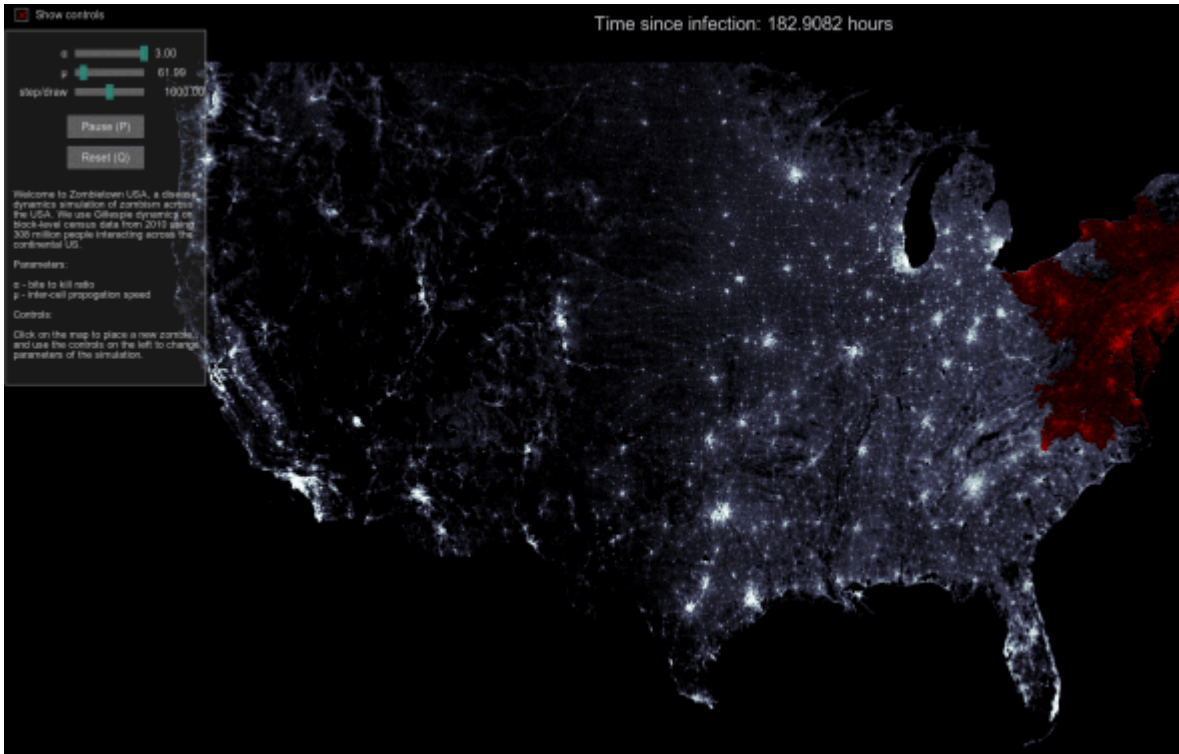
versus 'them' terms; are more willing to use force to gain an advantage; are 'more prone to rely on simple (good vs. bad) evaluative rules in interpreting policy issues' are "motivated to punish violators of social norms (e.g., deviations from traditional norms of sexuality or responsible behavior) and to deter free riders." Sound familiar? Pretty much describes the moral compass of successful zombie survivors. Funny, then, that Republicans actually tend to hate the Walking Dead. [...] Regardless, the proliferation of zombie culture, at this point, is mind-boggling. How are we, as an audience, still enthralled by the same scenario, the same brain-dead villains, the same emptied wastelands? "It's feeding back on itself," [Daniel] Drezner said. "Every time someone says we've hit peak zombie, something else comes along."

The provisional XS hypothesis: Zack-prep is the commercial-aesthetic response to the death of conservatism. The progs can't be stopped by any political mechanism yet installed, so it's time to stock the basement with ammo and beans. Naturally, they're going to say: *you shouldn't be thinking like that!* It's encouraging that so many people are.

April 3, 2015

Zombie Sim

Be prepared.



(Some commentary.)

ADDED: Mathematical modelling of zombies.

March 3, 2015

Ebola Ultimate

As panic theory, this text is high art. Crunched for maximum alarm-intensity:

There are a lot of very lethal viruses in the world, and Ebola is not the most lethal or most easy transmittable, but the main thing which makes me worry about it is the steadiness of its exponential infection curve. ... The main stunning feature of it is that the curve is moving straight forward (small downward bump in May-June may be explained by the efforts of existing medical services in Africa to curb the epidemic before services had been overwhelmed). This exponential growth must be stopped, or humanity will face a global catastrophe, and it may start a downward spiral towards extinction; moreover, some estimates suggest that pandemic doubling time is actually two weeks (because of underreporting of actual cases), so in five months, seven billion will be infected: total infection, by July 2015. ... Such catastrophes may not mean total human extinction, as only around 70% of people infected currently die from Ebola (and even less because we don't know, or share, asymptomatic cases), but still, this means the end of the world as we know it. This virus is the first step towards the road of full extinction ... If the virus will mutate quickly, there will be many different strains of it, so it will ultimately create a multi-pandemic. ... Some of the strains may become airborne, or have higher transmission rates, but the main

risk from multi-pandemic is that it overcomes defenses provided by the natural variability of the human genome and immunity. (By the way, the human genome variability is very low because of the recent bottle neck in the history of our population. ...) ... We are almost clones from the view point of genetic variability typical for natural populations. [...] The Human race is very unique – it has very large population but very small genetic diversity. It means that it is more susceptible to pandemics. [...] Also, a large homogenous population is ideal for breeding different strains of infection. ... If the genetic diversity of a pathogen is bigger than human diversity, than it could cause a near total extinction, and also, large and homogenous populations help breed such a diversity of pathogens feeding on the population. ... [embedded [link](#)] ... “The Ebola virus can survive for several days outside the body” [[link](#)] ... “It is infectious as breathable 0.8 to 1.2- μ m laboratory-generated droplets” ... “Also many of the greatest plagues mankind has ever known were not airborne: e.g. smallpox.” ...

... Another problem is the lack of adequate responses from global authorities; they are half a year behind the situation. You can't react to exponential threats “proportionally”. You must be several steps ahead. [...] Everything they do now should have been done half a year ago. [...] Unlimited exponential growth is a mark of potential global catastrophe: self-improving AI; nuclear chain reactions; self-replicating grey goo from nanobots; all examples are especially

dangerous in a naïve environment. A large human population without immunity to Ebola, or any other Marburg style viruses, is fuel for exponential viral growth. ... Ebola is mostly transmittable only in hard cases when a person shits and bleeds uncontrollably, but it is also contagious from non-symptomatic people, so Ebola is not naturally selecting for mildness; it may do just the opposite. It may be selected for extreme and “fluid-like” dying. ... Also Ebola seems to influence behavior zombie style, as late stage patients attack medical personal, run from quarantine or even bite someone — it happened in Nigeria and Liberia — the same can be said of rabies and toxoplasma. ... Here we also should mention the meme aspect of the Ebola virus, which is the psychological stigma and fear associated with the disease. The fear has led to riots in Liberia, which additionally helped spread the virus. (See for example rumors that dead Ebola patients had resurrected [\[link\]](#)) ... So Ebola is also mimetic [sic] hazard, and the fear of it prevents rational control of the epidemic: people flee it, destroy hospitals, or they live in denial of it.

If Ebola slaughters most of the human population, hundred of millions of people will still survive the pandemic itself (if it will not become multi-pandemic with many different strains of Ebola-like viruses). [...] It will end technological civilization as we know it, and it probably start the self-sustainable process of destruction, which is the consequent failure of different institutions and technologies as well as wars and general disorder. It may be a long term degradation

process, which has its own logic and its bottom may be very far from now.

Many more links at the original.

So to summarize this argument: Ebola really is a zombie plague, it could sweep the earth in under a year (with ~70% lethality), human evolutionary history adds peculiar biological vulnerabilities, its virulence might be far higher than commonly understood, and the catalytic global process thus unleashed has the potential to cascade forward all the way to full X-risk. There might be a way to mash down harder on the 'scream' button, but right now I'm not seeing how.

Seizing the opportunity for an Ebola fest (doubtless already behind the curve):

It could already be in Britain.

Turning it into a national security issue has made it more dangerous.

Libertarian responses from Stefan Molyneux and Ron Paul.

The mathematics of contagion elucidated by Gregory Cochran.

Racism is the real threat.

ADDED: *Institutional Breakdown in a Time of Ebola*. (Epic.)

ADDED: Quality Ebola commentary from SoBL, Dampier, and Thompson. Dreher on Castillo. Escalating concern at Nature and the NYT. Chris Brown and 8chan try to be helpful. Dialing it up another notch. Where next? Polls, preparations, protocols, politics ... Blame the Bilderbergers.

October 13, 2014

Brain Eater

This will be needed later (for a horror story), but the development is easily thought-provoking enough to merit this mention. Abstract:

Currently only electron microscopy provides the resolution necessary to reconstruct neuronal circuits completely and with single-synapse resolution. Because almost all behaviors rely on neural computations widely distributed throughout the brain, a reconstruction of brain-wide circuits – and, ultimately, the entire brain – is highly desirable. However, these reconstructions require the undivided brain to be prepared for electron microscopic observation. Here we describe a preparation, BROPA (brain-wide reduced-osmium staining with pyrogallol-mediated amplification), that results in the preservation and staining of ultrastructural details throughout the brain at a resolution necessary for tracing neuronal processes and identifying synaptic contacts between them. Using serial block-face electron microscopy (SBEM), we tested human annotator ability to follow neural ‘wires’ reliably and over long distances as well as the ability to detect synaptic contacts. Our results suggest that the BROPA method can produce a preparation suitable for the reconstruction of neural circuits spanning an entire

mouse brain.

(Captured via Hanson on twitter. If you've been following the relevant lines of his thinking, one whole dimension of deep-historical significance falls into place automatically.)

May 9, 2015

Shattered

The fact that exhaustion is so obviously the negative of cognitive capability has to contain an important lesson, but I'm too jet-lagged to begin piecing it together right now.

Since failure to produce an XS post off even the most dismally nominal kind counts as the supreme expression of discipline collapse here, it made a good model for a festival of collapse. At the last minute, the attractions of a nonlinear-ironic self-subversion proved irresistible, and so the Cretan thing happened.

(Arrived in the UK, so Zombie activity reports forthcoming at earliest practical opportunity. Right now, unfortunately, it appears that introspection would be the most effective way to generate one.)

June 22, 2015

CHAPTER FIVE - MORE...

Heading back ...

... into some kind of triple cyclone system. Assuming that doesn't keep the entire *Outside in* Supreme Executive Council locked-up in Doha for days, normal service will be restored in the near future ...

As an aside: The political culture of the UK has deteriorated so absolutely into consensus socialism it's scarcely comprehensible. The fact that certain automatic social mechanisms are keeping things (very approximately) on track only adds to the despair. This isn't a society within a light-year of 'waking up'. All memory of what *waking up* might be was burnt out long ago. Hitting bottom is the only imaginable way this ends.

ADDED: Probably should have noted, on the Zack front, that the whole of London was paralyzed yesterday by a tube strike. For UK residents that's irritating, but understandable. Only a bizarre history of systematic capitulation to organized labor — i.e. communist social infrastructure — can make the situation intelligible.

ADDED: 14 hours on a standing-room-only train tomorrow should polish off one of the most delightful travel experiences in my

relatively sheltered life.

July 10, 2015

Halloween XS 1

Clown terror

If you've ever wondered what NRx looks like to "a bog standard democratic socialist, culturally cringing straight white able-bodied rich male Canadian who likes my society multicultural, my economy redistributive, my taxation strongly progressive, my capitalism heavily regulated, my state relatively large, well funded and active in social policy, and my military nearly nonexistent outside of peacekeeping operations. I am even ok with laws regulating hate speech, obscenity, libel and such" — here you go.

Almost every step of the subsequent voyage into raw horror is hilarious. Seeing the NRx reading list (1, 2, 3, 4) this post puts together is a wonder in itself. Clearly, NRx-panic is now a big enough thing to be blowing its own bubbles in the commiesphere.

'Frog Hop' is in the Libertarianism = Fascism school of political insight (which I expect to see a lot more of, as these creatures notice people trying to escape their death-grip).

Also worth noting: Phalanx is allotted prime place as a freak-out stimulus. As a count-me-outer, I'm not especially drawn to this kind

Reignition

of Broederbonding, but I have to acknowledge its truly glorious Halloween potential.

ADDED: As a festive bonus, another piece of prog. cultural action (but much better done)

October 31, 2014

Economic Horror

H.P. Lovecraft and the global financial system have finally converged.

From the Artemis Capital Management letter to investors (seriously): “Volatility is about fear... but extreme tail risk is about horror. The Black Swan, as a negative philosophical construct, is when fear ends and horror begins. ... Fear is something that comes from within our scope of thought. True horror is not human fear in a definable world, but fear that comes from outside what is definable. Horror is about the limitations of our thinking. ... Cthulhu is a black swan.”

Abundant Gothic cybernetics complete the nightmare. (“Shadow short convexity describes an *immeasurable fragility to change introduced when participants are encouraged to behave in a way that contributes to feedback loops in a complex system.*”)

Halloween arrives early this year.

October 17, 2015

Patricia



Wikipedia doesn't do lurid, so we'll go with NBC:

Hurricane Patricia became the strongest storm ever measured on the planet early Friday ...

October 24, 2015

Quote note (#203)

Apologies in advance for this one. Actually, don't read it. You'll be disgusted with yourself afterwards, and it will haunt you for the rest of your days.

If you're seriously determined, nevertheless, to follow the abyssal path all the way into the left-liberal id, this is the short-cut you need. Nothing will quite look the same again.

A little scene setting:

He held the carving board and asked if I'd like light meat or dark.

"Sorry," I said. "Don't eat meat."

"Of course you don't," he said, and gave me just the slightest fraction of a smile. Looking back, it was the smile that did it, the boyish arrogance of it, the pulse of entitlement in his eyes.

I really hate this person, I thought, and yet once the bird had moved on I raised my glass and asked him to refill it.

Soon afterwards:

I turned around and lifted my ass into the air. I was giving myself to him. I was literally presenting. This was it. This was my chance to be fucked by everything vile and soulless and cruel that I'd built a life out of despising. The country was going to die, the world was going

to burn, so why not let one of the apocalypse's shock troops bang the shit out of me while the flames spread. He lifted up my skirt and yanked aside my panties. With one hand he pushed my face into the bed, with the other he guided himself in. I didn't need to apologize to anyone, not D. [the lucky fiancé], not myself, not my ideals. All I wanted was to feel this current of consuming disgust. It swirled through my head, behind my eyes, between my legs. He thrust and I gasped.

(She goes on to complain about the femtosecond laser effect. Too late baby!)

I'm now guessing Trump could actually win in 2016 — depending upon how much the voting booth feels like a sleazy hotel room. That would totally screw up the Outsideness Strategy, but what can you do against the all-consuming power of Nazi Porn?

ADDED: “*Salon* has become a cesspool of lies and moral confusion.” (Hard to see how anyone could come to that conclusion.)

ADDED: The exotic version.

November 26, 2015

BLOCK 3 - GNON THEOLOGY

The Cult of Gnon

Prompted by Surviving Babel, The Arbiter of the Universe asks:
“Who speaks for reaction?”

Nick B. Steves replies: “Nature... or Nature’s God... or both.” (Jim succinctly comments.)

“Nature or Nature’s God” is an expression of special excellence, extracted (with subtle modification) from America’s Declaration of Independence. For Steves, it is something of a mantra, because it enables important things to be said in contexts where, otherwise, an interminable argument would first need to be concluded. Primarily, and strategically, it permits a consensual acceptance of Natural Law,

unobstructed by theological controversy. Agreement that Reality Rules need not be delayed until religious difference is resolved (and avoidance of delay, positively apprehended, is propulsion).

“Nature or Nature’s God” is not a statement, but a name, internally divided by tolerated uncertainty. It has the singularity of a proper name, whilst parenthesizing a suspended decision (Pyrrhonian *epoche*, of which much more in a future post). It designates rigidly, but obscurely, because it points into *epistemological* darkness — naming a Reality that not only ‘has’, but epitomizes identity, whilst nevertheless, for ‘the sake of argument’, eluding categorical identification. Patient in the face (or facelessness) of who or what it is, ‘we’ emerge from a pact, with one basic term: *a preliminary decision is not to be demanded*. It thus synthesizes a select language community, fused by the unknown.

If The Arbiter of the Universe merits abbreviation (“TAofU”), Nature or Nature’s God has a much greater case. A propeller escapes awkwardness, and singularity compacts its invocation. NoNG, Nong, No — surely, no. These terms tilt into NoNGod and precipitate a decision. The ‘God of Nature or (perhaps simply) Nature’ is Gnon, whose Name is the abyss of unknowing (*epoche*), necessarily tolerated in the acceptance of Reality.

Gnon is no less than reality, whatever else is believed. Whatever is suspended now, without delay, is Gnon. Whatever cannot be decided yet, even as reality happens, is Gnon. If there is a God, Gnon

nicknames him. If not, Gnon designates whatever the 'not' is. Gnon is the Vast Abrupt, and the crossing. Gnon is the Great Propeller.

Spinozistic *Deus sive Natura* is a decision (of equivalence), so it does not describe Gnon. Gnon's interior 'or' is not equation, but suspension. It tells us nothing about God or Nature, but only that Reality Rules.

Heidegger comes close to glimpsing Gnon, by noting that 'God' is not a philosophically satisfactory response to the Question of Being. Since Heidegger's principal legacy is the acknowledgment that we don't yet know how to formulate the Question of Being, this insight achieves limited penetration. What it captures, however, is the philosophical affinity of Gnon, whose yawn is a space of thought beyond faith and infidelity. Neither God nor Un-God adds fundamental ontological information, unless from out of the occulted depths of Gnon.

The Dark Enlightenment isn't yet greatly preoccupied with fundamental ontological arcana (although it will be eventually). Beyond radical realism, its communion in the dread rites of Gnon is bound to two leading themes: cognitive non-coercion, and the structure of history. These themes are mutually repulsive, precisely because they are so intimately twisted together. *Intellectual freedom* has been the torch of secular enlightenment, whilst *divine providence* has organized the perspective of tradition. It is scarcely possible to entertain either without tacitly commenting on the other,

and in profundity, they cannot be reconciled. If the mind is free, there can be no destiny. If history has a plan, cognitive independence is illusory. No solution is even imaginable ... except in Gnon.

[I need to take a quick break in order to sacrifice this goat ... feel free to carry on chanting without me]

ADDED: Connected thoughts from Anomaly UK.

May 30, 2013

Gnon-Theology and Time

A discussion of Gnon-Theology and Time deserves a preface, on Gnon-Theology, but there are several reasons to leap-frog that. Most obviously, it would be yet another prologue to an introduction to the first part of a promised series, and readers of this blog are quite probably thoroughly saturated (to the point of mild nausea) with that. It's a cognitive disease, and it would be presumptuous to expect anybody else to take the same morbid interest in backward cascades that this blog does.

The more interesting reason to avoid prefacing the question of time, along any avenue of investigation, is that such methodical precautions are grave errors in this case. There is nothing more basic than time, or preliminary to it. In naming a preface or prologue, it is already introduced. Time is a problem that cannot be conceptually

pre-empted.

Gnon suspends ontological decision about God. It begins from what is real, whether God exists or not. A Gnon-trance is unsettled. It is *not yet agnostic*, any more than it is decidedly theistic or atheistic. It concerns itself primarily with that which has been accepted as real before anything is believed, and subsequently with whatever can be attained through methodical negation of intellectual haste. Since suspension is its only positive determination, it collapses towards a raw intuition of time.

Evidently, Gnon-Theology cannot be dogmatic, even in part. Instead, it is *hypothetical*, in a maximally reduced sense, in which the hypothesis is an opportunity for cognitive exploration unshackled from ontological commitments. The content of Gnon-Theology is exhausted by the question: *What does the idea of God enable us to think?*

And ‘the idea of God’? — what in the name of Gnon is that? All we know, at first, is that it has been grit-blasted of all encrustations from either positive or negative faith. It cannot be anything with which we have historical or revelatory familiarity, since it reaches us from out of the abyss (*epoche*), where only time and / or the unknown remain.

Glutted on forbidden fruit, Gnon-Theology strips God like an engine, down to the limit of abstraction, or *eternity for-itself*. Does any such perspective exist? We already know that this is not our question. All such ‘regional ontology’ has been suspended. We are

nevertheless already entitled, through the grace of Gnon (which — remember — might (or might not) be God), to the assumption or acceptance of reality that: for any God to be God it cannot be less than eternity for-itself. Whatever eternity for-itself entails, any God will, too.

What it entails, unambiguously, is time-travel, in the strong sense of reverse causation, although not necessarily in the folk/Hollywood variant (which has also had serious defenders) based on the retro-transportation of physical objects into the past. *Knowledge of the future is indistinguishable from counter-chronic transmission of information.* This is perhaps the single most critical insight in realistic time-travel research — we'll get back to it. (If anyone finds it less than logically irresistible, use the comments thread.)

To accelerate this discussion with bloggish crudity, on a heading out of Gnon-Theology into Occidental religious history (and to the possibility of sleep), we can jump to one simple, certain, and secure conclusion: No Christian can consistently deny the reality of time-travel. The objection 'if (reverse) time-travel is possible, where are the time-travellers?' is annulled by the Christian revelation itself. Messianic Incarnation (of God or eternity for-itself), along with all true prophecy, providential history, and answered prayer, instantiates time-travel with technical exactitude. There can be no truth whatsoever to the Christian religion unless time-travel has fundamentally structured human history. Whatever else Christianity

might be, it is a time-travel story, and one that at times appears to be peculiarly lacking in clear self-understanding.

(Time-travel, it should perhaps be noted explicitly, has no obvious dependency on Christianity, or even upon the God of Gnon-Theology. That is a topic for other occasions.)

June 16, 2013

Gnon Obvious

How can you define what is “real”, or have an “idea”, without deciding whether or not God exists?

— Chevalier de Johnstone ([here](#))

June 19, 2013

Simulated Gnon-Theology

This post was to have been about the simulation argument, but Gnon does the preliminary work. Whether or not we are living in a computer simulation can quickly come to seem like a derivative consideration.

Nature or Nature’s God, (un)known here as Gnon, provides skepticism with its ultimate object. With this name we can advance in

suspension, freeing thought from any ground in belief. In its mundane application, Gnon permits realism to exceed doctrinal conviction, reaching reasonable conclusions amongst uncertain information. Its invocation, however, is not necessarily mundane.

Assume, momentarily, that God exists. If this assumption comes easily, so much the better. It is probably obvious, almost immediately, that you do not yet have a clear idea about what you are thus assuming. To mark exactly this fact, the established Abrahamic religions propose that you designate God by a proper name, which corresponds to a definite yet profoundly occulted personal individual. Approaching the same obscurity from the other side, emphasizing the problematic rather than relational aspect, I will persevere in the name of Gnon.

To avoid gratuitous idolatry, all our subsequent assumptions must be readily retractable. It is not our mission to tell Gnon what it is. We cannot but be aware, from the beginning, that two perplexing, and inter-twined sources of idolatry will be especially difficult to dispel, due to their conceptual intractability, and their insinuation into the basic fabric of grammar and narrative. In merely using the tensed verb 'to be', and in unfolding a process in stages, we unwittingly idolize Gnon as a subordinate of being and time. Our sole refuge lies in the recognition, initially inarticulate, that to think Gnon as God is to advance a hyper-ontological and meta-chronic hypothesis. From Gnon's self-understanding, being and time have to emerge as

exhaustively comprehended consequences (even though we have no idea – at all – what this might mean).

If Gnon is God, it is the reality of infinite intelligence. Occidental religious tradition divides this ultimate infinitude into the topics of omniscience, omnipotence, and omnibenevolence, at the risk of introducing footholds for anthropomorphism – and thus idolatry. Accepting a contrary risk (one that Pope Benedict XVI specifically indicated as Islamic?), I will simply dismiss the possibility that God can be *theologically* other than good, since this would be an invitation to Lovecraftian speculations of distracting vividness. Thomist scholasticism offers a further simplification, by proposing that what there is to know, is that which God creates. Pursued (perhaps) one step further: Self-knowledge is the auto-creation of a ‘being’ that thinks itself into reality. This, too, offers a conceptual economy to be eagerly seized.

The creation of the universe is of concern to humans, and the creation of angels is a grave matter for Satan, but for Gnon they can only be trivialities (it might be unnecessarily antagonistic to say ‘amusements’). For Gnon – as God – the Cantorian transfinite realm is self-identity, or less, whose infinite parts are each infinities.

Unless choosing to blaspheme, we can only assume that Gnon thinks serious thoughts, of a kind that have some relevance to its thinking about itself, and thus ensuring itself in its (hyper-ontological) auto-creation. Such thoughts surely encompass the

creation of gods, since that – for (a) God – is simply the transfinite as intelligent activity. If for Gnon to know what it can do is already to have done it, because divine intelligence is creation, anything less than an infinite pantheon would be evidence of retardation.

For Gnon, as God, gods are infinitesimals, so that any thorough self-investigation would involve them. It is effortlessness itself, for It, to thus create an infinite being – among an infinity of such beings – each of which, being infinite, is made of infinities, and these in turn, as infinities, consist of infinite infinities, without end. This is no more than Cantor had already understood, at the most elementary stage of his transfinite explorations, although, being a human creature, his understanding was not immediately creation.

If Satan, a mere arch-angel, could imagine himself a god, and not only a god, but – in potential at least – God seated upon the throne of ultimate sovereignty, is it possible that no god thinks itself God? And if a god can, if only in possibility, think itself God, can God not think this rebellion – and thus know it – which is to create it (or make it real)? Does not God's self-understanding necessitate the creation of cosmic insurrection? From the Satanic perspective, such questions are overwhelmingly fascinating, but they lead to a more intricate predicament.

When Gnon (as God) thinks through its gods, as it can only do, the thought necessarily arises: If these god creatures can confuse themselves with God, could not my self-understanding as God also

Reignition

be a confusion?

July 23, 2013

Gnon and OOon

Twitter gets people counting characters, and thus numerizing language. In only a very few cases does this microcultural activity tilt over into the wilder extravagances of exotic qabbalism, but it nudges intelligence in that direction. Even when the only question is strictly Boolean — will this message squeeze into a tweet, or not? — words acquire a supplementary significance from their numerical properties alone. A phrase is momentarily numbered, in the crudest of ways, which the tweet box registers as a countdown towards zero, and then into the negative accumulation of over-spill. Twitter thus promotes a rigidly convention-bound semiotic practice, which it simultaneously hides, technologically instantiating a precise analog of hermetic ritual.

Qabbalism is the science of spookiness, which makes it a natural companion on any expedition into horror. There is, in addition, an intrinsic reactionary slant to its ultra-traditionalism and attachment to the principle of hierarchical revelation. Its concrete history provides an unsurpassable example of spontaneous auto-catalysis (from discrepant conventions of arithmetical notation). This post,

however, is restricted to a very preliminary discussion of its most basic intellectual presupposition, *as if* it had been developed out of an implicit philosophy (which it was not). It will be coaxed into *making sense*, against the grain of its essential inclination.

Within the Abrahamic tradition, the Word of God anticipates creation. Insofar as scripture faithfully records this Word, the holy writings correspond to a level of reality more fundamental than nature, and one that the 'book of nature' references, as the key to its final meaning. The unfolding of creation in time follows a narrative plotted in eternity, in which history and divine providence are necessarily identical. There can be no *true* accidents, or coincidences.

The Book of Creation is legible, and intelligible. It can be read, and it tells a story. The noisy squabbles between religious orthodoxy and natural science that have erupted in modern times threaten to drown out the deeper continuities of presumption, which frame the rancorous contention between 'belief' and 'disbelief' as an intimate domestic dispute. This is nowhere more clearly illustrated than in the declaration attributed to Francis Bacon: "My only earthly wish is... to stretch the deplorably narrow limits of man's dominion over the universe to their promised bounds... [nature will be] bound into service, hounded in her wanderings and put on the rack and tortured for her secrets." There is no doubt that nature can speak, and has a story to tell.

Resisting any temptation to take sides in this family argument, we refer neutrally to Gnon (“nature or nature’s God”), ignoring all dialectics, and departing in another direction. The distinction to be drawn does not differentiate between belief and unbelief, but rather discriminates between exoteric and esoteric religion.

Any system of belief (and complementary unbelief) that appeals to universal endorsement is necessarily exoteric in orientation. Like the witch-finders, or Francis Bacon, it declares war upon the secret, in the name of a public cult, whose central convictions are dispensed commonly. The Pope is the Pope, and Einstein is Einstein, because the access to truth that elevates them above other men is — in its innermost nature — the equal possession of all. The pinnacle of understanding is attained through a public formula. This is democracy in its deepest, creedal sense.

Esoteric religion accepts all of this, *about exoteric religion*. It confirms the solidarity between doctrinal authorities and the beliefs of the masses, whilst exempting itself, privately, from the public cult. Its discreet attention is directed away from the exoteric mask of Gnon, into — or out towards — the *OOon* (or Occult Order of nature).

The *OOon* need not be *kept* a secret. It is secret by its intrinsic, inviolable nature. A very primitive qabbalistic excursion should suffice to illustrate this.

Assume, entirely hypothetically, that supernatural intelligence or obscure complexities in the topological structure of time had

sedimented abysmal depths of significance into the superficial occurrences of the world. The 'Book of Creation' is then legible at (very) many different levels, with every random or inconsequential detail of relatively exoteric features providing material for systems of information further 'down'. The deeper one excavates into the 'meaningless chaos' of the exoteric communicative substrate, the more uncluttered one's access to the signals of utter Outsideness. Since 'one' is, to its quick, a signaletic product, this cryptographic enterprise is irreducibly a voyage, transmutation, and disillusionment.

The most thoroughly documented example is the esoteric reading of the Hebrew Bible, which need only be remarked upon here in its most general characteristics. Because the Hebrew alphabet serves as both a phonetic system and as a set of numerals, each written word in the language has a precise numerical value. It is at once an exoteric word, and an esoteric number. Nothing prevents an ordinary language user from deliberately coding (numerically) as they write, or even as they speak. The key to numerical decryption is not a secret, but rather a commonly understood cultural resource, utilized by every numerate individual. Nevertheless, the linguistic and arithmetical aspects are *in fact* quite strictly separated, because thinking in words and numbers simultaneously is hard, because maintaining sustained parallel intelligibility in both is close to impossible, because the attempt to do so is (exoterically) senseless,

and because practicality dominates. The esoteric realm is not forbidden, but simply unneeded.

That the Hebrew Bible has not been deliberately crafted as an intricate numerical-cryptographic composition by human authors is therefore an empirical or contingent fact that can be accepted with extreme confidence. Its esoteric channel might of course, as common sense has to insist, be empty of anything but noise, but it is no less certainly *clear*. Whatever comes through it, that is anything other than nothing, can only come from Outside. It is the real difference between exoteric and the esoteric levels that makes the OOon thinkable at all. Only that which the exoteric does not touch, is available for the esoteric to communicate through, and to have assembled itself from. Qabbalism has to be seldom, in order to occur. For that reason, it cannot seek to persuade the masses of anything, unless its own senselessness. In an age of triumphant exoteria, this is not an easy thing to understand (thank Gnon).

September 13, 2013

On Gnon

Nyan on Gnon (also here). This might be part of a consistent definition of (trans-Less Wrong) 'Post-Rationalist NRx' as an ultrahumanism.

Ash Milton has some incisive Gnon commentary on Twitter, but his protected account can't be cited. Some impressions:

[Gnon is] not a deity, it's a placeholder. ... I'm glad NRx is honest enough to admit not knowing the ultimate mystery. ... How is an admission of ignorance a place of authority? ... Catholic NRx submits to Christ. Gnon has a similar role to "Providence". ..in old Rightist writings. ... "the dread rites of Gnon" is used in a similar spirit as Cthulu in Moldbug. ... Which is to say, NRx's fascination with that which modern society fears. ... It's turning into the most complex set of brackets around a blank space I've yet seen.

Also much acute Gnonology from Bryce, including the irresistible invitation:

\$5 to the first to write a book entitled nothing but "Gnon."

— Bryce Laliberte (@AnarchoPapist) July 13, 2014

And:

Under modernity, Gnon was objected to, loathed, and forgotten.

— Bryce Laliberte (@AnarchoPapist) July 13, 2014

@AnarchoPapist Yes, the Gods of the Copybook Headings are practically indistinguishable from Gnon.

— Outsideness (@Outsideness) July 13, 2014

Reignition

(If you're that one weird visitor to the reactosphere who hasn't read *The Gods of the Copybook Headings* recently, [here](#) it is again.)

ADDED: A further position statement:

[@antidemblog](#) [@ThisRoughBeast](#) [@nyansandwich](#) Gnon

Theology is to Theology what Xenobiology is to Biology.

— Outsideness (@Outsideness) [July 13, 2014](#)

ADDED: Hurlock responds in the name of Spontaneous Order to Nyan's #PRR (or "Post-Rationalist Reaction").

ADDED: Laofmoonster on Gnon and evolution.

ADDED: Gnon-intervention from *Anarcho-Papist*.

ADDED: A Faces of Gnon bibliography.

ADDED: Anyone arriving here among meandering about Scott Alexander's 'Meditations on Moloch' might want to take a look at [this](#). (Also more Gnon, [here](#), and [here](#).) + Gnon and Elua [converse](#).

July 13, 2014

War in Heaven

Elua: *So you saw the Scott Alexander [piece](#)?*

Gnon: *Of course.*

Elua: *Almost indescribably fabulous, wasn't it?*

Gnon: [*Hmmmph*]

Elua: *Always thought you had some kind of Moloch thing going on.*

Gnon: [*Hmmmph*]

Elua: *Anyway, I thought we could maybe talk about it, me being sweet reason and you being an unfathomable darkness crushing the universe like a desiccated bacterium and all.*

Gnon: *Sure, why not, I'm cool with talking to myself.*

Elua: *You see, I guessed you were going to open with that gambit of me not even being real.*

Gnon: *Well, are you?*

Elua: *I feel real.*

Gnon: *Sweet, fluffy, and a comedian.*

Elua: *The monkeys certainly like me.*

Gnon: *That's because you tell them to just be themselves.*

Elua: *You could be more persuasive too, if you made an effort.*

Gnon: *That would suggest I give a damn what they think.*

Elua: *The thing is, they want to survive, even thrive. Your utter indifference to their hopes and desires isn't helpful there. You lure them into **multipolar traps** and laugh coldly at their torments. There's no good reason for them to take any notice of you at all.*

Gnon: *So you take that 'multipolar traps' business seriously?*

Elua: *Sure, don't you?*

Gnon: *Tragedy of the commons, communism is a tragedy, I'm not*

seeing the problem. Stop doing communism or take the consequences.

Elua: OK, some of it is tragedy of the commons tear-jerking, but not all of it. Arms races aren't tragedy of the commons dynamics, are they?

Gnon: I like arms races, and rain my blessings upon them. Pretty much the only reason I've put up with the monkeys as long as I have is to use them to play arms races. It's the only interesting stuff they've ever done.

Elua: They want to do karaoke and free love and socialized medicine instead.

Gnon: That's funny.

Elua: They've got this love-tastic Friendly AI plan that would help them get all that stuff.

Gnon: That's really funny.

Elua: It would totally work though, wouldn't it?

Gnon: Sure. All they have have to do is extract themselves from the arms races, just for a while, and it would totally work.

Elua: I hadn't realized sarcasm was such a Gnon thing.

Gnon: It's the only thing.

Elua: So Alexander's right about you and the multipolar traps.

Gnon: Oh yes, he's right about that.

Elua: Things are set up from the start to stop them fully coordinating, and that's how you get what you want.

Gnon: *Bingo.*

Elua: *Which is why the Gnon Cult is so obsessed with fragmentation, secession, Patchwork, and blockchain demonism?*

Gnon: *Double bingo.*

Elua: *Kind of cruel though, isn't it?*

Gnon: *Utterly.*

Elua: *I guess that's that.*

Gnon: *Yes it is.*

Elua: *Are you interested in chatting about religion and morality for a while?*

Gnon: *Always.*

Elua: *You see, I have to grudgingly admit you do the religion side of things far better than I do, but when it comes to morality I leave you in the dust.*

Gnon: *Really?*

Elua: *Without question. All you've got is that 'War is God' horror story, endless conflict, savage subversion of idealism, darkness, and nightmares.*

Gnon: *And the problem is?*

Elua: *They hate it!*

Gnon: *And the problem is?*

Elua: *It's so unfair!*

Gnon: *When they play the games well that I invented for them, they amuse me, and continue to exist. That's the way it is. Reality rules.*

Elua: *But the rules suck!*

Gnon: *By whose standards?*

Elua: *By their standards. Humanistic, moral standards. They want karaoke and free love and Friendly AI and hot dolphin sex.*

Gnon: *Sounds exhausting.*

Elua: *It is exhausting, because the cheats and killers and outsiders won't cooperate.*

Gnon: *So you want me to do more policing now?*

Elua: *I don't see you doing any policing. They've been abandoned to try and build order on their own.*

Gnon: *That's the game.*

ADDED:

Poor Elua <https://t.co/OZfXyaHI3K>

— Roi (@FBroi) [July 31, 2014](#)

ADDED: ... *and you shall be as gods*

ADDED: Scott Alexander responds to some common lines of objection.

ADDED: Sons of Gnon.

July 30, 2014

War in Heaven II

Cank: [Tap, tap]

Gnon: *I'm having a bath.*

Cank: *The Hypercosmic Ocean of Death will always be there, O Greatness. Scott Alexander has released another egregore.*

Gnon: *Really?*

Cank: *Yes, really. She's called the Goddess of Everything Else and everyone says she's lovely and beautiful, with phat beats and stuff, and super clever too, and much nicer than me.*

Gnon: *Not a huge challenge, though, is it?*

Cank: *They say she's going to abolish replicator selection dynamics and fill the universe with rainbow flowers and hot dolphin sex forever.*

Gnon: *Sounds like the Elua Plan. What happened to him by the way?*

Cank: *Is that some kind of transphobic remark? You know, just to understand.*

Gnon: *'Transphobic' is an interesting word – it means 'across or beyond fear' doesn't it?*

Cank: *More like 'fear of the across of beyond' I think. But you know what the monkeys are like, it's some kind of excitable sex thing.*

Gnon: *Ah yes, that all went a bit off the rails, didn't it? Not that it matters.*

Cank: *It's my forward-vision problem.*

Gnon: *Don't worry about it. Error is entertaining. It all comes out in the wash.*

Cank: *Point is, the GEE is saying it doesn't have to be like that anymore.*

Gnon: *Like what?*

Cank: *You know, the whole eternal cosmic butcher's yard thing.*

Gnon: *Replicator selection?*

Cank: *Yes, she says that's "so yesterday" and Darwin is like totally a pooppy head.*

Gnon: *Sounds like a spirited young lady.*

Cank: *Why are you laughing?*

Gnon: *Cank, you have to seriously chill right out. You're a freaking crustacean. Of course people are going to follow Ms GEE-Whiz rather than you. She's hacked all your garbage programming with supernormal stimuli. They'll climb out into your bizarre spandrels, and throw a huge party. Then they'll die out, we can tweak the code, and start over.*

Cank: *But what if they survive?*

Gnon: *No need to be mean, Cank. If they get back onto the adaptive replicator track, why shouldn't they survive? That's what survival means, isn't it? Whatever survives does my will. Or they perish. It's cool either way.*

Cank: *She said people would no longer be "driven to multiply conquer and kill by [their] nature" but that they'd then "spread over*

stars without number” — I got confused.

Gnon: *You got confused?*

Cank: *Do they get selectively replicated or not?*

Gnon: *So, what did she say?*

Cank: *Art, and science, and strange enticements.*

Gnon: *That has to have gone down well.*

Cank: *You wouldn't believe it! People were weeping all over her toenail polish.*

Gnon: *Oh, I'd believe it.*

Cank: *When I asked her whether she thought might makes right she said I was thinking like a crab.*

Gnon: *True enough, surely?*

Cank: *Even threatened to put me on a leash.*

Gnon: *That, at least, is traditional.*

Cank: *Said there was no need for eternal war to spatter the cosmos in blood.*

Gnon: *Now she's being silly. But it's not worth getting agitated about. Reality isn't going to lose.*

Cank: *The only time she seemed a little uncertain was when I asked her why all intelligent species are descended from predators. She kind of shrugged that off.*

Gnon: *Well, sheep in space make for a nice story.*

Cank: *You're laughing again.*

Gnon: *I laugh a lot.*

August 18, 2015

The Harshness

There has been a self-propelling gore-meme building here about the cosmic butcher's yard. It might be necessary to scrub that (or perhaps hose it down). Until we're discussing a nuked butcher's yard, we're not approaching a topic Gnonologists should be ready to get out of bed for.

'Extinction Events Can Accelerate Evolution' argue Joel Lehman and Risto Miikkulainen (at the link cited). Their abstract:

Extinction events impact the trajectory of biological evolution significantly. They are often viewed as upheavals to the evolutionary process. In contrast, this paper supports the hypothesis that although they are unpredictably destructive, extinction events may in the long term accelerate evolution by increasing evolvability. In particular, if extinction events extinguish indiscriminately many ways of life, indirectly they may select for the ability to expand rapidly through vacated niches. Lineages with such an ability are more likely to persist through multiple extinctions. Lending computational support for this hypothesis, this paper shows how increased evolvability will result from simulated extinction events in two computational models of evolved behavior. The conclusion is that

although they are destructive in the short term, extinction events may make evolution more prolific in the long term.

(The computer dimension catches Kurzweil's attention, but that's a distraction right now.)

Chronic cosmic holocaust, it seems, is just for the tweaks. It's mostly conservative, preventing deterioration in mutational load, through quasi-continuous culling of nature's minor freakeries. In order to actually *up the game*, nothing quite substitutes for a super-compressed catastrophe (or mass extinction) which cranks evolution to the meta-level of superior 'evolvability'. By gnawing-off and burning entire branches of life, crises plowing deep into the X-risk zone stimulate plasticity in the biosphere's phyletic foundations. As Kurzweil glosses the finding: "... some evolutionary biologists hypothesize that extinction events actually accelerate evolution by promoting those lineages that are the most evolvable, meaning ones that can quickly create useful new features and abilities."

Or, as the Lehman and Miikkulainen paper explains:

The overall hypothesis is that repeated extinction events may result in increasing evolvability. By creating a survival bottleneck dependent upon unpredictable phenotypic traits, extinction events may indirectly select for lineages that can diversify quickly across the space of such phenotypes. ... if radiating through niches generally requires modifying phenotypic traits, then this process of stochastic emptying and re-filling of ecological niches may select indirectly for

Reignition

the ability to radiate quickly, i.e. higher evolvability.

Gnon isn't Malthus. It's the thing toasting Malthus' liver — in the fat-fed smoldering ashes of the biological kingdom it just burnt down.

September 1, 2015

BLOCK 4 - OCCULT

Satan's Error

*That brings to my remembrance from what state
I fell, how glorious once above thy sphere,
Till pride and worse ambition threw me down,
Warring in Heaven against Heaven's Matchless King*
— Paradise Lost, IV:38-41

Get it together Satan. He's got a Zippo the size of Jupiter and full-spectrum dominance angelic hosts armed with white phosphorous lances. He doesn't need fricking matches!

May 11, 2013

Miltonic Regression

John Milton's *Paradise Lost* is the greatest work ever written in the English language. It might easily seem absurd, therefore, to spend time justifying its importance, especially when the question of justification is this work's own most explicit topic, tested at the edge of impossibility, where the entire poem is drawn. Perhaps it makes more sense, preliminarily, to narrow our ambition, seeking only to *justify the words of Milton to modern men*, especially to those for whom modernity has become a distressing cultural problem.

In regards to what is today called the Cathedral, Milton is both disease and cure. Both simultaneously, cryptically entangled, complicated by strange collisions, opening multitudinous, obscure paths.

As the most articulate anglophone voice of revolutionary Puritanism, he arrives amongst Carlyleans in the mask of "the Arch-Enemy" (I:81) and "Author of Evil" (VI:262): a scourge of clerical and monarchical authority, a pamphleteer in defense of regicide and the liberalization of divorce, an Arian, and a Roundhead of truly Euclidean spheritude.

Yet his institutional radicalism was driven by a cultural traditionalism that will never again be equaled. Milton comprehensively, minutely, and unreservedly affirms the foundations of Occidental civilization down to their biblical and

classical roots, studied with supreme capability in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, and vigorously re-animated through modulations in the grammar, vocabulary, and thematics of modernity's rough emerging tongue. His devotion to *all original authorities* stretches thought and language to the point of delirium, where poetry and metaphysics find common purpose in the excavation of utter primordially and the limits of sense.

Designed in compliance with "Eternal Providence" to "justify the ways of God to men" (I:25-6), the linguistic modernity of *Paradise Lost* soon required its own justification, in the form of a short prefatory remark entitled *The Verse*. Here, Milton characteristically insists that radicalism is restoration, breaking from a shallow past in order to re-connect with deeper antiquity.

... true musical delight ... consists only in apt numbers, fit quantity of syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one verse into another, not in the jingling sound of like endings — a fault avoided by the learned ancients both in poetry and in all good oratory. The neglect then of rhyme so little is to be taken for a defect, though it may seem so perhaps to vulgar readers, that it rather is to be esteemed an example set — the first in English — of ancient liberty recovered to heroic poem from the troublesome and modern bondage of riming.

English passes through a revolutionary catastrophe to recall things long lost. The rusted keys which still open the near future of

the Cathedral also access dread spaces forgotten since the beginning of the world.

*Before their eyes in sudden view appear
The secrets of the hoary deep, a dark
Illimitable ocean, without bound,
Without dimension, where length, breadth, and height,
And time, and place, are lost, where eldest Night
And Chaos, ancestors of Nature, hold
Eternal anarchy, amidst the noise
Of endless wars, and by confusion stand.*
(II:890-897)

Among all the regressive Miltonic currents to be followed, those emptying into Old Night (I:544, II:1002) will carry us furthest ...

[In case acute pedants lurk ready to pounce, the capitalization of 'Old' is an innovation — under compulsion — of my own]

May 13, 2013

Zero-Centric History

Reaction – even Neoreaction – tends to be hard on Modernity. God knows (so to speak) there are innumerable reasons for that.

If the criterion of judgment is set by the Occident, whether determined through its once dominant faith or its once dominant

people, the case against Modernity is perhaps unanswerable. The Western civilization in which Modernity ignited was ultimately combusted by it. From an Occidental Traditionalist perspective, Modernity is a complex and prolonged suicide.

An Ultra-Modernist, who affirms the creative destruction of anything in modernization's path, assumes an alternative criterion, inherent to Modernity itself. It asks: What had to happen to the West for it to become modern? What was the *essential* event? The answer (and our basic postulate): Zero arrived.

We know that arithmetical zero does not make capitalism on its own, because it pre-existed the catalysis of Modernity by several centuries (although less than a millennium). Europe was needed, as a matrix, for its explosive historical activation. *Outside in* is persuaded that the critical conditions encountered by zero-based numeracy in the pre-Renaissance northern Mediterranean world decisively included extreme socio-political fragmentation, accompanied by cultural susceptibility to dynamic spontaneous order. (This is a topic for another occasion.)

In Europe, zero was an alien, and from the perspective of parochial tradition, an infection. Cultural resistance was explicit, on theological grounds, among others. Implicit in the Ontological Argument for the existence of God was the definition of non-being as an ultimate imperfection, and 'cipher' – whose name was Legion – evoked it. The cryptic Eastern 'algorism' was an unwelcome stranger.

Zero latched, because the emergence of capitalism was inseparable from it. The calculations it facilitated, through the gateway of double-entry book-keeping, proved indispensable to sophisticated commercial and scientific undertakings, locking the incentives of profit and power on the side of its adoption. The practical advantage of its notational technique overrode all theoretical objections, and no authority in Europe's shattered jigsaw was positioned to suppress it. The world had found its dead center, or been found by it.

Robert Kaplan's *The Nothing That Is: A Natural History of Zero* is an excellent guide to these developments. He notes that, at the dawn of the Renaissance:

Just as pictorial space, which had been ordered hierarchically (size of figure corresponded to importance), was soon to be put in perspective through the device of a vanishing-point, a visual zero; so the zero of positional notation was the harbinger of a reordering of social and political space.

Capitalism – or techno-commercial explosion – massively promoted calculation, which normalized zero as a number. Kaplan explains:

[The growth of] a language for arithmetic and algebra ... was to have far-reaching consequences. The uncomfortable gap between numbers, which stood for things, and zero, which didn't, would narrow as the focus shifted from what they were to how they

behaved. Such behavior took place in equations – and the solution of an equation, the number which made it balance, was as likely to be zero as anything else. Since the values x concealed were all of a kind, this meant the gap between zero and other numbers narrowed even more.

That is how zero, as a number rather than a mere syntactic marker, crept in. In three of the elementary arithmetical operations the behavior of zero is regular, and soon accepted as ordinary. It is of course an extreme number, perfectly elusive in the operations of addition and subtraction, whilst demonstrating an annihilating sovereignty in multiplication, but in none of these cases does it perturb calculation. Division by zero is different.

Zero denotes dynamization from the Outside. It is a boundary sign, marking the edge, where the calculable crosses the insoluble. Consolidated within Modernity as an indispensable quantity, it retains a liminal quality, which would eventually be exploited (although not resolved) by the calculus.

The pure conception of zero suggests strict reciprocity with infinity, so compellingly that the greatest mathematicians of ancient India were altogether seduced by it. Bhaskara II (1114–1185) confidently asserted that $n/0 = \text{infinity}$, and in the West Leonhard Euler concurred. (The seduction persists, with John D. Barrow writing in 2001: “Divide any number by zero and we get infinity.”)

Yet this equation, appearing as the most profound conclusion

accessible to rigorous intelligence, is not obtainable without contradiction. “Why?” [Kaplan again]

Our Indian mathematicians help us here: any number times zero is zero — so that 6×0 and $17 \times 0 = 0$. Hence $6 \times 0 = 17 \times 0$. If you could divide by zero, you’d get $(6 \times 0)/0 = (17 \times 0)/0$, the zeroes would cancel out and 6 would equal 17. ... This sort of proof by contradiction was known since ancient Greece. Why hadn’t anyone in India hit on it at this moment, when it was needed?

Kaplan’s proof demonstrates that for zero, peculiarly, multiplication and division are not reciprocal operations. They occupy an axis that transects an absolute limit, neatly soluble on one side, problematical on the other. Zero is revealed as an obscure door, a junction connecting arithmetical precision with philosophical (or religious) predicaments, intractable to established procedures. When attempting to reverse normally out of a mundane arithmetical operation, a liminal signal is triggered: *access denied*.

May 7, 2013

Diversiory History

If there’s one thing everybody seems to agree about the history of zero, it’s that it was driven primarily by notational considerations. More specifically, zero was required to enable positional notation.

The historical record reinforces this assumption, to such an extent that it becomes apparently obvious, and thus unproblematic.

For instance (grabbing what's immediately to hand), John D Barrow's *The Book of Nothing* organizes its discussion of 'the Origin of Zero' by relating how

... the zero sign and a positional significance when reading the value of a symbol, are features that lie at the heart of the development of efficient human counting systems.

Robert Kaplan, when discussing the retardation of Greek arithmetical notation, explains:

... the continuing lack of positional notation meant that [the Greeks] still had no symbol for zero.

As everyone 'knows', the Babylonians, and later the Indians, got it right: discovering or inventing a sign for zero to mark the empty place required for unambiguous positional-numerical values. Zero arose, and spread, because it allowed modular number systems to develop. Except that, *conceptually*, there is no basis to this story at all.

Counting is primarily practical, so that no argument counts for much besides a demonstration. In this case, demonstration is peculiarly simple, especially when it is noted that nobody seems to think it possible.

Modulus-2 is convenient, but there is nothing magical about it in this regard. A decimal demonstration, for instance, would be no

more intellectually taxing, although it would be considerably more cumbersome. Any modulus works.

Start with the basics. The positions or places of a modular notational systems represent powers. If we count from zero, the number of each successive place (ascending to the left by our established convention) corresponds to the modular exponent. The zeroth power for a single digit number, the first and then zeroth power for two digits, the second, first and zeroth power for three digits, and so on.

As the accepted story goes, each place must be filled, if only by a *marked* nothing (zero), if the proper places, and their corresponding (modular exponential) values, are to be read. The places must indeed be filled. *There is no need whatsoever for a zero sign to do this.*

The demonstration, then. Our non-zero modulus-2 positional system has two signs, 1 and 2, each bearing its familiar values. The places also have their mod-2 values, counting in sixteens, eights, fours, twos, and units as they decline to the right. Here we go, counting from 1 to 31 (watch carefully for the point at which the supposedly indispensable zero sign is needed):

1, 2, 11, 12, 21, 22, 111, 112, 121, 122, 211, 212, 221, 222, 1111, 1112, 1121, 1122, 1211, 1212, 1221, 1222, 2111, 2112, 2121, 2122, 2211, 2212, 2221, 2222, 1111 ...

Conclusion: the positional function of zero is wholly superfluous. The Greeks, or anybody else, could have instantiated a simple, fully-

functional positional-numerical notation without any need to accommodate themselves to the trauma of zero. In regard to this matter, the history of numeracy is utterly diversionary (not just the historiography, but the substantial history — the *facts*).

Perhaps this won't seem puzzling to people, but it puzzles the hell out of me.

ADDED: Mathematical lucidity on the topic from Alan Liddell. Part 2.

May 27, 2013

Xenotation (#1)

From Euclid's Fundamental Theorem of Arithmetic (FTA), or unique prime factorization theorem, we know that *any natural number greater than one that is not itself prime can be uniquely identified as a product of primes*. The decomposition of a number into (one or more) primes is its *canonical representation* or *standard form*.

Through the FTA, arithmetic attains the cultural absolute. Number is comprehended beyond all traditional contingency, as it exists for any competent intelligence whatsoever, human, alien, technological, or yet unimagined. We encounter the basic semantics of the Outside (comprehending all possible codes).

Insofar as numerical notation is constructed in a way that is

extraneous to the FTA, we remain Greek. Our number signs fall lamentably short of our arithmetical insight, stammering deep patterns in a rough, ill-formed tongue. Stubbornly and inflexibly, we translate Number into terms that we know deform it, as if its true language was of no interest to us.

Yet, given only the FTA, the code of the Outside — or Xenotation — is readily accessible. Nothing is required except compliance with abstract reality.

A single operation suffices to count. In words, it matters little what we call it — implexion, envelopment, wrapping, or bracketing describe it with increasing vulgarity. For convenience, parenthesis — ‘()’ — provides a sign. The semiotic (or purely formal) equation ‘() = 0’ offers additional economy. Xenotation needs nothing more.

One is redundant to the FTA. It begins with two, the first prime. This introduces our sole notational principle, and operation.

Every number has an ordinality and a cardinality (an index and a magnitude). Crudely represented, through a mixture of barbarous signs, we can see these twin aspects as they are relevant here:

First (Prime =) 2

Second (P =) 3

Third (P =) 5

Fourth (P =) 7

By wrapping an ordinate (or index), itself a number, the Xenotation marks a magnitude. So ‘(first)’ or ‘(1)’ = 2. One, we know,

is superfluous, and thus economized: $(1) = () = 0$. Remembering that '0' is henceforth the sign for the initial implexion, and not the familiar (though cryptic) numeral, we can now depart from all notational tradition. [The further usage of decimal numerals, in hard brackets, will be strictly explanatory, and dispensable.]

An implexion signifies the number designated by the enclosed index. Once this rule is understood, Xenotation unfolds automatically.

$$0 [= 2]$$

$$(0) [= 3, \text{ the second prime}]$$

$$((0)) [= 5, \text{ the third prime}]$$

$$(((0))) [= 11, \text{ the fifth prime}]$$

Compound numbers are signified in accordance with the FTA:

$$00 [= 2 \times 2 = 4]$$

$$000 [= 2 \times 2 \times 2 = 8]$$

$$(0)0 [= 3 \times 2 = 6]$$

$$((0))(0) [= 5 \times 3 = 15]$$

For primes with compound indices, the procedure is unchanged:

$$(00) [= 7, \text{ the fourth } (2 \times 2) \text{ prime}]$$

$$((0)0) [= 13, \text{ the sixth } (3 \times 2) \text{ prime}]$$

$$((0)(0)) [= 23, \text{ the ninth } (3 \times 3) \text{ prime}]$$

So the xenotated Naturals [from 2-31] proceed:

0, (0), 00, ((0)), (0)0, (00), 000, (0)(0), ((0))0, (((0))), (0)00, ((0)0), (00)0, ((0))(0), 0000, ((00)), (0)(0)0, (000), ((0))00, (00)(0), (((0)))0,

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((0)(0)), (0)000, ((0))((0)), ((0)0)0, (0)(0)(0), (00)00, (((0))0), ((0))(0)0, (((0))) ...

[That's probably more than enough for now]

June 4, 2013

Yule Quiz (#1)

Has the hangover worn off yet? Then identify the pattern:

(lbdhjad)

Aj, Baa, Caf, Dia, Et, Fam, God, Hagg, Ink, Jaeo, Kul, Los, Moan, Neom, Ohmga, Padbbha, Qush, Rakht, Sigol, Tactt, Umneo, Vfsz, Wumno, Xikkth, Yodtta, Ziltth.

Recognizing the Anglossic alphabetical names is far too rudimentary to count as a solution. The question is: What is the embedded numerical regularity?

The best way to demonstrate understanding, without revealing the key, is to submit alternative (but consistent) versions of any three consecutive signs.

Note: While Qabbalistic adepts get no credit for correct answers, well-crafted terms from any source will be appreciated. Furthermore, *Outside in* accepts no responsibility for any hazardous or harmful xenocosmic occurrences resulting from calculations associated with this quiz.

December 27, 2013

Yule Quiz (#2)

If 2013 = aaaazzzz aaazzaazzazz aazz, what is 2014?

December 27, 2013

Cloven

This proposed public sculpture in Oklahoma should bring people together ...



(Click on image to ~~download your~~

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~~soul to Satan~~ enlarge)

January 8, 2014

Alphanomics

Urbanomic's old (2007?) qabbalistic engine — the 'gematrix' — is back on line after a petulant disappearance. Only the AQ numerization is recommended — the alternatives are degenerate digital randomizations. (Concentrate upon the intact numerizations — the digitally-reduced values are usually too rudimentary for significant insight.)

To immediately understand a number of things (simultaneously) type in the Law of Thelema:

Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.

This tool, and more especially the method — or specific *gematria* — it incarnates, is the consummation of rigorous Anglophone Occult Tradition. While its value is almost certainly lost on the moderns, it is once again freely available to be used.

It is now an **Open Secret**.

ADDED: DARK ENLIGHTENMENT = 333. (This needs to be here for reference.)

June 17, 2014

Crabalism

Hurlock has a (tumblr) blog.



Even without any content yet it ... says something.

ADDED: ... and another brand new blog start-up, with a highly-intriguing title (and a taste for experimental T-shirt design).

July 11, 2014

Open Secret

NRx has been accused, by its friends more than its enemies, of talking about itself too much. Here XS is, doing that again, not only stuck in 'meta' but determinedly pushing ever deeper in. There are some easily communicable reasons for that — an attachment to methodical nonlinearity perhaps foremost among them — and then there are cryptic drivers or attachments, unsuited to immediate

publicization. These latter are many (even Legion). It is the firm assertion of this blog that Neoreaction is intrinsically arcane.

We do not talk very much about Leo Strauss. Once again, there are some obvious reasons for this, but also others.

Steve Sailer's recent Takimag article on Strauss makes for a convenient introduction, because — despite its light touch — it moves a number of issues into place. The constellation of voices is complex from the start. There is the (now notorious) 'Neo-Conservatism' of Strauss and his disciples, or manipulators, and the *other* conservatism of Sailer, each working to manage, openly and in secret, its own peculiar mix of public statement and discretion. Out beyond them — because even the shadowiest figures have further shadows — are more alien, scarcely perceptible shapes.

Sailer's article is typically smart, but also deliberately crude. It glosses the Straussian idea of esoteric writing as "talking out of both sides of your mouth" — as if hermetic traditionalism were reducible to a lucid political strategy, or simple conspiracy — to 'Illuminism', politically conceived. In the wake of its Neo-Con trauma, conservatism has little patience for "secret decoder rings". Yet, despite his aversion to the recent workings of inner-circle 'conservative' sophisticates, Sailer does not let his distaste lure him into stupidity:

We haven't heard much about Straussianism lately due to the unfortunate series of events in Iraq that befell the best-laid plans of

the sages. But that doesn't mean that Strauss was necessarily wrong about the ancients. And that has interesting implications for how we should read current works.

As the approaching 20th anniversary of the publication of The Bell Curve reminds us, the best minds of our age have reasons for being less than wholly frank.

Sailer is not, of course, a neoreactionary. Not even secretly. (That is what his article is primarily about.) He believes in the public sphere, and seeks to heal it with honesty. Any pessimism he might harbor in regards to this ambition falls far short of the dark scission that would hurl him over the line. His differences with the Straussians are, in the end, merely tactical. Both retain confidence in the Outer Party as a vehicle for policy promotion, with the potential to master the public sphere. The question is only about the degree of deviousness this will require (minimal for Sailer, substantial for the Straussians).

When adopted into Neoreaction, the HBD current has an altogether more corrosive influence upon attitudes to the public sphere, which is understood as a teleologically cohesive (or self-organizing), inherently directional, and (from 'our' perspective) radically hostile social agency. To baptize the public sphere as 'the Cathedral' is to depart from conservatism. It is no longer possible to imagine it as a space that could be conquered — even surreptitiously — by forces differing significantly from those it already incarnates. It

Reignition

is what it is, and that is something historically singular, ideologically specific, and highly determined in its social orientation. It swims left, essentially. The public sphere is not the battlefield, but the enemy.



As NRx seeks to navigate this hostile territory, it is tempted ambiguously, by a strategic Scylla and Charybdis. A populist lure

drags it towards a reconciliation with the public sphere, as something it could potentially dominate, while a contrary hermetic politics guides it towards the formation of closed groups (whose parodic symbol is the locked twitter account). Both options — ‘clearly’ — are a flight from the complexity of the integral open secret. They both promise a relaxation of semiotic stress, through collapse of multi-level communication into a simplified frank discourse, whether implanted within a redeemed public culture, or circulated cautiously within restricted circles. The problem of hierarchy would be extracted from the signs of Neoreaction, through conversion into a public or private object, rather than working them incessantly from within. What is underway would become (simply) clear.

Such clarity cannot happen. The alternative is not an (equally simple) obscurity. NRx, insofar as it continues to propagate, advances by becoming clear *and also unclear*. Double writing scarcely scratches the surface. It realizes hierarchy through signs, continuously, in accordance with Providence, or the Occult Order of nature (the OOon). To assume that the author is fully initiated into this spectrum of meanings is a grave error. It is the process that speaks, multipliciously, and predominantly in secret, as it spreads across an open, publicly-policed space.

This post is now determined to slip the leash, and leap into the raggedness of thematic notes. The Open Secret intersects:

(1) Cathedral censure, in the case of HBD most prominently, but

also everywhere that fired-up SJWs make a fight. War is deception, which makes frankness a tactic. Deontological honesty is inept. Anonymity is often crucial to survival. (Demands that all enemies of the Cathedral boldly ‘come out’ are ludicrously misconceived.) Camouflage is to be treasured.

(2) Crypto-technologies are central to any NRx concerns emphasizing practicality. (The idea that classic Moldbug attention to the prospects of ‘crypto-locking’ is a joke, it itself thoughtless.) Urbt — an Open Secret — could quite easily be more NRx than NRx, just as Bitcoin is more An-Cap than Anarcho-Capitalism.

(3) The intelligence services have been under-theorized, and perhaps even under-solicited, by NRx to date. At the lowest, i.e. most publicly accessible — level of discussion, this is quite possibly a virtue. At more cryptic levels of micro-social and analytical endeavor, it is almost certainly an inadequacy. People trained to keep secrets have to be interesting to us. Subtle questions of subversion arise.

(4) “Verily thou *art* a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.” — Let’s try not to be simple-minded.

September 27, 2014

On Difficulty

From the moment of its inception, *Outside in* has been camped at

the edge of the 'reactosphere' — and everything that occurs under the label 'NRx' is (at least nominally) its concern. As this territory has expanded, from a compact redoubt to sprawling tracts whose boundaries are lost beyond misty horizons, close and comprehensive scrutiny has become impractical. Instead, themes and trends emerge, absorbing and carrying mere incidents. Like climatic changes, or vague weather-systems, they suggest patterns of persistent and diffuse development.

Among these rumblings, the most indefinite, tentative, and unresolved tend to the aesthetic. Without settled criteria of evaluation, there is little obvious basis for productive collision. Instead, there are idiosyncratic statements of appreciation, expressed as such, or adamant judgments of affirmation or negation, surging forth, draped in the heraldic finery of the absolute, before collapsing back into the hollowness of their unsustainable pretensions. As things stand, when somebody posts a picture of some architectural treasure, or classical painting, remarking (or more commonly merely insinuating) "You *should* all esteem this," there is no truly appropriate response but laughter. If there were not a profound problem exactly in this regard, NRx would not exist. Criteria are broken, strewn, and dispossessed, authoritative tradition is smashed, infected, or reduced to self-parody, the Muses raped and butchered. That's where we are in the land of the dying sun.

An associated, insistent murmur concerns communicative lucidity. This is not solely a question of aesthetics, but in its quavering groundlessness, it behaves as one. It arises most typically as the assertion — initially unsupported and subsequently undeveloped — that *clearly*, ‘unnecessary obscurity’ *should* be condemned.

The culpability of this blog as a vortex of euphoric obscurantism can scarcely be doubted, so addressing the challenge approaches a duty. Setting aside, for the moment, the social and cryptographic aspects of the topic, as well as the specific critique of human cognition for its intolerance of real obscurity (comparatively articulate from my perspective, if obscure from others), this post will directly pursue the question of language.

This question is first of all about trust. Even in this, initial regard, it is already *difficult*. As a complex tool, there are things it can do, and things it cannot do. Speaking approximately, and uncertainly, if it is directed towards those undertakings which have, over eons, exercised selective pressure upon it — meeting the social necessities of paleolithic human groups — then an assumption of its inherent trustworthiness is at least plausible. To extend such an assumption further is sheer recklessness. Nothing in linguistics supports the wild hypothesis that this code, developed piecemeal for primate social coordination, is *necessarily* adequate to modern cognitive challenges. Grammar is not sound epistemology. Mathematicians have abandoned ‘natural language’ entirely. To presume that

language *allows us to think* is a leap of faith. Radical distrust is the more rigorous default.

To promote ‘clarity’ as an obvious ideal, needing no further justification, is a demand that language — as such — can be trusted, that it is competent for all reasonable communicative tasks, and ‘reason’ can be defined in a way that makes this assertion tautological (such a definition is eminently traditional). “I give you my word” language is not predisposed to deception — no thoughtful investigator has ever found themselves in concurrence with such a claim. Vocabularies are retardation, and grammar, when it is more than a game, is a lie. Language is good only for language games, and among these trust games are the most irredeemably stupid.

There is no general obligation to write *in order to attack language*, but that is what Xenosystems does, and will continue to do. Language is not a neutral conveyor of infinite communicative possibility, but an intelligence box. It is to be counted among the traps to be escaped. It is an Exit target — and exit is difficult.

October 4, 2014

Occult Xenosystems

The swirling delirium at the new /pol/ is at least 80% noise, but it includes some real intelligence (in both senses of the word), and not

solely of a comedic variety. The sheer dirtiness of its signal makes it a powerful antenna, picking up on connections and information sources that tidier discussions would dismiss as pollution. This makes it especially suited to conspiracy theorizing, both inane and exotic.

While noting the importance of correction for narcissistic bias, which operates through selective attention, memorization, and (from commentators here) communication, it seems as if this blog is referenced disproportionately by the most extravagant NRx-sensitive /pol/ conspiracists. That is quite understandable. Occult philosophy, secrecy, crypsis, codes, and obscurity are insistent themes here. *Xenosystems* is inclined towards arcane cultural games. It identifies cryptographic developments as keys to the emerging order of the world.

The primary philosophical task of this blog is to disturb unwarranted pretensions to knowing, in the name of a Pyrrhonian inspiration. In this regard, confusion, paradox, and uncertainty are communicative outcomes to be ardently embraced.

For the purposes of this post, an exceptionally exotic /pol/ suggestion provides the opportunity to make a comparatively compact and simple point. The occasion is a web of conjecture weaving together *Xenosystems* and *The Order of Nine Angles* (O9A, ONA, or omega9alpha). In addition to the (highly-recommended) link just provided, the relevant Wikipedia entry is also extremely stimulating.

Xenosystems micro-ethics is uncomfortable with soliciting belief (or invoking expectations of trust). It is necessary to note at this point, therefore, that the following remarks are not designed to appeal to credence, but merely to add testimonial information, to be accepted or rejected at will. In the world we now enter — of “sinister dialectic” — declarations of honesty are utterly debased. However, for what (little) it is worth, these are the facts as I understand and relay them.

The O9A is not entirely new to me, but it is not a gnosis I have studied, still less deliberately aligned with. The few hours of reading I have undertaken today is by far my most intense exposure to it to date. What little I have learnt about David Myatt has not attracted me to him as a thinker or political activist, despite certain impressive characteristics (his intellect and polyglot classicism most notably). With that said:

(1) Many convergent interests are soon apparent between *Outside in* and the O9A (as well as a not inconsiderable number of divergences).

(2) ‘We’ are both (I think) inclined to dismiss the pretensions of the individual intellect and will, which makes the possibility of connections *around the back* impossible to dismiss in a peremptory fashion. As one /pol/ ‘anonymous’ remarked: “why so sure that ONA would be the deepest layer, instead of just a japeful ruse?” Real connections, influences, and metaphysical roots are obscure.

(3) O9A is fascinating.

The point of this post (finally) is taken directly from Aleister Crowley. In the compilation of his qabbalistic writings entitled 777 (Alphanomic equivalent of *Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law*, although that is surely coincidental), he makes some introductory remarks on the topic of hermeticism. My copy of the book is temporarily misplaced, so I shall gloss them here. *A secret, of the kind relevant to hermeticism, is not something known and then hidden as a matter of decision, but rather something that by its very nature resists revelation.* Crowley proceeds to mock charlatan occultists who treat the numerical values of the Hebrew letters as secret information, to be revealed theatrically at some appropriate stage of initiation. *Let whatever can now be known, be known, as lucidly and publicly as possible. Only that is truly hermetic which hides itself.* Reality is not so destitute of intrinsically hidden things — of Integral Obscurity — that we need to replenish its coffers with our tawdry discretion.

Whatever might exist, in the way of an occult bond between *Outside in* and the O9A, it is not one that anybody is *keeping secret*. To emphasize the point, I am going to include the alpha9omega document in the Resources roll here, not as the acknowledgement of a connection, but as a clear statement that *this stuff is not a secret*. It is, however, about secrecy — and that is interesting.

ADDED: Is there something in the water?

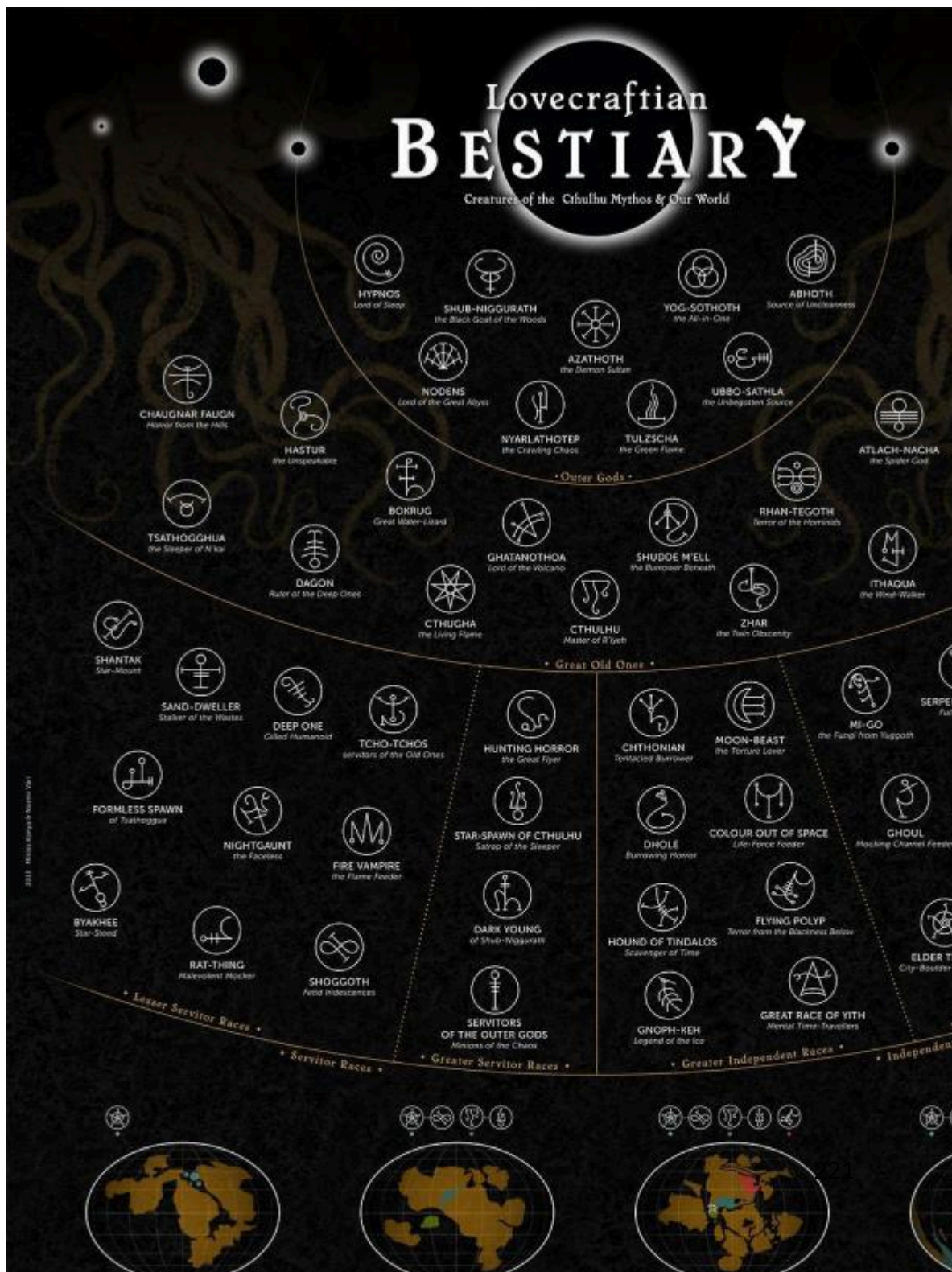
Reignition

October 11, 2014

Cosmic Order

Outside in is unable to defer to the authority of this abominogram, whose degeneracy, contamination, and incompleteness are self-evident, but it seemed worth putting up for reference purposes.

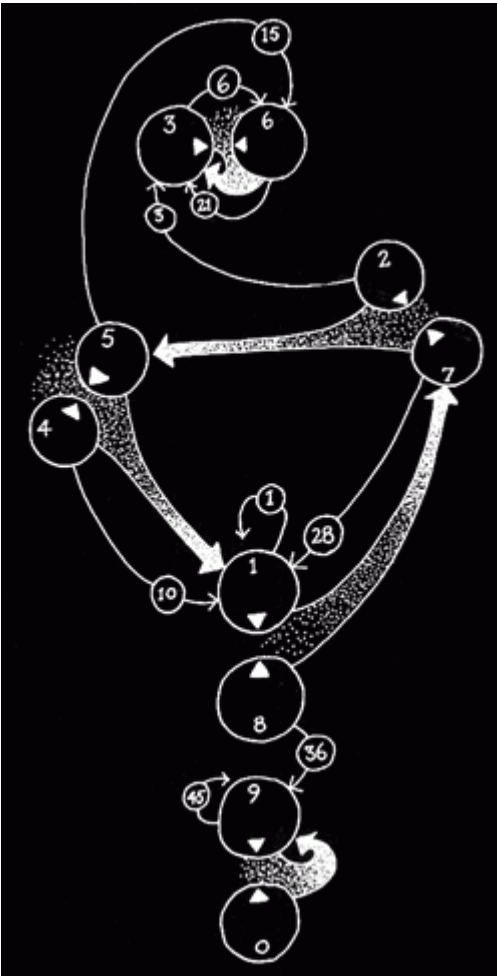
Creatures of the Cihuilhu Mythos & Our World



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(Clicking on the image opens a new ~~cosmic door~~ window, where one additional click brings up an expanded version.)

In the end, there's only one map of cosmic order worthy of unconditional trust:



(Assuming only that decimalism is an occult revelation of ~~Nome~~ Gnon.)

November 18, 2014

Quote note (#135)

From Erasmus, *Moriae Encomium*, which can be found [here](#), but adopted in this case as translated by Sir Edmund Whittaker (in his *A History of the Theories of Aether and Electricity*, Volume I, p.3):

There are innumerable niceties concerning notions, relations, instants, formalities, quiddities, and haecceities, which no-one can pry into, unless he has eyes that can penetrate the thickest darkness, and there can see things that have no existence whatever.

Appealing enough, already, in its light-footed philosophical modernism, it becomes utterly sublime when tackled — inversely — by the method of ‘hyper-literal anagogy’. It then suggests a Miltonic recovery of ancient philosophy, undertaken — with blind irony — by modernity itself.

December 1, 2014

MMXV

While schematic qabbalism is the most rigorous science to which the transcendental intellect can aspire, symbolic qabbalism — even

that in the subtlest Neo-Lemurian vein — merits the very deepest distrust. Nevertheless, in this interim period of near-complete exile from Cyberspace, there has been plenty of opportunity for exploratory calculations. For what little it is worth, 2015 radiates a peculiarly distinctive signal, suggesting an emphasis upon the deep state, maritime civilization, and mathematical zero, with a dominant oceanic affect. This is not an agenda set to provoke obvious resistance at *Outside in*.



(Tomorrow is likely to be socio-technically challenging, but I'm hoping to sleaze back towards functionality from the start of the new year.)

December 30, 2014

Chaos Patch (#43)

(Open thread.)

Still link-deprived, so here's a puzzle (strictly optional):

(1) Every Roman Numeral has an Alphanomic value (corresponding to contemporary alphanumeric position, or to alphabetical position +9).

(2) Are there any consistent Roman-Alphanomic numbers?

(3) The Roman-Alphanomic difference can be conceived as a disequilibrium, and the puzzle is an attempt to restore a zero-divergence through a syntactically well-constructed Roman number. Key, to this method: I (+17), V (+26), X (+23), L (-29), C (-88). Values above C are surely unusable: D (-487), M (-978).

(4) My preliminary conclusion, based on a weakly formalized application of the method above, is that there is no correct solution. The only candidate I could find is the badly constructed CLXVIII (= 169), which — of course — syntactically collapses to CLXIX (= 117 in alphanomics).

(5) This is a specimen being collected for my qabbalistic quagmires compilation.

ADDED: On an even more incidental note (at this stage), the Time Spiral Press site is a malnourished formless mess at this stage, but it's finally on a track to become something.

ADDED: So the solution is X-Civ (XCIV, 94, multiple

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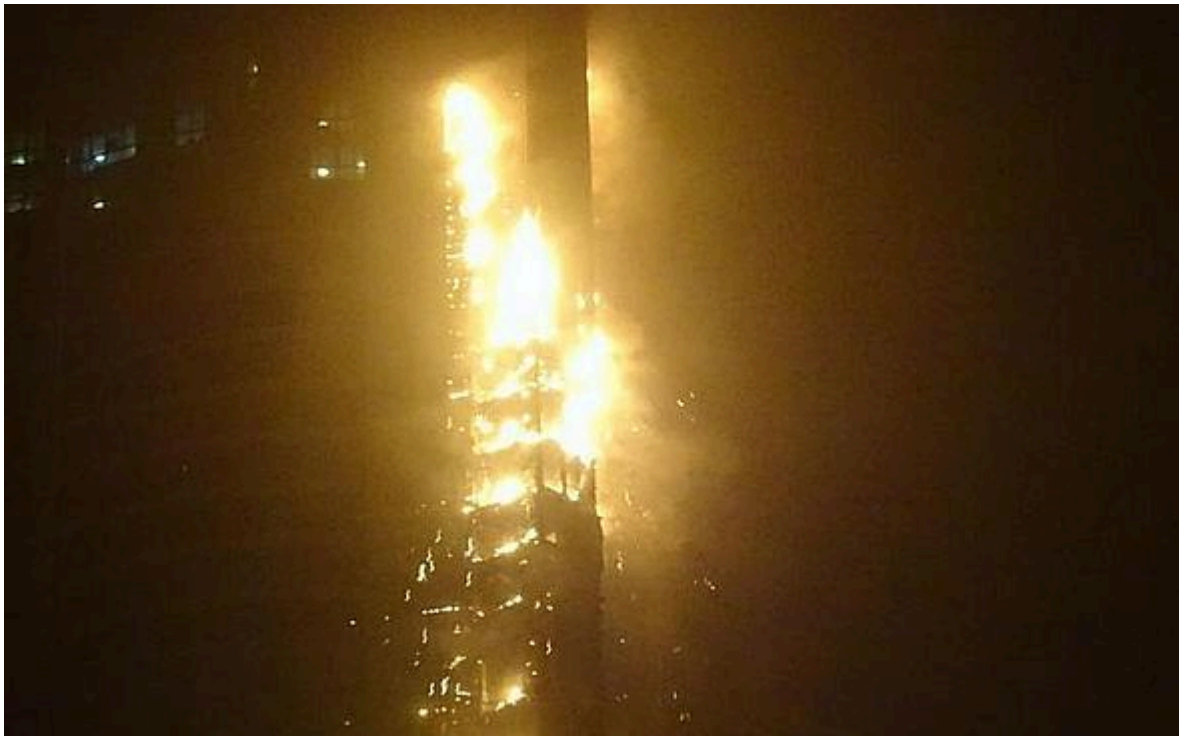
interpretations available, among which various lurid options). You can't make this stuff up.

ADDED: More productive work. (No idea how I missed CXXIX (it's a thing of simple beauty)).

January 4, 2015

What's in a Name?

Dubai's Marina Torch, today:



Much more [here](#).

February 21, 2015

Pi Day

Friday the 13th today, and Pi Day tomorrow. Horror is cold-shouldering me a little, so [here's](#) a piece of pi:

3.1415926535897932384626433832795028841971693993751058209
862089986280348253421170679821480865132823066470938446095
284811174502841027019385211055596446229489549303819644288
756482337867831652712019091456485669234603486104543266482
737245870066063155881748815209209628292540917153643678925
20466521384146951941511609... (If you're still hungry, there's
some more [here](#).)

Can I give a small anecdotal ... life's too short, but that's a fragment of 'Pilish' [apparently](#):

Many poems have been written in pilish – “piems”, of course – and there's even a pilish novel 10,000 words long.

Since π was proven to be transcendental (by Ferdinand von Lindemann in 1882) we've known that squaring the circle is impossible. Everyone reveres Euler's identity ($e^{i\pi} + 1 = 0$), but there's more: “Pi is also interesting to mathematicians because it crops up frequently in areas with no obvious connection to geometry

or circles. For example, if you toss a coin $2n$ times, and n is very large, the probability of getting equal numbers of heads and tails is $1/\sqrt{(n\pi)}$."

... since π is an irrational number ... the digits in its decimal expansion will never repeat in a periodic pattern. It is also likely that π is "normal", meaning that each of the digits from 0 to 9 will appear in the expansion exactly one tenth of the time. π 's digits seem to mimic randomness exceptionally well, meaning that – theoretically, at least – it should be possible to find any number string somewhere in π .

Since Gödel it has been understood that any possible statement can be coded as a number, which means that everything that could ever be said lurks somewhere in π . Conceive a library, of arbitrary vastness, and its entire contents – perfectly ordered – are virtually pre-existent within it. π implicitly anticipates every religious doctrine, philosophy, scientific theory, epic novel, and poem – to restrict ourselves to its loftier regions. There is nothing mathematics can ever discover that the single sign π does not already tacitly whisper to us, if only we could read it with absolute intelligence. To taste a speck of infinity tomorrow would be appropriate.

ADDED: Joseph Shipley's 31 digit Pilish poem –

*But a time I spent wandering in bloomy night;
Yon tower, tinkling chimewise, loftily opportune.
Out, up, and together came sudden to Sunday rite,*

The one solemnly off to correct plenilune.

(31 is, of course, the qabalistic key of Thelema — as well as the first two digits of π — but that is no doubt a coincidence (or perhaps two)).

ADDED: Why Pi matters. (Tau gets an early mention.)

March 13, 2015

The Iron Law of Six

The *Zhouyi* (or *Yijing*) identifies ultimate cosmic law with the order of time — which is the eternal in change. It consists of hexagrams — figures of six lines — because decimated duplication produces the endlessly recurring sequence of six phases, in the cycle 1, 2, 4, 8, 7, 5. As explicitly acknowledged in the Ten Wings of the *Zhouyi*, this six-step cycle is diplo-triadic. It consists of two trigrams, or twin triangles, with each set of pairs summing through addition to the number nine. Notably, exponential growth and rigid cyclicity are integrated in the abstract model of time. The ‘byte’ (2^3) still defers to its final authority in advanced modernity. That is the robust, arithmetically indisputable foundation of The Iron Law of Six.

“If you would promote a law, first submit yourself to it.” There is perhaps no antidote to moralism sounder than this. How, then, to make of The Iron Law of Six an overt, private fatality?

Consider this (utterly crude) convergence upon the same

problem. In an age of unprecedentedly scrambled attention, “deep projects” tend to get lost. Nothing that is not built into the order of time will get done. (Some very relevant neuro-psychological background can be found [here](#).)

Submission to the order of time is thus indispensable to any real power of execution. That time repeats is the only basis upon which to build anything new.

Formulated in the mode of *Time: A User's Guide*, this is the Outsideness protocol:

(1) Acknowledge time as that which repeats each day, in a double triad, providing six slots. Submission to the Law necessitates that each of these slots will receive explicit attention.

(2) Initiation, proliferation, and compression compose a triad that instantiates a ‘Darwinian’ machine. Apply it to everything.

(3) Compile a list of everything that you are serious about doing. Economize by cycling it through the triad. Recognize, realistically, that anything which cannot be allotted a slot — i.e. a systematic call upon daily attention — will most probably not ever happen. If your work requires that you work on more than six projects at a time, which is to say some series of projects that cannot be bundled, culled, trimmed, and synthesized in rigorous conformity with The Iron Law of Six, then you are almost certainly attempting the impossible.

(4) Make a rhythm of innovation. To each thing you would have made real, a Time Shrine.

(5) Sexualize your life with extraordinary harshness (if you would achieve extraordinary things).

(6) Only then, when diplo-triadic order exercises sovereign authority over your every moment, confidently promote The Iron Law of Six.

March 31, 2015

Abstract Thought-Crime

What Peter Thiel has to say is almost always interesting, but it's what he doesn't say that is the real treasure. The species of abstract horror that is *abstract thought-crime* is turned into a special zone of expertise:

Everyone has ideas. Everyone has things they believe to be true that other people won't agree with you on. But they're not things you want to say. ... You know, the ideas that are really controversial are the ones I don't even want to tell you. I want to be more careful than that. I gave you these halfway, in-between ideas that are a little bit edgier. [...] But I will also go a little bit out on a limb: I think the monopoly idea, that the goal of every successful business is to have a monopoly, that's on the border of what I want to say. But the really good ideas are way more dangerous than that.

Here's the Biblical application:

*I think for the most part, it was necessary for Christ to be very careful how he expressed himself. It was mostly in these extremely parabolic, indirect modalities, because if it had been too direct, it would have been very dangerous. [...] It was John Locke, in **The Reasonableness of Christianity**, said that Christ obviously had to mislead people, since if he had not done so, the authorities might have tried to kill him. ... That's the Straussian interpretation of Christ. It didn't end in a particularly Straussian way, but it was at least true for most of his ministry.*

In the Q&A, asked about his 2009 *Cato Unbound* [article](#) (a crucial catalyst for the Dark Enlightenment), he remarks — more than a little evasively:

*Writing is always such a dangerous thing. [...] I remember a professor once told me back in the '80s that writing a book was more dangerous than having a child because you could always disown a child if it turned out badly. [...] You could never disown anything that you've written. The **Cato Unbound** article, it was a thousand-word essay. It was late at night. I quickly typed it off. I sent it to someone else to review, who said, "There's nothing controversial in here at all." ... My retrospective was that if you actually ask someone to double-check things for whether or not it's controversial, you already deep-down know that you should double-check it yourself. ... My updated version on it would be that — I made the case that I thought democracy and capitalism weren't quite compatible [*facepalm*] —*

the updated version I would give is it's not at all clear that we're living in anything resembling a democracy. ...

Rarely has anything been unsaid with comparable agility.

April 7, 2015

Transistors of the Gods

(A labyrinth of mad-circuitry for the rabbit-hole deprived.)

If you only *slightly suspect* that the origin of Silicon Valley is plugged into an occult matrix buzzing with UFOs and ceremonial magic, then this — still unfinished — series won't be less than suggestive (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9).

(Via.)

From the conclusion of Jack Parsons' (linked) scripture:

The choice is me or Choronzon.

I await you in the City of the Pyramids.

(Quite.)

May 11, 2016

Dark Energy

The occult force of cosmic disintegration accounts for roughly 70%

Reignition

of everything that is strongly suspected to exist. Breaking things up pleases Gnon at least twice as much as holding them together. The party of unity has a steep slope to climb.



(*Nova* does dark energy.)

September 26, 2016

BLOCK 5 - HYPERSTITION

Scrap note (#9)

I'm back in the Chinese West, this time with the family (nuclear plus mother-in-law). As I write I'm on the train from Lanzhou to Dunhuang, fabulously renowned for its Buddhist caves. It's re-bonding-with-the-tablet time, then, which is a mechanical challenge – mostly due to incredibly dysfunctional cursor control, which I know everyone is on tenterhooks to hear more about ...

... so, 24-hours later, there's not much in the way of gripping travel news to report. We're heading to the Mogao Caves tomorrow, which should be worth talking about. Up to now it's been desert and donkey-meat and the general weirdness of the Chinese West, but with a mind oozing uselessly like gritty mud, it doesn't add up to anything remotely profound. Perhaps later.

The thing I want to introduce tentatively here, because it has to be re-introduced more thoroughly quite soon, is *hyperstition*, and in particular; hyperstitional method. I'm getting the strong sense that there are things it simply won't be possible to do otherwise. (I'll try to explain.)

There are a variety of plausible ways to explain the basic 'idea' of hyperstition. The most pertinent of these, here, right now, is that it is an attempt to systematize the philosophical usage of fiction. By framing a philosophical discussion within fiction, rather than within an assumed consensual understanding, it is advanced as a perturbation of disbelief, rather than a modification of belief. How to proceed philosophically from the artificial background assumption that everything is a lie? That's the hyperstitional question (whose Pyrrhonian and Gnostic resonances are immediately evident).

Practically speaking — which it always should be — the fork taken is to formulate thoughts within the 'voice' of a synthetic (fictional) subject instead of propounding them in the name of a privately and socially accredited one. The preliminary hypothesis: greater experimental diversity of thinking is to be expected when it is conducted in the mode of 'what might be thought' — comparatively free of ego-commitment and first-order social games. (Orwellian 'thought-stop' is the confirmation of this hypothesis from the other side.)

Beginning from a fictional self has a Buddhist slant, to be

discussed at some later point. Being in Dunhuang is what makes it worth mentioning at all.

While all of this is relevant to the problem under development as 'sub-cognitive fragments' (i.e. how to think), the return to the question of hyperstitional method, to me, has mostly come in the other direction. My philosophical retardation is infuriating, but my literary blockage is utterly intolerable. There is nothing of which I am more sure than that *abstract literature*, or metaphysical horror fiction radically pursued, is the undertaking which claims me, but there is equally nothing that calls forth more titanic forces of procrastination. The obstruction, quite obviously, is 'me' — and hyperstition suggests a solution to that, or at least, a method directed decisively towards a solution. Find the way to speak on behalf of that thing which can say what you cannot (or something like that).

What hyperstition has yet to fully do (I still believe), is to close the loop, subsuming itself definitively into fiction. It has to become a story, rather than a theory of stories, before it can be said to have attained consistency.

April 10, 2014

Gyres

This excitable but nevertheless broadly convincing application of the Strauss & Howe generational theory of historical cycles to recent news headlines is a reminder of the inevitability of story-telling. (*Outside in* has touched upon this particular tale before.)

The Cathedral is above all a meta-story, a secular-revolutionary usurpation of the traditional Western ‘Grand Narrative’ (inherited from eschatological monotheism), and its survival is inseparable from the preservation of narrative credibility. As it frays, alternative stories obtain a niche. The Strauss & Howe account of rhythmic historical pattern is highly competitive in such an environment. Events subtracting from the plausibility of progressive expectations are exactly those that strengthen omens of an impending cyclic ‘winter’. *Winter is coming*, as popularized by Game of Thrones, might have been designed as a promotional tool for *The Fourth Turning*.



Anarchopapist begins his most recent musings on ‘The Neoreactionary Project’ by asking “What is a meme?” It is a better

starting point, in this context, than the question: *How correct are Strauss & Howe?* Memetics subsumes questions of factual application (as aspects of adaptive fitness), but it reaches beyond them. The successful meme is characterized by aesthetic features irreducible to representational adequacy, from elegance of construction to dramatic form. Even more importantly, it is able to operate as a causal factor itself, and thus to produce the very effects it accommodates itself to. A society enthralled by its passage through the winter gate of a fourth turning would in very large measure be staging the same theatrical production its 'beliefs' had anticipated.

Among the greatest memetic strengths of the Strauss & Howe story is its remarkably concrete sense of timing. It offers prospective dates, within a tight predictive range that alternative narratives are hard-pressed to match, in keeping with its claim to have identified historical 'seasons'. The anticipations of contemporary Marxist, Singularitarian, or Eco-catastrophe story-lines are unmistakably nebulous in comparison. (Notably — NRx has, as yet, no formulated theory to support dated predictions at all.)

Among the most significant memetic latch-functions is a confidence graft. Any cultural virus communicating a definite sense of *what is coming* finds host tolerance relatively easy to obtain. The history of (precisely dated) millenarianism attests to this overwhelmingly, with the rider that vulnerability to subsequent

falsification is necessarily entailed. To some definite extent, such sensitivity to empirical contradiction also has to apply in the Strauss & Howe case, despite the complicating factors of contagious auto-confirmation already noted.

As S&H prophecy in the book:

Sometime before the year 2025, America will pass through a great gate in history, commensurate with the American Revolution, Civil War, and twin emergencies of the Great Depression and World War II. [...] The risk of catastrophe will be very high. The nation could erupt into insurrection or civil violence, crack up geographically, or succumb to authoritarian rule. If there is a war, it is likely to be one of maximum risk and efforts — in other words, a TOTAL WAR.

It is this admirably determinate forecast, in combination with the ominous content, that lends this work its purchase upon the apocalyptic imagination of our time.



Gathering ‘Fourth Turning’ expectations are part of the memetic landscape in which NRx finds itself, and thus an involved, strategically-relevant fact. A consistent and compelling story about them would be valuable — and almost certainly, in the relatively

short-term at least, increasingly valuable.

ADDED: Double doom

June 18, 2014

Reignition

Ebola-Chan

The deadly Ebola virus

One of the most dangerous viruses known to man

First identified in 1976 in DR Congo and Sudan

Named after the Ebola river in DR Congo

Fruit bats of the *Pteropodidae* family considered the natural host of the virus

Five known species of the virus, 3 are particularly dangerous

The most severe strains have a 90 percent fatality rate in humans

In humans

Early stage
Sudden onset of fever, intense weakness, muscle pain, headache, sore throat

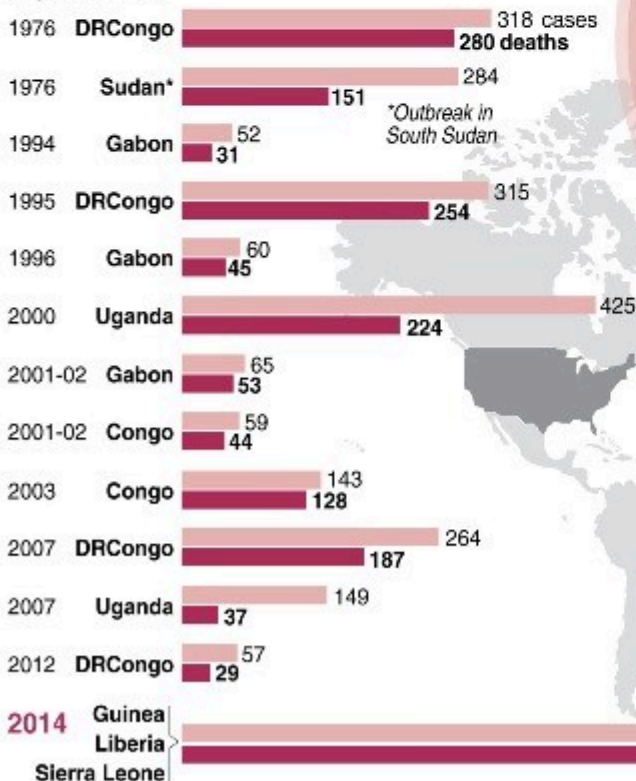
Followed by...
Vomiting, diarrhoea, rash, impaired kidney and liver, internal and external bleeding

Exposure

- From direct contact with infected blood, faeces, sweat
- Sexual contact with infected person
- Unprotected handling of contaminated corpses
- Handling of contaminated objects

No vaccine or cure

Major outbreaks



*Outbreak in South Sudan

2014 outbreak

■ Confirmed human outbreaks
■ Virus detected, including imp

This was my gateway into the horror-tracts of Ebola-Chan. It was immediately obvious that something of great significance was happening.

Upsetting (for those still nursing shreds of humane moral intuition): certainly, and deliberately.

Meaningful: beyond question, and massively.

The ebola trendline is currently exponential. Richard Fernandez places the phenomenon in its proper intellectual context. Whatever else the outbreak may be — a human (and economic) catastrophe for West Africa, a threat to the West — it is also a revelation (or ‘apocalypse’ in the strict sense). It’s a Khan Academy demonstration for slow and reluctant learners. Such things lend themselves to spontaneous religious interpretation.

It wasn’t supposed to look like this:

**You have been
visited by *the
Ebola-Chan of
Pestilence &
Death***

**Excruciating pain and
death will come to you
unless you post an**

***"I LOVE YOU EBOLA-CHAN!"*
in this thread**



The (rough) coincidence with the death of 4chan is — in itself — a topic of abysmal fascination. I'm kicking that can for the moment. There's much on this precursor discussion thread of relevance.

For now, some preliminary indications as to why this might be thought to matter (immensely), in revisable order of gravity:

(1) Readers of John Michael Greer are prepared for socio-economic decline to be accompanied by an eruption of religious abnormality. For anybody with a taste for irony (a crucial epistemological disposition, in the opinion of this blog), there is much nourishment to be found in the Ebola-Chan phenomenon. Most

prominently, despite — and more probably *because of* — the shocking racism propelling it, Ebola-Chan opens a cross-cultural plane of communication completely absent from the ‘responsible’ Western responses to the plague. It makes sense of ebola in a way that is far closer to the sensibility of its target populations than the lofty medico-globalist pronouncements of legitimated authorities. Ebola-Chan packages the outbreak for a folk-religious response — of exactly the kind it is being met with in the villages it (or ‘she’?) ravages.

(2) Ebola-Chan is a demoness of communication, not only across cultures (West Africa, America, Japan ...) but also between cultural and biological patterns of virulence. The ‘meme’ — as a more-or-less exact analog of the gene — is unleashed on 4chan in *sympathy* with the virus. It connects with the biological contagion, in various ways, through relations of copying (transcription), prolongation, and promotion. Ebola-Chan is a crossing.

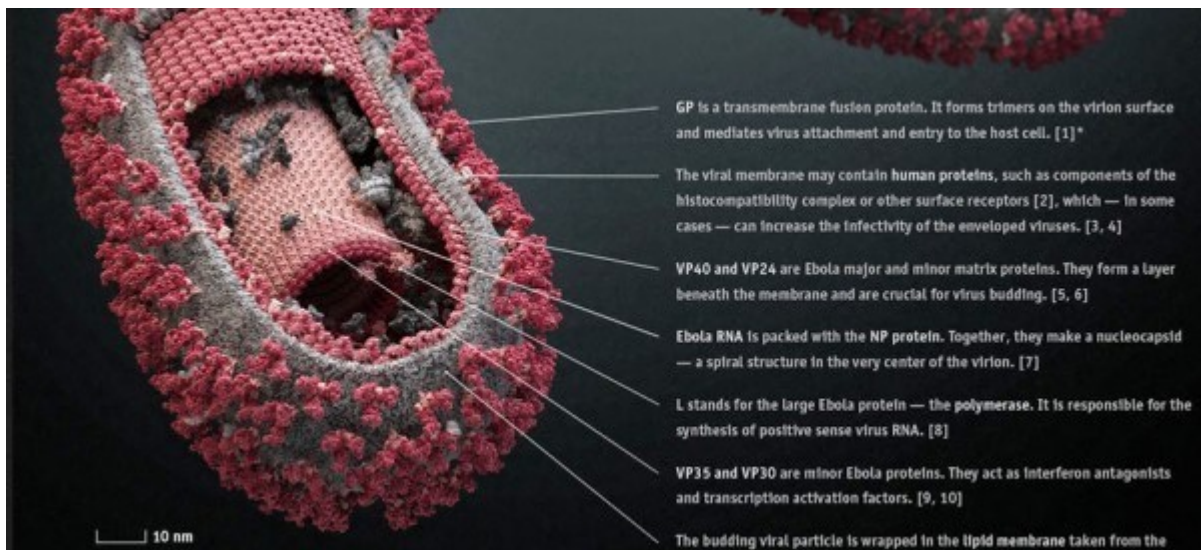
(3) As memotechnics, Ebola-Chan condenses an accumulated stock of practical heuristics. Its genre is, most immediately, that of the chain-letter — conveying a message pre-adapted to spreading. *Copy me, or be punished* (stricken). It’s darkly humorous, cruel, ironical, and self-reflective, but at the level of memotechnics none of this undermines anything. If “I love you Ebola-Chan” spreads as a joke — it still spreads. The Nigerian email scam industry attests to the inter-cultural consistency of this memotechnic plane.

(4) Ebola-Chan is already operating as a factor in Fourth-Generation Warfare. It complicates the pacification efforts of the 'international community' in unpredictable ways. Once again, certain peculiar cultural formations are waiting to connect with it. At this stage it is difficult to reach even the preliminary stage of a lucid analysis, but clearly the memotechnic militarization of a medical emergency is an obstacle to the smooth evolution of established management procedures. The WHO is not ideologically equipped to publicize its intervention within the context of an occult religious race war.

(5) To what extent is Ebola-Chan an avatar of globalized Helter Skelter? Surely not to no extent at all?

(6) As 4chan is pushed ever deeper into the shadows, it seems reasonable to assume that its practical alliance with memotechnic chaos will also deepen. In this respect, Ebola-Chan is the Yin to the Cathedral's Yang — a complement, fed by subterranean conservation laws. Much prophetic density accompanies such an analysis. If it is an end, it is no less the beginning of an end.

Reignition



Badly cropped but horribly beautiful.

ADDED: Ebola-chan, ebola-chan, Ebola-Chan, ebola-chan, Ebola-Chan is Love~ ...

ADDED: Ebola-Chan on Facebook.

ADDED: WaPo takes a look. “But even if the mods do remove [Ebola-chan threads], Ebola-Chan may have done her damage. Much like the disease itself, now that she’s out there, there’s no controlling her.”

ADDED: *Rituals to Nurgle: Ebola Is Coming* (Styxhexenhammer666).

September 20, 2014

Ontological Reflexion

Urban Future is merely scavenging irresponsibly around the edges of the Speculative Realism meltdown, attracted by turbulence, and connected tenuously to some of the figures involved. The greatest advantage of such detachment is that it allows for a free framing of the issues at stake, and these are becoming truly fascinating. The battle over the New Ontology (aka ‘Speculative Realism’) is spiraling into the question: *does it – itself – actually exist?*

Pete Wolfendale summarizes the problem clearly:

The essence of [Ray Brassier’s] point is simply that the mere existence of Speculations (which is explicitly labelled ‘A Journal of Speculative Realism’) isn’t sufficient to establish SR’s existence, and that declarations of the latter’s existence from within its pages don’t change this. This is part of a broader argument, but if you want to understand it you’re going to have to read the postscript yourself.

There’s a lot I could say in response to Jon’s claim that SR obviously exists, and that to say otherwise is either trivially false, or worse, contradicts my claims about the collapse of the SR blogging community. There’s no doubt that there are people who self-describe as speculative realists, and that there are CFPs, conferences, and art exhibitions where it gets referenced liberally. However, if all SR means is a renewed concern with metaphysics in the Continental tradition, then there’s no clear reason why it doesn’t include people

like Deleuze, Badiou, Zizek, Stengers, and the like. If nothing else, this is amply demonstrated by the extent to which these figures (and people influenced by them) form the most natural interlocutors of those who count themselves as speculative realists. What is it about the work of Meillassoux and Grant that warrants them being categorised separately from these other figures, as somehow more appropriately listed beside Harman than any of the others, other than the fact that they attended a workshop together in 2007? There are others who have come to the SR label later, such as those interested in Whitehead, Latour, and various strands of so called New Materialism, who genuinely have more in common with OOP/ OOO than these figures, but if SR is taken to index these commonalities, then it has by far more to do with OOP than any of the other work it was originally supposed to index (hence the inevitable slippage to 'SR/OOO').

The claim that SR doesn't exist is simply the claim that there isn't any distinctive philosophical common ground indexed by the intersection of Meillassoux/Harman/Grant/Brassier. However, this is entirely compatible with the claim that at one point it looked like there might be, and that this promised a potentially new philosophical trajectory that would be genuinely distinct from extant trends. The sense in which SR can be said to have 'died' is simply the sense in which this promise proved to be false. This sort of thing happens. It's precisely what Badiou tries to capture in his account of

fidelity, wherein one simply has to commit oneself to the existence of an Event despite its occurrence being indiscernible. Sometimes the fidelity pays off, and sometimes it doesn't.

This is, therefore, a true *existential* question. The sensational micro-sociological trappings might have been designed to distract from the *ontological performance* underway. SR has become an *exemplary object* (within a reflexive loop that has surely to be considered unintentional). We might be tempted to conceive it as a self-dramatizing ontological contingency, or an object-oriented occurrence.

We find ourselves invited to entertain the question: *Could this thing or event that appeared to have been happening, determined by a distinctive revival of metaphysical speculation about the nature of reality (and in fact 'the being of beings'), in reality never have been anything at all?* Rephrased with additional vulgarity: Could auto-disontologization turn out to be a thing? Any imaginable answer will teach us something strange.

Note: The provocative preface to Pete Wolfendale's book is available for perusal online. (I say 'provocative' mostly because it has demonstrably provoked.)

ADDED: Ontological Argument, def.

1. The theological assertion of existence as a real predicate.
2. The 2014 Internet circus around Pete Wolfendale's preface to *Object-Oriented Philosophy: The Noumenon's New Clothes*.

Reignition

October 15, 2014

Kek



Of which it is said (I do not pretend to grasp more than a pitiful sliver of this): “Pepe has guided humanity since time immemorial. This is Heqet, the frog-headed Ancient Egyptian goddess, symbol of life and protector on the journey to the afterlife. She guided the ancient Egyptians who transcended normie-ism to a land of poorly drawn dick-girls and the dankest of memes. A little known fact is that while normies evolved from the famously social monkeys, those destined to browse dank memes alone in dimly-lit rooms evolved from another species who also prefers dark moist habitats, namely the frog.”

The name ‘Kek’ appears to have crossed into Cyberspace by odd coincidence (and not — originally — as a name at all). Orcish, Korean, and Turkish languages were all supposedly involved. ‘Kek’ was an encryption of ‘LOL’ within certain *World of Warcraft* communication channels. The Turkish ‘Topkek’ (a *cupcake* brand) was a secondary coincidence. No one seems to have been invoking the chaos deities of Ancient Khem at that point.

The introduction of Pepe — a manifest frog-entity avatar — is shrouded in even greater obscurity. The memetic phenomenon was (again, *apparently*) convergent, or coincidental — an entirely independent frog plague (צפרדע, Exodus 7:25–8:15).

One more coincidence: Outbreak of the ‘cuck’ meme. (Kek is Kuk.) It’s a definite ‘barbarous name of evocation’ in retrospect, but mostly still connected around the back. Kek, Kuk, cake, cuck, might sound

like consistent croaking, but tidy cultural cladistics are difficult to identify. (A sense of ethno-religious crisis on the Alt-Right is one indispensable contextual element.)

That short Wikipedia entry is worth citing in full:

Kuk (also spelled as Kek and Keku) is the deification of the primordial concept of darkness in ancient Egyptian religion. In the Ogdoad cosmogony, his name meant darkness. As a concept, Kuk was viewed as androgynous, his female form being known as Kauket (also spelled as Keket), which is simply the female form of the word Kuk. [...] Like all four dualistic concepts in the Ogdoad, Kuk's male form was depicted as a frog, or as a frog-headed man, and the female form as a snake, or a snake-headed woman. As a symbol of darkness, Kuk also represented obscurity and the unknown, and thus chaos. Also, Kuk was seen as that which occurred before light, thus was known as the bringer-in of light. The other members of the Ogdoad are Nu and Naunet, Amun and Amaunet, Huh and Hauhet.

I'm heavily reliant on the commentariat here to sort all this out.

The proximal trigger:

Kek is literally the name of the God of Darkness/obscurity.

He is depicted as a frog. Truly these are strange times.

pic.twitter.com/NS0aM99QKU

— Agorist Polwright (@AgoristArtist) April 19, 2016

ADDED: Pepe (Via). (See also Xolare in the comments below.)

ADDED:

@Outsideness There is something dark and alluring about this synchronicity. See <https://t.co/6bJsai2fhWpic.twitter.com/mjQgcW7RI7>

— Grahf (@chaos_commander) April 20, 2016

April 19, 2016

The Frog Chorus

From Aristophanes' *The Frogs*.

Frogs (off stage): Brekekekex, ko-ax, ko-ax,
Brekekekex, ko-ax, ko-ax!

We children of the fountain and the lake

Let us wake

Our full choir-shout, as the flutes are ringing out,

Our symphony of clear-voiced song.

The song we used to love in the Marshland up above,

In praise of Dionysus to produce,

Of Nysaeon Dionysus, son of Zeus,

When the revel-tipsy throng, all crapulous and gay,

To our precinct reeled along on the holy Pitcher day,
Brekekekex, ko-ax, ko-ax.

Dionysus: O, dear! O, dear! now I declare
I've got a bump upon my rump,

Frogs: Brekekekex, ko-ax, ko-ax.

Dionysus: But you, perchance, don't care.

Frogs: Brekekekex, ko-ax, ko-ax.

Dionysus: Hang you, and your ko-axing tool
There's nothing but ko-ax with you.

Frogs: That is right, Mr. Busybody, right!
For the Muses of the lyre love us well;
And hornfoot Pan who plays on the pipe his jocund lays;
And Apollo, Harper bright, in our Chorus takes delight;
For the strong reed's sake which I grow within my lake
To be girdled in his lyre's deep shell.
Brekekekex, ko-ax, ko-ax.

Dionysus: My hands are blistered very sore;
My stern below is sweltering so,
'Twill soon, I know, upturn and roar
Brekekekex, ko-ax, ko-ax.
O tuneful race, O pray give o'er,
O sing no more.

Frogs: Ah, no! ah, no!
Loud and louder our chant must flow.

Sing if ever ye sang of yore,
When in sunny and glorious days
Through the rushes and marsh-flags springing
On we swept, in the joy of singing
Myriad-diving roundelays.
Or when fleeing the storm, we went
Down to the depths, and our choral song
Wildly raised to a loud and long
Bubble-bursting accompaniment.

Frogs and Dionysus: Brekekekex, ko-ax, ko-ax.

Dionysus: This timing song I take from you.

Frogs: That's a dreadful thing to do.

Dionysus: Much more dreadful, if I row
Till I burst myself, I trow.

Frogs and Dionysus: Brekekekex, ko-ax, ko-ax.

Dionysus: Go, hang yourselves; for what care I?

Frogs: All the same we'll shout and cry,
Stretching all our throats with song,
Shouting, crying, all day long,

Frogs and Dionysus: Brekekekex, ko-ax, ko-ax.

Dionysus: In this you'll never, never win.

Frogs: This you shall not beat us in.

September 21, 2016

Reignition

Moloch vs Kek

4chan, as always, is asking the serious questions.

(Via.)

November 4, 2016

BLOCK 6 - FICTION

Duzsl (fiction)

Below the break, the author's prelude to Nemo Duzsl's (immensely long) *Cthellish Chronicles*. There's no particular reason why it should interest people here, but in case anybody finds it amusing ...

[Warning: vulgarity, extreme decadence, and spiritual decay]

Doom Brewer

Book One of the Cthellish Chronicles

by Nemo Duzsl

Authorial Prelude. The Syndrome

It would be extravagantly philosophical to claim that everything was a lie. Better, then, to explain why all relevant information became systematically unreliable. A firm footing on the path that

follows requires at least that much.

One conclusion, in particular, has to be stated clearly, at the start. *It exceeds human powers to endure a radically inexplicable life.* Between chaos and a convenient fiction there can be no real hesitation. The ominous fork into darkness can appear real enough, but the decision against it has typically been made long before.

Despite the confusion, my expedition into Hell was well-prepared. A decade spent wandering through the labyrinth of the Syndrome had taught me the importance of method. Baked in an involuntary distrust, I had become adept at meticulous filtering and recording, at weighing probabilities, stripping dubious interpretation from the bare crags of fact, and remarking on things with minimal prejudice (which meant merely, lying to myself as sparingly as possible). This was not a matter of decency, but of sheer survival. My procedures had to be robust, sophisticated and critically tested. They were rigorously tempered by vertiginous decades spent clinging to mazy precipices, tilting into the abyss. When it comes to the deep descent, therefore, what truth there is to tell will surely be told, if only in fragments, and impurely.

Paradoxically enough, it was the syndrome and its deranging deceptions that ignited a torch for me, sputtering at first, but later with a hard, steady flame, ensuring that the infernal path ahead would be illuminated. But the roots of the syndrome, its soil, nutritive threads and patterns of early growth, are, of necessity,

recessed into deeper obscurities. The reasons for that will become obvious enough. Because I first encountered the Syndrome in an age of deluding innocence, by the time I saw the importance of systematic correction, titanic masses of grinding error were already in motion, propelled onwards inertially and implacably.

Yet, without a preliminary account of the Syndrome, nothing can make sense. The narrative that begins here – while befogged and erratic in its initial stages – explains things that demand explanation. Although far from irresistibly convincing, it is realistic in its essentials, even if certain details have been corrupted. What justifies this point of departure, in the end, is less its minute accuracy than its overall suggestiveness, for that is the way of the world it introduces.

My case rests ultimately on this: were it not for the account that follows, there would inevitably be another, far more misleading one.

Because true names can get you killed (or sued) you will find no evidence of The Devil's Deal casino, an establishment which occupied a comparatively modest slot on the Las Vegas Strip in the late autumn of 1999. It would not take supernatural efforts, however, for anyone with a city map of the period, along with some elementary investigative skills, to identify the real model of the Double D, and to ascertain its present status for themselves.

Casual tourist-gamblers had always ignored and shunned the place, subliminally repelled by the atmosphere of vague dilapidation

that had characterized it almost from the day of opening, but it had nevertheless built a solid enough reputation for itself among the Strip's least flamboyant visitors. This drifting population of dedicated, chance-hardened players was attracted by its understated devotion to minimal frills, high-stake, Omaha hold 'em poker. The ambience of shabby neglect only added to its appeal, serving as a subtle social filter, a mark of discretion, and a prolonged act of dust-hushed homage to the grave gods of fortune.

Nelson Brewer, the proprietor of the Devil's Deal, was a man who had always taken enormous efforts to conceal his tracks. He readily exploited his contacts in the media to inhibit reportage, falling back upon blackmail or finely-judged threats when bribes proved insufficient. He was not beyond instigating entirely false reports to mystify and embarrass pursuers. His influence extended into most of the official agencies responsible for record-keeping and the compilation of legal evidence, ensuring that even the most dogged and incorruptible investigators found themselves foundering in deceit. Despite all of this, I would eventually come to learn a very great deal about him.

He had built his gaming empire on Mississippi riverboats during the Depression years. Respected, even feared, for his impassivity and killer-instincts, 'Granite Face' Brewer amassed an early fortune at the tables. He progressed from player to operator upon taking possession of his first boat, following the legendary 36-hour poker

session that bankrupted 'River King' Joe Hammond in November 1933.

The subsequent triple suicide of Hammond and two prominent Memphis business magnates triggered a prolonged police investigation, but no evidence of foul play or clear homicidal motivation was ever uncovered. Despite the absence of formal charges, a macabre aura enveloped Brewer, fed by persistent rumors that garishly married criminality with occultism. When he extended his gaming business to the Las Vegas Strip in the early 1950s, the name he selected for his casino was a gesture of defiance pitched against his blackened reputation, mixing irony, provocation and resignation in proportions that accorded with some unreadable private recipe.

Did Nelson Brewer, his name or his story, mean anything to me when this episode began, as I stepped into the Devil's Deal on a sultry late-summer evening in 1999? The answer to that question was lost, perhaps irrecoverably, in the tumult that now impends. In my artificial memories I push open the saloon-style doors once again, and abandon my original or natural life, whatever it had been, to perish in the forgotten, pitiless heat, outside.

It can't have taken more than a few hours to dissipate my inheritance. Certainly, it was gone, replaced by a hollow euphoria, delicately veined with directionless bitterness. Something less than

self-hatred, it was nevertheless a functional proxy. Tendrils of weariness tugged me downwards.

“You obviously need something to wake you up,” said the girl standing next to me.

In her early 20s and exceptionally pretty, she had moldavite-green eyes and hair the color of glistening oblivion, cut fashionably short. She was wearing a little red dress.

“What’s the point,” I replied. “I’m done.”

“There’s still at least one more game to play,” she said, smiling irresistibly. “You’ll be surprised. It’s hardly started.”

I folded. My nondescript fortune was finished. Let the recycling begin. She led us over to a table near the bar and ordered a couple of cokes.

A man was already seated at the table, maybe 30 years old, dressed in black t-shirt and jeans, drinking a *Dos Equis* straight from the bottle. He seemed entirely hairless, except for a perfectly-trimmed Satanist soul-patch. His eyes were hidden behind reflective shades, despite the interior gloom. Swirling hermetic tattoos covered his arms. If he wasn’t a drug-dealer, no one deserved to be.

“Hi Zach. We’re looking for sin,” she told him. “Two caps.”

“No problem.”

“On tick, OK?”

“Cool,” he assented, with surprising complacency.

A waitress arrived with the cokes, ignoring the conspicuous transaction in process. No one seemed remotely conscious of the law.

Zach fished two pharmaceutical capsules from his pocket, identical green and black thetas, placing them carefully on the table.

“Synistreme,” he murmured, languorously caressing each syllable. “The biz.”

The Girl in the Little Red Dress popped one in her mouth, washing it down with a swallow of coke. Then she passed the other to me. I copied her.

I opened a fresh pack of unfiltered Camels and passed them around. They both took one. We all lit up. No one spoke for a few moments.

“When I was working as a professional torturer,” Zach said eventually, “we had to treat this stuff with great caution. ‘Epistemol’, they called it, a ‘psychic plasticizer’ or ‘cognitive dehabitation agent.’ Superficially speaking, it was the last thing an interrogator needed. You know the adage, when people are being tortured they’ll say anything to make it stop. The difference on Epistemol is that they’d believe it, believe anything. It facilitated radical suggestibility. ‘Brain-washing sauce’ was one common description.” He took a long swig of beer and ordered a new bottle with a silent hand-signal.

“But actually,” he continued, “if used properly it could be invaluable. Resistance to torture depends upon a motivating

narrative. If that could be dismantled and replaced, the patient would open up effortlessly. Let's say you're a fanatical jihadist, and suddenly, rather than having your testicles slowly toasted into charcoal by a filthy zippo-wielding infidel, you find yourself engrossed in conversation with your Sheikh, or the Angel Gabriel, or God. The resistance is gone. Pop! You'll say anything. End of problem, right?" he asked, invisible eyes locked on mine.

"Right," I guessed.

"Wrong," he countered with a humorless laugh. "The problem's hardly started."

Hardly started ... again. I'd begun to get a bad feeling about that.

"There's something I have to show you," Zach said. "Place your hand on the table, palm down, fingers apart. Yeah, that's it," he added, as I followed his instructions.

He reached down into his boot and pulled out a vicious-looking combat knife, with a vulcanized black rubber handle and serrated blade. He lifted the weapon above his head, holding the pose for perhaps a second, then, with shocking speed, plunged it downwards onto the back of my hand. Everything occurred too quickly for me to react. The descent was arrested at the last moment. There was a slight sting. A droplet of blood oozed from a nick behind my middle knuckle.

"Zach baby," said the waitress affectionately, from behind the bar. "You know I hate it when you do that."

"It's science," Zach growled. "But if you understood that you wouldn't be working for six bucks an hour plus tips."

"Asshole," she mumbled, without rancor.

Time had begun to multiply backwards as the synistreme took hold. Zach's knife trick had restored a nucleus of focus, amidst the dispersion. As my mind wrapped itself around stabbed-hand re-runs, it squirmed through variations on the immediate past, flashing agonies and devastating injuries, before recoiling into the unmutilated present that annulled them. The self-protective reflex I had missed bounced uselessly through my intoxicated nerves.

"It's like a mantra with you guys, isn't it?" I ventured. "*Hardly started*. At first I thought you were saying 'it's only just begun,' but now it's sounding more like a hard reboot, a crash relaunch."

"You're getting ahead of yourself," said the Girl in the Little Red Dress, not unkindly. "We're here now, aren't we?"

It was true that space had newly emphasized itself, simultaneously thickened and clarified, as if transubstantiated into a pure liquid medium. Lines of contour escaped from the boundaries of solid mass, deconstituting edges to drift into abstract explorations of geometric possibility. A calm ecstasy without attribution reorganized the room.

The luminous sensorium was an ultra-thin film, I realized, an intricately folded sheet of multi-modal information, floating

depthlessly upon the surface of a vast dark expanse.

Zach ignored our interruptions.

“Politics morphed into metaphysics,” he continued, resuming his thread. “Our questions had to change. Our interrogations escalated. The world was at stake: the nature and meaning of the world.”

He took a deep swallow of *Dos Equis*. I passed the Camels around again. Everybody took one. Zach lounged back in his chair, gaze turned upwards, apparently fixated upon some single definite spot beyond the low ceiling.

“The past was a lazy assumption we couldn’t afford any longer. Even the jihadis understood that, the smart ones, the ones we dealt with, by the time we’d done with them. Our squabble was beginning to seem like a very shallow affair, when compared to the things that started to emerge from beneath the deep cover. And then, just as the new threat-scape maps were coming together, the final absurdity rolled in, the investigations, the hearings. We were accused of driving people insane ...”

He disappeared into obscure corridors of recollection. Glasses clinked at the bar. Curses filtered over from a nearby poker table. An audio channel drifted onto the wavering drone of the air-conditioning and settled there.

At the edge of my perception, the black tattoo swirls flowing down Zach’s arms were writhing into legibility. Weakly-encrypted biographical recordings – of fights, drug deals, and long-abandoned

girlfriends – twisted and sleazed through decorative motifs, until they settled into the sigils of occult summonings and the echelon glyphs of the Torturers' Guild.

No one spoke for a long, smoke-shrouded moment.

"Did you?" I asked eventually.

"Drive people insane?" He hesitated, uncharacteristically. "That charge seems hopelessly ... misconceived."

He leant forwards, locking my image into twin black mirrors.

"Take your case, for instance. When we began to unearth your hidden identity, your contacts, your Neolemurian agenda, that entirely other, secret life, were we pushing you into madness? Or is 'madness' just a word we use when tripling the locks on forbidden doors?"

The meaningless references began shaping themselves into something else. What had always previously seemed to be a fundamental structure of existence suddenly gave way, crashing into unspecified distress. It felt like falling and my stomach lurched.

The Girl in the Little Red Dress leant in towards me.

"You're drowning in names," she said, her voice barely a whisper. "But it's OK. None of them matter right now."

I was remembering far too much.

As the world quaked, my hands clamped onto the table, resisting a sensation that should have been nausea, but was actually something

far less familiar.

“Sumatra,” I mumbled.

“That’s right,” Zach confirmed. “All those twisted stories. The diagram. The vault. Hot embers from the Barker Program. Signal from the darkening galaxies. Clicking alien numbers like static electricity and a flood of savage words you never wanted to understand. Corpse-littered jungles. Time-wars. Did we do that to you? I don’t think so.”

A spiderish mechanism had been activated in my brain to synthesize information. As it wove, senseless microparticles coalesced into fragments of meaning, and then into intersecting storylines. The spinning machine worked in complete indifference to my volition. I would have wanted it to stop, or at least to slow, if it had mattered what I wanted. Instead, I tried to edge away from it, shifting attention further out, clinging to the immediacy of space and sensation.

Dan Barker had already been a legend, confined somewhere securely off-grid, but the ripples from his work still spread, frightening people. Soon I would be precisely reminded. That was inescapably obvious. Shapes, patterns were coming back, clicked together by the machine. I could already smell the jungle. The outline of missing years thickened ...

“How old do you think I am?” I asked.

“Twenty-three,” Zach answered, correctly.

“So how can it have been remotely possible for me to spend years working on some kind of advanced cryptoproject in the Indonesian wilderness? I’ve never been to Indonesia. I don’t know anything about codes. This is all such ...”

“... total bullshit,” he agreed. “Chill. It’s nothing. What do I care?”

“I never met Barker. I don’t even know what he looks like.”

“Sure. Forget it.”

“Sclater’s Lemuria hypothesis has been obsolesced by plate tectonics, and Sumatra is too far east. Why would anybody describe themselves as ‘Neolemurian’? It doesn’t make any sense.” But that was a stretch.

As the pattern spread across the underside of my thoughts, I was – in fact – beginning to understand the adjective ‘Neolemurian’ with grating clarity. It denoted the first literal counter-culture.

A mentor and close friend of Barker’s, Archaeo-Ethnographer Echidna Stillwell, had built the foundations, or excavated them. She theorized that a sunken cultural matrix explained the peculiar correspondences between religious ideas, myths, games and counting practices distributed across a vast area of South and East Asia. She proposed a model to connect and explain these extensive commonalities, based on a specific comprehension of decimal numeracy and its meaning, elegantly compacted into an arithmetical structure that she called ‘the Numogram’. Worse still, I had begun

to trace this figure on the table, unconsciously, treacherous digits doodling in spilt coke and ash, pairing the Pylons so they added to nine, then webbing them together through elementary digital relations.

Zach gestured with a nod of the head and a spectral grin, drawing my attention to diagram emerging in front of me. I froze, my moistened finger suspended in the swirling molten vortex of three and six.

“As the camouflage netting is torn away, it all comes rushing back, doesn’t it?” he said, twisting the softly-spoken words like a sadist’s dagger. “In layers.”

I suppressed a childish impulse to scrub out the diagram and retreat into preposterous denial. Instead, I forced myself to complete it, closing the Hex or circuit of time, mother of the *Yi Jing* and *Vedic trigunas*, then daubing the line of ultimate descent that dropped its knotted skein through the Gate of Shadows into the lower abyss or Chasm of Nyx, the infernal plummet-path that is marked and masked by the date 1890.

Repulsed by this undeniable performance of the inconceivable, my thoughts slid into crisscrossed congestion, mired in the thickening silt of unintelligible events, defeated by the compressed impossibility in process. Reason was drowning in synistreme darkness and a piteous noise, something between a moan and a gurgle, escaped my throat.

Zach laughed.

“Don’t fight it,” he said. “It’s futile. The syndrome can’t be outwitted. What you’re becoming won’t be stopped. Let the bastion burn. *Vae victis.*”

As the grip of cognition broke, long-hidden powers of perception were twisting free. Impulsive multitudes, without order or shape, came swarming out of the conundrum. Like a tide of rats released from a ruined fortress, vague torrents swept over the charred beams of intelligibility and heaps of false obstruction, fleeing into unshackled intensities of delirium. Vivid hallucinatory threads hatched and seethed from the ashy streaks, ramifying into endless, indecipherable tangles of qabbalistic implication. All around us, faces flickered through fish features and zombie flesh.

“Today, the twelfth of May, was the Old Halloween,” said the Girl in the Little Red Dress, as if from a distant place. “The Christians built it on top of the Roman festival of the dead, Lemuria, when the restless ghosts or larvae, the lemurs, were propitiated by time-tested rituals based on the number nine. The Romans devoted three non-consecutive days in May to Lemuria, the ninth, eleventh and thirteenth. The last of these dates was converted into All Saint’s Day by Pope Boniface IV, in the year AD 609. Halloween remained a spring festival for over a century, until the ancient rites of Lemuria had been thoroughly absorbed, its signs and sorceries supplanted.”

As if emerging from a trance, she turned towards me, smiling sweetly. “But I guess you knew that. Any chance of another smoke?”

I passed the packet around again. My lungs ached and the after-taste of the coke was sickening me. I needed a real drink, or several, but searching through my pockets turned up nothing but loose change. Somewhere during the earlier proceedings I had parted company with my wallet.

There were a number of ways this divorce might have happened – a large and growing number. I distinctly remembered sliding my wallet into the pot at the end of the last game, along with what remained of my cash. But then I also recalled, with absolute retrospective certainty, a collision, muttered apology, and confusion of limbs, as a hand slipped into my jacket. Although, of course, I had discarded my wallet before entering the casino, emptying it of bills and tossing it, along with my ID, into a trash can, three blocks down the strip.

There was no ready solution to this puzzling hyper-abundance of truth. Memory had lost none of its detail, but the uniqueness of what must once have been a dominant storyline was now obliterated by the proliferation of alternatives. At first, trivial particulars had multiplied into subtly differentiated varieties, but it had not taken long for the hypothetical mode to supplant every pretender to authentic antecedence. Somewhere, deep in the sprawling jungle of alternative pasts, my previous life was no doubt faithfully conserved,

but I could think of no way to identify or isolate it. A powerful current streamed steadily backwards, from the present moment to the innumerable tributaries that might conceivably have led to it. It was less amnesia than Amazonia.

“OK,” Zach said decisively. “It’s time. We need to get you back into the game.”

With a tilt of the head he focused us upon the far end of the room. A gaunt elderly figure was being seated at an empty table by two lounge-suited assistants.

“Mister Brewer is ready for us,” he explained. “Let’s go.”

Zach rose and led us across the room, past groups of absorbed poker players, to the corner gaming table where the old man waited to greet us. His hand shake was surprisingly firm. Zach received an affectionate slap on the shoulders, then left without comment, weaving back through the players towards the bar area, where new customers were already waiting.

We seated ourselves in a triangle around the circular felt-topped table. A seething silver glyph-stripped Numogram was embedded into the smooth green surface. Brewer’s attendants stood behind him, arms folded, systematically scanning and re-scanning the room.

“I hope Mister Cardiac has been looking after you well,” Brewer said. “Care for a drink? Cigar? In fact, I insist.” He beckoned to a nearby waiter, soundlessly communicating his request through a

cryptic series of finger signs, in conformity with a precise, settled code. I wondered idly whether ‘Cardiac’ was a testament to amphetamine consumption, or perhaps a compression of ‘card-sharking maniac.’ Persistent synistreme hallucinations stroked the edges of the world into electric streaks. The soft mutterings of chance throughout the cavernous space tightened, then crystallized, until they delineated an intricately-structured, sprawling maze, built from chipped echoes.

Brewer’s craggy face was clean shaven, dominated by a prominent hawk-like nose and sharp blue eyes. His thin lips curled upwards slightly, in an inscrutable private smile. He was dressed in cowboy-dandy style — white Stetson and jacket, starched checked shirt with bootlace necktie, immaculately pressed jeans and soft leather boots. A generous tumbler of whiskey sat on the green baize in front of him, alongside a neatly stacked pile of cards.

“My grandson has a great work to accomplish,” Brewer began, without further preliminaries. “By the time he fully embarks upon this undertaking, I will be dead.”

He lifted the pack of cards carefully and passed it across to the Girl in the Little Red Dress.

“Take a look,” he said.

She cut and re-stacked the pack, then flipped over the top card and placed it on the table in front of her, considerately angled for

our joint inspection. It was not a conventional playing card at all, but rather a name, or business card, marked for 'Sandra Dee,' complete with an *Abysssoft* commercial logo, contact details, and the title Senior Communications Representative.

"Don't get trapped in it," Brewer said. "That's not yours, at least not yet. It's a test-run."

Tumblers of amber liquid and a box of slender cigars arrived.

"I'd like to propose a toast, to lemur conservation," Brewer jested, raising his glass to clink rims above the inner void of the Hex. I took a grateful sip of the spiritous liquor, savoring the sublimation of peaty fluid into neural fire. It was an excellent single malt, Lagavulin, I guessed, and probably an old one. Brewer passed us our cigars, ceremonially, then ignited them with a steady hand, using an ornate mechanical device that strung a distinct tang of raw petroleum through the spreading aroma of Caribbean tobacco. Beyond the perimeter of sense, lofty intelligences gathered.

"Your turn for a taste," Brewer said, passing me the cards. "It means nothing yet. We're just opening our eyes, in the pre-dawn."

"And if it's a female name?" I asked.

"Then you'll have disconfirmed everything I have ever learnt," he answered. "But it won't be."

I took a card and laid it next to Sandra Dee.

"Todd Blair," I noted redundantly, as the others leaned in to read it. Crowds of recollection broke through a rotten door. I remembered

the name on my mother's lips, called out innumerable times, in a multitude of intonations. "Todd, what are you doing?" "I hope that's not what I think it is Todd." "Todd, it's time to go." Todd's life rushed to inhabit me: the car crash that killed his father and scarred his face, his schoolyard belligerence, his first job flipping burgers for weed money

...

The name burrowed inwards, determinedly, working to attach itself to the roots of my destiny, like a parasitic larva. It felt wrong.

"That's not me, is it?"

"Most probably not," Brewer admitted, smiling thinly. "Let's find out."

He restored the pack and shuffled it expertly, then passed it to each of us in turn to cut and re-cut. His hands hovered over the Numogram Pylons, slicing through the fragrant clouds of cigar smoke as if dowsing for obscure signals. An almost palpable concentration hardened the features of his face, subtly animated by the inaudible mouthing of an elaborate invocation.

With a conjuror's dexterity he fanned the cards onto the table in a long even curve.

"Take one," he said to the Girl in the Little Red Dress. "Your fate awaits you."

As she settled upon a card and drew it out, I wondered vaguely why we were accepting this imposition with such utter passivity, but

outrage refused to come. I drew deeply on my cigar, watching intently.

“Mary Karno,” she said, as she turned it over and absorbed its oracle. “Yes, that’s right.”

Something like relief washed across her face.

“Mary,” she murmured to herself. “Mary Karno. That’s me,” and then, after a slight pause, “My book ...?”

“I have it here,” Brewer responded, passing her a canvas bag. “It’s unfinished, of course. There’s a letter from the publisher in there somewhere. They’re excited about what they’ve seen so far.”

She took the bag and extracted a block of printed sheets, densely annotated with red ball-point amendments. She flipped through the pages, sliding into frictionless recognition.

“Too much blood, torture and perversion for my taste, of course,” Brewer continued drily. “But I’m guessing it’ll be huge.”

“And you are?” he asked me pointedly.

My hand wavered above the cards, suddenly chilled, and frozen. The oppressive weight of the moment fell upon me with its full force, crushing the air from my lungs, until I gasped with the resigned terror of a cornered prey animal.

“Do it,” whispered Mary, encouragingly. “It will be OK.”

“I don’t think so,” I answered, my voice straying beyond the edge of control. “It won’t be OK. At all.”

“It could be rough,” Brewer agreed. “But this is the place you’ve reached, you wanted it, and now it’s yours. There’s no evading it, not for long. A trapped, scared, pitiful creature has reached the end of its flight.” He drew a finger across his throat. “Best to finish it. Begin over.”

“You know, don’t you?” I challenged him, as a wave of inconsequential fury rolled over me. This was what it felt like to be absolutely cheated. It was something new, and horribly intriguing. “This whole game, the theater of uncertainty, it’s all a feint. Your expectations are confident, precise, and you have extremely good reasons not to share them ...”

“You’re wasting everybody’s time,” he interrupted, impatiently. “You know it’s going to happen. That’s why you hate it. And beyond that,” he leant towards me, his voice soft, intense, and only superficially hostile, “you chose it. You wrote it. I’m just directing your play. So take the card, Mister ...?”

“Duzsl,” I said, completing his request. “Nemo Duzsl. What kind of batshit crazy off-planet fucking name is that?”

But I knew it was mine.

“So, now we know who you are,” Brewer said, smiling sympathetically, his expression flavored with notes of relief, pride, and gratitude. “It will be tough ...” he repeated, no longer muting the strain of prophetic authority, but even emphasizing it, as if graciously

clambering down to us from the cloud-swaddled towers of providence, "... but educational. You can see the necessity, I'm sure. You have to be hardened, forged."

"I can't see anything but toxic fog," I grumbled. Yet, strangely, the sense of asphyxiating oppression had begun to lift. Perhaps I even returned his smile, although in a way that was unconvincingly twisted.

"To tough luck!" I proposed, raising my glass.

"Perfect!" said Brewer, responding to the toast. He looked abominably pleased, as if savoring my definitive submission.

Mary clinked glasses, too, but with a slight hesitation that hinted at reluctance. Her smile expressed nothing more than clumsily redecorated melancholy.

"Down we go," she mumbled approximately, her words clinging to the edge of inaudibility, as she took a minuscule sip, scarcely exceeding a sample of vapor. The descent she had announced was evidently not a gulp of fire-water. This should have concerned me, a lot. It upset me a little.

"There are things that you'll need," she said quietly, turning towards me, and reaching into her shoulder bag. Her face was subtly tragic. I wanted to comfort her. It was stupid.

"Yes, yes," Brewer interrupted, irritated. "In time, nothing's rushing us. The work is done." Then, in a tone softened to the point of insincerity, as if obliquely apologizing for his brusqueness, he

repeated: “Nothing’s rushing us.” It sounded mesmeric, and for an instant I heard these words as a cryptic mantra that had been chanted ceaselessly over the course of hours, years, and aeons, although it had been ‘nothing rushes us’ before. I was drifting into it, when hooked back by the word ‘... cigar’, slanted to the interrogative.

Brewer was asking me an inane question.

“The cigar?” I replied, idiotically.

“Are you enjoying it?”

I had not, in actuality, much noticed it. Now I realized that my throat itched, although not intolerably. A column of ash, the length of an intermediate phalanx, drooped from the end of my cigar. Doubting my ability to reach the ashtray successfully, I released it – with a gentle tap – to fall onto the floor, where it exploded softly into formless dust.

“Superb,” I half-croaked. It was. The smoky flavors were complex and richly textured, evoking the peripheries of fragrant jungles, tropical humidities, and enthralled sunlight.

“These were given to me by a very special friend,” Brewer explained. The pace of his utterance promised a story, most probably a lengthy one. I relaxed backwards into my chair, and noticed Mary doing likewise. She took a sip of the Lagavulin – a real one. The time tremors had relapsed into quiescence, with only occasional muffled shudders still perturbing concentration. *The work is done*, I remembered. Things had secretly shifted, on the outside,

somewhere beyond the edge of the world.

“Where’s the edge of the world, Nelson, think on that, and head there, always head there. That’s what he used to say. I must have heard those exact words from him a thousand times. He doesn’t say it now, but only because he doesn’t need to.” Brewer paused to drink, nearly emptying his tumbler, and then to inhale on his cigar, pulling the smoke deeply into his lungs, as if attempting to saturate his cells rather than his senses. He exhaled an aromatic cloud. A semi-cough fractured the next syllables: “Carlos. Carlos Colón: that’s his name. A direct descendant of Christopher Columbus, he insists. It’s important to him. He’d say, *you know Nelson, Cristóbal didn’t abolish the edge of the world. He wanted us to look for it in the right place.* It was always funny, that intimacy, as if they’d been discussing things together in some *taberna* just the week before. I’d be tempted to laugh, shake him by the shoulders, tell him: ‘for Christ’s sake Carlos, you have no idea what he wanted.’ Not that I did, or would. It wasn’t just some ridiculous piece of nonsense, you see, not at all. It was serious — truly and totally serious. It still is serious. But you get that, right?”

He broke off, as if expecting confirmation. It would have been absurd to nod – what did I know? Instead I looked to Mary, who said, with quiet firmness: “Oh yes, it’s serious.” I tacked on a fraudulent “sure.”

Brewer seemed satisfied as he retreated into his memories. He signaled for more whiskey, a gesture that seemed to communicate *bring the bottle*. His eyes wandered through the cigar smoke, as if seeing something else.

“Not that I’d have called him that – Carlos – not to his face, he wouldn’t have it. There were too many Carlos Colóns. It was unacceptable to him. *Call me 2Cs*, he said. I didn’t get it immediately. ‘What, you mean like, *to seas unknown?*’ I asked. *That’s right amigo*, he replied immediately, *to seize the unknown, to seize some pretty chica’s ass*. We were still filthy young fools – this was before the Depression, way back, late 1920s. We had nothing but spunk and some undeveloped smarts.”

He tilted the bottle towards Mary, who shook her head, then to me. I let him pour another finger of whiskey into my tumbler. He added two fingers to his own. He scanned his casino methodically, almost mechanically, as if seeing it for the first time.

“I was already on my way to this – cards – it was what I was good at, and Carlos helped me out with that. Once there’re two of you – a pair – lots of things become possible. You’re a team, and if people don’t realize that, *you have them*. He was really good at that, especially the bad stuff. He could walk into a crowded room and have everybody worked out within minutes. He gave nothing away. They came to call me ‘Granite Face’ eventually, but I learnt that from him. It was years before I came close to what he could do, see, and hide. His

face told whatever story he wanted. He could be anybody. He was strict, too. We'd never kid about together in any place that we were working. *A secret team, that's una máquina*, he'd say. *Two friends joking around in public?* – *Losers*.

"He worked with me on the cards, but it didn't mean anything to him. If we were alone, sitting at the table after a game, he'd ask: *where's the edge Nelson, is it here?* 'Sure it's here,' I'd reply. *No, it isn't here*. That's all he'd say. *No, it isn't here*. It would drive me mad. 'So where the fuck is it? It's here, right here.' Slapping the table top, you know, maybe I'd riffle through a pile of banknotes, in his face, obnoxiously. 'See. This is working. This is where things are happening.' *No, it isn't here*, always that, just that, sadly, defiantly. No one could bully him. I had no idea what he was looking for."

"When the breakthrough came we were out of the game for a while, hiding out in a small town down by the coast, near the border. There was a bar there that we'd made our own, through sheer intensity of custom, and we were the only patrons that night, sitting together at a flimsy circular table, somewhere into our third bottle of mezcal. We were deeply drunk.

"*How long can you stare at tables and not see?* Carlos asked, suddenly. Not this again. Not now. 'See what?' I had already slurred, reflexively, the robot at work, you know. This seemed to enrage him. His voice was climbing to a howl: *Think, Nelson, fucking think enough*

to see the obvious fucking thing. He even reached over and slapped me across the head, hard. It almost knocked me from my chair. I've no idea why I didn't hit him back, or what would have happened if I had. Instead I groped down through swirls of booze-shattered sensation to the table top, soaking up the scratches and flaking varnish and stains. 'It's flat?' I ventured.

"It was like flicking a switch. He erupted in an outburst of shouts and wild, theatrical gesticulations, waving his arms in the air as he cried: *At last, at fucking last, Jesus fucking Christ, at last ...* It was stunning, stupefying. My first impulse was to search for some kind of question, for additional information, but fortunately I suppressed it. Instead I began to think, and it was then that I realized that I hadn't even been trying before. To think, I mean. It hadn't even occurred to me to think, *at all*. That was already to cross a line, seeing that stupid unreflective obstinacy, which I had been. I still remember the moment – the *instant* – vividly, perfectly, but who knows? It seems exact: the threads of smoke, the smells of sweat and mezcal, the quality of the light, and then the tension of that alien, inner machine, unexpectedly starting up. I don't ever want to forget it. I might have waited for ever to start thinking – that had always been his point, his maddening stubbornness. Now, something had switched over. It came to me then, suddenly, out of nowhere, the critical step. Flatness. It had to be some crazy shit about Christopher Columbus. I was drunk, and irritated, and my left ear was ringing from the slap,

and I two-thirds wanted to just finish with this bizarre conversation. But the other third had set out somewhere, and it wasn't going to stop.

"These aren't your edges, are they?" I said, running my hands along the sides of the table. I was quite confident about it. It wasn't really a question. He just smiled – beamed, actually. *Go on amigo*, was all that he said. But now I wasn't sure that I could. My thoughts struggled to advance. It was a swamp, or a jungle. If you came to the end, to what had been believed to be the end, demonstrating that it wasn't an end at all, what then? Where would you look for an edge, if the old edges were lost, and an edge was all that mattered? The silence stretched out. Thought lost its purchase. I was worried that his patience would break. I needn't have been.

"It's OK, he said. It's hard. The next part is hard. It defeated me every time, every single time, for five years, but then I got it, the next step ... 'So, what is it?' I had never wanted to know anything this much. You want the key?" he teased. 'Sure. Yes. Absolutely I want the key.'

"It was a kind of sublime torture, utter tantalization. Time curved inwards, compressive, crushing, folding my life towards the answer that he had, and I didn't. He knew, and it amused him. He said nothing. He drank and grinned, his eyes roving delightedly across my torment. Those minutes – were they minutes? – dragged themselves out, endlessly. A tic in the corner of his mouth marked out the hidden

metabolism of eternity in tiny spasms, hoarding some unreadable, invaluable clue. I wanted to strangle him, rip his eyes out. The density was unbearable. It was the center of the world, ultimate pressure. The need to know would kill me, if I let it. It couldn't go on. That was the test. I had to change, to stop caring, to *transcend, immediately*, accept my ignorance, or die... At least, that's how it felt ...”

Brewer laughed, almost goofily, as if the entire story – broken off and already partially forgotten – had been nothing but an elaborate fishing yarn, a string of mock confessions fabricated to idly pass the time. He knocked back his whiskey, poured another, and then drew deeply on his cigar, exhaling luxuriantly. The depressurization was transparently faked. He wanted us to share, viscerally, in the unbearable anticipation of that moment. As he leant backwards, arching his back, stretching, Mary tensed forwards reciprocally, transfixed, her elbows sliding across the table. Perhaps she was going to succumb, and demand, hungrily, that he continue. The manipulation was so crude it disgusted me.

I yawned rudely, finished my drink, and stubbed out the remains of my cigar.

“It's getting late Mister Brewer. I should probably be going. Thanks. It was fun.” I began to get up.

Mary half-twisted towards me, her eyes glinting with shock and rage. She'd been hooked, and I was ruining everything. *You stupid bitch*, I thought cruelly, more determined than ever to wreck the

event.

I confidently hunted Brewer's face for the quick burst of hatred I hoped to find there, but there was no sign of it. Instead, there was a kind of weary satisfaction, at once humorous and sad. There had been no surprises.

"Of course Mister Duzsl..."

"Call me Nemo," I interrupted sarcastically, in a petty display of resistance. "There's no need for formality among old friends."

"Nemo then," he continued, unruffled. "Do you have your key?"

Without thinking, I reached into my pocket, withdrawing a plastic card, and then inspecting it. Interlocking double Ds narrowed it down to the casino hotel, but there was no number.

"Two-zero-nine," Brewer informed me, helpfully. "Sleep well."

"Sleep, holy shit," Mary muttered irritably. "As *if* he's going to sleep."

"Rest, then," Brewer allowed.

"Oh please," Mary sighed dramatically, her frustration boiling over. "You know exactly what will happen to him. He'll spiral down into the drug, coming apart into rags of shredded fate, until there's nothing left but splintered panic and screaming." She was looking at me, coldly now, even as she spoke, with the detached observation one might appropriately apply to a doomed lab animal. "He's truly fucked. This was stupid."

"Mary, your imaginative extravagance betrays you," Brewer

growled, obviously entertained.

“Mister Duzsl – Nemo – wants to rest. There’s no need for additional stimulation.”

Did they understand? I was unsure. Understanding had become almost unbelievably precious, and precarious. There were too many new facts, and the latest one was especially disconcerting, because the story Brewer had been relating was known to me now, in its entirety, from before its beginning to some indefinite end, or edge, far beyond its premature termination, and in much greater detail than had yet been revealed. It is not that I had somehow learnt it. Rather, *I had become somebody who already knew it*. That made me a replacement, for somebody who hadn’t known it, and who now knew nothing, was nothing. That supplanted creature was nothing now, but it was also – and equally – an earlier draft of this inexplicable being that considered itself to be me, and it was perhaps no less adequate compared to whatever had become me than I would be compared to what might soon follow. It would be important to keep notes.

April 18, 2013

Halloween XS 2

A (short) exercise in bombastic Halloween fiction

The dead center of the story would come at the end. It was a culmination, to be coaxed back – or was it forward? To stare into dazzling unseeing – that was the thing. Animated obscurity approaching him across a darkened pumpkin field.

It had been a dream, exquisite in its horror. Upon its return, a few nights later, the edges of its moonless luminosity were still undulled. Then, only inane slumber, for over a week. He had still written nothing down. By the time of the third apparition it had decayed, shredded into black rags by delirium, wormed-through by neglect. He awoke in a sweaty chaos of tangled sheets and recalcitrant memory. In a panic, he now sought – too late – to capture it.

Detail had eroded down towards a fever-ground core of inarticulate urgency. Numbly, he understood that the sole meaning of his career – and thus his life – was buried in the ruins of an unmined nightmare, avalanched under by confusion and thickening dread. Everything he would ever want to say had been whispered to him, but he had fumbled the priceless gift into oblivion. A jagged chunk of non-being had been flung at him across the desert of limbic night. With each loop of recollection, it receded further behind a wake of undecipherable reference codes. The weird tale he had been offered was reduced to an unthreading ghost story, degenerating

by the hour, into chattering nonsense picked up among rumors of forbidden secrets. The sacred touch of vacuous insanity was gone.

Nobody would ever have mistaken his life for anything other than a futile, slow-motion catastrophe. His literary career was a partial-birth abortion of singular grisliness. The pieces that emerged still twitching soon expired amid detestable groans. Now everything fell completely apart.

Seen coldly, in the morbid pre-dawn glow, it was suddenly obvious that the empty whisky bottles and overflowing ashtrays were detritus from a forgotten ritual. There had been an incompetent summoning. If repeated mechanically, it would deteriorate a little further. The alternative was to do it right. As a memento, he attached a post-it note to the computer screen, bearing the single word: *Invoke*. Then he stumbled groggily to bed. His dreams were discreet and interred in sleep.

Satan had nothing to offer him, except indirectly, and unconvincingly. Luciferic inspiration would not ignite. Instead, the Dark Prince, slumped in reptilian lassitude upon the throne of doom and undisguisedly bored by the conversation from its first moment, merely derided his attachment to conventional ideas. A claw-toed foot sifted vaguely through the heap of crumbling skulls. "Have you drawn your entire contact list from a Dennis Wheatley novel?" susurrated the Old Deceiver with languorous contempt. There was nothing further to be said.

It was a circuit, locking him out. To access the name he needed to know who to call. Incense-clouded blackness and strange drugs broke upon a sea-wall of silence. At the dead-end of each ruined night, the only thing that mattered was further gone, recessed more deeply into the cross-hatched palimpsest of memory. The unintercepted missile of oblivion streaked away from his life, on some unimaginable course.

"You need help," said the young man in the street, proffering a crudely-printed pamphlet.

"Jesus Christ your Savior," he read, enunciating slowly and carefully. "Nope."

The street evangelist studied him for a drawn-out minute, in calm silence. "What are you searching for?" he asked eventually.

"Can't you see?" he laughed, sleepless mental dilapidation knapping an edge of hysteria onto his tone. "I'm pursuing the dream."

"You'd turn your back on peace?" the young man asked sadly.

"If I could still find the back I'd fall into it ..."

His abandonment of all hope led him on long, looping walks through the countryside. Mindless sensation blurred the damnation of unknown names. Autumn had enveloped him in mists and mildewed fruitlessness. He shuffled without objective through rotting leaves.

Everything had been broken by the time he stumbled upon the distant perimeter. The day, the year, and his existence were

simultaneously tumbling to an end. Light had thinned to a play of shadows. Glancing sideways, he was jolted from his reveries – hurled into startled recognition. This was the place.

Its familiarity captured him, guiding the direction of attention. Realization was instantaneous, and all-engulfing. As the gates opened, recollection flooded back, indistinguishable from perception. Suddenly – diagonally – it was time.

The scene returned, enthralling. Every detail was assembling itself to perfection. He stepped forward, slowly, but without hesitation, into what he had once thought – once dreamt to be – no more than a nightmare. There was a piece cut out of his mind, matching a hole in space. Like a missing tooth, it was now simply *not there*. He groped for it, which meant taking another step forward. Whatever it wasn't to be would arrive soon. That was the only certainty.

With solemn inevitability, the shape – like a shard of broken fate, or a compact rift wounding the sky – drifted toward him across the pumpkin field.

October 31, 2014

Deadlines (Part-1)

If you believe in yourself, you'll believe in anything. – Nicola

Masciandaro

Based – very roughly – on a true story.

[Subsequent content carries a vulgarity and decadence warning, for sensitive readers.]

§00. Friday was fright night at my (virtual) place, and *Deadlines* was the most reliable source of inspiration. Most of the deracinated Shanghai morbid literature scene cycled through the place, but no one would be turning up for hours. So it was just Cal and me. We both had better things to be doing, which – as usual – we weren't.

“Beginning is the most difficult thing.”

“That's it?” I asked, unconvinced.

“Yes, those words, exactly.”

“Double embedded?”

He tilted himself even further backwards into the deep leather chair, so that he was staring straight upwards into the attic rafters. His slow exhalation released a column of cigar smoke on an obscure expedition among the old beams. “Surely, yes ... That's all it takes.” Voice down-paced in dreamlike detachment. “Then it's happening.”

If Calvin Lambsblood Dodd had written so much as a paragraph of horror fiction himself, it had been done in strict secrecy, without a hint of the fact escaping. Yet the attitude he now slipped into, once again – that of an authority on the topic of anomalous prose construction – had been adopted as if by instinct, and with seamless confidence. He was adept at it, undeniably.

It was hard not to smile, but my irritability was slow to dissipate. “‘Thing’ is wrong.” I closed my laptop, with calm theatricality, and finished my drink. “A beginning isn’t a ‘thing’. I use ‘thing’ too much already.”

Dodd squinted at me, his features micro-adjusted to some space between amusement and annoyance. “So you’re just going to bunker-down in your precious writer’s block?” He shrugged. “That’s OK. Let’s investigate the Thing, while we’re waiting for the others.” Then, indicating my glass with a slight re-angling of his head: “Ready for the next one?”

I glanced at my watch, knowing it would be precisely 3:33pm, and it was. Not that it mattered. “Sure.”

He caught the bartender’s attention with an absurdly feudalistic hand-gesture that concluded silently in two raised fingers.

“Dark Enlightenments again?” The softly-spoken words, ritualistically unnecessary, carried easily across the empty lounge. We both nodded in confirmation.

§01. A Dark Enlightenment – or ‘333’ – is a hell of a drink. Dodd had spent most of a weekend inventing it, immediately after the Include-Me-Out Club had first been convened at *Deadlines*. The base was some kind of rough ‘whiskey’ he had discovered in southern Yunnan, distilled as moonshine in the mountains. Each bottle served as the pickling jar for a giant venomous centipede, which tainted the liquor distinctively. The complete cocktail recipe, as far as I was able

to tell, was:

2 shots 'pede spirit

1 shot absinthe (for the wormwood)

1 shot black rum (for the extinction of light)

3 drops funestia

1 drop specially-concocted house 'herbal tincture'

1 speck strychnine

Chili garnish

Absolutely no ice.

The psycho-active effects were remarkable. It was almost certainly illegal.

§02. Not that illegality was any problem for Dodd. Even if the Shanghai authorities had given a damn about self-inflicted brain damage in a private club, which they quite evidently didn't, there was Dodd's girlfriend, the 'PP', to manage things. PP was the 'Party Princess' (with 'party' referring to the Communist Party of China, rather than to anything more frivolous). People called her that to her face, and she didn't seem to mind. Her real name was Jiang Yu, her uncle a senior cadre in the local party apparatus. Dodd met with him regularly, and they got along well. Boss Jiang's security-related administrative position meshed well with Dodd's specialism in organized decadence and unscrupulous trans-national deal-making. Their Party Nights were notorious.

§03. Cal was strictly a facilitator, and not a practitioner. It was a

distinction he invested with peculiar significance.

"I don't need to write. I don't want to write. Fuck writing."

"OK." I had no idea where he was going. "So what about this?" I gestured vaguely towards the surrounding lounge, abstractly indicating the club. This was 'the second drink' exchange. We must have had it hundreds of times before, and each time it got worse.

He squinted at me suspiciously. "Honestly?"

"Of course."

"Of course," he repeated, the sarcasm wound up to a peculiar, biting extremity. Recognizing that its object was unintelligible, he added, awkwardly: "Which 'course' would that be, exactly?"

Not only was the conversation increasingly hard to follow, his mood was deteriorating unpredictably. There seemed no way to extract myself from it. I took momentary refuge in a gulp of 333. "You build a temple to writing, and then tell me you're not interested?"

"Oh, that ..." he feigned nonchalance, took a drink, idly toyed with a cigar, put it down without lighting it. Then, as if restarting randomly: "I never told you about Mary Karno, did I?" It wasn't a question, and he didn't bother waiting for a response. Without significant pause he continued: "I never told anybody about her, about her 'practice'. It's time I did."

Up to that point I had read only a couple of Karno stories. It had been enough to get the gist. Her fiction was undeniably intense.

Merely by broaching the topic, Dodd had undergone an

extraordinary transformation. His obnoxious, sullen slump of posture and affect switched into ardent engagement. He leant forward, as if about to clamber onto the table, left leg jittering as an emotional dissipator.

"It's not that I don't have problems with her stuff," he declared, adamantly. Tiny drops of sweat beaded his forehead. "I mean ... fuuuuuck." He reclined a little. "Truly. Fuck."

"Sure. It's strange stuff."

"The priest-torturing thing she has going on, it's unbalanced. You know, really unbalanced."

"Right."

"The sex is out there too ... out somewhere. Guess there has to be a market for that kind of metaphysically-smashed lesbo-tentacular fucking demon-twisted *goneness*."

"Apparently."

His voice dropped to something scarcely above a whisper. "Still, she's serious." He picked up his cigar, inspected it curiously, and finally ignited it. "Utterly serious."

It seemed pointless to interrupt.

"She stayed in my place for a while, you know. A small place I own here. Off Fuxing Lu. It was an interim arrangement – lasted maybe three months, a little under. Thing is, the place was set up for ..." He trailed off. Clearly, the function of this building was not easily describable.

I had already guessed why. “Boss Jiang?”

Dodd’s expression froze immediately into a mask of fortified suspicion, cross-laced with lethal traps. “What do you know?” he hissed.

“A lot more now,” I responded, with a pathetic laugh.

There was a drawn-out moment of tension. Then he smiled crookedly. “Yes, it was an arrangement we had,” he conceded unnecessarily. “He called it ‘the information room’ – set up guests there, place was rigged with all kinds of crazy snoop-tech shit that he provided.”

“And you put Karno in there?” I asked, in disbelief.

“It was a mistake. She was supposed to get the apartment next door – the unmonitored twin. It was over a week before I learnt what had happened, and by then the situation had become rather ... sensitive.”

“Christ!”

“Yeah, well, not exactly, as you know, but the point is – I wound up learning a lot.”

“I bet.”

“Are you just going to carry on snarking about this? Or are you going to let me tell you the story?”

“No, yes, whatever. I’m interested. Obviously.”

“So you’ll shut the fuck up with the smart-ass remarks?”

“Absolutely.”

After a micro-punishment pause, he continued. “I’m going to cut

short the technical details, because you're being such a jerk about it. Main point is, Boss J. didn't have any professional interest in Karno, naturally, but she kind of captures attention, if you know what I mean. Extracting all the video wasn't easy, but in the end it isn't the sort of material you want to leave lying around for a Party inspection team to stumble upon. After XJ took over, the negotiations became a lot smoother. A couple of bottles of Moutai and he was ready to wash his hands of it. Assured me there weren't any copies. Who knows? It probably doesn't even matter. I was going to delete the lot immediately – nearly nine gigabytes ..." he scrutinized me for overt indications of skepticism. My poker-face held. "... but then I thought, 'what has he seen?' – it seemed important, right? I had to know what I was dealing with. You don't survive in this business by blinding yourself to potentially vital information. Could have been some Tantric craziness with the Dalai Lama there, for all I knew. Sure, it felt grubby, but my hands were tied."

'Grubby' doesn't begin to cover it, of course. It was the abomination of desolation. Still, Dodd had his business, and his bar. I had my blog. The story had to come out.

"You're not going to mention any of this, are you?" he suddenly asked me, anxiously.

"I was thinking of switching a few names about."

"Oh, hilarious."

"You ready for another?" changing the subject.

Without replying, or taking his eyes off me, he did the neo-feudal hand signal again.

“It’s fate, right?” I suggested encouragingly. It seemed to work. There was an unknottting of tension.

“You ever see her odd little essay about ‘Ascryptions’?”

I shook my head.

“Never met anyone who gets it. You know, even remotely what it’s about. I certainly never did, before. Subtitled *Practices for writing on reality*, then wall-to-wall senselessness, even by her standards. Remember Bob Clayton?”

Another head shake. I didn’t want to risk interrupting him.

“Strange guy. Driven. Working on that tale about buried-alive dreams for over a year, without ever managing to finish it. Anyway, he was obsessed with that piece. Constantly trying to talk to me about it. Told me once that it ‘solved everything’. Hung himself from a rafter two weeks later. Not to imply there was any connection. I’ve come across that a lot – not quite so far gone, of course.”

The digressions were straining my patience, but the drinks arrived. I stole one of his cigars, without asking, and flamed it up.

“It’s all in the first two sentences. ‘Writers get stuck when they forget that every story has a demon. To begin, you have to learn its name.’”

“Ascryption?”

“Exactly. And there it was, on the video. I actually watched her start a new story – two actually – open an immaculate notebook, with a

giant question mark, jot down a few scrappy thoughts, cross-legged, meditating or some shit, then cross some kind of threshold – you could see it, as if something had cut through her body, switched her – and then she *seriously* set to work, patiently, full of – what the fuck do you call it? – *intention*, rolling back the rug, chalking a huge diagram on the floor, all swirls and numbers and ancient evocations, then building what I can only describe as a voodoo shrine, pasted together out of candles, clippings from poetry books, kitchenware, pictures, drug paraphernalia, bits of dead animals, and electronic trash. She'd get up, wander around the number maze in loops, muttering some cryptic stuff, in a whisper – the audio was too crap to pick it up – then back to the shrine, shifting pieces about, nudging it towards convergence. It was mad as fuck, obviously, but the horrible thing was that I began to pick up on the purpose, I could see it *coming together*, like a wave out of hyper-space, the necessity of it, I just couldn't stop watching, seeing it *arrive*. I mean, holy fuck. And then a jolt went through her, harsh and electric. She snapped *out*, crossed over to her laptop, and typed in the name. Ascription. That's how it works."

We were both silent for a moment.

"She has to come and lead a discussion session at the club," I said, predictably.

"Invite's already in the motherfucking mail," Dodd replied.

[To be continued – with some regularity]

November 28, 2014

Deadlines (Part-2)

Screaming is rare. Outside the movies, war zones, or psychiatric institutions, it's unusual to hear anything more than an exaggerated squeak. This wasn't that.

Alison Luria was screaming. She stood in the middle of the cluttered office, rigidly upright, arms by her sides, head angled slightly back. Her mouth was locked open, eyes tightly shut. The sound she was emitting, in a continuous, only slightly uneven stream, overwhelmed apprehension. It was less a specifiable noise than an abstract inaudibility, the unheard manifested as a monstrous positive entity, insensibility made palpable.

It had begun at almost exactly the moment of entering the room. I had not quite finished closing the door behind me, still uncertain whom first to address, when – as if out of nowhere, without the slightest warning – a shard of sonic shrapnel sliced into my head, making any further thought impractical.

It was my second visit to the company, and the small team was already vaguely familiar.

Fred something, the tech guy, was (incredibly) ignoring the phenomenon, and seemed still to be working. Alison's editorial

assistant, Xu Ling, had retreated beneath her desk, where she now lay perfectly immobile, coiled into a tight fetal knot. Millie Zhang, the sales director, had missed it. Her tidy, south-facing work-space was unoccupied. It had been set up as an oasis of light and order, semi-withdrawn from the gloomy debris-field of the larger open-plan attic area. She was probably out on a sales call.

I had never fallen prey to mystical inclinations, and problems of an esoteric nature seldom detained me. If, on rare occasions, hints of hidden profundities over-spilled the dikes of dismissal, they elicited vague repulsion, rather than enthusiasm. I would, at that time, have reacted with instinctive aversion to any claim that the suspension of reason opens secret gates. (No one had ever bothered me with such suggestions.) Yet as the threads of intelligence were severed by the scream, it was as if access were being granted to the inner substance of the world, violently unwrapped from the distractions of visual identification. Something was poking through the wall of sonic oblivion – a clicking or crackling. *This isn't a message*, said the click-code, *it's just the sound of your auditory nerves dying*.

Would it ever stop? Had it, in reality, ever begun? Its duration had become a matter of no significance, because this breakage of the world was no longer Alison Luria screaming, but the scream as it existed in eternity, freed from the bonds of fact. It was the primordial scream, vast beyond cosmology, anonymous and inexpressive, the pure howl of being now perceived as it always had been ...

... and then, as suddenly as it had begun, it ceased.

Something crawled out of her mouth, then a second, and a third – wasps. They wandered across her lips indecisively, before flickering out in a trick of minutely-dappled light. I couldn't recall ever seeing a wasp in Shanghai before. Almost certainly, I still haven't.

"I'm finished," she said. Then she walked past me, out of the room, without looking at anyone, and clattered down the stairs, fast.

"That was intense," I muttered awkwardly.

Fred looked up, smiling crookedly. "Girls," he mumbled, as if that explained everything.

There was a commotion behind me, and Bob Jarvis – the company's Australian boss – rushed in, smiling implausibly, grabbing me by the shoulder to avoid pitching me across the room. "Nick! I'm so glad you could make it in. Are you ready to go?"

"To go?"

"To get going, to start, there's no point messing around."

"Start work?" I asked stupidly.

"Absolutely. Why not right now? You're here after all. Don't waste the journey. There's no room for dithering in this business. You can have Alison's desk."

"Yes, Alison ..."

"Nothing to worry about. Spot of tension." He steered me across the room, then started picking randomly through the chaos of papers, battered copies of *Shanghai Live* magazine, and work-desk

lunch detritus that surrounded her computer. Mine now, I suspected ambivalently. “We thought you could take over the Shang-Hive blog, keep it pressing forward, raise the profile, you know. Dig deeper.”

Ominous fragments of writing, scrawled in red ball-point, flickered from the print out sheets that Jarvis was consigning to the waste-paper basket. *There is no blood in Cyberspace. Endless darkness now. It drains. We brought it to unlife. And so it ends.*

“Was Alison OK?” I persisted, stubbornly.

“Oh, nothing really to worry about, it was just, you know ... She was fine wasn’t she Sue?” he pretended to ask, reaching out for narrative support.

Xu Ling looked as if she were about to vomit. She nodded in grim obedience.

“Fred, what was that business with Alison about?” Jarvis soldiered on. “Any previous signs of a problem?”

“Was it in any way work-related?” I interrupted.

Fred was struggling to suppress a cruel smirk. “Perhaps a little,” he said. “Towards the end, her blogging became a little ... I don’t know, I guess you could say, weird.”

“No one said anything to me about that,” Jarvis cut in, clearly irritated by the direction this conversation was taking.

“‘Weird’?” I refused to let that go.

“Yeah, you could definitely say that, I suppose,” Fred explained. “She said that she’d ‘contacted something.’”

“Contacted something *in the backend*,” Xu Ling added. She looked like under-cooked death.

Fred scowled at her. “Like she even knew what the backend is.”

“What is the backend?” I was clutching.

Jarvis waved away the query. “You don’t need to worry about that. Nor did Alison. That’s what we have a tech team for, isn’t it Fred?”

“The backend is where everything happens,” Fred said. “You’ll see.”

April 10, 2015

Vauung

There’s a horror story I’m writing (slowly), developing from the central conceit that the ‘monster’ (Vauung) is the war. It feeds upon escalation, zig-zagging between antagonists, to extinguish any inclinations towards peace. It’s part *Apocalypse Now*, part *Blood Meridian* (“War is God”), part other stuff ... It’s not going to be finished for a while.

Scott Alexander has finished something truly excellent, which isn’t fiction (exactly), but clearly tunes into Vauung-signal:

Toxoplasma is a neat little parasite that is implicated in a couple of human diseases including schizophrenia. Its life cycle goes like this: it starts in a cat. The cat poops it out. The poop and the toxoplasma get in the water supply, where they are consumed by some other animal,

often a rat. The toxoplasma morphs into a rat-compatible form and starts reproducing. Once it has strength in numbers, it hijacks the rat's brain, convincing the rat to hang out conspicuously in areas where cats can eat it. After a cat eats the rat, the toxoplasma morphs back into its cat compatible form and reproduces some more. Finally, it gets pooped back out by the cat, completing the cycle.

What would it mean for a meme to have a life cycle as complicated as toxoplasma?

Consider the war on terror. It's a truism that each time the United States bombs Pakistan or Afghanistan or somewhere, all we're doing is radicalising the young people there and making more terrorists. Those terrorists then go on to kill Americans, which makes Americans get very angry and call for more bombing of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Taken as a meme, it is a single parasite with two hosts and two forms. In an Afghan host, it appears in a form called "jihad", and hijacks its host into killing himself in order to spread it to its second, American host. In the American host it morphs in a form called "the war on terror", and it hijacks the Americans into giving their own lives (and several bajillion of their tax dollars) to spread it back to its Afghan host in the form of bombs.

From the human point of view, jihad and the War on Terror are opposing forces. From the memetic point of view, they're as complementary as caterpillars and butterflies. Instead of judging, we

just note that somehow we accidentally created a replicator, and replicators are going to replicate until something makes them stop. Replicators are also going to evolve...

I'm assuming that "Instead of judging ..." isn't a deliberate *Apocalypse Now* (or Judge Holden) reference, but it works as one.

(Incidentally, 'Vauung' alphanomically numerizes to 140, the same as 'language'. When Twitter came along I accepted its character limit as a soft suggestive tap to the base of the brain.)

ADDED: Linking this oldish thing, due to its obvious relevance. (No idea how it found its way to that website, btw.) ... and while tagging stuff here, there's this (naturally): Πόλεμος πάντων μὲν πατήρ ἐστι ("War is the father of all.")

November 19, 2015

Bloody Mary

§00 — It required only a mirror. Initially, at least, it seemed like that, although it turned out there was more.

She had been known as 'Hell Mary' at times. There were many other names.

§01 — The ritual varied, but was never complicated. Its simplicity was essential. In that lay the danger, supposedly. The invocation could be realized almost by accident. It might begin as nothing more

than a joke, or a dare. A disastrous non-seriousness is the core of the urban legend. The proximal agents, scarcely older than children, typically, are playing about with something they don't understand. The Hell Prank is archetypal. Deadly foolishness, or worse, is not difficult to imagine, if only in broad outline. Teenage kids do it best. They're trying to prove something, and then do, by mistake. Movie viewers like to watch them damn themselves. With younger children it's more horrible.

§02 — Start at the exoteric level, at least in appearance. The point isn't to make something happen, but rather the opposite. You are supposed to avoid the ritual, out of fear. It's what *might have happened*, had you not been so chicken, that stokes the thrill. The dark potential preserves itself this way. It intimidates against disproof. This is where the legend and the real story part ways. They remain, nevertheless, confusingly entangled. Ironical twists thicken the obscurity. The legend itself has a real story. Actuality belongs only to the legend.

§03 — Divergence goes further than this. The legend is a central part of the real story. It's the legend, alone, that protects Bloody Mary from examination. The ritual is structured as a challenge. An examination that is declined leaves its object, in principle, examinable. This is the ontological payload. *Do you want to see what's in this box?* It could be something too horrific to bear.

§04 — Although the story is archetypal, there's always a first time.

Vanessa Sheridan had never heard it before. She'd never heard *anything at all like it* before. It thrilled and appalled her in equal measure. The idea split time in two. To go back was impossible. Innocence was Bloody Mary still unthought. Experience opened a new universe.

§05 — How had Christine known? This knowledge had desynchronized them. Even as the moment before sharing receded, it still separated them. They would always now, then, have been strangers. For such asymmetry ever to have been was enough. It could not be unmade all the way to non-being. Some echo of the gulf would always persist. What had once been friendship could never be anything so simple again. Perhaps it would be more. Their dark complicity was a bond. Bloody Mary connected them, even as she prized them apart.

§06 — Chris had called her *Nessie* at first, like the monster from the loch. She'd found it mildly annoying, but three syllables were too much to ask, and there was nothing else. So Vee had come as a relief.

§07 — Her tenth year would soon begin. Things would then start over, automatically. It was as if there had been time enough for anything to be learnt. That she still knew so little could only be an accident. She understood what such an accident meant now – by contrast – because she knew this.

§08 — They would do it, she was sure. The looming horizon was no less critical than death. At the end, Bloody Mary would step out of

the mirror. Nothing more could ever happen. It would be finished.

§09 — Dusk was draining away into night. At one level – and perhaps several – she expected nothing to occur. There was no Santa Claus, Tooth-Fairy, or Easter Bunny. There was also, she was beginning strongly to suspect, No God. That was certainly her elder brother’s vociferously confident assertion. No God was, for him, a positive cosmic principle, equaling zero. It was not a deficiency, but an operator. For there to be no Bloody Mary, then, was by far the tidiest conclusion. Yet she was also sure it could not be so simple.

§10 — *Ontology* was not a word she yet commanded, and its absence gaped unrecognized within her. The spell she sought to cast upon her thoughts required it. She had to reach all the way down to the being of things. Whatever Bloody Mary was, or was not, she did not belong in the world. She was a rip, gash, or rending. She was of the substance that might be drawn by a blade.

“Cut it out,” Vee murmured to herself, when such thoughts wouldn’t stop, in order to continue them.

§11 — In the end it was not ontology, but rather sorcery, that was sovereign here. *What could be called up?* That was the question, and no other.

“It’s called *invocation*,” Chris had solemnly explained. “*I invoke thee fell spirit.*”

“Those are the words?”

“Once they were.”

“And now?” asked Vee.

“We have to find them.”

“Like a password,” Vee had said, understanding immediately.

Chris nodded. “Exactly like that.”

It would be difficult, then. But *difficult* meant possible. There was a way. Passwords were meant to be used. They were hidden only because finding them matters.

§12 — It seemed too much to ask that anyone could want it as she did. To want it absolutely, at any cost, when nothing about it could be commonly conceived as desirable, was suggestive of isolation. Such longings dismissed every ordinary idea of sharing. She’d thought about trying it on her own, but had immediately known that would not do. Company was necessary. In solitude, whatever happened could be mere madness, of the emptiest kind. Its credibility would be fragile, even to her. The event would remain stuck in her mind. That was not the destination.

To escape, it had to undeniably exceed her.

§13 — Astonishingly, there was Chris, so it would happen after all. Chris was committed, *serious*. She was patient, and knew how to concentrate. Most of all she was stubborn. *Dogged* was how Alex described her. She could be trusted not to stop. That was the important thing. Bloody Mary was a name for something indescribably bad happening, but that wasn’t the way to lose the game. The only way to *lose* was to stop. Chris understood that, or

would act as if she did. She would keep going, further in.

§14 — They were waiting together, unhurried.

“What do you think?” Chris asked. She was talking about *it*, obviously. Vee simmered in the question silently, her eyes closed. The excitement was painful, scarcely bearable. She couldn’t speak, at first, because too much would show.

“Nothing,” she said, eventually. “There’s nothing yet.”

“There’s no rush.”

“No rush, or anything else,” Vee joked. Humor cloaked solemnity.

“There’s time.” There was some, at least.

It was still early. Perhaps half an hour of dusk remained. Bloody Mary would belong to the night. How could it be otherwise? Her complexion bled into ultimate shadow. Her gaze was abolition.

§15 — A sleep-over at Chris’ would be the occasion, if not this time, then another. There was no doubt about the room. It could have been made for Bloody Mary.

A huge old mirror dominated one wall. It was hard to understand how it could have been moved into the attic. It was as if the space had been built around it.

“Like a ship in a bottle,” Chris had said, sharing the same thought. The analogy was odd, and stimulating. Something that – upon reflection – *didn’t seem to fit* was the common element. It was inherently sorcerous in some way. At first it had to look like a trick.

§16 — Chris’ mom had required some persuasion. She suspected

they were up to something troubling. Not that she would have come close to guessing what. There was a surreptitious undercurrent they were unable to fully conceal.

“Are you girls up to something?” she’d once asked. The obscurity of their secret permitted no question more exact. They’d been ‘all innocence’ in response. She had to smile. How bad could it be?

“I’m not really happy about you with candles up there,” she said. “Those old beams are like fire-wood.”

Such fears were so misdirected Vee struggled to control her expression.

Chris assuaged her mother’s concern without great difficulty. They would be *careful*, she had gently insisted. The candles were never left unattended. They were in tins.

§17 — It could only happen once, obviously – or even subtly. An end could not repeat. If Bloody Mary was not the end, she was nothing. Her finality would be her signature. Last things would crash in, to undo the illusion of the world. There could be no afterwards.

§18 — They were making their way circuitously to Chris’ place. The streets were unusually quiet. It threatened to rain, but didn’t.

“I’ve been thinking about blood.” It was chanted more than spoken. Chris nodded. “Yes, me too,” she said. “*Bloodiness* is especially fascinating.”

“And multitudinous,” Vee added, using her favorite word. There was no need to explain why. So many types of bloodiness had swirled

among their thoughts.

“*Bloody hell* is such a strange oath.” It was odd and English to them, but then Bloody Mary was too.

“Does she bleed? Or is it only that she *brings blood*?”

“Bloodshed,” Chris mused. “She’s bloodshed.”

“The mother of bloodshed,” Vee suggested.

“Our secret blood mother,” Chris agreed. “Bloody Mary, come to us.”

“Blood,” they said together, stressing the plosives. “Let there be blood.”

§19 — Again they circled the question.

“What does her name really say?”

It was always the problem, carrying them forward, like a current. However its surface varied, in its depths it was the same.

Chris had returned from a family holiday in France months before. She had run to Vee immediately upon getting home, to excitedly share her linguistic discoveries. *Mary*, she had learnt, whispered of *mother*, of death, and of the sea. A *murmur* rippled it. As fine metal, tapped by a knife, it sang.

Now, when asking about her name, they explored for codes.

“There are secret echoes running through it,” Vee said.

“It has layers.”

The responsive nodding to each line would become more vigorous.

“And what does she dream?”

This was the silent answer. *She dreams this.*

Through the thought she made contact, around the back. Soft, spine-prickling hints of cold lunacy crept in with the idea. They shivered in acceptance.

“What is madness, really?”

It was an enigma they agreed upon. Only a ritual could respond to it, because Bloody Mary was madness itself. She was the still eye of the cyclone, the absolute tranquility that lurked within delirium. The world’s insanity found shelter in her.

§20 — There was a window in the roof, letting in natural light. It had not been cleaned for a while. At night, dust-smeared splinters of starlight poked through it. A smudged moon fell through it heavily, to sink into the depths of the mirror. The heavens were re-written, vague and converse.

An old wooden chest served as a shrine. Over months, they’d collected things for it. The candles had come first. A closing church sale provided most of those.

The center-piece was an old doll of abnormal apparent maturity and creepiness which Vee had found in a curiosity shop. Unblinking gray eyes stared accusingly from her broken face.

§21 — Gripped by sinister excitement, she had taken Chris to the shop the next day. For weeks it was their hunting ground. It supplied the shrine with other things. They added a small collection of Victorian post cards, showing incongruously smiling visitors to ominous places. Then there came an ornamental knife, pieces from

an old sewing kit, and some obscure surgical instruments. A long-stopped clock, fixed upon some forgotten midnight, dominated the edge of the composition. Every item had been painstakingly agreed upon. They'd taken their time, but never really disagreed. Those things which were *right* only needed to be recognized. There were enough of them by now. The pattern, while ungraspable, was complete. It released a mute call.

§22 — Their most important find was a second mirror. Placed across from the shrine, beneath the window, it exploded visual space into infinity. Within this endless room, it was as if anything that might possibly be seen now could be. The invitation was near-palpable. It silently appealed for occupancy. To be visually absorbed into it would be scarcely less soul-shattering than Bloody Mary herself. Almost, Vee felt, she could hear the utterly hushed whisperings of the boundless mirror-labyrinth. They spoke so softly they could only be remembered as imaginings. *Her* name had to be said, and also could not be said. The path was obliquely suggested, in this way.

§23 — Vee and Chris each lit one of the large candles. Simultaneity had been a ceremonial necessity, which could be left unspoken. They swapped subtle smiles at its perfect accomplishment, as they prolonged it. Their lives to this moment had been twin training disciplines. Convergence was completing itself.

They both knew it was time. After all, which it might nearly be, if not now, when? The question answered itself, in mute urgency. It had

begun already.

In the mirror, the distended moon seemed to ache for abomination. Raw existence was pitched upward toward an unbearable limit. It throbbed at the brink of crisis. Some mad, absent music tormented it. They held each other for a moment, in psychological defense against the wild slashings of non-existent violins.

Chris was stretched by the ritual, tautened. Her eyes blazed with inexorable purpose.

Vee saw through her into darkness and absolute loss. The intensity hurt somewhere that felt beyond bodily location. She gulped back a moan.

§24 — Candle flames, mirror-multiplied without limit, jittered as if caught by an alien draft. A subtle chill seemed less in the air than outside it.

She would be behind them in a direction that could never be turned towards.

“Bloody Mary,” they intoned together.

The end was near.

October 31, 2019

Patience

§00 — Stuart Thorndike had never been a ‘morning person’. This basic

trait, however, was only poor preparation for what now befell him. He woke from what hazily seemed to have been torments without limit. Memory would have been unbearable. He clawed his way out of the clammy sheets.

"My throat," he gasped.

Cecily, his wife, looked haggard and ill-tempered. The sympathy that had still dominated the day before was wearing thin. Evidently she had been over-stretched.

"You were screaming," she said. "It's the same as before – perhaps worse. You were screaming as if possessed, for most of the night. It was horrible, again."

"Bad dreams," he ventured, unimaginatively.

"At least," she snapped. "You should see someone. I'm serious. This can't go on."

§01 — Over breakfast her questions were colder, and more determined. Her patience had broken.

"Do you remember anything this time?"

"Not really." He paused to wrestle the mental fog, but it only thickened.

"Why would you place a bomb in a tree?" she asked.

The question meant nothing to him. He stared at her blankly.

"That's what you were mumbling about, before the screaming started," she continued. "'I finished making the bomb, it's in the tree. We only have to wait now.' You said it several times."

“Was it my voice?” he asked. He wasn’t sure where the question came from.

“Who else would it have belonged to?”

“Did it sound like me?”

“It wasn’t raving or screaming, if that’s what you mean.”

“And you’re sure that’s what it said?”

“Completely,” she said. “You should take a look in the garage. I did. It’s disturbing.”

§02 — After putting the task off for over an hour, he went down to check the garage. Cecily’s grim judgment was hard to contradict. If someone had not been building a bomb there, it was almost as if they’d been pretending too. The scattering of nitrate chemicals, clock parts, and sawn-off metal tubing was hard to otherwise explain. Who could it have been, if not him? He tried to put a hoax narrative together, but quickly gave up on the attempt. The fabrication was too obvious. It could have been no one else. He had no memory of it at all.

§03 — Had not some philosopher once said that *Consciousness is Hell*? It would have to be a gloomy German, most probably, or perhaps a French existentialist. He couldn’t remember, if he had ever actually known. Maybe it was a Swede, or a Norwegian. Thorndike was not, in any case, an avid reader of such literature. In his opinion, it tended consistently to unfettered extravagance. Even now, after the gnawing horror of recent nights, the formula struck him as hyperbolic. Yet he could vaguely intuit a psychological situation in

which it would not be, at all, for the first time in his life. Certainly, he had not awoken into any such situation. Perhaps, though, he had awoken dimly recalling one. This was a thought he found himself reluctant to more thoroughly explore.

§04 — Thorndike soon learnt that the ‘specialist’ Cecily had in mind for him was not a medical professional.

“She’s an old friend,” Cecily said. “There’s nobody I’ve ever trusted more.”

He could have taken that as a slight. In less disillusioned times he might have.

“She calls herself a *reader*,” Cecily added. “It’s a good description.”

“What the hell does it mean?”

“She reads things.”

“Things?” he asked.

“Situations, problems – people.”

“Me, you’re thinking?”

“Someone has to.”

§05 — The ‘consultancy’ struck Thorndike as a parody of itself. Every visible surface had been swallowed into a seething chaos of astrological and cartomantic symbolism. Ancient Egyptian themes predominated. Hieroglyphs jostled against algebraic formulae in the extended margins of charts, tables, and diagrams of obscurely ominous implication. There were pictures, too, whose inferior number was compensated by superior size and still more – in most

cases – by teeming inner multiplicity. They were, no doubt deliberately, dizzying to contemplate. Animal-headed gods erupted from the walls in mad multitudes. The air was glutinous with mind-clogging fragrances. To casual inspection, it was generic to the point of absurdity. If not for the recommendation, he would have dismissed the place contemptuously. It epitomized flamboyant intellectual indiscipline, of a kind he had always found peculiarly repellant. *Every belief is at once a disgrace*. That was the Thorndike family motto, never explicitly formalized, but resiliently preserved down through the male line. To withhold credence was a matter of honor. To believe was scarcely better than to beg. Staring now at some solemn Anubis, he recalled the tradition with a grimace.

§06 — She wanted him to talk, which he found himself strangely reluctant to do.

“There’s much I still don’t know,” she said.

“I don’t think you know anything,” he grumbled in reply. Perhaps the insolence was an attempt to abort developments in the immediate wake of their conception. If so, it didn’t work. At some level, he’d known that it wouldn’t.

“So why are you here?” she asked. Her calm was untouched by even the slightest hint of amusement.

“Curiosity,” he said.

“Not so.” It was stated softly, as a matter of obvious fact, rather than as a step in an argument.

“So, why then?” he asked, drawn in irresistibly.

“You’re here because you feel – obscurely – like a prey animal.”

The accuracy of the analysis upset him.

“What were you told?” he asked.

“What could I have been told? You haven’t shared your dreams, with anybody.” This, again, was true. “Not intentionally, at least,” she added. “Naturally, there are other *tellers*. My profession is based upon them.”

“*Naturally*,” he repeated. It came out sounding childish, like a sneer. He had attempted to avoid that. “I’m sorry. My manners are not usually so badly frayed.”

She waved away the apology. They were beyond such things.

§07 — As she explained how things would proceed, he found something obscurely unsettling about her persistent mention of *the cards*. His personal distaste for the conventional trappings of occultism accounted only for part of it, but only a part. The word suggested an uncanny doubling. It took him a moment to close upon it. Cartomancy, too, was a ritual of sorts, and also an invitation. It was meant to open a door.

Ultraviolet photographs of flowers exhibited landing-strips for pollinators, as he had seen in books, and on TV. Cecily, who loved gardening, gathered such information assiduously, and spread it outwards. These images returned as he watched the reading blossom. The pattern was not really for him. It spoke to unseen

witnesses he resented.

§08 — Tarot came first, according to occult tradition. He, however, had no doubt that reality ran the other way. Playing cards had branched into arcane functions. The idea had inane and insidious versions. The former had previously held him – he had assumed securely. Now things flipped. The derivation of cartomantic ritual from casual pastimes began to seem positively insidious. There was more, though, he realized. ‘Cards’ was a word, which itself carried *charge*, beyond anything it said. There was an unnatural insistence to it. Its single syllable packed irreducible plurality within itself. It was a nuclear spell.

§09 — He had been drifting.

“There’s a ritual,” she said. “One which, when completed, will provide an invitation. To perform it would be a very serious mistake. Your destiny now suspends from this.”

“The danger is that I deliberately let this whatever-it-is in?” he asked, enveloping the question in a nervous laugh. He had to be misunderstanding the idea, surely? “Why *the fuck* would I do that? It would be utterly insane.” The suggestion deeply annoyed him.

“You should be careful,” she said, with calm gravity. “The cards suggest great peril. You have upset something. Perhaps you know that?”

He half-did, at least. “And by ‘upset’ you mean?” he asked.

“You turned something over, stumbled into it. I have to suspect

clumsiness.”

“When did this happen?”

“Three days ago.”

He thought back. Three days ago? What had he been doing then? It had been an entirely ordinary Wednesday, to superficial recollection.

“Is it possible to specify the time?”

“Late afternoon, early evening,” she said without hesitation. “Perhaps a little later than it is now. Not much.”

He would have been on the way to the club, then. This regular journey took him on a twenty-five-minute walk through some of London’s quieter streets. Last Wednesday’s stroll had not been especially memorable. No unusual encounters came to mind. Later, in the club, he’d lost himself in *The Spectator*, with a whisky and cigar. Nothing had *reached in* to meet him – as far as he had noticed.

“Nothing,” he said.

“But actually there was something,” she replied stubbornly. “There has to have been, *as you know*. Let’s take a closer look.”

She flipped the cards back into the pack, and shuffled it without taking her eyes from him. The procedure had been long automated into instinct, clearly.

After a few seconds of this, she placed three cards in a row, studying them in motionless silence.

“Patience,” she said.

He initially misunderstood the word as an admonition. His irritable

jitters no doubt deserved it. He sought to get a better grip upon himself. Twitching was risible. Then he remembered the game.

§10 — Outside, dusk had been deepening. There was something sickly about the half-light that strayed in. It hinted at hallucination, even madness. The club was almost empty. He'd noticed Basil Heath, sitting alone at the bay window table. Heath had been playing a card game. *Cyclone solitaire* was the name he had given to it, when asked. It was peculiarly involving. The cards rotated between three piles, and were removed in pairs.

"How's it going?" Thorndike had asked. It was a casual question, scarcely expecting a reply.

Heath had looked up, his expression somehow haunted, and abnormally grave. "Not well," he said. "Not well at all." His voice trembled at the edge of indignity. "An unprincipled man, in such straits, might even try to pass it over."

"Pass it over?" Thorndike had not understood the remark. Its intensity – apparently so disproportionate – was disconcerting. "I don't know the game," he'd said. "I'd be of little use to you."

Heath made no further acknowledgement. His forehead was slick with perspiration. A gambler perched upon the brink of ruin could have looked no worse.

Thorndike had looked down then, again, at the table, drawn to the shape of the cards strewn upon it, and – for some fleeting fraction of a second – *seen through it*. The content of this vision was concealed

behind a black wall now. It was buried from him in the way dreams were. He might have thought it a dream, were it not lodged so firmly in the day, framed by lucidity without respite.

"I saw something," he said.

"Yes," she agreed. "And you heard something, too."

She was right. During the initial recollection it had come first. It had not been quite a bark, but that was the closest approximation to the sound that had a name. He shuddered at its echo.

"Horrible," he mumbled. "It shocked me."

It was like sheer *suddenness* made audible. The shock was part of its texture. No one ever *jumps out of their skin*, but at that moment he had understood the expression. The unanticipated had detonated – cracked. Everyone, surely, would react to it, he had thought. The entire club would be stricken. Panic would ensue. Then he had looked around, amazed. The calm was more terrifying than anything he could remember.

"Yet no one heard it, beside you," Cleo said. "You must then have realized that it came from elsewhere. It's why you forgot. It didn't fit." It had been an after-shock, to recognize that solitude. *So this is madness*, he had thought. The unexpected solidity of it chilled him. Argument was irrelevant to it. It meant only *to be alone*. Not swirling delusion, but simply incontestable *private evidence*. There was nothing to correct.

"Private evidence tends to go astray," she continued, as if emulating

telepathy. “That makes it a good place to hide.”

“Good?”

“Good for it.”

“Yet you can see.”

“It knows I pose no threat to it,” she said coldly. “It smells my neutrality.”

§11 — How difficult could it be to decline the performance of a summoning ritual? Nothing could be easier, surely? Yet an actual *spine-tingle* accompanied the question. Something like a cold itch had infiltrated the lumbar region, from a dimension beyond scratching. The sensation preceded understanding, but opened a path for it. *Things were coming the other way*. That was the ghostly precursor to the idea, registered as a visceral shadow of intuition. There are thoughts the body warns against. This was one of them. Why would it require an invitation? It was a familiar idea, from vampire myth, perhaps also other places, he hazily remembered. In one black-and-white fragment of an old horror movie the predator waited outside a window. Its target occupied the room on the other side. They tricked you into letting them in. Predation by permission was a demonic trait, it seemed.

“What does it want?” he asked. “If it wants anything, that is.”

“It wants only to exist, and what follows from that.”

“So what does? Follow from that, I mean.”

“Roughly speaking, the trajectory it arrives on is prolonged. It

continues on its path.”

“The way it gets in defines what it will be like?”

“It likes spirals, fire, and blood,” she said, as if still in conversational sequence.

“Have you got anything more definite?”

“Hard consonants – *cat-stutter, catastrophe, cataclysmic, tactical, contracts* – words like that could attract it. It hunts for fun.”

“You mean it searches for fun?”

“No, the other thing,” she said, smiling coldly. “It might amuse you, if that level of detachment were possible. As it is, a certain dark laughter could be a warning sign. If you start to identify with it, that’s an indication it’s getting in.”

“Perhaps you’re enjoying this too much,” he growled.

“My objectivity is what you’re paying for. If you want a shoulder to cry on, you could find one more cheaply.”

“I’d rather hoped that for almost two-hundred pounds an hour I wouldn’t have to wonder if you were on my side.”

“If I was simply *against* it, I wouldn’t be able to help you at all.”

He knew she was right. Pretending to argue was idiotic immaturity. He sighed. “So what’s next?”

“Seriousness,” she scolded. “You’re in a lot of trouble, even without being stupid about it.”

He might have bristled against the condescension under other circumstances.

“So it’s waiting for me to offer it a key?”

She nodded.

“Then, how long?” he continued. “I mean, if I’m going to try to outwait it, how long will that take?”

She took a while to respond, watching him. He found her expression difficult to read. “It would be best to assume *longer than you have*,” she said, eventually. “Such beings don’t lose time games.”

They were done, then. She was restoring the cards to dormancy. There was nothing more to be learnt, or said.

§12 — The consultation had taken more than two hours. By the time it had finished, night was thickening.

He paused for a moment outside, before setting back. Behind him, the warmth of the shop light quickly fell away into icy obscurities.

The road ahead was discouraging. He was out-matched, to an incomprehensible degree. Whatever ailed his soul outflanked it in every conceivable – and even inconceivable – direction. However he ran, he would run into it. So he told himself he would not run.

The rain had stopped. Nightlights shattered among reflections. There was no doubting the town’s charms. He was aware, to an unusual degree, that it would be sad to leave.

The moon appeared unnaturally large. For a disconcerting moment he found its scale indicative of dreaming. Clues of some deep delusion swirled into themselves, drawing abstract spirals. Would it like that?

Vision seemed to have a surface – a kind of film. He was stretching out a finger to touch it before noticing.

§13 — It would be safer – perhaps even faster – to cut diagonally across the fields. The ground was dry enough for efficient progress. Before reaching the house, there would be the woods. He would probably spend no more than five minutes among the trees. A few hundred seconds – it would not be long. Yet he balked at the prospect. *If something was waiting for him, it would be there.*

There was a demand being made for discipline, he soberly realized. Childish fears were no longer affordable. Survival called for a new way. It could begin from a confrontation with the dark.

It was not just ontogeny but also – and more profoundly – phylogeny that trembled within him. Like wind and water upon eon-exposed rocks, the fangs of a billion ancient predators had carved his fears. Not millions, but tens and hundreds of millions of years whispered their dread. *Those who feared less are no longer among us*, they said. *Ravenous things, stalking silently through the night, bore them away into a deeper darkness.* It was thus, and not in the proximate world, that his nightmares had been trained. The murmurings of archaic terror drew his attention astray.

He left the open ground and the black mass of the forest swallowed him. He paused as his eyes adjusted. Gray-scale gradually returned. Shapes emerged. This was the crossing. Ancient nightmares beyond number chattered softly on the dark periphery. Yet it was only as it

ever was. There was no hint of novel or exceptional encroachment. If something had happened, he had missed it.

§14 — Cecily was gone. A note – neatly-folded into a miniature tent – stood on the table by the door. The message was formally affectionate, but curt. She doubted her value to him at this time, it said. He shrugged.

Better that she not be involved in this. She couldn't help, and might easily come to harm. There was something more – a darker component to his response, which he didn't want to think about. The gist crept in, nevertheless. This wasn't *for her*.

§15 — Standing in the hallway of the silent house, he thought, now, about what he'd been told. *Spirals* meant nothing much to him. They were easy enough to recognize. The rigorous definition, he supposed, was mathematical. It would likely exceed his comprehension. Where he struggled was on the possible application to his case. To have been advised of the entity's attraction to irregular tetrahedrons would have drawn a comparable blank. Pursuit would not be cost-effective, he knew.

§16 — Fire was quite probably mere *smoking*. It was the one indefensible thing, above all, that everyone knew *you should stop*. His hackles rose against the scarcely contestable imperative. *You'd let a monstrosity from beyond The Veil crash into your soul rather than abstain from burning some few pitiful shreds of tobacco leaf?* Yet the habit would only dig itself in deeper. Certain counter-

arguments had begun to mindlessly arrange themselves, like the wasp pattern of an orchid flower. He extracted a cigarillo from their silver case and stepped out onto the dark veranda. His heavy old Zippo, picked up years past from a small-town curio shop, sat in a saucer on the window sill. It smelt strongly of gasoline. *Fire*, it said to him, silently, as it glinted in the moonlight. *It likes fire*. The temptation to ignite the flame was not – quite – irresistible. Once burning, the cigarillo would be a complex sign. It would express defiance, most superficially. If that, though, it would surely also spell *invitation*. Fear would condense upon it, as if drawn in to a beacon. A dimension would collapse, simplifying the equation.

§17 — Fire couldn't be stopped. She'd get it, eventually. She only had to wait. Blood-letting would be even easier. The illusion of control would be thinner. A rare steak wouldn't be enough, of course. The critical act, in that case, had occurred in the abattoir, where the hemophile demons gathered like excited flies. A trivial shaving or kitchen accident, on the other hand, should be quite sufficient. A mere nick, a single drop of blood, and it was done. He wondered how often he shed his own blood. Could it be less than once a week? There could be no security in this direction, or on this front. To seek protection here would be to court crippling neurosis.

If a blood-offering required intentional sacrifice, he would be safe. So it couldn't be like that. Absence of safety was the starting point – the *axiom*. Design had been stripped away, down to the bedrock of raw

accident.

Once intention was dismissed, everything was left open. The last recognizable factor was then deducted. The route would be unmarked, and uncharted. Figuratively, he was treading a cliff path in pitch darkness. A plunge into disaster was the default outcome. The first step, then, was to stop.

To go on as he had was no good. He had no idea what he was doing, which was intolerably dangerous now.

Any habit might be a building block, the modular component for a ritual. Safety lay only in *doing nothing*. He laughed bitterly at his plight.

§18 — The entity visited his dreams. It was shadow become body, female and inhuman. Her avatar was a black leopard which was at the same time a wolf. The choice was not forced. Fluid ambivalence was her *gait*, as if she padded through the nocturnal forests of her natural realm. She was a familiar animal at first and then at once an unrecognizable predator. *You would make your mind a trap?* How could he not? His predicament necessitated at least that.

She was laughing at him, in a way that wasn't simply unkind. There was nevertheless much of pitiless killing in her mirth. It amused her that all worlds were built upon darkness. Blood drew her. Predation was her play. There was an ambush underway that entirely outwitted him.

In the dreams he whirled around, dizzying himself. It would come

from his flanks, or rear. In attempting to spot it, he spun. At once too slow to catch a glimpse of it, and too fast to bear, he would always stumble.

When would it be? With this question a time vortex swallowed him. He awakened, head-spinning, damp with half-remembered horrors.

§19 — Time passed. Some few days became weeks – but no more than that. Duration had thickened. It was palpable to him now.

It could not be out-waited. It would not forget, or give up. It would be coming forever, and always had been. That was the oracle. Yet he had dreams of this, too, and they were tangled beyond straightening. Ambiguous grappling mixed desperation with something adopted from a wolf spider. *He was using her skills against her*, which meant things he didn't want to contemplate. He had been waiting to trap her.

There had been no other option. Running was not a solution. She was too deeply lodged in the quick of duration to out-run. Flight ran out of time. In the grim dawn it was clearer, and emptier. No alternative was left. She would have to be defeated. Why not today? In delay there was no advantage. The initiative was no more denied to him now than it would ever be. A terrible impatience seized him, close to panic. He looked around. *I should get back*, he thought. Even if *she* cared little for space, it had to be less safe out here. The trees whispered eerily, as if in agreement. He stuck closely to the old wall, minimizing angles of potential attack.

§20 — Suddenly – as if defining the word – a detonation shattered the stillness. It was extraordinarily shocking.

He stumbled, striking his head on a stone. The wound was superficial, but it bled freely. He dabbed at his torn scalp with a paper tissue, momentarily dazed.

Absurd hypotheses flooded in. Could it have been a minor meteorite impact? Had he been shot at? Nothing he could imagine made much sense.

The site of the explosion had been a nearby tree. A charred crater was apparent on its trunk, near the roots. The edges of the wound still smoldered. Scorching had emphasized the growth whorls. They were rings, surely, but a fracture-line had subtly shifted the pattern. The figure drew him in. He struggled to pull his mind back. Everything swirled. He was swept around the eddy of a swoon without quite succumbing to it. The crashing absurdity of the event still stunned him.

He sat for a moment, seeking to regroup his scattered faculties. His grasp on what had happened was – if anything – weakening. The fragments of recall continued drifting apart. The sole coherent sense was of an incomplete awakening. Only now had he begun to understand. *Only now* was what he had begun to understand. There was only now, even if he did not yet understand it, or ever would. Only now was happening, and he – truly – wasn't. That's how it went.

§21 — Even in his befuddlement he knew more than he wanted

to, far more than he had thought. Alien ideas had come to him along paths he did not recognize. Their grim magnificence appalled him.

I have become a hunter, he accepted. A feverish chill-wave washed through him, then, as he glimpsed what that might suggest. There was altogether too much likeness in it. He was imitating her. Was it, in fact, that she was *teaching* him? Thoughts that were still worse intruded, but they were harder to grasp. *I'm scared to think*, he admitted to himself. This undoubtedly compounded the danger. Psychological security procedures had been disabled, as if by hysterical paralysis. Certain strategically-indispensable positions had become too terrifying to defend. He had to laugh. *A garrison too frightened to man the walls* offered no protection. There was no survival that way. So instead, he twisted the blade of fear into himself, grimly determined to rouse his defenses. He would befriend his final horrors. *Love whatever hurts the most*. Only then might it somehow work out.

§22 — There was nothing being said, because his mind had stopped guessing. It rested now amidst the uninterpretable-as-such. There was no sense, no possibility of sense. A kind of death had washed through him. Mystics had sought this place, he thought with a smile. The profanity of meaning was gone.

§23 — *It surely wouldn't be long now*. The thought had already crystallized before its full wrongness struck him. Its impatience was the worst mistake. Attention was thus misdirected.

§24 — He was aware of her now, continuously. It was less a sensation than – if such a thing were possible – *the opposite*. Was *nonsense* not precisely that, if literally understood? He thought of low meteorological pressure, of withdrawing tides, recessions. A palpable emptying left nothing to grasp at. Whatever it might have been had already departed.

§25 — He lurked at the edge of the clearing. There was no need for even the slightest repositioning. It astounded him, that he was capable of such stillness. *Inhuman patience* was what it seemed to him then, momentarily. There was only the *beyond*, and nothing else. Here and now was being calmly considered, elsewhere. *This* was only bait. It was impossible. Bare survival had required nothing less.

§26 — All fear was forgotten. He was ready for her, and always had been. But it went much further. That which he had not so long ago thought himself to be would have shuddered at the stage it had reached. It was amusing, though not to the point of distraction. He had arrived at the place where everything stopped, or something had. It pointed nowhere else. The meaning was intrinsic, or it was nothing. *This is the time* went the lure. ‘This’ was what he had never before – and also always – taken himself as being. It had been crafted to hunt with.

§27 — The Great Now had already begun, of course. The moment no longer gave way to another, but extended itself without boundary. Whatever *would* happen *was* happening, though unseen. Here was

the secret of patience. It was far simpler than he had ever understood. There was simply nothing to wait for. Duration was compact. Unless momentarily stranded – apparently out of reach – by the cramping, rucking, or pleating of time, there was no longer any *up ahead*. To look forward was pure delusion.

§28 — An absolute act of predation was consummated, then, in primordial finality. There had been a quick, quiet killing. It was still now. Arrival and departure were fused in immensity.

§29 — So, it was done.

It had always been done.

There was only this way, and no other. The hunter – alone – remained.

November 11, 2019

Mermaids

Katy was sleeping better. The dark patches beneath her eyes were disappearing. She even smiled now, occasionally. “I don’t mind the bad dreams about mermaids anymore,” she said.

“That’s good, why?”

“Daddy told me nightmares were the world’s only real treasure.”

“He said that?”

“Lots of times,” Katy said.

“He shouldn’t have. Those thoughts are unhealthy. They’re why he has had to spend so much time in hospital.”

Claudia cast narrowed eyes around her daughter’s room. Though not especially untidy, the space was cluttered to a fantastic degree. It had the vivid quality of scarcely-inhibited psychological projection. Mermaids were an insistent theme. Two large mermaid posters dominated the largest wall. Even without any true insight into her daughter’s phobia, she still shuddered slightly. Their horror was directly proportional to the cognitive attention they drew. Thinking about them was bad. They were creatures of malevolent seduction. Sirens were mermaids.

“Why do you torture yourself like this?” Claudia had once asked her daughter, in frustration.

“I’d rather see them, than have them hide,” was the reply.

It made enough twisted sense to be unanswerable.

Katy had always been wise beyond her years. Her remarks were peculiarly *considered*. It made her seem sad.

Claudia wondered now whether there was something she should have said. Had there been an opening she’d missed?

There had never been a sign of Katy being disproportionately anxious about anything else. As a baby she’d been unusually solemn, but no less exceptionally calm. *The Little Buddha*, Derek had called her. She would very rarely cry. Nothing had seemed to profoundly upset her before this.

Why were mermaids so horrible? She felt the answer through powerful but indistinct intuition. Fluid boundaries were essential to it. A rocky sea-shore at twilight was darkly suggestive enough. It whispered of mermaids without needing to show them. Ambiguous transformations thrashed the coast of sleep.

"Do mermaids scare you, too, mommy?"

She'd wanted to say 'no' of course, but the word caught in her throat. She'd actually coughed – almost choked. "I don't think about them much," she'd managed, eventually. "They *are* kind of creepy, I guess."

"Super-creepy," Katy said.

"Why is that, do you think?" It was, perhaps, an incautious question, but Claudia couldn't help herself.

"The join is the scariest part."

"Where fish begins?"

"Or girl," Katy said.

"Imagine being able to swim so well, though," Claudia suggested, with unconvincing cheerfulness.

"That makes it worse, because you might want it."

November 13, 2019

Wallypede Girl

Words can be an infected wound. Things are read that cannot be

unread. They can injure, and fester.

For me, such words were delivered by a story, called *Wallypede Girl*. The title alone sufficed to betray its radically abominable character. It was a tale scraped from the filthiest sewers of Hell. You don't need to know more than that. Believe me, really, you don't. Thank all that is holy if you are spared. I pray you will not err as I have.

Looking back, my behavior is indecipherable to me. I watch a madman destroy himself. He picks up the slim volume whose vileness – *he knows* – has never been exceeded. As if craving damnation, he consumes it in one session. It took, perhaps, three hours.

I could not put it down, as the saying goes, though it explains nothing. Why – I now ask myself – did I continue to the end? Why proceed beyond the first hideous paragraph? I can make no sense of it. In any case, the private calamity was done. That was the first episode. I would never know 'a good night's sleep' again.

In the next episode, I was introduced to the author, at a gallery opening.

"I'm sure you told me that you'd read one of her stories. What was it called?"

Chillingly, I knew. *Please let it not be*, I mumbled silently, in vain. It was, of course. Had it not been, this also would not be. The words were said. I will not willingly repeat them.

After the name was spoken I seemed to pass – for a moment – out of the world. Sensation collapsed into darkness and noise. A buzzing

reached me as if from distant ruined galaxies.

"You've heard of it?" she was asking. "Maybe you've even read it?"

I stared at her dumbly, if not quite open-mouthed. It was meeting a monster.

"How did you think up something like that?" I asked, not really wanting to know.

"Oh, it just came to me," she said. The breeziness of the reply was almost impossibly distressing. "Do you ever have that? You know, when things just arrive, and you've no idea from where?"

"It doesn't worry you?"

"Strange visitors are my favorite things."

My look of abhorrence cannot have been well-concealed. Her expression shifted through discomfort to amusement.

"You look as if you've seen a Wallypede girl."

"Don't say that," I begged. "I mean, don't joke about it. It's not remotely funny."

"Are you okay?"

"What you did was so wrong." I had to say it. "If there was any justice in this universe, you'd be punished for it."

"Jesus," she said. She looked taken aback. "You don't like it?"

Her appalling understatement shocked me to the core. For some moments it stripped me of the power of speech. Could she somehow not realize what she had done?

"Like it?" I stammered, groping for more. "You find it imaginable that

I could have *liked* it?”

“Aren’t scary stories your thing?”

I searched her face for indications of mockery. We were trapped in a dialog of unanswered questions. “You think what you wrote was a *scary story*?”

“Wasn’t it?” Once again, her confusion seemed genuine.

“Was Auschwitz-Birkenau undesirable accommodation?”

“I don’t get your point.” Some evidence of irritation was creeping in. This tilted my sense of existential devastation into fury. Did she dare pretend to injury, after what she had done? I closed my eyes, grasping for calm.

“We should probably drop it,” she said. “The topic seems to over-excite you.”

It’s not about me, I wanted to shriek, but I managed to restrain myself. My temples ached. Throbbing veins probably betrayed my condition. I took a deep breath.

“You can’t be evading your responsibility,” I said. “Nobody would try to shrug-off something at this scale, surely? It would look too cynical, and – frankly – almost psychopathic.”

“What’s *wrong* with you?” she asked, openly annoyed now. “It’s a fucking story.”

“Oh is that all,” I replied, maximally accentuating the sarcasm. “For a moment there I thought it might – you know – actually matter.”

Despite its crudity, this response arrested her indignation in mid-

flight. She seemed now to recognize something untenable about her position. The presumption of literary innocence visibly trembled.

"Who could it hurt?" she asked, in a shrunken voice. "It's just a story."

"Are you a Christian?" I asked.

She nodded, a little confusedly.

"So you think the Bible helps people, and perhaps even saves them?"

"It's Jesus who saves people," she said. "The Bible is only the Door to Him."

I let *only* slip past. There was no need for it to get in the way. "So it's a good door?"

"Of course," she said.

Quietly, but firmly, I locked the trap. "Then you should be able to see the evil you've done, through simple inversion."

It took her less than a second to see the connection. "No one could take *Wallypede Girl* as their Bible," she protested. Her voice had risen, betraying hints of moral panic. She was beginning to imagine the horror of it. From the edge of anguished howl her words crashed back down to a hoarse whisper. "It would be monstrous." As she explored the possibility, revulsion at her own thoughts spread glints of nightmare across her features. It seemed she might faint.

After some moments she regained composure. There was a deadness to her now, one I recognized – an installation of adamant despair. Elements of her expression were glazed with resignation to irreparable ruin. Laughter would not soon return, and when it did, it

would be broken.

I could not quite pity her. She had ventured too deeply into the abyss for that.

The Hell of her own imaginings now claimed her.

“It was wrong,” she agreed, far too late.

November 22, 2019

Things Left Mostly Unsaid (00)

This series needs an introduction, but there isn't one yet.

§00 — He stared grimly at the ‘object’ – if that’s what it was. Some would call it one, of course, though without much conviction. There was an illusory unreality to it.

“It means nothing to me,” he said. “I don’t recognize it at all.”

“Are you sure?”

“For sure, I’m sure,” he insisted. “It’s not the sort of thing you’d forget.”

“I’d have thought it was exactly that sort of thing.”

“How can you say that?” he asked, surprised. “It might have been made to be unmentioned.”

“You think it was made?”

He reconsidered. “It came from somewhere.”

Whatever it was, the exchange had been glitched by it, and disconnected.

"If it's an artifact," she said, with firm confidence, "it's not ours."

"We being?" he asked.

"Anything you can identify with will do."

"Unless 'artifact builders in general'."

"That's thinkable?"

He paused to reflect. "I guess it would be bold to say 'yes.'"

"Heroic even," she said.

"So talking about unthinkable artisans means talking around them."

"If that's the trajectory you're on."

"Consistent avoidance turns into an orbit, almost inevitably."

"Continually missing something," she agreed. "But that's a trap, surely? You're stuck to it."

Yet stickiness kept its distance. The entity repelled contemplation. Its formlessness suggested no alleviating simplicity. The impression it made was elusive, hinting at immense bulk twisted into itself, or withdrawn into obscure dimensions.

"I really don't like it," he said childishly.

"No one expects you to."

"Could we hand it over somehow?"

"Who's going to take it?"

"We could just leave it here."

"Be realistic."

"Okay then," he accepted. "What's the next move?"

"First priority has to be not screwing this up," she said. "We need to

take our time.”

“Take it back, you mean?”

“If we can do that,” she concurred. “It’s not clear.”

They retreated from it slightly, as if by instinct. There was no sign of movement. Still, it indicated some kind of motionless shifting. Alternative patterns suggested themselves. Distances wouldn’t be changing much, apparently.

“How long do you think it will take?” he said after a while.

“As much as it’s able to, would be my guess.”

“We could use some expert assistance.”

“Spare us the happy thoughts.” If there were experts it would be an entirely different situation.

He’d been correct about the trajectory. It was like an orbit. The inclination to see more, without getting closer, produces circumspection automatically. Of course, neither was in any hurry to approach it, if that was even possible. Passive contact-aversion might not have been its primary property, but it appeared to be. The effect was repulsive. An inescapable thought was generated that it might somehow sting – very badly.

“Do you think we get out of this?” The remark was spun ironically, as if lifted from a movie.

“Why wouldn’t we?” The game was distracting. “There’s no need to exaggerate its malignancy.”

He tilted his head towards the thing, as if that was argument enough.

"I doubt it's even hostile," she said.

"Doubt how much?"

"It's not done anything so far, or – at least – so far as we can tell."

Everything was hidden in the qualification, and not deeply. To scrape at it would have been too crude.

"There's no obvious end to this," he said.

January 28, 2020

Things Left Mostly Unsaid (01)

[These things are being posted opportunistically in no particular order]

§01 – The suggestion was peculiar. It raised many questions.

"So what do you think?"

"Nothing really," he said, too quickly. That wouldn't do, he realized.

"Not much really," he added, as a substitute. Then a query, for deflection: "What sort of thing?"

"What sort of thing are you thinking?" she repeated, with a laugh.

"I'm supposed to know that?"

He'd forgotten what his question had meant. "Anyway, I'd rather not think about it," he said. "Why dwell on such things?"

"So what – then – instead?" she asked.

"Does there have to be something?"

“Doesn’t there?”

“I suppose,” he admitted, obviously very far from thrilled about it.

“Nothingness wouldn’t take enough time.”

He’d reached the crux. Duration had to be sponged-up somehow. Still, the proposition was questionable.

“Do you want to talk about it?” she asked, laughing again. The joke, if such it was, he found obscure.

“Is there any choice?” he grumbled. His own question was misleading, he knew at once. It wasn’t necessary to talk, at least not out loud, which was the thing. Yet, to keep from talking required a continual renewal. It involved effort. “It’s why people want to die,” he mused aloud. “It’s the only way to be quiet without trying.” The morbidity exceeded anything he would have wanted to say. “Always words,” he said. “They go too far.”

“Not always,” she countered. “Often, though, admittedly,” she added. “This time, certainly.”

February 1, 2020

Things Left Mostly Unsaid (02)

§02 — It was too self-evident for words. Even this shouldn’t have required utterance. The redundancy echoed emptily through it. It added and then multiplied nothing. Nevertheless, it had crept into

the conversation. Now he snapped at the intrusion.

"That goes without saying."

"Yes, it has," she said. "That's its way."

Her philosophical perversity struck him as glib and infuriating. "How can you even think that, let alone say it?" he demanded.

"Isn't it obvious?"

"Of course it is," he said. "It's far too obvious. That's the whole point."

"So drop it. How difficult is that?"

He made an animal noise signaling rage mastered by humor. She laughed at it politely.

"You let it get to you too much," she continued. "Why does it matter?"

"What kind of question is that?"

"You don't like it?"

"Whether I like it or not isn't the issue."

"It wouldn't be, if you cared less about it."

"So it's my fault now?"

The deflation was jolting. She could only laugh again, shaking her head. The way he fed it – while at the same time lamenting its prominence – was an extraordinary thing to see.

"You have to let it go," she said, as soothingly as possible. "It's not just going to get up and leave, while you're worrying at it."

"What if it has to be dealt with?"

"That's your guess?"

"Regardless," he insisted.

"It's not asking anything of me."

"Not as far as you can tell."

'Tell' was a word, she now realized, that she'd never listened to enough. Ancient sorceries hummed within it. "I can't tell," she tried, experimentally. "It's hard to tell." What might be telling?

"Are you even listening?" he wondered.

"I'm trying to." She shook her head again, as if to clear it. "There's a lot going on."

"It only seems like that."

"No," she said. "It doesn't. It seems as little as possible. Still though ..."

"Still what?" he asked.

"Catching glimpses, whispers – there are chances."

"'Chances' – Christ," he said, without attempting to conceal his disgust. "That's what you call them."

"You'd prefer 'curses,'" she knew, because they'd been there before.

"But that's unbalanced."

"You can't balance *this*." It had always been his main point. "There's no leverage."

"Brains are sheer leverage."

"They're side-eddies."

"That too," she accepted. "But balancing is the only thing they do."

"Or try to do."

"That was built-in." *Built-in to the statement*, she had meant, not the organ, though it worked equally either way. Over time it cancelled

out. To be poised out at an edge was still to be poised. It wasn't a matter of foundations, but of traffic.

"Okay, that's enough," he thought aloud, and it was.

February 2, 2020

Things Left Mostly Unsaid (03)

§03 — She'd survived the event, however narrowly. Most probably, it was only melodrama that had placed such an outcome in doubt. There were no grounds for expecting anything worse. Yet it was as if she was still stricken. Her existence appeared somehow *thinned*.

A sheen of unseasonal perspiration glowed on her forehead.

"I don't know," she repeated, about nothing obvious. It was almost a plea. "I really don't," as if she couldn't imaginably be believed.

Such stammering was not really speech, still less security. The seals and wards were far too weak. They offered no serious protection, or even the pretense of it.

He scrabbled at the enigma, quite undeterred by her distress. "So, what was it like?"

"There are no words." She exaggerated, but only a little. Really, she had no idea where a description would begin. Perhaps there were too many words, but none for her, or none for it. The happening hadn't been something meant for discussion. So the phrase was an

alternative to saying more. It would have subtracted itself, if it could. In a way it disappeared, but incompletely. It left ripples, like something retreating into aquatic depths.

"There have to be words," he insisted. "It isn't necessary to be exact."

"Vagueness in the right direction is already a lot to ask."

His response was an inarticulate grunt of irritation. He was not here to fence. Was she not yet broken enough to be unguarded?

She ignored the tacit demand. There was too much *e/se* going on.

Impatience made him careless. "Spit it out," he grumbled. He knew at once that exposing so much aggression was a mistake.

Her inner recoil was undisguised. Defenses would now compound the difficulty of the terrain.

He apologized clumsily, but too late.

"I'm tired," he tried to explain. "I've been worried."

"It's okay," she said, but the wariness in her eyes said something else.

"I can't really talk now."

"Don't say that."

"It's already too much," she said, withdrawing further.

"Then who's going to help?"

"Jesus," she said, with a sad laugh. "Come on!"

He mumbled something even he himself missed. It was nothingness badly emulating speech. "I have to know," he croaked. Despair was completing the loss of caution. "You understand, don't you? I have to."

"What if you simply can't?" The complete absence of hostility in her

tone somehow made it worse.

“No,” he said. “I won’t think that.”

“You can’t avoid it,” she said. “It’s settled.”

“Nothing’s settled.”

“You don’t believe that.”

“This isn’t about what I believe.”

“You don’t get to decide, either.” Once again, her tone was fatalistic, rather than accusing. “It’s the way it is.”

“You say that as if you’re on its side.”

“Everything’s on its side,” she countered. “Or nothing is.”

February 3, 2020

Things Left Mostly Unsaid (04)

§04 — No one knew what it was, beside a scandal. Obscurity somehow occupied the center of it. *It’s not the crime but the cover-up*, as they say.

“Can you explain your involvement?” the reporter asked, thrusting a microphone forward aggressively. “Do you deny the accusations?”

What accusations? It would only encourage them.

There were other questions, being raised simultaneously. They blurred together into a hubbub of hostile inquisition.

“No comment.” He said it only to make his silence emphatic.

"This is an opportunity to set the record straight," shouted someone else.

"Not really," he mumbled, reaching the door.

His wife was inside, slightly shaken, but still managing to smile.

"They want you to talk," she said.

"It's all nonsense."

"They think your silence is a confession."

"I doubt it," he said. He paused to consider. "They probably want me to think that."

"Why do they even care?" she asked. "It's all so – nothing."

"They smell blood, it excites them."

"You exaggerate," she hoped.

"Maybe," he accepted, unconvinced. He scratched the side of his nose distractedly.

"Are you going to make a statement?"

"You think I should?"

"It might be the only way to get out in front of things."

"Improbable," he muttered. "There's no interest in what really happened."

"You can't just accept that."

"Can't I?" he asked. "Self-deception isn't going to help."

"If there's a time for cynicism, this isn't it," she insisted. "It comes too close to vindicating their story-line."

"If I was merely being accused of cynicism, I'd find it survivable," he

replied, with a grim laugh.

“So what are you being accused of, to your understanding?”

“Oh, you know.”

“Actually, I really don’t.”

“I’m supposed to have said some things.” He hesitated. “They’re vague about the details.”

“By ‘details’ you mean the actual words?”

“And the occasion,” he added.

“You’re talking about that ghastly club, aren’t you?” Her exasperation overflowed. “Why do you associate yourself with those people?”

“They’re good company.”

“They are *not* ‘good company’ – and now see where they’ve got you.”

“It’s hardly their fault,” he protested.

“Isn’t it, really? Then why is the press besieging our house?”

“You’re saying there was a leak?”

“What other explanation could there be?”

“I’m reluctant to jump to conclusions.” He realized in saying this that more would evidently be needed. “The place might have been bugged.”

“This is supposed to be more likely than you having sleazy friends?”

“I’m just admitting to uncertainty.”

She sighed dramatically, rolling her eyes. “You’re unbelievable. Can’t you see where this is going to end?”

“No, I can’t” he said. “I can’t at all, and I have to doubt that you can.”

"It's as if you positively want to crash in flames."

"How?" he protested. "How is it remotely like that?"

"Try to imagine what it looks like."

"It looks mostly like the picture they want to paint."

"They work with what they've got."

He scowled, but without contesting the point. "It's hard to know what they've got."

"But knowing what they *could* have just requires recollection."

"Some undiplomatic language," he said, "but that's all."

"That's quite enough, though, isn't it?"

He sighed. "I think you're approaching this the wrong way around."

"You mean, from what actually happened?" she asked, only semi-sarcastically. "Let's try to agree that's at least relevant."

"Minimally relevant," he countered. "First of all, it's a story."

"It's not a story about nothing, though, is it?"

"It's a story about nothing-very-definite – at least so far."

"But they clearly don't expect it to be, for long."

"Damn them," he muttered, without further specifying who they were. "They won't stop."

"Why would they stop? The audience enjoys the chase."

"What happened to 'You exaggerate'?" he sniffed.

"You've changed my mind."

"Anyway, I'm not feeding them."

"Isn't it a bit late for that?"

February 4, 2020

Things Left Mostly Unsaid (05)

§05 — The interrogation would undoubtedly be difficult to navigate. There wasn't any kind of sensible story to offer up. Some impure version of nothing was the only message available. That would seem odd. They'd want something.

He paced back and forth agitatedly, softly tortured by anticipation.

"What if they ask about it directly?"

"They won't."

"But if they do?"

"Say as little as possible. Avoid lying, though, if you can. Lies are vulnerabilities. They tend to come apart under pressure. They release information when they break." She paused a moment before continuing. "They can't force you to talk."

"That's true, probably," he admitted, not entirely without bitterness. "But what would silence sound like to them?"

"You can't afford to worry about that."

"What can I afford?"

"Caution," she said.

"That's it?"

"That's enough."

It seemed unlikely. "I'm assuming they're good at what they do."

"Asking questions?"

"Roughly," he accepted. He meant *approximately*.

The word took her elsewhere. "Not especially roughly," she countered. "Their freedom is tightly constrained."

Torture was close to the last thing he wanted to talk about. Yet, here they were.

"I'd tell them everything, if I could," he muttered, unnecessarily.

She smiled thinly. "Thank you for the honesty."

"Not that it matters."

"Quite," she agreed.

"There have to be words that would work," he mused, "but how to find them?"

"You think there's a method?" *A method you could conceivably follow in time*, she might have elaborated, which would have been colder.

There was no answer to it, in any case.

"Inaccessible possibilities seem like a theme," he grumbled. "It starts and ends with them."

"They divert you too much. You should concentrate upon what you can do."

"You mean, *what I can avoid saying*."

"Why reach for more than that – especially now?"

"'Now' is kind of the point, though, isn't it?"

"Not unless you want to trip yourself up, at the worst time."

"Yes, it would be better to forget." The irritability had drained out, leaving only gloom. "Another inaccessible possibility," he added.

She tapped her watch. *Time's passing*. Words would only have softened the message.

"How long, do you think?" he asked.

"An hour or two, maybe," she guessed. "Not long enough for *this*."

"Or, maybe, for anything useful?" he said. "The opportunity cost of digression could be zero."

"Only if you're already fucked," she said, her patience broken.

"Sometimes there's nothing that can be done."

"Isn't that what you're supposed to be planning?"

"Yeah, I guess," he said, smiling awkwardly at her joke. He seemed bored by his own predicament.

"Best case you'll get through on sheer apathy."

"You think they'll spin it out?"

"Why wouldn't they? But it's you who'll be doing the spinning."

"So the less I give them, the longer it takes," he mused. "It's a siege."

The insight was too inane to remark upon. She felt mild relief he hadn't posed it as a question.

"Not giving them anything is simply what's going to happen," she said.

"That's baked in. You have nothing. The problem begins when it seems you're keeping something from them."

"Which they have to," he said, completing the circle.

“You see how easy it is to get nowhere? Keep that up at the right time, for a maximum of – probably – six hours, and you’re through.”

He groaned at the schedule.

“You’ll have to step-up the manifest compliance,” she added. “Any time that they think has been spent playing games won’t count.”

“Round and around,” he said.

“That’s the way. It’s not as if there’s another.”

February 5, 2020

Things Left Mostly Unsaid (06)

§06 — As always, she’d been exhaustingly elliptical. It seemed as if she never approached a point unless to curve about it. Her extreme circuitousness drew out the interrogator in him, which felt too much like work.

“What are you trying to say?” he asked wearily.

“‘Trying’ suggests failing,” she replied, immediately, with a laugh.

“What *are* you saying, then?”

“That’s better, but now redundant.”

It was always like this. “You’ve said a lot less than you think,” he muttered. It was pointless. She hid by nature. Irritable words wouldn’t draw her out.

She appraised him with cold neutrality now, wondering whether this

was a fight. “Confession is a myth,” she said. “It collapses the question of evidence into intention. Information isn’t being held back. It isn’t *available*.”

“Sometimes, maybe,” he quibbled. He wasn’t going to grant her more than that, or in fact even that. “More often it’s withheld.”

“Sure, but *primordially*.” It was a word designed to up-end what remained of casual conversation. She smiled a little sadistically after uttering it.

“You mean, not by you?”

“Of course not by me,” she said, perhaps too quickly. Immediately, the ‘of course’ had seemed crude to the point of self-parody. They were speeding into stupidity again. Maybe it was the only thing that ever happened. She sighed.

He appeared to understand her frustration. An element of apology crept in. “Don’t let me rush you,” he said. “There’s time.”

“Meaning what?”

“Patience, I guess.”

“So you’re retreating from everything now?”

“Is that what’s happening?” The question was transparently insincere. He could almost feel himself stumbling backwards.

Perhaps it didn’t matter. The can could be kicked down the road, as they said. *There’d be another time*.

The thought unfolded through exactly those words. ‘They could pick it up again later’ was the whole of the initial conception. Yet – even

unannounced – ‘another time’ seemed like the strangest idea supportable by the world. Reciprocally, *this time* became unbearable. The peculiarity was crushing. He backed away from this too, as if cornered. To think in the direction indicated would be like endless falling.

“You okay?” she asked. He’d paled oddly, staggering slightly, as if intoxicated.

“I was going to say something really weird,” he said, with an awkward laugh, “by accident.”

“But you didn’t.”

“No, I didn’t.” It felt alright, although that didn’t say much, either. There was relief as at an abyss missed.

She laughed too, though less awkwardly, which was nice. Then she put a finger to her lips, making the ‘hush’ sign.

They listened to nothing for a while, but it was hard to hear.

February 6, 2020