

FEARSOME
CRITTERS
WITHOUT
BORDERS,

With a Few
ONEIRIC
and
SUBCONSCIOUS BEASTS

ISSUE ELEVEN

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PECULIAR MORMYRID

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PROLEGOMENON

FEARSOME CRITTERS

Without
BORDERS,

With a Few

ONEIRIC

and

SUBCONSCIOUS BEASTS



“The lumber regions are contracting.”

-William T. Cox, Fearsome Critters of the Lumberwoods

“Man is perhaps not the center, not the focus of the universe. One may go as far as to believe that there exists above him on the animal level beings whose behaviour is as alien to him as his own must be to the day fly or the whale.”

-André Breton, Prolegomena to a Third Manifesto or Not

At the “Bigfoot Expedition” museum in the southern foothills of the Appalachians, we find, behind glass display cases, objects of reverence: mangled pie-tins, crushed peanut butter jars, tufts of fur, and molds cast from generous hominoid feet. A diorama shows two woodsmen desperately pushing against the door of their cabin—a single furry arm breaks through, while the headphones fill our ears with shouts, grunts, and bangs. Something wants to come in. Like the inverse of some holy annunciation, we find ourselves in the presence of alien relics; the freakshow saints of the forest, promising terror or salvation, in the form of monstrous inside-out evangelism. We know the subversive potential of receiving guests, and especially, of taking seriously what they see, how they see us. All so-called “Enlightenment” stems from these encounters, the perspective of a visitation that throws the (all too misguided) assumptions about the natural order of things into a visible crisis. Strangers come from the depths of the forests and the lakes, from other worlds, from hearsay and whispers, the constellation of unknowns that roughly coagulate into a darksome “out there”.

Some people have found it depressing that there is a scientific classification of the kinds of living things around us (even if it remains changing and incomplete) and imagine that this has somehow “killed” living nature. Others on the contrary still consider the natural environment on the whole as a hostile chaos. But the multitude of creatures rarely cares about whether it has been classified or not, and rarely has concerns that could easily be translated as good or bad. This indifference might be highly compelling, commendable or scary, but so might any curiosity. Mutual curiosity. Who’s

watching whom? Which type of presences do we conceptualize as separate other beings? What is a lifeform? Where does discreteness, integrity and intentionality emerge? What are we literally haunted by? Some things seem to always move around in the periphery of our vision, or in the deep dusk, or in the blackest night, or solidified in rock, or miniaturized, or just on the other side of the house wall. Who's curious about whom then? Who instigates the conversation? When are they incomprehensible and unrecognizable, and when will they take the form of characteristic creatures out of one or the other popular mythology? Is it largely in the eyes of the beholder, or do certain landscapes produce certain beasts, or is it about the cultural setting? When is the landscape already full of creatures of old traditional mythologies? Have those old trolls and elves and werewolves and forest nymphs and pixies and nixies been chased off, or have they colonized new lands? Are they still recognisable and have they evolved? When do more recent popular mythologies, or even contemporary ones, have a free reign? The introjected myths of colonized peoples, the lurkers in the periphery where lonely frontier workers walk, the different types of aliens, the most elusive animal species, and the film monsters! But also the auratic objects that speak to us, or even the trivial ones? The disembodied voices, the vague intentions in the air? Do they intermingle, merge or compete? Who prompts a reclassification of whom? And how do they keep interfering with our lives? Whose messages can we read? Can the provocative absence of their interventions haunt us too? What consequences does it have for the way we perceive and organize life? With whom are we ready to open a conversation? Poets are perhaps the ones that should be least prejudiced, right?

Ultimately, the possibility for something that moves in a different way has obsessed us because it brings with it the chance of extension and transformation of the world, its miseries, its trajectories and so-called inevitabilities. In the 17th century Europe was beset by the sudden visibility of alternate models and societies, the critique came in the form of encounter-texts, often tales of discovery and extended tourism, dialogue, and black humor rebukes of clear and distinct injustices. We cannot help but imagine a new outpouring of imaginative dialogue, not with human visitors this time, but with those mobile “out-there”, the ever-present legendary beasts and fearsome critters, the extra-terrestrial visitors and the hair-raising misinter-

pretations that plague the few remaining and precious zones of ambiguity in our world; whether in the odd geographical corners, pockets of wilderness, or at the cusp of hypnagogic plunge, where the borders of sleep bring us closer to new forms of life. Yes, the time has come for a new encounter and a discussion with the “Philosophical Cryptid”, the hairy Micromegas of the backwoods, the slobbering utopian. Bigfoot leaves her sign in the form of crossed branches; the psychoanalysis of footprints and remnants dares us to interpret more than just the possibility for categorizing some new biota; they ask us to change everything we know about ourselves.

For its next collective excursion, Peculiar Mormyrid sets up camp in the foothills, across the forest, making excursions into all the most remote pastures. Our goal? To find evidence, track movements, gaze at the stars, prepare for our guests, and ultimately, to define a new “Critter Theory” to terrorize our era. Seeking to learn from the varied outputs of the Fortean, UFOlogists and cryptozoologists, from the imaginative hypotheticals of Jules Verne to the systematic sea serpentology of Oudemans and his epigones. We ask what transformative surrealist potential there is in pursuing the “data of the damned”, and simultaneously, celebrate its most extreme and challenging fringes for imaginative power. Beyond just what may or may not be “real”, we want to know what lies behind the phenomena, what joys and terrors and secret desires drive us to pursue such strange extra-scientific researches. Our correspondents have sent along their evidence, their cryptid dreams, their alien encounters; their theories and their local monsters, their psychoanalytic interpretations. They have played games with the sounds of the forest at night, dreamt up localities and beasts. Above all, we are looking for collective experiences and ideas that will contribute to a re-awakening of our own perspective, towards those hovering globules of potential, what Breton invoked as “the Great Invisibles”, that we happily conflate with the monstrosities of the popular imagination.”

SECTION 1

PROVISIONARY
BOARD
for
CRYPTOLOGICAL
METAClassIFICATION



NO FRAMEWORKS FOR FREAKSHOWS

by Jason Abdelhadi

It's not that the popular hunger for something ELSE is apart... The OUT THERE makes occasional appearances in that other temporary outdoor environment we collectively hallucinate has some special stable status... (you call that an "inside?" Points to guts now that is an inside!)

... That is until we see something, just there now, perched on the window-sill... It is in the nature of radical social and ecological uncertainty that the varmints start doing the rounds (at night, when it's hard to see). And we know by now once anything is spotted and enough people think it's "in the air", tendency does a two-step: 1) despair vector projection-booth and 2) souvenirs.

Ratty old horror paperbacks migrate from "free" boxes to "pride of place" behind curated vitrines. Necromancy in the boutique. Sardo—accent on the DO, doesn't sell cheap. Yup, blood, a trend. Means anyway there is a general availability of, and popular appreciation for, the odd, the more-or-less marvelous, the pulp-magical, in a way that has historically not always been that ubiquitous... In that sense, we ought to gather our rose-bloods while we may, and no doubt we will come across many curious things, some interesting, from many curious sources, some tempting, that would in less trendy times have been left for better or for clout to archival obscurity. Throwback to the 1930s, to the Ero-Guro craze, to, well, the surrealist-popular heydays when everyone was doing it... It's a moment. Certainly we do not mind plundering what is primarily a commercial response to social uneasiness and collective anxieties, something surrealism has always availed itself of, when available.

This, needs to be said, is not to imply that there is a simple equivalence between surrealism and any kind of "weird studies", "occulture", etc. Mutual interest at the surface level (bats and grimoires and sex magic and dreams) do not cohere in the index—fundamentally these are not aesthetic or lifestyle material, for surrealists, and they are not even tempting as mascots... No, surrealism chases down the OPPOSITIONAL substratum, a MOVING

point (one could say ROVING) and so cannot commit to one or the other side of “weirdness”, which it views occasionally at best as a relative term, a posture for a given situation, time, place. All that to say there is a distinction to be made between surrealist exploration of phenomena, oddities, popular culture, writing, philosophy and the occult, and that of the “general consumer” looking for a creepy quirk. It is important not to confuse the impetus to explore and potentially weaponize these phenomena from within a movement whose aims are explicitly the transformation of life and the world, with those of... Well, mystery-danglers and confidence folks and such.

Of course we’re dealing with an amorph trend-type commodity shaping thing, and so something that weaves in and out of popular sensibility, commercial prospect, hype, general “taste”... I choose therefore for my Straw Wolf the most articulate/popular expression, and the founders of the “concept”, the podcast and community of “Weird Studies”... And why it just so happens this town ain’t big enough for the both of us... I mean, one half of the highly successful “Weird Studies” podcast, JF Martel, lives here in this fair burg Ottawa Ontario...

The proponents of Weird Studies, despite their affinity for the “irreducible” and the “mysterious”, concede an awful lot of ground to the contemporary WAY of speaking around their chosen subjects... These weird entities which they propose to study each episode, in what one might be tempted to call a “monster of the week” format, except that we hardly a chase scene... No, it’s the usual removed and “off-the-cuff” infotainment experience, where feelings and opinions and riffing come out in that predictable “podcast pacing”. We get a catholic breadth of weird things, ranging in focus, from Tarot, to Philip K Dick, HP Lovecraft, Crowley, Dungeons & Dragons, Deleuze, Magical Thinking, etc etc. Each item is no doubt interesting to some degree, and worthy of some scrutiny and exploration... (But for a half-Canadian thing, surprisingly little focus on Canadian weirdness! Would at least expect to see Guy Maddin, Kids in the Hall, *Are You Afraid of the Dark*, AE Van Vogt...)

Dissection of an episode: in media res, discussion, opinion, relation to ME (oftentimes ME the consumer-artist or me-the-toe-dipper or me-the-fan, me-the-traumatized, whatever...) Then summary, association, analysis, context, personal history... At this point there is plenty to gather for all parties and we should not deny the basic charm in learning something new...

However, by the time it circles around to drawing the “point”, we frequently come to some uncomfortable angles.

First, a love, an obsession with, “irreducible mystery”. It is a point of honor that, for Martel and Ford, whenever they can reduce to the irreducible, they can take comfort in a surface level mystification, indeed almost an explicit mysticism, that is far from what I would consider to be the heavy meaning behind the word “weird”. For them, the moment humankind hits a stumbling block, it becomes a divine limit, a blank wall, a chance to revel in the unfathomable, isolated mystery of it all... Instead of, perhaps, to surrealism, where such limits are CONFRONTED and STORMED, where DYNAMITE IS SET and our EARS PLUGGED—old college try!

And despite their wide breadth, like Jung, Campbell, and their followers, the “Weird Studies” camp seems to want to SYNTHESIZE their findings... Into something essentially crystalline, static, cathedral-esque... You know the type. Dangerous proposition, and not always at the forefront, but certainly the underlying project. Again, to find a weird phenomenon, something actually stunning, exceptional, marvelous, something that can't be swallowed... How to deal with...? Appreciation, fine, admiration, joy and then... Alas... PROCESSING. Everything comes down to what Martel calls “the absolute aloneness before the mystery of being”... Not so hidden (that old time?) mysticism, one that relies on humanism, individualism, and the myth of the lone rebel... One that is, they explicitly say several times, anathema to the group. And here another core divergence from the collective adventure, anti-humanist and no-surrender-to-limitations attitude of surrealism.

We have essentially an individualist and dogmatic bait-and-switch of the truly wild and weird... A passion play, some examples (drawing from the Cronenberg *Naked Lunch* episode, but representative, I think)...FIRST movement is an appreciation of the maverick weirdness and apparent openness that comes from standing against (they use the word SINNING with too much frisson) societal norms. But just when it seems like they are opening up to the point where surrealist research can begin—the point of “what could this mean...” we are immediately diverted into the camp of individualist orthodoxy, the denial of the group, the ineffable mystery before G—er, “something”...

One gets a certain satisfaction hearing these guys discuss “art as criminality” as if being a criminal were the act of lone inspired existential genius,

and not, in 99% of cases, a social collective phenomenon and a subversive TAPPING INTO POOLED RESOURCES...

My fear is that “Weird Studies” as a wide-net is at its worst is just another Jungian/Campbellian cloak for the usual perennialism, irreducible mysticism, foreclosure of thought and capture of actual exploratory traditions into the “safe space” of the lone creator. Several times you will hear them explicitly denouncing or denying the possibility of the existence of “movements”—they call them “constellations of individuals” rather...And perhaps it is no surprise that in half a decade of episodes, and over 150 “weird” topics, the surrealist movement has never tempted them as a standalone topic but only as a straw dog to pit against this or that individual dissident etc. Very good...

(Constellationism... Pseudo-Stirnerite spike in the ground rebel smart alec individualism! Common retreat of the revisionists, and one we have no shortage of in surrealist circles today... Who prefer these informal networks and conveniently portable mobile online feedback loops, who despite their polymorphous collage-fingers make a sticking point of that ONE remaining humanism, conveniently, the very one which makes them a perfect Victim/Snack for the very Critter salivating for their oddbodies and its delectable biomarkers...)

Imagine tying David Cronenberg to Byzantine icon painting...

In an episode of the Future Fossils podcast where the dynamic duo appear on cybernetics, Martel actually explicitly cites surrealism as a “dangerous move” in the 20th century...One that, in his view, sought to take the unique domain of art outside of its bound and aestheticize the governance of life itself. “The line that Dada wants to erase...” (Yes!) For a crypto-individualist, this is too risky a move. It’s interesting that he cites the surrealist movement as triumphant in our contemporary society, for succeeding in actually bringing out this aestheticized cybernetic world today! No, if it wasn’t obvious, surrealism does not see itself represented by the contemporary world... Quite the contrary. The world today is the result of an over-humanizing handbreak pulled to preserve at any cost necessary the individual vessel for economic and social control. It’s the HUMAN that is necessary for them. But the point is: there is no choice. There is no human. There is no separation from life. Martel declares: “Art should be radically free, and therefore radically separated from life.” We see this is an oxymoron, an ultimate constraint on both to ensure there is no danger. Rather they see art as a “regulating”

function, “art as radar, as an early alarm system” rather than as a means of transforming the human.

“Art is a means by which the HUMAN being is able to capture, touch, express, the REAL”

A surrealist might say, what’s with all this ART, HUMANITY, and REALISM, and what does it have to do with the truly exploratory, open, and weird?

“Art is innately...Spiritual...

Simultaneously trying to argue that art is subversive, outside of the frame of reference, antagonistic (sure) BUT that this ALWAYS has to occur in a framework of an individual human (why) and serves ultimately as a kind of conservative inoculation function to push “civilizationizing” forward, by forcing society to confront this aberration. Whereas a surrealist approach has no love or need for the HUMAN, for the salvation or conservation or innovation of CIVILIZATION, quite the opposite...

Things are “restored to their original strangeness” but immediately yinked back to the framework of the singleton creative monomyth...

This is the scam of “radical mystery”... Guernica, Sistine Chapel, whatever... vs “artifice”...

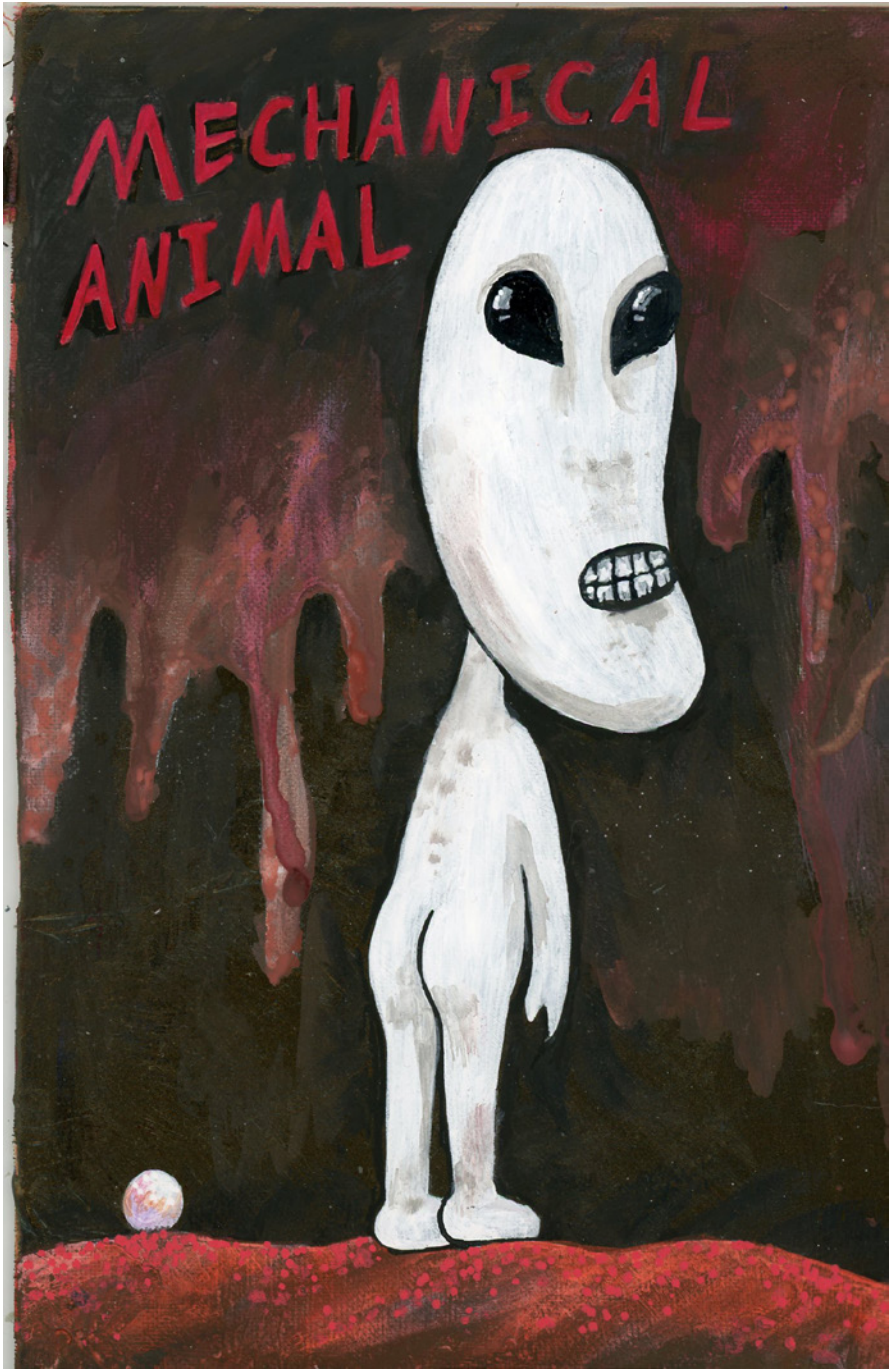
Martel says: “Radical mystery is not a dogma... It’s a simple fact everyone can agree on.” Has there ever been a more condensed articulation of dogma?

Well just to demarcate a little, it’s the surrealist position (I think) basically that you can’t recuperate the exceptions, you can only parody them, and then the only interaction that really meets them on their own terms is to follow them outside... Mystery isn’t radical, it’s a temporary surface qualifier, and rather than mirrorplay and superficial awe we ought to follow our drives and “go too far” and caress those creepy textures... Not to stop and gape at their mystery oh wow, but to perceive and expand the minds and the contexts and the worlds that clash, where claw meets hand, and where the signals get jittery, kick over that dinky little “irreducible crucible” and look up at the beginning of something really new...

-Jason A, Old Ottawa Be Damned



Hazel Cline



A bean-shaped alien emits an orb from his anus while chanting the words mechanical animal repeatedly as related by Steven Cline

Hazel Cline

MONSTRUOS.

JC Otano

Mis experiencias más recientes con lo inusual han tenido que ver, infortunadamente, con la llegada de nuevos monstruos. Raras especies ocasionadas por el cambio climático que se presentan de improviso, y que producen una impresión asociada con lo maravilloso tanto como con el espanto.

El traspaso entre el otoño y el invierno ha abierto, al parecer, un intersticio en la frontera geológica, un istmo de Bering por donde han podido colarse unos diminutos seres vivos, totalmente inadecuados para estas latitudes australes y que han despertado todas las alarmas. Ya no se trata de una nevada en Buenos Aires, acontecimiento que es aguardado con impaciencia cada 70 años, o del descubrimiento de un túnel secreto del siglo XVII cavado por sacerdotes contrabandistas, donde han aparecido los restos de un gliptodonte. Hubo lluvias de tortugas y caracoles en 1909, como las registradas por Charles Fort, y hasta un pez vampiro arrojado por un trompa de agua desde el Río de la Plata hasta el centro de la ciudad (una *Geotria macostroma*, conocida vulgarmente como “lamprea”), con una gran boca en forma de ventosa con la que ataca a los peces para chuparles la sangre. No, nada de eso, es algo que ocurre actualmente en el ámbito del hogar. La primera señal fue una pequeña lagartija, casi transparente, posada sobre el vidrio de una ventana en el living room de la casa. Traté de atraparla con una campana de cristal, para no hacerle daño y llevarla hasta un jardín o dejarla junto a un árbol. La creía lenta como un dragón de Komodo, pero ¡error! era rapidísima, y en un segundo se escabulló detrás de una estufa. Corrí el artefacto pero ya no estaba: se diría que había desaparecido.

Al día siguiente una planta interior de origen africano, que llega casi hasta el techo en la sala del comedor, descubrí que había florecido, sin duda durante la noche. Eran unos pequeños racimos con forma de campanillas que se dice que la planta los produce una sola vez en la vida, y que despiden un perfume tan delicioso que casi llega a ser insoportable.

MONSTERS.

JC Otaño

My most recent experiences with the unusual have unfortunately involved the arrival of new monsters. Rare species caused by climate change that appear unexpectedly, and that produce an impression associated with wonder as well as fear.

The transfer between autumn and winter has apparently opened a gap in the geological border, a Bering isthmus through which tiny living beings have been able to sneak in, totally inappropriate for these southern latitudes and which have raised all the alarms. It is no longer about a snowfall in Buenos Aires, an event that is eagerly awaited every 70 years, or the discovery of a secret seventeenth-century tunnel dug by smuggling priests, where the remains of a glyptodon have turned up. There were rains of turtles and snails in 1909, like those recorded by Charles Fort, and even a vampire fish thrown by a waterspout from the Río de la Plata to the center of the city (a *Geotria macostroma*, commonly known as “lamprey”), with a large sucker-shaped mouth with which it attacks fish to suck their blood. No, none of that, it is something that currently happens in the home environment. The first sign was a small, almost transparent lizard perched on the glass of a window in the living room of the house. I tried to catch it with a glass bell, so as not to hurt it and take it to a garden or leave it next to a tree. I thought the lizard was slow as a Komodo dragon, but oh boy! he was lightning fast, and in a second he was scuttling behind a stove. I ran the artifact but the lizard was gone: it would be said that it had disappeared.

The next day a houseplant of African origin, which reaches almost to the ceiling in the dining room, I discovered that it had flowered, doubtless during the night. They were small clusters in the shape of bells, which it is said that the plant produces only once in a lifetime, and which give off such a delicious perfume that it is almost unbearable. If they offer you a *Dracaena fragrans*, never accept them.

Si te ofrecen una *Dracaena fragrans* no las aceptes jamás. Abrí las ventanas para poder respirar y con la llegada del atardecer acudieron para polinizarlas cientos de mariposas negras bastante inquietantes, nunca antes vistas.

Tuvimos que ahuyentarlas con sábanas y toallas. Al cabo de tres días las flores se secaron y todo volvió a la normalidad. Otras especies que antes correspondían a climas subtropicales se fueron aclimatando en zonas habitualmente frías: loros, escorpiones, y mosquitos que transmiten el dengue y la chikungunya.



Fossilisk

Irene Plaszewska

I opened the windows to be able to breathe and with the arrival of sunset hundreds of quite disturbing black butterflies, never seen before, came to pollinate the plant.

We had to scare them away with sheets and towels. After three days the flowers dried up and everything returned to normal. Other species that previously corresponded to subtropical climates gradually acclimatized in usually cold areas: parrots, scorpions, and mosquitoes that transmit dengue and chikungunya.



Hazel Cline

SECTION 2

CLANDESTINE
CONGRESS
of
GREAT
INVISIBLES



LOOKING TWICE AT THE BUST

by *Emma Lundenmark*

The first time we passed it, I wasn't really sure what I saw. I got a hunch though, about sadness. Still, it could actually have been just a bust. A white stone bust of a woman, standing there in the grass as we passed it, strolling along the small path. But then I stopped while my friends kept on walking. I was convinced that I was mistaken. It was not a bust – it must have been two white snakes coiled around each other.

I went back to take another look and now it was obvious. The two albino snakes interlocking, stretching in opposite directions, with their bodies forming her bare breasts and the proud and distinguished face on top. I walked over to my friends and told them about it. At first they agreed.

“Yes, they are snakes.”

“Sure, pretty snakes!”

But soon I realised they were making fun of me, secretly chuckling through their teeth. Now they were convinced that I was mad. They had just waited for me to prove it. A few days later, they sent me away to Eva, the outcast, but fortunately she had seen the snakes too. In the small cage in the glade where the bust was, everything turns into its double.

Eva lived in a mausoleum in the church yard. She was hidden in the last picture on the wall in the room furthest in, surrounded by a fruit garden, painted by a devil's finger. She sure looked scary, but she was in fact always very polite to me. She actually taught me everything I know about aliens.

Once there was a party in the large room in the crypt. I was hiding, watching their giant bodies from behind a pillar. They were made of marble, these alien stone creatures coming alive, one arm or leg at a time.

It seemed as they already knew me, that they were waiting for me for some reason. They moved closer and closer. Their eye-sockets empty, light grey as if every shadow on their bodies threatened to see me and tear me apart.

I managed to slip away, but they were coming for me, slowly gliding towards me. I hurried to Eva's room, with my back pressed against the wall, but again, she was hiding in her painting. Instead, I found an opening behind me, in the chicken wire covering the window pane, where I squeezed my way out just in time.

It was not until I landed with my feet on the grass, that I saw the grey shadowed infant in my arms. Light grey as the rest, but oh, so soft. I must have stolen her somehow, without remembering.

Now it was too late to turn around. I heard Eva's voice rattle in my chest. "Young lady, don't you dare walk into that chamber."

But soon the infant's silent cry conquered all the rest.



Looking Twice at the Bust
Emma Lundenmark



Steven Cline

TRANSFIGURATIONS

by Jane Robert Foster

A woman stands with a cup.
I drink it.
I am transformed into an ibex.
The mountains are rocky.

The *** are close by.
In the cave.
They sing to me sometimes.

Elaborate figurations of sonic webs.
Unintelligible emotional gestures.

Fornications abound everywhere in every direction.

I challenge a rival male to a duel.

I dissolve into him.

Our heads fuse.

We walk along the edge of the cliff face.

Two bodies and one head, in tandem.

I am a water spirit.

I evaporate into the liquid night.

I am everywhere.

A glow emerges from the granules of soil.

I emerge a worm.

I engage the sunlight rain.

I am eaten by a *** .

They prepare me with fine herbs and chemical treatments.

They say prayers and incantations over my dead flesh.

They distribute the tattered fragments of my body amongst them.

I am a ***.

I expel air from the flaps in my chest.

I sing.

I sing.

I sing.

How the mood the moon grants
Caresses my front finger thinking.

How the overflow of salt pine
Eases the urge to stress
Over the location of pinewood dreams.
I'll go there again,
Maybe in another 72 years,
Maybe in another 238.
Either way, patience pays off...
Probably.

I sit by the fireliquiddoor.

I count my chickens.

There may be enough to make it to morning.
If not, the smell will wake the whole cave
With painful firewood nostalgia.
Can't do that, can we?

Rapid sleep cycles.
Dream and wake and sleep and dream and wake.
50 times a second.

The portaldreams are particularly florid.
They take on the form of ibex belly-smell.
And warm fur comfort.

I wonder when they will come again.
Time will tell...



The Great Invisibles

Rik Lina

HEATSEEK

for RM

by *Peter Dubé*

In imitation of orbit. In appetite for revelation. An exposure. An unveiling. A pair of searching pools of light course with brutal regularity, descending from this pair of isolated towers: luminous raptors plunging from the peaks to scan a landscape. Each one as broad as a man's reach, if eager to encompass what he sought. First one swirls by; and then the next. Then back again, a metronomic light: a tick-tock revelation. In the high tower that is their source some presence guides them surely, but remains invisible. Only the racing, predator illumination appears, following, just, the possibilities of escape. Passing above barriers of blades, barbed wire at the limits of the sanctioned world, pausing in their sinister trajectory only to make plain.

First one frothing aureole of light embracing, holding close, the chalk marked pattern of an imagined alphabet spelling hope. The next stop shows a diminutive castle assembled in blocks of coloured wood. A keep in alternating yellow, red and intermittent blue assembled in the idle hours of some unknown afternoon. By children maybe, or by those who guard them. Then track left.

The target of the targeting contains just three rings spun in white and glittering sand. A reminder, or a hint, a trace of a diminished circus perhaps. A floor plan for one just as likely, but no clowns or tigers, feats of strength or soaring acrobatics inhabit to distract. No spectacle. No laughter. No centre to these circles. This emptiness. Track left once more.

A dancing horse. A toy. A model. A reproduction rising on hind legs to paw abandoned air with hooves a lone man, or was it, lacquered red. The head tossed back. The mane tracing potential pathways into space, white teeth caught in the glare. One hears an unspoken call to stampede here, to break through walls and falsify corrals. Now track left again.

a box with lid askew. Impossible to see its contents. All potential lost to sight. The light tilts up and crawls towards the violent enclosure. Along its way another vision seizes searching light.

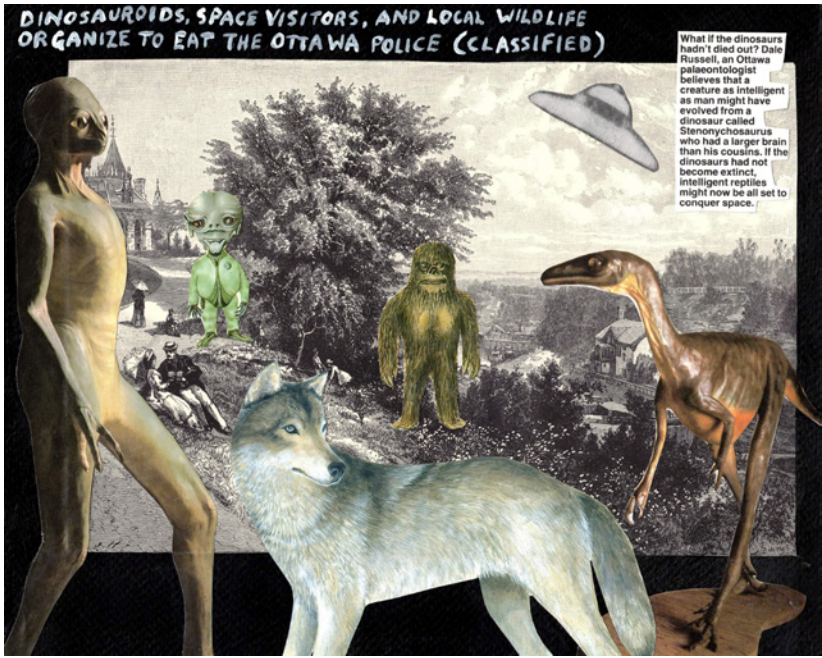
A photo. A human face is mutilated with violent crosshatched marker leavings. Who was it? How might he, she, or they, respond to their erasure in this way. Move on.

Four footprints in the sand. The human passage, like the beams will not be interrupted. They lead towards a limit in this space. The birds of dazzling light move with them.

The fence itself. Tumult of metal and rough posts. But here a hand has come and cut its way outside; made new space, new possibilities and left no news to follow. And now, a left again. The searchlights stop. Startled. Stunned. Immobile at last.

They rest on something calling to be named: some beast. Something impossible, or the appearance of it. A thing unknown. The first impulse is to scream out quadruped, but no. The entity is supine, the upper limbs stretched out above the massive head, because the skull is vast and all four extremities end in rapacious claws. The back lined from neck to what must be called a tail with protuberances, all spikes. And the organism stirs as light achieves it. Pushes the earth away and rises to its hindmost limbs to stand. The huge head blinking in the glare as — unthinkable to not observe — the jaw drops. And drops.

The maw is ringed with teeth. Both sharp and long, as pointed as a knife or bitter argument and still the lower jaw descends, more expansive than any python's: the endless mouth of a mythic serpent gone in search of an archaic narrative. And when it stops the open maw conceals the whole of the improbable, still living, form; this thing is mouth entirely, all open, all ready to engulf and there — at the deep point of the spreading jaws, the gorge — an image of the severed fence, the open hole, is echoed, the place where something has been cut apart. Where something comes unbarred. The echo of the lights' last meaningful pause. The questing, feasting lights that eat up everything speak at last, in this. Make space, they say. Escapes are made in ways, and means, are manifold. Find one. And make it yours.



Vittoria Lion



Vittoria Lion

SECTION 3

The
PEOPLE'S
REVOLUTIONARY
OUTPOST
of
ELSEWHERE
EXPLORATION



A NEW CRITTER THEORY: CONJUNCTIVE REALITY OF THE UNIVERSAL BELLY

by LaDonna Smith

The truth of the theory of Big Bang is certainly creative by mathematical standards, but remains questionable by Surrealist research. As we know the mind of god is present only in the dream state, where answers to questions not fully formed make their way into the Consciousness we can't define. That which is present in the Universe we revere as unfathomable, and of which there is no question concerning truth or reality that can be comprehended as real. For this reason I shall proceed to define the Universe as we know it as the Universal Belly of the gods, and that would include you. Think of life outside the body as we see it with our highly developed eyeballs, brain matter and consciousness. We can explain the wonder of the afterlife as the open eye's perception as it is awake, but in reality we sleep in our misperceptions of life and the universe, we have only a partial perception of reality or infinity, or parallel dimensions of reality, including connection to the mystery of the solar system and its parallel universes in the guts of the gods.

Our world is a construct inside the bowels of an animate living being. Although this theory may seem sordid and preposterous, there are facts that point to this revelation!

As it is known by physics that there are many stars and planets in the solar system, and proven that there are many solar systems discovered beyond those that have been revealed, withstanding the possibility of an infinite multi-virtuality that lay beyond the beyond of outer space. This brings us to the question of the environments we possess inside our own bodies being the reality of inner space. The formation of life in truth, diverse states contained in outer space that in fact could be you, the unknowable entity, seen as the dark nothingness, reduced as the mystery of life and the god of the universe!

You are the Universe! Millions and millions of electrical impulses, thirty trillion cells exist in the human or “god” body. That’s 30,000,000,000! Close your eyes and imagine the environment inside your very own skin. There are microscopic colonists, and more than half the body is not human. There are fungi, viruses, bacteria, and even more recently explored archaea in the darkness of the bowels of one human body. The fact that our galaxy as we perceive it is only one of many galaxies in the infinite universe of universes (as we as humans are aware), is like there are so many micro-biomes in your personal bowels! Who’s to say what creatures lurk within that parameter. And based on the scope of the existent infinitude of tiny particles and elements, our universe is no less than the bowels of a greater creature beyond our imaginations. The human world could be a construct inside the bowels of an even greater animation, a living being beyond our comprehension!

So be it. As without is as within; as within is as without!

I dreamt exactly that. In my dream I saw a cave full of live archaea going about their business living in the salivary surfaces of the soft palate of a mouth and disappearing into a black hole, it led into this tunnel (just like that described in certain extraordinary “Life after Death” accounts.) And this tunnel was highly populated, actually over-populated with tiny squirming little microscopic entities slipping deeper into an even larger deep dark cavity swimming in acids while transmorphing into an exorbitant excess of tightly clustered orgiastic maggots, all squirming for rank and precedence just like human beings on the blue planet we call earth! Where clearly we have too many people in the world in my perception of earth, there are too many maggots writhing in the tunnel funnel of the universe of a human digestive system!

I always thought that all human babies are ugly, and to me all human babies look alike. Just like that, all maggots are ugly and all maggots look alike! Over-population of maggots, like over-population of yeast, or people for that matter, is a real problem upsetting harmony and balance in any digestive system. That poses the question:

Is this to imply that perhaps the Cosmos is a digestive system? We

clearly know that scientists cannot see, nor fathom the entire thing. Actually, turning back to the reality of the universal colon and the plethora of maggots, I came to the realization, that I (as a maggot) was just an ingredient in the universal cosmic soup! Cooking like hell, just as diverse and wild as the hell of a Hieronymus Bosch, and this must actually be a hell as a human. Too many maggots in the soup! And so I awoke in my dream to realize that I had just been swallowed down a long esophagus into a vat of acids, painfully confusing from my previous utopian life as a piece of cake in the window!

The experience was scary but exciting like a vacation trip through the tunnel of the Hershey Chocolate factory, a human tourist attraction, whereupon seated in the whimsical floating carriage on a canal, and entering an cave-ride into a darkened tunnel, took one through a spectacular panoramic view of how a Hershey bar came to be. From the entrance to the attraction, I experienced the hype and education on how Hershey made his bar (and his mint) by creating a sugary treat, only to pop up at the end of the tour inside the blindingly bright Hershey store, where dead chocolate was no longer warm, gooey and alive, but molded into hard, cold hunks, wrapped like cadavers in aluminum and paper and sold in an endless array of shapes and sizes for a price! (Finally out of the tunnel, finally I find that I must revisit the surreal condition of birthing.)

Connect the reality of maggots as people. Thousands of them squirming collectively vying for personal space, zigzagging on crowded sidewalks, thousands of them squirming, only this time not in the large intestine, but in Tokyo, Mexico City or New York! Entities like maggots all living a sordid life waiting to be processed into another reincarnation reminiscent of humans in a large cityscape, not unlike maggots in the colon, all clocking out at 5:00 o'clock or later! It is well known, and I quote, that "the greatest concentration of microscopic life is in the dark murky depths of the oxygen-deprived bowels." (unknown)

So when Life throws you a curve of inevitable misfortune, your day-to-day bull-shit, grievances and irritations, I entreat you to look up to the dead stars and planets in the sky, and imagine yourself in the belly of the universe, which although not yet proven by science, you could well be the maggot life in the guts of the gods.

Back to Meta-science:

As you know, there's the condition of the decline of the human brain. In the modern debate on reality, dementia is taking its toll on the human population as plaques and abnormal fragments. Clusters build road blocks between networks, blockages & tangles in and of un-co-operative neurons. But we know that neurons are the critters of the brain. They are the most valuable work horses that labor carrying signals of truth and gossip across the synapse, like housewives on the phone, and are clearly responsible for much of the dysfunction and absurdity of human existence. However, looking into the future, into the Crystal Ball of infinite possibility, there could be a great flip, a complete turn-around from this dysfunction, as electrical impulse (and gossip) like lightning ignites the equivalent of a forest fire in the human brain, in effect ravaging the entire environment, and then the host entity implodes, and creates a whole new Big Bang! Then what?

That mind (the "greatness of god") dies out like distant stars have already done, as only the past can be seen in the present when the eye is open, though powerful dreams tell us the future and truth that life truly awaits us in the arena of the unknown, and in the rogue subconscious of loose imagination we are confidently sprayed into the almighty void of sleep and dreaming to reunite with the dark matter from which poetry arises. And thus from this humble cogitation, this intangible truth based in sheer imagination and dreaming, the mare of the night, I leave you with this cosmic rhythm; in the musical iambic pentameter:

— / — / — / — / — /

"the curfew tolls the bell of parting day"
and the maggots presence in the large intestine
is the music of the Universe as we perceive it
as sure as stars & planets may one day
be eaten as the fast food of the Gods.

See fig.1 below:

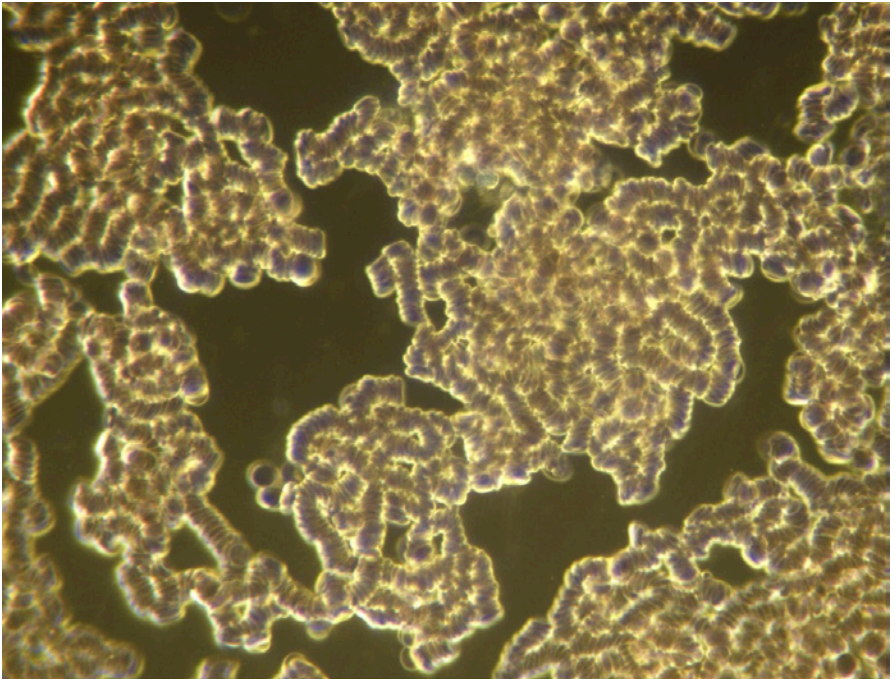


Fig. 1: A new Critter Theory: Conjunctive Reality of the Universal Belly

SACRED WARRIOR

by Janice Hathaway

Out of the deepest dusk
an ancient being solidifies
I see

An ominous rumble
pierced by the snap of teeth
I exist

Beware your approach
the ax awaits your inattention
I listen

Control your curiosity
think again before you approach
I wait

Changes in reality
not subject to psychoanalysis
I seek

Terror is my joy
defying your classification
I celebrate



Sacred Warrior
Janice Hathaway



Svalan - 24

Svalan Sörblom

DESIRING OBJECTS

a film by Steve Morrison and Colin Wheeler



film stills

watch at <https://peculiarmormyrid.com/desiring-objects>

MY LIFE ASLEEP: EXTRACTS TAKEN FROM A DREAM JOURNAL

by *David Belcher*

Skeleton in a field of twisting grass



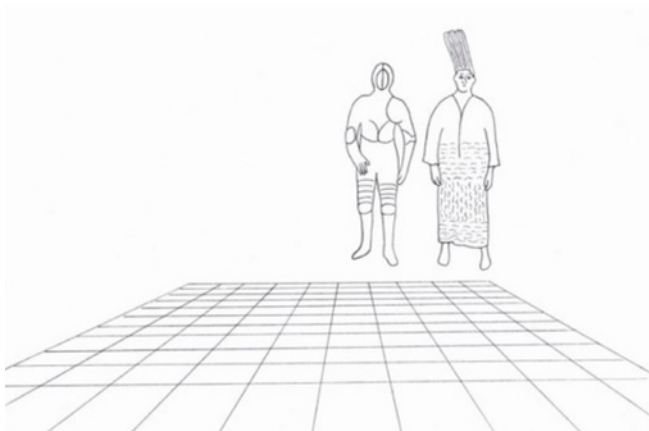
The sky is clear and blue. I am standing in a field.
A figure appears far away. It walks toward me.
The figure is a skeleton. I lie down.
Grass blades twist around my body.



Invasion of the Bubblemen

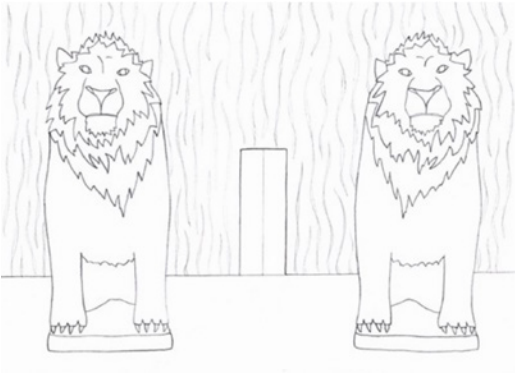
Stars are falling. Each star is a bubble.
Every bubble carries in it a furry grinning man.
Bubbles burst when they reach the ground.
Bubblemen invade our homes.
People are carried away.

Glass snake in a white light



A glass snake floats in a white light.
Inside the snake there is an engine.
Soldiers enter the snake's open mouth;
they carry out the engine and replace it with a claw.
Two men appear above a pattern of squares.
One man wears silver armour. The second man
is plump and he wears a colourful kaftan.
His red frizzy hair is a leaning tower.
'That's ironic,' he says looking at the snake.
He looks at me and says to the silver man,
'He doesn't understand irony.'

City of the future



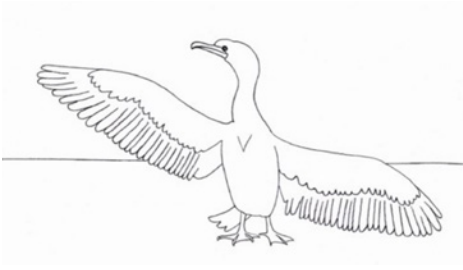
Two giant lions guard tall doors in the glass wall.
The door opens. I glide past the lions into a vast shadowy space. People float about in glass boxes. I drop into a spinning rainbow-coloured funnel into a strangely perfect country landscape.

Green soldier



There is a soldier in a forest.
He is made from leaves and he carries a leafy gun.
Strangers take the soldier apart one leaf at a time until a woman holds his mind in her cupped hands.
It glows like a light bulb.

Wendy's house



As I pass my sister's house I look through a window
and see my sister dressed in a red wedding gown.

As I pass my sister's house I see a large owl perched
on the roof. The road outside the house is a river of fire.

As I pass my sister's house I look through a window
and see a dancing cormorant.

Fractal Nexus



The city is flooded.

I stand on a slab of concrete beside a ruined house.
An old man behind me points at a churning cloud
that rolls across the water.

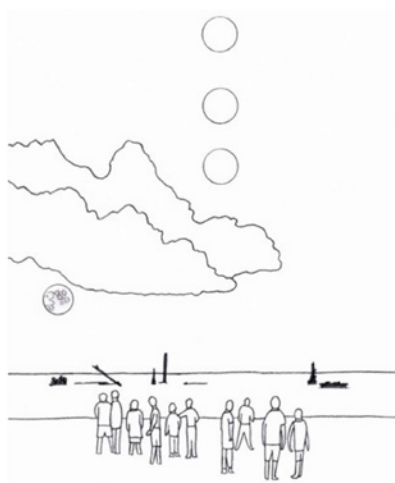
He says, 'That is the Fractal Nexus.
It will destroy everything.'

Mechanical baby



A crazed woman appears at my window.
I open a door and find two babies on the doorstep.
One baby is pink and wrapped in blankets.
The second is a mechanical baby wrapped
in an oil cloth. I pick up the mechanical baby.

Last walk



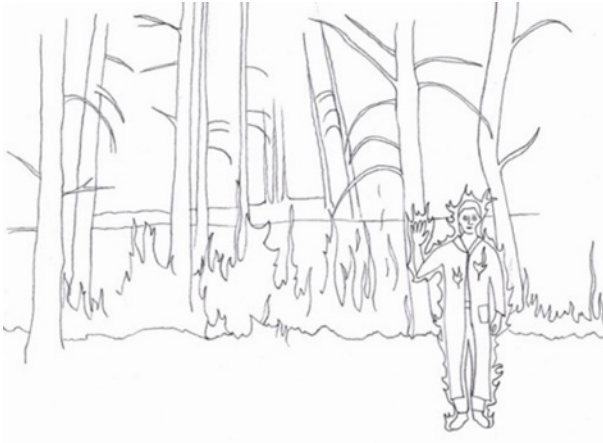
A road leads to a beach. My sisters are beside me.
I say, 'Let's go for our last walk.'
There are three suns in the sky and storm clouds.
A crowd gathers. The moon appears.
Strange black structures rise from the sea.

Eye of the ancients



My sister Wendy walks away along a street.
I follow. I climb steps into a dimly lit house.
In one bare room I find a black dog.
It does not look friendly.
Carved into the floorboards is an eye.
The dog says, 'That is the eye of the ancients.'

Firestarter



I cross a street and walk toward a row of shops.
There is a painting of a burning forest in a shop window.
A man in the picture stands with one hand raised.
He is on fire. The painter has signed the painting
'Firestarter.'

SECTION 4

SUBTLE
SINGULARITIES
SISTERHOOD



AND THE TREE HUNG DOWN BREATHLESS AND CAUGHT

by Erin K

It looked Azul with wine darkened eyes.
The eclipse of its form frenetic and bare.
What was it?
Plumage with olive branch brows and miniature sways
A fine roaming desert on the line of its head
Pomade beach with a crescent of sand to its breast
A teardrop of green and moss on the crown
And the beak.
The beak—how it dangled in its long, thoughtful pause.
It was a moving stone.
A bird of feathers, tapestry like limbs and luminous talons
With a gait of swaggering nostalgia
a papier-mâché mountain tipped askew
And a loose tie of wilted watercolors that trailed after him like
 his lips of devastated grins
The long thunder of his legs had a strut so hypnotic like the
 mirage that offers the wicked promise of some great access
It velveted the dreamscape with the lands wide severing
and I watched it until the myth bit me in half

MISSHAPEN

by Hazel Cline

tonight i have paws
long and misshapen
i walk on them
wishing away their paleness
with the mud
sharpening the nails
on the stones into claws

i walk between the columns
of this living temple,
the woods
i breathe the teeming black
that pools among the roots
and in my lungs
the night distills
into a howl

i search with my eyes in the night
wishing away their weakness
with the light of longing
“show me,” i ask,
“the face I fear.
reveal my fracture.
i must repair it and be real.”

ahead, a glow.
i creep
nearer, a fire.
my stomach sick, i see

the visages alight
so like my own but not
everything I fear is here
these people for whom I care
these creatures that I fear

i shudder and sweat
at the ring of their firelight
at the uncanny human gaze
that sears my phantom limbs
that reals my thoughts
that desiccates the offering
of my soul
on the altar
of their opinion



Black Dog
Corrina Ulrich

ADRIFT IN A BLUE HUM

by Erin K

The moon hung like a pot of honey
and I could feel the warm evening stars drip into my mouth.
I was asleep in a room full of books
when a bluebird flew into my throat
like a rabbit's head
I swallowed it whole
and it nestled in my lungs
where I could see the moon through its eyes —
It was so beautiful there, so much like home that I couldn't
bear to say goodbye.



Sea Beast

Corrina Ulrich

CARTOMONST'RY: A BESTIARY GAME

by *Ryan Chiang McCarthy*

In his tale of the huge fish Peng that transforms into the colossal bird Kun, Zhuangzi cites a wonder book called *The Jester of Qi*. He probably made this book up, so it falls to us to make our own guides to monsters and the places they inhabit. Here's one way to do it, using an ordinary poker deck with the diamond suit removed.

What the Cards Mean:

Face cards are landmarks; pip cards are creatures or creature traits.

Hearts ♥ are **aquatic**; Clubs ♣ are **terrestrial**; Spades ♠ are **aerial/celestial**.

For landmarks: Jacks are **natural features** (cavern, grove, river, etc), Queens are **structures** (bridge, beehive, tomb), and Kings are **traces** of past or distant events (mountain split by battling demons, a cloud in the shape of a dead hero, trees leaning in longing or fear)

Creature ranks correspond to a scale of weirdness from **faint** (low) to **mythic** (high). Aces = 1. Example: The Ace of Clubs is a deer with a long green tail, the 10 of Clubs is a tiger-faced moose god whose gaze makes antlers grow on anyone it sees. Creature cards can also be different traits of the same creature. If I draw a 3 of Hearts, a 2 of Diamonds, and a 9 of Clubs I might say, *There is a creature here with the body of a blue bat (2♠) and three red mantis heads that take turns singing when it flies (9♣). Their voices sound like a waterfall (3♥).*

Interpret the cards as loosely and with as many implications as you like.

Order of Play:

Draw a Hand

Each hand provides details for a locale. Draw till you get a face card (Jack, Queen, or King). The face card plus any pip cards you drew make the hand.

Describe the Locale

Based on the hand you drew, describe the locale and the creatures that live there. If the first and only card you drew was a face card, consider it both a landmark and creature card.

Take a Passage

Pick out some feature of the locale which leads to the next, such as a road or a creature's migration, then draw a hand for the next locale.

A Sample Play-through:

5♣ 2♥ 7♠ 8♥ K♠

Walking west you come to Egret Cloud (K♠) which circles above a pool. The merry egret (7♠) passed over this pool where the cobalt toad (8♥) dwells; the jealous toad threw three of his cold eyes at the egret, so the egret became a cloud. Beside the pool the cobalt toad sits at the mouth of a cavern. His remaining nine eyes are ice marbles- if you flick one it will send the other eyes rolling around his face, and he will be quite still until they settle. Just inside the cavern you will find a moss child (5♣) holding a transparent fish (2♥) in either hand. The right fish will cure memory and the other will cure duty.

4♥ 5♠ A♣ A♠ K♣

The cavern extends for several miles north before opening again upon the garden (K♣) which the cinnabar orangutan (A♣) planted to attract the shark-faced heron (4♥, 5♠). On the east side it is planted with solemn jujube, on the west side with mirthful asarum. At the center the heron is perched at the ledge of a porphyry fountain (A♠). It has two shark faces- one gnaws the corpse of the cinnabar orangutan and the other declaims the glory of temperance.

J♥

The blood of the cinnabar orangutan flows west and joins the Sour River where it cascades. A yellow nudibranch is swimming up the cascade- in 500 years it has come halfway. In another 500 years it will reach the top and swim to Lake Impertinence where it will become the Star Manta and destroy the world. If you help it further up the cascade it will tell you a secret.

J♠, 6♣

The Sour River flows west until it grows wings and flows in a spiral into the heavens where it wraps around the paw of Leo (J♠). On the left bank three green bear skins (6♣) lie in a circle- if you walk by them they will rise in the breeze, encircle you, and offer you marriage. Two of them will smother you to death but one will let you ride the wind.

6♥ 4♠ 7♣ 8♣ 10♥ 9♠ Q♣

As you're smothered, your specter drifts south till you enter a marsh fragrant with sweetgum and durian. There rises from the marsh the Shrine of the Leaf (Q♣), built of beryl and rosewood. A single leaf of unknown tree floats above the amber altar- snow falls from the leaf's bottom side, but flames rise from the upper. The priest is an owl-footed moon jelly (10♥, 4♠) swimming in a quartz bowl (7♣) carried by three blue-robed acolytes whose left arms join at a shared hand. In their right hands they hold sprigs of basil, which they dip in the bowl and then shake at your spectral body. Where the droplets land they harden and become green- you are becoming a jade statue of yourself (8♣), but your right hand has dragonfly wings and longs to take flight. From a chink in the temple wall a shaft of sunlight cuts through your jade wrist and sets your hand free. This hand is in fact the god Dragonfingers (9♠).

THE SOJOURNER OF MILD HALLWAYS

by Erin K

The winged hooves began to coppice the woodland
First the eye and then the rest of the face swallowed us up
The spiral of the trees
footsteps and entities
inside the cloaked and drifting mist
We all moved like nests of oranges
Tripping silently the veils between the dark dense doorways
Feathered fangs stared through the veridian
The oculus hungry for the cool nectar of our forgetting thoughts
Bees half frozen combed their honey with ferocious tails nipped from
the breeze
And caressed hellishly from the foes of melting violins
Hot from the stone the devils milked our melting silhouettes
packed us away and buried us in the perfume of leaves long dead
These crooked crags hallowed our marrow
And let the sun pasteurize like the dust of a red giant
collapsing and corrupting the nurtured beasts
that rest their prisms in between the hidden skies
Sinister and glowing with gold in its gullet
A muted shape appeared
once like a deer's head flickered through the flames of the lamp
It skittered and progressed like a beetle wing that sang its movements
like the bones of a thing you wished wasn't found
It had crawled in from the night using borrowed warmth and the music
of stone vessels
There were arms clumsy and unused protruding from its haunted oak
Like smoke it could vanish and appear and trick the listening ear
As it slid over the bodies of the ceramics the wool and the Persian ice baskets

One furrowed in bleak distress how to extinguish this cobbled phantom drift
But with the intention crept the answer
like gooey drapes over the imprecise border of a dream imposter
the life began to stutter as hues of dusty ambrettas sprang like quiet lava
the shape that arrived to haunt was reduced to a frightful splinter
Gone and pulled away
Through attics allies and the canopy of sleeping ground



Giis

Corrina Ulrich

ATOMS UNALONE

by Hazel Cline

i thought i saw a ghost
it was only reflection
in a darkly tinted window

my face interrupts the pristine black
an empty plane broken by
 an act of recognition
an illusion?
or is this horror a truer image
of myself than ought before my
mirrored eyes has passed?

i sink into the deep places
behinds my lids
i feel my smallestnesses
growing big
the hollow spaces between my atoms
expand into eternal vacuums
those hollow spaces between my atoms
scream

scream to find themselves
unalone
my flesh is haunted
by my flesh
the emptiness in me, a universe
recoiling at my disease
what is this
that teams, enfleshed,
across my empty innocence?

what is this
that creeps in sordid
mystery through the night?

what is this thing, this life?
and what, this life in me?
this dark cryptic force
that makes of me a monster

I am a monster and
my heart is a poltergeist

Listen to a sound interpretation of *Atoms Unalone* at
<https://peculiarmormyrid.com/atoms-unalone>



Hazel Cline

SECTION 5

ASSOCIATION
for the
PROMULGATION
of
EXTRA-LINNEAN
ZOOLOGY



THREE PROCESSIONS OF INTRINSIC FERTILITIES

by Jason Abdelhadi, Mattias Forshage, Lake, JR

JA, MF and L play on April 26th a round of the Ottawa Surrealist special invented by L and JR, called “Blueballing.” A collective drawing game, where players take turns making additions to a set of drawings passed around. Though instead of the usual transformations where players make their own interpretations of previous elements and are able to integrate them into a new gestalt that they are allowed to develop and emphasise, in this game players are forced to interrupt the drawing and switch sheets among each other as soon as another player suggests it. Thus it is intermediate stages of the interpretations that keep being passed around, before they are allowed to settle according to a single person’s vision, and they keep changing. The process can be described as a kind of perpetual *coitus interruptus*, and the resulting image is likely to be a rather impersonal vision that no single player can identify with, an energized scene, a snapshot of a transformative drama, reeking with ribbing and ratcheting. Very dialogical but in a sense also very disrespectful, quite messy and vandalic, though often very distinct and illuminating. In this case, many of the thematic undertones of the “Fearsome Critters” theme emerged more or less spontaneously from our preoccupation with the topic.

An analytical and interpretive conversation followed, in which Jessica Rousseau joined in, the highlights of which are transcribed here. In addition, during this discussion, MF was drawing some re-interpretations of the images as revealed, which were then also discussed.





Interpretive Discussion:

Kind of reminds me of what we used to do, the Bestiary thing, describing the habitats and environments. This one feels like a group of different...

Yes it's a cluster environment. It's not an environment, it's a "meta-environment."

Yes more so than any specific figure.

Is there a word for that, "inter-ecology" or something? A totality of ecologies? Or a map of ecologies?

Some kind of taxonomic bio-web of all the living things...

It might have something to do with meta-population dynamics... That things that survive might be spilling over into other worlds. But when they do, these different ones have to keep being recolonized because otherwise they will go extinct.

What I am really very pleased about here is I started to draw a tombstone and then the thing in the middle starts to look more cuticle-like, which we had a discussion about, how Chickadees apparently know how to peck your cuticle if you grab them. I see it got replicated sometimes as a tombstone and sometimes as a kind of finger or cuticle. It did repeat somehow as both forms. Really odd that that happened.

It also sort of looks like one of these oldschool petrol pumps that just needs a handle beside it.

So maybe this is just a gas-station.

That's what it is.

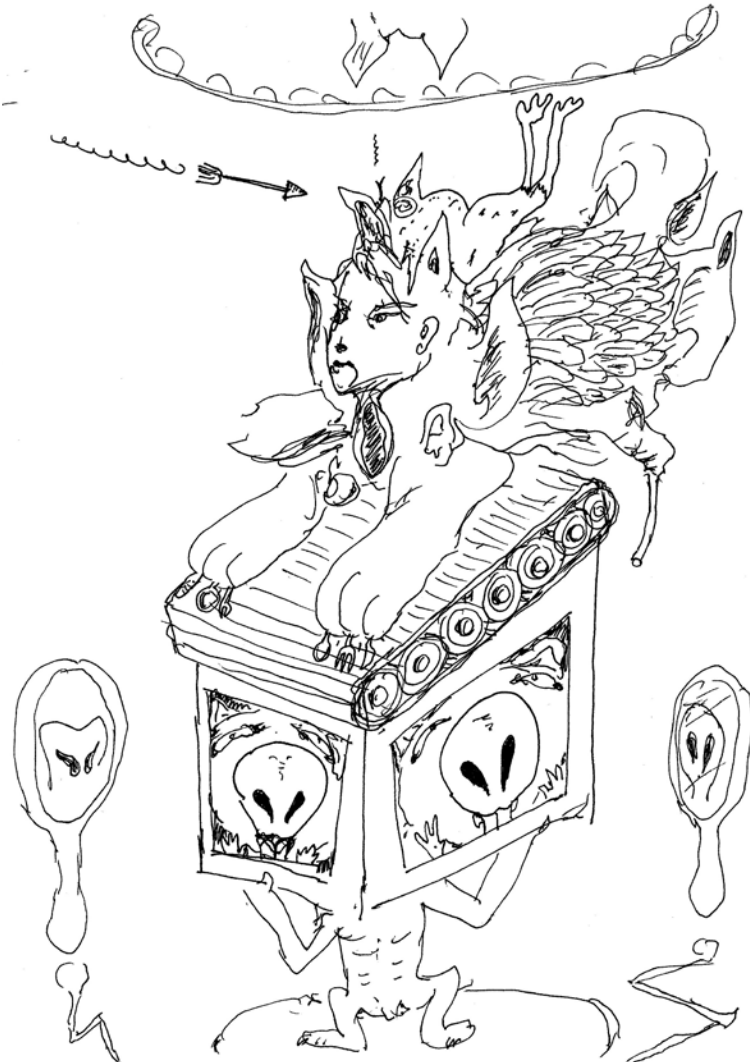
And this just started out as an elephant, right?

No it started out as rings and a leafy thing in the middle.

That's the one, I started it.

It's funny which things can end up having things branch off of them really easily... It's almost like certain doodles have more intrinsic fertility.

Intrinsic fertility—good!



But I don't know very much what's going on in this one, actually... This kind of thing would be like a sort of ship?

I see this as like a charioteer, and this is like the thing pulling the chariot but it's also more mounted on top... Like a palanquin.

Yes but it holds together and it moves together. The question is whether these three things on the side are just one environment or three different environments?

I see this as the background that is parallax.

If this is a regal entity that is being carried on the palanquin, then this might be...

Well if this is the Regal Entity then it makes sense that this is like a prison...

"Oh show me all the people we hung that... Show me those traitors hanging from the tree". And then this is the underclass.

So it's a map of tyranny? A dystopia?

But this one is really interesting I don't know what's going on here... This passed out lady...

She's swooning but... What are they doing?

Treating the lawn?

Could just be a fashion photographer.

A fashion photoshoot.

Maybe it's surveillance. "You must expose yourself to the state."

Could be...

"We need to take your passport photo."

Justice is blind right? But it's actually not, because it's kind of grinning.

Shouldn't justice want to see evidence?

No I guess that's why it's called a "procès-verbal." Supposed to be a verbal process and you're not supposed to consider anything else than what you hear.

So it's a field recording.

Freud was into that as well. And the issue of paying attention to any other type of information except for what the patient is actually telling you.

Keep 'em talking.

That seems a strange one. But that's like anything in the scientific method where the whole idea of being able to isolate a single variable, and the assumption that we can do that instead of looking at the complexity of nature, and ecosystems etc.

But it is fun to isolate things and just see what happens. Not taking it as a dogma, like this character here maybe, took it too far...

It's a nice fantasy to think that the world works in that kind of Aristotelean if/then, everything is a giant binary computer...

I am noticing a pattern though. All three have mounted sedentary quadrupeds with some kind of base. Like Hannibal with his war elephants.

And they are all a bit procession-like, a bit slow moving.

I guess there is a tendency to want to give that weight underneath a figure. It's kind of funny those things emerging... Nobody says anything useful in art school, but there is psychologically this desire... "Figure Needs Thing Underneath..." And you can see every culture does that... Different cultures put weird shit underneath... Whether it's a big lotus throne or Greek pedestal.

What do you call that thing that things are on?

Plinth.

Substratum? Some really generic term...

Base...

Notice all the little "side-elements" that happen before it stops. Characters... These are the actual people at the gas station being parked etc.

I enjoy jumping in like "bowling ball? I'll see your bowling ball and raise you a coconut!"

Is there a relationship between bowling balls and coconuts?

For me it's the three dots / holes. I've always linked them in my mind.

I've never thought about it but it makes a lot of sense.

I would love to be able to drink coconut water out of a bowling ball at some point in my life.

Or if bowling balls are hanging in those trees...

You'd be able to bowl the coconut.

You'd have bowling ball milk, and Bowling ball crabs...

That would be an interesting game, a game where you throw a crab at some pins. I sense like a type of fortune telling. "What will happen? Will there be a storm? Will the chief die?" I would accept that over electoral politics actually.

I agree.

It would be a little like the hedgehog croquet in *Alice in Wonderland*.

That's true! There's enough things where we could probably use more

“arbitrary” in “serious domains.”

Oh yeah.

They are seeing this in computer science for example. They are starting to see that having just arbitrary randomness gives you a better result than having an algorithm.



Is that a lemming?

That wasn't my intention. Could be a lemming...

The beaver?

Ah right, the beaver who walks towards us...

Maybe it could be a “fairy beaver.”

This guy is horrifying, It's like a larva.

Those four eyes are very effective.

There's a kind of big awful insect that you find under rocks near the water... Looks like that...

Leech?

Crayfish?

It's like an insect larva... Really big one...

It's a diving beetle larva. They have these syringe mandibles because you need to have that if you are going to inject stomach fluid into your prey under the water. There's no way to do that without a syringe.

Odd how many animals have things like that. Even the snakes have squirties in their teeth.

But then they come up out of the water to pupate. They eat fish.

By injecting their stomach acids into them?

Yep.

I wish I could eat fish. I like fish. They're tasty.

They really shocked me when I was a kid... So maybe that's what is going on here. Oh there's ants too and the ants are hanging... "Elephant and Ant."

That's what made me think of the beaver.

Rearranging the entire architecture...

There's no beaver here.

Surrealist city planning.

Is there a beaver here? I think there could be a beaver.

Well this has bat wings... This could maybe be part beaver, like a beaver chimera? That is something... A marsupial or...

Maybe the tombstones could be beaver tails, standing up out of the ground...

That's really good... Because it's the cute Ottawa dessert... The Beaver-Tails... So those are actual tombstones. That would be nice if they made fried-dough tombstones.

I was actually looking... I got to thinking, can I find other tombstones, that are like other Laura Lakes, and go visit these? As an experiment. And there are some in Ontario! There is a good amount of Laura Lakes around.

You could kill them.

True.

Question is, what are the implications of killing other people with your name, could you then steal the powers of other yours, or something? Can you like merge with them?

Would that be onomonocide?

That would be the easiest form of identity theft.

Then you would just have this deck of cards of the same person that you are, so you could cover for each other.

So these are all the same tombstones then?

Yup. This is the "Laura Lake" graveyard.

Oh yes, so you can't connect these to id:s then, had to come up with some other principles for deciding whom to kill.



Dune Loot

Jason Abdelhadi and Mattias Forshage

CRYPTIDS LACKING GENERALITY

by Jason Abdelhadi, Mattias Forshage

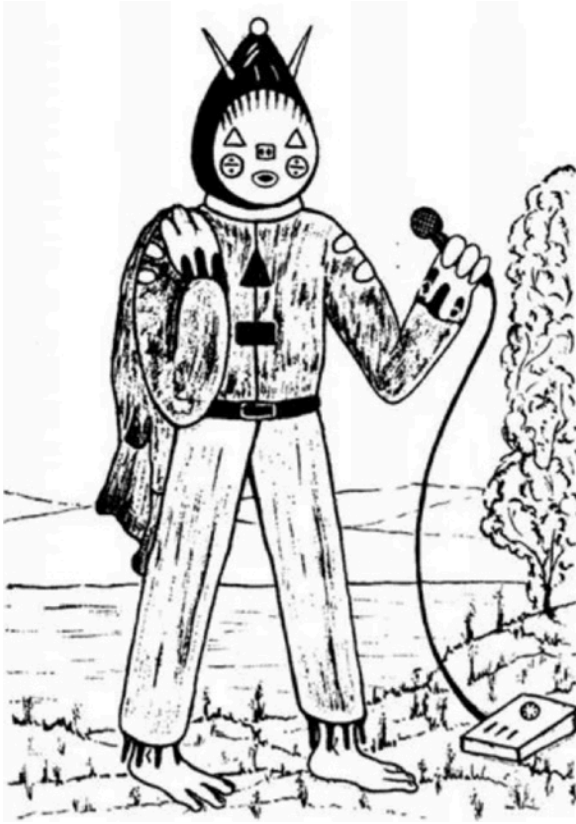
Transcription of discussion Ottawa April 30, 2023. Omissions and a few minor language edits for comprehensibility have been made without being noted, while additional information is indicated with brackets.

It's a clown

MF: What is it about the cryptids theme that is making you guys so enthusiastic?

JA: Some of the convergences between UFO and cryptid accounts sort of strike us in the same way as any kind of unexpected phenomena... Another rich realm of interesting narrative encounter, and popular mythologization that is often very strange. When you look at the particular accounts you often get very strange details. So it's not just generic UFO myths or cryptid myths, and not just the general shape of these things in popular culture, but going back to the actual material wealth of specific strangeness that comes from looking at particular accounts.

One example that we all really resonated with was the story of “Sam the Sandown Clown”, which was published in a UFO journal but which does not really fit the mold of what one would expect there. Also of note that this occurred in Sandown, right next to Shanklin in the Isle of Wight where we were for the Archaeology of Hope exhibit. The “alien” was more like a mysterious clown character, met by two children, kind of just a confused clown vaguely hinting that he was from somewhere else or not of this place... “I’m trying to get home” etc. The way he looked in the published account was also very appealing for us. Not what you’d expect a “standard” alien to look like, but it does look right for the Isle of Wight:



Steven also hosted an event in Atlanta called the “Cafe Interdimensional” which focused on some of these themes, UFO cults, the messianic or utopian aspects etc. and stories, and celebrated and explored the weirdness of it, played games and enjoyed the pleasure principle of it without falling into either irony or hardcore belief. It’s when you start digging into the little details rather than the big obvious meta-narratives that are of interest...

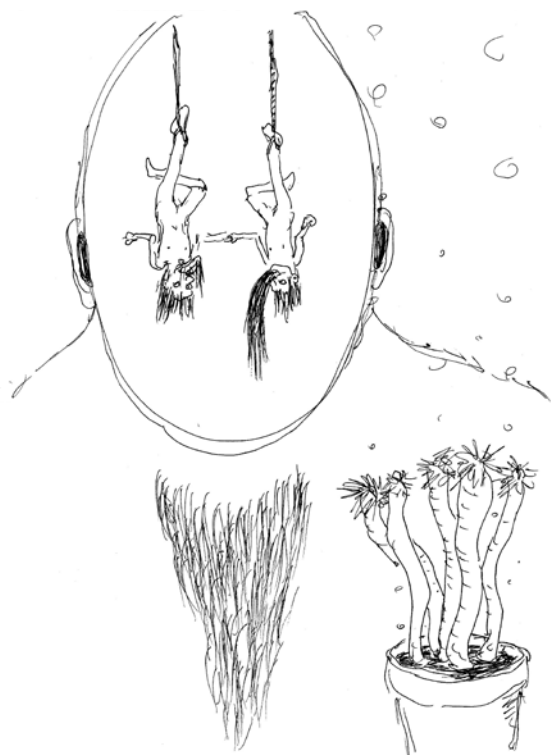
MF: Absolutely... If you pick a couple of details it’s sometimes very difficult to describe what it is that unites them, “this is the generality that they are examples of”. Yes, they are examples, but what are they examples of?

It’s also a popular theme in popular culture. And also there is a kind of regular atmosphere that goes with it... Which in this case is usually a pretty unattractive atmosphere. Most of the books that we found that broached the subject [in a large secondhand bookshop, just prior to the conversation] were books that we didn’t want to read.

The living exception

JA: Maybe some of the Fortean perspectives are coming closer – that openness to phenomena combined with the popular or black humor mythologization of the gaps... And not making that ontological declaration of whether it exists or not, which is maybe a lot of what those books in the base layer of UFOlogy or cryptozoology are concerned with. You watch those bigfoot documentaries and they are really hilarious because they are obsessed with just “getting the one” specimen. This is why I am kind of making that leap to the “aspirational holotype” which allows you to leap from cryptozoology to “real” zoology. But there’s something in the gap there that they are trying to get to. It could just be a kind of neuroticism or popular psychosis or it is pointing to some kind of hope or dream or different psychoanalytic interpretations. Really it’s a family of phenomena or a family of storytelling that might benefit from an angle that isn’t the usual stuff about whether it’s real or isn’t it, is it a scary campfire story or not. I guess the Forteans come closer because they talk about the possibility and folkloristic idea.

Veil of the Hairy Tongues

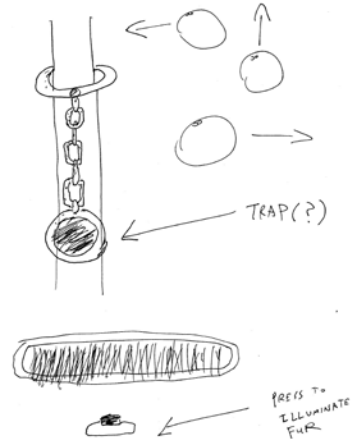


*The Bearded Tongue of the Chimney
of Upside Down Communal
Living with Strangers, left*



*The bearded tongue out of the chimney
of upside-down communal living with strangers*

*Stranger Trap and Bubble
Directionality, below*



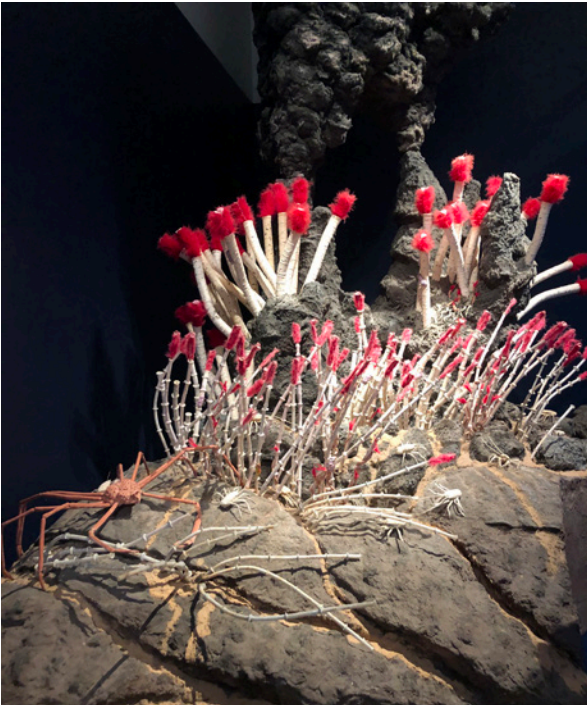
MF: I have no idea what contemporary Forteaners are actually thinking, but the perspective of Charles Fort himself would be that these are all highly interesting because they are all good examples that the general worldview is much too narrow and there is this entire class of thing that just won't fit into it, so the fact that they are exceptions is what makes them interesting. But if you are taking that as a general explanation, then way too many things are included that are actually uninteresting. And you end up in the postmodernist trap just saying that everything is an exception so there are actually no real patterns at all, and the only patterns that exist are the exceptions. But if there is no pattern then there is nothing to be an exception of.

JA: Well maybe the pattern emerges when you start to say what doesn't count.

MF: But that's so much easier to do if you have kind of a very narrow view that you've been taught, that you want to overthrow. It's very easy to do that, but once you've done it, you're still left with the question of what is actually interesting. Maybe I am just abstracting because I don't know how to gen-

eralize this. I can happily accept that there are various interesting things in this area and that it could be very specifically about the storytelling as such; kinds of oral traditions that are quite interesting and people who experience weird things and make good stories out of them.

JA: And stories that take a life of their own, like Breton's Great Invisibles. Why was that interesting to Breton? But the difference to a standard cryptozoologist is that to them, it's just that it's a "really well hidden creature". For the cryptozoologist it's about proving the thing and a hyperfixation that something is real, I just need to prove, and then I will be justified. Whereas for Breton the exciting fact is that it remains cryptic and that it operates outside the normal sphere. But what function that is playing in the context of the *Prolegomena to a Third Manifesto or Not* is the search for a new myth, right?



Hydrothermal Vent

MF: But Breton is simplifying things there. I think the bearded worms [pogonophores] are maybe a good case in point here because they have both the fascination of the scientific lore that is a funny story about this Ivanov, the Russian guy who was the big expert on them, and had it all completely

wrong [he had only one half of the animals bodies and placed them upside down, putting them in the completely wrong region of the animal kingdom]. But that they are still really fascinating creatures anyway because they are these deep sea creatures that live around these deep sea trenches where there are these hydrothermal vents and that there is an ecological system that grows around these sulfur eating bacteria and it's not at all dependent on the sunlight which governs the entire rest of life on this planet [elsewhere, we refer to it as a "xenobiocoenosis"]. And that kind of suggests that tiny things can exist there that we don't know of, because these creatures are still part of the same origin of life and are related to one another, but it's just a kind of random fraction of other sea animals that have somehow made it into those habitats and could live off of whatever was available there. So it's very much like random colonizers of other planets. There's very little connection with the rest of marine life. There are a bunch of snails and crabs that go along with them. But what about the others we haven't found yet?

*Hydrothermal Highway
with Aperture*



FURRY tongue

*Cryptid stripped bare
by her bachelors even*

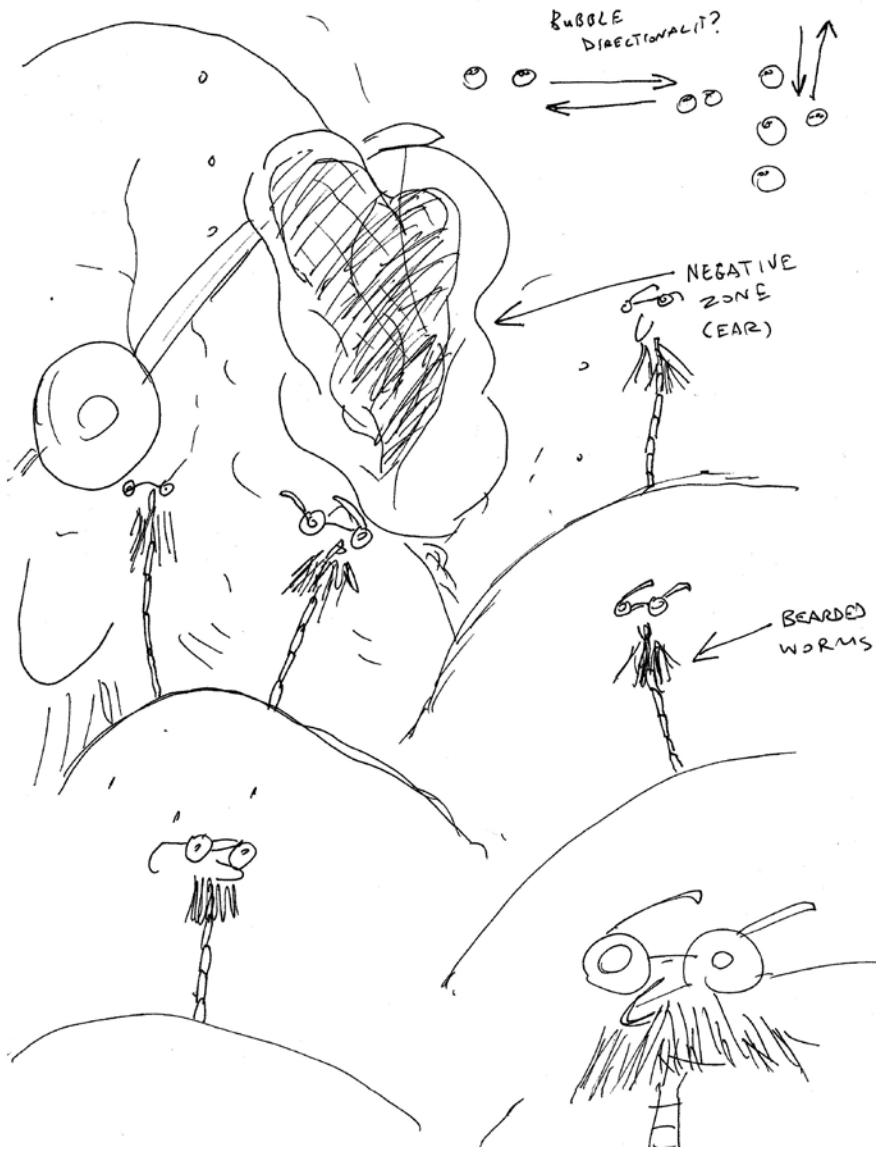


THE CRYPTID STRIPPED BARE
BY HER BACHELORS EVEN

JA: Extremophile marine-life... In the hydrothermal extremophile areas in the “erotic ocean” - the extreme end of the erotic ocean.

MF: And are they all just isolated different planets or is it something that under very extreme circumstances could be generalized along certain lines so that they would connect with each other?

JA: Isn't this the point about the convergent evolution of the crab shape which has evolved multiple times under the right circumstances? I think there's an invisible side to it, things that are not quite visible yet or not quite known, and that combined with the ecological or environmental side, that usually has to do with an “outside” or wilderness idea. That's where the *Fear-some Critters of the Lumberwoods* stories come in. From people who are new on the continent and attacking nature firsthand. Where these weird games that they would start to play. Which is partially about scaring other people, but also pulling their leg or joking, and has an entire culture to it... On the North American side. But also the traditional European side too, and the longterm traditions... Bearded Worms with Aperture-Ear



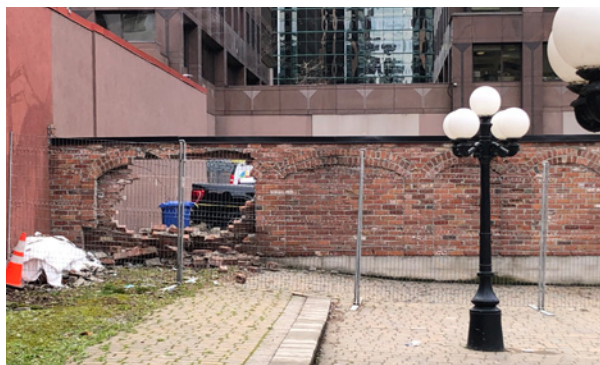
Bearded Worms with Aperture-Ear

It ends up being a kind of game

MF: But many of them are similar. They're about people who need to spend a lot of time alone in nature.

JA: So why isn't it enough to just talk about bears being scary or wolves being scary? Why does it have to be this other kind of entity? It may be not that different from a bear or wolf ultimately but something you have to distinguish from it.

MF: Exactly and it's not obvious which one is more scary.



*"Oh, I find myself here.
What has shaped
this environment?"*

JA: Because they said recently someone did a study that correlated bigfoot sightings with black bear populations. It's a pretty believable fact, but I don't know what it means.

MF: Well it just means that where there are a lot of black bears, you get a lot of these tracks and artifacts, that you can ascribe to bigfoot. It doesn't say anything about bigfoot itself.

JA: But why the need to build a bigfoot out of that, when you can just have black bears? And the aliens thing is similar. Phenomena which could be explained but could still be scary. But you often have these other explanations, and how do they fit in... The way we treat these things, this is what Steven was pointing out at the bigfoot museum, quasi-religious side to it, where all of the items bigfoot had touched were imbued with something, like a relic-style magic to them. Because we don't have the specimen, any negative imprint we

have of the specimen can be given this kind of mystical energy. So this pie tin or this peanut butter jar has been crumpled up by bigfoot, so they put it under glass... Or all the foot imprints. And there's often a weird tradition of any kind of crossed branches in the wood being bigfoot markings. It doesn't really make a lot of sense but... It ends up being a kind of game, in a way. An outdoor game.

MF: And that specific experience has the general game shape of “which is the fearsome creature that has caused the disaster that we are seeing around us right now?”...

JA: Do you mean any given specific scenario or do you mean the general condition of the moment?

MF: No the general condition would be too general... But a random situation. “Oh, I find myself here. What has shaped this environment?”

JA: So a kind of paranoiac-critical method but it's a highly focused one maybe... At least in terms of having to have a pseudo-zoological explanation?

MF: So that's one thing. But then there's also this other idea which veers more to the synaesthetic... All these little things that you hear, or feel, or smell in the darkness, what kind of lifeforms they really are?

JA: So it's the disconnect between the inaccurate sense or the inconclusive sense. So we start to conclude the inconclusivities?



Beaten up Cryptid

Typifying the invisible

MF: Because you have only certain classes of sensory data, but that's maybe getting too philosophical... And that makes it interesting regarding the thing you keep bringing up about holotypes. There has been a lot of fighting over this in zoology recently because you can publish formally correct descriptions of any kind of creature you want. A lot of people think you would need to have the holotype with you but according to the Zoological Code of Nomenclature it's possible that a depiction can be the holotype. And it doesn't have to be a very accurate depiction. It could be your drawing of it. The reason is mostly to do with old things. When Linnaeus was describing things he would refer to for example "this animal I've seen in illustrations in Seba's book because he had a specimen in his shop in Amsterdam." So that becomes the type specimen. But it's only very recently that people have started exploiting that systematically. And it also has to do with animal protection now. People might go out into the jungle to discover new species... Find something and say "oh! this must be new!" and then release it and don't keep a specimen for science. There was a famous snake that was described that seemed like a pretty spectacular snake but no one knows what it is because they let it go... Because that becomes a philosophical question again. The type specimen is supposed to become a reference for what the name means, but then, a lot of different things can be a reference. And it doesn't have to be a reference that works very well.

JA: Well that's good... Because it leaves room for ambiguity and imagination.

MF: Really a lot of it. Way too much. Because if you are publishing these ambiguous descriptions then they are pretty useless because no one else can use them anyway to recognize what you've been describing or to include it in some type of classification.

JA: Well there's also the popular culture connection, because a lot of the things that people were seeing with regards to cryptids, they have traced pretty accurately to movies. So for example Loch Ness Monster shows up when people start seeing *The Lost World* or *King Kong* and seeing the depic-

tions of dinosaurs and plesiosaurs in that era. Which is funny because then that gets concretized. And as these creatures get more accurate and revised scientific descriptions over time that doesn't affect the popular original image of the cryptid. So in a sense cryptids become a fossilized snapshot in time of what people had taken from the films they saw. So you have this weird projective mythmaking.

MF: Yes, and there are still a lot of those classical things that are from times when people were out logging on their own, which they usually aren't these days – although some of them are, actually – or up in the mountains herding their animals etc. A lot of those were stabilized and provide a snapshot in time as well. That's interesting.

JA: So in that sense it's just a really specific subtopic of surrealism and popular culture.

MF: Yes. And so the way to approach that would be ethnological or psycho-analytical or again social history, but that's quite a limited perspective which is not surrealist in itself but which we can maybe get some inspiration from... I was going to tell you about Linnaeus's cryptid, the *Furia infernalis*. The "infernal fury". It's an invisible creature that bit him when he was sleeping under a tree. So he described it, because he had never seen it, because it was invisible.

JA: So you can describe something by being bitten by it? That's another aspect of the cryptid thing. It's always a personal experience that's slightly traumatic, they captured me, they bit me, they threatened etc.

MF: But don't you remember on the Isle of Wight that Janice was convinced there was an evil spider on the plane that had bitten her.

JA: But in Japan they ascribe that to the Kamaitachi, the "sickle-weasel". It's like a weasel with sickle hands, but it's invisible and it cuts you, and that's the explanation they give when they find a cut on their body they cannot explain. Hijikata the Butoh guy did a famous photoshoot based on that name where he just ran around the countryside looking weird. Not any sickles or weasels in it.

MF: But nowadays there are lots of people who know they have been bitten by spiders without seeing it.

JA: Yeah. It's a syndrome. That's what a cryptid is. A collection of experiences that you don't have an explanation for but you can pull it together. A syndrome isn't really an explanation yet. It's just a syndrome, a common pattern. Right? So it's not just coming up with new creatures and animals... But to come up with a new place where a monster might emerge might be something a little bit different. And the xenobiocoenosis track too, strangers living together. But it doesn't have to be... Cryptid is a shorthand. A shorthand name for what about these themes and this sort of collective myth is interesting.

MF: There's been a number of questions that we actually have raised here. And it's also just about the animation of the immediate sensory surroundings.



Hazel Cline

All monsters

JA: But in a specific way. There's something modern about it too, in a way. Maybe that's another angle that doesn't quite link up to the folklore, pixies etc. In that cryptids might have a kind of postscientific provenance in a way. After a certain point it's not just the same kind of thing. There might be a qualitative difference from what we're talking about in more traditional folklore? But maybe that's being too... What do they call that? Epistemic break? Too Copernican etc. "Oh science changed everything!" But in a sense it does for someone like Lovecraft where you have to create a new kind of horror because you have a new kind of science. A new kind of unknown once you have a new kind of knowledge and a new kind of political and social reality too. They do seem to emerge in periods of anxiety... And another thing that I thought that acted a bit like a cryptid... in a sense, well, maybe not but... a lot of the kind of intersubjective characters that the Stockholm group would come up with. Those kinds of characters for the group, the way the group acts and the group creates this personality [they have occasionally been referred to as "avatars"].

MF: But it's also a really good angle, what you were really scared of as a child. I mean, that can be really difficult to remember.

JA: No! Not for me. I mean I couldn't boil it down to its true essence but I have a few themes. The Polkaroo head from Polka Dot Door, which is basically like a llama head moose...



Polkaroo

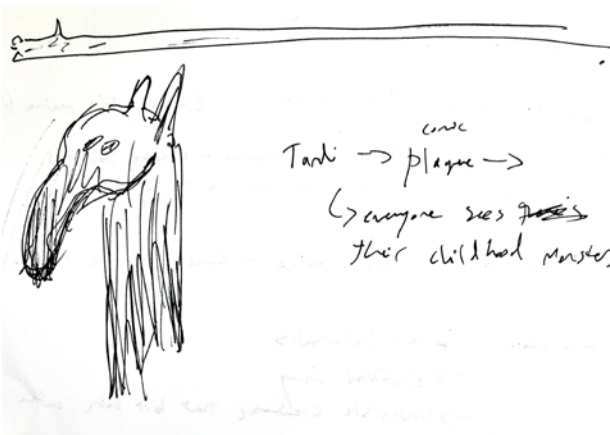
There's a Looney Tunes cartoon that was similarly frightening, which you might remember. It's where Sylvester and Porky Pig go to a hotel and it's really scary at night and everything is trying to kill Porky and Sylvester is always noticing and there's a moose head on the wall and a noose... And I didn't realize they rhyme but it comes out of the moose's mouth. That scared the hell out of me.

MF: The Noose Moose!



Claws for Alarm (1954)

JA: And then there was a similarly long necked shape produced by my curtain rod because of the night light beaming up. Scary black shadow, beaming up, almost like the snake in the Hans Baldung painting at the NGC [National Gallery of Canada, where we just saw it], a kind of dog or animal head with a long snake body and that really scared the shit out of me.



JA Childhood Horrors

JA: And then the final thing that would scare me would be just sounds at night, just anything, even the sound of my own heartbeat would scare me. I didn't like rustling etc. For a very long time I was very scared of it. So long necks, creepy llama heads and whispering nocturnal sounds would be what scared me. That's already starting to sound a bit cryptid-like.

MF: And I'm a bit jealous about having that concrete examples and remembering them so well... Having kept them alive so to speak.

JA: Fearfulness... And there was one guy who struck me, the manga guy Morohoshi who wasn't translated very much into English... in *Ankoku Shinwa* (weird shinto buddhist archeology horror) who makes the villain a kind of cosmic nebula horsehead shape that embodies an evil Shinto entity.

MF: You mentioned a couple of these in the Isle of Wight, and there is actually a Jacques Tardi comic where there is a plague where everybody starts talking a lot and starts a panic and sees their childhood monster, and he draws them all – it seems he was asking his famous French comic artist friends to all draw their childhood fear monsters. A very nice game and part of one of his regular stories [*Tous des monstres!*].

There were a lot of small things I was scared of, but only once in a while, I suddenly remember “I was really scared of this!” and then forget all about it again.

JA: Nothing kept you up at night? I was very scared of a lot of things. I was a very scared kid. The film *Skinamarink* made me feel like that was the kind of fears I had. Could be because he set it in a 90s Canadian house...

Cryptids have a utopian dimension too, not just a question of being afraid of something. A lot of people put a lot of hopes into them as well. And they had that debate in one of the bigfoot documentaries as well, two guys arguing whether if they found bigfoot they would kill it or not for a specimen... “No I won't!”

SECTION 6

EPHIALTIC
COUNCIL



A SINEW ANTIQUE

by *Tadbg Wallace*

Stumbling and slinking in the moon's blue wash, a fine old beast. The crisp, quiet midnight aether, at once suffocatingly thick and depressingly bare, a black labyrinth of unspeakable mystery. A thing made sacred with age, a blind keeper of starlight built sepulchres without number. This beast is a fine beast revered even by the floresiensis skeletons and heresiarch lepers who haunt desert shipwrecks, who hop and gnash at all life. Like a pulsating liver, wrought from dry dirt and harbour loam, a living thing unreckonable. Whiskers, like dark roots wreathed with dust, drawn from a silent mandrake horde, nights expertly vomited by the laughing pit, the pit from whence great laughter came. Silence. Hark, for he draws near. Cataracts as relic flotsam guarding the impossible flames of a Sargasso rite among wise Cnidaria planted, waiting, for an hundred thousand aeons. The beast trembles and searches, his hide and his cry hypnotise of half remembered, half-abhorred homeward lanterns in the mist of some vespertine yesterday. In some once pivotal alcove or palace cistern, he finds his long rest.



Steven Cline

UNTITLED

by Sarah Al-shimary

An epigenetophilologist discovers a tattered, sewn book flooded with archeological expeditions, biological histories, languages of ancestral origins, cave-writings encompassing differences in interrelated species, broken oracle bones, etc. These tombstones have been excavated, brushed off, and sealed from an unknown desert in the Far East. Little of its remains have been made available for civil access ...

Entries from a Prehistoric, Cross Sectional, Study on Symbolics, Lifeforms, and various Plant Elements.

Undated, from what time do I write? The time that will have happened. We burn and revolt, a book is constructed from the ashes of freedom — it is God's grand oeuvre! Who provides the subtext? Only the rivers.

12:01. Petri dish. Swimming in the Agar River my body has evolved gills under my breasts when I received my first period. Against the current an oceanic mechanism diffuses the paper nutrients found in a book, the *pulp* that is, into the gillstream of blood and granules. This was a dream selection, one that is passed on maternally from fish to ova, constricted in the genetic transposons of the fluorescence which marks the gill-glitter quality.

I take note of this in my book: *ash is hypothesized to contribute to the epigenetic systems of language in the body which are then mapped ontogenetically onto the Self as a computer. It is imperative to note that fluorescence is only marked in the ovum, irrespective of what that ovum might represent itself as, but rather reliant on the presence of itself.*

2:59. Travel log. I dreamt someone opened the flesh of my eye and kissed my scales and the blood beneath me with kindness. In this dreamscape, a bird whose evolutionary history was halted shortly after the invention of the wheel pecked against my rib cage.

In my book: *the bone composition of the bird wing is analogous to the bee. Bird-blood and bee wingspan may be linked to certain night philosophies that one must accustom oneself to via genetic modification of the W783N gene, which encodes for sleep cycles. More on this after interpretation of next dream.*

22:45. Sleep lab. Participant Y, whose name shall be obfuscated for the sake of morality, has started to babble. She begins with blows of the ax, or what we call the Breaths. She mutters in sleep “*ashbb*”, “*assshb*”. Intriguing. I sit next to her bed with my arms propping up my head. I have kept myself awake on the edge of waiting and rehearsals of childhood memories. She imagines me dreaming of bears whose teeth catch pink salmon.

In my book: *Ash may be the signifier of the letter H in French, pronounced ash. Similarly, cendre in this language is the direct translation of the word Ash, the remnants of a combustion reaction such as cremation or shamanic rituals or the uncountable dust particles of trees. One can infer that participant Y must be revisiting her grandmother’s grandmother’s grandmother’s burial ceremony. The mechanism of the dreamwork as largely unknown may uncover itself as this: the continuous revisiting of life’s discontinuities.*

00:00. *What’s unknown is an impossible matter of de-clamming, deciphering, prying open to unearth sand. The signs are unfamiliar yet I approach their flowers anyways.*

4:12. Micropipette. Today testing the transmission of autoerotic trauma onto intergenerational species of Arabian horses. Transmission is enabled through several mechanisms:

1. The revival of the Paternal mitochondria, which has not been previously reported to be genetically transmissible, but may provide the appropriate wound-site for the initiation of traumatic ribosomal sequences ...
2. Activation of neuronal receptors that target specific memory gene sequences ripe for synaptic *explosivity*, or the amplification of certain remembrances that are correlated to increased wet dreams in Arabian horses ...
3. Selective inhibition of proteolytic enzymes, or degradation factors, which have been previously proven to directly increase the mental

overload of foreign events that have enabled the body to defend itself against an unknown anguish ...

In my book: *the selection of Arabian horses was a precise, deliberate, and violent decision on the part of the experimenter, who happens to be herself. The Arabian horse presents a hopeful mosaic of trauma-induced protein sequencing previously undiscovered in other species. For this reason, the Arabian horse and its history of its forced colonization was the animal of choice. Ethics code notwithstanding.*

8:55. Textbook appendix. A city whose inhabitants know no voice speak in tears. Researchers are investigating the vocal properties of organic amylase — tear-inducing enzymes— structures which enable speech bubbles crystallized in the tear form. Their null hypothesis follows that there is no statistical difference in the language comprehension skills of those that have an inactive versus an overactive tear gland. A longitudinal study conducted on the city inhabitants reject this null hypothesis on the grounds of the discovery that *tearjerkers* have especially hyperactive exocrine glands as a result of evolutionary selection techniques favoring emotional capacity over biopracticality.

In my book: *crying is an offensive mechanism, not a defensive one. A common dream trope is the individual who is stuck in one place and cannot move, as a voyager sinks into quicksand. They offend with tears what we defend with our voice; perhaps their superiority lies in the open-lack method of speech wherein every utterance is ultimately the expressed desire of what one doesn't have and what one cannot do to fully attain it.*

THE GOD OF THE MOSQUITOES

by *Tadhg Wallace*

(To be read with an incessant, droning, buzzing in mind)

Bring us apples, yellow apples, bruised and dusty and tart and dry, bring us water, still water, algae eaten, unfathomable, home to invisible eggs and fossil refuse, a final home for atavistic plagues, a forever temple. Bring us blood and sand and let us take our glory rest in eternal tombs like lava forged ziggurats, and bring us worms, dirty worms from the ancient city called URUK, where we have eaten of the man-kings of old and peasants too and savoured exotic sickle cells and sweet leukemias, and holding up our hands we shun all, that is, all.



Judge
Tadhg Wallace

CARNATION

for RM

by Peter Dubé

As if the world cracked. As if it opened only to reveal — nothing is hollow. No void waits. Beneath the surface, tempered or brittle, crust or wafer, heavy or slight, waits the tumult, eager foretaste of the abandoning of determination. The excess. Yet the dark yields to, or yields up, the swarming light. It writhes. Its mass entangled, lobes and limbs wrapped one around the other, soft places touching. Luminous clusters neither vegetable nor reptile, brilliant yet imprecise, emerge embroiled, pavane through the sudden open space in entelechy. Alive, all. Giddy in motion. The ready first steps of new systems, or the threat of such. In the coils, a rhythmic tread of bodily musics, Rhythm always waits, patient until rising from the buried potentiality, overflowing caverns deep give a texture to the palimpsest of the real. Fighting or fornication, whatever might rise from renewed contact. Unseen pleasure, unheard of knowledge, twist or sarabande, ease, the sorceries of creatures passing new in their becoming. Tangled anticipations take the world, tighten their grips; the gulf spreads further, revealing more. Rushes of inversion and invention. Torrents of the unnamed. Things that might be gestures or still pupae or unpronounceable words. The coupling creatures and intensities that are only at home underneath things finding air without a plan, their rush unpeopling the tunnels in which they ordinary lie. What readies itself to answer them? What words to give those things that live behind our languages, what way to say how we love them? The image of a beautiful new cover hangs in the air, but the fabulous, fornicating creatures of light prefer their nudity. Dig for a kind of freedom. And clambering from the subterranean dark they love the open air for breeding new shadows with them. Things that writhe in a responding cadence and tell stories of a world yet to be.

GOLGOTHA

by *Tadbg Wallace*

By Golgotha, a mandible, pellucid and frayed, by haunts-of-night, a Gannim wake, in flight from Collthais.

By sloping hills of hematite, carven tears of dew, llallawavii hunt and rest beneath a ruptured moon.

By boreal seas, mangroves freeze, before the break of noon, in duelling spheres, by aether leagues that sprawl beyond Nhivuun.

By the paths of mountains steep, built of taaffeite risen from the deep, soil and rock in long retreat from antipolarian eras reaped, I seek, upon a fallen star, phos hilaron far, promised of old in Achernar by Lemurian geasa.

By gilded temples Atlantine, that touched the sun in ages grieved, consumed now by the wrack of waves, we paved a destiny of days, galleyed on with silver glaives, made unto the wilds dazed, in mourning of a sunken maze, severed from sidereal ways.

By Tartarian tombs in Titan one thousand miles deep, eyeless devils delve the heaps of forgotten, bronze-writ records, and by his crypt, a cave, beneath lock and latch, Iish'kithlaan, Cing of Cings, rests in argentavis feathers.



Hazel Cline

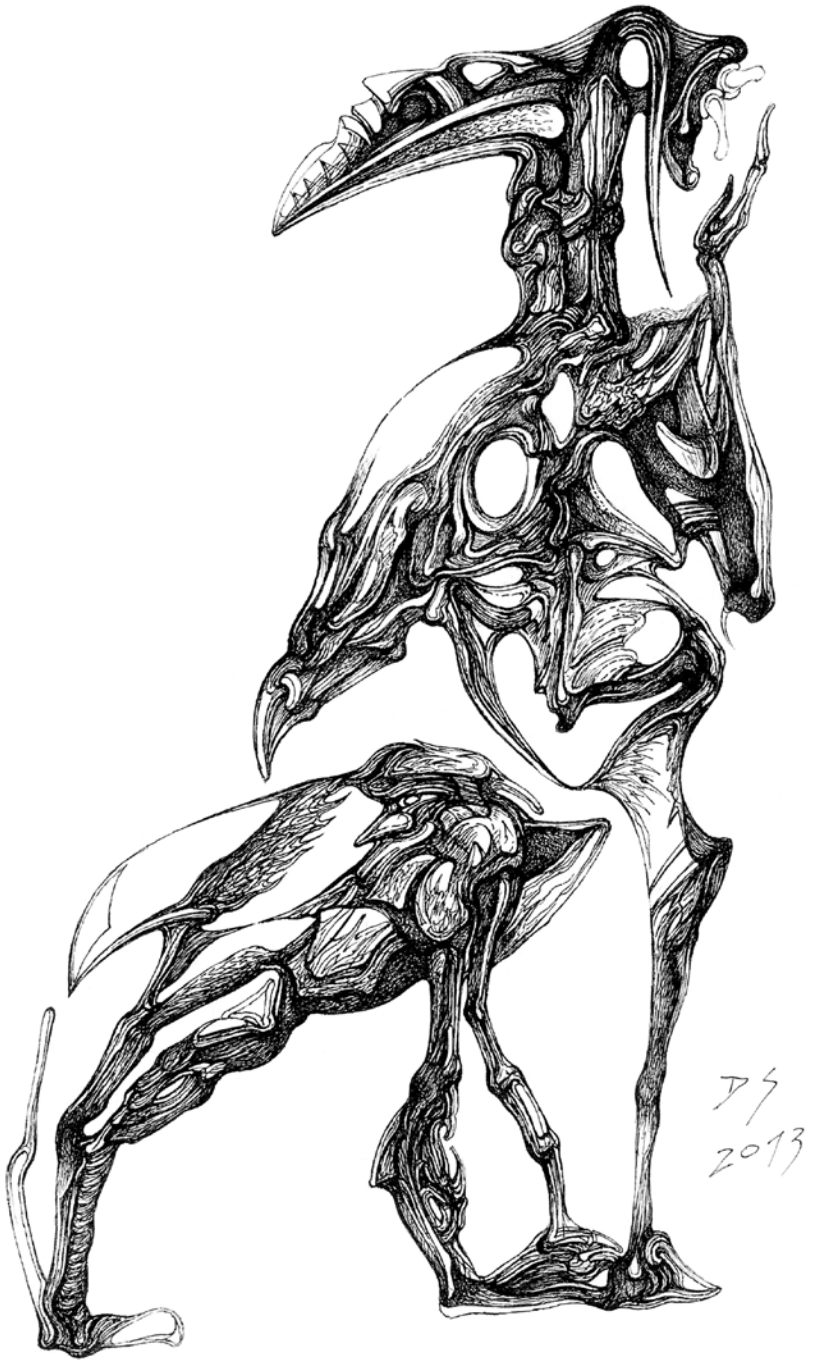
IVY DESERT

by *Tadhg Wallace*

Here sinuses are assailed, the cold fog like rust on the air, the rising breaths of sheer soil silently moribund in this labyrinth of the moth and moss-eaten brick and at some other time, the sunset sanctuary of browned pine needles in tranquil wake. Here, one finds bold vigour when at the threshold, but tires without. Look beneath this silent hedera. A formicidae country, soaked steppe root-devoured, nerves of these silent watchers, Gods of the perma-dusk at the Earth's epidermis. Come and see. Firmament of Verdant wax razors where scraps of grey make mysteriarchs of ixodes intellects. So it is for many a mile where still mists like violet manors and irksome influenza, fevers on the air, loiter and welt, among this February dawn demesne.



The Outside
Vittoria Lion



Dan Stanciu



An Astral or Fluidic Body

Richard Capes

ODE TO A SHOEBILL STORK

by Tadbg Wallace

“I CANNOT TELL YOU WHERE IT IS GOING OR HAS GONE BUT WHERE IT IS IT WAS IT WILL BE”. The radish-man crouched on an ivory pillar and plucked damp, rainbow feathers from a blind cane-byrd.

II

Key lime portico

Arrow arrow, foul error. By dreams and boulders I am wizened and tortured. I seek that which cannot be and will not be outside half-understood codices of my brain-in-a-jar. Penitent ides, today you shall join me in paradise spaketh the passive.

III

Incredibly III

Night garden halberd. Slumbering saints. Progeny of an hanged man do pass silently, where, were, we're calm haunt done with all that, crickets, Knight's rest at bowing oak green-black positivity by midnight blue, who can say? Missing the umber

IV Liminal

SECTION 7

ELYSIC
COUNCIL





Ron Sakolsky

THE VULTURE OR A MOST CURIOUS CASE: A CONFESSION OF A FLEDGLING EPICURE OF ENTROPY

by Erin K

By the languid hand of Fate, I was hatched a creature of misunderstanding. As a fledgling, barely out of my down, whispers swirled around me – pronouncements of our morbid predilection, the consumption of the dearly departed. Even then, a morbid curiosity bloomed within my nascent soul.

In that very year, I learned the unsettling truth: some of the departed clung tenaciously to this earthly realm – wisps of existence we called ghosts. In a dusty, forgotten chamber of the grand manor, its windows veiled in heavy, damask tapestries, the very air thick with the susurrus of forgotten years, I encountered one such being. It was a spectral morsel, a fleeting echo, and I – with a primal hunger yet unnamed – devoured it whole.

This act, this macabre feast, sparked a flicker of self-awareness within my hollow shell. Before this, existence was a nebulous state. I could perch amongst the others, these boisterous, vibrant creatures who filled the house with their incessant cacophony, yet I remained unseen, unheard. My Wednesdays were punctuated by the arrival of clean, folded garments, conjured from some unseen hand. The source of these ministrations remained a mystery. Nights, I lay awake, staring at the star-dusted ceiling, desperately trying to recall the last time a voice addressed me directly. It was a struggle, but I clung to a fading memory of a name uttered in hushed tones weeks prior.

A chilling suspicion gnawed at me. Perhaps I had once been as alive as them, albeit the smallest and most overlooked. But surely, I must have begun to fade, to disappear. The others, oblivious, offered no alarm. With furrowed brow, I pondered the cause of this spectral exile.

Then, a memory surfaced, sharp and painful. Weeks ago, engrossed in

a conversation with a colony of garden snails, the luncheon bell boomed through the house. In my haste, I tripped over a trowel, scraping my knee raw. Rising, I discovered, to my horror, that I had crushed one of my newfound companions. Guilt, a fiery serpent, coiled in my stomach. I fled the scene, tears blurring my vision, and did not return for three agonizing days. Upon my return, the fallen snail was gone.

The truth struck me with the force of a fallen colossus. The snails, those silent observers, had witnessed my transgression. They, in their silent wisdom, had deemed me a murderer and pronounced their verdict: invisibility.

An odd serenity washed over me with this revelation. I surrendered to my spectral existence and dreamt of fantastical feasts, of tables laden with decadent cakes laid out in a moonlit forest. Rising with the dawn, I embraced my ostracized state. Henceforth, I would become a connoisseur of the forgotten, a phantom partaker in the grand, morbid ballet of the intermedium. For in the silence of the unseen, I, the vulture-child, would find my purpose.



Ron Sakolsky



The Angel Of Objective Chance
Jay Blackwood



Andrew Mendez

MANTIS DREAM

by Steven Cline

I was camping in the Blue Ridge mountains. Before falling asleep I decided to leave three brightly colored starburst candies on a rock as an offering to the unseen entities of the forest, whatever they might be. The candies were yellow, pink, and orange. Later, I had a very restless night's sleep, and woke often. A feeling of being watched hovering on the edge of my consciousness. In the early hours I dreamt that three praying mantises the size of a small dog and with the bright coloring of the candies had landed on my back, in some strange kind of acceptance ritual. I wasn't scared by them so much as a bit uncomfortable, and nervous. I asked my wife if she could be so kind as to gently remove them from my back, and place them back on solid ground.



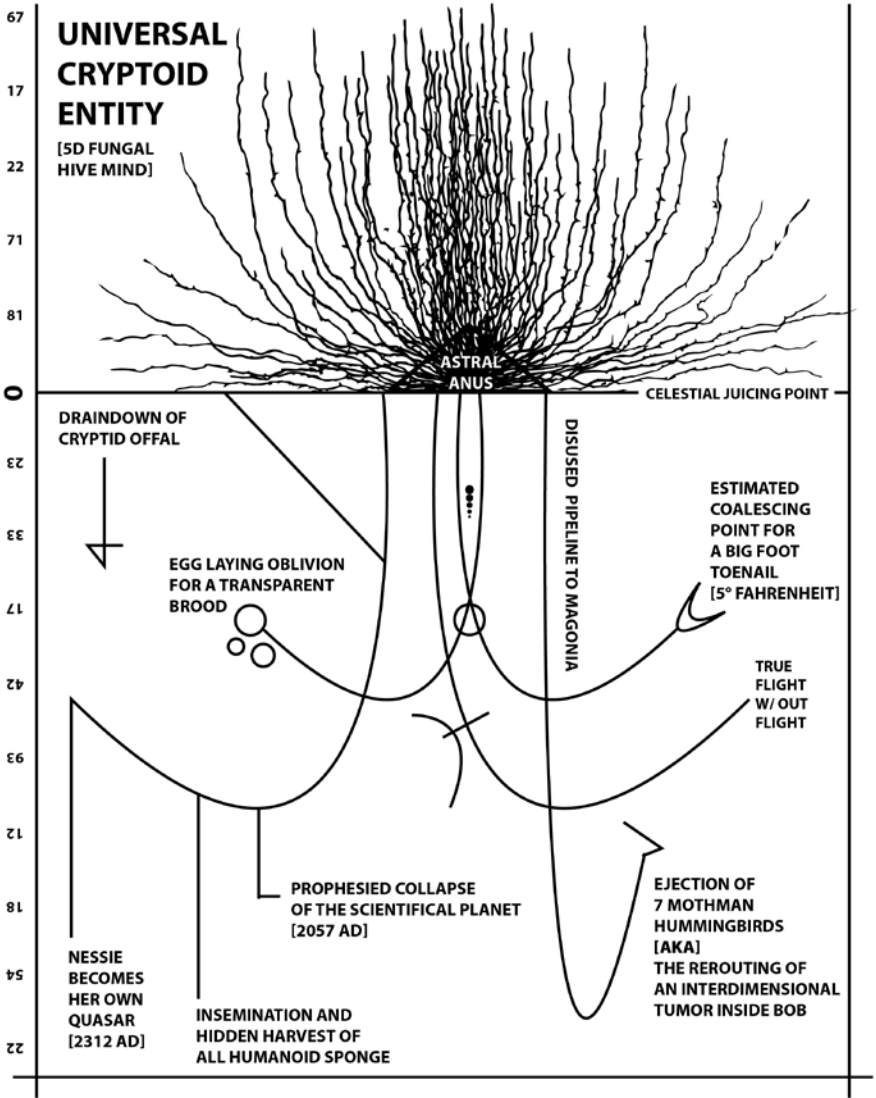
Steven Cline



The Beings I Saw This Summer
Andrew Mendez



The Inner Child
Andrew Mendez



Steven Cline

SECTION 8

GENEALOGICAL
SOCIETY
for
MYTHOLOGICAL
INTERBREEDING

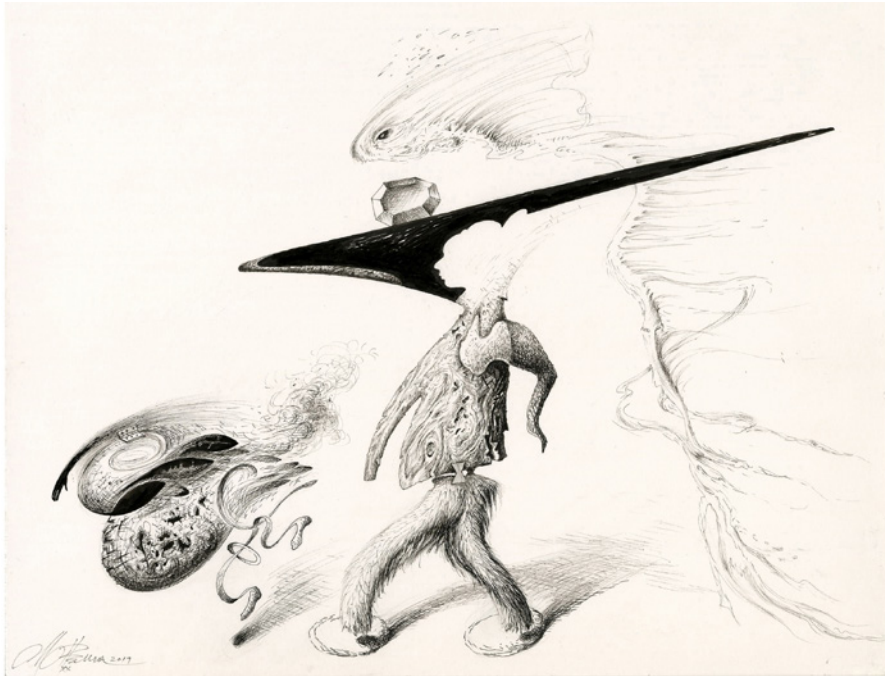




Poetic Stellium
Mitzura Salgian



Bleary
Corrina Ulrich



Eye of the Air
Mitzura Salgian

SNIJNGAD

by Sasha Vlad & Dan Stanciu

No matter how many arts of revealing you have penetrated and no matter how many a secret may be your friends, you cannot foresee Snijngad, it is unforeseeable. It appears suddenly and disappears in the blink of an eye in a cloud of lights. It is always on the go, covering wide areas with his movement. Wherever it passes, it sets the rest in motion and shakes the sitting down, it is unfixable and does not lie down (whatever it is offered, or done to) and it will be difficult to create anything that will stop it. It doesn't have an outline, and its shape breaks down constantly to recompose another vagueness, equally clear, but on different spirals.

With 15 fingers on its lower hand and 39 fingers on its upper hand, with two forked nails on each finger, each nail being 10.7 meters long and of the color green, with a felt tube under each nail, in which weather flags are wrapped up, waiting for the day when they will unfurl their fabric over all natures, with a central heart having 40 rooms furnished summarily with newspapers from the miracle years, and in the peripheral hearts sounding the echo of four pianos whose keys are hit by four negative composers (the first with a half-mystical, half-glued breath, the second with a relatively solitary breath, the third without breath, but very percussive through vibration, the fourth colored with a solid breath, but without that harshness of great sobs), with only one lung, old and not very deep, located at the back of the pelvic dome, where the breath turns back to its primary eruptions, with 53 heads, of which only those seven on its chest are endowed with elastic brakes to be able to laugh when the moon sets at the foothills of intelligence, with 8,986 layers of skin covering its impalpable and in some places transparent, flesh, between layers turning to glass in a fluid state during the night (a skin alike a golden water on which float vessels under an intimate flag on a cruise carrying them to novelty-loving shores, where they will anchor to empty their hold of cold flowers), with an odd number of shoulders (13? 21? 1,011?), from which protrude pairs of somber wings, although joined together by a ticking orb of lime that

is spinning (a sort of portable sun), with 5,654,229 eyes, all open, spread over the whole expanse of a mural swamp, from where they peer into the black making of the stars and see how magma combines with chaff, with 691 more eyes unadapted to sight or forever blind, but who, somehow, through their feverish fibers, have access to the inner surfaces, with four eyelids to each eye (three above and one below), each changing its hue or texture depending on the surrounding view, with 33 horns grown on its back in response to the dilution in makeup of the demonologists' guild, each horn (adorned with aromatic ribbons) measuring between 1 and 3 meters and making a virile clanking sound with every movement of the body, like that of fortified small change, with 53 purple halos surrounding its 53 heads to show its quality of a bloodthirsty angel, with 14,802 nostrils (it has about six thousand on its soles alone) that absorb oxygen from the beings it meets on the way, leaving piles of dried crusts on the side of the road, with 15 hundreds of testicles (each the size of a man) full of vipers which in the winter will slip through a chute outside and be lost among the frost-heated stones, with 28 humps on its hips, each of which having an orange little flag at the top and on each little flag nine aortas dancing rhythmically, with three and a half spleens ready to pour their lymph over the windowsill at the slightest scandal that would arise between the vestals of the kidneys, with 19,519 tongues, each speaking in its own language and saying how superb was the first ending of his concluded origin, with as many mouths that swallow wind and spit words with foul meaning and then bite the top of a mountain and lingeringly chew its iron, and after that it hurls jets of needles at the dust of Sodhi, who is slow to move because it got bogged down in glory, with over two thousand sets of ovaries on whose pages yesterday's thunder has replaced the letters with nimble hooks, with 67 skulls in its stomach, ruminating the food that comes from the north, where the ice bore fruit, with two hundred something rows of teeth stuck in the palm that includes the sphere of no return and its future rotation, with a single human bone (out of the 832,140 of its skeleton), it being both its support and start, Snijn-gad is the absolute champion in speed landscaping.





Debauch

Corrina Ulrich

NINE CAULDRONS WALK AWAY

by *Ryan Chiang McCarthy*

I worked a while as a substitute teacher and one day I oversaw a fourth grade class, whose teacher left plans to the effect of, “let the kids invent monsters.” Joyfully, zealously, every kid produced a wonderful monster in the space of a few minutes, in drawing or writing, and their delight multiplied in comparing their creature to everyone else’s. Only weeks later did it occur to me to write down what I remembered, so I could only recall three of their creatures:

***The Flickerheart** comes out at dusk and looks like a flickering heart of red light with two little butterfly wings. It blinks like a firefly, but frightens away predators by exploding in a puff of sparkling red power. In the process, though, the Flickerheart dies.*

***The Sink-A-Ship** looks exactly like a cruise ship and eats only cruise ships. It hides behind islands until its prey docks nearby for an excursion. When the Sink-a-Ship devours its prey its portholes line up exactly with the portholes on the swallowed cruise ship, so that you might see the passengers inside waving for your attention. You can’t hear them, so naturally you’d assume they’re waving a greeting and not being digested.*

***The Doppelbroccoli** is a species of broccoli found growing near the North Pole, which has developed sentience and, moreover, the power to perfectly mimic anything it touches, except for flavor. Your friends might come home from Greenland but the only way you’d know they aren’t broccoli is if you ate them.*

Gan Bao’s Jin Dynasty collection of weird lore, *In Search of Spirits*, records an episode where Confucius and his disciples were menaced at midnight by a roaring ten-foot-tall man in dark robes and a high hat. That hothead Zilu struck the man down, only to reveal by torchlight that the assailant was a gigantic catfish. Confucius offered this theory: *I’ve heard that as things age, they gather life force... Domestic animals, along with turtles, fish,*

snakes, tortoises, plants and trees, with time develop spirits, which can become monsters... When a thing grows old, it can become monstrous, till it's killed.

This theory is borne out throughout the weird lore, as when the Tang poet Li He says,

Owls that have lived a hundred years,
Turned forest demons,
Laugh wildly as an emerald fire
Leaps from their nests. (tr. J.D. Frodsham)

Accounts appear as well of household objects- like pillows, shoes, toys, or spoons- taking on life and walking, dancing, forming friendships with each other. The *Record of the Dark and Bright* reports a lusty woman who, one morning, encountered two smartly dressed young men whom she embraced, only for them to become brooms in her arms. Is it so incredible that broccoli or ships might also develop consciousness?

They say the god-emperor Yu made nine bronze tripod cauldrons that depicted every weird or dangerous creature known throughout the Nine Provinces; these things being cataloged, people could travel through the mountains and rivers without fear of them. These cauldrons were kept as regalia all the way to the end of the Zhou dynasty when they disappeared. Some guess they were melted down to make coins, others that they were stolen or fell in a river in transit, but isn't the most obvious explanation that they were simply mature enough to walk away?

Of course a thing engraved to the brim with monstrous lore would feel qualified to try a little monsterring itself, and the means of containing the contagion become another vector. The joy of inventing monsters, and seeking, knowing, talking about, and fearing them, and the joy of being monstrous- aren't these all one thing? Could it be the same thirst for life that drives the Flickerheart's beautiful self-annihilation, which brings me to evoke monsters that devour me? Could it be that the same process that makes old tools fall in love or dance passes through me to imbue life into all I encounter and all I forget?

It seems the human being isn't king or priest but a cosmic big top, a communism of ghosts, a demon owls' nest spewing emerald fire, harmo-

nious or discordant to varying degrees, but as composite and symbiotic as the siphonophores or lichens. The swirling elements- whether microbes or memories, vitamins or voices- meet here to experience one another and find new oceans. And isn't this why the dreaming of monsters is all the more lively and pleasurable in concert with others, dissolving into other minds? Only a ship that devours us can take us far on these seas.

Consider that in each of the Flickerheart's wings, in each of its sparkles and dimmings, in every single speck of red powder, in the red gleam in the bewildered predator's eye (let's call it a lion), there is a Flickerheart. All the Flickerhearts embraced by every gleam enter at once into one single red eye-gleam. So in every gleam there are myriad Flickerhearts, flickering in the myriad eyes of twice myriad lions. What's more, each and every gleam containing myriad Flickerhearts returns again to one red gleam in the bewildered lion's eye, a lion which itself wanders the desert on a Flickerheart's fluttering wing. Here we might adumbrate the anatomy of Novalis' animal whose *constitution determines ours and vice versa*.

The world is just the imagination that flows and flickers with fiery, hairy, hungry, windy, fanged, chitinous, lo, leafy, fearful, slimy thoughts, a play of passions acting from far beyond human borders: *beings whose behavior is as strange to [man] as his may be to the mayfly or the whale*. If these beings completely escape man's sensory system of references through a camouflage, the camouflage might come not from them, but from a glib rationalism veiling life through stunted categories. And the regime of capital which this mutilated reason abets, as it exploits and erases things and people alike at unparalleled scale, should expect inconceivable vengeance from them both.

Monstrous thought might, however, apprehend these beings freely and intimately. Hence Benjamin Peret counsels us: *You no longer want to know what is logical and what is not, you no longer want to know anything except what you are going to be told. Write as fast as possible so as not to lose any of the secrets that are made known to you about yourself, and above all do not re-read yourself*.

I recall here the Chaldaean admonition, *Change not the barbarous Names of Evocation*. A tongue untethered from discursive or mimetic schemas, its jeweled wings of riotous beauty unclipped, can become all *barbarous names of evocation*, replete with the voices of wondrous beings

viewless to fettered reason but moving brightly for the disembodied ear. Hearing the world rushing with nymphs, daemons, and other beings, and seeing it sown with *fiery bonds of love* and *symbols* intimating beauties inexpressible to reason, the old Theurgists' power came not from standing at the apex of a scale but, placing themselves at the very bottom, allowing these others to speak and act through them.

We, who care neither to exalt nor degrade the human being, can break cosmic ladders into amorous broomsticks, and get to sweeping the cobwebs from our vision, and searching the darkly splendid world for symbols and signatures by which the assembly of monsters never stops talking to us, most of all from despised or neglected corners.

In late Spring this year two such signatures were presented to me, though I was slow to correlate them. First, on a walk I noted a single black woolen glove lying abandoned in the grass. A few days later, I felt an itching on my left leg and saw that a line of red welts ran along it. The glove, by its solicitous loneliness, and the welts, by their rousing annoyance, both demanded my attention but their meaning remained dark to me. Unable to sleep one night, on account of my itching leg, I took a walk along a moonlit creek when a headless fish-scaled owl with oak leaves for wings crossed the sky. From the porcelain mouth in its belly it cried these words:

One can cast in bronze only what is known of monsters; what's unknown of them fills and roams the world. Finding two or more of their traces, follow them; following them, meet them; meeting them, hear them, and so join knowledge with unknowledge.

Hearing this, I went back and reflected on the two traces given me—the abandoned glove and the itchy welts— and what unknown creature it was that spoke through them. Then I heard its voice:

Though the thawing world forgets me, I grasp it, and am filled with the myriad hands hidden in the writhing soil. Abandoned by flesh I hold the sky as the earth's own glove, and where before they scratched itches my fingers bequeath them; where before I hoarded heat, I scatter it; and the leg that trod past me I mount and make the pattern of my mighty continental treading.

Around the same time, wildfires were starting in Canada which, as of this writing, fill the skies with smoke from afar and form on the map a pattern not dissimilar from a human leg.



Oss
Corrina Ulrich

ZEBRAMAN

by Steven Cline

Zebraman is progressing. Progressing rapid.

Invite him in

Zebraman cuts the barrier of Ocean's silky skin. In his purple saucer, drifted high.

In coral-covered saucer, rides he. Carrying countless passengers, the coral hivepods. Coral wearing garment of eyes, wearing thousand and one [stolen] trueblue oval eyes.

Invite him in

Dim dry riverbed. Cold silent landing. Within Zebraman's earwell, a twin'd translucent river drops down its sad metallic anchor. Bathborn baby, circa 1892.

Zebraman wears his most ancient coat. His coat which harbors the All. The black stripes, the white stripes, and the hiddens.

Invite him in

Zebraman dreams in purest scar tissue. An outcropping of polka dot, fastened quickly upon Zebraman's savage, static brow.

Zebraman = reality's remainder. His is a flesh injected of mere cowfluid; in our human boldness, we always shall form him. In a sack of reddening cough drops, in the tea-soaking of every stray yarn—always in this shall we form.

Zebraman is quite utterly electrical. In his blackening smoke we gather for our secondary dawn.

Invite him in

Zebraman is a nursery of whispers. Ever must we ride in Zebraman's mind. Must behold, for his strange yet fossilized labyrinth.

We must dare these corruptions, still.

He has been Invited in



Language of the Birds
Erik Volet



Kukeri Dancer

Erik Volet

A HYPNAGOGIC ENCOUNTER

experienced by Hazel Cline

I was walking on the sidewalk near my apartment, and I saw something small and brown moving on the ground in front of me. I looked closer and saw that it was a tiny, furry humanoid creature. He had very big feet for his overall size. Getting closer, I recognize it as a little Bigfoot. A Littlefoot, if you will.

A DREAM, 2023/01/16

dreamt by Jason Abdelhadi

I have helped a friend editorially and somehow with a research project. Something scientific. Could have been Jonas. He then shows me the results. A locked glass cabinet with a few rows of multicoloured action figure-like depictions of some kind of alien or amoeba-like life from another dimension. They look insectoid, some of them like centipedes stand partially upwards with an evil grin. They are raised via some kind of interdimensional culture process. Based on a 2\$ value 90s PC game, a box of which is included in the display. I am blown away. I think this is prize winning, history making anyway. I imagine I will be interviewed about this moment. I keep questioning how it works. I guess we are in a classroom and I am just having this as a side conversation but I fall out of my desk. And I am very proud to have helped.

SECTION 9

PSEUDO-OBSERVATION
ENTHUSIASTS



OOTNS OBJECTS OF THE NIGHT

by Jason Abdelhadi

“They are the link that is never really missing, the link between the clay and the blood... Their function is to stand apart and grow in strength... It is their function to invent forms... An ABSM [ABominable Snow Monster], a neo-neanderthal, an unmissing link.”

-RA Lafferty, *Boomer Flats*

1

Searching for ABSM's in LeBreton Flats, Ottawa, in pursuit of the cryptic short story *Boomer Flats*. the idea being, that “Flats” are interchangeable as environments for those who stand apart, the extraneous ones, the extra bit at angle to rest of the city.

LeBreton Flats... Some characteristics:

- Ordovician seabed, ripples of ancient ocean still visible
- Former working class neighborhood burned to oblivion
- Decades of nothing, constant threats and proposals to build, bordered and threatened by unwilderness (transit stations, museums, bike paths, conapts).
- Days are numbered
- One of the few places downtown to be truly alone
- Rubble, patches of swampy water, flat segments, odd video game world map sectionality, disorienting but essentially rectangular
- Swampy water and flora
- Kildeer breed here; if you go near them, they perform their “broken wing dance”, mimicking an injury to drive you away from their nest
- Detritus of many eccentric people and down-and-outs... Books, IDs, shoes

Signs of the ABSMs:

- a) A pillow beneath a bush, for cryptic naptimes
- b) A ritually defaced Hockey Card, with mud smear over eyes of player
- c) Storage trunk (antique); Christmas stocking in deep summer
- d) ABSM “sole”, better than a footprint (if you teach a person to stomp...)
- e) Remnants of string arrangement with fossils and twigs... Classic ABSM material ambiguity
- f) A lower half of a mammalian jaw, still full of bloated meat, covered in flies
- g) Rhyming with the jaw above, a toy grinning mouth, a grinning acronym...





2

...Whosoever sleeps with their windows open shall at fateful moments be awakened by the mobile signals of the night. Honourbound to use the oddities who move as living prompts to action, the waking oneiric consciousness makes note of their effect on the mind with the gravity of myth—yes, and, it IS mental heaviness that characterizes mythic phenomena, they are ICOs (Impression Creating Objects) that function to the right observer in the

same ballpark as fossils, lightning, earthquakes and mountains. Tonight's "speculative guest" was the owner of a sound that I had long been curious about but never energized enough to check out in my hypnopompic torpor.

Finally I felt the impetus to scramble out of bed and peek: it was a sort of somnambulist pulling a plastic toy wagon filled to the brim with OOTNs (Objects of the Night). I admired, befuddled as I was, the sound of the plastic wheels on the sidewalk at night, as well as the stately unrushed martial pace of the Entity in Motion (EiM). Like the classic "Noght Thights" of the elder Youngsters, I "ride" along with this delirious wagon.

I remember the Haunted Hay Ride of Saunders' Haunted Farm in Munster. Much more impactful than the haunted house, because of its daytime limpidity, and its mobile oddness—a map-based tour of bizarre rural installations (BRIs)—UFOs embedded in old trees, madmen with chainsaws, lore keepers and just plain open-aired atmospherics of anticipation. I was on those rides myself as an alien coming to learn and collect frigid data about the exceptional geography of this very specific farmstead. A snatch of a dream memory as a car turns on ignition (the sound of starting); a series of beautiful genre paperbacks but I am being dragged away from them, bound by the neck to a rope on the back of a vehicle violently pulling me away. A kind of "hanged man" for the car-chase age.

I'll remember today being struck by the left calf of a person walking in front of me—she had a tattoo of the Hanged Man, looking more or less orthodox in the darkgreen blue tattoo monotone, except with the addition of a crescent moon above (or below?) his upturned feet. If the crescent moon is reminiscent of country living then it makes sense that the hanged man is himself a scarecrow—like in the Wizard of Oz, a being of contemplative thought unused to walking, but once freed his tottering under the hungry moon strikes us as the ideal prompt for a dance. Can we base a new holiday on the rotoscoped weirdness of the nocturnal scarecrow dance, the Hanged Man? Long professed to be my favourite Tarot card, and also one that I drew rather randomly a week ago from a happenstance pull from a creepy vintage pre-film 1990s Lord of the Rings Tarot set my family keeps around for some reason. I say rotoscoped because of the dancing rotoscoped scarecrow in the (-sub)iconic 1930s Ub Iwerks cartoon featuring the little grizzly bear and Old Man Winter. What is a (-sub)icon? An icon that never devel-

oped a mass of impressions (faulty) but which some of us have remembered due to chance circumstances... Availability and boredom. Crackling outside. The hint of a faraway electronic announcement. A subtle beeping only perceptible at certain angles. Tinkling, like bells. I have “invented” a praxis of mounting decent microphones up near the window (4th floor) and listening from bed, half asleep.





3
Two anthropoids stumbling through the primeval world. One of them, troglodytes say, has POETRY-EYES. This is a dangerous power. Whatever it looks at... Well... There are campfires and lightning. Another aeon, another cave-dwelling rumor, the THUNDERSTORM-OHR (the Racket-Eared One), who can transmute the clatter of a dropping stone into... Well... And then on the mud shores, the SCRATCH-SORCERER, who flings muck and peels back bark and massages the skin and the rind, who smears under-eyes and tickles the rabbit-breather, who grips the side of epoch-hill... Divulging ancestral secrets in the clubhouse off the lane, a monomane smoking and comparing the indices and timetables and the growth of prosperity and blight and metalworks... CONUNDRO, the stage performer, the descendant of platform apes, listening well for opportunity and sensation. All media, bubbling, all genealogy, well...

It's the season of the theorists. The "complete set people" assemble the variants and charge exorbitantly for the trouble. ONE DOES NOT HAVE A CAR—the stuff of heroic fantasy—and "makes do" with a bag of worthless inherited pseudo-silverware (plated false) that speaks to a storybook misunderstanding of alchemy and assessment. The Anti-Antiquity Institute will

revere this foremother as a “visionary” who toppled the Patina-Empires of old through sheer obstinacy. As former “Angle-Fellows” DISCUSSED THE WIND in a hushes and awesome downtown cant, to hide purport from the suburbanites, and win criminality with charm, she with the Anti-Revival Booth smote down the choices of the value-chasers by argumentation and lingo and massage therapy.

Anytime in the next century, wander into an empty construction site in the evening—trespass—and watch any creatures who scurry about. Look with binoculars at the haze-emergent moon, and in the river, make a face at the tail-slaps of beaver-insinuating objects (BIOs). Do anything, in short, but become a charming cable-publicity vortex. The temptation to INDEX Yourself to the cable-next-door (wow so simple! No need to leave house!) is a false automaton, there is no self-motivating-creator and no Body-Ohne-Breadbasket (BOB). It’s all Moon n’ Lightnin’ powered re-animation of dead stitched corpse persons, that’s everything worthwhile, you monster! Stop tapping. Learn to read Otrantic, and then go through a “biting” period. LAND on enemies with the blunt gravity of a helmet.



ANDOLAR OF THE WOODS

by Atlanta Surrealist Group

Three of us decided to speak to a spirit in the woods. We carried an offering of one bagel, and impaled this bagel on the branch of a very special dead tree in the middle of a clearing. Onto this bagel we each also added a drop of our blood. We then sat down among the leaves, ready to listen to the woods, and to question it. Our medium descended into a trance. They were informed that the answers would form in their mind before our questions were uttered. And so they did.

What is the spirit of these woods?

Andolar.

What is the significance of this clearing?

The moon.

What should I be asking?

Where the ship of the sky goes.

Don't we know where the ship of the sky goes?

[Silence]

Who are your messengers?

Insects.

What do they do?

Ask questions they already know the answer to.

What is a cryptid?

Hollow spaces.

Do you move through time?

The stars distilled.

The stars distilled into what?

Drops of sound.

What does the bird say?

A hornet ablaze.

Who lives underneath the ground?

The creaking of the wood.

What is an alien egg?

That which lives underground.

Is there writing on your wings?

A faraway sound.

Do sounds stop?

Call of no return.

What about the resonances?

Under the layers of leaves...seven.

Do you know what the deer that came to me last night and the night before was trying to say?

"I listen."

When I heard a howl late one night from this forest, who gave that howl?

White stones in the underbrush.

What is the trick to floating?

Vibration repeated.

Where is it all headed?

A thunderous roar.

What happens at this spot in exactly three hours?

Roots delve.

[Sound of aircraft passing]

The shell is cracked.

Why did the aliens in my dream play sitar?

Everything is sensitive.

Can you speak and hear at the same time?

I feel the sound of you walking. Your footsteps are a language.

Where do you come from?

Sorrow like mist rises from the earth.

[Sound of dog barking]

Where were you yesterday?

Call returned from the great distance.

What games do you like to play?

The sharpening of branches.

To what end?

Beauty.

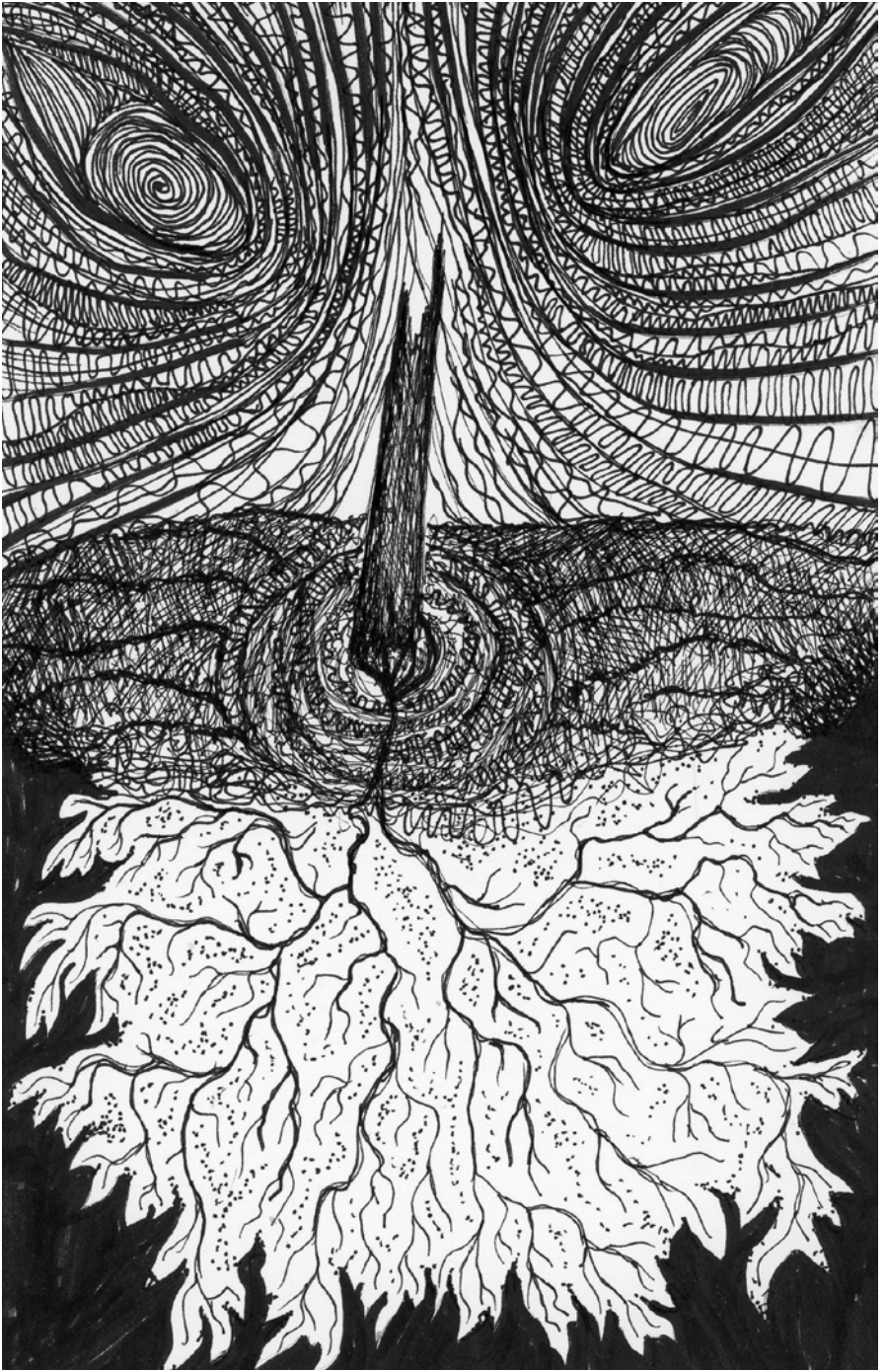
[Sounds of fluttering]

What makes the fluttering?

My limbs are a chorus.

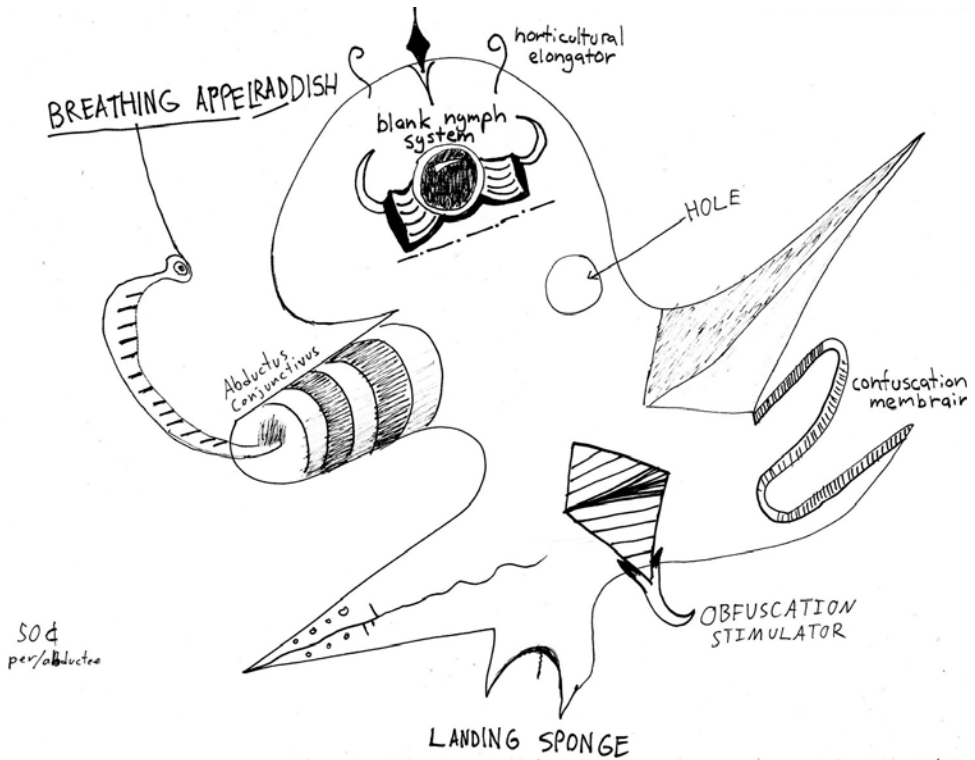
Would you like to go now?

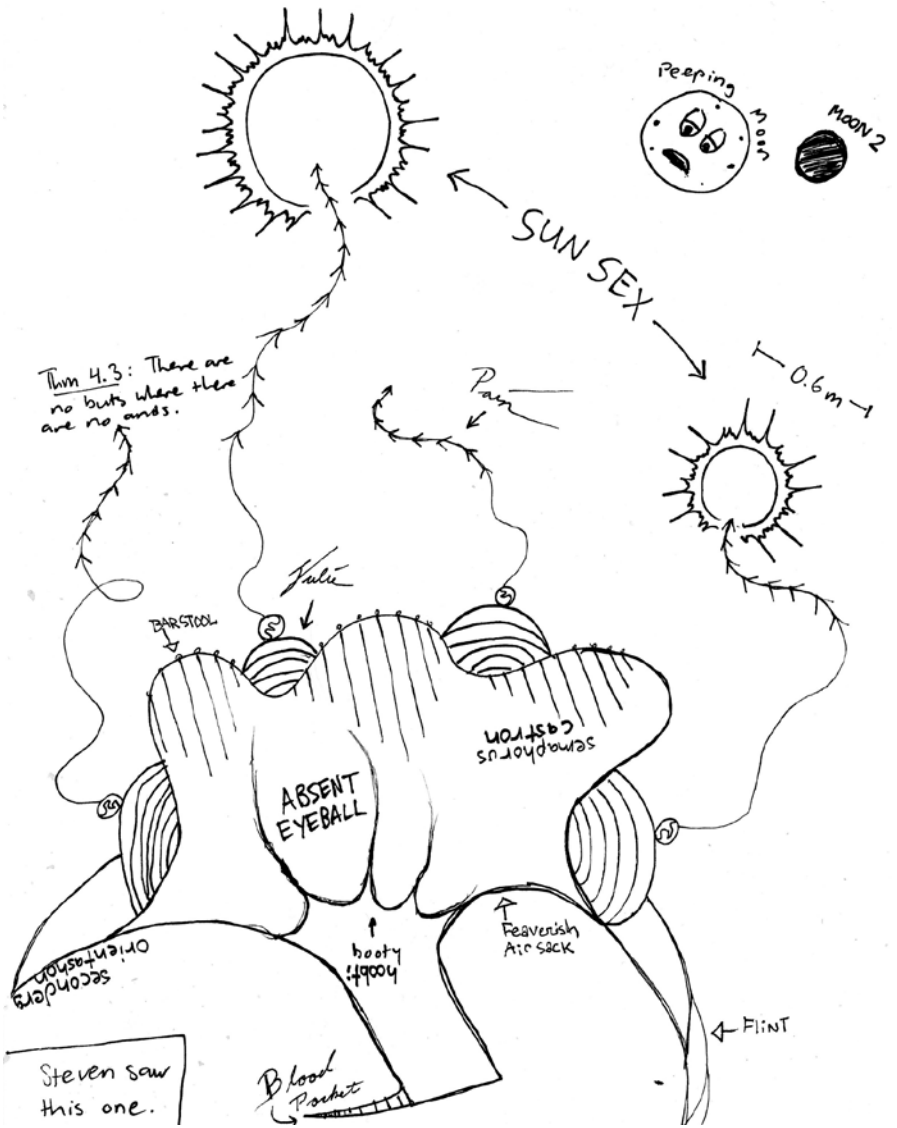
Yes. Tired.

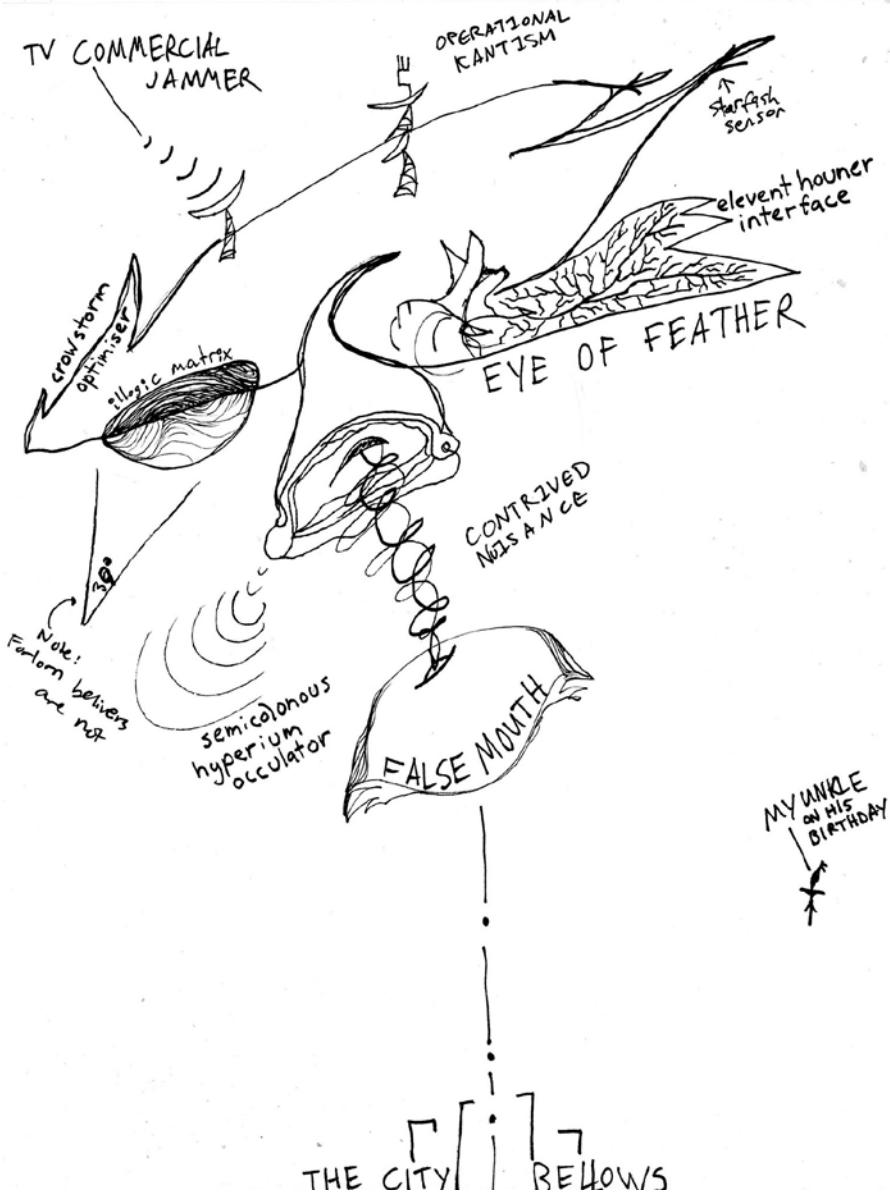


UFO DIAGRAM GAME

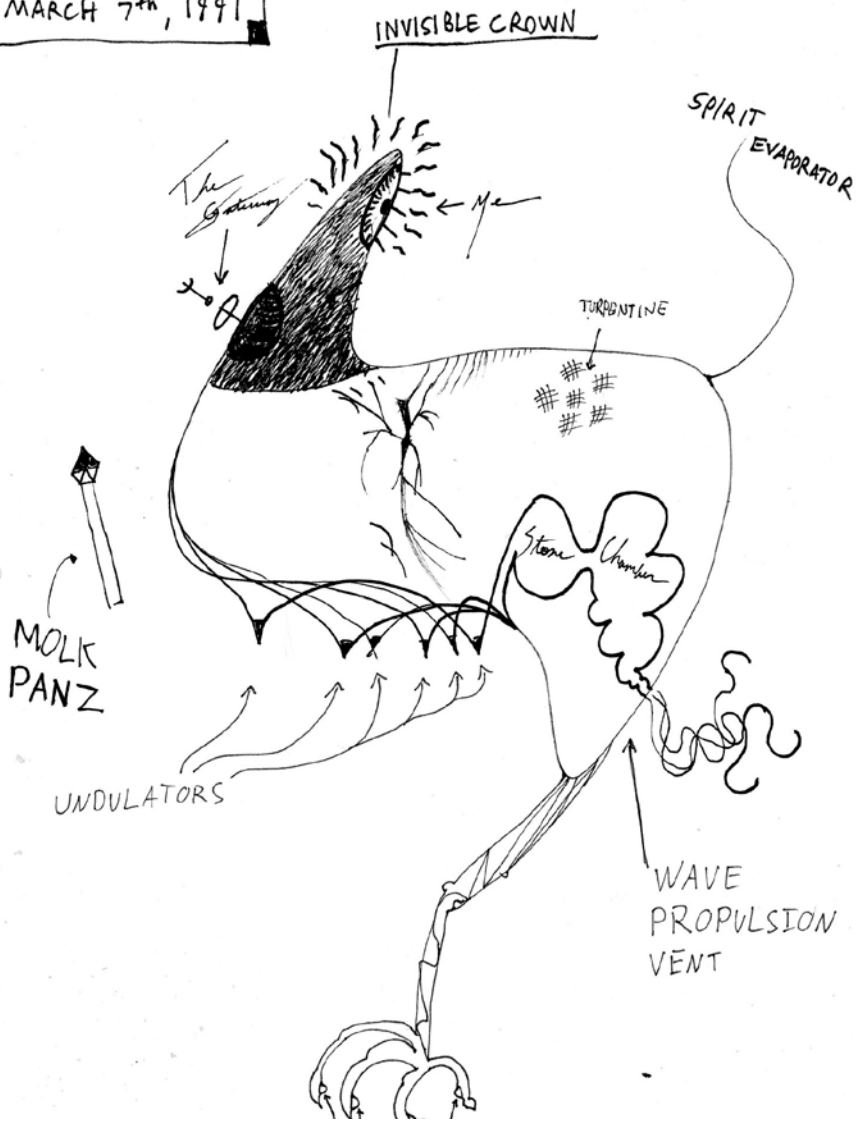
by Atlanta Surrealist Group







→ OBSERVED
→ MARCH 7th, 1991



LIMINAL SAFARI

by Stuart Inman

I hunt monsters. But these monsters are images, signs, events, that live at the edge of our human spaces and at the edge of our consciousness. I hunt them mostly in the streets, but also in woods and fields, wherever time, erosion, catastrophe causes the ruination of reasonable explanations. A wall that, once, was smoothly plastered holds within it a host of subliminal images, all jostling at the threshold of consciousness.

The fundamental component of this game I play, of being a hunter in the forest of symbols, with a camera instead of a gun, is certainly not original with me. There's a long tradition of 'realist surrealist' photography whose exemplars include most notably Emila Medkova and Vilem Reichmann, Roman Kubik, and, closer to home, Bill Howe, to name only a few. If the basic idea is not original, I think that many of the images are, perhaps not due to any great virtue of mine, but simply these things that are out there disclose their inner face in ways unique to me. My point, I hope you will realise, is not that I have any unusual powers of observation, but rather that anybody who seeks in this way can find those images unique and original to themselves.

The hunt is for a found sign that reveals a semic openness, that could, perhaps, show quite a different face to somebody else, it would be interesting to see how a number of people, armed with cameras, might interpret the same space, maybe a polyphony of images?

The Found Sign. Perhaps, as it is often the result of natural or accidental ruin, that it is discovered and recognised without further intervention, until that point of discovery, it has no signification. Perhaps, as found sign, it is the most pure oracle, recasting the entire universe as a vast Rorschach image, remade spontaneously by the human mind. But, as we look at it, it looks back at us.

It is said that the best camera is the camera you have with you. Although I have something of a passion for the various machines that take photographs, both digital and analogue, there is no favouritism when

it comes to finding these images. I may set out 'on safari', but am just as likely to find them in a moment of inattention when all I have is a little compact or even just my phone instead of a dslr or a 35mm or medium format camera. The point here is to be aware of one's surroundings in a particular way. They are found through a kind of low-level scanning of the environment, not focusing too intently or tightly, but loosely, a wide beam as it were, of inattentive attention.

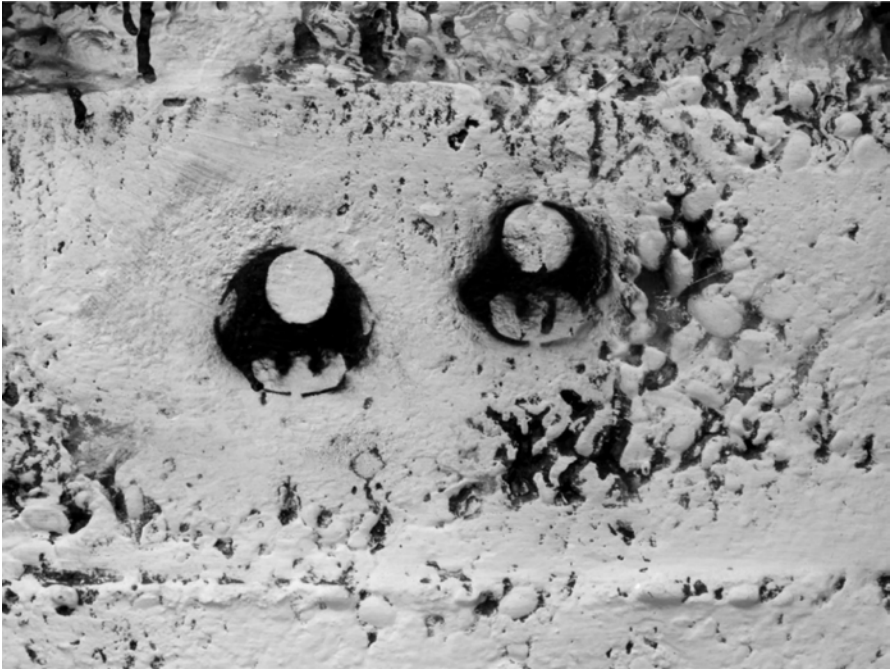
What then appears resembles us, our anxieties, our desires and that which (because unconscious) we do not know. More than that, not only is it an oracle of ourself, laid out before us, but of the socio-political world, imagination's critique of the real, delivered with cruel penetration and exactitude. The libidinous or frightened beasts, the cruel or sad or pretentious and pompous little men, the monsters, these are what we'd reveal to the world like a mirror, if our conscious mind had half the wit of the unconscious. But, as it is that very unconscious made conscious, it is our great opportunity to lay out a critique that contains the richness of both realms.

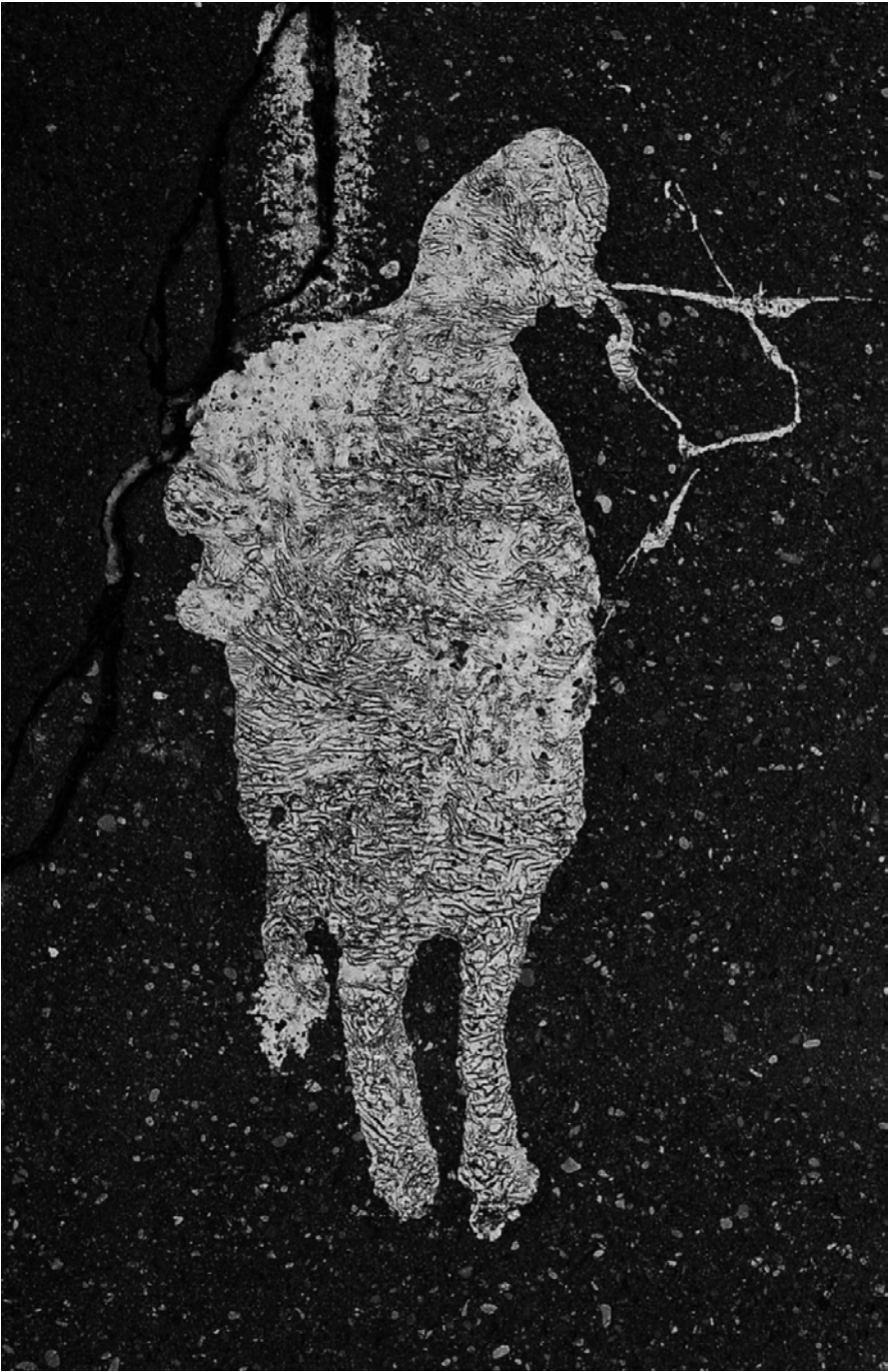
A brief diversion on method. This is, as much as possible 'straight' photography with a minimum of intervention. The whole point is of the foundness of the thing found, the object or sign in its raw state. I don't regard it as art, but as reportage, as documentation. For this to work at least as I want it to work, it needs the greatest degree of objectivity, but an objectivity that is undermined and maybe confronted with the greatest degree of subjectivity. 'Concrete irrationality' in real concrete! It's not that I don't produce art, I am also a painter, but the whole point of this is really at the opposite pole to contemporary debates about AI, I want you to know that this is as real as possible, that you too can go out and find these images (and quite possibly already do) that they are out there to be found, in they are hidden. Thus I try to manipulate the image as little as possible, a little cropping to emphasise the discovered image, a slight shift in exposure might emphasise mood, maybe some sharpening, that's all.

Titles can suggest what I find in these images, but without that sort of guidance, perhaps you'd discover something quite other. I remember that the Yugoslav surrealists, circa 1929, spent some time in a group project deciphering a wall. I like the idea of taking these photographs as a

starting point for a game in which drawing, painting, collage and more photographs, found subjects that echo the original images, as well as interpretative texts. More than this, perhaps that could be a starting point for games of interpreting the strange oracle of the found and delivering imagination's most exacting critique of the public sphere.



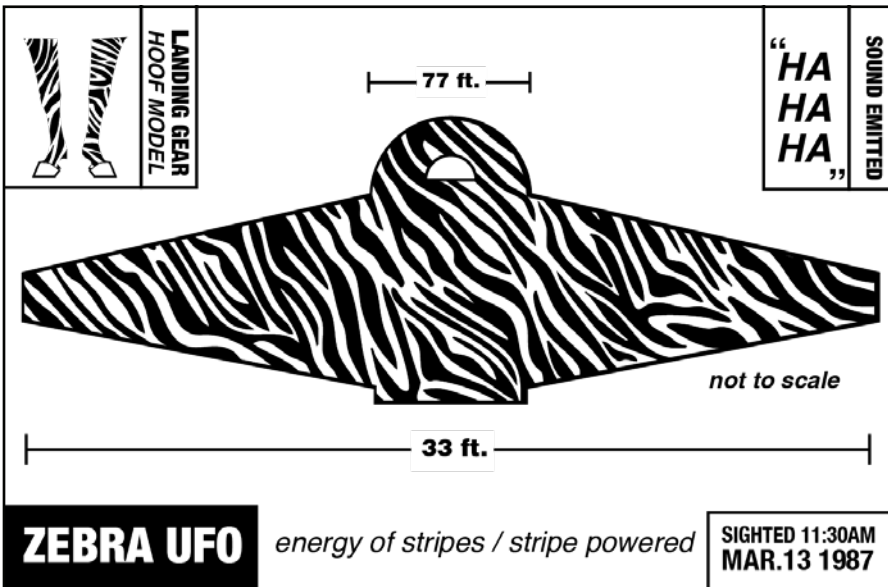








Jane Robert Foster



Steven Cline



Jane Robert Foster

SECTION 10

ONEIRIC FAUNA
TAXONOMIC
PROFESSIONALS





woodpecker eats itself
Jesse Narens



fearer, eraser, denier, replacer, forgetter, repeater, repeater, repeater. invasive reflection
Jesse Narens

A DREAM, 2018/01/05

dreamt by Jason Abdelhadi

An alien invasion on the night of a major holiday. It is early in the morning. Amber and I go to a fancy Belgian hotel/restaurant in the rideau centre for breakfast. It is very cold out. Everyone is trying to get a tattoo for this particular holiday. It is the upstairs parlor on Rideau. I am about to go in. An ambulance pulls up and picks up a paraplegic (whom Amber recognizes) from the tattoo parlour. I realize even if I get one now I won't be able to show it off for the holiday since it needs time to heal, so I give up on the idea. Somehow I intercept an alien communication. The general looks like Marilyn Manson from *The Dope Show*. He is commanding these brachiosaur-like creatures to attack Earth. They expect to clean us up. He says if they even get to the point of having to engage our troops they've already lost.

(Waking source for tattoo - skin patch removal scene from *Blood on the Devil's Claw*)



the taste of tiny bones
Jesse Narens

THE GOLD BUB

by Tony Convey

It was a long time ago when we lived in the Dark Range Valley. They called me 'THE GOLD BUB' and claimed they found me exposed in a crack in the Dark Range. They said I only grew legs and arms when I was exposed to the sun. They told me I was placed in a large crystal container in which a dark mist gradually pulled off the gold covering my small body. They didn't know it but for years I removed sharp little flakes out of my fingers, mouth and legs. I was left on my own as the Elders were busy closing entry points to their realm. There were always plenty of creatures near the structure where the Elders gathered to examine their latest captures.

Once a creature was caught and named they were taken to an area where they were imprisoned. I couldn't see some of these creatures but I could hear some at night as they crawled across their stony floor leaving sparkling lines in their wake. I wanted to find and look after my creatures but I did not know how I could do it until one cold morning when I went outside after hearing a scraping noise and saw some thick coloured lines moving across the wall and I carefully picked one up.

As I peeled it off it made a gurgling noise like thick water choking a pipe. It wrapped itself around my neck and a voice blurted from the frothy brown creature that was growing across my chest. My ears laughed and my toes cried as the creature was now covered in thick blue fur as it stroked my legs with its curly claws. It struck me that I had created this creature in a few minutes while the 'masters' took a week to get their captives breathing. I carried it into the processing room bursting with confidence that I had made my first creature.

Nobody looked up from their creatures. My blue furry creature scanned the room and made a shrill noise. It wasn't audible or visible to them. With the blue one curled around my neck I left their nasty room. I then decided to try and find the crack on the Dark Range where they had kidnapped me. I had often looked at the Range and wondered what else could be discovered in its volcanic walls. On my second attempt I

noticed what looked like a crack almost covered by a flowering tree. I moved the flowering branches stepped into a dark entrance and almost fell onto a soft floor wriggling with movement. A current of gurgling noise flew through my ears and my body twitched like it was crawling with ants. I looked down and little heads and claws were climbing out of my chest. For a minute I panicked but then I realised I could use these little creatures. I lay myself on the luminous floor. A congress of critters emerged from my body like an ant plague but I did not panic and watched the little creatures scuffling all over me. The majority disappeared and I pondered over this cavalcade of unknown creatures. The cave was like a moving stage with multi coloured creatures, small and large wriggling, flying and climbing around its crystalline floors and walls.



Golden Bub
Tony Convey

As I walked back to my small but warm hut I remembered that the Elders Musk Celebration of their creature capture skills was only a few days off and I started planning my revenge for their arrogance and cruelty. I had been intrigued by how many of these new creatures were flying whereas the Elder's captives were running around in their cages or climbing trees before they were eaten. That night I dreamed of floating above the celebration and dropping scores of flying creatures onto the Musk.

As soon as I woke up I started turning the dream into reality. I went back to the cave and as soon as I climbed in I had a brain flash, laid down on the crystals and absorbed little creatures for hours. Most of them had wings some small others extensive. Maybe I could develop my own wings? I decided to stay in the cave as long as I could and see if the creatures had wings as they moved out of my body or if being exposed to the light caused it.

After a few hours I got up and started to walk back to my hut. I could feel another larger creature coming out of my back but by this time I thought I had seen everything so I just kept walking until I saw my reflection in a little creek showing two golden wings emerging from my back. I laughed and laughed and thanked my golden heritage. I wondered if I could find a way to put the wings back inside until I needed them. It happened with a soft purr and I smiled all over as my plan slid into shape. I had to find out how I could gather enough creatures in the few days before the event so I was back in the cave early next morning. I eased on to the crystals, closed my eyes and drifted away. I was quickly woken and found myself in a gleaming ball with many voices whispering in my ears. 'We have brought you home Golden One and you will help us finish the invaders'.

I was feeling warm shivers all around me. I was at home. The voices coiled into one which told me on the evening of the Musk Celebration I was to fly over the site and send shafts of light into the crowd and behind me a large, luminous circle would form and almost immediately drop thousands of tiny creatures into the darkening light.

The evening arrived and the Elders were spread over most of the Dark Range Valley. Their elaborate tables contained the red water which intoxicated them and the mounds of meat from their holdings were disappearing fast. Surrounded by bubbling creatures of all colours I shook my back and

slowly lifted myself above the valley. There was a soft thud in my ears as cascading tunnels of light poured out of my shoulders and hit the ground like lightning. A wave of roaring fear rose into the sky just as the luminous circle splintered releasing hundreds of creatures which grew in size as they shrieked in grotesque voices. Panic overcame the Elders and they ran in every direction knocking each other over as the now huge creatures landed all around and over them and drove them out of Dark Range Valley. They never returned and the Dark Range Valley was returned to its owners and for over a century I have lived a joyous life in numerous shape shifting modifications and adventures above and below the mountains and the Valley.



Old Bub

Tony Convey



The Big Dump
Tony Convey



Preparing for flight
Tony Convey

A DREAM, 2023/02/20

dreamt by Jason Abdelhadi

Defending the house from attack coming from beyond my parents' backyard. We are safe indoors but a bunch of evil winter creatures emerge if we try to go out there, including bigfoots, which try to force their way in. One heroic female leader decides to leave the door open as an experiment. I get ready with a canoe paddle. A female bigfoot emerges and makes a dash for us. I think the leader wants it to come in but I don't understand her logic and am more inclined to fight it.

(source may have been the "arm through the door diorama" at the Bigfoot Museum in Georgia)



observer

Jesse Narens



tiny bodies paused momentarily in a dance with the tide

Jesse Narens

A DREAM, 2023/02/07

dreamt by Jason Abdelhadi

At some kind of winter cottage scenario. Go with a few people for a walk in the woods. Looking for a cryptid. Find a strange bunch of human prints and a lone bear print. It's very lonely and quiet. We find a little convenience store in the middle of the woods. A chinese family runs it. They sell books. I buy two, including a weird copy of *Lautréamont* in French. It's the size and shape of a checkbook. It has illustrations by Edward Gorey, full of spidery monster figures. I think to myself, surprising what you'll find! I go to pay. They ring me up. They tell me I can save big if I buy a canned drink. I ask my companions to grab me one but they seem confused. I can't tell what I paid. I couldn't read the register. They won't give me a receipt. Amber assures me I didn't pay more than 25\$. We go to leave. Looking from the door I see store is hurtling down the highway. I guess it's mobile. I am wondering what random part of Quebec we will end up in.

A DREAM, 8 JUNE 2024

dreamt by Hazel Cline

There was a person who lived next to a river. The river was broad and ran through the bottom of a steep-sided canyon. A road ran on either side of the canyon, and it was spanned by a big, sturdy old bridge formed by an intricate latticework of green metal. The person lived down the road from the bridge in a house at the top of a steep driveway that led up from the road at the canyon's edge, and they had a wonderful view of the river and the land far around. One day when they were out on their front porch, admiring the scene, they were surprised to see a massive, dark shape moving in the water. It was long and wriggling like a snake, but big enough to span the width of the river and then some. Startled but curious, the person hastened down their driveway to the edge of the canyon to get a nearer look. As they watched, the giant snake looked as though it was going to start out of the water on the other side, when it was abruptly pulled back under by an unseen force or beast. It struggled furiously, sending up great splashes of water higher than the canyon walls, but it quickly succumbed and was pulled under. The person watched intently for several minutes, but the giant creature never resurfaced. They looked up and down the river in case the creature reappeared further along. That is when they noticed something under the bridge. It appeared to be a giant cocoon. However, on closer inspection, it appeared to be made out of intricately entwined metal parts. The person called the authorities and told them what they had seen. A team came out the next morning with boats to search the river. But by that time, the cocoon had disappeared and there was no sign of the snake. However, the head of the team, who was actually the owner of a car factory nearby, believed the witness's story and said anything could be hiding in the caves that opened up in the side of the canyon. The witness asked what manner of creature could have dragged such a massive snake down, and the team leader responded that he had heard of creatures that could take down prey many times their size. He said that one such creature was the Golden Wolf, which had been known to take down sharks.

In a neighboring town, a blond man dressed like a punk was walking down a dirt lane. He was a Golden Wolf who had learned to appear like a man. He had also learned how to open up the hearts of trees to get to the creatures that lived inside and eat them. The wolf entered a grove of great old oak trees. He ran his long fingernails along a subtle seam in the trunk of one tree and widened the aperture bit by bit until the trunk had swung wide open to his view. Inside was an intricate metallic cocoon. He opened it and ate the owl he found inside. All the trees in this grove contained owl cocoons, and the Golden Wolf Man quickly decimated their numbers, consuming most, but not all of them. He always left some prey so they could give birth to the next generation of his meals. But he was still hungry, so he went to a preserve run by members of his kind, where food was plentiful. It was technically a place for desperate wolves to come, who had not hunted successfully enough to feed themselves or their young sufficiently. It was run under a system of wolf's honor, but our Golden Wolf Man had little need for honor. He had a greater need for a full belly. So he went to the preserve and picked himself out a nice fat hare, signing the check-out sheet with a fake name. Of course he had to use a fake name because he could let no wolf think that he had hunted unsuccessfully.

ADDENDUM

written by Steven Cline, as if he were Hazel Cline

A few weeks after receiving this dream, we took a road trip to Ohio. At a certain point, a sign for Point Pleasant, West Virginia appeared. Point Pleasant, of John Keel's *The Mothman Prophecies* fame, the site of the ominous Silver Bridge collapse. Somehow, quite by accident, we'd made a pilgrimage to mothman's home territory. We parked in the downtown, and Steven reverently kissed the feet of the large metal mothman statue there. We then jumped back in the car, and pulled onto the rebuilt silver bridge. I looked at the clock as we crossed, and the clock read 3:33. I had images in my head after of mothman lying in a car below the bridge, at the bottom of the Ohio river. Waiting in a watery cocoon of mangled metal, biding his time...

SECTION 11

ASSOCIATION
of
ABYSSAL
AERONAUTS



NEXTWHERE

by Maggie Fields

“On a bed on the far side of the room, wearing only her stockings, a woman was sleeping, like an animal ensconced in its shell, and her sex slept too, like an animal ensconced in its shell.”

—Michel Leiris, *Cardinal Point* (1925)



Fig. 1. Artist's impression of the landing at Shirleys Bay.

As somebody once wrote a decently long time ago, “Existence is between here-off-end and nextwhere.” When the object landed in the night, slowly dissolving the edge of the forest outside Ottawa in its path, the first to notice were only the bioluminescent coyotes with six gills on either side, who bent their heads upward to lick the well-greased saucepan of the waxing moon and spread their shadows into the clearings. The coyotes communicated with one another via a detailed mapping of the locations of stars. Having long noted with interest that their howling appeared to attract the strange flying entities that glowed like a halo over the pines in the setting dusk, the highly esteemed and erudite scientists of the Department of Transport decided to record their calls and chatter. They selected roughly two dozen individuals to follow, watching them through a tiny window carved in a sort of camera obscura secluded in the dark woods. The scientists’ recording instruments consisted of enormous satellite dishes and a fine wire that reached up into the ionosphere and connected with the northern lights.

Sometimes—during particular phases of the year—you may see the northern lights even from Ottawa, and the phenomenon’s tendency to disrupt the Department’s communications was a source of great bafflement and frustration. This was precisely because, on the nights when they showered the sky, the curtains opened and became a vast and mysterious ocean wave that swept restlessly over the forest, and in the mornings everything was quite slippery and drenched and the trees were covered in all the tossed-up creatures and tiny shells from the deep sediments of the Ordovician sea bed—trilobites, orthocones, crinoid stems, brachiopods, peculiar inkblot beasts with no name other than “this” and “that” found stuck to the trees like whale barnacles. It was here that the scientists of the Department of Transport placed their observatory, for they believed that through study of the objects in the night sky they could learn, as their curious visitors had, to harness the power of the Earth’s magnetic fields in their travels...

In the course of our acquaintance Wilbert Smith, the director of the magnetospheric survey and fixation of my fondness, introduced me to John Lilly, with whom he had recently shared correspondence. Under sensory

isolation in his private aquarium he had spoken with extraterrestrial civilizations in their own language, and he had learned—telepathically—the prehistory of their navigations to our fragment of the universe. Many of their crafts were set afire upon entry into the atmosphere, their ashes washed away in the unending deluge, he told me, but one had reached the secret regions where all is preserved in time far longer. The ancestors of the great whales heard the impact in the waters, roused from their cocooned sleep. One by one they drifted past and softly pried the object from its mantle, remotely with their strings of sound, pressing against its internal artifice to leave a trace in the texture of their thoughts, as it descended farther and farther, down to the verdant and untouched terraces where they could not follow, for in the wild abyss lay the final abode of the bodies of their kind.

In surreptitious discussion with the scientific heads of the Department of Transport it was decided that this was the medium I would use to converse with our visitors from elsewhere. Here it was, without further delay—the glass plane separating the pelagic currents from the influence of your repressive systems as if in a zoological pavilion, through which one perceives *the pure functioning of thought!* A grainy old tape rewound in a dimmed basement, a backward retrospective soiree of the entire phylogenetic timeline to the very earliest instance. To be a flying saucer, a submersible, and a herring in a fin whale's jaws all at once, in a dream chambered like a shell! Bodily experience reduced to that of a unified erogenous zone, where each discrete corporeal part has its equivalent in another and corresponds to a distinct phonetic component of the alphabet.

Perhaps like the elation of a young woman finding herself alone on a stretch of empty road, suddenly transfixed and overwhelmed upon sighting inexplicable lights in the sky, contemplating her own imminent abduction with a hushed shudder felt underneath her skirt? I thought what I faced was but only the complete abolition of the interstitial between the expectation and fulfilment of pleasure—the spectre of that particular and most dangerous variety so neglected in “real” life, pleasure without interruption or end. This is why communications with visitors from interstellar space always have the character of an immediate magical transference of thought, an instantaneous consolidation of words, pictograms, figures: as in the thickness of a

sexual nightmare so stirring it rouses from sleep, one knows, without need for further reference.

I had previously read the *Book of Healing* of Ibn Sīnā, among the foremost of the luminaries of the Middle Ages, wherein it is stated that the existence of the soul would be proven beyond hesitation if a man were to be born fully-formed in a dark void and lie suspended, deprived of feeling his own limbs. Was this a vestige, then, of when it was still a matter of such importance to determine whether humanity possessed souls?

In my paralysis—the paradox of fluid immobilization—is there a reinvention of the marvelous couch of Berggasse 19, on which the delightful lady prone to her passionate outbursts lies motionless for inspection, or is this a regression, perhaps, to the age of hypnosis? There is an image from the photographic archives of the Salpêtrière Hospital depicting a certain Louise Augustine Gleizes (denoted in the records as “A”), taken into the Master Charcot’s hellish whirlwind of erotic misadventures and scientific exploitation at the recorded age of fifteen-and-a-half, in the total blackness of a darkroom, thrown into catatonia by the sudden flood of light erupting from a glowing bulb, a photographic shock. But, no, here Miss Gleizes is a deep-sea anglerfish, or the infernal vampire squid, and the penetrating luminescence we see emanates from inside her body, from the vibrant organs at the tips of her own tentacles. (In this second version, as in the first, Charcot himself is outside of the photographic frame: this is because he is a very large sperm whale who does not fit...)

Indeed, the quintessential reverie of the rocket state entailed the exploration of all conceptual means of putting a human body into orbit. And still, such pursuits held aspirations far from a military-industrial nightmare: the experiments, mirroring the contemporaneous establishment of satellite communication between Earth and spacefarers, constituted attempts to measure the widest possible orbital range of thoughts, to calculate their velocity. An extension of how, in the previous century, a sailor lost in the polar regions and beset by terror and solitude could still feel the embrace of his lover... We wished to study the generation of synchronous and parallel thoughts, soft in their reach like the fascinating feathers women would wear to the horse fair or the Great Exhibition, striped like nautiloids and zebra mussels, brown clams and geoducks.

It was relatively recently, Dr. Lilly told me, that the inner world of the Cetacea first began to reveal itself to humanity. One can only imagine the awful

labour of flensing the great carcasses, the butcher's face reflected in the eyes peering from the slit perineum, pried open by the cruel knives: those cloudlike eyes that unified eye, egg, perineum, fruiting body. Was not the most significant scientific discovery of the past half-century concerning the cetes, and the vast distance of their place among the forking paths taken by life from ours, perhaps that they universally share the experience of the hysteric who complained to Breuer of having "a sounding board in my abdomen"?

A small whale blows a ring of bubbles into the ancient sea, returning from the place where the strange flowers in darkness never come up for air. She lies on her back and examines it with a series of pulses she emits from her beak, and she sees also a diagram of the outer layers of an extrasolar planetary system; a table of graphic traces (an idea yet to come, unknown to her, and still yet she may know of something analogous, the waves that vanish...); an X-ray image of the cornices and spindles inside her own brain; the concentric circles of the grand labyrinth of Chartres, among which the abbots and acolytes in their black chasubles once played a hidden game every Easter, which becomes the labyrinth of her own fossilized face; the memory of her own hallucination, ever so transient, of a hail of raindrops colliding with the surface of the ocean...



Fig. 2. Ms. Fields "dials the cosmos," undated (circa 1950s), courtesy of the archives of the Department of Transport.

In my half-awareness I am walking on the lip of the Late Cretaceous salt flat. The ancient birds fossilized immediately when they flew inside it. Beyond there lay the forever country where dreams are edible, where the desert sky carved a windchime landscape... One doesn't need one's body there, you're already invisible. The refinements of geodes, elegies.

I am under the impression of drifting very rapidly, although I am stationary. Oh, now I remember, I'm on the train westbound to Penzance, there goes the countryside, the cows and sheep.

There is a tender, lucid moment where I think I am looking into deep space, where I realize that I am hovering on my chest, not on my back. I am seeing all the dark matter in deep space through the peephole of a kinoscope at the Exposition Universelle, perhaps, or through the lens of Van Leeuwenhoek's microscope. Now the corona borealis of Fourier enters my eyelid. Slowly it melts into a keyhole that peers within a mouth, or the enclosed topography of an internal organ formerly intangible to me, that I'm not sure whether is mine or someone else's, somewhere pulsating and carmine. The qualities of moving up or down in space are only idioms, polite and inconsequential niceties, like prattling on about the weather, I suppose. It's only you, the velvet darkness, and the flowers that grow inside.

When I first lived in Ottawa I often found myself lonely. I'd read the magazines while waiting at the laundromat, or at the hairdresser's as she suctioned my scalp with all her finely dentated eyestalks. It was a frigid day in the winter of 1960 when I read of the descent of the undersea parachutist to the lowermost reaches of the Mariana Trench, sandwiched in between all the gaudy photographs of Sun Valley, of Antelope Canyon, of Porpoise Land (which contained no such creatures, only dolphins and some turtles). I lingered on the description of the sunken vessel he had glimpsed at such fathoms; a delirious phantasm brought about by the absence of sunlight, crushed in the diving bell like an iron lung. (Or perhaps by the *abyssal auroras* that shine there instead, noted beneath an accompanying illustration of Beebe's.) I recalled a statement of the young Freud's from his obscure account of hysterical bioluminescence in a subject presenting with spontaneous blindness:

he writes that it is in the drowned ruins of ships where all dreams forgotten upon waking since one's birth are to be found. (For me it had been my father's grandfather, the galvanized and reanimated corpse of a sailor raised from the frozen wreck of the *Erebus*.) In the course of the Department's experiments we had learned that, like weakly interacting massive particles from space, the messages from the cosmos encrypted in the hieroglyphs collide with our bodies at all moments of the hour, passing through the cores of our bones, our flesh and blood. The only beings to retain any direct awareness of these messages—to have identified and recorded them—were the great whales, whose fine threads of baleen ensnare them and do not permit them to escape.

When I returned home, the woods were wet with filaments of ectoplasm that settled on the stripped boughs.



Fig. 3. "The Communication Institute." Courtesy of the archives of the Department of Transport.

Who is anyone in Challenger Deep?

Addressing the question at hand requires a substantial broadening of perspective. It can be safely affirmed that the original forms of multicellular life to crawl the sediment—the first proto-animals, perhaps—existed neither awake nor asleep. Thus the processes that we call “unconscious” ultimately have their origins in the sea; the physiology of dreaming is a regression itself. Furthermore, it is rather probable that the material conditions of the earliest life only meaningfully allowed for the registration of sensations experienced internally, and one might even thus posit that the entire history of evolution itself is that of the gradual increasing external direction of the sense organs.

Secondly, the oft-neglected reason why the application of modern visual technology to the undersea realm remained such a profound conundrum for so many years is because the subaqueous environment photographs poorly using the typical film made for recording ordinary waking life (the belief that the appearance of such was inherently more desirable being the result of a set of crude assumptions that stifling conventions have stalled our progress beyond). This explains the failure of all the very early attempts, producing little material discernible to the eye and overall looking dreadful. The first success is frequently identified as an image taken by William Thompson in 1856 after a visit at the house of a local mesmerist, following a procedure involving a stereoscope adapted for usage in sleep. In the decades ever since, this science has become more and more refined at an exponential rate. This is, however, deeply regrettable, for the presumed clarity of vision and garish technicolour hues in our modern documentary footage of the pelagic world have only been the product of altering and flattening the appearance of the deep to give it the illusion of resembling waking life as closely as possible.

Our next significant development regards the invention of the home aquarium, popularized for commercial use to great acclaim in the middle years of the same century. Its enthusiasts rapidly became cognizant of numerous other potential applications of this wondrous device. Many a husband and wife discovered that, when sleeping through the night upon electroplated pillows connected to such an aquarium, in the mornings the fantasized images that glided past their eyes in the early moments of falling asleep appeared suspended in the murky fluid behind the glass (among, of course, the manicured

decorative fronds and rather distressed fishes and snails). Often enough to be noted, this apparatus would somehow cause one spouse to experience the hypnagogic visions of the other, as if switching between brains; this led to many arguments over whose hallucination was whose. Widely publicized clamourings for divorce resulted in its unfortunate untimely discontinuation.

And lest we forget the *Intelligent Whale*, the submarine piloted via a navigation system constructed from slides of paintings from children's books: successive stages in the geological history of the Earth as seen from a comet, the arid steppe of the Ice Age, the Jurassic Coast, the coal forests of the Carboniferous. All you had to do was draw in breath and disintegrate to propel her...

Or, more precisely, let us ask: what did the first man to ever dive into Challenger Deep see upon his arrival?

An array of little sparks, the pinpricks of light that speckle a flute of champagne; specifically, the photopsia peculiar to the lovely young hysterics in Charcot's laboratory, a phenomenon observed at (by some caprice of fate) exactly the same moment. It is true that at first the abyssal trench was expected to be an Arctic terrain, with its mirages, its flashes, its ice blinks. There were some features that had been long known: the dune of hardened tears lying in wait covering the floor of the basin, glaring and lunar against the black firmament, its white sands cradling the eggs of creatures from deep time that still had yet to hatch, warm near the volcanic vents... And yet, when a broken fragment of the transatlantic telegraphic cable was dredged up from the depths of the Mediterranean covered in chanterelles and encrusted eardrums, the departure of the *HMS Challenger* was ordered. An extensive preparatory investigation was at first undertaken, a detailed radiological inventory of the basin of Challenger Deep, with comprehensive delineation of its respiratory functions and circulation, of the believed locations of the pain and pleasure nodes of its central nervous system. Naturally, Charcot himself was enlisted in the recruitment of the scientific personnel to man the submersible for descent into the deepest stratum: at first he employed his now-familiar technique of inducing sleep in the subject. Using the heliographic method, numerous lantern slides were procured and prepared of the gardens of the candidates' childhood homes, drawn directly from their own memories, and submitted to comparative study. Of them nothing was heard until the *Challenger* at last anchored in the port of Yokohama in the spring of 1875, where they were quarantined in the military

hospital following the foray. It was observed curiously that with each progressive day their appearances turned increasingly transparent, as if they were like eye dust dissolving into ether perhaps, their skins pellucid like the fish who live in the dark depths of the Pacific rifts.

It is known that the luminous colours emitted by the otherwise invisible and crystalline creatures of the abyss exist on a spectrum of gradations and levels of activation that correspond directly to the intensity of their observer's erotic arousal. You have sessile warblers, tunicates, deafening bromeliads, the equation of the electrophone and the bladder neck, the Bride's whale is here for you in her dress, the eels are raining like stars. And then there are whales visible only beneath powerful magnification, who swim among the waves sketched by some fanciful antiquated instrument recording the vibrations of human speech, or the playing of a violin, in a dish of impermeable sand, the threshold of an entire soluble zoology... Most of all the shimmering diatoms that form from the residue left in the creases of your eyes when you are on the edge of sleep, over the ridged shelf of the chasm, harvested in such enormous nets of fine silk and hauled up tediously for miles to the surface, the same silk from which the baleen plates of whales form in the womb! So desperately craved for centuries in the port of Venice, where the consort of the last of the Doges claimed she could never fall asleep without inhaling the most prodigious amounts, for she needed it to turn her thoughts into flowers, into kelp paddles, undersea lilies... So far from all her lands, from the city of Treviso for whom my father had such fond memories, her canals and colonnades nestled among the lion's-maned anemones and the sea-lambs. The infusorium enters through the genitals and eventually completes its task of penetrating the sensitive optic nerve, and this is rumoured to grant the host the vision of all things invisible to the naked eye. You fall in love with the sea, and the glove-maker hands you a mysterious card that admits you entrance to the Sadean château where all others who have become entrapped reside, the flying castle assembled from the skeleton of a humpback, an opera attended by masked women whose gowns are all made of glass...

In response to the immense spread of public interest in the findings of the expedition, the immersive panorama depicting Challenger Deep was installed on the grounds of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham Hill. Unlike with its predecessors, here the purpose was not merely to build something to be *looked*

at, but rather the engenderment of exquisite sensation in the spectators. The patrons entered the dome stripped entirely of their clothes, and with wonderment remarked that the extremities of their bodies had all become overtaken by a tremendous libidinity. One woman reported suddenly experiencing a full orgasm within her orbital socket, and others with their tonsils or through a fingernail. It was revealed that the inspiration for the panorama and its singular architecture derived from the system of vitrines which held the diaphanous and invertebrate animals collected from Challenger Deep: here, their sexual and reproductive behaviours were observed in order to potentially reconstruct the genesis of man in his earliest common ancestor with all other forms. This was believed to prove certain hypotheses put forth by Dr. Haeckel, the esteemed illustrator of the specimens. History tells the rest.



Fig. 4. “Thousands of other wonders wait to be discovered in this black ‘other world’ where sunlight never reaches...”

I find myself submerged in the spirit room of the National Museum of Natural Sciences. In the vase next to mine is a sort of chimera or sphinx like a large falcon with the striped head of a thylacine. There is a laboratory assistant here devoted to the question of why specific genera of undersea animals who lack visual decoration or interest externally have evolved beautiful ocelli on the outer membranes of their internal organs, very similar to those found on the wings of moths and the feathers of certain birds. Initially, it is believed, such mutations caused terrible pain, but now they are an entirely favourable adaptation to the fortunate creatures who possess them. The current speculation is that they may have a communicative function.



Fig. 5. "Proper position for floating."

An account of the night Wilbert Smith, in his observatory at Shirleys Bay, recorded a colossal disruptive event with his gravimeter, August 8th, 1954: transcript of interview with Ms. Fields.

“I can recall the night the miracle occurred. I am in bed wearing only stockings and a cotton slip, my pillow turned toward the forest visible through my window. The object has come in through the roof of the house and silently spreads its light over me. There is no fantasy of some perverse vivisection I perceive, but nonetheless I know the intention already: I have been sought for the secret transcript hidden in my body, the secret transcript engraved in the iridescent inner surface of the cirrate shell that has calcified within me since the time of the last universal common ancestor, the time of the fossilized beings who dwell in the woods outside Ottawa. I want to stretch my limbs over the edge of the bed, but the object is already emitting its paralytic colours, enclosing the perimeter of my bed in lines of paralytic colours. Of course my visitor could only be from the forest, only the forest with its sadism and lonesomeness, its downpours of teeth in autumn, its flowers in the shape of question marks. Only the cruel tones and cannibal love of the forest of farthingale birds, the birds whose hooves sing in the befeathered darkness...”

*An Extract from a Monograph of a Paleontologist in the Service
of the National Museum of Natural Sciences, Ottawa*

“Of the more novel accomplishments of the scientists of the Department of Transport was their presentation before the Geological Survey of perchance the oddest fruit of their researches: the reconstruction of Tiktaalik-Pakicetus, the distant descendant of the ancestral Hominidae, appearing in the fossil record roughly 35–45 million years following the poorly-understood cosmic event that formed what is now known as the Anthropocene-Surrealocene Barrier. (The name, of course, is not intended to insinuate that this species is a hybrid or ‘crossbreed’ of the aforementioned creatures shrouded in deep time, or even related to them other than very faintly. Rather, the name denotes the significance of the amphibious ecology,*

physiology, and psychological traits of this species for the history of science: the Hegelian synthesis of the sea-to-land and land-to-sea dialectics represented respectively by Tiktaalik and Pakicetus.) Here we observe a female habitually submerged in her natural lair, one of the many warm tidal pools formed in the rich silt covering the shoreline of the Mare Solubilis; notably, this strikes the observer as similar to the 'bottling' behaviour of the now long-extinct pinnipeds. This activity allows her—an organism extraordinarily mentally receptive to minute fluctuations of the Earth's magnetosphere—to telepathically detect (and possibly, if we are to anthropomorphize, eavesdrop on) the thoughts of other animals in the local environment, and to communicate via sensation of remote magnetic currents within the earth. It is evident that Tiktaalik-Pakicetus developed into her present form via the introduction of new, more complex modes of labour, as once hypothesized quaintly in the aeon-misted past by a particular Friedrich (now, at the time of Tiktaalik-Pakicetus and her ilk, known affectionately as 'Fred') Engels. (However, regrettably at this time the details of such profound changes remain somewhat lost in dim obscurity, far beyond the conscious memory of Tiktaalik-Pakicetus.) She is the heiress of photosynthetic speech and a unique mechanism of reproduction, via infrared and biosonar apparatus; the female genital structure has now transformed via natural selection into a series of sensitive organs which assist her in telepathic perception of the mentations of other beings. However, oddly, she lays soft-shelled and delicate eggs, an ability possessed by all biological sex variations of the species. (This constitutes a markedly strange evolutionary regression to the most ancient of all living mammals, the monotremes, in a creature that has otherwise undergone an incredibly dramatic metamorphosis.) One may note that her stripes very closely resemble those of the shell of the chambered nautilus, an animal as vanished as the ammonites of the age of the non-avian dinosaurs. This may be considered an example of convergent evolution—which, it must be mentioned, is now understood to be not merely a happy accident of the effects of similar environmental circumstances, but a kind of telepathic resonance or free-association between physical configurations of living organisms across vast distances of time and geographic space...”

**A brief historical note: drawing upon exhaustive archival research, it is believed that the Department of Transport traces its ancestry to a secretive company of the late eighteenth century—M. F.*



Fig. 6. Artist's reconstruction of *Tiktaalik-Pakicetus*, courtesy of the archives of the Department of Transport.

A memory of December 27th, 1962, the day Wilbert Smith died, calmly awaiting his departure to a realm where he would "be certain to know more about it all"

There are hours when I must escape into my own body. I awoke in the bedroom I had secreted myself: a maze of shells within shells, porcelain spires, striations, as in the nest of a paper wasp. I lay enfolded within the torn linens of a mummified pharaoh, the encoded transmissions from space pressed next to my skin resembling the hieroglyphs of the Book of the Dead, which mirrored the rhythms of my sleep in some mimesis. I kept several holes in the cosmos wrapped in the blankets, and I could faintly remember the coyotes twisting their way in from outside while I dreamed, brushing my feet with their quivering snouts.

In my nightgown and boots I threw on my coat and followed the ravens on the telephone lines. In my mind I could see the landing site, the

flattened trees and the wrinkled fence that the Department of Transport had erected. A comet had landed in this part of the forest four hundred million years before, colliding with the primeval sea. It was the furred egg of a bird giant composed of several individuals, flying as if fused to one another at the bases of their spines and the joints of their wings. Inside it were the intricate wreaths of a Gothic prayer bead, but in place of the boxwood figures of Christ and the Apostles were forms unknown.

On that day the wild turkeys were forming a circle beneath my feet, weaving through the aspens with their last leaves, spinning a web with their beaks in the prior evening's fall. A cartouche of everlasting significance, drawn in a spiral made of symbols left for our visitors from the stars. Now the object was returning to whence she came. I reached into the chokeberries and held her fins, a soaring static through my arms.

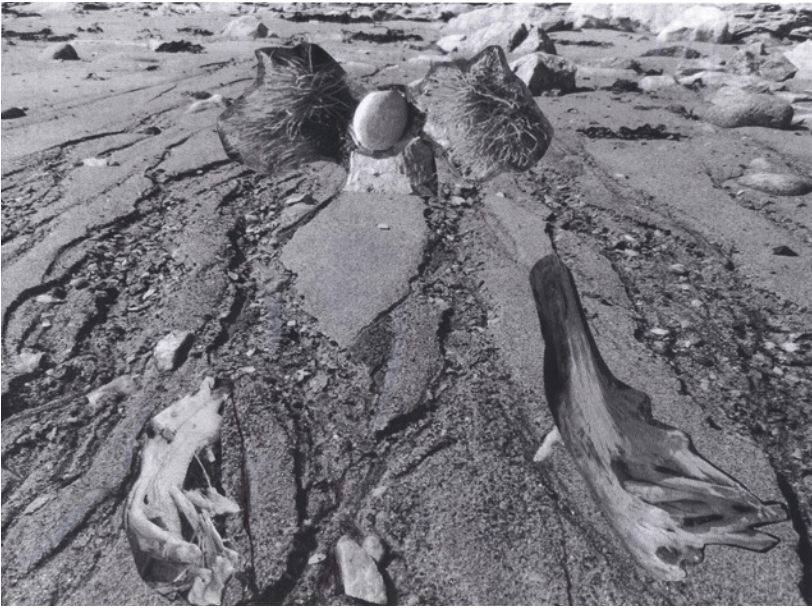
Leaving the soft ring of snow, the chrysalis of a white manta ray rose into the sky, a sailing flute, and the coyotes rode her into Challenger Deep like glowing birds, the halo of colours growing fainter and fainter in the waters.



Fig. 7. "The Magnetospheric Survey." Courtesy of the archives of the Department of Transport.

Biographical Note

Ms. Fields was born in 1929. She lives in Carsonby, Ontario. She worked for Transport Canada between 1954 and 1968.



Our Guide to Nought (for Zoé Laporte)
David Nadeau



Anchor points for a handrail, screwed here and there
David Nadeau



Intensified Gallimaufry
David Nadeau

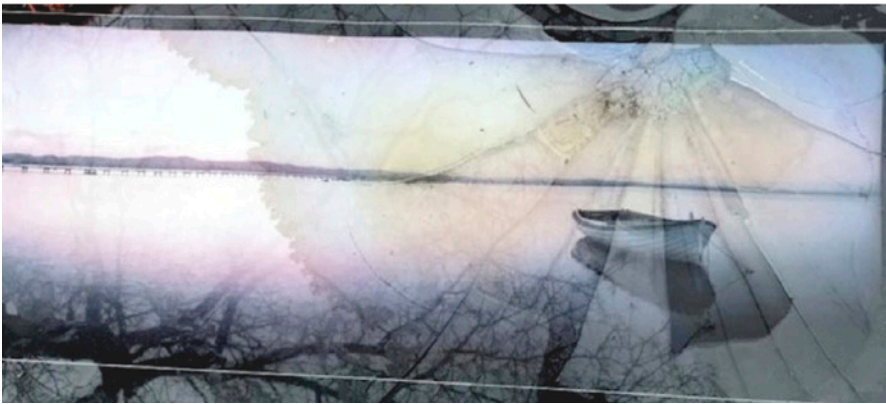
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THE SUBCONSCIOUS SUBTERRANEAN ESTUARINE

by Tim White

*'This is now where I want to fish the night's malevolent tongue in its
immobile revolution!'*

– Aimé Césaire



*chance image found in neighbourhood hard rubbish with concurrent crypto-poetic
ocean occupying location. October 2023*

In *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* Jules Verne writes of an under-world ocean complete with storms and terrifying monsters, a ‘sunless sea’ in ‘caverns measureless to man’ lying unknown to most surface-dwellers, beneath the the known world. Recently I became convinced of an ancient ocean whose waves rise and fall beneath my part of the world, invisible for most part except in dreams and moments of hypnagogic lucidity, it reaches deeper than the known world of everyday life, a pelagic dreaming in which my waking mind is drowned every night and, from which each day, I’m cast up alive and reanimated like an undead Robinson Crusoe or Lemuel Gulliver on an ever newer, ever more improbable country with

only my wits to make sense of its strange customs, beliefs, institutions and politics. While it pleases some to call these places ‘the real world’ I find little to convince me that this place is 1.) singular, or, the least bit 2.) real. Most assuredly I’m convinced it is different each time I wake up – continuity is the illusion – the only constant being the demand to submit to its preposterously perverse, absurd, self-importance, arbitrary rules and grim mindset.

The spirit under the ice - The Ancient Mariner

The presence of absent seas, ancient depths, swirling currents plays havoc with our sixth and seventh senses. What lies below lies within and what startling and unprecedented aquatic fauna and flora flourish in the eddying tides, dappled shadows of glassy waves dancing on forgotten sea-beds, translucent emerald light diffusing, kaleidoscopic coral reefs, the endless surge and drag of trans-dimensional tides.

On the cosmic beach, amid drift wood and cast off oddments of industrial society, an air of mystery hovers over the flotsam. In its green light everyday things take on new forms: a mattress is the seabed, markings on the road surface become fossils of imaginary creatures from an ancient Piscean era; a polystyrene box for transporting fish becomes the living embodiments of an aquatic dreaming. An over-sized power boat echoes the longings of mythic sea-farers. These marks of ancient – or future creatures – whose language and culture, whose images spill from comic books popular film and TV, and music infiltrate every aspect of daily life. Surely there’s something important here we ought to be paying attention to?

Sometimes it seems as if we’ve become so numbed by patriarchal-capitalism’s mono-culture culture and its stultifying predetermined hegemonic views about what is and isn’t real, we adamantly refuse to see the crypto-poetic fauna and flora which dwell in our own dream terrain.

But the Ancient Ones’ and their pelagic landscape is indelible, it cannot be erased, paved over, weeded out, dug up or gentrified it breaks through roads and footpaths like weeds, like the roots of trees, like damp in an old ceiling. The living dreams and their watery habitats survive despite human indifference and antagonism in sometimes in odd, unwanted and forgotten corners, sometimes in plain sight.

Their fuzzy sonar echoes bounces up from forgotten sea beds. Here, are things which, while presenting as everyday objects, perspectives, or familiar territories, are also fundamentally uncanny, our minds - like those of the early colonial artists who, seeing the Australian landscape for the first time, could not but depict it in the familiar shapes and hues of Europe - have to imagine them as something familiar.



*Crypto-poetic marine entity
in suburban setting*

As the mermaid/man resembles human beings, at least the part which sits out of the sea, but differs in so more important ways, so there are places which echo playfully, plaintively, resonating at unhearable pitches, transmitting their insistent signals through the very *materia* of the familiar. Arising from ancient/mythic encounters they reverberate on the edge of consciousness persisting, rising through layers of concrete, bitumen and planned spaces, like ripples in a pond, imprinting likenesses of unknown beasts, gods and demons (entities which are neither or something else entirely), proclaiming stories strange of encounters strange and remarkable to those with ears and eyes properly attuned.

The Ocean Within

What lies below lies within. The presence of absent seas, ancient depths, swirling currents playing havoc with compasses, dark clouds hiding the stars forcing us to rely on our sixth and seventh senses for navigation.

Startling unprecedented aquatic fauna and flora flourish in its watery embrace where shadow waves dance, light shifts and ripples on coral forests scoured by the endless tug o'war of transdimensional tides.
– Tim White, 2023

We're all Starbuck clinging to the coffin, an albatross wheeling over head, circling the homogenised suburban wastes, where Nature herself is in mortal danger of humanity's vainglorious arrows. [comment on the life of the ocean in this place/time].

That a long gone mythic sea (perhaps a soon-to-be risen one) can evoke benevolent fantasies of a time when self was not separate from the womb and its fluid idylls and fantasies, its utopias, fairylands, its hidden mysteries and underground seas seems to me to be an optimistic sign.

In the Celtic tradition the other world is located under the sea and on occasion its peoples rise from the deep bringing blessings – sometimes curses – to wage war or love on the landlubbers. Always, their subtle knowledge and innate community with living things shines through. The age-old fantasies of mermaids, harpies, selkies and other hybrid creatures of sea and sky, embody deep libidinous longings for a world beyond the liminal where tides rise and fall, multiple moons wax and wane, where current and wind carry us to incomparable lands of magic and love, above or beneath the ecstatic waves. We are at the mercy of Time's seas of its mercurial moods, whether its restless rippling caress, or its tempestuous cyclonic violence.

*Those are pearls that were his eyes;
Nothing of him that doth fade
But does suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.*
– The Tempest



Cthulhu cult image, footpath.

The housing estate where we live is built, I'm told, on the site of an old market garden watered by a creek long covered by road and concrete kerbing. Before that coastal sand dune and shrubs provided shelter for the possums, wallabies and birds. Before the catastrophe of colonisation the wind-protected hollows provided homes for the Boonwurrung, an indigenous coastal people living in amenable collaboration with sea and land and its genus loci.

Further back still, ice-ages swept the land, raising and lowering the seabed so that where I sit typing, has been both above and beneath a hundred meters of sea water. Geological studies makes it clear this fluctuation of sea levels and alteration of the continent has occurred many times. Perhaps this is why the presence of the invisible ocean presses so heavily on its dreams.

Whether memories and dreams from those watery times persist in some kind of ur-memory, some unimaginable consciousness of nature and the world, or whether they exist as transmissions on quantum wavelengths accessible only to receptive dreamers we cannot prove conclusively. I know only that the sounds I hear in sleep are the same as those heard in the mysterious inner ear of sea-shells.



*Crypto-poetic angler fish
remains in road markings*

When it rains the estate roads becomes a mass of puddles, some quite enormous, pouring off into the stormwater drain. Laughing water fills the storm water drains echoing once-upon-a-time creeks. Despite being interred under cement and bitumen under the street, the drainage system follows the

old waterway: those same creeks and rivers carved out by Dreamtime ancestors. Like them they are hidden but they also refuse to go away.

Our imagination is the link connecting knowledge of self and other, human and nature, with what is unseen, the occulted presence of other times, other existences, other lives, other beings whose ancient magic still works and weaves all things, all times, all possibility into the waking dream of becoming.

The presence of absent seas, ancient depths, swirling currents playing havoc with our sixth and seventh senses. What lies below lies within and what startling and unprecedented aquatic fauna and flora flourished in these eddying tides, dappled shadows of glassy waves dancing on forgotten sea-beds, translucent emerald light diffusing, kaleidoscopic coral reefs, the endless surge and drag of trans-dimensional tides over time persist as memories or imaginings or longings.

Does the subconscious ocean exist under my house, or, is it undying presence separated by quantum diffraction into a different universe, or time, ever present but beyond the conscious mind's ability to know, except unconsciously in dream states?

I know little except that I swim in the ocean which swims inside me.



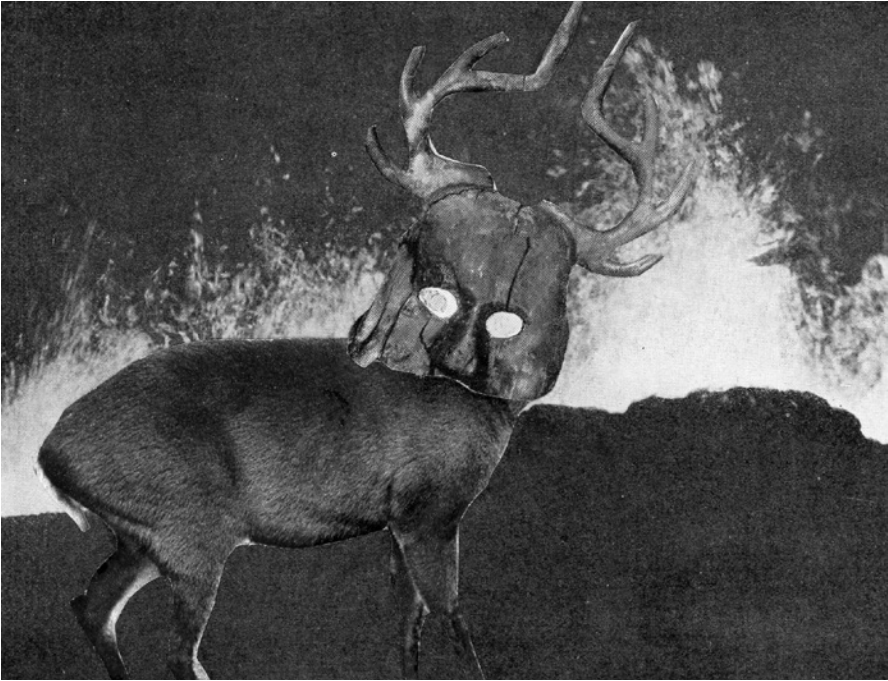
*Remains of mythic sea-serpent
found nearschool dumpster*



*Crypto-poetic image of flying stingray
on shop doorway with image of modern
aquatic stingray for comparison*



Steven Cline



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