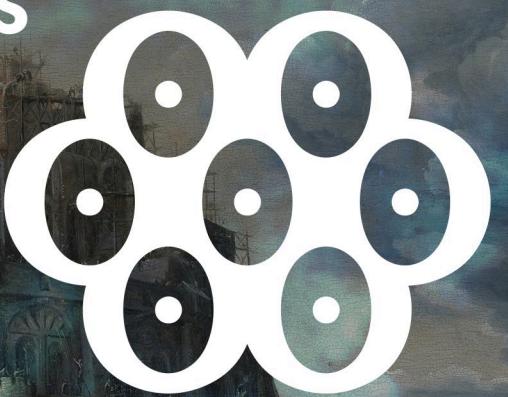


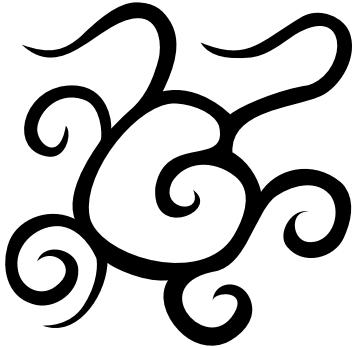


ERIS CONJUNCT VENUS



LAWRENCE MILES DELPHIAN EXPERT
ORACLE THE WESTERN SANGHA
PANOPTICON ROSE DAVEY

from the editrex



Oink for OCDEIL TERRESTRÉ, piggies, oink!

Do you have what it takes to set the bar lower? Earthly Delights Ogdo welcomes pitches and submissions of anything weird and upsetting—essays, fiction, interviews, poetry, visual art, or anything else that can be printed. There are no form requirements, just send us what you've got at editrex@ogdo.run.

This is it. The first, or, depending on your temporal viewpoint, the last, edition of our acclaimed publication's widely maligned third volume, or some would say third volume. As usual, certain small changes have been made to our format:

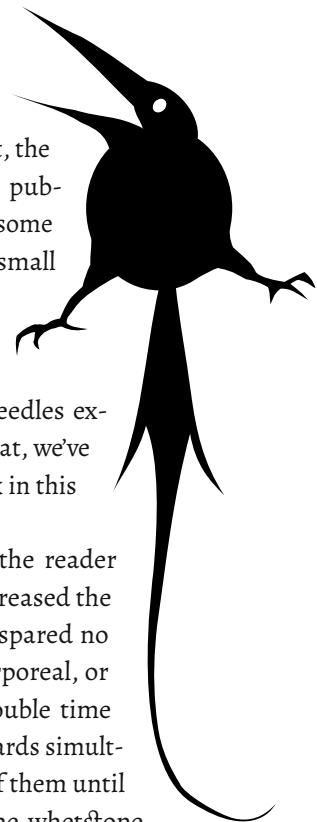
Due to a certain staff member not showing up for work due to "dying when a food cart covered in horse tranquiliser needles exploded near him" or some pussy shit like that, we've had to cut down the amount of demon dick in this edition by 30%.

To maintain our quota of menacing the reader (falsely so called) with Shapes, we have increased the amount of diacritics triplefold, and have spared no threat and no punishment corporal, incorporeal, or otherwise in getting the interns work double time (doubly in time, going backwards and forwards simultaneously) to sharpen each and every one of them until they part flesh with ease. The world is the whetstone against which we grind our blade of want.

While we usually avoid commenting overmuch on current, or any, events, to get Lawrence Miles to agree to an interview with us, we have agreed (not with him) to declare as a matter of editrexial policy and under the eye of God that Big Russell Davies is a bitch-ass motherfucker. If there's anything else going on in the world, well, "we don't believe in any of that".

Finally, attendant as always to our mission statement to "unleash pain and despair" and convinced by pleas that some of our articles have been too dense to understand, the latter half of this issue's long, chitinous body is entirely in Toki Pona, a wonderful constructed language engineered on the basis of the noble philosophy contained in that burger-grade American classic, *the tao of pooh*, to make it impossible to say anything useful but sound self-righteous while doing it, and therefore a perfect gentler introduction to the concept of linguistic reference for the more swinish end of our readership's bell curve.

God bless the great state of New Jersey. ☸

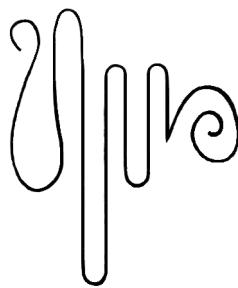


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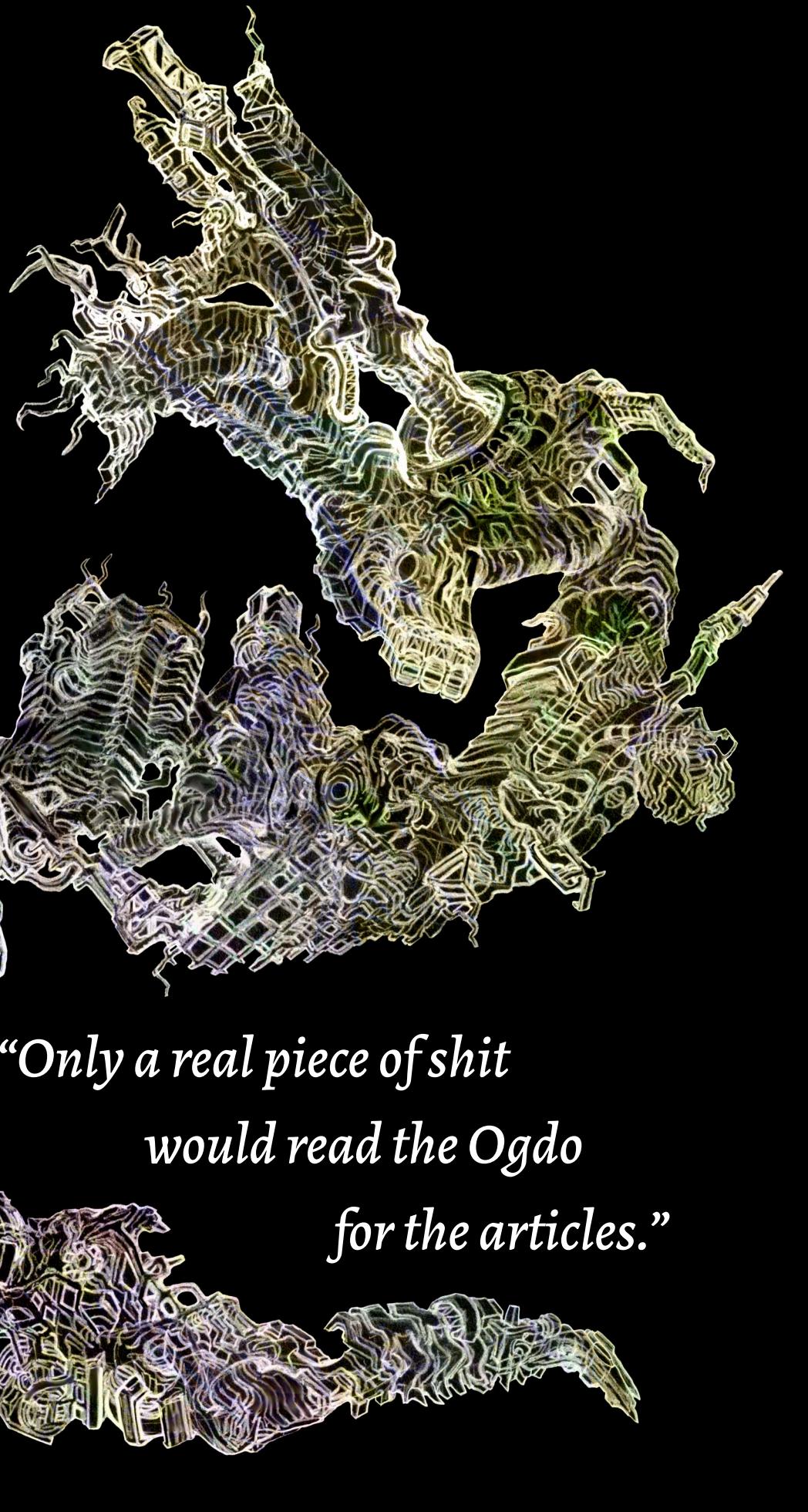
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“First as tragedy, then as farce, then as the Ogdo.”



“Only a real piece of shit would read the Ogdo for the articles.”

VENUS

As sanguine as the summer sun at noon,
Her asana a yungdrung draped in black,
So opens now the door of rusted brass,
And for her I, the Fairest, do the same,
That she recall the name *

Whose beauty pilots * in his barque,
As she before the season turns to heme.

Io to "Eρις, loveliest of Νύξ!
I lay Cythera's feast before you bare.
Would you deny the night to Heaven's bull,
And starve the eye of watching ?
Across the Mytilini let him recline,
As in the dog days' heat,
You me of the weaver's art remind.

ERIS

Who'd dare not know the host of heaven's spread?

Some lines of
this were too
bunged up with
ectoplasm to be
legible. —EDX

The pearl of lone Αφροδίτη's rosy shell.

What weaver would surpass Αράχνη's count

And through the wall what row of teeth incise
On Nuit's arc the root of Scission's Law:
"With all your might, please cut this rodent through."

And as I hear this catacomb's a grave,
It pleases me to find a rat to lay
Upon the damp of dolmens not yet stone.
So I who pull the surf obtain the star

Whose dimples bear the mark of Babalon.

And seeing me they the gates throw open.
Where heat and perfume can lead undo
Within the lotus-bearer's copper hills
I flare the ingot brought from Dilmun land
And tie me straight with *.

XAIPEΔΙΩΝΑΙΑΧΑΙΡΕΕΡΙΔΑΚΡΑΤΥΝΟΙΕΝΑΙΔΕΣΠΟΙΝΑΙΟΓΔΙΕΛΤΕΡΡΕΣΤΡΕ



-COLA

CARTA BLANCA ES CERVEZA MEXICANA... GOKELA!

PERO DA NADA TU SODA-44

AVIS

PRESENTE SODA CON BRANDY P

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BYASS

Lawrence Miles

The Ogdo sat down to talk myth, magic, and monsters with the inventor of Star Wars.

Just on the face of it, a time-travelling voodoo cult who wear the skulls of vampiric monsters from another timeline as masks and whose time machines are living temples is an incredibly cool concept. How did you arrive at it?

Before anything else, bear in mind that it was only supposed to work as a subset of *Doctor Who*. And specifically the kind of *Doctor Who* that was going on in the Great Interregnum between the old and new series, not specifically the shot-on-video kind and not the CGI-driven DisneyWho version either. With that as the background...

...the whole set-up of *Doctor Who* only functions if you think of it as a symbolic kind of science fiction, which means it's always verging on sorcery. The TARDIS is a symbol of time, there's never any pretence that it's an operable piece of scientific technology, except in awful Terry Nation scripts where it works like a space rocket. So there's inevitably a low-key element of ritual in it. Like so many others of my generation, I was obsessed with / triggered by the *Sapphire and Steel* episode with Shape, the elemental horror who entered the world through the first photograph because the first photograph was a window, and therefore an opening. It makes no rational sense. It's symbolically perfect.

Series 2,
Serial 4

And I was writing *Doctor Who* at a time when Marc Platt's vision of Time Lordism, which started in the last few Target novelisations, was all the rage and would've been on telly if Season 27 had happened. There was a sense of SF mysticism there, the idea of Time Lords being so ancient that they'd effectively formatted the universe to run the way they liked it, a kind of magical thinking even if it was performed by a race who claimed to hate magic. That vision informed the Virgin novels, so I for one was happy to goth it up a bit.

Sooo I was in my twenties and focused on ritual thought, and also obsessed with eighteenth-century history, and therefore drawn towards voodoo. This now feels like what we'd call cultural appropriation. I paid for that, though: I was hospitalised in 2005, spent several days hallucinating mid-fever, and believed a West African religious order was planning to kill me as a punishment. The things I saw were horrific, and also not real. Once I'd fully recovered, the Nigerian man who'd spent two nights watching me in case of self-harm forgave me for accusing him of being part of a sacrificial cult.

Sometimes cool ideas cross the line into racism.

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You've talked about your writing being in a mythic or folkloric mode. How would you define 'myth'? How does it differ from a mere story — if there is such a thing?

I'm 1970s enough to think that even if most of Jung is horribly over-literal, there are still some things that stick with humans just because humans have a common biology and live under reasonably similar conditions. However simplistic the whole "journey of the hero" thing might be, the reason it's popular — at least among boys, who are generally flattered by it — is that it's rooted in a human life-cycle. You know how baby kangaroos are born, then crawl into the mother's pouch, then stay there until they're big enough to come out into the light again? I'm 100% sure that if kangaroos were sapient, their myths would involve at least two rebirth sequences, whereas human myths only have one. Their story-structures would feel weird and lopsided to us.

So when I talk about "myth", I think I'm just suggesting that I'm less interested in intellectual storytelling than in something primal and instinctive. Intellect is how you make stories interesting, it isn't

what makes them important. The Minotaur is terrifying because it lives in an actual model of the subconscious and represents something that's bestial and horrifyingly Freudian. Take it out of that environment, try to make a rational point with it, and it loses its power. You can still write an intelligent story around it, but there's always a primal "it" at the centre. Anyone who knows dreams knows that the subconscious always wins.

Would it be tasteful to think of your work as a machine?

A structure, certainly. More Lego than Meccano.

How do you feel about allegory? Suppose someone comes up to you and says, "Oh, the Wartime Houses are a metaphor for the collapse of the British Empire" or "Oh, the War in This Town Will Never Let Us Go is the one against terror".

This ties in with what I was saying about instinct, I think. I give H. G. Wells massive credit for *War of the Worlds* and its "well, how would you British people like it if colonialism happened to you?" approach, but that was at the beginning of industrial-era science fiction. When it comes to things like the twenty-first-century *Battlestar Galactica* — "it's a metaphor for the War on Terror, but with shape-changing robots in outer space!" — then it

can just fuck off. If you want to make a series about what's happening in the Middle East, make a series about the Middle East. *Battlestar Galactica* did an episode about suicide bombing when suicide bombing was a daily event, in the most wretched, shitty, "ahhh, but do you see?" way. People are dying and you're treating it as water-cooler nerdism.

But the thing is... I do think fiction, even — no, especially — fantasy fiction should be political, in the widest sense. Because politics isn't about party, it's about morality, about human responsibility, about the assumptions we make when we're dealing with our own society. I think most of the things I've written could only have been written in the era when they were written, and I'm quite happy about that. I never wanted to write anything timeless, that would be boring. I'd say that you can see, in most of the

fiction I was responsible for, a sort of imprint of the time. I just wouldn't be awful enough to say "look, the flailing Lovecraftian idiot god at the centre of the universe is actually George W. Bush, do you get it?"

Why do you think it's not more commonly acknowledged that 'red mercury' is obviously the philosopher's stone? The name's the same.

To be fair, more people have been killed because they were believed to have been in possession of red mercury.

Do you practise magic?

I did when I was younger. Magical thinking is wonderful as long as you remember that it's not literally true. Things can be true without being literal, which is something that seems to be harder to grasp in a monotheistic culture. I've known Hindus who absolutely believe in Ganesha but would treat you like a maniac if you suggested there's physically a man with the head of an elephant sitting on a cloud somewhere. Speaking as an atheist, this is what the worst kind of acultural atheist doesn't understand: the problem isn't superstition, it's literalism. Our entire culture is based on superstition, it's only when you treat superstition as a palpable, material fact that you become a fanatic.

But the reason I don't play at magic any more is for the same reason I don't write books any more. I ran out of strength a long time ago, and things are only getting worse. If I wrote, I'd probably do magic, and vice versa.

How did you come to run out of strength?

I say “strength”. I’d say “hope” if it didn’t make me sound like an attention-seeking prick. The last time I was interviewed... I think it was about 2013...? I was asked why I stopped writing, and I said it was because I’d run out of hope. I still think that’s true, but I also still think I sounded like a prick for saying it. I don’t believe there’s any point creating anything if you don’t think there’s a viable future. I didn’t think there was a future twelve years ago, so you can guess how I feel now.

The future of “Western civilisation” is a white supremacist empire stretching from America to Russia, taking in much of continental Europe and absolutely, unequivocally the UK. I’ve heard people I trust say “Britain will be a literal fascist state within ten years”, and I think... Jesus, ten? That many?

And nothing I can possibly do or say will stop that. Why write? If I’d managed to become A Successful Writer at the last point when it mattered, twenty or thirty years ago, then writing might have been worthwhile. It’s too late now.

What has struck you about how your work has, or hasn’t, been received? Do you think it has generally been understood?

I think, because of the way I have no social graces and just say what I think without any sense of diplomacy, that I’ve been misunderstood as someone who perpetually wants a fight. I hate fights. I have opinions that I blurt out instantly because I hate lying and detest liars. Bear in mind that I’ve spent thirty years pointing out that Neil Gaiman is a manipulative prick, and that you can see it even in his earliest work, and only now is everyone accepting it. Now we know he does exactly the same thing in his personal life that he does on the page.

If there’s one thing I’d like to say about myself that’s true and hasn’t been recognised enough, it’s that I’m an experimentalist. I’ve always disliked doing the same thing more than once. I never did anything knowing it’d be well-received, I just wanted to see whether doing something on the edges of what I found interesting would work. Culture is democratic after the fact, if you try to make something based on what you think people want then you’re guaranteed to make something rubbish. Or something horribly abusive.

You’ve seen than most the damage caused by the emergence of ‘the nerd’ as a marketable demographic, and you’ve also

UTILITY
DRESS
FOR
THE
WOMAN
WAR
WORKER

expressed a particular disdain for Star Trek...

No, wait. Most of the Star Treks are perfectly-all-right programmes, in the same way that most competent drama series are perfectly-all-right programmes. What I have disdain for is the idea that they’re in some way deeply meaningful. I remember hearing a Trek fan at some SF convention or other saying, “*Star Trek* taught me to have respect for other cultures.” And I thought... Jesus, living on Earth should teach you that. Watching a testosterone-soaked twat like Captain Kirk shake hands with a guy who’s been painted blue shouldn’t be necessary for you to understand the concept of racial tolerance.

Our question would be, what do you think Jonathan Frakes’s fursona would be if furry conventions had never split from sci-fi conventions?

He strikes me as the happy-bear type. But with a twinkle in the eye that suggests he’d like to go down to the woods today and give you a big surprise.

How do you think the commentary in your works on the impact of pop culture — I think of the *Remote* or *Tiffany Korta in This Town* — has aged?

In both cases, the full impact of the internet hadn't yet been felt. Both of those books assumed that television would be the base medium of the future, which it sort of still is, but now it's only the background rather than the focus. I was a 1990s utopian who believed the internet could take everyone to the next stage of human development. The idea that it's better at spreading misinformation than human goodwill didn't really occur to us in those days.

The Book of the War anticipated the emergence of the wiki as a primary interface to sprawling fictional universes. Apart from wikis compiled from preexisting corpora, Orion's Arm and SCP Foundation are two notable examples of works written in wiki form — I think you've used the phrase "the story-universe as an end in itself". Do you think hypertext of this kind has become passé?

Honestly, I haven't seen enough online nonlinear fiction to judge. Actually, never mind online, I haven't even read *House of Leaves*. I've repeatedly been told that I should. Also the works of Jorge Luis Borges. One day I'll get around to it.

What's your favourite roguelike? According to our staff writer, you "seem like the type".

I'm not a video game person, I'm a board game person. But interestingly, the only video game I've enjoyed this century is *Hades*... which is a roguelike. So your "seems like the type" person is basically correct.

What are some of your favourite board games?

On this very day, I'm about to unpack the modern version of *Cyclades*, a huge Greek-mythology-inspired board game that's as close as you can get in the real world to the game played by the gods in *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963). I love modern board-game mechanics, I love board-game analysis, and I love old-school fantasy that lets me put a massive hydra on the table somehow. Though I should point out that I also loathe "Warhammer" and all its ugly, worthless, parasitic progeny.

Our 'big myriapoda' donors require us to namedrop Burroughs in every issue. Am I wrong to say there's something of the "dead-end horror of the centipede god" in the paranoia of the War and especially the Celestis?

I'm assuming you mean William S. rather than Edgar Rice, although come to think of it, the movie version of *At the Earth's Core* is one of my foundational experiences (I was four). I read *Naked Lunch* as a teenager and quite liked it, but it wasn't a big influence.

For that matter, we wonder how Robert Anton Wilson would have regarded it. Or regarded it?

Ah. Yes. I did read the *Illuminatus!* trilogy at the age of sixteen, which is the ideal time to read it if you're in the 1980s. But it's been so under-the-surface influential that any young person reading it today would wonder what all the fuss was about. Also, so much boy-wank.

Do you like the KLF?

Uh-huh. (Uh-huh.) Uh-huh. (Uh-huh.)

Any current projects?

It's been twenty years since I did anything of note, and even then, within a very, very small arena. Why would anyone think I have current projects..?

Oh, except I design board games. Does that count?

If Johnny BBC, head of the BBC, called you tomorrow, begged you to take charge of Doctor Who, and promised to have Steven Moffat driven through the streets like a dog, would you accept?

Hahahah! Yes. Of course. If anybody asked me to write anything for television, I'd accept, unless they came from a particularly evil channel. The reason I don't write for TV isn't because of some strict moral code, it's because you need people skills to navigate a job in mass media, and I'm an autistic, self-destructive pain in the arse with no charm, grace, or ability to prevent myself saying what I'm thinking. I could barely even hold a conversation with an executive without telling them in precise detail what they're doing wrong. I mean, I'd probably be right, but that's not the point.

Yes, I am very unhappy. ☺☺

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WORDS *Colophon* COVER *Panopticon Rose*

The Western Sangha

Over the last few hundred years, the western imagination has found in Buddhism a wealth of suitably meaningless pithy aphorisms rivalled in its capacity for being turned into a marketable slurry to dump in the troughs of cozy bookstores, screenplays, and Reddit threads only by Daoism. A tendency among religious studies communicators to see its phantom around every corner is, then, understandable. Things have come a ways since the nadir of Alan Watts's "Buddhism is Hinduism packaged for export", but claims of "secret Buddhism" persist. When Andrew Mark Henry (ReligionForBreakfast) cites proposals that Nāgārjuna was a secret Pyrrhonist, and Justin Sledge (Esoterica) shrugs and half-jokingly says, "some say the Therapeutæ were secret Theravādins, because they sound alike?" they are putting on display ideas about how Buddhism spread that can be checked against the historical record, and against Buddhism in its own terms. Mañjuśrī willing, this will be a joyless endeavour which will drain from Buddhism a great mass of its charming and delightful mystery and leave it a dry and miserable husk. You're welcome.

HOW FAR WEST DID Buddhism spread? The typical answer is Afghanistan, give or take Græco-Bactria or the Indo-Greek Kingdom, or perhaps “I think Iran?” or “Persia someplace, maybe the ‘stans”. Occasionally, a more precise account is made of the areas in Central Asia where groups on the periphery of Buddhist influence might form a thin, quasi-diasporic membrane that might bump the border this way or that west of the stronghold in Gandhara, which geographically so marked the Buddhist heartland in the early days of its transmission that the Swat Valley is considered overlaid with the beyul (see OGDO V) of *Odḍiyāna*, the birthplace of the great *vidyādhara*-s. Eventually the answer might get granular enough to reach “Sogdia”, and out come the various historical maps. Commendable as this form of chartfucking surely is, it seems like a dead end. Buddhism didn’t just show up and then vanish into thin air the moment it got pushback from the various schools of thought present in Persia. The rulers of the Indo-Greek Kingdom had adopted it, and Buddhism in Bactria was so strong that it was still quite present by the time Islam arrived—Ja‘far ibn Yahya, famous vizier and naga TF enthusiast (*Aladdin*, 1992), was a member of the Barmakid family of one-time Balkh-based Buddhists well-known to the Islamic world.

What counts as Buddhist? If we stick to confessionally Buddhist populations and polities which adopted Buddhism as their state religion, we will not get much further than eastern Iran. But even at that far Western edge, people knew of Buddhism and could be in contact with Buddhists. India was a bit far for a Greek, but within ready trading distance for Parthians. Parthians may not have adopted Buddhism wholesale, but Buddhism left some mark on their notions of the world. And when they traded to their west and talked on the side about the world, then, the conversation would be somewhere downstream of the glacier of Buddhism proper even if Buddhism did not form its headwater.

That a population might nominally nod to it does not mean they have any idea what Buddhism proper entails, any more than an Amazon mindfulness closet makes a Zen monastery out of the sweatshop which installed it. We want the transmission of the Dharma, the heartwood of Buddhism, rather than merely its name. “The Buddha had extraordinary sanctity and so became a foreign deity of some sort” of St. Jerome is not engagement with Buddhism. Objects such as the Buddha statuettes found in Egypt (Berenike) and Sweden (Helgö) testify to the health of the trade routes along which Buddhist goods travelled (once

there were such things as Buddhist goods), but tell us nothing about the penetration of Buddhist concepts. "They have the words, but not the music".

An element with some place in Buddhism that could be derived from any number of other places is too diffuse. "Reincarnation", for example, is not enough. We want a belief or practice we can recognise as either definitely having origins in Buddhism, or so particularly tailored to Buddhism to seem incongruent outside it. By way of analogy, the possibility of having some unspliced sections of DNA in one's genome from an ancestor reduces with each generation, along with the size of the unspliced sections, until by the 7th generation (perhaps only 200 years), the size of the contribution is on average less than 1% of the genome. Cultural contributions last considerably longer, but are subject to their own form of splicing. Even the strictest 'cloning' cannot withstand the selective pressures of the needs of the Sangha.

To address the spread of Buddhism rather than passing resemblances by happenstance, we must restrict ourselves to what has a reasonable link back to Buddhism, preferably as represented by the Pali canon, the best window we have into early Buddhism, barring some new means of determining whether the Sanskrit canon predates it, which is not forthcoming. Mahāyāna is not excluded; Mahāyāna is generally additive on the Pali, accepting it as Buddhavacana but expanding on it with sutra-s not accepted by those who stick to the Pali and the Abhidharma. It is useful to recall that Mahāyāna (including Vajrayāna) and Theravāda are the survivors of a once more crowded field of Buddhist schools, and any trace of Buddhism we may find need not derive from either of them. To prevent getting lost in the weeds of what might be considered a feature of this school or that, the Pali sutra-s will help us verify that we are dealing with some chunk of Buddhism proper. Last, to trace the line from Buddhism accurately, it is useful to cap our search before the early modern period. If the contact with Buddhism could be traced to a colonial venture, we have gone too far.

Pyrrhonism

Our first candidate is the Greek sceptical school Pyrrhonism, which has a long history of claims to Buddhist lineage; either that Pyrrhonism was inspired by Buddhism, or that Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka was inspired by Pyrrhonism. The former claim is by far the older, having, in some form, been around during Nāgārjuna's lifetime, Diogenes Laërtius being approximately his contemporary.

Shortly after the life of the Buddha, Alexander's conquests in the 320s BCE brought the Greeks into direct contact with the śramaṇik tradition of which Buddhism forms one surviving strand. Pyrrho of Elis travelled with Alexander, and is recorded to have come into contact with śramaṇa-s, or, as the Greeks called them, *gymnosophistai*, 'naked sages'. This appellation could have come by any number of movements: Jainism, historically Buddhism's twin, has the school of 'sky-clad' monks, Digambara Jains, who forego clothing. According to the Digambara school, the split between it and the clothed 'white-clad' Śvetāmbara school happened during the lifetime of Ācārya Bhadrabāhu, who would have been in his forties during Alexander's conquests. (According to Śvetāmbara-s Bhadrabāhu was white-clad, and the Digambara-s date from some 350 to 400 years later.) Likewise in the sutta-s accounts of an almost endless variety of ascetic practices contemporary to Buddhism which the Buddha saw the need to comment on, a number were definitely nude; among them the lost Ājīvika school of atomic determinists, at one point considered the third nāstika school alongside Buddhism and Jainism, and what amount to furries (Majjhima Nikāya 57):

Atha kho puṇṇo ca koliyaputto govatiko acelo ca seniyo
kukkuravatiko yena bhagavā tenupasaṅkamirīsu; upasaṅ-
kamitvā puṇṇo koliyaputto govatiko bhagavantam abhivā-
detvā ekamantaṁ nisīdi. Acelo pana seniyo kukkuravatiko
bhagavatā saddhim sammodi. Sammodanīyam katham
sāraṇīyam vītisāretvā kukkurova palikujjītvā ekamantam
nisīdi.

All sutta translations are Bhikkhu Sujato's. See <http://suttacentral.net>.

"Then Puṇṇa the Koliyan, a cow votary, and the naked ascetic Seniya, a dog votary, went to see the Buddha. Puṇṇa bowed to the Buddha and sat down to one side, while Seniya exchanged greetings and polite conversation with him before sitting down to one side curled up like a dog."

In the age before fursuits, the fight against poodling apparently took on more financially viable forms.

We can be reasonably certain, then, that Pyrrho actually did have contact with the very early Buddhists, and completely certain that the Greeks with Alexander came into prolonged contact and extensive cultural exchange with them. It is admittedly extremely unlikely Pyrrho could deduce all that much of the densely technical instructions of the śramaṇa-s if it were through translators alone, but the results speak for themselves as to the similarities in philosophical underpinnings, and it is known that Alexander and Pyrrho were accompanied by the

Taxilan gymnosophist Kalanos for a period of time before his self-immolation upon coming down with a fatal illness. He did not flinch.

From Matthew Neal's "Madhyamaka and Pyrrhonism":

"(...) we have seen that Bett's 'water through mud' hypothesis, that one Indian teacher's reluctance can be extrapolated to argue that language translation problems prevented Pyrrho learning philosophy from any of the sages of the [north-western] borderlands of India, is almost impossible to credit in the face of the evidence, which includes Alexander's having encountered two bilingual Greek-speaking communities there, the formal use of Aramaic in educational institutions at Taxila where most of the recorded encounters took place, and the knowledge of Greek writing in Indian texts of the time. We have seen that other Greek philosophers were in the region then—at least Onesicritus the Cynic, Anaxarchus, and Clearchus the Peripatetic—and that a number of Greeks including one of Alexander's bodyguards habitually received instruction from Indian sages."

Pyrrhonism exhibits features of broader śramaṇa philosophy. Diogenes Laërtius, writing of Pyrrho and having stated his indebtedness to the gymnosophistai, says "universally, he held that there is nothing really existent, but custom and convention govern human action, for no single thing is in itself any more this than that". Pyrrho taught a form of the suspension of hypostasising, epoche (ἐποχή, 'cessation'), which would have been familiar to the Buddha. Pyrrhonism puts forward that phenomena appear, but are not determinate; that they change with time, appear stable only through the discourses in which they are named, and are hence not known in their essences beyond these discourses, which themselves can change. All this positively reeks of dependent origination. Clinging to delusional hypostasising (in Buddhist terms, clinging to *ditthi*, views in the sense of hypostatic determinations) is painful, leading to πάθη πάθē, 'affliction' in the sense of what is done to a person and ταραχή tarakhē, mental distress. Both terms carry connotations much closer to the meaning of dukkha than its conventional translation as 'pain' or 'suffering'. In the Alagaddupama Sutta, the Water-Snake Simile, the Buddha makes explicit that wrong views may very well cause anguish, but that the premise of Buddhism is not the replacement of wrong views for "right views", but the extinguishing of the root of wrong views. "Right views" are those which are conducive to the ending of stress; and it is these the Buddha teaches, a path to the cessation of suffering, not a path to universal knowledge. In the Sīsapāvanasutta (Samyutta Nikāya 56.31):

[E]tadeva bahutaram yam vo mayā abhiññāya anakkhātam. Kasmā cetam, bhikkhave, mayā anakkhātam? Na hetam, bhikkhave, athasamhitam nādibrahmacariyakam na nibbidāya na virāgāya na nirodhāya na upasamāya na abhiññāya na sambodhāya na nibbānāya saṁvattati.

"[T]here is much more that I have directly known but have not explained to you. What I have explained is a tiny amount. And why haven't I explained it? Because it's not beneficial or relevant to the fundamentals of the spiritual life."

And in the Alagaddūpamasutta (Majjhima Nikāya 22):

So suñati tathāgatassa vā tathāgatasāvakassa vā sabbesam dīṭhiṭhānādhiṭhānapariyuṭhānābhivivesānusayānam samugghātāya sabbasaṅkhārasamathāya sabbūpadhipati-nissaggāya taṇhākkhayāya virāgāya nirodhāya nibbānāya dhammaṁ desentassa.

"They hear the Realised One or their disciple teaching Dhamma for the uprooting of all grounds, fixations, obsessions, insistences, and underlying tendencies regarding views; for the stilling of all activities, the letting go of all attachments, the ending of craving, fading away, cessation, extinguishment."

Paralleling Pyrrhonist scepticism, the Buddha also makes extensive use of negation without advancing any positive position of his own. In the Brahmajālasutta (Dīgha Nikāya 1), we find him making use of the catuṣkoti, the tetra-lemma of serially negating the proposition ("is"), its privation ("is not"), their conjunction ("is and is not"), and its negation ("neither is nor is not"), to produce an inventory of views he does not hold to be useful. So thorough is this list that it includes at length a critique of "recluses and brahmins who are endless equivocators", denying that it is enough merely to suspend judgment alone. Such a position is not to be confused with Pyrrho or, for that matter, Nāgārjuna; their scepticism is put forward not merely as a "well I don't know so I better not embarrass myself", but instead a means of understanding dependent origination through leaving hypostasising no ground whatsoever on which to stand. When Nāgārjuna makes use of the catuṣkoti, it is the Buddha he is citing and paraphrasing, not Pyrrho. There are analogies in common with Pyrrhonists: Nāgārjuna uses a ladder simile as Sextus Empiricus (his contemporary) did, rather than the raft simile Siddhartha used in order to convey the same sentiment. Just the same, Nāgārjuna's logical form has Indian precedents, and specifically Buddhist precedents. Shared features between Madhyamaka and Pyrrhonism, however close we might get to confirming the second claim regarding the influ-



Mahāparinirvāṇa, Gandhara, 3rd or 4th century CE.

ence of Pyrrhonism, is all the more in favour of Pyrrhonism being marked by the contact with Buddhism.

We can start to more confidently check the box of the first claim. Pyrrho had contact with Buddhism, and came out of that contact with something that would not look at all out of place among śramaṇa-s, though he was not a Buddhist, and did not operate in the same normative framework. His was philosophy first, and coming to full terms with the philosophy is the practice, as it is with Madhyamaka, as gelugpas have long attested. What causes some level of doubt is the degree to which a direct transmission to Nāgārjuna is historically viable. One would have to suppose that he got all of it from Pyrrhonists, approximately five hundred years after Pyrrho accompanied Alexander, and in all that time, with all that exchange, it was Nāgārjuna in particular that those doctrines reached, and they just happened to slot so perfectly into Buddhism that he could then cite the *sutta*-s as their basis. It does not strain credulity to suppose Pyrrho got something from the śramaṇa-s—it would be stranger if he didn't—or that the Græco-Bactrians and Indo-Greeks had access to both, or even that Nāgārjuna would have had access to arguments familiar to Pyrrhonists. But it does seem incredulous to suggest Nāgārjuna would have 'smuggled in' arguments from them that would not be known to Buddhists already. Claims that Nāgārjuna was

so shrewd as to be able to completely mask Pyrrhonism by creatively stretching Buddhist terminology (as is Joseph Walsner's position in his book *Nāgārjuna in Context*) are difficult to square with how the literal proximity of Pyrrhonism must have been close but not too close, there for Nāgārjuna (from central India) to access in his day but not there for others to pick up on, and dormant within the Buddhist sphere for some five hundred years between Pyrrho and Nāgārjuna. If, as Neal asserts, "It was the Mahāsāṅghikas, with whom Nāgārjuna was most associated in his early career, who held that understanding was sufficient for liberation, leaving mental absorption as rather superfluous, and that constitutive thought still operated in the highest states of trance", then it is an especially funny coincidence that a quasi-foreign system such as Pyrrhonism would happen to be within spitting distance without anyone noticing, most especially if we are to believe that the fall of the Maurya empire resulted in a xenophobic vacuum suspicious of foreign influence. Nobody noticed until recently? The narrative here grows convoluted. The truth can be convoluted, but if Madhyamaka and Pyrrhonism are so close already, must we try and make one into the other?

In any case, as we return to the question of Westward expansion, "it didn't quite take". Pyrrhonism, with its stress upon the philosophy as the practice, lasted as a

philosophy, but the lack of a practical structure on which to build meant that it eventually lost ground to perhaps more tangible schools, such as... ughhhh, Stoics. By the time of Roman preëminence, Græco-Bactria had fragmented beyond the point of meaningful contact with the Hellenic world. The Indo-Greek Kingdom fell around the time Jesus popped out of the virginal womb. Strabo recounts a śramaṇa from Bharuch self-immolating in Athens after being sent to Rome, in what was by then a particularly Buddhist hobby, but this is a relationship to Buddhism as only a foreign novelty, not as neighbours on the other end of a cultural continuum.

The Therapeutæ

Another candidate sometimes put forward are the Therapeutæ, a Jewish ascetic group in Egypt during the early first century. God only knows why. The Essenes predate them by a century or more and provided them with a pattern for ascetic religious communities in a Jewish context which was quickly becoming amenable to forms of practice which look historically distinct, maybe even, *gulps and pulls collar* Gnostic (vide infra), but not Buddhist. The Therapeutæ were not secret Theravādin-s, or if they were, they did an atrocious job. Ascetic practice alone does not a Buddhist make, and none of their practices align with Buddhism moreso than with any ascetic movement at all: no sex, no meat, no property, and so forth. “What if they were the descendants of Ashoka’s missionaries”, even if true, would not pass our litmus. The claim that their name is a corruption of ‘Theravādin’ is extremely dubious; the term “Theravāda” only rose to prominence after Ashoka’s time, even if we accept Theravādin accounts of the term being coined at the third council under him (and it isn’t agreed by all parties that the third council looked anything like the Theravādin version), and why would they have introduced themselves as Theravādins and not Buddhists, to the Greeks, during the period of maximum contact between the Greek and Buddhist worlds when the Greeks would be both able and willing to hear them out? They introduced themselves enough to half-establish their name in Pali, only to then decline the opportunity to discuss Buddhadharma? The conversion of the Therapeutæ to Judaism would have been blindingly fast and unbelievably thorough; two hundred years is a long time for a specific missionary expedition, but if these constituted a diasporic group somehow, two centuries to have all the distinguishing features from Buddhism abandoned without any claimed memory of them, is practically speedrunning.

“Another candidate sometimes put forward are the Therapeutæ. God only knows why.”

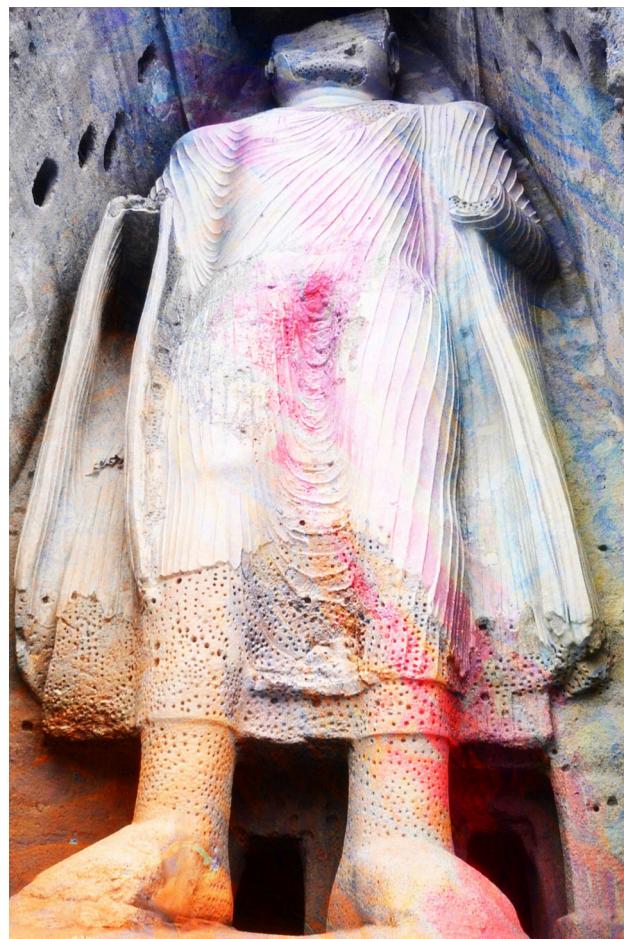
Our primary source for the Therapeutæ is *De Vita Contemplativa* whose author (maybe Philo of Alexandria, but that isn't universally accepted) apparently knew them around Lake Mariotis personally, and attested to their devotion to Torah study and its central prominence in their observation of the sabbath; the Therapeutæ seem to have conceived of themselves in Jewish terms above all. If this is our primary source for their "Buddhist" qualities, it is doing an odd job of it. When did they convert to Judaism? They have no memory of their own conversion, but they were a strong enough group to win converts apparently widely throughout Egypt (so says *Contemplativa*'s author), and nobody, Greek, Egyptian, or otherwise at the time thought to compare them to śramaṇa-s, even though they felt comfortable doing so for Pyrrhonists some two hundred years after the Therapeutæ? If they were once missionaries, they seem to have had barely any contact with the non-monicastic world once established in their monasteries. These narratives of a lost missionary group don't add up, and if they did, it would be embarrassing for them as missionaries.

The Cathars

Our search would probably then end with the Pyrrhonists but for one last candidate, the Cathars.

The Cathars (from *καθαρός*, 'pure', 'clear') , or Albigensians, were a semi-loose (the Council of Saint Felix de Caraman seems about as close as they came to formal organisation) group of heterodox Christians in the Languedoc (modern southern France), centred around the town of Albi. Seeking an end to rebirth in the world, Cathars worked to disillusion themselves with the dissatisfying world of temporal phenomena, and were primarily divided between the laity and an order of renunciates, the *perfecti*, who survived on alms, with a minor priesthood sometimes facilitating between the two.

In Christianity, an engaged clerical arm forms the primary administrative structure and tends to eclipse the renunciates, assuming those even exist. Buddhist priesthoods, where they appear, are consistently less authoritative as an organisational body than either the monastic Sangha or, in certain cases, the local yogin-s, who are certainly not known for their administrative acumen. One area of definite overlap between Buddhists and Cathars is the tension between monastic practice and laity; Buddhist laity is "expected to behave itself" (Ajahn Sona) and follow, as best they are able, the five precepts, but they are not especially expected to be monks, barring temporarily, which



"Shah Mama", the smaller of the Buddhas of Bamiyan, c. 6th century.

in many parts of the Buddhist world has been a rite of passage. Still, laity are not monks, and where laity must fill in for monks or are expected to fill in for monks, we can tend to expect development to address the tension between the relatively lax rules for laity and the hundreds of sub-rules (most of them rules lawyering on the basis of a small number of themes) for monks which regulate their daily conduct. For Cathars, this tension between credentes and perfecti is addressed principally by the convenientia, or pledge to take the *consolamentum*, the Cathar "baptism in the Holy Spirit", and become a perfectus eventually.

An unscissioned piece of Buddhism in Catharism appears in their renunciates' rejection of eating meat, excepting fish. Their pescetarianism was based in part on the grounds that a soul might be reborn in an animal, and that the animal should ideally not be harmed or killed, presumably because harming and killing it would deepen attachment to the material world and harm the killer's chances to be released from the grip of rebirth. This practice was so emblematic of the Cathars that inquisitors would request suspects to kill animals or consume meat

to check if they were perfecti. Béatrice de Planissolles recounts:

"He encouraged me then to leave with him to go to the Good Christians, citing as examples many noblewomen who had gone. He first told me of Alestra and Serena, two ladies of Châteauverdun, who painted themselves with colours to appear to be foreigners, in order not to be recognized and went to Toulouse. Arriving at an inn, the hostess wished to know if they were heretics or not, and gave them live chickens, asking them to prepare them because she had something to do in the town and left the house. At her return she found the chickens still living and asked them why they had not prepared them. They replied that if the hostess would kill them they would prepare them, but that they would not kill them. The hostess hearing this, went to tell the Inquisitors that two heretics were at her inn. They were arrested and burned. When they had to go to the pyre, they asked for water to wash their faces, saying that they did not wish to go to God painted thus... He told me also that God had made all the spirits of heaven and that these spirits sinned by the sin of pride, wishing to be equal to God. By reason of this sin they fell from the sky through the air and onto the earth. They dwell and penetrate into the bodies they meet, indiscriminately, whether into the bodies of brute beasts or the bodies of men. And these spirits who are in the bodies of brutes are also endowed with reason and knowledge just as those in human bodies, except that they cannot talk when they dwell in the bodies of brute beasts. And the fact that the spirits who are in the bodies of brutes are endowed with reason and knowledge can be seen because they flee what is noxious to them and seek what is profitable. This is why it is a sin to kill such a brute beast or a man, because each one as well as the other has a spirit endowed with reason and understanding. He said also that it was necessary for these spirits to enter into a human body to do penance for this sin of pride and that this must be done before the world is finished. It is only in human bodies, he said, that the spirits can do penance for this sin. They cannot do it in the bodies of brute beasts."

Here she lays out not only a theory of non-harm in relation to animals, but the specific nature of what qualifies a sentient being: "they flee what is noxious to them and seek what is profitable".

None of not eating meat, not harming animals, or a belief in rebirth is uniquely Buddhism; but their specific combination with an explanation rooted in something very much like karma does give us pause. A belief in rebirth does not, by itself, entail that animals may be ensouled as people are, nor would them being ensouled entail that they ought not to be harmed or even eaten after death. We might imagine a much wider variety of beliefs held regarding their reasoning, and indeed Cathars had multiple explanations, but there are many moving parts

here which reduce significantly the possibility that Cathars simply devised this from the clear blue, most especially if there is a plausible route by which they picked it up as a "genetic contribution".

A little digging and we find other unscissioned contributions. Peter of Castelnau wrote:

"They denied the resurrection of the body, and invented new myths, claiming that our souls are really those angelic spirits who were driven from heaven through their rebellious pride and then left their glorified bodies in the ether; and that these souls after successively inhabiting seven earthly bodies will then return to their original bodies, as though they had then completed their long penance."

Seven rebirths is the maximum number of rebirths guaranteed after stream entry in Buddhism. Here, as with the explanation for the diet, it sits alongside variants. Béatrice de Planissolles:

"These spirits incarnate themselves as a result and the world will not be finished before all of them are incorporated in the bodies of men and women. This is how the spirit of a baby who was just born is just as old as the spirit of an old man. He said furthermore that when the spirits of men and women who are not Good Christians, leave their bodies, they enter into the bodies of other men and women until they have entered nine bodies. If among these nine bodies the body of a Good Christian is not found, the spirit is damned. If on the contrary it finds the body of a Good Christian, the spirit is saved... He told me as well that the spirits of God who have sinned place themselves wherever they can in order to dwell there."

This is not far at all from the Buddhist notion of the "precious human rebirth" which is necessary factor for release from transmigration, and though it has picked up some notions unfamiliar to Buddhism (in which there is no concept of a lifetime limit), it still rhymes easily enough.

In just about every theological issue, the Cathars seemed similarly riven. Was Christ a person? If Christ appeared, was his appearance merely illusory and immaterial, or was there a real material Christ? If there was an apparent Christ at all of any kind, was he influenced by the heavenly Christ of which he was a sort of shadow, or an evil false prophet working to pervert the celestial Christ's teachings? Was the Devil (the evil god of the material world, by whatever name) an underling of the true God or the result of some sort of error on another's part? Was the Devil oppositional because he was just that much of an asshole, or was he provoked into rebellion by being cuckolded by the true God? Is the world of matter a prison run



The walls of Carcassonne c. 1850, before restoration.

by the Devil so he can be an evil god all he wants, or is this the shadow realm punishment cube for the Devil as well?

Docetism, the belief that Christ's suffering was illusory, by itself is a stance that necessarily occurs as a possibility when considering Christ's human and divine nature. Ioan Couliano in his *Tree of Gnosis* discusses gnosticism as a kind of game, where, the initial move having been made, other ones follow in a logical structure, the titular tree, leading to similar results across time without needing to posit direct historical influence.

Across the breadth of Cathar belief, we see branches of this kind, despite the end results of all of them looking very similar to us, and involving similar dichotomies. Peter of Vaux-de-Cernay, hardly a pro-Cathar source by any means (if he could have had Toulouse nuked, he would have run to the button, apparently), still attests to the variety of Cathar belief:

"Further, in their secret meetings they said that the Christ who was born in the earthly and visible Bethlehem and crucified at Jerusalem was 'evil', and that Mary Magdalene was his concubine — and that she was the woman taken in adultery who is referred to in the Scriptures; the 'good' Christ, they said, neither ate nor drank nor assumed the true flesh and

was never in this world, except spiritually in the body of Paul. I have used the term 'the earthly and visible Bethlehem' because the heretics believed there is a different and invisible earth in which — according to some of them — the 'good' Christ was born and crucified. Again, they said that the good God had two wives, Oolla and Ooliba, on whom he begat sons and daughters. There were other heretics who said that there was only one Creator, but that he had two sons, Christ and the Devil; they said moreover that all created beings had once been good, but that everything had been corrupted by the vials referred to in the Book of Revelations."

We can see how multiple explanations might bolster the same positions without necessarily following from one another. Is eating meat bad because animals (except fish) are of a kind with people, or is it because these are the products of sex-havers? Either explanation on its own may suffice for a Cathar perfectus. Neither by itself would necessitate any modification of the practice, but both would have implications for how modifications to the practice would be read. Cathars were pescetarian, not vegetarian. If it is permissible to eat fish, but it is not permissible to eat ensouled beings, then it does follow that fish don't have souls. If they did, why would Christ feed others with them? We could imagine an evil Christ convincing others

to consume meat to trap them here, and there were—there are, in the form of Mandæans—those who hold the view that Christ was a perverter, but to them, John the Baptist was the real big man on campus and that baptism rules, whereas Cathars thought baptism was a disgusting, perverse shadow of the spiritual anointing of consolamentum.

Cathars apparently considered the notion of a physical Christ revolting, supposing that Christ, to in any way be meaningfully capable of releasing others from the physical world, must not be of it, at most granting merely the appearance of a body. The parallel is closer to notions of bodhisattva-s projecting ‘holograms’ of themselves (this is common enough Buddhist parlance now for emanations) across time and lives than it is the Buddha of the sutta-s, who certainly had a body. The Buddha got sick, had a bad back, and physically died. The Tatiyagilānasutta (Sāriyutta Nikāya 46.16) clearly describes the Buddha as gravely ill, even using “suffering” (dukkha) to describe it, “*tena kho pana samayena bhagavā ābādhiko hoti dukkhito bālhagilāno*”, at which point a recitation of the seven awakening factors seems to so please the Buddha that he comes out of it.

Just so, the Buddha at length presents the body as a negative, excepting to the extent that the body is a convenient source of disgust which might be carried forward into a loss of passion for impermanent things, and a readily available place to put one’s attention during meditation. The Buddha is clear that even his own physical body, despite his enlightenment, is foul, filthy, that the physical form is a pūtikāya, ‘putrid mass’. Of the body, the Buddha says, “*kāyo rogabhūto gaṇḍabhūto sallabhūto aghabhūto ābādhabhūto*”, “this body is a disease, a boil, a dart, a misery, an affliction”. He describes beautiful women presented to him as “*muttakarīsapuṇḍram*”, “full of piss and shit”, using gender-neutral terms (“kimevidam”) so as to denote a body, any body, as a mass of sores. When Venerable Vakkali, on his deathbed, told the Buddha that he had wished to see the Buddha in person, he was chided, “*Alam, vakkali, kiṁ te iminā pūtikāyena diṭṭhena? Yo kho, vakkali, dhammarūpa so mām passati.*” “Enough, Vakkali! Why do you want to see this foul body? One who sees the Dhamma sees me.”

The Buddha did not expect the body to be replaced by something else upon death, however, and refused to entertain questions about “what happens to” a Buddha or an arhat upon death. These questions, as covered in the Brahmajāla Sutta, are “the thicket of views, the desert of views, the twist of views, the dodge of views, the fetter of

views. They’re beset with suffering, distress, anguish, and fever.” “They don’t lead to disillusionment, dispassion, cessation”, the Buddha tells the monk Vacchagotta. Through realising the specific nature of phenomena, a monk undoes the root ignorance which motivates wrong positions, *ditthigatam*, through coming to fully understand the conditional nature of the aggregates. To Vaccha’s questions regarding “where they go” when they die, the Buddha denies that they are reborn at all, but then goes on to deny that they are not reborn, specifically saying that this definite position doesn’t apply: “*Na upapajjatīti kho, Vaccha, na upeti*”. Buddha compares the questions to watching the extinguishing of a fire, and then asking which of the cardinal directions the extinguished fire “went”. Release in Buddhism is not a “place” to which one goes. Neither is it mere annihilation, an un-place. Higher and lower realms do exist in Buddhism, but are not the goal. The Buddha holds that seeking rebirth in successively better realms might feed into attaining release (Majjhima Nikāya 120), but as a rule strongly discourages taking birth again at all even in a deva realm if it can be avoided. The preferable rebirths are preferable only insofar as they might facilitate full release, without remainder. Aṅguttara Nikāya 3.18 has the Buddha directly encouraging monks to be “horrified, repelled, and disgusted” by the notion that their practice will lead them to the deva realms, but this same sutta makes it as clear that the deva realms are obviously preferable in their contents to those of the lower realms, from which direct release is precluded.

Here, the Cathars diverge, holding that a person released from the world is an angel, freed from the Punishment Box or Shadow Realm of the material world, and, having no more sin to fetter them to it, returns to the benign, benevolent true God, in whose hands is placed the responsibility to guarantee non-return.

Manichæism

The Cathars sat at the westernmost end of a chain of heterodox transmission through the Christian world, generally agreed to begin in Christendom with the Paulicians in Armenia, through the Bogomils in Bulgaria and the Balkans, and from there through Lombardy to the Langue-doc. The Bogomils held to similar dietary standards as the Cathars, and had clear guidelines for what actions would bind one to the evil material world. Per the (disgusted Hank Hill voice) *Britannica*:

“They condemned those functions of man that bring him into

close contact with matter, especially marriage, the eating of meat, and the drinking of wine. In fact, the moral austerity of the Bogomils invariably was acknowledged by their fiercest opponents... By the early 13th century the dualistic communities of southern Europe—comprising the Paulicians and Bogomils in the east and the Cathari in the west—formed a network stretching from the Black Sea to the Atlantic."

Following the chain of 'dualistic' transmission back, we arrive at Manichæism. Mani, its prophet, was born to a Docetist family of Elcesaites in Ctesiphon in the 3rd century CE. Already under the instruction of heaven, he undertook a journey to India, Pyrrho-style, before returning to the Sasanians to preach his new religion, a mélange of the different schools found around the region: Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, and, after a fashion, Christianity. In its attempt to systematise these geographically distant positions, Manichæism had to form a view that these groups could see at least part of themselves in, but the Manichæans regarded themselves as belonging to none of the three, but as constituting fourth thing on par and compatible with but not equivalent to them. Only as Manichæism in the west (here meaning "west of eastern Iran") collapsed did its eastern holdouts see significant Buddhification, and this especially starting in the 700s, after the early Paulicians.

The Manichæans held that the material world was a prison for souls wandering through rebirths bound by ignorance of their conditions, and that there was a way out of this predicament through the practice of Manichæism which undoes root nescience. The dualism with which they came to be so strongly associated amounted to the claim that the World of Light and World of Darkness were two entirely separate creations, which did not either reduce to the other, and had only by accident become intermingled, an accident which Manichæism looked to fix. This idea, carried over from Zoroastrianism (The notion, once current, of purely dualistic 'original' Zoroastrianism and a later monistic movement called "Zurvanism", in which the good and evil spirit came from a singular progenitor, has been shown to be a phantasm of 19th century scholarship. Both variant cosmologies historically coexisted without either being seen as deviant to the other.) is not found as such in Buddhism, but is not too far removed from the Buddhist rejection of the phenomenal world in favour of the unconditioned, which, crucially, also denies any causal or formal link between the two, in contradiction to Abrahamic religions or monistic Hinduism.

Manichæism organised itself along lines more familiar



"Augustine sacrificing to an idol of the Manichæans"
by Aert van den Bossche, 15th century.

to Buddhists than Christians. A group of renunciates (*electi*) form a transmitting institution, supported materially by a laity (*auditores*) defined by an intention to eventually join said backbone, in this life or in some future one. This pattern closely parallels the Cathar one.

Buddhist communities read Manichæism as a heterodox Buddhism, with responses ranging from inclusion (or, in one case, inclusion of it as a form of Buddhism during a mass slaughter of Buddhists) to state repression. Its heterodoxy did not prevent its spread as far as Cháng'ān, crossing north of the Tibetan Plateau by the 700s, through routes that already had been used for the spread of Buddhism hundreds of years earlier, and along the way, many surviving examples of Manichæan art and writings were deposited in Buddhist collections throughout the Western Regions, like in the Mògǎo caves in Dūnhuáng, Gāochāng, effectively anywhere we might find material from Sogdia through Uyghur lands is likely to have evidence of this final arm of Manichæism, by then long since snuffed out as an organised group in the West. Manichæans seemed to have an almost supernatural ability to piss

off rulers wherever they established themselves, and most were converted to Buddhism in China in the 14th century, though an extremely well-camouflaged community reportedly may still exist in Fújiàn.

Gnosticism

'Gnosticism', under which rubric the Cathars and the Manichæans have been subsumed, remains a problematic term; the movements so designated were called that by outsiders and after the fact. With the powerful draw the idea of a religion or form of religion called Gnosticism has exerted on such 20th century figures as Herman Hesse, Carl Jung, and Philip K. Dick, as well as on those eager to categorise just about every modern phenomenon from Marxism to fascism and positivism to psychoanalysis as a resurgence of the Gnostic heresy, one can be moved to wonder — as numerous scholars have — if we aren't, in reality, dealing with a modern phenomenon and a modern obsession that has merely attached itself to the name of an ancient fringe movement. Couliano's 'ideal object' view of Gnosticism excludes Buddhism by the simple virtue of it not playing on the same exegetical board.

It has been floated (by eg. Edward Conze) that Buddhism shares with Gnostics generally the notion of *gnosis*, revelation not derived from the senses. I disagree that Mahāyāna presents a notion of gnosis that would be familiar to Gnostics, but there are comparisons to be made, most especially regarding the material world and the role

of the body in it. Here, Cathars appear closer to Buddhism than Manichæans; the latter held that the world was the result of a kind of ontological dialectic that could be navigated, the pure distinguished from the foul and held to, despite the shared view of all three that the material world is confining, prison-like. As we've seen, Buddhism does not hope for the release of souls from this prison to an explicable or expected 'somewhere else', Cathars and Manichæans apparently do; but Cathars do not seem to hold out hope of knowing what of the world is derived from the good. Buddhism concurs. The world of phenomena, according to Buddhism, is a dialectic, but not a moral one; rather, all phenomena condition one another. This being so, knowing that the branches of dissatisfaction have roots which have conditions of their own, one might remove the conditions for the arising of more dissatisfaction, primarily through the undoing of root nescience. Holding out hope of the arising of some dependently originated satisfaction which will not cease is nonsensical in the Buddhist view, and this precludes the possibility of rebirth causing release of its own accord. Cathars agree, denying that rebirth will ever be satisfying, and concluding that release is found nowhere in the world of distinguished phenomena.

The most significant practical gulf between Buddhism and Catharism seems to be the extent to which Buddhism made itself into an institution, first and foremost during the life of the Buddha, who went to great lengths to make Buddhism's case to local rulers and to establish the Sangha as the storehouse of Buddhadharma into the future. Manichæans tried this with limited success, Paulicians and their ideological descendants largely did not, and seemed to treat their persecution as conferring a kind of validity. This was not the case with Buddhism; Bodhidharma could tell Emperor Wu that his temples had accrued no real merit, because he's Bodhidharma, but he was the outlier. Cathars were quite adept at embedding themselves within the society of the Languedoc at all levels, but were living on borrowed time.

The Church had every reason to believe Catharism was a direct threat to their continued preaching in Occitania, and it is very hard to argue that a system of belief directly denying baptism, the Eucharist, and the divinity of the God of Abraham is somehow "just a variant of Catholicism". Following the assassination of the papal legate Pierre de Castelnau, the church's apparently feeble and tone-deaf efforts to persuade the generally pro-Cathar public fell through, and his fellow legate Arnaud Amaury



Mani as the "Buddha of Light" (光明佛 Guāngmíngfó) at the Cǎoān (草庵) temple, Fújiàn.

assumed an early role in the Albigensian Crusade, committing effectively every kind of atrocity known to Christendom (which is all of them), most especially under Amaury and Simon de Montfort, 5th Earl of Leicester, who was held (even by Catholic accounts) to be such a monster that the general public of every persuasion primarily remembers him for how much they loved his extremely grisly death: outside the walls of Toulouse, his head was Nickelodeon gacked by a mangonel operated by the city's women in 1218. Following their military ousting, the Cathars gave the inquisition a good hundred years of insurgency, but could not reestablish themselves. The last perfectus was burned at the stake in what is now Ariège in 1321, and though an exceptional hatred for the Church remained in Occitania, it never translated to a revival of Cathar beliefs or practices specifically.

Heaps of garbage are still produced in service to a notion of "perennial philosophy", which would have fragmented and scattered about to be then cobbled back together like a pseudo-Theosophist starseed-powered Voltron. This idea is simply false; there is no throughline that could be threaded through all or even most of the world's religions. What we are left with is, as we have seen, an evolving game or series of games through which we might witness the transfer of practice and theory alike, so long as they are maintained. It is remarkable, then, that Cathars, at the end of a game of telephone nearly two millennia in length, showed the marks of their ideological predecessors so clearly and coherently.

The Buddhism we are contemporary with is what's survived to the present day, not what was planned from the beginning, and Buddhism does not hold that its chain of transmission will last forever. What may be hoped for is that its time is long and its roots are deep (no yuga-watching in these parts), but not that the institution of Buddhism will be 'seen standing' for an eternity. But as Buddhism's normative framework has its precedents, its headwaters, so the streams of today will form the headwaters of the novel forms to come.

Dissati, bhikkhave, imassa cātumahābhūtikassa kāyassa
ācayopi apacayopi ādānampi nikkhepanampi. Tasmā
tatrāssutavā puthujano nibbindeyyapi virajjeyyapi
vimucceyyapi.

"This body made up of the four principal states is seen to accumulate and disperse, to be taken up and laid to rest. That's why, when it comes to this body, an unlearned ordinary person might become disillusioned, dispassionate, and freed. ☸"



Colophon is a Dzogchenpa and the senior staff writer for the Ogdo.



00039

Trump

WORDS *horsefucker thicc*

It's 2017 and Donald J. Trump has just become the President of the United States. It's 2025 and Donald J. Trump has just become the President of the United States. It's 20

WE HAVE PREVIOUSLY argued that time*, or at least our conceptions of it, broke irrevocably sometime in the late 90s, and everything since then has just been circling the drain on some leftover meta-axis. Trump is the best example of the skin and fur sloughing off the rotting flesh of the Great Rough Beast, America.

Donald J. Trump might be the most talked about man alive. There is no such thing as not having an opinion on him. He is the emblem of the age: any discussion of our political and cultural moment comes back to him. And just as Napoleon may have embodied his time, Trump, petty, ridiculous, and demented, puts to display ours. Trump is democracy manifest.

He may be the perfect lifeform of the late anthropocene, a man entirely without superego. He has no sense of shame. He has a brand, but that is not the same thing as a sense of selfhood. He has needs, chief among them the need for publicity, and he acts upon them. He is a barely sentient, highly mobile slime mould guided by a string of strange obsessions and whatever he heard or looked at last. One can sometimes discern the outline of a thought percolating through the cavities of Trump's skull—it seems likely that his claims about Haïtian immigrants

came from his consternation about Kirsti Noem killing and possibly eating her dog—and on occasion he demonstrates strange flashes of insight into things he, by rights, should know nothing about—such as his startling observation on Noem that “Most voters don’t like politicians who kill dogs”, or him correctly judging a \$600 coronavirus relief cheque far too low. One can feel the rhythm of his bioelectricity coughing and humming from the stresses and pauses and meandering asides of his speech. He is an effortless extrovert, an instinctive social animal.

And he has genuine charisma. No other word exists for the Messianic (their words) hold he has on his supporters. And whoever denies that he’s funny—when he asks his national security adviser during a meeting with the Taoiseach, “John, was Ireland one of the countries you wanted to bomb?”, or a five-year old at a meet and greet, “At your age belief in Santa has got to be pretty marginal, right?”—is lying to themselves.

A core part of his appeal is his drag-like performance of masculinity. His sublimely fake hair, the comically overt phallic symbolism of his ties, his queenly hand gestures. The contemporary right’s obsession with the loss and recovery of masculinity paints it as something unspeakably fragile and inorganic that can, in any moment, be

* see Ogdo
vol 20

shattered by drinking from a straw or imbibing a smidgen of soy. It is therefore entirely fitting that Trump become their alpha of alphas. Here is the phallic death urge in a blue suit.

It's easy to fall into the trap of overmythologising Trump. 'Teflon Don' was never real—his talent isn't not failing which he does constantly, embarrassingly, and often, but not staying down. Probably his most inexplicable trait, mysterious in the proper sense, is his ability to surround himself with an endless throng of bagmen willing to be thrown under the bus by him despite him openly demonstrating his contempt of them and none of their predecessors ever having benefited from it any—all of them end up unpaid, humiliated, prosecuted. Rudy Giuliani was America's mayor. Mike Pence could have stood for president. Then Trump ate them. Is this also not the American dream?

If this all sounds like admiration of Trump, maybe that's correct—the same way you'd admire a natural disaster, or your house burning down. Morally, he is absolutely loathsome on every level: a rapist, a conman, a real estate developer who makes other scummy real estate developers look legitimate, a demagogue who stirs up hate against society's most vulnerable, a politician who makes the rich richer. Whatever you value, he's probably transgressed it. As a person, it is very difficult to pick even one unambiguously virtuous trait he has. Even his bottomless confidence is marred by his social climbing and his tremendous susceptibility to the opinions of those around him.

Trump is so execrable to liberals not due to this policies, which they supported under Obama and continued to support under Biden, either of whom deported more people than Trump, but the fact he does not let them feel good about it. Genocide is bad when he does it but a regrettable necessity when Biden does it. He is the bare face of the American project hanging out.

Comparisons of Trump to Hitler (it always seems to be Hitler and not Mussolini or Franco) are comforting because they reduce him to a problem which, to the liberal mind, was already solved, and because they suppose there is a roadmap to everything, that Trump is working his way down "First they came for..." or any number of 'Steps of genocide' infographics floating through social media like a checklist. In short, they make it possible to pretend history is still over.

If we grant that Trump is a fascist, then it's remarkable that the Democrat response to him has been to also

become more overtly fascist, not only in their enthusiastic support of genocide, which should certainly suffice, but also in their advocacy of a return to a lost age of civility (by which they appear to mean Reagan or even Bush), their abandonment of what token support for immigrants or trans people they may have offered in the past, their celebration of the spectacular killing power, in those words, of the American armed forces. What do you call Kamala Harris promising to bar asylum seekers from the country in violation of international law? What do you call the contention that politicians are divinely appointed to office ("It was her turn"), and that for voters to signal their genuine preference rather than bowing to their betters is evil? And what exactly is the point of trying to egg Trump on on his sanctions?

There is no 'Trumpism', no coherent ideology, and barely a movement, either, just an accidental agglomeration around a single charismatic centre. 'Authoritarianism' and 'populism' are just ways a liberal says they disagree with something, not explanations. Racism, that most American of products, does not suffice to explain Trump simply because if every racist in America voted for Trump, he wouldn't be bringing in seventy million, he'd be bringing in 120 million. Racism has to be among the reasons for supporting Trump, but it cannot be the only one. All of Trump's base is racist in a structural, functional sense. Yet there is a real difference between the racists who "don't see colour" and the proud white supremacists; between the vision of suburban, small business -owning America and the vision of a Based Crusader Ethnostate; between a FedSoc-trained textualist judiciary and vat-grown think tank homunculi who think the law should, at any moment, be whatever they consider convenient to pretend it is; between KekistanHimmler1488 (of late employed by Doge), and the Trump voter who went on *60 Minutes* to say, "I voted for [Trump] because he said he was going to get rid of the bad hombres. [My deported neighbour] Roberto is a good hombre." They don't want ethnic cleansing, they only want the Bad immigrants, who are bringing crime, deported, and the Good immigrants to stay. This is, obviously, itself a racist framing, but a framing every Democrat policymaker shares. It is not a racism that can be confined to any particular segment of America. It's the racism that's in the air and the bloodsoaked dirt. "The cruelty is the point" say some, but really, there is no point, not on a personal level. Most of these people are simply very stupid.

Well-known cave-dwelling ogre John Fetterman's former chief of staff is currently heading a project to push

GROUP THE DORM



INDIE

VOY

the Democrats towards “broadly popular positions”, constructed to mean racism and transphobia and not, say, single-payer healthcare. One could go on at length about the failure of a political party to understand that the concerns that its opponents cater to are not organic to the electorate but drummed up by the selfsame opposition, about the completely misbegotten idea of ‘winning’ where it means doing the things your opponent would also do, about the failure to understand that what the people who came out in record numbers in 2020 to vote for “not Trump” want is “not Trump”, not “Trump lite”, about the fantasy of a ‘moderate Republican’ who agrees that the Democrats are Satanic paedophiles who eat mole children’s brains, but doesn’t like Trump’s incivility... But of course the Democrats are also detached from reality. Their party at the close of the second decade of 2016 is an organism for producing urgently-worded fundraising emails, optimistically overspecialised to an island ecosystem where nothing would ever really change. It exists only to sustain its cadre of policy dorks, quote unquote media savvy consultants, and op-ed writers all travelling to the same diner in Iowa to ask the same corn farmer to point which position he would like the racism dial to be in, whose advice will always be to lean further right — the tragedy to the farce of ‘patriotic socialists’ watching the right prosper on proposing destructive solutions to fake problems and thinking, “We should also propose destructive solutions to fake problems”, proceeding to say slurs, and still getting called pinkos. The Democratic party, at one time capable of conceiving and forcefully fulfilling an agenda, is no longer able even to mask the basic

bankruptcy of its right-wing policies with the superficial charm of Clinton or Obama. Trump, in the fashion of a good fool, exposes this. He shows the “institutions of our democracy” for the farce they are. Now that he is in office again, the Democrats can’t even block his legislation because just enough of their Congressmen died of old age while it was being pushed through the machinery.

Trump does not really care about power that much, either, not the way Mitch McConnell cared about power before his brain leaked out. The Sháng dynasty of pre-imperial China appeared to have a vast range of specialised offices, but no actual structures to carry out its orders. Its rulers were shaman-kings who ruled by ceremony; the infamous mass human sacrifices, the shows of power over life and death, substituting for the physical monopoly of violence. Its method of taxation and redistribution was the great hunt which travelled through its vassals’ territories and had to be fed by them. With the requisite apologies for the insult to the Sháng, this is Trump, grinning as he uses his big boy crayon to sign an executive order to send a dozen people directly to torture jail in a foreign country or some other extravagant, inefficient, and easy-to-mobilise-against cruelty.

The Democrats believe in America. Trump is America. The collision of belief with reality is harsh. Trump is America’s lunch finally naked at the end of the fork. He is disgusting because America is disgusting. ☸

horsefucker thicc is a community organiser and small business owner based in scenic Enumclaw, Washington. She does not fuck horses.

The Billionaire

TE BILLIONAIRE IS holding a press conference. “There’s massive fraud—massive—” he hears himself say. “None of the mainframes are encrypted—no defragmentation of the blocks at all—” He likes that. It sounds like a really smart guy thing to say. He should make note of it so he can remember it later.

The president’s eyes have sunk further back into the pink folds of flesh that envelope them.

“And they’re storing it all in a cave—it’s like in the 50s—and all this data is just going in the cave—it’s not efficient because there’s only one elevator—and it’s like the 50s when you go into that cave because it was built in the 50s—” He doesn’t understand why the government was storing data in a cave. He knows it’s not efficient to do that.

There’s a child between his legs, its name is Hyperion or Romulus or Endymion or something like that. It keeps saying “You’re not the president. You need to leave.” It’s unclear if it’s talking to the billionaire or the president. The president watches it like a deep sea fish seeing a submarine.

The billionaire knows all about submarines. He built one, once. He told his engineers to make it and then it was

there. He wonders what happened to it. Was there a court case? He thinks he probably won.

He sends the interns, all dressed in suit jackets over polo shirts and cargo shorts, to raid the Department of Education and they come back with a truck full of binders. He orders them all burned for efficiency’s sake.

He thinks the entire Department of Education should be deleted. He can just import skilled workers from other countries. They have fewer rights that way. If he doesn’t like them he can have them taken away by men in tactical gear. He and the president understand this.

The president keeps rambling on about kings and real estate and what he (The president, not the billionaire. The billionaire knows the difference. He knows they’re different people.) would do if he was attacked by a shark.

He has to fire an intern after getting into an argument about if Jews are white or not.

The drug is the only thing keeping him moving. He needs it. He’s back at his doctor’s—or does the doctor come to him?—having a scrip written. The doctor’s smile reminds him uncomfortably of his mother’s vulva. “Well, huh huh, I don’t usually work with my patients, but, heh heh, in this case, surely...” and he is handed a sack full of the drug,

he can barely lift it. He has to drop his trousers because the child on his lap has pissed itself. The doctor will chase it out with a broom. He is a billionaire; he has places to be.

Someone has published one of the intern's name and face online. He yells for the criminal to be arrested but no one comes.

He's worried about his safety since that CEO got assassinated. They shot at the president twice but didn't hit him. The president says it's because of God, but he knows God is just a story made up by people whose IQs aren't as high as his. He thinks computers will become the new God.

He would like to go to Mars. He thinks about it often. He thinks it will be like in *Total Recall*. Everyone will think he's cool when he's on Mars.

The president's office is full of sweaty men in ill-fitting suits. They're drafting an executive order to strip citizenship from everyone who didn't vote for them. He likes that. It's efficient that way. No wasted votes.

He spends the afternoon trying to call his children but none of them pick up. He resolves to remarry and make more as soon as he is done deleting the government.

The new bodyguards are dressed up like Praetorians. They say it's because of how much they hate degeneracy. He thinks that's cool. Isn't it cool how he likes Rome? He should post some memes about Rome so people know he's cool.

He tries to have an AI generate a more fertile wife for him but passes out before they've arrived at the correct number and arrangement of limbs.

He struggles for three hours to light an enormous candle and by the time he's done he's forgotten what he needed the light for. "It's my gaming candle", he says and grins. There's no one else around.

He keeps dreaming of a second, even larger cave system, with more files in it. He sends interns looking for it but most don't come back.

The president doesn't even blink when he accidentally calls him Daddy. It's unclear if the president is alive.

He's slept in the office again. He doesn't know what time or day or year it is. He had all the furniture replaced with sofa beds so his workers wouldn't need to go home to sleep. Sleep is weakness. He's not weak. He yells until an intern emerges to bring him his computer monitor so he can get to work. After five hours he realises it's not plugged in to anything. He masturbates furiously to images of fertile 19-year-old anime catgirls until the blank black display is splattered with gray.

"And here's our couch fucker!" the president says suddenly and he realises the vice-president has entered. "Yes sir. Thank you, sir", the vice-president says with a smile that's no more pained than usual. "Did you know that he fucked a couch? We've been hearing it more and more. He fucked it like a dog", the president says. The vice-president steps on one of his children who bursts open and splatters green and purple innards over the floor. Interns in suspenders and Bavarian hats rush to lick it up. He notes this with dissatisfaction; he wants his children to be strong, not splattered by couchfuckers. He has never fucked a couch.

He spends six hours practising his jump. He would like all letters of the alphabet other than X deleted.

Maybe the AI was right — maybe a wife with six legs would be able to give birth three times as fast. He tries to explain his idea to the president but the president doesn't seem to be listening.

He notices his gums are bleeding. He goes to ask his doctor about it but remembers he's replaced the doctor with a robot that discharges more of the drug when he presses a button. It's more efficient. The robot doesn't look like his mother's vulva. He made sure his engineers understood that when he told them to make it.

"...for his many projects, his cars that don't drive and his rocketships that don't fly... We love to fly, don't we, folks? We don't love it so much when they don't fly... and if I'd asked him to beg on his knees he would have done it. It's true... Should we make him beg? We won't. Would it be beautiful if we did? We won't do it folks. He's our big beautiful billionaire, that's true, and maybe if I tell him 'you're fired' he won't be so much anymore, but who knows..." The president trails off, staring at a strange angle. Who's the president talking about?

He yells at some government employee until she cries, and feels a bit better.

He realises it's 6 PM and it's time to go home to his wife, or ex-wife, number six or seven, something like that — he's the alpha of the relationship and that's what's important. They flap around like a pair of dying fish secreting their fluids and make another child. It slips out from between them and hides under the bed. It has three faces on three sides of its tailed body but the fourth side is blank. This disturbs him slightly. He's tired. The cleaners will find it in the morning.

The sofa beds have all been replaced with anti-homeless benches so his employees would spend less time

sleeping and more time working. He feels good about his efficiency. He hasn't slept in 88 hours.

The president's office is full of crawling things with many arms and great curving horns on their heads and chests with floppy penises discharging bitter yellow fluid but no legs, no legs at all. They're drafting an executive order to make it illegal for anyone to be a woman. He likes that. He makes sure all his children are men so they can spread his genes.

He sends the interns, all dressed as Harkonnen soldiers from *Dune* (the old good one, not the new woke one), to raid the Department of Energy, and they come back with a truck full of radioactive materials.

He deleted everyone who knows what a nuke is. That's good. Nukes are old. They will have new weapons soon, rods from God (the new God, made by a computer, not the old woke one) and nanoviruses and all the cool things from the *Culture* books. He likes *The Culture*.



He comes across the vice-president mounting a couch, redfaced and sweating, hips thrusting, arms trembling, surrounded by a ring of rhythmically clapping interns. They disperse as he arrives, leaving the vice-president alone. The vice-president keeps thrusting and bellows as if in pain.

He's ordered his engineers to make the Treasury more efficient. "Dogecoin taxes! Make it cyberpunk! Delete everyone who can't explain what they do in 30 seconds! Like the kind of government the Blade Runner would have!" His engineers scramble to write it all down. They think he's funny. They think it's cool how he knows who the Blade Runner is.

The interns are all skeletons with brown shirts and red and white armbands. They march in circles with their arms propped in a permanent erection and chatter uproariously when he quotes *Rick & Morty*.

The president doesn't even breathe when he accidentally calls him Fuehrer.

Great fat white maggots the size of small dogs squirm at his feet. He picks one up and wonders which one is his child. It says "No, no, no", and he throws it, or tries to, it's heavy and won't fly far, then picks up another and wraps it around his neck. If he can't tell how would anyone else? He's a genius after all.

He looks into a mirror and sees himself physically turning into a frog. He needs to up his dosage.

He's found the entrance to the underground tunnels. He sends the interns all clad in Great War trench coats and gas masks to raid them and they come back with a truck full of mole children with social security numbers tattooed on their skins.

It's terrible what the deep state pedomen are doing, he

thinks as he idly daydreams of eager teenage girls with voluminous babymaking-holes.

The president appears to be slowly rotting.

He has a machine for impregnating his wives with. It's big and has a lot of tubes and it looks just like it was from *Alien*, like it was a machine the alien from *Alien* would have. He had his engineers make it like that. That's why he's an innovator.

He likes to sit inside the control booth and watch as the machine whirrs to life and the wives eye the approaching mechanical penis suspiciously, trying to relax.

He sends the interns, all armed and armored as crusaders, to raid places of worship and they come back with a truck full of icons that weep blood and scripture made of teeth.

He comes across the vice-president being tortured by the Inquisition. He remembers the Inquisition from *Monty Python*. It's funny. He should make a post about it on X so people will know he remembers the funny thing from *Monty Python*.

He browses the internet for news of his wife's death in a fiery car crash, but finds none.

The president has two faces, one that smiles and one that leers. He wonders how he hasn't noticed that before. It must be because his dosage was too low. The president has two faces and four great curving phalluses that discharge urine like a fountain.

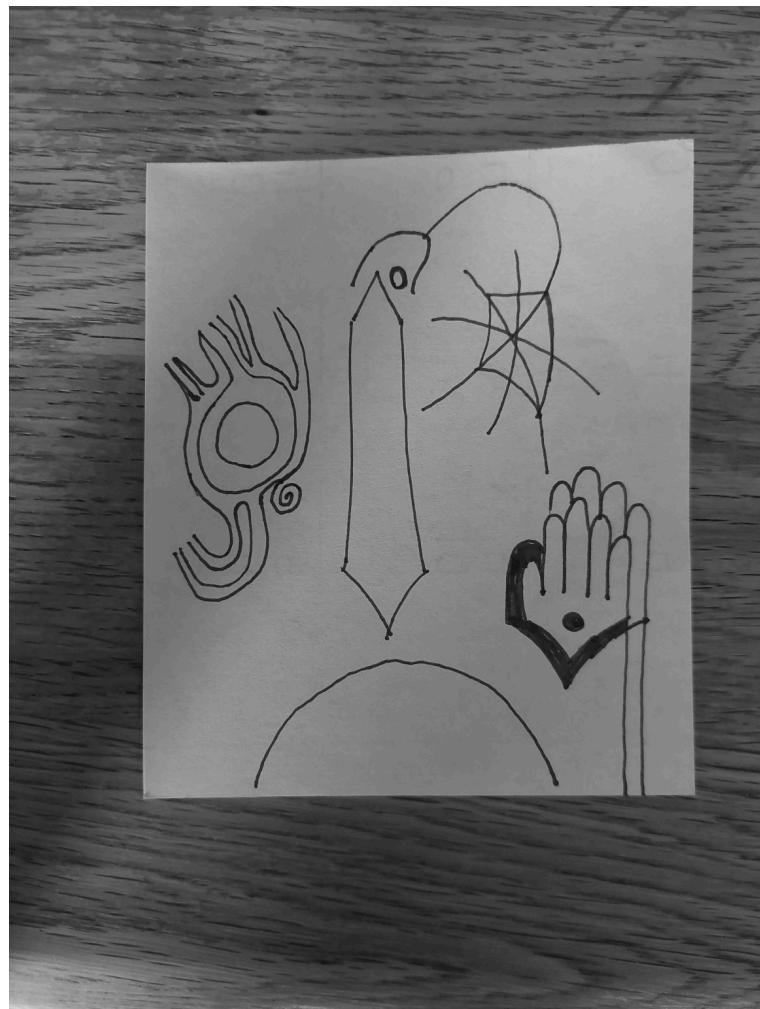
He has finally uncovered the location of the Department of Wokeness. He sends his interns, all dressed as Totenkopfverbände, to raid it. ☺☺

Dedicated to L.



Let us not dishonour
our foes by withhold-
ing our kindness

What are these?



Who knows, we don't.

Ouroborous of Snake Fellatio



Good afternoon. I, like you, am Bryce Youngquist. Fair warning, this one's going nowhere pleasant.

TE MOST COMMON understanding of the psychology of genocide, as presented by liberal media, is as an expression of insane hatred, by an insane person, who has also driven an entire society insane, so that they are willing to go along with it on the condition someone uses the word 'insane' to describe the whole experience five or six more times. This understanding is simple, easy, and as a complete coincidence allowed the western allies of World War 2 to show up in West Germany and say, "BOY IT SURE IS A GOOD THING WITH THAT EVIL WIZARD HITLER GONE ALL OF YOU STOPPED BEING NAZIS".

While it is against the principles of Youngquistian thought to examine something beyond the most superficial possible level, this explanation contradicts one of our higher laws: the Law of Solipsism. To be Bryce Youngquist is to understand you are not the center of the universe, you *are* the universe. In its entirety. Ours is the only existence in the world.

WORDS Guest Contributor

From this, we can derive a far more comprehensive understanding of the issue at hand, and its expressions both historical and here-and-now. The refrain from liberal Zionists for a quarter century has been "if only Netanyahu were gone, the nation I love would wake up, and stop committing these horribly embarrassing crimes". For those of you unfortunate enough to be American, this will sound remarkably similar (and indeed frequently it is the exact same people) to all the liberals who insisted that Donald Trump "was not who we are", a self-serving lie that pushes all the Bad Stuff of the group they identify with off on the Bad Man presumably responsible for it all. It is from that self-service, that snake bending back to suck itself to completion, that the true nature of the genocidal mind reveals itself.

The Holocaust was many things, but first and foremost it must be understood it was its perpetrators' Plan G after plans A through F were shot down due to being "physically impossible" "reliant on the British being nice to us" "just kind of hoping the problem would go away on its own" or

“vaguely Chinese” (Actual internal objection in early discussions!). The fear that Jews had the supernatural ability to make Germany lose wars was an intensely stupid one, and that intense stupidity offered the people tasked with solving the issue a tremendous amount of latitude to address it or not address it depending on how convenient it was at the moment. Somewhere around Plan C the Nazis entered into a partnership with a Zionist group that would later go on to found Benjamin Netanyahu’s political party, in what their founder called “an eternal alliance between a Kingdom of Israel founded on fascist principles and the German Reich”. From the Nazi perspective, this was a win/win: fund terrorism against the British, *and* export a bunch of their Jews to go do it. In gamer parlance, this got them a low-percentage cheevo: “make the British Empire the good guys in a conflict”.

But time moved on, and for some reason “Come To Israel: It’s Been Endorsed by Adolf Hitler” was not a sales pitch that moved a lot of Jews, and World War Two proper broke out, and the Nazis faced a problem that a non-Youngquistian mind would absolutely have seen coming: “hey remember how we tried to get all our Jews to leave the country?”

“You know how people don’t like moving a long distance?”

“You know how we just expanded our borders?”

“Can you guess where most of the people we kicked out went?”

In reaction to this totally predictable outcome, plan E came into existence: the Einsatzgruppen. Picture, if you will, the kind of schlubby, balding dork who’s a volunteer firefighter to try to feel like he’s part of any kind of community at all. The perfect, Youngquistian logic was “well we need the army to go do army stuff, and there’s way too many Jews in Eastern Europe for the SS to go through them all. Where do we have some spare manpower lying around we can use to get rid of them”. And so the volunteer firefighters of Germany were loaded onto trains, handed pistols, given a list of addresses, and told, “remember to have fun out there!”

This, also totally predictably, failed miserably. The Einsatzgruppen killed plenty of Jews, to be clear. But the paunchy sados tasked with going door to door shooting women and children had not signed up for this, and they were extremely bad at it. Casualties to suicide and desertion started mounting, rapidly, and rightly so. Towards the end of their operational run, their commanders were only capable of getting the team out to work on gameday if

they were falling-down drunk beforehand. And now, for the first time in this entire miserable saga, the High Command recognised, “we need to do something about this”.

All the horrors up to this point they’d had no issue with. But now, the pride and dignity of Germany had been tainted. Cold, cruel, impersonal killers dispatching threats to the fatherland they could handle. A bunch of blubbering babies stumbling drunkenly around East Germany crying about the things they saw when they closed their eyes? *That* needed to be fixed, and fast. The ultimate conclusion of this you know: division of labour and gas chambers, to prevent any one guy from having to bear the full psychological weight of his part in genocide. The revelatory part, and the one you may not know, is the interim step.

The pep talks.

Heinrich “Mr. Too Damn Good-Lookin” Himmler, head of the SS and so impromptu head of the project, was tapped to get out there and get the boys’ morale up. The Holocaust is a period of tremendous darkness, and these speeches are among its darkest parts. It would be easier to metabolise the Nazis as insane, hideous, monstrous, insane, insane, or insane, if they had been some cartoonish crowing about the glorious victory of the master race, and the pride the men should be taking in their work. They are so much worse.

They are entirely self-pity.

Talking about the tragic sacrifice of the soldiers. Of the terrible necessity that drove them to this. Of the cruel fate that brought Germany to this, the place where of all the awful options that lay before them, the least possible evil was to go door to door and keep shooting Untermenschen until there were no more Untermenschen to be found, lest an even worse future come to pass. Of the grim nobility, of bringing their eyes down, and luxuriating in their own pain, and letting themselves know that because they feel bad about what is happening, that proves they are still good men, no matter what visions come to them in the night.

Sure, a bunch of people are being genocided. But, says Ouroborous indistinctly, as he briefly pauses his self-suck, those are just details. The part that matters is what this is doing to *me*.

If you think about it, I’m the real victim here.

And *that* is the core of the genocidal mind. To treat a people as lesser than yourself is one thing. To have achieved the height of solipsism that you can kill them and, as

the comedian Frankie Boyle put it, go back a decade later and make a movie about how killing them made your soldiers feel sad—that is the point where you can see the camps' smoke rising in the distance, where you will feed millions into the flames rather than stop thinking about your own comfort for a quarter of a second. The snake does not slouch toward Bethlehem, he rolls, powered by the regular bursts of his own semen that manage to surge out past his thirsty jaws.

In conclusion, the liberal Zionist is a creature lower than dirt and who spits on the ashes of the Holocaust in order to lubricate their jerk-off sessions. Also I'm Bryce Youngquist, that remains an important part of the package. ☸

Guest contributors' opinions are their own, and do not necessarily represent the stances of the Ogdo, the German antisemitism commission, or Bryce Youngquist.

Reading comprehension test

1. Is the Ogdo:
 - (a) a magazine;
 - (b) a periodical;
 - (d) a grimoire; or
 - (c) all of the above?
2. What is Colophon:
 - (a) Buddhist;
 - (c) a lion;
 - (c) your grandmother the Queen's new spiritual advisor and magma pump consultant; or
 - (d) tankie?
3. How many eyes are there in “Earthly Delights ☸gdo”:
 - (a) seven;
 - (d) eight;
 - (c) some other number; or
 - (p) there's no “I” in ‘centipede’?
4. What was the main contention of the preceding piece:
 - (b) that Hitler had traumies;
 - (a) it failed to condemn Hamas;
 - (g) that noöne knows how “Ouroborous” is really spelled; or
 - (b) Bryce Youngquist?
5. What's a good reading strategy:
 - (a) read the text one sentence at a time, repeating as necessary until you understand it fully;
 - (b) skim the text and return to difficult parts later;
 - (o) ask an adult to read it for you and explain what it means; or
 - (d) imagine something it could have said and get mad about it?
6. Read the following dialogue. What has Bert asserted:
 - (1) by right views, one is released;
 - (2) the Thus-Gone attains the eternally real;
 - (3) Ernie has soiled himself; or
 - (4) minions banana?

BERT: Disvāna tañhām aratim ragañca, nāhosī chando
api methunasmim. Kimevidam muttakarīsa-
puññam? Pādāpi nañ samphusitum na icche!

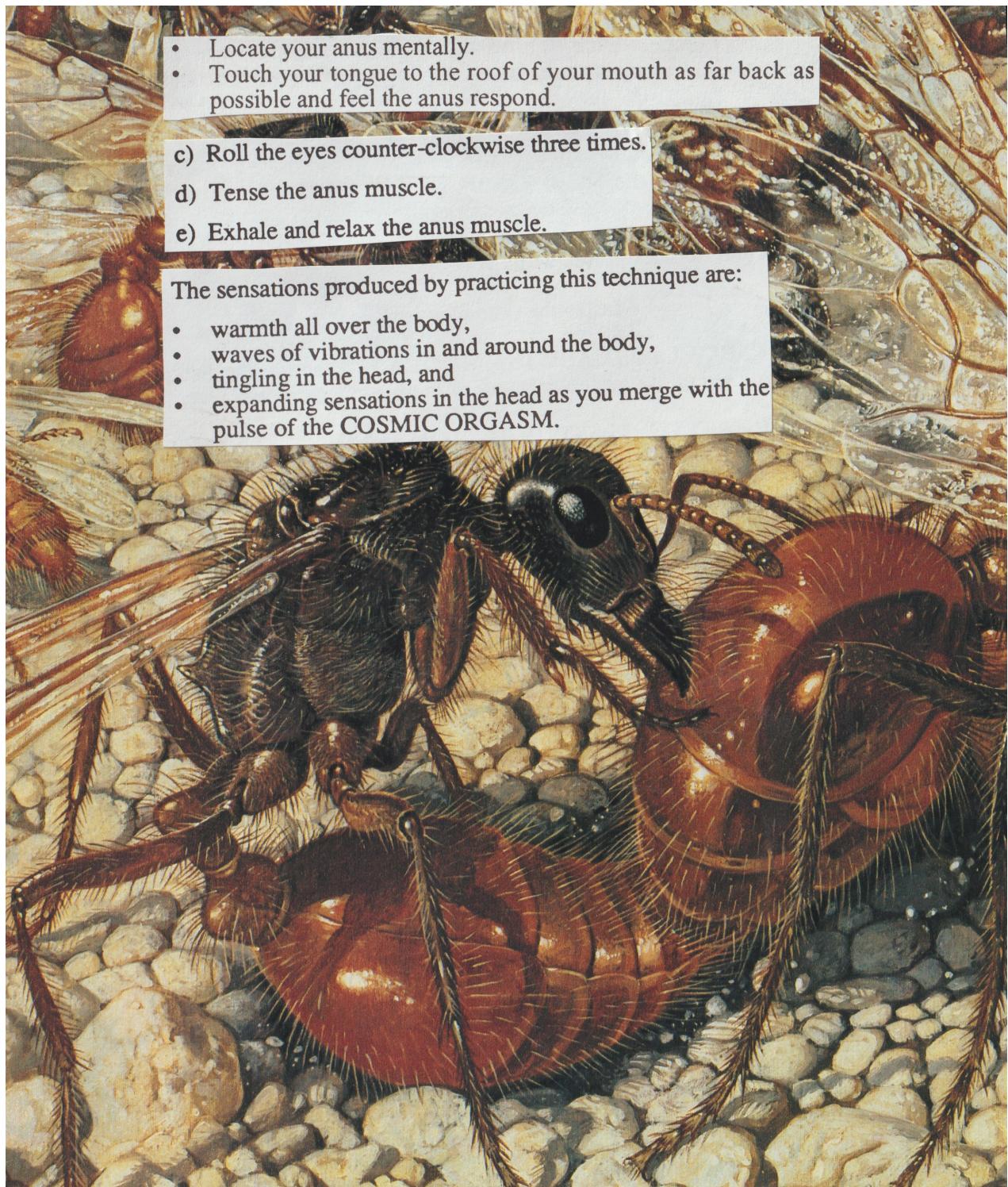
ERNIE: Etādisañce ratanañ na icchasi, nāriñ narindehi
bahūhi patthitam, diṭṭhigatam sīlavatañ nu jīvitam,
bhavūpapattiñca vadesi kidisam?

(Erñiyāti Bertiyyā)

BERT: Dhammesu niccheyya 'samuggahitam'. Passañca
diṭṭhisu anuggahāya, aijhattasantiñ pacinam
adassam

7. Is the phrase “I will annihilate you”:
 - (e) funny;
 - (b) a credible death threat;
 - (c) both; or
 - (d) good clean old-fashioned family values?
8. What's wrong with this questionnaire:
 - (a) the letters keep changing;
 - (q) the questions are leading;
 - (e) it denies the Holodomor; or
 - (u) I don't know, I can't read?

Fill out this questionnaire, make four copies, mail one to your congressional or parliamentary representative, bury one, nail one to the door your local place of worship, then burn the original and drink the ashes mixed with water.



See more of Davey's art at <http://daveysart.neocities.org>.



00024

The Mass of Eris Esoteric

a ritual of the Cocooning Unicorn Priory

THIS MEDIAL FORM of the Mass of Our Lady is suited for Celebrating Weekly, on Boomtime, or on the Feasts of Non-Apostolic Saints. Mass is held in a Chamber which is Pyramidal or Pentagonal or some other Shape, and should have at least Two doors, one opening Unto the Narthex, one unto the Sacristy, and Optionally a second Exit to the narthex. The Mass is officiated by the CELEBRANT, who should be a Priest or Chaplin of POEE, or any other organization if none can be located; and the OTHER ELEPHANT, who assists, and should be at least a POEE Deacon, or someone else.

Part A: Her Coming to Us

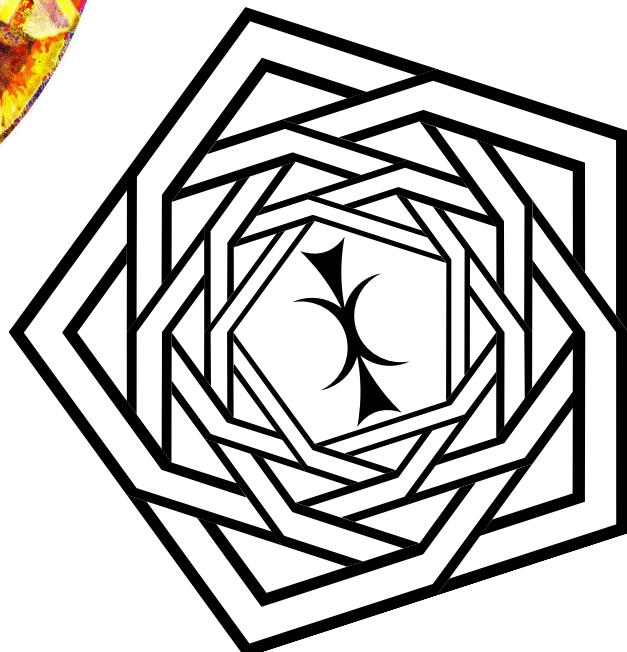
The Celebrant and the Other Elephant Prepare the Altar. The Altar should be in the Eastern Part of the Chamber, either Square or Pentagonal, and covered with a Golden Cloth. At the back is a Icon, Statue, or Other Representation of Our Lady. On either side of Her are Representations of the Eristic and Aneristic Principle. These can be anything: an apple and a Rubik's cube, a black and white rock, a broken shoe and the *Tractatus*. Before the Icon of Our Lady is laid a representation of the Mandada; and before it, two Bowls (one of the eating and one of the smoking kind), a Cup, and a Chalice. In each Corner of the Altar is a Candle, color'd either all White, or the Northeastern one Golden, the Southeastern one Red, the Southwestern one Black, Blue, or Green, and the Northwestern one White. Also on the Altar, or, if the space does not permit,

TEXT AND DIAGRAMS courtesy of the
Cocooning Unicorn Priory



This has no particular meaning.

The Mandada. No two elements interlink, but all five do.



on an Adjacent Table, should be a Roach (either kind), a Keychain, a Cabbage, and a Copy of the *Principia* or like Scripture, or just a Blank Piece of Paper, which ought to be about as Good.

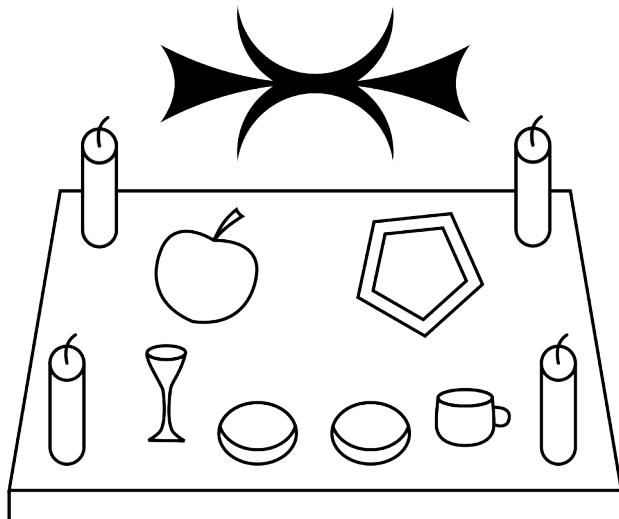
The Celebrant and the Other Elephant Blefs & Consecrate the first themselves, then the Space, then Each Other, and Finally the Altar using Formulae Not Given Here.

The Other Elephant now goes Out into the Narthex to look for the CONGREGATION, and, finding None, shall return, and the Celebrant and the Other Elephant Celebrate the Mass By Themselves; but an they find Any, now require of them, "So do you want in or what?"

And should the Congregation answer in the affirmative, the Other Elephant will now Shake Their Heads, and Take Up a Bowl of Water, a Cup of Salt, and a Towel, going to fetch these if they have Forgotten to Prepare them, or if the Congregation has Toppled or Stolen them or Something. They then add a Pinch of Salt into the Water, Wet the Towel, and Wring it Almost Dry.

¶ First I Must Sprinkle You With Fairy Dust

The Congregants line up to the Other Elephant, who Slaps each of them with the Towel to to drive them to their Senses, or failing that, Banish Impurity.



Suggested altar arrangement. Objects that do not appear in the diagram are not shown.

All Congregants Duly Driven Away or Else Purified, the Other Elephant now draws a Pentagram upon the Floor in front of the Entrance with their Foot.

The Other Elephant turns unto the Entrance, and gives the Short Invocation of Chaos:

ꝝ ZAZAS ZAZAS NASATANADA ZAZAS

Turning back to the Congregants:

ꝝ You may now approach the Gatekeeper.

Each Congregant in Turn Steps upon the Pentagram, and the Other Elephant make the Sign of the Five over Them.

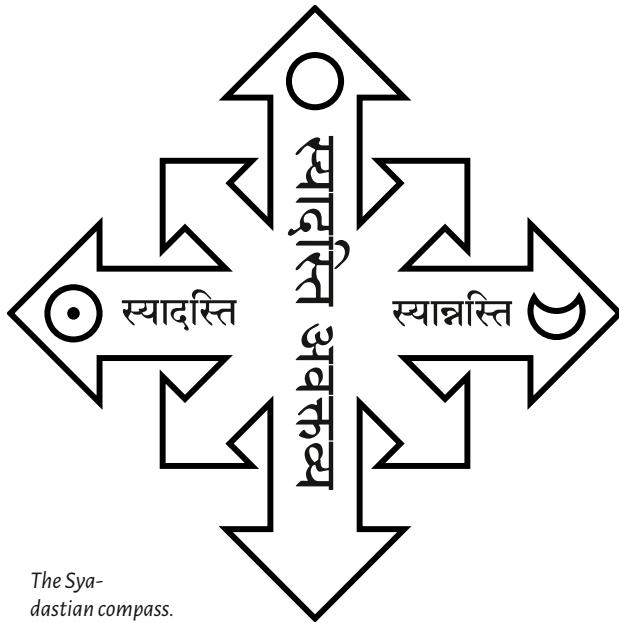
ꝝ Hail Eris! ☩

ꝝ Praise Discordia.

Each Having Done So, the Other Elephant enters, smudging the Pentagram with their foot as they Do. This Concludes Part A.

Part B: Our Coming to Her

The Congregants all Line Up in the Chamber. The Other Elephant closes the Entrance.



I. The Welcome

The Celebrant first jangles the Keychain.

ꝝ Praise to the Omnipotent Polyfather of Virginity in Gold.

They then throw the Roach on the Floor.

ꝝ Praise to Saint Gulik, the Messenger of the Gods.

Finally they hold up the Scripture. The Other Elephant has By Now hopefully made their Way to the Altar.

ꝝ There is no Goddes but Goddes, and She is our Goddes. There is no movement but the Erisian Movement, and it is the Erisian Movement; and every Golden Apple is the beloved home of a golden worm.

R Her Apple Corps is strong!

ꝝ She is Chaos. She is the substance from which artists and scientists build rhythms. She is the spirit with which children and clowns laugh in happy anarchy. She is the heart of reality, the beating pulse of Magick, and the buzz of infinite æther. She is Alive; She is what sets us free. Her name is Strife.

R She is Chaos!

R She is alive!

R Her Name is Strife! ☩

The Congregants can now be Seated.

II. The Exhibition

The Other Elephant first Holds Up the Representation of Order.

ꝝ Behold Order!

R (jeers from the Congregants)

The Celebrant now Holds Up the Representation of Disorder, and the Other Elephant reads the Versicle in their Stead:

ꝝ Behold Disorder!

R (applause from the Congregants)

Both are laid down.

ꝝ Behold Chaos.

R (confused silence from the Congregants)

In the next part, the Celebrant and the Other Elephant alternate which gives the Versicle and whom the Response, while the Congregants look on in Dismay:

- R Nothing is true
- Y Everything is permissible
- R Everything is true
- Y Nothing is permissible
- R No rules everywhere
- Y The Goddef Prevails!

The Quidriskelion; the four faces of Eris.

The Congregants can now Respond:

- R The Goddef Prevails!

III. The Adoration

- Y Praise to Aneris, abiding in emptiness.
- R Hail Aneris!
- Y Praise to Eris, delighting in the dance of creation.
- R Hail Eris!
- Y Praise to Enyo, harsh and hateful.
- R Hail Enyo!
- Y Praise to Discordia, wielding the lightning-flash of liberation.
- R Hail Discordia!

At each Versicle, the Other Elephant lights one of the Candles on the Altar: the Northwestern, the Northeastern, then the Southeastern, and Finally going back for the Southwestern.

- Y She is All Goddesses and She is No Goddef. She is the Mother of All and All that Is Not; and through Her do all things come to pass and pass away.
- R All hail Eris!
- Y ERIS ENYO ANERIS DISCORDIA: from the emptiness of our Heart we Adore Thy Twenty-Three letter Name! ☯
- R ERIS ENYO ANERIS DISCORDIA!
- R We Adore Her Name!

IV. The Benediction

- Y Her Spirit hovers now about us. Let it fall upon us, let it fill us and free us; let Her Hand guide us back along the Path to Oblivion, so we may not become lost among the Precepts of Order in the Region of Thud.
- R Let Her guide us!



- Y Her Work Be Done!
- R Her Work Be Done.
- Y Blefsed are the Sacred Chao, the Mandada, and the Pentabarf, the symbols of our Faketh
- R Blefs the Symbols!
- Y Blefsed the Five Winds and/or Breezes which therefrom emanate
- R Blefs the Breezes!
- Y Blefsed the Apostles of Eris
- R Blefs the Apostles!
- Y And Blefsed the Keepers of the Sacred Chao and the Notary Sojac.
- R Blefs the Keepers!
- Y Blefsed all the Saints and Avatars of Our Lady
- R Blefs the Saints!
- Y Blefsed Emperor Norton, Her only Begotten Son
- R Blefs the Emperor!
- Y Blefsed POEE =POPES=, wherever they may be
- R Blefs the Popes!
- Y Blefsed the Discordian Society, and the Unenlightened Horde.
- R Blefs us!
- Y The Unicorn germinates in Her Cocoon.
- R We Are All Unicorns Anyway ☯

At this Point, a Reading may be given. In a regular Mass, it should be the Chapter of the *Principia* corresponding to the Number of the Week; if the Mass is held to Celebrate some Saint, it should be related to that Saint; and so forth.

V. The Meditation

Y Let us meditate now 'pon the Spinning of the Chao.

All but the Other Elephant Bow their Heads, Stick their Tongues to the Roofs of the Their Mouths, and Meditate, the Other Elephant ready to Beat any who Falter. The Silence Concludes Part B.

Part C: Her Coming Onto Us

The Celebrant now Requires of the Congregants, "Are there any here who are not Baptised into the Erisian Movement of the Paratheoanametamystikhood of Eris Esoteric in the Legion of Dynamic Discord?"

If any Come Forth, the Celebrant shall Judge for Themselves whether to have them Thrown Out, quickly Baptize them, or merely Shake Their Head and Go On regardless.

In each Blessing, the Celebrant gives the first Versicle to the altar, presenting the Sacrament to it, and the Second to the Congregation, holding it aloft. After each Blessing, the Other Elephant takes the Portion of the Sacrament not placed on the Altar and Circulate it Amongst the Congregation.

Blessing of the Host:

Y In the name of Saint Hung Mung, I blefs and consecrate this host.

Y Here is the host: the fruit, the body, and the goat.

R Five tons of flax!

Blessing of the Tea:

Y In the name of Saint Mojo, I blefs and consecrate this drink.

Y Here is the nectar, the elixir of immortality.

R Ewige Blumenkraft und Ewige Schlangenkraft!

Blessing of the Smoke:

Y In the name of Saint Syadasti, I blefs and consecrate this drug.

Y Here is the grafs, the cud of the Holy Cow.

R Mu Mu!

Blessing of the Wine:

Y In the name of Saint Malaclypse the Elder, I blefs and consecrate this liquid.

Y Enter us as we pour this wine, O strange concubine, and make us free.

R Immanentize the Eschaton!

Part D: Us Coming In Her

The Syadastian Chant is chanted, possibly followed with other Exultations, Readings, or Homilies. The Altar may be Circambulated, and personal Prayers and Offerings made.

Part E: Us Going With Her

The Ceremony generally devolves. ☺☺

*The Cocooning Unicorn Priory is an arm of the
Paratheoanametamystikhood of Eris
Esoteric under the House of
Rising Collapse.*

ΣΟΤΑΜΟΝΟΥΟΤΝΙΣΥΟΘΣΙΕΙΟΠΑΤΕΜΣΙΟΤΑΡΟΘΦΑΙΔ

An epistle to the unen-lightened

FROM Mother Panchromatine

The Mass of Eris Exoteric

COURTESY OF Jo Entropic

TOSE WHO DISMISS it and most of its self-declared adherents both labour under the misapprehension that Discordianism is a 'parody religion'. This notion entails that to be a 'real' religion and to not be serious are mutually exclusive. Yet Discordianism posits the opposite: what if Truth, whatever it is, cannot be expressed in straight, serious speech? What if the proper response to it is not solemn awe, but laughter?

The western mind is founded on a series of lopsided dualisms: Apollonian–Dionysian, anal–oral, male–female, rational–irrational, order–disorder, Aneristic–Eristic. All of them find their root in a psychic contagion we call the Curse of Grayface, after the hunchbrained malcontent who originated it. The Grayfaced mind resists treatment. Even when, and all the more for being, keenly aware of its own spiritual misery it will turn medicine into more poison. This is a defence which cannot be overcome head-on. Discordianism aims to embody, not merely argue, the cure.

For this to work, one must take the joke dead seriously. Most self-declared Discordians are barely Eristic, and that on accident, and rarely Erisian. To them, it amounts to a game or a mere practical joke. By these lights, it is a total failure: Tékumel is more inventive, Laibach are more transgressive. Discordianism only makes sense as joke as a real religion; and as a religion, as a joke.

To worship the Goddess of Chaos and Madness with a knowing wink is not to worship Her at all. Neither can we forget how stupid a notion it is, nor allow ourselves to be embarrassed by it. One must embrace the absurdity, learn to live in the space between the put-on and the put-onee.

Our Lady is real. To know Her is impossible, to love Her, insane, and to worship Her, idiotic. X

*Mother Panchromatine is the Prior-
ess of the Cocooning Unicorn Priory.*

1 Get high on PCP.

2 Masturbate furiously, fully nude, in front of a street-facing window.

3 Stage a loud argument with yourself. Shout things like "You've been out whoring again haven't you" and "I swear to God if I catch you pissing in the sink one more time I'll drown you in it". Slap yourself on the belly and thighs, topple furniture, break tableware. Stomp around and slam the door while wailing hysterically. Move on to sobbing quietly.

4 Decapitate your landlord with a sword and dissolve their body in lye (acid is for larpers).

5 Read the Ogdo daily. Study it as you would scripture.

6 Invent a god. Worship it earnestly and ask for it to bring you prosperity and to destroy your enemies. Do not falter if these do not manifest. Make your devotions more extreme. Look for omens and signs from the god.

7 Go to a town hall or another official meeting open to the public. The less important the better. Accuse the officials present of embezzling public funds to build a sex dungeon for entertaining alien dignitaries of the UFO kind. Demand they allow ordinary taxpayers to also use the sex dungeon. After the meeting if anyone so much as looks at you, go over to them and start telling them in detail about the sex acts the aliens like to perform.

8 Assume the godform of Chris Dorner.

9 Have sex you find repugnant.

10 Run for president on a platform of "Kill everyone now" and "Build the Zikkurat".

11 Make a magazine where you tell people to take PCP and kill their landlord. &&

*Jo Entropic is the heat death quing and
once and future presidential candidate.*

Хакери на Чо- вешките Души

глава 6

Делфийски Експертен Оракул

Human Soul
Hackers

chapter 6

Delphian
Expert
Oracle

Хакери на човешките души—хуманитарен киберпънк *is a Bulgarian cyberpunk novel marked as written in 2001–2002 and published 2004. Available sources report the author, Иван Попов, deceased as of 2019, a significant loss for a small and stagnant language. This translated excerpt has been provided for publication in the Ogdo by General Linguistics, LLC in the interest of preserving and disseminating certain arrière-garde apocrypha originating in former Warsaw Pact territories during the period 1989–2014, a measure considered necessary in light of the developments of the subsequent decade.*

MАСАТА Е ЗЕЛЕНА и продълговата. С форма на силно ексцентрична кометна орбита. Във фокуса, на мястото на слънцето, е забит изящен организаторски пулт. На най-близкия до фокуса стол, значи в перихелия, седи ясно кой. Началникът на отдела седи, Асанович. На една ръка разстояние от пулта. Всички други са на повече от ръка разстояние. Дизайнът ненатрапчиво напомня кой къде е в иерархията.

От двете страни на Асанович са заместниците му — Макилрой и Харис. Нататък — Бярнесен и Де Йонг, и двамата русоляви и с добре поддържани брадички. Като правени от един и същи генен инженер. Макар че Бярнесен е наблюдаващ офицер на „Дженерал Лингвистикс“, а Де Йонг — на противника, тоест на „Оракул“. Още по-нататък е Барбара Уест. Защо ли присъства пътят, чуди се Сидорчук. Може би следи дискусията да не премине границата на психичното?... Самият Сидорчук е почти в афелия на масата. Как казваха там туземците, коя дупка на кавала? Ако Балабан е прав и последната дупка е наистина адски важна за акустиката, значи Сидорчук е предпоследна дупка на кавала.

— ...Успях да построя ЛСИ-конструкт върху съвкупен материал от медиите на територията — говори той с

TE TABLE IS GREEN AND OBLONG, shaped like the strongly eccentric orbit of a comet. In the focal point, where the Sun would be, an elegant command console sticks out. On the chair nearest to the focal point—that is, in the perihelion—sits you-know-who: section chief Asanovich. He's at about an arm's length from the console. Everyone else is at more than an arm's length. The design unobtrusively reminds everyone who's where in the hierarchy.

At Asanovich's sides are his two deputies — McIlroy and Harris. Next — Bjarnesen and De Jong, both blondish and sporting well-trimmed goatees. They look as if made by the same gene engineer, even though Bjarnesen is observing officer of General Linguistics, and De Jong represents their competitor, Oraculus. Further on, Barbara West. Why is she here, Sidorchuk wonders — maybe to make sure the debate doesn't go beyond the psychological? Sidorchuk himself sits at the aphelion of the table. How did the locals say, which hole of what whistle? If Balaban is right and the last hole is crucial to the instrument's acoustic properties, it would mean Sidorchuk is the second-to-last hole of the kaval.

“...I've been able to assemble an LSI construct based on materials collected from the local media”, he says ➤

убедителна интонация. — Резултатите, честно да призная, са силно подозрителни. Дори само интегралните параметри. Асоциираната размерност в пространството на Кохонен е средно пет цяло и девет. Припомням, че прагът на устойчивост се оценява на четири и три...

...На стената срещу Асанович светят два огромни екрана. На единия е застинал в очакване очилат азиатец на име Шимомура. Експерт от източния отдел на Комитета. От втория еcran гледа непознато лице, кръгло, гладко, лъскаво и неизразително. Типичен федерален бюрократ, никакъв инспектиращ от Хуманитарния департамент. Хумдепът обича да инспектира — откритите доклади, кой знае защо. Макар че всички знаят — отживелица са тези доклади. Ритуал, останал още от безмашинния интелект. Само ядат работното време. Но за лош късмет на Сидорчук баш на неговия доклад се натресе инспектиращ. Така и не му запомни името, макар че онзи го каза няколко пъти... Другите два екрана пустеят. Макар че Сидорчук специално настоя във видеоконференцията да се включи Сингх от полето. Интелигентът обеща, че непременно ще е на линия. Но го няма никакъв...

— ...ключовият момент е — Сидорчук продължава механично да повтаря течания в зъркелите текст, — че контентът е прекаран през автоматичен преводач до стандартен английски. След което конструктът се сравнява със стандартна английска база. Това по принцип не се препоръчва от никоя теория. И въобще е в разрез със стъло. Но за този език няма разработени машинни семантични бази. Такива са обстоятелствата. И изобщо ако имаше туземна база, нямаше да съществува проблемът, който решавам...

„...и нямаше да съм нужен в качеството на теоретик.“ Това, естествено, Сидорчук не го казва на глас. Но все пак си го помисля. Стого погледнато, това са камъни в градината на хумтех-компаниите — нали те правят лингвистичен софтуер. Но за малките езици това е икономически неизгодно. Семантичните бази се изграждат бавно, трябват маса специалисти. И ако обхватът е прекалено малък, а брутният продукт на калпак — още по-малък...

— ...очевидно има проблем с преводимостта. Софтуерът, който съм използвал, на територията се счита уж за най-добър. Но има явна културна пропаст, несъвместимост, която се вижда дори от макропараметрите...

— Защо пропаст? Сидорчук, тази твоята... територия не е ли все пак културно европейска? — питат Харис, без въобще да е искал думата.

► with convincing intonation. “Frankly, the results arouse strong suspicion, just from looking at the basic integral parameters. Associated dimensionality in Kohonen space averages out to five point nine — let me remind you the stability threshold is four point three...”

...On the wall, opposite Asanovich, glow two huge screens. On one of them, frozen in expectation, is a spectacled Asian man named Shimomura, an expert from the Eastern section of the Committee. From the other screen stares an unfamiliar face, smooth, round, shiny and unexpressive. Typical federal bureaucrat, some kind of inspector from the Department of Humanity. The Hum-Dep loves to inspect — especially the open access reports, for some reason. Everyone knows these meetings are an anachronistic ritual; a remnant from the times of machineless intelligence. All they do is consume work hours. Just Sidorchuk's luck for an inspector to show up to his pre-sentation. He failed to remember the name, even though the man had said it several times... Two other screens are vacant. Sidorchuk had insisted for the conference to be joined by Singh from out in the field, and the intelligent had promised to be online, but he's nowhere to be seen...

“...the key point being”, Sidorchuk continues to mechanically repeat the text from the peepers, “that the content has been run through an automatic translator to standard English. Afterwards, the construct is compared to a standard English base. This is inadvisable per all theories, and in explicit contradiction with the Special Theory of Linguistic Relativity. But there are no machine semantic bases developed for this language. Such are the circumstances. If there was an indigenous base, the problem I'm solving would not exist in the first place...”

...and my services as a theoretical scientist would not be required. Sidorchuk, of course, doesn't say that last one. But he thinks it. Strictly speaking, he's casting stones into the garden of the humtech monopolies — they're the ones making the languageware. But for small languages it is economically unfeasible. Building up a semantic base is a slow process, involving the work of many specialists. So if the effective range is too small, and the GDP per cap — even smaller...

“...there is an obvious translatability problem. The software I'm using is considered best in class for the territory. Even so, there's an evident cultural chasm that one can immediately observe just from looking at the macroparameters...”

“Why a chasm? Sidorchuk, this... territory of yours —

— Европейска е. — Текстът в зъркелите на Сидорчук мигом се сменя. Нектопът престроява изложението съобразно зададените въпроси. — Но е от четвърти–пети функционален тип. Има си цял куп особености...

На стената отсреща на Сидорчук виси графика. Стил — класически. Гол старец с дълга брада стои пред черна дъска с показалка в ръка. Обяснява нещо на групата изкопаеми рептилии пред него. Рептилиите го зяпат хипнотизиращо. Такъв значи доклад. Само дето отдалеч не се вижда названието...

— ...аномално високата размерност на модела до някъде може да се обясни с несъвършения превод. Облаците от смисъл на понятията не съвпадат. Нещо, което за тях е езиков шаблон, на нас ни изглежда като счупване на шаблона...

— Но речникът би трябвало да се справя с това — възразява хумтешкият офицер Бярнесен, също без да е искал думата. — Чия разработка е той?

— На някаква местна фирма. „Исирма“. И реално не се справя със сложни облаци от смисъл, макар че уж би трябвало. Синонимната база е оstarяла. Може би затова компютърът отчита такава висока концентрация на оксиморони — три и половина пъти над нормалната. В никоя стабилна култура няма такова нещо, освен може би в зен-будизма, но той пък се отличава по други параметри... Но най-важният резултат от изследването въобще не може да се обясни с превода. Какъв е този резултат? Ако се направи разсложаване на ЛСИ-данныте във времето, ще се види, че до един момент асоциираната размерност е една, а после отчетливо тръгва да расте. Пак тогава почва да расте и концентрацията на оксиморони. Изглежда сякаш в този момент езикът започва бързо да се променя, шаблоните се разпадат...

...Непроницаеми са лицата на колегите, скрити зад зъркелите. Всички явно са вързани към базата знания за хуманитарни теории. И точно сега базата данни яростно им заговаря нещо, ако се съди по рязкото раздвижване. Асанович увлечено търкаля топчесто псевдомишиле. Останалите просто шават с пръсти. Да, стандартният невроинтерфейс се слага на дясната китка. И през него можеш да си командваш машината направо с мърдане на пръсти...

— ...погледнете на графиката — Сидорчук дава команда и третият еcran светва. — До юни месец параметрите са постоянни, кривите са хоризонтални. Асоциирана размерност — пет и едно. Концентрация

isn't it culturally European, after all?" interrupts Harris.

"It's European." The text in Sidorchuk's goggles immediately changes as the necktop restructures the exposition in accordance with the questions asked. "But it's of the fourth/fifth functional type. There are a great deal of peculiarities..."

On the wall opposite Sidorchuk is a painting in classical style. A naked old man with a long beard stands in front of a blackboard, pointer in hand. He's explaining something to a group of fossil-record reptiles in front of him. The reptiles gaze back, hypnotically. That kind of presentation. Only the title can't be discerned from this far...

"...the anomalously high dimensionality of the model can be partially explained by the imperfect translation. The meaning-clouds of various notions don't match up. What's a linguistic pattern for them, to us looks like the breaking of a pattern..."

"But the dictionary should be handling that", objects humtech officer Bjarnesen, also without requesting to speak. "Whose work is it?"

"Some local outfit called 'Issirma'. And it doesn't actually handle complex clouds of meanings, even though it should. The synonym base is obsolete. Maybe that's why the computer calculates such a high concentration of oxymorons — three point five times the norm. No stable culture has such a thing, except maybe Zen Buddhism, but that's distinct by other parameters... Still, the most important result cannot be explained with translation artifacts at all. See, if we group the LSI data over time, we can observe the associated dimensionality remaining stable up to a certain moment, and then, distinctly, beginning to increase. And so does the oxymoron concentration — simultaneously. Looks like at that point the language begins to quickly change, patterns fall apart..."

...The colleagues' faces are impenetrable, hidden behind the peepers. Looks like they're all connected to the humtech knowledge base. And right now the base is telling them all something intense, judging from the abrupt shuffling. Asanovich, enthused, rolls around a trackball pseudo-mouse. The others just wiggle their fingers. Yes, the standard neurointerface goes on the right wrist, so you can command your machine just by the wiggling of fingers...

"...look at this graph", Sidorchuk issues a command and the third screen comes to life. "Until June, the parameters are constant, curves trend horizontal. Associated dimensionality — five point one. Oxymoron concentration — one point seven times the norm. That's already a

на оксиморони — едно цяло и седем от нормалното. И това е много, но не чак толкова. А от юни нататък параметрите тръгват нагоре. Първо плавно, после рязко, после пак отново плавно...

...но присаждането на невроинтерфейс струва много скъпо. Хирурзите са алчни. Фондацията „Лукач“ уж е заделила пари за служебни невроинтерфейси, но засега са ощастливени само началствата. И заместник-началствата. Макар че Асанович, да речем, не ще да си туря такова нещо. Не бил паднал, казва, толкова ниско, че да го бърникат разни доктори. И си кара по старому. Със Сидорчук е обратното. Той е голям мераклия за неврокуплунг, но отделът го е предвидил чак за след три години, и то само ако го повишат. Макар че ако го повишат, той ще може да си плати сам операцията. Трикът е да плати Комитетът, и то сега... Ето, офицерите от хумтекса нямат такива проблеми. Техните корпорации не се стискат, богати са. То не че бащицата Лукач е беден...

— ...При целия контент ли е така или само за някои медии? — пита Бярнесен. Хумтеците явно са заинтригувани.

— Ето данните от конструкта, разслоени по източници. При две медийни групировки параметрите тръгват да растат още в края на май. При другите — по-късно, но в рамките на следващите два месеца.

— И как обяснявате този скок? — това е Де Йонг, другият хумтек.

— Обяснявам го с местно въвеждане на нова хуманистарна технология — изплюва камъчето Сидорчук. — Нищо естествено според мен не може да бъде причина. Вие знаете ли технология за генериране на текст с такъв антишаблонен уклон?

Офицерите от хумтекса размърдват пръсти още по-яростно. Явно преравят базата знания.

— Може би стимулирано подгрято изображение на Кохонен — казва Де Йонг. — Или креативен алгоритъм, но пуснат с антикорелационни параметри. Обратно на нормалното.

— Точно така — великодушно се съгласява Сидорчук. Нали е преровил базата предварително. — Технологии има. Въпросът е кой ги продава и най-вече — кой ги е разрешил за употреба. Защото сами разбирате, това ниво на оксиморони е федерална норма. Пределно допустима норма. И международна също...

— А защо на тия не са им наложени санкции? — обажда се неочеквано гнусен глас от високоговорителя в ъгъла. Намесил се е хумдепският бюрократ. — За

lot, but not that much. Then from June onwards, the values only increase. First gradually, then abruptly, then they slow down once again..."

...but implanting a neurointerface costs a whole lot of money. The surgeons are greedy. Supposedly, the Lucacs Foundation has already allocated a budget for providing its workers with neurointerfaces. But so far only the chiefs have been so lucky — deputy chiefs, too. Asanovich, he doesn't want one at all. He hasn't fallen so low, he says, to let doctors fiddle with him. So he carries on in the old-school way. Sidorchuk is the opposite. He really wants to get a neurocoupling installed, but the section has scheduled him for three years from now, and only if he's promoted. But if they promote him, he'll be able to pay for it out of pocket. The trick would be to get the Committee to pay for it now... The humtech officers, they don't have this problem. Their corporations aren't as clenched, they're filthy rich. Not that Our Daddy Lucacs is poor...

“...is this the case for all content, or just certain media outlets?” asks Bjarnesen. Looks like the humtex are intrigued.

“Here is the construct data grouped by source. Two media conglomerates have these parameters growing since end of May. The others trail them by no more than two months.”

“And how do you explain the sharp rise?” goes De Jong, the other humtek.

“I explain it with the local introduction of a novel humanitarian technology”, Sidorchuk finally spits out. “I don't believe anything natural could be causing this. Do you know of a technology for generating text with such counter-pattern properties?”

The humtech officers wiggle their fingers even more intensely. Looks like they're digging through the knowledge base.

“Maybe a stimulated heated-up Kohonen image” says De Jong, “or a creative algorithm, when run with anticorrelational parameters. The opposite way around.”

“That's right”, Sidorchuk, who's been through the base beforehand, generously agrees. “The technologies exist. The question is who's selling them, and, more importantly — who allowed their usage. Because, as you know very well, the maximum permitted level of oxymorons is a federal norm. A boundary condition. As well as an international one...”

“Why haven't they been subjected to sanctions?” an



систематично разрушаване на шаблоните трябва да отнемат медийния лиценз...

— Там още нямат такъв закон — уточнява Сидорчук. — За да приемат закон, им трябва точна методика за измерване. А още нямат лицензирана семантична база. Моите резултати, казах вече, са по много спорна методика.

— Но тогава... ако нямат машинна база, как генерират текст? — чуди се бюрократът.

„Ex, федерален пъх — мисли си Сидорчук, — ти май си забравил, че текст може да се пише и ръчно... може измислен от човек, а не от софт...“ Но това само си го мисли, а на глас повтаря думите, течачи в зъркелите.

— В страни от четвърти и пети функционален тип — физира изреченията нектопт — хуманистарните технологии са в зачатъчно състояние, а машинни текст-генератори се използват рядко.

— И от скоро — вметва Асанович.

— Но тук има една въпросителна — продължава да диктува нектопт. — Ако използват примитивни технологии, не може параметрите да скочат така рязко. Физически не могат да накарат

unexpectedly disgusting voice pipes up from the corner speaker. It's the humdep bureaucrat. “For the systematic destruction of patterns, media licences should be taken away...”

“They don't have that law yet”, Sidorchuk clarifies. “To introduce a law, they need a way to perform the exact measurements. And they don't yet have a licensed semantic base. As I pointed out, my results are already based on very controversial methods.”

“But then... if they don't have a machinic base, how do they generate text?” wonders the bureaucrat.

You fed rat! thinks Sidorchuk, You must've forgotten that text can be written by hand... that is, can be thought up by a human, and not by a soft... But he just thinks it to himself, while his voice recites the words flowing into his peepers:

“In countries of fourth and fifth functional types”, the necktop has it, “the humanitarian technologies are in an embryonic state, and machine text-generators are used infrequently.”

“And since relatively recently”, Asanovich adds.

“But this raises a question”, the necktop continues to dictate. “If they use primitive technologies, the parameters can't shift so abruptly. It's physically impossible to get their, what's-it—journalists—to change writing style all at once. So there

всичките, как бяха там... журналисти да си сменят стила на писане. Значи все пак има нещо модерно, нещо машинно. Но първо трябва да попитам нещо представителите на компаниите-производители. Наистина ли не сте продавали никакви езикови технологии на тази територия? Може ли да декларирате официално?

Хумтеците отново шават с пръсти.

— Официално — казва накрая Бярнесен. — Да, никакви продажби на езикови технологии нямаме там.

— И при нас е същото — повтаря Де Йонг. — Проверих базата данни на отдела за продажби.

— Така. Това е много важно. Защото излиза, че на територията ползват не ваши технологии, а никакви чужди. Или може би дори свои...

— Изключено! — вика Де Йонг. — Там е пълен примитивизъм. Не могат да направят пълноценен лси-конструкт. Нямат специалисти. А и много пари са нужни, откъде да ги съберат?

— Как оценявате, че не могат да съберат парите? — питат Асанович. Той се е излегнал назад в шефското кресло и следи дискусията с незаинтересован вид. Сякаш не вярва на нищо от казаното, но няма желание да спори, понеже смята темата за безсмислена.

— По рекламиния пазар — отговаря Де Йонг. — Нали той формира бюджета на медийните групировки. Много е мизерен обаче той в тази дупка. Разработката на пълноценна семантична база струва колкото целия годишен рекламен оборот.

Асанович недоверчиво хъмка, но не казва нищо. Този довод май не му се вижда убедителен. Но пак не проявява волевия си характер и не удря по масата, а маха с ръка да продължават.

— Ако това е езикова технология — идва си на мисълта нектопът, — трябва да се търси кой я е въвел. Технологии от този тип се използват при управление на общественото мнение. Но се използват много внимателно, тъй като са опасни. Кой на територията се занимава с общественото мнение? Първо — местните власти и групировки. Тях отхвърляме, тъй като са им малко ресурсите и нямат технологии. После — глобални организации и радикални секти от списъка на ценностните врагове. Но засега на територията не е засичана тяхна дейност. Остава това да е страничен ефект от някоя операция на Програмата...

— Коя, нашата? — учудва се физиономията на инспектирация.

— Нашата, коя друга! — намесва се Харис. —

must be something modern, something machine. But first, I will need to ask the vendor representatives the following. Have you really not sold any linguistic technologies to this territory? Can you declare this officially?"

The humtex can be seen wiggling their fingers again.

"Confirmed. Officially", says Bjarnesen in the end, "we have no sales of linguistic technologies there."

"Same here", repeats De Jong. "I queried our sales people's database just now."

"Okay. That was very important. Because it means they're not using your tech at all, but someone else's. Or maybe their very own..."

"Impossible!" De Jong calls out. "It's total primitivism out there. They can't put together a full LSI construct. They don't have specialists, and where would they get that sort of money anyway?"

"How do you evaluate whether they can raise the money or not?" asks Asanovich as he lays back in the big chair and follows the discussion with a look of total disinterest — as if he doesn't believe in anything being said, but sees no point in arguing.

"By the advertising market", De Jong replies. "It's what forms the miserable budget of the media conglomerates in that dump. Developing a full semantic base would cost as much as their ad turnover for a whole year."

Asanovich *hmms* in disbelief, but says nothing. This must seem to him an entirely unconvincing argument, but again he deigns not to demonstrate his wilful character and does not bang his fist on the table, he just waves them on.

"If this is a linguistic technology", the necktop gets back to the point, "we must find out who's responsible for its introduction. Technologies of this type are used for controlling public opinion. But they are applied carefully, because they are dangerous. So, who in the territory is working the public opinion? First, local authorities and criminal groups. Can't be them — insufficient resources and a lack of technological capacity. Second, global organisations and radical cults from among the list of value-enemies. But their activity hasn't been registered on the territory so far. Therefore, it remains to be a side effect of some operation of the Programme..."

"What — our Programme?" questions the face of the inspector.

"Ours, whose else!" interferes Harris. "Looks like they've

Нешо са прекултивирали общественото мнение. Поредната издънка...

...А Харис доста мрази Програмата. Повече от целия останал отдел, взет заедно. В борда на директорите на Програмата има някакъв негов роднин, който навремето му е съсипал кариерата. Харис има много роднини и всичките влиятелни. Предците му са дошли на континента още с кораба „Майска роза“ и впоследствие процъфтели. Заседават все в директорски бордове, с кратки командировки във висшия федерален апарат. Родата е разклонена, могъща и от типа на благородна. Само Харис, отълъчен от нея заради някаква кавга, се е утаил чак на ниво низш управленец...

— ...това не е достатъчен аргумент — твърди инспектиращият.

„Откъде се е взел такъв защитник на Програмата? — чуди се Сидорчук. — Обикновено инспектиращите само слушат, без да се намесват...“

— И освен това — допълва Де Йонг — Програмата работи с наши технологии. А ние не сме разработвали за този език никакъв софтуер.

— И ние — казва печално Бярнесен.

— Но може — настоява Харис — да са взели софт от друга фирма. Или да са финансирали собствена разработка.

— Изключено! — вика Бярнесен. — Имаме с тях подписан партньорски договор. Също като с вас. Ние сме ексклузивен доставчик на езиков софт. И на Програмата е забранено да развива нашите алгоритми. Тя са интелектуална собственост...

— А ако Програмата е платила на съвсем друга фирма, за да развие съвсем други алгоритми?

Бярнесен маха с пръсти във въздуха. — Не. Нашите наблюдаващи офицери там не са докладвали такова нещо.

— „Оракул“ също ли не са информирани?

— Не — казва Де Йонг. Настъпва кратка тишина.

— Но все пак — взема си обратно думата Сидорчук — нова технология е развита. За това имаме и второ доказателство, много по-сериозно. Преди седмица постъпил материал от полевия ни интелигент. Тъй като е секретен, не мога да го обяви на откраднат доклад.

— Как е категоризиран този... полевият материал? — пита де Йонг. — И вкаран ли е в секретната база?

„Да бе, чакай да ти кажат!“ — негодува мислено Сидорчук. Той знае: ако е даден категоризиращият профил, същността на материала може да бъде измъкната от секретния конструкт. С десетина итерации на

overcultivated the public opinion again, and then some. Yet another fuckup...“

...Harris really has it in for the Programme. More than all the rest of the section put together. On the Programme's board of directors sits some relative of his, who had once ruined Harris' career. Harris has a lot of relatives and all of them are influential. His ancestors had come to this continent aboard the Mayflower herself, and flourished accordingly. They all sit on various corporate boards, with short stints at the upper federal apparatus. His family is far-branching, influential, and sort of aristocratic. Only Harris, excommunicated after some quarrel, has precipitated to the level of middle management...

“...this is not a sufficient argument...” insists the inspector.

Where did this defender of the Programme come from? wonders Sidorchuk. *Usually, the inspectors just listen without interfering...*

“Besides”, adds De Jong, “the Programme works with our tech. And we have developed no software for this language.”

“Neither have we”, grieves Bjarnesen.

“But they might've”, insists Harris, “taken another company's software. Or financed their original development.”

“That can't be!” exclaims Bjarnesen. “We have a partnership contract with them. Same as with you. We're an exclusive provider of linguistic software. And the Programme is not permitted to extend our algorithms. They're intellectual property...”

“And what if the Programme has paid an entirely different company, to develop entirely different algorithms?”

Bjarnesen waves his fingers across the air. “No. Our observing officers there have reported no such thing.”

“And neither have Oraculus?”

“That's correct”, says De Jong. A brief silence ensues.

“But still”, Sidorchuk resumes, “a new technology has been developed. We have further proof of this, and it's even more concerning. A week ago, we received a material from a field intelligent of ours. Since it's secret, I can't announce it at an open meeting.”

“How's that material been categorised?” asks De Jong. “And has it been entered in the classified base?”

Sure, by all means, let us tell you! objects Sidorchuk in his mind. He knows: given the categorising profile, the gist of the material can be extracted from the secret construct. Takes complex search and differential synthesis, just

сложно търсене и диференциален синтез. Защото материалите от секретната база са недостъпни като пълен текст, но са индексирани заради служебните льси-търсачки на Комитета. Поне така твърди Балабан, той бил пробвал някога нещо...

— В секретната база е вкаран — завърта се със стола Асанович. — Но не е профилиран. За експертиза на доклада на Сингх привлякох господин Шимомура от източния отдел.

Японецът скланя глава на широкия екран.

— И фактите в доклада — казва, — и изводите на интелигента са правдоподобни и извънредно интересни за теорията. Впрочем и за практиката също.

И мълъкva.

— Това ли беше експертизата? — възди се Де Йонг.

— Докладът на Сингх е
сериозен. Там става
нещо нередно.

— Материалът е секретен — казва Шимомура. — Разширеният текст на експертизата е с ограничен достъп.

— А защо интелигентът не е на линия?

— Трябаше да бъде — казва Сидорчук. — Но го няма.

— Но при това положение какво становище можем да вземем? — недоумява Макилрой. — Всичко е скрито, всичко е секретно. А младият колега Сидорчук иска... какво? Отваряне на нова полева тема, така ли?

— Искам го не аз, а Сингх — уточнява Сидорчук.

— А аз — извичява мощен глас Асанович — искам междуведомствена експертиза. На дейността на Програмата в целия този сектор! Молбата вече съм я написал, сега само ви уведомявам. Ще я пратя във Фондацията още днес следобед. Докладът на Сингх е сериозен. Там става нещо нередно. А аз отговарям за територията. И за целия как беше... функционален тип. Мръсни странични ефекти от Програмата — дал бог по целия свят. Още един такъв на моя територия не възнамерявам да допусна...

— Ако поискаме експертиза обаче, от Фондацията ще се ровят и в нашите разработки — напомня Макилрой. — Там правят ревизиите винаги двойни — едновременно и при тях, и при нас.

— Нека. Да се рови комисия от Хумдепа е пак

about ten iterations — since the materials from the secret base might be unavailable in full text, but they're still indexed for the sake of the Committee's internal LSI crawlers. That's what Balaban claims, anyway — he had tried something at some point...

“It's been input into the base”, Asanovich spins with his chair, “but not profiled. To analyse Singh's report, I've invited Mr. Shimomura here from the Eastern section.”

The Japanese man bows on the broad screen.

“The facts in the report”, he says, “and the conclusions made by the intelligent, are plausible and, furthermore, extremely interesting for the theory. As well as for the practice.”

He goes silent.

“That was the analysis?” frowns De Jong.

*“Singh's report is serious.
Something wrong is happening there.”*

“The material is classified”, Shimomura says. “The extended text of the analysis is limited access.”

“Why is the intelligent not online?”

“He should've been joining us”, says Sidorchuk. “But he isn't.”

“Then what are we supposed to we make of all this?” McIlroy questions. “Everything's hidden, everything's secret. And our young colleague Sidorchuk wants... what? To open a new field case?”

“It's not I that want it, but Singh”, Sidorchuk clarifies.

“And I”, raises Asanovich his mighty voice, “want an interdepartment investigation of the activity of the Programme in this entire sector! I've written a formal request already, now I'm just informing you. I'll be submitting it to the Foundation this afternoon. Singh's report is serious. Something wrong is happening there. And it's me who's responsible for the territory. Not to mention the whole, what'sit... functional type. Dirty blowback from the Programme — there might be uncountable cases of that all over the world, but I'll be damned if I let another instance occur on my turf...”

“Should we request an investigation, the Foundation will be looking into our developments too”, McIlroy reminds. “They always double up the revisions — one at the Programme, one here.”

по-добре, отколкото да се рови контраинтелигенцията на Програмата...

— И този доклад на Сингх ще го разсекретят — напомня Де Йонг.

— Ами тяхна си работа. Впрочем... ще ви кажа за какво става дума. По същото време, когато са тръгнали да скачат езиковите параметри, на територията е отбелоязана странна серия от непознати психични заболявания. Непознати дори за теорията, нали, Шимомура?

Шимомура кима съгласно. Всички останали мълчат. Никой не се решава да доразпитва. И прави ло. Асанович ще ги отреже. Макар че явно са заинтригувани...

— Сидорчук, имаш ли още нещо? Нямаш, добре. Приключваме. Докладът на Сингх ще се проучва. От Шимомура като консултант и още от някой. Плюс един полеви агент да дублира Сингх... Ще уточня хората до седмица. Това е.

Офицерите се надигат от столовете. Оправят ръбовете на панталоните. Де Йонг нещо мърмори на Макилрой. Недоволни са явно. Екраните на стената гаснат.

— А, Сидорчук! — вика шефът тъкмо когато излиза от залата. — Ела за малко в кабинета ми.

Бърлогата на Асанович е съвсем близко — отсрещната врата. Сидорчук търпеливо изчаква началника да си доприказва с Барбара Уест. Накрая токчетата на психоложката изчакват към стълбите, а Асанович отключва кабинета. Вътре е полуутъмно, завесите са спуснати и лъха на цигарен дим. Шефът обича да си трови дробовете напук на медицинската комисия. На Сидорчук е предложен диванът — кожен и широк като креват тип „полов тепих“. Той присядда на края. Гледа как шефът се суети гърбом към него.

— Ще пиеш ли едно? — Асанович е извадил от шкафа звездна бутилка коняк и чаши. Сидорчук се колебае като Буридановото магаре.

— Хайде, какво се чудиш?

— Чудя се — набира смелост Сидорчук — дали да откажа от учивост или да приема от учивост.

Асанович се смее добродушно.

— От учивост трябва да се приема — казва. Налива две чашки. — Но да не се злоупотребява. Да се пази черния дроб.

Двамата отпиват. Звездната течност дразни несвикналото небце на Сидорчук.

— Знаеш ли — говори шефът, — май не трябваше да те набърквам в тая история. Докладът на Сингх не беше

“So be it. Rather have a HumDep commission dig through our stuff, than the Programme’s counter-intel.”

“And Singh’s report will be declassified”, De Jong adds.

“Whatever they want. Actually... I’ll tell you what it’s about. At the same time the linguistic parameters went on the increase, a conspicuous series of unknown mental illnesses was recorded on the territory. Unknown even to theory, is that correct, Shimomura?”

Shimomura nods in agreement. Everyone else is silent. Nobody is up for any more questions. And wisely so. Asanovich would just shut them down. Still, they do look intrigued...

“Sidorchuk, got anything else for us? No? OK, let’s wrap this up. Singh’s report will be looked into. By Shimomura as consultant, alongside someone else. Plus a field agent to pair up with Singh... I’ll clarify the personnel assignments within the upcoming week. That’s it, we’re done here.”

The officers rise from the chairs, they tidy up the sides of their pants. De Jong is grumbling something at McIlroy. They look unhappy. The screens on the wall fade out.

“Ey, Sidorchuk!” the boss calls out right as he’s exiting the hall. “Come see me in my office for a bit.”

Asanovich’s lair is right opposite. Sidorchuk patiently waits for the chief to finish his colloquy with Barbara West. Finally, the psychologist’s heels tap stairwards, and Asanovich unlocks the door. The blinds are lowered and the semidarkness inside smells like tobacco smoke. The boss loves poisoning his lungs to spite the medical commission. Sidorchuk is offered the sofa — leather, broad, and bedlike. He sits on one corner and watches the boss fuss around with his back to him.

“A drink?” Asanovich has taken out of the cupboard a starry bottle of cognac, along with some glasses. Sidorchuk hesitates like Buridan’s ass.

“C’m on now, whatcha wonderin’?”

“I’m wondering”, Sidorchuk gathers his courage, “whether to refuse out of politeness, or to accept out of politeness.”

Asanovich laughs genially. “Politeness dictates that the proper course is to imbibe,” he says, pouring two glasses, “but not overindulge. Gotta watch that liver.”

They drink. The starry liquid irritates Sidorchuk’s palate, unused to its taste.

“You know”, the boss says, “Maybe I shouldn’t have involved you in this thing. Singh’s report wasn’t meant

за тебе. Въобще той е от компетенцията само на контра-интелигентския отдел. Но трябаше експертиза от нас. Като уж най-добре запознати с обстановката. А при нас няма теоретици. Освен тебе. Ти си ни един-ствен... И сега трябва да летиш.

— Къде да летя? — стряска се Сидорчук.

— На територията. Експерт по темата „Морфей“. Макар че заглавието не ми харесва. Как ги наричаше ти онези психясалите?

— Болни мозъци.

— Да. Темата „Болни мозъци“ е по-друго. Съгласен ли си?... Макар че какво те питам? Нямам други хора, Сидорчук. Шимомура е вързан в тамошния отдел, не искат да го пускат, имал някаква много важна програма. Той ще ни консултира онлайн. Иначе е голям експерт по подсъзнанието... Но трябва и човек на полето.

— Аз също имам програма — възразява Сидорчук. — Сега тъкмо смятам разни поправки към лси-конструктите. Уточнявам модела.



— Къде го уточняваш? — прекъсва го Асанович. — На голямата машина ли? Няя можеш и по мрежата да я командваш. От територията.

Шефът допива чашата си. Последната останала капка милостиво изсипва в саксията до стената. Растението в саксията е криво, хилаво и позавехнало. Балабан казва, че било див фикус. „По-скоро е пропул се фикус“, решава Сидорчук.

— Ще получиш после удължен отпуск — обещава шефът. — На Канарските, Хавайските, Курилските... Където решиш. Усещам аз, Сидорчук, че има нещо гнило в тая територия. И честно казано, не вярвам да е виновна Програмата. Тук Сингх малко се е изхвърлил. На всички ни се ще да им натрием носовете на програмаджиите. Но трябва да гледаме и реалността. А реалността е, че подценяваме туземците. Страшно ги подценяваме. А аз ги знам! Като кътните си зъби ги знам! Там са страшни дяволи. Оправят се с всякааква техника. Ти не им гледай брутния продукт, че бил малък уж. Това компютърът го казва, че щом им е малък брутният, значи нищо не разбират. Но компютърът не е ходил, не е видял. А аз съм видял и патил. Ония хитреци, Сидорчук, могат не

for you. It's only in the competence of the counterintelligence department, really. But we had to run an expertise, being, supposedly, most familiar with the situation over there. And we have no theoreticians. Except you. You're our only one... and now you gotta fly."

“Fly? Where?” Sidorchuk is startled.

“To the territory. Expert on project ‘Morpheus’. I don’t like the name, though. How did you call ‘em, those... headcases?”

“Ill minds.”

“Yes. Project ‘Ill Minds’, well now that’s more like it. So, how about it?... And why am I even asking you? I have no other people, Sidorchuk. Shimomura is tied up in their department, they wouldn’t let him go, he’s working on some very important program. He’ll be consulting us online. He’s a big expert on the subconscious... but we still need a field guy.”

“I’m working on a program, too”, objects Sidorchuk, “Calculating some amendments to the LSI constructs. Clarifying the model.”

“Where’s that?” interrupts Asanovich. “On the big rig? You can command it over the net. From the territory.”

The boss finishes his drink, mercifully pouring the last drop into the flower pot in the corner. The plant is crooked, weak and wilted. Balaban says that’s a wild ficus. *More like a ficus gone wild*, Sidorchuk decides.

“You’ll get extended leave later”, the boss promises. “On any island you want — the Canaries, Hawaii, the Kurils... You just name it. I can sense it, Sidorchuk. Something’s rotten with that territory. And, to be frank with you, I don’t believe it’s a Programme job. Singh overdid that. All of us want to stick it to the Programme. But one has to reckon with reality — and the reality is that we underestimate the locals! Terribly, terribly underestimate them. And I know them! Like the back of my hand I do! Real devils, the lot of ‘em. Making do with all kinds of tech. So what if their GDP was low. That’s what the computer says: the GDP is small, therefore they don’t know shit. But the computer has never set foot there. It hasn’t seen anything. And I’ve seen some, and I’ve been through.

хуманитарна, ами и трансхуманитарна технология да скалъпят! Да...

— Ако ще ме пращате на територията, ми се полага и невроинтерфейс — сеща се Сидорчук. — На всички полеви работници се полага.

— Не знам дали ще има време да ти го присядат. След операцията трябва време за тренировка на новите рефлекси. Ако Сингх поиска да те пращам веднага...

Меко бипва шефският мобилник. Асанович лепва слушалка до ухото. Нещо му говорят. Той кима: „Да, да...“ После изведнъж лицето му се вкаменява. Погледът посърва. „Кога? Ужас... Да, непременно инспекция...“ Прибира слушалката. Ръката потреперва.

— От Хумдепа се обадиха — казва. — Сингх е загинал. Катастрофа. Преди няколко часа.

They're cunning, Sidorchuk! Should they as much as feel like it, they can hack together not a humanitarian — a transhumanitarian technology! Yes..."

“If you’re sending me to the territory, I’m supposed to get a neurointerface”, Sidorchuk recalls. “All field workers are meant to get one.”

“I don’t know if we’ll have time to implant you one of those. After the surgery, it takes a while to train the new reflexes. If Singh wants me to send you over there right away...”

The boss’s mobile softly beeps. Asanovich puts the phone to his ear. They’re telling him something, he’s nodding: “Yes, yes...”

Suddenly his face turns to stone. His eyes wilt.

“When? Horrible... Yes, certainly an inspection...” He puts the phone down. His hand shakes.

“That was the HumDep,” he says. “Singh is dead. Car accident. Hours ago.” §§

**DEATH TO
AMERICA
DEATH TO
ISRAEL**

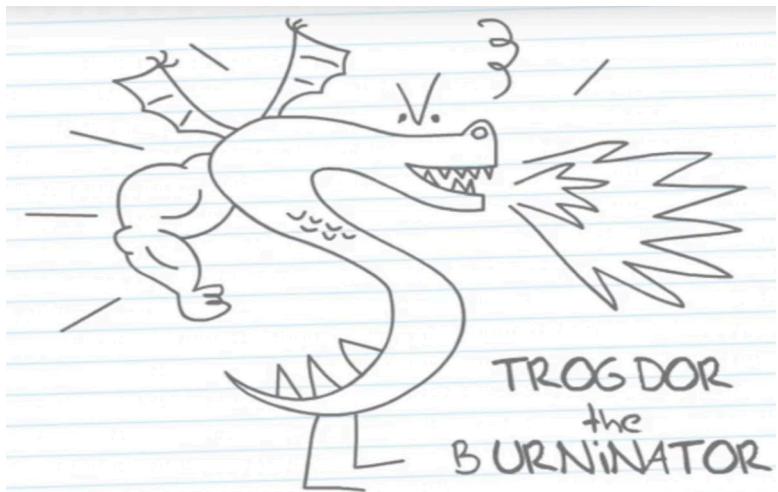
PAID FOR BY FRIENDS OF HAMAS, INC.

**فَلِيسيطين...
شَرْجَرْ**

from Serpent Messiah

HELLO THERE! YES, IT'S ME, Serpent Messiah, your Senior Staff Artist. Please accept my sincerest apologies for my prolonged absence. It's probably best to be upfront about this... I did indeed get caught making thermite in the bathroom at Powell's World of Books. I am so incredibly sorry for that! It was a foolish and irresponsible thing to do, and I deeply regret it. But a deep well of respect for our valued readers has drawn me back, and I'm ready to put all that behind me and get back to what I love most: drawing scenes with just a touch of magic. Attached is just a tiny preview of the new and fun creations I will be excited to share with you in issues to come!

*Truly happy to be with you again,
Serpent Messiah
PAK. CHOOIE. UNF.*



Praise for the Ogdo

I thought I'd never see the end of my diṭṭhiṭṭhānādhiṭṭhāna-pariyuṭṭhānābhinivesānusayānām until I called Hoboken's finest. They had it sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggāya'd within a lifetime. Thanks Ogdo!

—*The Greater Maghada Pervert*

Ruined my marriage.

—“divorced in Seattle”

This smart thinking show why Ogdo #1 brand in the world , excellent tips, Get Ogdo now, help me alot in home and garden, recommend everyone. <https://burgerking.com>

—*Juan Veryportlandlastname*

Great for centipedes.

—*MoistMao69*

I had a very negative view of your magazine before I tried the tips in your Tarot article in my Etsy tarot reading business. Now instead of telling my clients they're on a journey I'm able to perfectly forecast the place and time of their death, and instead of telling them they're radiant channels of the divine feminine, I tell them they're deep into self-delusion as a way of coping with their role of upholding patriarchy and white supremacy. I now understand your grandmotherly kindness, and I will apologize for my words and deeds by driving my Toyota Previa into the local Hallmark's.

—*Indigo CrystalDream*

It's thanks to the Ogdo that I learned to read Sumerian before I could speak English.

—*Mason, age 6*

We do not usually respond to rejected submissions, but we do read all material sent to us, and would like to make this exception to our policy to request you never send us anything again. It was awful and we're not sure if it even qualifies as “fiction.”

—*The New Yorker fiction editors*

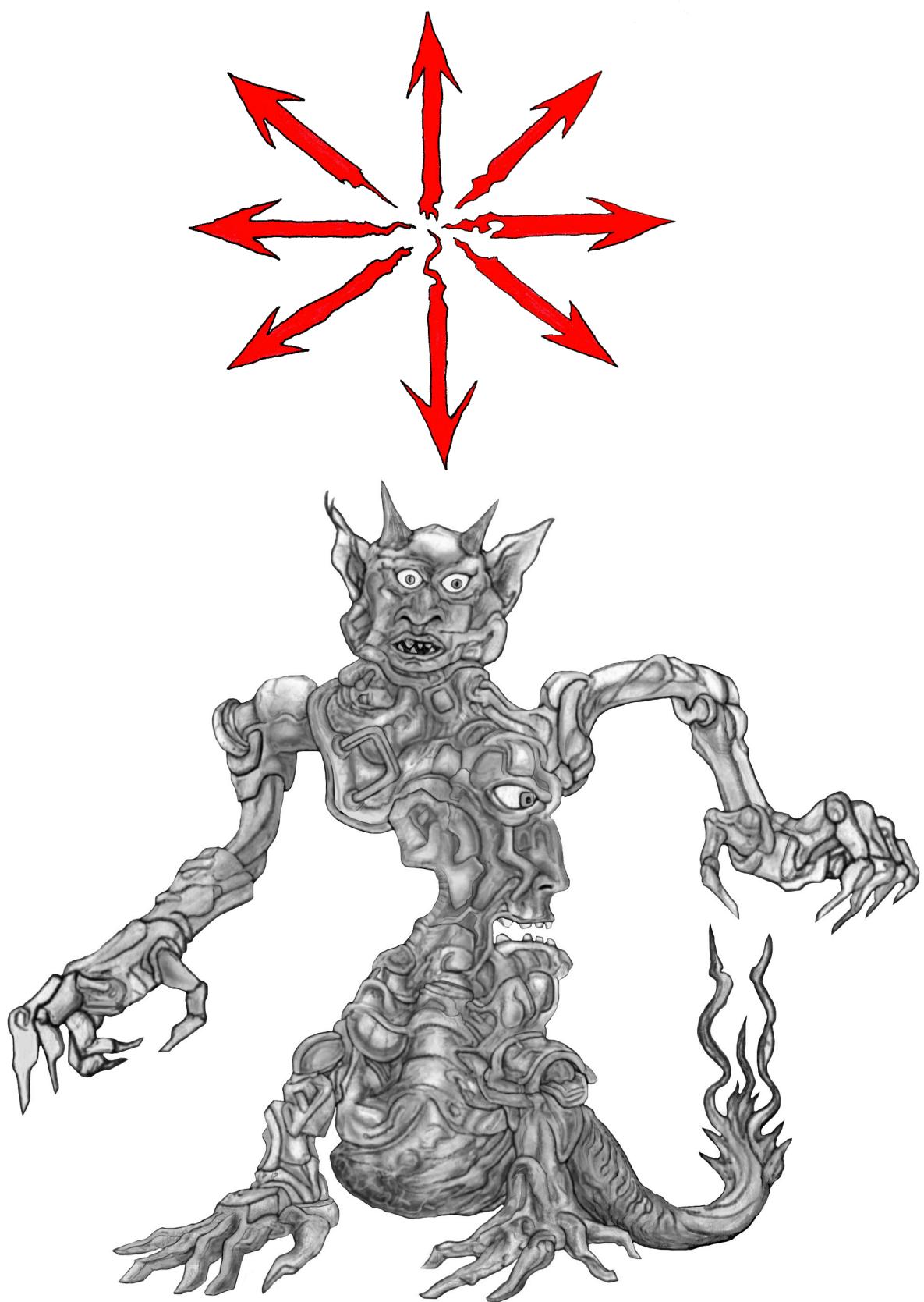
I read this and did not like anything except the ligatures.

—*Blaadokz of Zephelium*

Lost

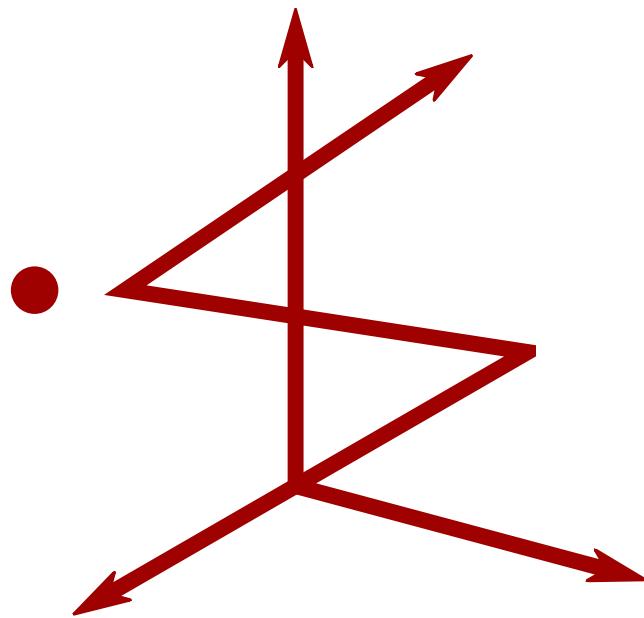
Found

*One of the largest kingdoms
can rule over
as they see fit
after betraying and decimating the expedition
the provider of a majority the kingdom's food
an entity of unknown origin
and crowned himself king.
While not all of them accepted immortality
he was stabbed to death
within the Catacombs
for reasons unknown
responsible for the Age
of how devout
and extended a similar hand
His solution was the lizardmen.
capable of harnessing
Five years into the famine
known for its vast array
to destinations associated with death
We have known for the past 150 years about the possibility
then we must come to the conclusion
we are told that in these far off lands
energy that emanates from
mysterious differences
If we look
corrupt individuals and break minds
to merge power and dimensions such as life and death
with an agenda.*



The Ogdo will return...

00001



**Through smoke and darkness, a mirror;
and our godmother, the spider...**

*The Ogdo spreads through its readers. Pay our
kindness forward. Make copies and give them out.*

