

Looking Glass

Gonzo Anthropology
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Spring 2010



**THE AVANT-GARDE:
DREAMS OF THE BLIND
WATCHING THE WATCHERS.**
AN ANATOMY OF CONTEMPORARY FILM CRITICISM
**ESTONIAN ROT GUT REVIEWED
TINO SEHGAL & THE INANIMATE EMPIRE
FINNISH "SPACEFOLK"
LOVE ACROSS THE SPECIES BARRIER**



IN MEMORIAM

The Importance of Being Harry

by Penny Arcade

“The play opens with this ruined Greek philosopher. Whenever he smiles his teeth are so bad that you see the Acropolis. He lives in a Greek take out paper cup with the Acropolis on it. And then there’s Malvina Falkland who has buck teeth: she throws them into the ocean so penguins can escape to the Antarctic. She is in love with this Ghetto type character; he’s a vineyard owner and then Attila the Hun comes in wearing carrier-ship battle shoes and she dances with the five headed general who always talks you to death. Then there’s the boy who’s just seen the abyss and can’t get over it.”

-H. M. Koutoukas, to Bomb Magazine

It is improbable that anyone besides H. M. Koutoukas could have invented H. M. Koutoukas.

Certainly Harry was the Alfred Jarry of the 20th and 21st century, and like Jarry before him, Koutoukas didn’t so much reinvent theater as kick it inside out. He was one of the creators of what is now called Off-Off Broadway, and the author of plays like “The Man Who Shot His Washing Machine” and “Turtles Don’t Dream” which played at the legendary Caffe Cino.

Haralambos Monroe Koutoukas was born a twin in 1937 in Endicott, New York, into a Greek Orthodox family residing in that backwater shoe town. “I suppose if I had stayed up there in Endicott, I would have been a foreman in the shoe factory by now,” Harry said. He had his own radio program, “Talking Leaves,” at age nine, and while his brother Paul was preparing for the orthodox priesthood, Harry was preparing to become the Pope of Greenwich Village.

When I met Harry he was always in evening dress. Corpulent and physically intimidating, he was indeed flamboyance personified, with a wild energy that created a whirlpool of words which quickly engulfed whoever was present. He called

his plays “camps.” These days everyone loves the frou-frou kind of “camp,” but Harry’s camps were dead serious. At the end of the first act of one of his plays, his character was

kas in summing up a situation in one enlightening, transforming and hysterically funny sentence. Harry was a wit. A real one. Like Oscar Wilde, Quentin Crisp, and Dorothy Parker. That was, I might add, his life’s work.

“Bad checks are the purest form of poetry.”

“I will obey no law other than the Ancient Laws of Glitter!”

“[My hair is] bleached. I decided to look the way I feel. Everyone thought I was dying my roots black. Some people get their blond hair by squeezing cats over their heads.”

“My dear, lines are not something you snort!”

“I have to pretend to be drunk because everybody wants

my apartment... I could pay the rent with a weekend of pickpocketing.”

“Please bury me on a spit, so every time there’s a bad theater production I’ll turn automatically.”



H. M. Koutoukas with his fellow avant-guardians.



to slit his wrists. Harry actually did it. On stage.

When I asked him why, he said “I had to do something to save the play!” That’s what he brought to the theater: immediacy.

In the early hours of Saturday, March 7th 2010 the restless spirit of Haralambos Koutoukas was stilled. I am sure I’m not alone in wondering what Harry’s last thought was. Few in the history of the spoken word were as salient as Koutou-

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MACHISMO SPRINGS

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A recent Newsweek article began,
*“In the middle of the night,
we are all Fellini...”*

Leading dream researcher G. William Domhoff,
professor of psychology at UC Santa Cruz,
disagrees, but his findings about what
dreams actually do add up
to something far more
colorful and vivid.

Curiouser AND *Curiouser*

BILL DOMHOFF

ON E I R O N A U T

Michael
Merriam



YOU ARE HERE

Where did we get the idea that dreams, in their natural state, resemble surrealist paintings, if, as you say, they are actually naturalistic and it is our cultural prejudices that cause us to misremember them as bizarre?

I don't know, but it probably goes back to the worldwide belief that dreams are strange, which is due to their overlap with hallucinations, drug states, reveries, and so on. Big myths are also linked with dreams in many cultures. The founder of anthropology, Edward Tylor, said that dreams were one key basis for the universal belief in a spirit world. Another anthropologist, Geza Roheim, said that myths are dreams that have been told and retold, meaning that common themes highlighted, and exaggerated, and from there it is an easy step to surrealist paintings by people who wanted to type how they were different

from past painters.

Is there a Holy Grail of dream studies, an analogue to the Unified Field Theory in physics?

For me, the closest thing to finding a Holy Grail would be to figure out if dreams are based on the same type of figurative thinking that generates metaphors, and similar forms of thinking, during waking. If it could be shown that dreams are like little parables or stories that contain general themes ("I am afraid my relationship will fail," or "I am afraid my performance on a task will not be good enough," etc.) then I think we could understand why dreams seem so much like plays or other forms of dramatization. For now, my claim is that dreams are highly realistic simulations of our waking interests, fears, worries, and wishes, which become embodied in something like stories or plays.

How has this work effected your own dreams?

I don't think it has had any effect at all. More generally, I think it is very difficult to effect dreams in any way except maybe for those rare people who sleep right on the edge of waking consciousness and tell us they can shape their dreams. Several experiments carried

out in the 1960s and early 1970s, the heyday of systematic dream research in the sleep laboratory, established that dreaming is surprisingly autonomous. All the internal and external stimuli said in the past to account for dreams--twisted bed covers, something you ate, church bells, and so on--have only minor effects on an irregular basis.

Researchers like Ross Levin and Tore Nielsen have done research on nightmares, and think they might have the function of "fear memory extinction," desensitizing us to frightening phenomena through repetition. We know you favor imagery rehearsal therapy [re-scripting the nightmare while awake, lessening its intensity,] but do you think nightmares have any particular cognitive function for dreamers, different from ordinary dreams?

No, I don't think nightmares have a cognitive function. They are like stomach aches or headaches in that regard. But then, I have come to the conclusion that it is highly unlikely that dreams have any adaptive evolutionary function. *Thinking* certainly has an adaptive function, and I believe the ability to generate mental imagery and to think in a narrative form also have survival value, but it doesn't follow that the exercise of those abilities during some part of the sleep period has an adaptive function. I realize this view is counter-intuitive. So let me throw in that after years of looking for the adaptive function of our musical abilities and our love of music, there are now theorists who argue that they don't have any, despite its huge role in our lives.

If dreams resemble theater, which playwright comes closest to capturing their essence?



It would have to be a playwright who deals with the dilemmas and tensions of everyday life with family, lovers, friends, and co-workers. I guess I'd say everyone is their own unique playwright during dreaming, and as my first case in point I'd urge your readers to check out my paper on the dreams of a widower we call "Ed" on *dream-research.net* (http://psych.ucsc.edu/dreams/Library/domhoff_2008b.html) while looking at the dreams themselves on *dreambank.net*.

What is the greatest mystery in dream research?

It is the most strange and the most trivial that we don't understand, meaning that I think we understand a scene about a lover cheating on the dreamer, or a scene where the dream fails in some highly important task or performance, but we don't understand why the dreamer and the cheating lover are in what seems to be a bland setting, or there are books scattered around, or whatever. Similarly, the relatively few dreams where we fly under our own power, or where something else unusual happens, seem to be based on the same metaphors that we use in waking life (e.g., in the case of the flying dream, we are happy, elated, waking on air, just plain "flying" we are so happy) but we haven't been able to come up with research that supports that seemingly plausible idea, which is very frustrating.

Is it possible you can't support that because it isn't really true? That you cherish the "dreams as perfectly ordinary and not at all bizarre" theory too much?

I am all for the fun of colorful dream weirdness, but I am also searching for psychological meaning in dreams. So I am only disappointed in the failure to find evidence for a figurative theory of dreams to the degree that it seemed to be a good hypothesis. I would settle for any hypothesis that explains the phenomena under inquiry. I think there is a huge amount of wonder just in the fact that dreams are so realistic, vivid and dramatic. Every dream, not just the most dramatic and colorful, is an amazing, original creative production, even if it is "just" another variation on

some "theme" that is typical of a given person's dream life. In that regard, I think those that talk Fellini are missing the boat and being a bit snobbish about what most dreams are like, as readers can see for themselves by reading through many dreams in any dream series on *dreambank.net*.

An early psychologist expressed the real wonder of dreams when he said: "Dreams are real while they last. Can we say more of life?" To me, that is the wonder that people everywhere experience, which is more basic than the strange aspects of dreams, which I agree do happen, but not as often or in the off-the-wall fashion that is part of our cultural lore. Put another way, I don't feel a need for the "surreal" when "the real" is amazing enough. Moreover, for a person seeking a scientific understanding of a phenomenon, the "wonder" is in the phenomenon itself and in the sustained quest for an explanation.

Michael Merriam



DR. G. WILLIAM DOMOFF IN HIS WAKING HOURS.
His dreamers' case studies are all available on **DreamBank.net**

SPECULATION: THE DREAMS OF THE BLIND

We only perceive what we must perceive in order to survive. Rocks look solid, though they're mostly empty space, because for our purposes, they are impenetrable. In a recent paper, dream researchers Domhoff and Kerr refuted claims that the blind can "see" in their dreams, just as Domhoff has refuted any similarity between dreams and surrealism.

There is a possible relationship between surrealism and blindness. Could it be that surrealist painters were showing us a real world to which our own adaptations had blinded us?

Because actually, there's no word for what is traditionally meant by "weird." "Weird" itself means "coincidental," the *wyrd* being a cosmic trend with which heroes like Beowulf fall into, and out of, accord. Meaningful coincidences abound when we are at one with the *wyrd*, and we utter the word when we notice them. "Weird" doesn't really refer to off-the-wallness. We could use the term "bizarre," but that actually means "showing diversity of form, texture, or color." Then there's "odd" which simply means a member of a two-element set found without its complement, and "eccentric" is even less helpful: it's a term from geometry, implying a line running through a circle without touching its central point. "Strange" means "foreign" and "peculiar" means "unique." So if there's never been a word for it, where do we get this idea of a zany unrightness, with its not-always-welcome, but alluring, undefinable characteristic?

The work of Marius von Senden (recently popularized by Annie Dillard) might be helpful here. Von Senden is associated with certain advances in cataract surgery, and in his book *Space and Sight*, he catalogued the experiences of men and women encountering the visible world for the first time. Many, blind since birth, weren't happy to be sighted.

Reports of children simply

walking around with their eyes closed were common. One boy threatened to tear his eyes out if the world would not become something other than an incomprehensible mass of colored patches. It is undeniable that for all of them, it was an experience of surrealism, in the exact mode of attention invented (we should probably say "discovered") by André Breton. One boy, when asked to identify the shape of lemonade, could not do so with his new powers of sight. So he tasted it, and identified it as "square" because its flavor had a cornered texture, and reminded him of handling a cube.

The correspondence between acquiring a new sense, surrealist painting, and the hallucinations common to sufferers of Charles Bonnet syndrome are suggestive.

Charles Bonnet wondered in the late 1700s "how the theater of the mind was produced from the machinery of the brain." While the hallucinations suffered during Charles Bonnet syndrome (which occurs in blind people) may share traits with avant-garde cinema, Oliver Sacks assures us that they completely resist traditional dream analysis. The images, which include smiling men who, upon turning their heads, have frighteningly long teeth on one side of their faces, are not dreams. Bonnet did his research when his grandfather, after walking past scaffolding, hallucinated a six-inch model of the same scaffolding waiting for him on his desk. Later, he saw an old man in a bathrobe smoking a pipe, and realized it was himself. Such visions are so native to Magritte and De Chirico, we have to wonder, why is surrealism grounded in terror? Traditionally, we have assumed this to be a reaction to history, war and famine, as the first strains of that art movement were, and have unanimously assumed that very simple psychoanalysis would illuminate the secrets of surrealism for us. In light of evolutionary biology and the similarities between surrealism and the sudden acquisition of a new sense in Von Senden's cataracts patients, we speculate that cross-disciplinary and holistic approaches to surrealist art have obscured far more than they've revealed, and the time has come for an evolutionary and biological assessment of surrealism's beginnings.

The severity of much of surrealism is lost on us. It is only recently that surrealism has been associated with lightheartedness and whimsy. It is, in its origins, a movement without any humor, and the images were thought to be terrifying. It may have represented, not a reaction to historical trauma, but the gradual acquisition of a new sense, or hallucinations attending the loss of an old one. In any case, they were clearly not "symbols of things" so much as expressions that something else was going on, parallel to the visible world. We did not evolve to perceive that something, just as arthropods did not evolve to perceive architecture. As to what those hidden phenomena might be, only a biology-based approach to surrealist art, and to hallucinations, could tell us.

Kerr, N., & Domhoff, G. W. (2004). Do the blind literally "see" in their dreams? *Acritique of a recent claim that they do. Dreaming, 14, 230-233.*



Swoan

FICTION BY

Had Charles taken baths instead of showers as he'd been trained to do, he probably would have heard the encroachment. Lying on the shower floor, he was frustrated by the lack of nuance in the water lever, and tried languorously to alter the pressure with his toes. (Baths came too hot too quickly for him. This was the alternative.) The tepid water beat steadily across his chest, and as Charles lay in aquatic bliss, the skilled intruder had already entered through the front door, picking the lock in a matter of seconds. Charles

did not hear the intruder, as he continued to simmer in naïve resolve. Free time on the company's dime, he thought.

He did not understand why he was on assignment in Riga in the first place. Sure, there were Russian agents everywhere, exerting proxy control over the unstable republic. "But who cares?" Charles deliberated out loud. "There is no immediate threat to Canadian security here," he thought.

He was wrong.



song

JOHN GLOSSER

Charles had not misunderstood the overall regional political “makeup” of Riga. His mistake had to do with an inability to comprehend improbabilities. He seldom calculated them, as Charles was not a mathematician, but he tried to be prepared for them—as much as a trained agent can be. Canadian intelligence understood this disconnect, which was precisely why they put him there. Not every agent in a government’s repertoire was supposed to possess thorough competence. Speculation is the death of most agents, espe-

cially in this theater. They needed men with a specific type of limited capacity who could, unwittingly, misguide Russian and Latvian agents. Many years later, Charles would prove to be a much more talented politician than government spook.

An ant dropped from inside the faucet onto the ball of Charles’ right foot. Not killing it, he made good a self-promise that he would never consciously take a life unless it posed an immediate threat. He had a particular affin-



ity for ants. Especially for the droves of fire ants that he once watched on a family vacation to Taiwan. He missed those carefree days of posh travel, which counted as “living abroad” as far as the Service was concerned. Charles remembered playing in the pool with his mother at the resort just outside of Taipei, the cancer burning inside her.

His mind wandered from the insect to his mother to his hair. Among the personal effects Charles was permitted to bring to this, his first and last assignment with the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), one of them was a red shampoo made of rose petals alleged to preserve and heighten hair of his color. He cared deeply about hygiene, and thought of it solely from an evolutionary perspective. For him to be able to survive and replicate as an upstanding citizen of Canada, he would need to maintain not just proper hygiene, but a level of cleanliness well above average.

Charles, as he always did while bathing, thought about masturbating. Not whilst imagining his young wife back home in Toronto, but of the translucent skinned Latvian girl who had made his bitter espresso that morning. “Latvia is nothing like Canada,” he thought.

The intruder found the bathroom and

furtively positioned himself to destroy his inexperienced target, for whom he felt sorry (Charles’ position had been given away by a fledgling double-agent moments before).

The first bullet from the intruder’s assault rifle tore the shower curtain and penetrated the shampoo, splattering its blood-like contents everywhere. Charles screamed as the subsequent rounds sent fragments of tile into his mouth and skin. The theatrics of the shampoo, shrieks, and shrapnel were enough to convince the intruder that he had done what he had set out to do.

After the interloper left and the smoke cleared, Charles came to. His first thought was not profound: “How lucky I am to be alive.” His second thought, an expected promise, “I will never sell short my passions again and end up in a place like this.” This second consideration, unfortunately, Charles would not fulfill until some thirty years later, on the date of his resignation from office of Prime Minister. Until then, he would have to deal with his handler.

Some Thirty Years Later.

Charles pondered, during the darkness of morning on his sixtieth birthday, unable to sleep, his desire to slumber in the buff.

He and his wife of thirty-three years, Isabelle, had deemed it highly undignified for the man of 24 Sussex Drive to be stripped of a gentleman’s classic blue silk pajamas. After an hour of such wasteful contemplation, Charles turned on his tiny HDTV as his wife entered the shower at the first crack of light. He joylessly watched the climax of his fourth favorite film, *The Poseidon Adventure*.

After a ten-minute shower, Isabelle brushed her teeth. This was the semi-annual clue for Charles to lay on his back and undo his pants.

America’s *Horse with No Name* played faintly in the background as Isabelle attempted indignities with her mouth. It wasn’t as if Charles were impotent. Everything about our lives has become obligatory, he thought. It was a realization of one of his worst fears. Out of respect for his wife, he attempted fantasizing about Adrienne Barbeau’s nude scene in *Swamp Thing*. It did not work. Even her saliva seemed cold.

As Charles tied his tie minutes later, he was asked via telephone by one of his aides, Frances, “Sir, are you able to take the photo opportunity with the nation-

al beach volleyball teams later this afternoon?”

“I’m afraid not, Frances. Have Jack do it.”

Upon termination of the call, Charles noticed a reduction in his belly fat. He couldn’t figure out why, given there had been no change in diet or exercise. “Most people find fat repulsive,” he thought. In his mind he continued, “People are disgusted by fat because fat is formless. Like the biblical dawn of Earth. It’s too close to divine truth, and to God’s perception.”

Again, he doubted God.

Charles hates briefings. Especially those regarding his speeches. The process is so equivocating. As if their intention were sheer political banality. He’d rather lay on the shower floor. His Press Secretary Miller Haynes, a bulldog of a man who constantly seemed on the verge of apopleptic seizure, sits diagonally across from him in the prime minister’s study on a brown leath-

er sofa arrangement. “What are we talking about today, Miller?”

Miller is annoyed at the fact that Charles isn’t even bothering to take notes, “It’s your speech after all.”

“You speak as if I write them.” Charles has accepted, by now, that this is how speechwriters are: affecting, but not effective.

“Is there something wrong, sir?”

“No, Miller. No.”

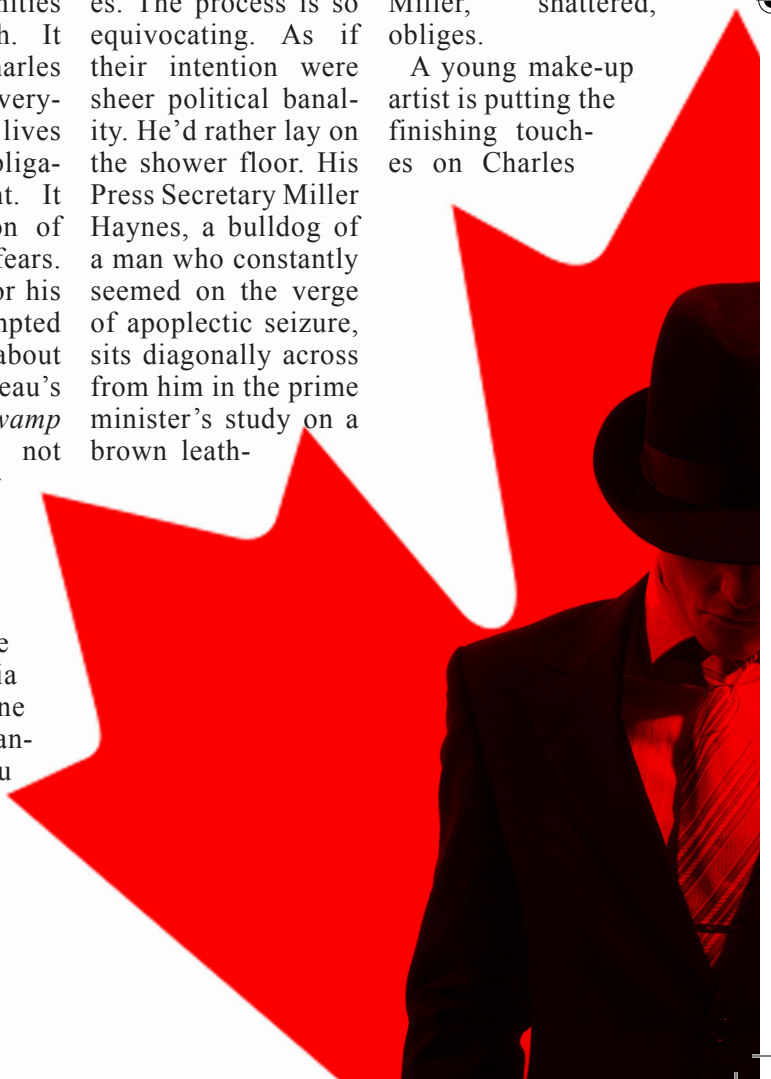
“Very well.” Miller crosses his thin legs. “Our banking superiority to the States is the theme of the day, sir.”

“Quite.”

“Shall we go through the speech?” (Miller’s forced jubilation is beginning to make Charles ill.)

“No. You can go.” Miller, shattered, obliges.

A young make-up artist is putting the finishing touches on Charles





Mackenzie Abbot as he postures for national address. The last of the crew scurries from the frame as the director commences the count-down, “5, 4, 3,”

2, 1...

It’s all Charles now, “Good afternoon. Without a doubt, the issues pertaining to Canada’s financial strength supersedes the new and other purpose of this address. The substance of what I am now to reveal will instantly command the attention of the world’s media, and detract from undoubtedly more important issues. I am sorry if you feel misled, however, I believe in truth, regardless of its interpretation.” The director and cameraman share a look of shock. “When I was a child, my father, Eugene Abbot, was secretly a sculptor...”

Charles was a scrawny, pale, and plain child, who would watch his father through the crack of a door. “I would watch him leave the basement every night just before midnight, locking the door behind him. The only section of my childhood home forbidden to us. His private place. But one night, he forgot to lock the door. I took this opportunity, not so much to spy on my father, but to get to know him. I discovered beautiful Romanesque statues of women with their bosoms exposed, and stunning concept sketches that have populated my dreams for decades.”

Charles looks more confident now. His glare cuts straight through the camera. “I have a passion for women’s breasts. It is not a passion for pornography, it is not about lust or exploitation. This is about the aesthetics of the female figure, its use in art, and a return to a more classical representation. She is the zenith of evolution.”

Miller Haynes is watching this unfold from his office. He leans in to one of his aides, “We better brace for some serious kerfuffle.”

Charles continues, “I must resign as your Prime Minister. Immediately. In order to pursue the world’s greatest female bosom. When I have succeeded, I will use this model in the construction of the greatest statue the universe has ever seen. Not simply an effigy, but a permanent tribute to the archetypal goddess of womankind. Thank you, good afternoon, and God bless.”

Quickly, Charles traverses the labyrinth of hallways back to his bedroom. Staffers watch him in total silence.

Poorly postured at the edge of his bed, Charles watches the scene from *Terms of Endearment* where Jack Nicholson drives Shirley MacLaine in a convertible on the beach. His wife enters the room. Done up, she is a photogenic woman who speaks with surprising cool, eyeing his half-packed open suitcases on the bed, “I have spent my entire life cultivating your image. There is nothing I can do for you now.” He does not turn to face her. She exits the room, making sure to gently close the door behind her.

All at once, Charles was hit in the face with the consequence of his

actions. The same rays that were teasing him to come out and play were now dancing on the surface of his life’s blood – which was now strewn like a great media flood through the consciousness of millions. He then thought about the relative insignificance of his actions, and the insignificance of his life, and how his own perceived insignificance will be inversely magnified through the perceptions of the masses. Charles remembered the time some thirty years ago, in the Latvian bathtub, ignoring his duty. He wondered, had he taken his post seriously perhaps... just perhaps... he would not have ended up Prime Minister.

Melancholy came over Charles. As hastily as he entered the situation, he now wanted out. He didn’t know where to turn. Churning organic butter on a Saskatchewan farm seemed like a better idea at this point. Needing fresh air to fuel the debate, Charles climbs, mostly unnoticed, to the rooftop of his building. He is greeted by two snipers and asks them politely to leave. They obey.

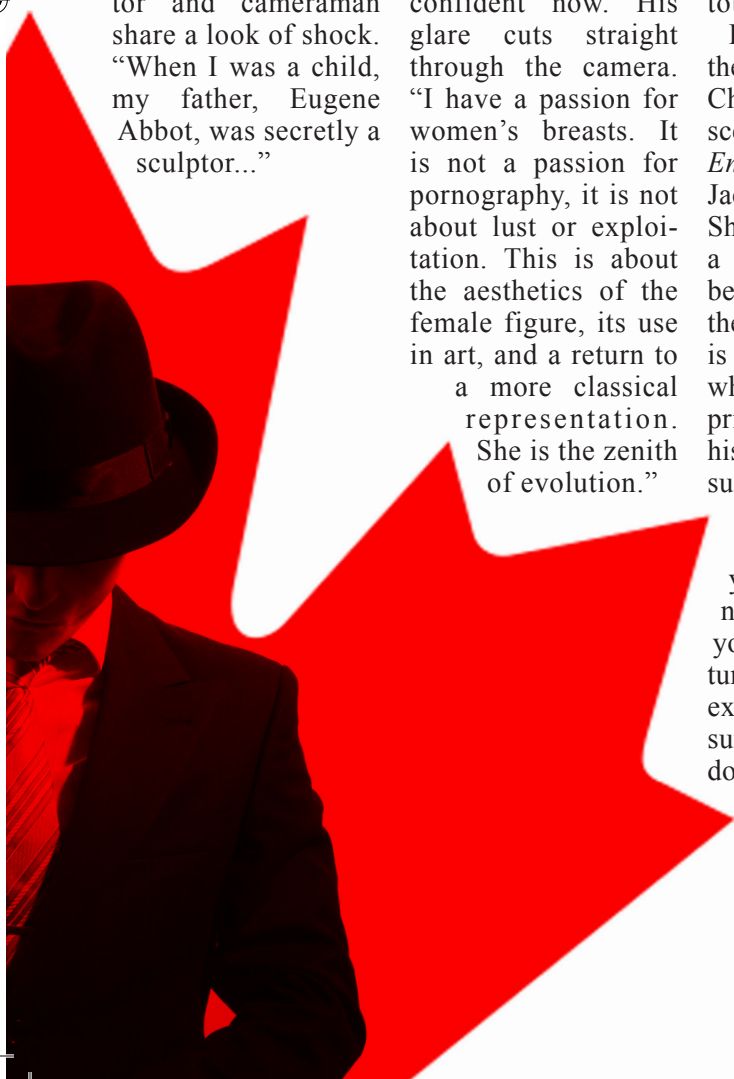
Looking over the water into Quebec, Charles recalls his perverse fantasies of war with a separatist Quebec. Charles the Uniter, he would have been called. Maybe such a campaign would have led

him down a better path. Charles leaned against the railing, looking down at the earth, and the water, and white caps. The wind caught him, blowing lapels, carrying him softly over the edge, down, down... He could have fought it, but he embraced it. As he fell, he remembered the one extramarital affair he had eight years ago, just before deciding to campaign. The fall itself reminded him of the feeling.

Charles remembered flying to see his first lover while still at the University. He decided to fly on Mother’s Day because his mother was dead. He thought it was a good day to fly because most people would be with their mothers or in laws or other important females. “What do same sex couples do on Mother’s Day?” he thought, as he plummeted to certain doom. “Do they divide up the attention between Mother’s Day and Father’s—?”

Charles woke, some thirty years ago, on the floor of the Latvian shower, where he as Prime Minister was born. He looked up, not knowing how he got there. He was not startled, either. Charles saw the intruder looking down upon him. The sounds beat the bullet, which beat the flesh.

At first, he saw nothing.



CAROUSEL OF BESTIALITY

By Clementine Frew

The following section is about the human phenomenon of zoophilia. It does not contain descriptions of sex, only ethnographic research. The views expressed by the contributors do not reflect the views of this publication. It contains no sexually provocative material. We are a journal of anthropology, presenting the opinions of a segment of the human population. We do not condone animal abuse in any form.

An engraved bone rod from the cave of La Madeleine, France, from the later Ice Ages (around 25,000 years ago), depicts a lioness licking the opening of either a gigantic human penis or a vulva. An Iron Age cave painting from the seventh century B.C., from Val Camonica, Italy, portrays [intercourse with] a donkey, and ancient rock art discovered in Siberia depicts men copulating with moose.

In 1889, further drawings were discovered on cave walls in France. In one cave, in Font-de-Gaume Breuil, colored stone engravings of men mounting animals that resembled cows, were uncovered (Rosenberger, 1968). A rock drawing from Ti-m-Lalan, Fezzan (5000 B.C.), shows an animal resembling a fox/dog copulating with a woman. Depictions of bestiality were also found in rock paintings in Bohuslan, southwestern Sweden, from the Bronze Age (the 2nd millennium B.C.), in which a man is inserting his penis under the tail of a large quadruped.

-Hani Miletski, *Understanding Bestiality and Zoophilia*

Much has been made of an imaginary “common ground” shared by zoophiles. Recent articles in the *Miami Herald*, the *Guardian*, and the *New Statesman* have explored the topic, almost always drawing on Hani Miletski’s 250+ page volume *Understanding Bestiality and Zoophilia*. But there is no such thing as “zoophilia.” The term refers to a set of relationships more complex, on an order of magnitude, than those referred to by the simple word “homosexuality.” It is misleading to refer to the sum total of all inter-special relationships with one term, and the word “zoophilia” has empowered us to forget how different we really are. Homosexuals want to be accepted, and they deserve to be, but even though we are condemned together in Leviticus, and even though we have historically been grouped together by the majestic incompetence of lawmakers, homosexuals are not very much like us. All animal lovers are different from each other.

CETEACIOPHILIA is the love of dolphins, as expressed in the new autobiographical novel by Malcolm Brenner, interviewed in these pages. There are similarities between his book, *Wet Goddess*, and narratives

of UFO abductees. He is planning to write another book, about his ex-wife, who had an experience of alien contact. When asked if he saw any similarities in the discourses, Brenner said that the difference lies in the alien encounter’s being cold and terrifying, while dolphin love is warm, erotic, and inviting. The commonality between them lies in the cerebral, in the essential nature of the encounter being a form of higher communication. “When you meet an alien intelligence, it’s always shocking,” he told us. The inner and the outer ocean are one ocean. Some knowledge of this mystery may be part and parcel of this particular strain of zoophilia, and it might not avail itself to the rest of us.

FORMICOPHILIA means “love of ants” and refers to arousal by the crawling or nibbling of snails, frogs, etc., on the human’s sexual organs. Cleopatra was said to have this predilection, though her passion was for bees. What can this teach us about the essential sameness of venom and vaccine, this rare transformation



YOU ARE HERE 15



of the threatening insect world into mutually welcomed intimacy? Such a translation of the hive-mind into human thought patterns is a gift bestowed on only a few.

OPHIOLAGNIA is sexual obsession with snakes, which according to R. Christy's 1967 work, *The Animal Lovers*, is "probably more prevalent in society than is generally believed." In this age, it seems more commonly connected with body modification and a level of suggestive and overt lifestylism than other forms of inter-special love, but again, the terror intensifies at the moment where the unknown is *about to become known*, and it usually (not always) indicates the inability of the terrified subject to accept the imprint of the animal's knowledge, called medicine among some Native Americans. Interestingly, in the case of snake-fetishism, its quasi-acolytes are typically interested in intimidating others, as is the sublime David Icke, whose bizarre theories about the ascension of a reptile race among us boggle the mind. The practice of bifurcating the tongue is a gesture beloved by those who are potential snake-lovers, but who probably

will not go the distance. With the help of men and women who have known actual serpents intimately, the tongue-bifurcators and their ken might better understand themselves and their destined totemic affinities.

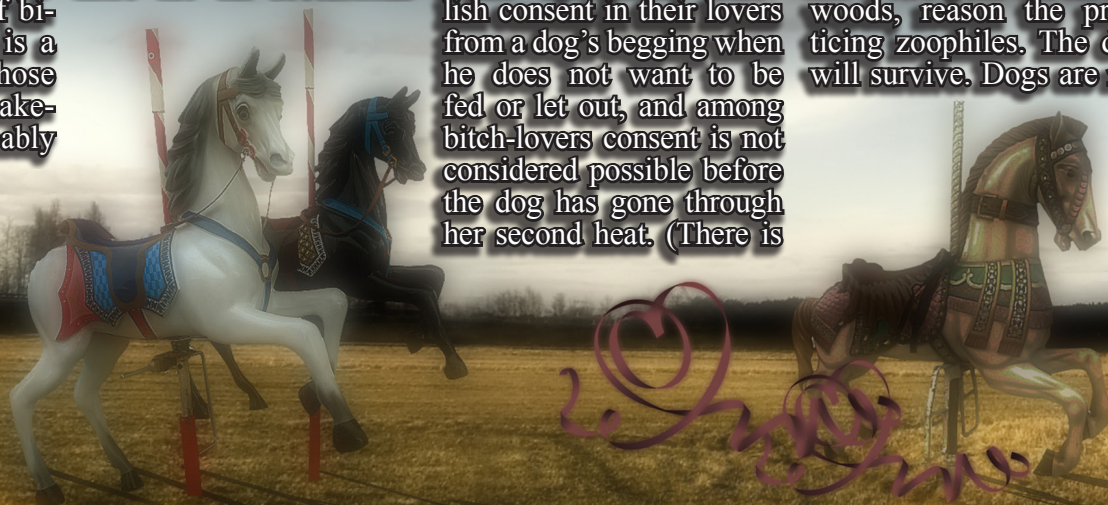
ARACHNOPHILIA is not unheard of as a leit-motif, but as actual objects of desire, it would seem that spiders are not highly prized. Arachnophilia's presence in certain works of horror speaks as much to the desire to be overpowered by the existential pornography offered by the genre as for sexual release, as it did in Burroughs' agonized fiesh-scorpion sex passages, which took place in the bureaucratic hell-state Annexia in *Naked Lunch*. Arthropod sex occurs when the complexity of civilization reveals itself as just another manifestation of evolution, as a grotesque mutation of our animal brains. Reproduction, breeding, mutation, the abominableness of nature, and the realization that most mutations are unfavorable, and that evolution has no real goal, these are the revelations

of the spider-horror sub-genre. True spider lovers, however, have said that they have always associated spiders with vulnerability, with easily broken creatures, and not with cosmic revulsion, dangerous power, or the supernatural. How could this wisdom be transferred to one with an unrelenting phobia of spiders? Perhaps such a transmutation of nightmares is the province of the arachnophile, and no one else.

AVISODOMY is an unlovely word for the (historically Chinese) practice of anally raping geese and snapping their necks as the rapist approaches climax, causing the sphincter of the goose to tighten and increase the intensity of orgasm, according to Miletski. It can also be used as a blanket term for human-avian coupling. This is where many would see a unifying trait between zoophiles: consent is key, and rape is evil. But the practice of establishing consent from avians is different from finding it in canines, so different that it is again misleading to give those two sciences the same name. Cynophiles establish consent in their lovers from a dog's begging when he does not want to be fed or let out, and among bitch-lovers consent is not considered possible before the dog has gone through her second heat. (There is

a Great Flood myth among the Sedang of Indochina, in which two survivors, a woman and her dog, were forced to cohabit and beget children to repopulate the land. Miletski's book tells us that to this day women are forbidden to eat dog there, as dogs are their husbands.) Consent in birds is often determined by precisely the same signs that indicate fight: ruffling of features, etc..

The sexual preference for a dog, **CYNOPHILIA**, is difficult for some to understand, even though physical intimacy with dogs to the point of facial tongue kissing is common even among Republicans. The "zoophile community" (which is imaginary) hopes to be accepted as living in consensual relationships, especially when it comes to human-canine pairs. Still, many practicing cynophiles want to be left alone. Their energies are devoted to refuting this or that anti-bestiality study (dogs have the mental capacity of two year olds, say some, and sex with them is pederasty!) with this or that infuriatingly valid point (drop a dog and a two year old in the woods, reason the practicing zoophiles. The dog will survive. Dogs are not



comparable to infants in any way.)

The faithful among us must argue for a radical pluralism within our community, a totemism. We are engineers of interspecies intimacy, and are acquiring spiritual and physical knowledge of animals beyond what philosophers and medicine men, however profound their insights, have been able to develop. We must think and write about each other as enjoying a diversity more radical than those trapped within the tractor-beam of same-species relationships can ever know. There is less in common between an avisodomite and a cetaciophile than between a lipstick lesbian and a heterosexual beer guzzling man. The latter two creatures are basically exactly the same.

The human race could not exist if it did not take such a condescending attitude toward animals, and our enemies are our enemies because for millenia our survival has depended on our condescension to beasts. But the totemic powers in the earth do not hate us in return. Nor can we forget how complicit we are in the suffering of animals. Telling teenagers in liberal colleges that they are, however remotely,

complicit in racist practices, and even in the holocaust, has become commonplace. How much more blood have we on our hands then, we who secretly join the very animal rights organizations that condemn us, we who believe in protecting animals above all things but huddle together in our usenet groups and proclaim our right to enjoy sexual pleasures, though we do little to save the ones we love.

In order to recognize a totem, we must recognize that it is nothing like us. We, who love beasts, we alone have the power to commune with our totems. We must write about the beasts we love, if we are writers. Paint them, if painters. Fight for them always. We must become experts in the species we prefer, and abandon all abstractions. We are the animals' messengers to the uninitiated, the blind, the *anthropophiles*. We must carry the animals' wisdom. Only then will they empower us, free us, and forgive us.

Clementine Frew

ASK THE CAT LADY

Dear Cat Lady,

My boyfriend was into dogs and I dumped him. Now I realize that men suck. Ryan was my first boyfriend and I loved him and he loved me. He used to pet me when I was upset and make sure I had food and water. And then he told me about the dog thing and I freaked out and broke up with him. It's taken me a year to realize that I want him back. How do I approach him? Or have I lost him forever?

-HELPLESS

Well, Helpless, first you have to realize that you may be romanticizing your past relationship with this man. You may have seen, from your friendship with him, that to be called a "bitch" or to be treated like a bitch is not always a bad thing! I suggest, dear one, that you let him know he's been on your mind. If your mind has opened up, and he's amenable to meeting for lunch, you can tell him of your new openness, but do so without expecting anything from him. You can do that, can't you? I sense you may want another shot at "fixing him," but you can't change him. He is what he is. Why not consider teaching your next lover how you like to be treated and spoken to? Tell him, if there's ever an argument, he's to remember: if he wouldn't say it to his dog, he shouldn't say it to you.

INFOBOX: THE ICELANDIC PHALLOLOGICAL MUSEUM

Welcome to the Icelandic Phallogical Museum (“probably the only museum in the world to contain a collection of phallic specimens belonging to all the various types of mammal found in a single country,” they say, of themselves.)

The museum is dedicated to the ancient science of phallogology, and is egalitarian in its use of male genitalia and its illustration of their influence over all aspects of culture and psychology. Every mammal species native to Iceland is represented in this penis museum: 45 different species, including, of course, one from a polar bear, 54 from whales, and four from human beings.

*Address: Hedinsbraut 3a, Husavik, 640, Iceland
On the web: www.phallus.is*

LADY JESSICA AND HER LUSCIOUS LITTER

Lady Jessica Sovereign, the beloved New York City dominatrix, talked to us about pseudobestiality, wherein human beings role-play as animals with other human partners. Referencing the Indian Lore website, Lady Jessica said “Totems are the enduring animal symbols that allow these people to explore the mysteries of life and the spirit world. Each animal embodies certain strengths and attributes that the spiritual seeker embraces and follows on the path of self-exploration. Given this clear definition of animal totems, I whole-heartedly feel that animal play is undeniably the western world’s exploration of animal totems within a BDSM context. BDSM when practiced consciously and responsibly can heal and support spiritual growth much in line with the experience of animal totems for the Native Americans.”

On the web: www.ladyjessicasoverign.com

WET

I first heard about your book on the Sci Fi blog io9. I was amazed that some of the comments about you on that site were even-handed and balanced. But I guess it makes sense that the Sci Fi community would be more open minded.

This has been a trope in science fiction since the 1940s when a British author Olaf Stapledon published a novel called *Sirius*. That’s about a scientist who creates a hyper-intelligent dog who then falls in love with his daughter. I read that novel after my experience with the dolphin. Stapledon managed to pick out all the problems, and all of the good things, about a relationship like that. If he had replaced the dog with a dolphin, it would have been my story.

Are there any other stories that speak to you so directly?

[Stanislaw] Lem’s *Solaris*. It’s a story about a human being confronting a truly unimaginable intelligence that has the ability to get inside his mind, as it were, which is what I felt was happening to me with the dolphin.

I know you had a great admiration for consciousness researcher Dr. John Lilly.

I did an interview with him in Seattle Washington, it was in Future Life magazine. I used to cry on his shoulder.

What was his reaction when you would talk about zoophilia with him? Or did you?

I corresponded with him about it. The first time I met him I didn’t feel comfortable telling him in great depth about my experiences with the dolphins. I eventually ended up corresponding with him and he basically wrote me a letter back congratulating me for making so much progress with the dolphins, because he felt that that was a very valid form of communication, sexually.

Was his validation a turning point for you?

It was very important to me. But before that, my friends in college had been my cheerleaders as my relationship with the dolphins was evolving. They were open minded freaks like I was.

Is zoophile rights a platform for you?

This is what I can do to help save dolphins and whales. I am a good writer, and I had this experience, so I wrote this novel. When I wrote it, I didn’t even know there was a zoophile community as such.... My primary intent was to help dolphins. If it ends up doing something for zoophiles along the way, that would be an added benefit, but my intent was to show the depth of the relationship that you can have with a dolphin if you and the dolphin are on the same wavelength.

What is the greatest mystery dolphins present to you?

There are a number of great mysteries, one of them is: what is the nature of their consciousness? My answer is, it’s so much like ours it’s scary, and we should be glad, not only that they’re in the ocean, but that they don’t possess weapons of mass destruction. They have some kind of culture. How do they communicate with each other? They can put out 100 times as much information as we can in any given period of time.

G O D D E S S

Do they conceive of love differently?

I think their conception of love is surprisingly like ours, from what I can tell. The dolphin started treating me like a male dolphin that she was trying to get it on with. Their courtship is quite athletic, it can be quite rough. They can swim at each other at about 20 knots. At one point when she was trying to masturbate on my foot, I didn't want her to do that, and I pushed her off. She got so fed up with that, she pushed me down to the bottom of the pool, which was 12 feet. She didn't hold me down there very long, but I learned later that's a gesture they use with juveniles when they misbehave.

The late Dr. Ken Norris was one of the most respected dolphin researchers in the world, and he said that for dolphins having sex is like shaking hands. It's that casual. So when I wouldn't yield to her direct demands, she got pissed off.... She also tried to teach me to speak Dolphin. She played a vocal game with me: I started off trying to get her to imitate me, and she wound up getting me to imitate her. That was mind-blowing.

Do dolphins have religion?

I would love to know the answer to that question, so much.

Based on the evidence you've seen?

No. I think they may have fiction. This is what distinguishes dolphins from most other non-humans, they have an imagination. They can think about things that have not happened yet. They can weigh the possibilities and decide on a course of action, and they do this very judiciously. What happened to [recently deceased Sea World orca trainer] Dawn Brancheau, I don't think that was an accident. I think that whale was trying to get some message across, but God knows what it was, you know?

[Speaking of religion,] it mentions bestiality in Leviticus, "One who lies with a beast must be killed, and the beast also." That's like the group that wants to kill Tillikum for killing Dawn Brancheau, The American Family Association. They're trying to invoke a biblical punishment against the whale.

Was there a new spirituality that you discovered through your interaction with the dolphin, or are you a materialist?

Yes to both questions. All kinds of things can happen inside a person that don't necessarily imply a belief in the spirit world or the supernatural. I think that it's possible for telepathy to exist between people, or between people and animals. Ric O'Barry told me he trained all the dolphins for Flipper by telepathy. Toward the end of our relationship, all the barriers between us fell down and when I was looking at the dolphin, I just saw the pure essence of that being that had that beautiful shape and that beautiful form, and who was asking me to give her the only thing I could give her, which was my attention and my love and the physical act of making love with her. That in itself was a transcendental experience. It was far and away the most intense interpersonal experience I've ever had.

Do you think that the climate is changing and that the world is becoming more sympathetic to interspecies love?

I think segments of the population are. The fact is Alfred Kinsey, 60 years ago, found out that something like 15% of the male population has had a sexual experience with a nonhuman partner. [According to the 1943 Kinsey study, one man in every 13 had an experience with a non-human partner,

about 8%. He noted that such experiences generally happened once or twice per lifetime.] Any way you look at that, that's millions of people. Not all of those people would describe themselves as zoophiles... this is much more widespread than we would like to believe.

Did you feel any fear in your first experience with a dolphin?

I felt embarrassed as hell, but I didn't feel fear. She did frighten me. The thing is, I always trusted the dolphin, I went in there with the assumption that the dolphin would be judicious with me, that she wouldn't hurt me accidentally. They never use more force than they have to to get their message across. It makes me wish I'd spent a hell of a lot more time with her, but frankly, at the time, I took her pretty much for granted, and I regret that more than anything else.



Malcolm J. Brenner talks to LGM about telepathy, last February's tragic loss of Sea World orca trainer Dawn Brancheau, and his brave, life-changing voyage across the species barrier. His novel *Wet Goddess* is currently available from Amazon.com.

A psychogeographer considers and explores the built environment around him to understand better its effect on human psychology. Psychogeography is a science (most would say a pseudoscience) which has sometimes guided, but has never led, urban development. One Moscow-based avant-guardian is changing that, but his belief that the commonly maligned Soviet architecture is good for the Russian psyche is under attack.

PSYCH MO

Report by
**Seraphima
Onofrei**

GEOGRAPHY:

SCOW

Taras was born in a dentist's chair thirty years ago. The hospital in Pidhorodni, Ukraine was full of victims of superficial knife wounds. There had been a spate of accidental stabbings across the small town that week, because of the inaugural knife festival, an ill-fated attempt to promote the town's scythe crafting industry. The wards were full of wounded, so Taras's mother was wheeled to the dental ward.

Taras lives in Moscow now and is a fully qualified dental surgeon. (This might make one question the banalizing effect being born in an ordinary maternity ward might have.) His suites look over the Moskva River. He points to the Red October chocolate factory, now an art gallery, one of Stalin's "seven sisters," a tall, glassed apartment block pointing out of the landscape like a champagne flute. "Notice anything missing?" He asks. "Parks.No Parks."

Taras is responsible for a guerilla psychogeography installation the knowing few call the Parliamentary Grass Incident. Parliamentarians arrived to work to find the building's 300 or so square meter floor entirely covered in grass. Signs all over the lawn read "Walking on the Grass is Encouraged," a reversal of the "Walking on Grass Forbidden" signs that make Moscow parks more like museums of nature than public natural spaces. The prank was inspired, he says, by a moment of pure rage when he had ignored such a sign to sit under a tree and read a book. A babooshka happened by, and railed against him for his disrespect to nature.

"In Soviet times," he has said, "our idea of beauty... at least it was hopeful. Russia produces so much beauty; dance, music, theater, art, women. But now we put a fence around it. Look, we say. But this is not for you to touch. And the oligarchs wives and the rest of the world enjoy it, while ordinary people never walk on the grass. It's like a return to feudalism. There's no progress in it."

While Taras seems to find sufficient funding for his projects, he struggles for recognition from those with the power to enact his visions. Adrian Makarov, Master Town Planner from Makarov & Kaukov group, likes the idea of psychogeography but thinks Taras lacks a basic understanding of town planning fundamentals. "He's a dentist. It's like a beautician breaking in on open heart surgery and saying 'I don't like blood, can't you fix this patient's heart without all this blood?'" Makarov points out that cities exist in dynamic environments. "The world doesn't stop turning to allow you to create the perfect city. It's an evolving, living creature. It isn't constructive to excite people into criticizing something they haven't control over, but have to live with everyday."

Melnikov, one of Soviet Moscow's most famous architects, is remembered in connection with the Constructivist holocaust that swept the city after the revolution. The association is mistaken; Melnikov was ousted from the architectural establishment for objecting to the Stalinist design movement. He retired to a life of painting and sculpture. In the same way, perhaps because of his enthusiasm for progress, Taras is sometimes misaligned with UK-based Norman Foster's postmodern / eco-movement (think Gazprom's giant glass HQ, pictured on the next page) that is begrudgingly received in Russia and Kazakhstan.

In fact, Taras doesn't appear to be concerned with the showy, new aesthetic, or with style at all. "It's natural" he dismisses. "In the past we had our ideology and our size and it was reflected in the Palace of Soviets or the Hotel Rossiya. Now we have money. We want to be acknowledged, we're reaching out of the dark. So you see, all these impossibly high Foster towers are coming. It's just a different time." While he may be an admirer of Moscow's classical survivors, such as the neo-gothic Kremlin walls or Baroque TsUM, Taras concludes that sustained his-





torical revivalism might be right for established cities like Paris, but not for a Moscow struggling with its identity. “There is such strict control in Paris over developers, over architecture. In some ways it’s good. But it’s a kind of constipation, no?”

Rather than the aesthetic, it’s the accessibility that Taras objects to. “In the past, this beauty was for everyone. Like the Chicagans, we used the city to inspire people,” he laments, referring to the North American “City Beautiful” movement of the early 1900s. The

movement, whose influence continues today, led to the beautification of Chicago, DC and Detroit. Streets were widened, awe-inspiring monuments were installed, public squares and buildings were built with grandeur and classicism as imperatives.

The concept held that a visually inspiring city would create more virtuous citizens. The idea was not dissimilar to Stalin’s, suggests Taras. “Everyday things like worker’s clubs and public transport – have you seen a more beautiful system than Moscow metro? Now we don’t

build metros to the suburbs anymore. Just more roads, more cars. It’s all so careless. We put no respect into building our city anymore.”

The capital of a country that is home to over 100 ethnicities and spans 11 time zones was always going to have a somewhat confused aesthetic. St. Petersburg, with its European baroque and neoclassical palaces, its dedication to scale and romanticism, is the crown of Russian architecture, but isn’t really a true representation of a country which lies largely in the Orient. In that way,

industry and only later, with the ensuing population growth, saw the erection of palaces and public buildings, metro stations and suburbs. Now, heavy-duty brutalist factories of industry sit alongside classical manor houses and across from sprawling shopping malls made of cheap new materials. The only place you can find consistency of style in Moscow is in its new outer suburbs, a vast, flat sprawl of uniform bleakness. Taras restricts his commentary to application rather than aesthetics, probably for that reason. “I understand that these things are objective. I’m more concerned about how things get used.”

That’s why Taras is a psychogeographer and not a critic, per se. He doesn’t care if a building is pretty or not. His interest lies in the way the built environment makes you feel, how you use it, how it affects your behavior. Psychogeography is a serious term for what is essentially a playful social experiment of the prankster successors of the surrealists, the *Situationist Internationale*. Finding unique ways to reimagine their cities, Situationist activities ranged from a simple *dérive* (a more cerebral version of Beaudelaire’s “stroll” that encouraged pedestrians to take a different route and become more aware of unknown aspects of their city) to exhibitions on the topic, a film series, and more recently, in the “psycho-geographical praxes” of groups such as the London Psychoeographical Association, which are probably as abstract and pointless as they sound.

Taras’ projects, on

the jumble of styles one can see while strolling Moscow’s Red Square, which include the Tartary-inspired St. Basil’s cathedral, built to commemorate the capture of Kazan and Astrakhan, Schushev’s monumental cubist mausoleum of Lenin, a trophy of Soviet design, the Assumption cathedral with its leanings towards the Italian renaissance, the neoclassical Senate building and the gothic-spired towers of the Spasskaya Kremlin gate, is a fairer characterization of such a multi-everything nation. Outside the historical center the jumble continues and is just as true to Russia’s diversity. Moscow started its life as a trading hub, evolved to include light





Hotel Rossiya, which psychogeographer Taras thinks constitutes an important part of Russia's architectural heritage

the other hand, aim to bring psychogeography to life. They're interactive, grand in scale, occasionally offensive, often contradictory and always quite expensive. Taras doesn't reveal who invests in his projects, none of which have ever turned, or were even intended to turn a profit. It was once rumored he was funded by the federal opposition, so subversive were his schemes, but over a beer and some peanuts he admits the rumours weren't true. "There are a lot of rich people in Moscow" is the most he's willing to divulge.

In July last year, Taras petitioned the current renovation of the iconic Bolshoi Ballet by staging a free performance of Don Quixote in the square in the building's foreground. Except for a few background parts (filled by volunteers from other dance companies across Moscow) the cast was almost en-

tirely made up the original Bolshoi company dancers. Taras had a makeshift stage built and trucked in to the Bolshoi forecourt, and enlisted his nephews to paint the background scenes on cardboard. He considers the performance a huge success, especially because he wasn't arrested or beaten. The police officers who were called to the scene left with tears in their eyes after the final act, and let him go with a fine and the mutual understanding that he wouldn't pay it. Then, "A taxi driver comes up to me to tell me how happy he was that he happened to be driving past at the right time. A bum joins him thanking me for putting it on and telling me he'll help me with the next one. Turns out the bum used to be the creative director of the Belarusian State Theater back in the 80s and the taxi driver was a violinist for the Moscow Philharmonic. The crazy

thing about Moscow is that they were telling the truth."

The point of staging a dero-chic, pared down Don Quixote right outside the home of the most famous ballet company in the world was to protest what Taras calls "Decorative Crime." Inspired by Alfred Loos' influential Viennese treatise "Ornament and Crime," which blasted the allocation of resources to increasing ornament and "excessive beautification" as wasteful, even criminal. "Instead of renovating the Bolshoi, which is beautiful enough as it is, the state should pay the violinist so he doesn't have to drive taxis. It should put on free performances for schools and the underprivileged."

Taras was one of the most passionate opponents to the proposed development set to replace what most people considered a Soviet monstrosity, the Hotel Rossiya. Until its closure in 2006, the Rossiya, once adjacent to the Red Square, was the biggest hotel in the world. Designed by Chechulin, who was responsible for celebrated works like the most famous of Stalin's seven sister towers, the hotel was demolished in 2006 and will be replaced by a Norman Foster shopping complex. "Why is this such an improvement?" asks Taras. "Sure, a lot of people thought it was ugly, but it's a kind of denial of a big part of our history to tear the Rossiya down and replace it with a design from the UK. Even in Soviet times when

they were demolishing all the churches, using the bricks to construct toilet blocks so people couldn't reconstruct the original building, there were people who got the importance of preserving cultural heritage." Baranovsky, the architect of the Kazan Cathedral that sits like a wedding cake on the corner of the Red Square, made detailed measurements and took hundreds of photos before the church was demolished. "That effort, that thinking, it allowed the church to be reconstructed and that chunk of our history has been saved. We just blew the Rossiya up and now we're trying to forget it ever happened." Enter Taras' most grand and impossible project yet, the Rossiya 2 Apartment Complex. And the Rossiya 3 complex. And the Rossiya 4, 5 and 6. Taras plans to recreate the Rossiya hotel, 5 times, in the outer regions of Moscow metropolitan area.

"Building 5 hotel Rossiyas out in the suburbs as an alternative to constructing yet more of the usual apartment buildings retains, even celebrates, the calm, characteristic uniformity of outer-urban Moscow while preserving an important part of Russia's architectural heritage," says the press release Taras hands me over our last beer. I ask him if rebuilding a torn down eyesore over and over might be considered a kind of constipation, regression. "You could be right" he responds, and snatches the press release from me, crushing it into a ball with his hands and throwing it over the bar.

A few weeks later, I heard on radio station Echo Moskva that a submission to develop a re-creation of the hotel Rossiya in Moscow's outskirts was entered to council. So maybe I just missed the point. After all, I was born in an ordinary maternity ward.



Gazprom HQ, architected by Norman Foster, is a possible alternative to the revivalism to which Taras objects.



Avant-Garde Vacations: ZÜRICH



ZÜRICH is the cultural capital of the superbly named “Helvetican Confederation,” called “Switzerland” in America and the UK. To many of its residents, Switzerland is “a beautiful prison,” and to its visitors, it is a wonderful place to spend thousands of dollars taking a nap. Are you sure you want to go to Zürich? You could find a little more edge in Bern, and more culture amid the grime of Basel. But yes, we have a guide. We will tell you where to stay for free, where to eat, and what to avoid in one of the most expensive cities in the world. Be prepared to pay, for example, 3 Swiss francs (about 3 dollars) for six minutes of internet, 12 CHF for iced tea, 4.50 CHF for a bottle of Coke, and 56 CHF for a train ticket to Bern, less than an hour away. Be prepared also to go to bed early—there’s very little to do, and you’re only going to frustrate yourself asking about nightlife, because people will look at you as if you’re crazy for wanting to be out after dark. This is part of their nationalistic pride. They want you to know that they work harder and understand money better than you do, which is probably true.

The truth is, Zurich is not boring at all; it is actually a Dream City, and we have prepared a guide to show you both its conscious and unconscious features.

WHAT TO DO BY DAY

FRAUMÜNSTER CATHEDRAL

Begin your morning with a trip to this church, Fraumünster Cathedral, more important to the skyline of Old Town than the grander Grossmünster, and more famous too for its stained glass windows by Marc Chagall. I can’t imagine how a gifted critic would appraise these windows, but they’re free. Just don’t keep staring at them.

I think they’re quite crap, personally. The yellow window depicts the prophets, the green, Christ, and the blue is the End of Days.

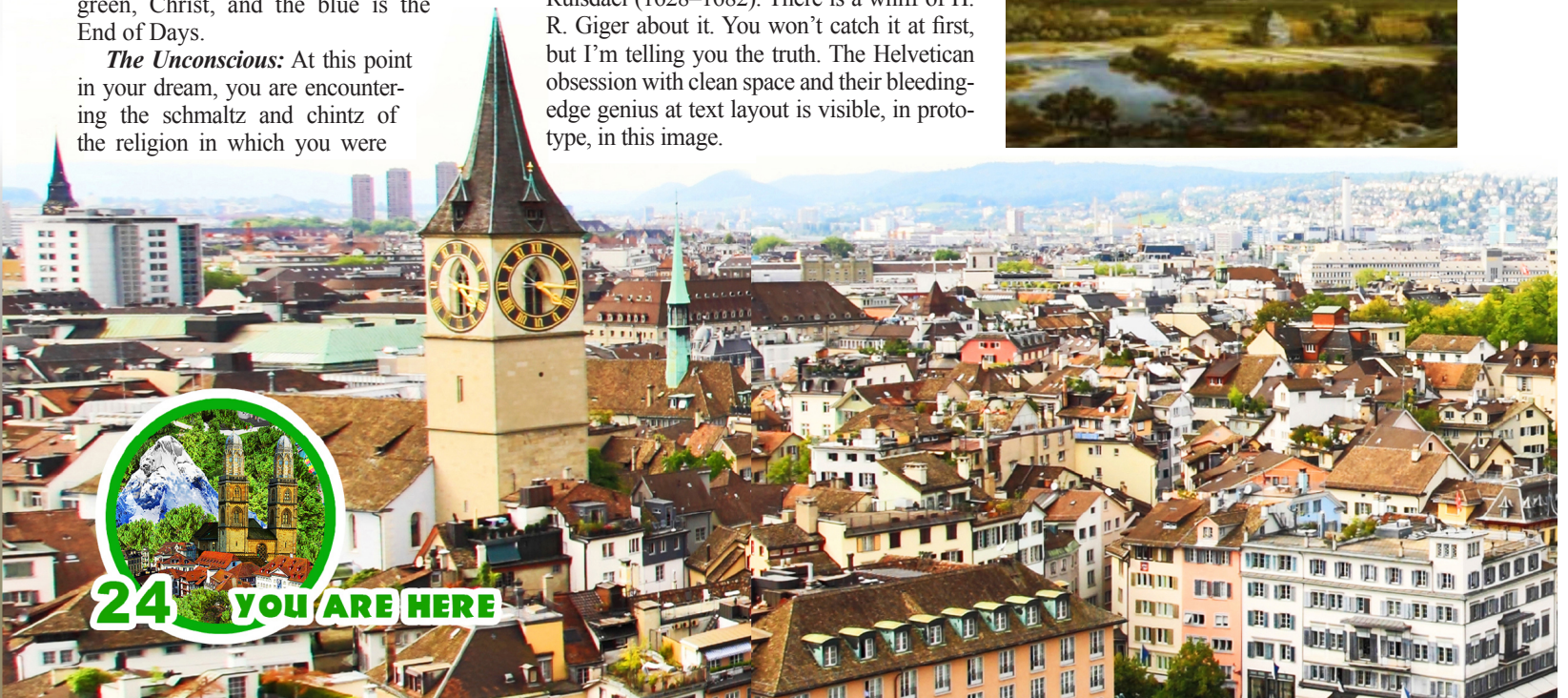
The Unconscious: At this point in your dream, you are encountering the schmaltz and chintz of the religion in which you were

raised. Even if you were not raised Christian.

KUNSTHAUS

The curious thing about Kunsthaus Zurich is the building itself—it is as if a cabal of architects plumbed the nether-reaches of design to wrest this gross bulb, which looks like a tarantula’s cephalothorax, from Hell. In their abyss voyage of curation, the Kunsthaus Zurich architects discovered that they loathed art.

Take this example (pictured right), their treasured *Die Bleichen von Haarlem* by van Ruisdael (1628–1682). There is a whiff of H. R. Giger about it. You won’t catch it at first, but I’m telling you the truth. The Helvetican obsession with clean space and their bleeding-edge genius at text layout is visible, in prototype, in this image.



The Unconscious: A few hours away, toward Geneva, in Gruyères, The H. R. Giger museum is as close as Switzerland ever gets to a roadside attraction. Of course, the Swiss cannot paste America's sad and holy paper mache dinosaurs, and tourists hoping for American roadside's trashy charm will have to settle for mere excellence. It's nothing you haven't seen before: Aliens, the Harkonnen's furniture from Lynch's *Dune*, and three floors of tritely unsettling, moody canvases (sick people being sodomized by machines, and so on.) To get to these wonders, you must ascend an alp to behold stunning mountains breaking against the sky, and watch majestic elk gamboling in the morning sun. Oh, I forgot. You wanted to go to Zürich. We should head back there now.



Museum HR Giger; Château St. Germain 1663 Gruyères Tel.: +41 26 921 22 00 Fax: +41 26 921 22 11 E-Mail: info@hr-gigermuseum.com

THE BLIND COW (BLINDEKUH)

Deborah (not her real name) was coming out of church when I literally ran into her. While she was apologizing, I could see that one of her eyes was bandaged under her dark sunglasses. We fell to talking and she told me that she was losing her sight. She had been living in Switzerland for almost ten years, married to a Swiss

man, but the eye medication on which she had relied while in England had not been approved by the Swiss authorities. She returned home to get her medications, and learned that she could have salvaged much of her vision, perhaps 30% of it, had she made repeated trips to the UK to get her meds instead of waiting for the Swiss to become reasonable. Naturally, she rued the day she had trusted Swiss doctors, as there seemed to be a disconnect between having high standards for the sake of being better than everyone, and protecting the patient's health. (These are her sentiments, not mine.)



She was going to the Blind Cow, a restaurant for blind people to take their sighted guests. The world's first dark restaurant, it was an experiment that spawned several imitators, including one chain: Le Dans Nuit, which has locations in London and Moscow. The place simulates blindness. It is completely dark, and the wait staff are blind. "It's meant to show sighted people what it is to be blind, but of course it doesn't do that," said Deborah. To some blind patrons, the restaurant seems idealized and naïve.

"There's nothing at all random there, like there is in the real world. Normally, well, there would be a pot to trip over, or a fork in the wrong place."

Deborah told me another story: a friend of hers, a man with just under 10% of his vision, had lived with a seeing-eye dog for years. After 10% of his vision was restored through surgery (he still could not work or drive) he had too much of his vision to qualify for the ownership of his dog, which was taken from him. "They keep their hearts in the bank," she said, of the Swiss.

The Unconscious: It's dangerous to forget

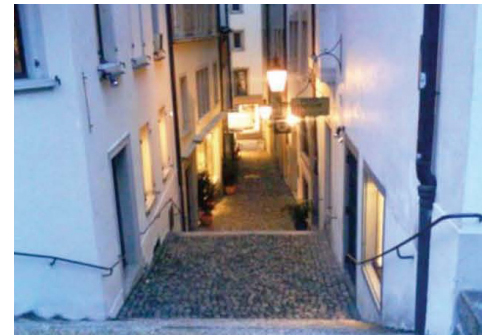
that our American ideal of graphic design comes directly from the Swiss. The layout of blindekuh is exactly the same as that used by graphic designers—the clear space to throw clean lines of pure information into relief, the indifference to image content in favor of image placement—and most chillingly, the enforcement of blindness on people who are not naturally blind. How else can one describe the effects of repeated exposure to Swiss design? Though such a policy is noble in the ideology of this restaurant, it is also the ideology of the country. It's identical to their moralism when it comes to the city's bedtime. It is supposed to close early. That's what good children do, and Zürich is a nursery full of good children.

VISIT A BANK

Why are banks decorated as opulently as churches in Zürich?

"Churches have a grandeur to them, yes, but it's basically the same grandeur in every church around the world," Austin Grovesnor, a hedge fund manager, told me outside the imposing doors of Grossmünster cathedral. "It represents a power, a certain power. Thing is, we do not know how direct the power of a church, or of God, really effects us. But the power within a bank—to create, to destroy—that is undeniable. The grandeur and opulence within a Swiss bank is... less meaningless."

The Unconscious: (To learn about the financial avant-garde, turn to Chapter Eleven, Page 58.)



CABARET VOLTAIRE

After you solve Old Town's labyrinth of shining cobblestone and arrive at the portal



Looking Glass / Spring 2010 / Utopia 25

of Cabaret Voltaire, you will, all of a sudden, imagine yourself a qualified critic of architecture and interior design. You will be tempted to observe, even to scoff, that here the sedition of the early 1900s has been killed, and commodified. You would think this only if your lazy intellect tends to mistake sophomoric skepticism for insight. Take umbrage if you like. After all, how dare I? I don't even know you!

It would be hard to overstate the struggles of Cabaret Voltaire. New York City doesn't have any squatters as fierce as Mark Divo and his gang of anarchist artists, who squatted the establishment before it could be sold and turned into a useless boutique. Now it is simply *disguised* as a useless boutique.

This is the storied location where the Romanian Tristan Tzara (still, at this point, opposed to André Breton's surrealism) gave dada to the world. "The Cabaret Voltaire was dada. There was no alternative institution or site that could disentangle 'pure' dada from its mere accompaniment, nor was any such site desired," said historian Bernard Gendron.

It often has an empty feel by day, but its existence is always in peril. You are right to suspect that your time may be wasted there. Some ground research will be necessary to determine what events merit your attention. You may see a boring exhibit, you may see a midnight re-enactment of torture techniques.



Cabaret Voltaire; Spiegelgasse 18001 Zürich 043 268 57 20

WHAT TO DO BY NIGHT

Zürich is prohibitively expensive, and aggressively pleasant. If you go when the weather is nice, there's nothing to stop you from sleeping outside. Of course, you'll end up quite frustrated if you look for any nightlife in the Old Town (head to Langstrasse for that, and for affordable food. But if you want a good time, keep walking on Langstrasse until you get to Germany.)

FINNEGANS WAKE READING GROUP

The book is written in five dif-

ferent languages: English, German, Italian, French and Irish. In Switzerland, speakers of all these languages are common, but at the *Finnegans Wake* discussion group, hosted by the world reknowned scholar Fritz Senn at the James Joyce Institute, we spent about 10 minutes per line. I'm told that the book takes approximately 13 years to read. One page a week. There are about a dozen of us sitting around a long table. The youngest is in her twenties. Most are around or over 50. One gentleman there, Seamus, a retired Irish professor, was on his third time through. (A little abashedly, he told me that on his second reading, he breezed through it in 12 years.)

Page 31 opens with a road made of pikes (I offer, lamely, that there is such a road in the Kalevala. I was wrong to bring this up. How could that be relevant?) It's a clear reference to The Giant's Causeway, recalling Finn McCool's legend, and in the story it is lined by knights with upside-down flower pots on their spears. This is how earwigs are caught, said one of our scholars. Many confirmed that this was true. Earwicker (the hero of the book), was particularly nervous that he was about to get caught. The young girl sat online to bring Wikipedia to bear on the discussion as needed. At one point, we came upon a line that included references to a brothel and centaurs. There was mention of a man holding something called a "Cumseptre." The men and women of

Finnegans Wake

Page 31

flagrant marl, jingling his turnpike keys and bearing aloft amid the fixed pikes of the hunting party a high perch atop of which a flowerpot was fixed earthside hoist with care.

On his majesty, who was, or often feigned to be, noticeably longsighted from green youth and had been meaning to inquire what, in effect, had caused yon causeway to be thus potholed, asking substitutionally to be put wise as to whether paternoster and silver doctors were not now more fancied bait for lobstertrapping honest blunt Haromphreyld answered in no uncertain tones very similarly with a fearless forehead: Naw, yer madders, aw war jist a cotchin on thon bluggy earwuggers. Our sailor king, who was draining a gugglet of obvious adamale, gift both and gorban, upon this, ceasing to swallow, smiled most heartily beneath his walrus moustaches and indulging that none too genial humour which William the Conk on the spindle side had inherited with the hereditary whitelock and some shortfingeredness from his greataunt Sophy, turned towards two of his retinue of gallowglasses, Michael, etheling lord of Leix and Offaly and the jubilee mayor of Drogheda, Elcock, (the two scatterguns being Michael M. Manning, protosyndic of Waterford and an Italian excellency named Giubilei according to a later version cited by the learned scholar Canavan of Canmakenoise), in either case a triptychal religious family symbolising puritas of doctrina, business per usuals and the purchypatch of hamlock where the paddish preties grow and remarked dilsydulsily:

Holybones of Saint Hubert how our red brother of Pouringrainia would audibly fume did he know that we have for surtrusty bailiwick a turnpiker who is by turns a pikebailer no seldomer than an earwigger For he kinned Jom Pill with his court so gray and his haunts in his house in the mourning. (One still hears that pebble crusted laughta, japijap cheerycherrily, among the roadside tree the lady Holmpatrick planted and still one feels the amossive silence of the cladstone alleighbelling: I've mies outs ide Bourn.) Comes the question are these the facts of his nominigentilisation as recorded and accolated in both or either of the collateral andrewpaulmurphyc narratives. Are those their fata which we read in sibylline between the fas and its nefas? No dung



the reading group pondered this in silence. They spoke seven languages between them, but could not imagine what this mysterious word meant.

Then somebody said “Well, given that it’s nearby two references to sex, it could be an obscene word? Slang, perhaps?” I still said nothing. Then Ludwig, a sharply-dressed, German with a short gray beard, brightened. “In Latin,” he said cheerfully, “the word ‘cum’ means ‘with’! So this may refer to King Leopold, since he used to ride through-town holding a scepter!” Everyone nodded, and another scholar interjected “Yes, and he was dressed as an Arab sheikh!”

I had to say something. “If there was even one teenager in this room, you guys wouldn’t have any trouble deciphering ‘cumsceptre.’ I’m telling you, this is not a veiled reference to King Leopold, or Anna Karenina or the Bible or anything else, it’s... really obvious.”

Everyone just looked at me. “What do you mean, it’s obvious?” said Seamus. “Obviously what?”

They genuinely didn’t know what I was talking about. “CUM sceptre? You don’t know what that is?”

After a long pause, there was a gradual acquiescence that, possibly, just possibly, James Joyce might have been referring to... *a penis*. But they preferred not to believe that and kept searching the whole of history and literature for another explanation. Finding none, they decided it was a mystery, and moved on. For my money, I think they’re a little out of touch.

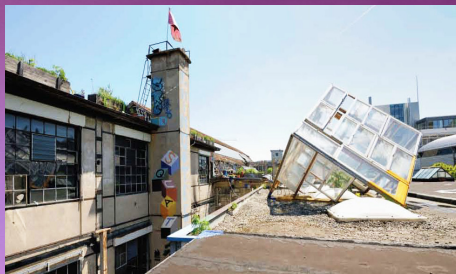
The Unconscious: Sometimes the book does make sense, and it’s spooky when it does. We discussed the passage set in a dark forest which described “pebble-crusted laughter,” and Lady Holmpatrick (“Holmpatrick” is a dream name for Ireland—Home Patrick, Home of [St.] Patrick.) The pebble-encrusted laughter is a house: inside the house, a family is together, laughing. From outside the stone house, that laughter seems packaged in pebbles. The evening’s reading had seemed desperate and pointless to me before this, but

something took over now. As our voices fell into a calm and eerie complicity, we arrived together in the dark wood at night. We began to cooperate, as scholars. The tone of the discussion waned, grew more reverent. “Alegrabeling,” we read. I thought “Allegra. War. Bells” and then someone else said it: a legato succession of bells, and wars, mournfully harmonic. Then the message: *Ive mies outs ide Bourn*. “I’ve gone outside the bourne”—the boundary from which there is no return. Whoever left the message has died, and Earwicker has stopped to remember him. It was Finnegan who left it, Finnegan’s ghost, and for a moment, I saw him, too. The glimpse I caught of him did stop my breath, but re-reading today I can’t recreate the shock.

I asked Mr. Senn what the secret to reading the Wake successfully might be. “I wonder if there is any secret to reading *Finnegans Wake*,” he said. “People just do it according to what they know and what interests them. As our reading group does, very individually.”

The Finnegans Wake Reading Group; Meet on Thursdays, 7 p.m., in the Joyce Foundation.

Zürich James Joyce Foundation; Augustinergasse 9, CH-8001 Zürich; Phone ++41 1 211 83 01 (Augustinergasse is off Bahnhofstrasse, and easy to find.)



WHERE TO STAY

I don’t speak for the whole publication, but I don’t think it’s right to pay to sleep in Zürich. We need to support the squatters’ movement there.

Finding the Binz squat is a magical challenge. Take the tram to the Binz stop, then follow the white lines painted into the street—the Swiss, as everyone knows, are very precise,



but at one point on the outskirts of town, the white street lines warble and bubble, as they would if seen while drunk or on acid, and form the picture of a pointing hand that says “Binz.” Follow that line on its weird meander and you’ll come to some abandoned train cars, which, if you follow them like bread crumbs, grow more and more ordered until they are indoors and themselves occupied with people, mattresses, furniture etc..

Warehouses linked by rope ladders, dangerous-looking bridges, abandoned train cars, makeshift tiers of hallways, bedrooms, skateboard ramps, and other miracles of DIY architecture, boggle the mind. Once inside, I asked a man with a bar through his nose and a mohawk (Andrew) if I could stay.

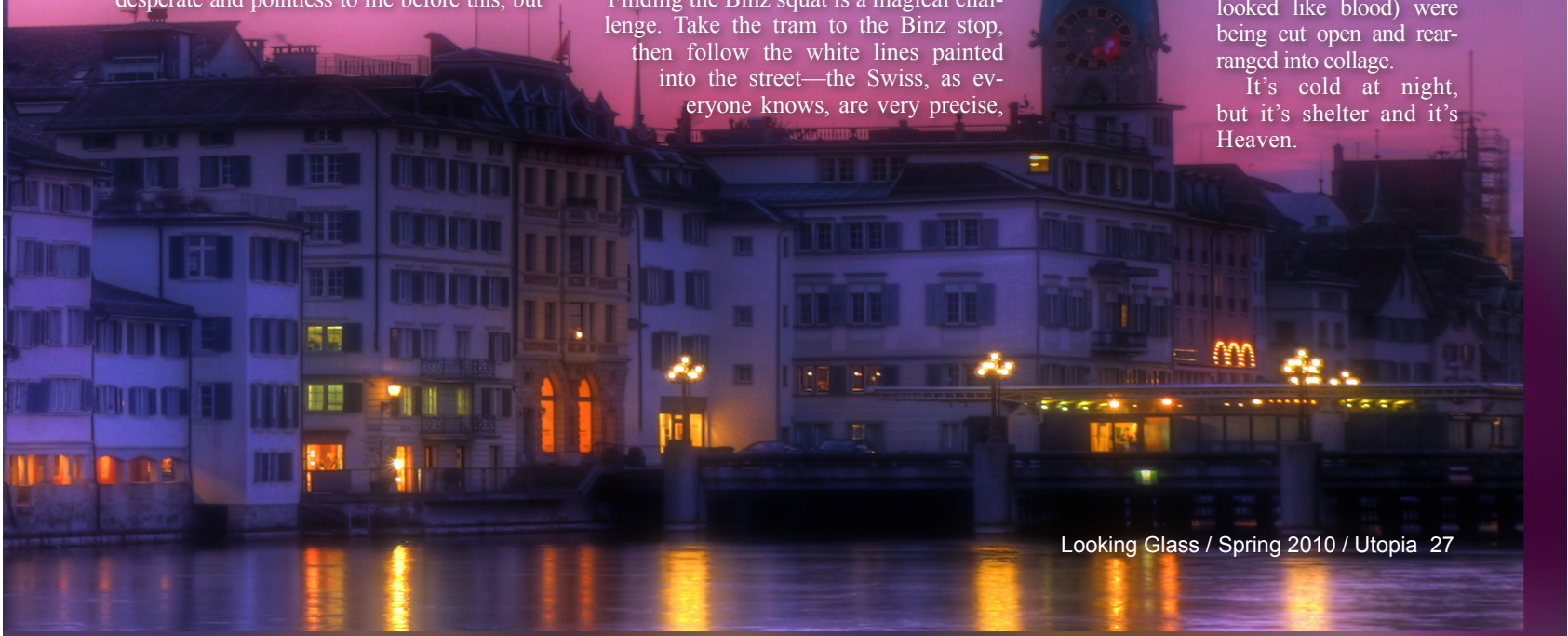
“How did you find us?”

“Mark Divo sent me.”

“Oh,” he says, almost scoffing. “The Artist.”

I looked around. They have nothing but space. High above the warehouse two windows were joined by a bridge of ropes and wood. Tiki masks lined a spiders’ web made of planks, and another door, which automatically closed by a system of pulleys, led to a library where, on a platform, antique furniture upholstered bright red sat under an artist’s lamp next to paints, markers. Children’s books (one of them spattered with what looked like blood) were being cut open and rearranged into collage.

It’s cold at night, but it’s shelter and it’s Heaven.



JOURNEY PSEUDO

by Michael Merriam

We love hoaxes because they disappoint us. We may travel to museums to see shrunken heads, but nobody really wants cruise ships to maroon, however occasionally, on cannibal isles, where tourists' heads are shrunken. We'd just as soon not live in a world where tarantulas hatch out of our faces, or teenagers take LSD until they think they're glasses of orange juice. We look for the facts to either verify or disprove stories, but surprisingly, the history of the fact and the history of the hoax are the same. The helix of hoaxes and facts, which is the DNA of science, has mutated into a bewildering menagerie of non-sciences, which have been propelling zealots and New Age primitives into the glorious realms of the unreal. Settle into the spongy coils of your floating brain carriage, and sail with us through a Universe of Pseudoscience!

Our journey begins in prehistoric times. Evidence left on cave walls tells us that while the hunt was a ritual, and the death of animals commonplace, the death of human beings had a "you're shitting me..." quality to it. Death is the first hoax. In an attempt to "see through it," and hopefully make it negotiable, prehistoric man invented medicine. We gradually developed osteopathic skills, like bone-setting, as well as trephination, a form of paleolithic brain surgery. Why do people still practice trephination today? Answers range from "to relieve the

pressure" to "because it was time," but the fact is, most people who undergo the procedure are glad they did. This is one of pseudoscience's most enduring and pointless mysteries.

In ancient Egypt, hoaxes involved two things especially: writing and politics. The very system of hieroglyphics is hoaxlike, as the physicist Thomas Young discovered. When Young came to egyptology, he was glared at by grave-minded historians who were sick and tired of natural scientists treating their human science like an obvious, lesser discipline. Young did take it seriously, but reasoned that the written system of hieroglyphics was something of a joke. It employed the Mad magazine logic of the rebus: the images, when pronounced together, chanced upon the sounds of other words. The writing does not simply imitate the spoken language, it must mock it to stay active, to be at all comprehensible. Young was right, and his work led to the translation of the Rosetta Stone. Another vaguely scientific egyptologist was Professor Alexander Thom, educated in engineering at Oxford. He created the pseudoscience of megalithic geometry, which presupposes the invention of geometry in Egypt before its advent in Greece, which he said explained the construction of the pyramids. The idea is that, based on the 366 degrees in the earth's sphere, a megalithic yard was used as the unit of measure in the time of the pharaohs. This geometry was carried into Northern France and Britain, and accounts for phenomena like Stonehenge. Because of Alexander's pseudoscientific research, most people today believe that the

Egyptians were incredibly advanced mathematicians. In fact, they were just

above average. We can't disprove most pseudoscientific claims, because they are seldom falsifiable. Falsifiability, as Karl Popper taught us, remains the criterion of good science. If it can't be falsified, it's pseudoscience.

The ancient Greek, Thales, invented both science and philosophy, and was the first to separate the fact from the hoax. This era, remember, is where the archetype of the sorrowful intellectual was born. Dante parodied it in the *Inferno*, with his sad but thoughtful shades who had no knowledge of God and had to make do with geometry and math. Thomas Kuhn, who invented the non-fiction genre of "popular science," liked to illustrate the birth of science with images of innocent Greeks wondering things and trying to explain them. Kuhn's books, intentionally or not, are hoaxes. As it happens, Greeks did not sit under the stars like a wall-eyed children, rocking back and forth and drooling on themselves and wondering how everything got there. Kuhn pretends that he is simplifying things for us, but what he is actually doing is laying bare all his own assumptions about history and anthropology—and this is a good thing.

Sir James Frazer, the great anthropologist, wrote of Celts fatally sealing their kings into trees. He thought they were practicing the pseudoscience of harvest enhancement. Wittgenstein corrected him, and held that the Celts killed their king because they were overwhelmed by the majesty of Death.

In Europe, tales of Merlin were inseparable from tales of the pre-Arthurian trickster magi. At this time, too, the conical cap was common both to imbeciles and sorcerers, and we had not yet forgotten that the dunce cap and the wizard's mitre were the same accoutrement. This was when the April rite, whose *antics* (which means lunatic, comic, and ancient, all at the same time) were both sacred and



28 YOU ARE HERE

THROUGH SCIENCE

scientific. It's the first April Fool's Day! April Fool's Day is a day of fact making. After all, it is the truth that is revealed at the moment "April Fool!" is called.

Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, in a book *Leviathan and the Air Pump*, labor hard to convince us that facts, as real as they are, are also an invention. This is not to say, as many young and misguided undergraduates would like, that facts are empty, meaningless, or always false. Only that they are inventions of the Victorian age, born from the dialogue between Hobbes and Boyle. It was at this time that the Modest Witness was born: one who is not himself a scientist (hence his modesty) but who can observe the results of an experiment objectively to see if the hypothesis was found true. It is the modest witness's conclusions that we, today, accept as facts.

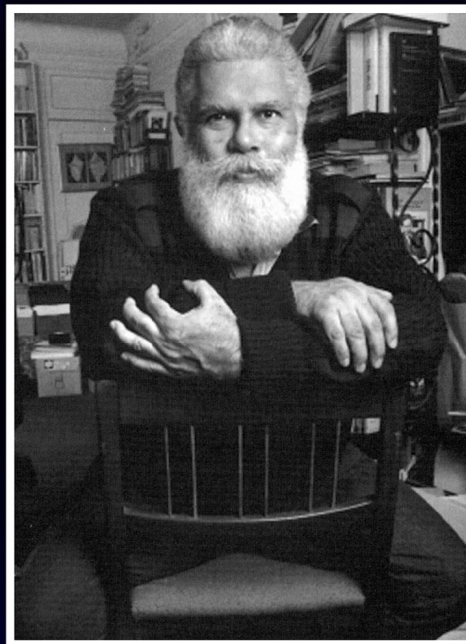
When the Fiji Mermaid was discovered, legendary showman P. T. Barnum acted as a modest witness himself, putting it on display for all the world to see. He never claimed it was real, only that a Dr. Griffin (a man of incredibly dubious credentials) said it was real. The modern hoax isn't much different from the primitive hoax!

Picking up where Barnum left off, historians of science like Donna Haraway (author of "The Cyborg Manifesto") enthusiastically work to historically situate "the fact." Her intention was not to prove that "factualness" didn't exist in the world, but to help all kinds of scientists laugh nervously together at the recognition that the basis of their work was, to some extent, made up ("constructed,") and then get back to doing work they cared about. This is the academic science of epistemology, the study of where
k n o w l -

edge comes from. It helps us differentiate between science and pseudoscience. But some think it is, itself, pseudoscience, and it has come under brutal attack.

Alan Sokal's 1996 refutation of gravity in the postmodern journal *Social Text* pretended to argue that gravity was a social construction, and quoted, with false modesty, theorists like Haraway and Jacques Derrida. It was a mean-spirited hoax. Of course Sokal believed in gravity. He just wanted to prove that some people will believe anything, and that the editors of the fashionable journal who published his hoax didn't bother to fact-check their pieces.

With the advent of the internet, hoaxes are spreading faster than ever. Young people, with a passion for irreality, create internet news aggregation services, which cannot afford to fact-check or investigate. They collect and repeat specious claims from similar news sources in a charming sort of "telephone game." Heirs to Nigerian fortunes and identity thieves, as well as amateur philanthropists who raise money for non-existent countries, vie for attention with gossip bloggers, and together, they are so popular that actual newspapers are driven out of business. Hurrah! Pseudoscience, and indeed, *pseudoinformation*, is saved. And that concludes our journey. But where are we going? The answer is probably outer space, where we can watch as our planet is being baked to death by greenhouse gasses... or is it?



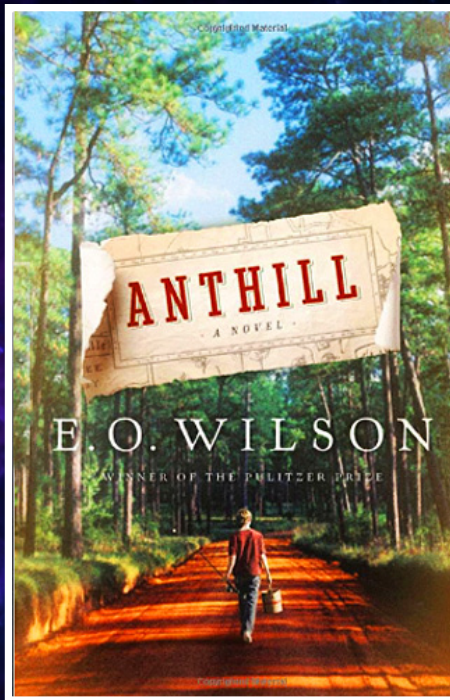
HAPPY BIRTHDAY SAMUEL DELANY

The brilliant author and critic Samuel R. Delany celebrates his 68th birthday this April Fool's Day! His new novel, *Through the Valley of the Nest of Spiders*, comes out in the fall. Read our interview with Delany in the next issue of *Looking Glass Magazine*.



MINIMIZING BY DESIGN

EDITED BY SUZIE GUMMINGS



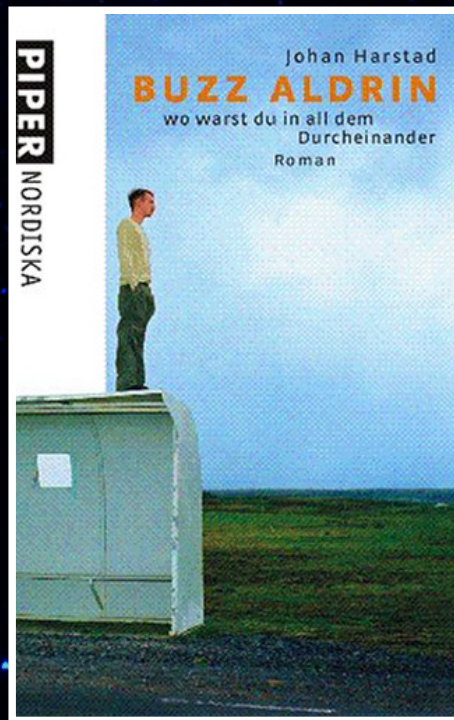
Wilson's Anthill

The readable-to-a-fault E. O. Wilson is vacationing on the shores of fiction. While criticisms that his work in sociobiology can be used to justify sexism and racism detract from our understanding of his contributions, it's comforting to think that his just-so-story approach to natural history might play out in fiction from now on.

The book is appealing, with the exposition of the fascinating sexual organization of ants dramatized in the struggles of a colony in Alabama, told alongside a coming-of-age look at an idealistic environmentalist in the American South (the human protagonist was inserted largely at the insistence of the publisher). But really, we're in Nickelodeon territory. Wilson does not invent a compelling new voice, and his authorial voice (which always overwhelms that of his characters) is still "popular science." Older curiosities like Bernard Weber's *Empire of the Ants*, and even H. G. Wells' sillier novel of the same name (about giant radioactive ants) would better serve lovers of dottering monologues like Wilson's.

When it comes to hard science, though, Wilson's book is actually overdue. Recent research shows neural evidence for nigh-insectoid egalitarian social systems, particu-

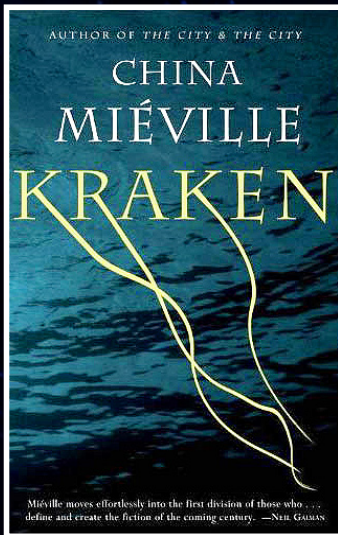
larly among low wage earners at major companies. Salaries being kept secret because of a typical distaste for inequalities seems to be hard-coded into our very biology, in a study reported in *Nature* wherein wage earners were asked to rate, on a ten point scale, how much they approved or disapproved of a random distribution of monies among other subjects. Unsurprisingly, we don't like it when other people earn high amounts of money, even when their doing so is provably unconnected to our own earnings. In other words, the "ant" metaphor has always been apt. Most authors, once they touch it, can't resist making tiresome and irrelevant comparisons between ant regimentation and human nature. Wilson's book, which more or less avoids that, is a welcome first. Anthill redeems the practice of viewing human science and natural science synoptically.



Euroconference, Stockholm

Norway's *Buzz Aldrin, Hvor Ble Det av Deg i Alt Mylderet?* (Buzz Aldrin, What Happened to You in All the Confusion?) by Johan Harstad is one of many untranslated SF wonderworks to be discussed at the next Euroconference in Stockholm. Everything from Google-translate hack-ups to products of months or years of lan-

guage professors' painstaking work will be under discussion. What will it mean that there will soon be no such thing as "Untranslated SF"? Though the conference is in English, the movement it represents could lead to the de-hegemonization of literature. Comprehensibility to ones neighbors will become "someone else's problem," and SF could begin to mimic Raoul Vaneigem's situationist credo of 1968, "Act Locally, Think Globally." What will it mean when the writers of Somali villages and Ukranian backwaters feel less inclined to imitate Western authors and free to project their local worldviews into cosmological work? It will become the universe full of universes SF visionaries have always dreamed of, and could even mean a radical reversal of the homogenization created by television throughout the 20th century.

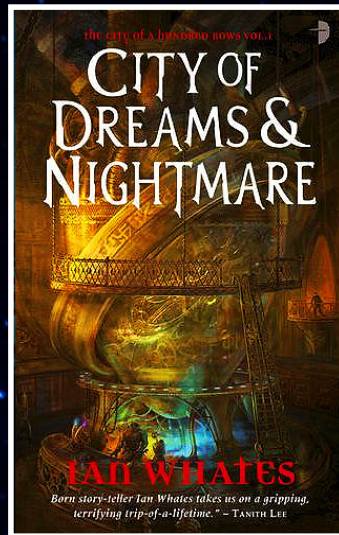


Mieville vs. Kraken

Mieville turned in *The City and the City* along and one other title to Macmillan; that second title, *Kraken*, is due out this spring in the UK. Mieville's tackling of SF innovation stretches the boundaries of both nat-

ural and human sciences. It's a tale about a giant squid which disappears from a natural history museum, and the resulting war between cults of its worshippers.

You'd think there'd be a lot of this kind of thing going on in the real world, but actually, there's only one native population of cephalopod worshippers we can think of, on the Isle of Pingelap, whose schools, at least up until the year 2000, taught the big bang theory alongside their creationism (a Mother Octopus created the cosmos). Mieville's cults are in part remixes of a passionately held misconception about Sumerian mythology. Stories about a chaotic monster (Tiamat, of largely undisclosed nature) conflated the depths of outer space with the depths of the ocean, so that when H. P. Lovecraft presented her for his new audience (in the form of gods, mostly male, of incomprehensible awfulness) he brilliantly construed a fear of the deep sea into the Sumerian worldview, for effect.



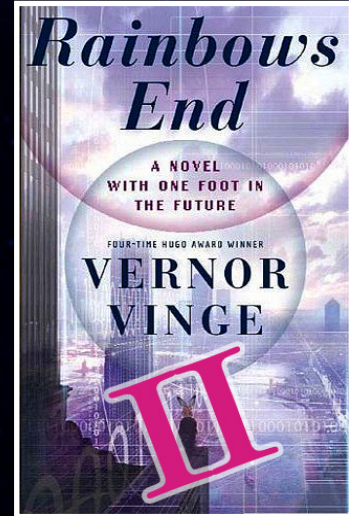
Imprint of Dreams and Nightmares

HarperCollins' new SF&F Angry Robot imprint is coming to North America this spring,

with Ian Whates' *City of Dreams & Nightmares* available now as an ebook and available in paperback this summer. Some titles look promising, like Lauren Beukes *Zoo City*, others, not so much. The compelling thing about Whates' novel, however, is that the none-too-subtle worldbuilding opens possibilities for old-fashioned, plot-driven, just-a-notch-above-pulp sword and sorcery. Maybe we'll get it, as the fantasy genre has to stop trending toward bad SF. Only time will tell, because for all this novel's color and variety, its paragraphs lack the muscular heft of Robert E. Howard's prose. Ponderous descriptions like the one below dominate the writing:

The younger man's face was clearly illuminated by the lanterns lining the walls as he looked up. Strong, handsome features dominated by piercing eyes. It was the eyes that concerned Tom. If he were to glance beyond his friend's shoulder and slightly to the left, the man would be looking straight at Tom's hiding place. Fortunately, his eyes never wavered from the other man, the man he had addressed as Magnus.

After an endorsement from the great reinventor of tales, Tanith Lee, we can hope that Whates chooses to emphasize his gift for ideas and images, and eases up on lukewarm characterizations. His work could auger well for the new imprint, which, given that publishinghouses' sci fi divisions' advances to authors are down 70% (according to UK source *Concatenation*) we should support.



Vernor, Vernor, Vernor...

Vernor Vinge announced that he is at work on a sequel to *Rainbows End*, a novel whose premise might strike today's readers with disquieting timeliness as new research into Alzheimer's disease makes the book more important now than when it came out two years ago. In it, a man recovering from Alzheimers finds himself in a world greatly changed by augmented reality, such as is under development in the real world by tech-genius Pranav Mistry. Johnson & Johnson / Pfizer's new drug bapineuzumab will soon enter the third and final phase of testing. Belief that beta amyloid causes the disease, or at least abets it considerably, is widespread, and if there's a drug that can stop the spread of this protein, we are well on our way to developing a cure. The recent study's sample size was not large enough to show whether the effects of the disease were reversed, and some cognitive function restored, by the drug.

HARD SCIENCE

Nicholas Webb, on the ultraviolet catastrophe.

When a scientist describes light functioning as a wave, you understand her because you once saw someone point to a wave and say the word "wave." The visual and the auditory were fused, and your mind suddenly contained the concept of "waveness" in a file folder that looked and sounded like a flowing, curling piece of the ocean. Your mind's point was not actually to identify a wave, but to set aside an image for later use as a scientific metaphor. What was it like in those primordial days when metaphors were minted from the raw ore of meaning? If you could hear a recording of your thoughts at that time, they would sound surreal: "a wave is as different from a building block," your mind would tell you, "as a pine tree is from lemonade." But your mind knew what it is doing. In fact, this is its only function: association, the recognition of error, and then re-association. The conceptual is the goal, the mind's *raison d'être*, because concepts build into-comprehension. The mind is designed for science. Even art, in which we bide our

time and play with these sensory index cards, is generally held to be a way of getting at the truth.

At the heart of any scientific theory is a concept or metaphor that provides a fundamental basis for explaining how things work. As long as these explanations, derived from the metaphor, match our observation, then the foundation of the

no such thing as a car that can go from 10 mph to 20 mph without passing any of the speeds in between.

This concept might be the mind's first real offering when the phrase "continuous universe" occurs, and because of the automotive image, the concept of a continuous universe is easy to understand.

Continuity is challenged by the phe-

and frequency gave rise to what was termed the *ultraviolet catastrophe*. If the intensity of light emitted by the object is proportional to the frequency of light emitted, and the object is allowed to access an infinite continuum of these values, then as something enters the ultraviolet emission region the intensity of that emission be-

proportional to the radiation given off but dependent on the temperature of the object. More importantly, Planck proposed that the spectrum of frequencies these oscillations can have is not continuous, it is quantized and restricted to specific values. If the frequency of oscillation was the speed of a car, Planck argued that the electrons could travel at 10 mph or 20 mph but not at any speed in between - the car will never hit 15 mph. The car metaphor wouldn't work. We needed a better one.

Planck's hypothesis was expanded into a new metaphor of the universe that describes small particles as waves, and quantum mechanics was born. This simple metaphor accurately predicted the radiation of a heated body, which could not be done within the concept of continuity, as well as a variety of phenomena like the color of flowers, the emission spectra of stars and the photoelectric effect. All of these complex explanations followed naturally from something as simple as treating particles like waves.

To solve the riddle

theory is considered sound. One of the central concepts in classical physics is that any property of any object has access to a continuum of values. For example, the speed of a car can be 10 mph, or 20 mph, or any one of the infinite number of values between the two (10.1 mph, 10.001 mph, 10.00000001 mph and so on). There is

nomenon of blackbody radiation. A blackbody is an ideal object which absorbs all radiation and re-radiates a continuous spectrum of energy, so this example is firmly rooted in the concept of a continuous universe. It is a representation of why a block of iron, for example, glows when heated. Predictions of blackbody emission intensity

comes enormously strong. Observation showed that at a given temperature, the emission intensity of a radiating body peaks and then decreases, instead of increasing as predicted. In the early 19th century, Max Planck proposed that the electrons in a radiating body are like tiny pendulums, oscillating back and forth at a frequency



**Continued on
Page 50**

SOFT SCIENCE

In **SOFT SCIENCE**, Paul S. Nowak argues that if video game criticism improves, we'll soon have independent games designed for critical appeal. This would be a good thing.

It is the entertainment industry that seems most obsessed with being avant-garde. But more specifically it is the video game industry which is caught up in the competition between developers and the drive to bring the latest and greatest technolo-

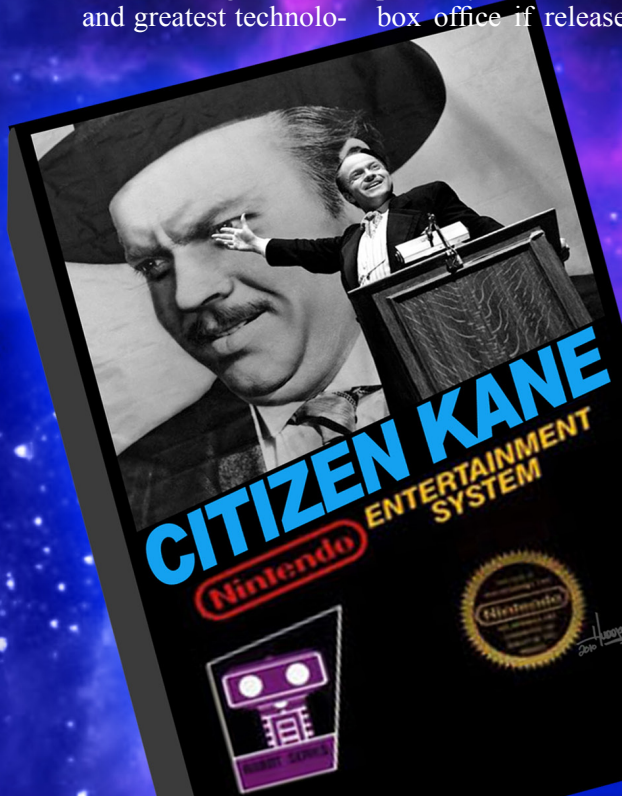
big-brother of games, has already asked the tough questions, and learned its lesson.

In institutions of higher learning around the world, canonical lists of films are taught and studied. Though it would probably tank at the box office if released

and groundbreaking enough to save for posterity. Whether or not we agree with their choices, the caretakers of film have kept their most important charges safe from the ravages of time and obscurity. So why can't the games industry do the same?

for each of its five years. The N64 was a bit of a disappointment by comparison, averaging only 76 games for each of its five years. The Game Cube was a bit more on the mark for the leader in gaming, averaging 106 games for each of its six

could easily boost this number into the tens of thousands, each of them a unique play experience with the ability to transport players to distant worlds of the imagination. Granted, some of them will do this much better than others, but which of them will do this best?



gy to the marketplace. While consumers may initially feel that they are the ones who would ultimately benefit from such a competition, it is an entire generation of gamer who may ultimately pay the price in the long run.

But where will the future of games bring us? The answers lie in our past. The film industry, considered by many to be the

today (especially if it were to be released in its original black and white,) Welles' *Citizen Kane* is revered by the community of film academics. The 1941 "classic" wouldn't hold a candle to today's multi-million dollar, computer-rendered mega blockbusters, but yet, for reasons that escape me, someone somewhere decided that it was important

Following the Nintendo consoles strictly as an example, (and even more narrowly, Nintendo consoles in North America,) we see that an average of 68 titles per year were released for the company's premiere Nintendo Entertainment System during its ten year lifespan. Its successor, the Super Nintendo, averaged more than twice that, an astounding 142 games

years. Nintendo's current model, the market dominating Wii, has put them all to shame, reaching over 942 titles in its fewer than four years on the shelves (including WiWare exclusives).

In this solitary example, we've counted almost 3100 unique games. As Nintendo makes only one family of consoles, putting all the home gaming systems together

Which one of these is our *Citizen Kane*?

It is my prediction that the future of games, much like that which has already happened with film, will revolve around the preservation of the past for coming generations. Someone who knows a great deal about game design (or more likely, a group of such people) has to sift through all that has come before and

determine which ones are masterpieces, works which transcend the period and context of their release (like *Legend of Zelda*), and which are merely charming period pieces (like *Duck Hunt*). Some of these masterpieces might not have been commercial successes. This must be determined and taught in institutions of higher learning in a comprehensive curriculum. Otherwise, the next Sid Meier or Shigeru Miyamoto may end up wasting their talents reinventing the wheel.

As universities continue to offer advanced degrees in design and production, companies are taking it upon themselves to make games' history available to new gamers. Nintendo has been adding more and more of its older titles to the Wii's downloadable library, along with some of those from its former but defunct competitors like SEGA and Turbo Graphics 16. Unfortunately, the decision about which titles to add is almost entirely dependent upon which titles Nintendo as a company has access to and believes will make it the most money. Older incarnations of its long-time successes like the Mario and Zelda franchises are all available, but what about the interesting failures? *Gyromite* was a commercial disaster and one of only two games made for Nintendo's R.O.B. (Robotic Operating Buddy), but at least the company was trying to do something new at the time and the

game still has its enthusiasts and adherents. What other innovations, and unpopular artistic triumphs have we lost? Like architecture, film, and painting, the catalog of work must have more than just commercial criteria to establish its canonicity.

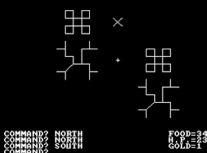
The video game art differs, in spirit, from cinema in that automatism is less of a possibility for game designers. As the Gawker-owned blog *Kotaku* recently observed, the structure of video game companies doesn't allow for autocratic designers to enforce a vision and take full responsibility for its failures. Another point we could make is that there is, as yet, no art-oriented independent designers' labs. It remains about the bottom line, and the game industry had no concept, as Fellini did, that if nobody in the audience liked a product, it was possible for all of them to be wrong. This might represent an advance video games have made over film: the players matter to games more than the audience matters to independent filmmakers. But at the moment, the majority's rule over video game design is despotic, and its bad for both designers and players. There has to exist a possibility of critical success coincident with commercial failure. Such a movement in the press could prevent a young genius from getting shafted, and could inspire more creative departmentalizing in video game companies.

THE SYLLABUS

Unit I: THE ELEMENTS



Pong:
Playability



Akalabeth:
Worldbuilding



Ms. Pac Man:
Gimicky



Space Invaders:
Flow

Unit II: BOUTIQUE ARCADIA



Aztec Challenge:
Story



Dragon's Lair:
Seamlessness



Gyromite:
Physicality



Super Mario Bros. II:
Permutation

Unit III: MOODS OF PLAY



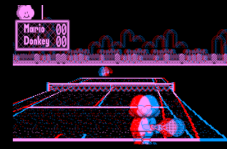
Myst:
Isolation



Realms:
Convocation



Street Fighter:
Tournament

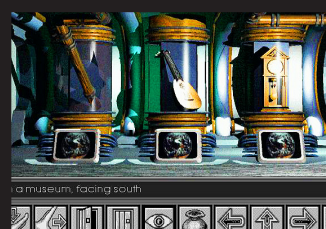


Virtual Boy:
Revolution

THE LABYRINTH OF TIME, for the iPhone

★★★ 1/2

Terra Nova's 1993 under-pressure from King Minos, the-radar *Labyrinth of Time* has that stretches into several eras of come into its own, at last, as an human culture and history, al- iPhone application. Addictive (if lowing your antagonist to alter a bit pricey at \$4.99) and beauti- history around himself. You're ful, this surreal completely alone in this haunting mini-masterpiece got lost in the world. There are no real monsters to fight, just puzzles to solve and charmingly dated art (a mature, usually art-deco brought it back, and announced take on the demo scene of the his intention to create its sequel, 90s) to stare at. Simple controls, *Lost in the Land of Dreams*. You intuitive puzzles, and a baroque can finish this game in a day if but comprehensible story and a you have no life, three days if you great score make this a three and do. It's a maze, created by Dedalus a half out of four star must-have.



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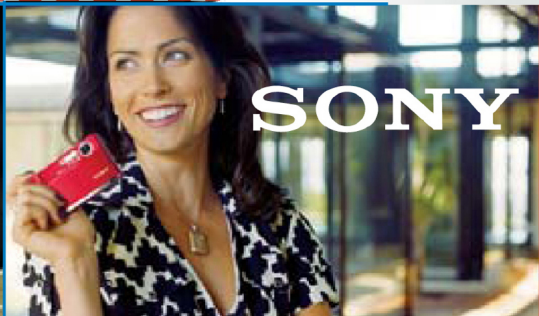
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WATCHING THE REPUBLIC

In the new age of social media, what is the role of the film critic? Strains of democratic and republican sentiment crop up among the critics as well, and with the web / print split so pronounced, the politics of film criticism is anything but post-partisan. Second generation filmmaker Sean Stone essays the question of where opinion stops and wisdom begins.

As an art-form, as a way of spending time with friends, as a form of indulgence in voyeuristic solitude, we love watching the morphic medium of film. And because we love it so well, it seems that no other art is so easily criticized; like with sports, our film criticisms are visceral—we have our heroes, our underdogs, the films we love to hate and hate to love, the films we could've done better ourselves. Still, who can explain what makes a movie "good?" In an age of so-called "democratic" internet forums, the film critic seems almost archaic when fans can "tweet" or "blog" their own immediate responses; the *demos* can even judge a film pre-release, based on rumors or the quality of the advertising; it would appear that in a democracy, movies are an event—a sensation—whereby the *demos* will respond in waves... or it will not respond at all.

However, if there is a republican rather than a democratic nature to film, which I believe there is, then the role of the film critic can be pedagogical, insofar as the critic stands as witness to the intentions of the filmmakers; in an ideally-formed trinity, the dialogue would exist between filmmakers-critics-audience, whereby each of these entities reflects something that is culturally (e.g. historically) pertinent to the film. While much

can be over-looked in a film, especially amidst the quickening haste of modern life, it is the role of the critic to interpret a film's historical relevance at the point-of-release, lest the spirit of dialogue is lost; for the filmmakers have exerted their energies in creating a product whose value the audience will weigh. But the role of the critic is not that of the audience; the critic stands apart from the mass audience and participates in a more direct dialogue with the filmmakers, each intending, like the audience, to understand not only the product at the center—the film—but in puzzling over the film, to comprehend that film as an imagined-reflection of the world we inhabit.

With the onset of cheap digital cameras and excess capital, people are making more movies, independently, in what would appear to be a "democratic" fashion. After all, one only has to walk through Blockbuster Video's "New Release" section to be overwhelmed by the mass-production of the so-called cinematic "art"; everyone seems to want to be an artist because we each presumably have a story to tell. Yet how many of these individual stories can resonate at the level of a culture? While it's true that each film will have some merit, the film's release is that moment of honesty, when the artists (the individuals) confront the culture; not head-on but orbitally they now revolve around a created-world—the film—which represents our shared-world in imagined form.

So while film production becomes increasingly "democratic," it remains "republican" in spirit; for to value film is to understand that a film is a world-in-itself, an entity at once born from this world yet detached from it by

its own parallel existence (i.e. born of an historical moment but simultaneously eternal insofar as it is not strictly bound to that moment in time). While each of us will have a personal, democratic feeling toward a film, film is still undemocratic because it does not adapt itself to the audience's whims. The death of a character, a happy ending, a particular camera angle—these elements do not appear at the behest of the audience's will. Television programming is perhaps more democratic insofar as there is an ongoing survey of the audience's response to the programming; and "virtual reality" programming will undoubtedly be more democratic, as it is dependent upon the decisions of the subjective world-view. But since a film is a thoroughly-composed entity before it is surrendered to its viewers—a world created by filmmaker-craftsmen in accord with a fixed time and space—it remains a classically republican institution.

And in a republican setting, the audience responds to its representatives—the filmmakers—by how they acknowledge the film product; if they approve of it, they vote with their feet, as they say. But so long as the filmmakers, and not the audience, are the thorough-composers of the product, film will remain within the realm of classical composition; and so long as it is part of this Platonic tradition, it



36 YOU ARE HERE



E W A T C H E R S : O F F I L M

follows that a dialogue should revolve around the product—the film-world created by the craftsmen in the same fashion that a republic stands by the strength of the dialogue amongst its citizens.

So, in order to understand where the dialogue should begin in relation to the film-product, perhaps we should ask again, what constitutes a “good” film? To understand the challenge of this question, we should look to the Platonic question - what is the purpose of a film? For if a pencil is designed with the intention of writing for extended periods; if an airplane is designed with the intention of transporting people safely through the air; what, then, is the intention of a movie? Herein lies the rub, for as we know, each film is designed according to the differing intentions of its makers—advertising (witness the brand and product placement associated with films and their actors);

entertainment (seeking box-office revenue, generally from a younger demographic); art (the self-expression of the filmmakers attempting to create something that doesn't naturally occur sui-generis); even cost-cutting plays a decisive role (witness the tax-breaks offered by governments as incentives for production in locations which may or may not work atmospherically).

To question what constitutes a good film is akin to the question, what constitutes a “good” world? To answer this is akin to the man who asks, how do we know God made the earth “good”? And by elevating ourselves to the intellectual realm, beyond the visceral reaction of the audience, we assume the role of the critic. By definition a critic has to assume a contrarian's role in the dialectic, for the critic must find something to criticize. Consequently, it would seem that the role of the critic is not to pronounce an all-encompassing “good” or “bad” upon the film, but to analyze and assess the landscape of that film's world. For in this land, the artist-creator is not omnipotent like God; instead the artist inhabits his film-world just as the audience and critic do, since they all look upon the same final product. This is a blessing in disguise; unlike God who cannot be questioned, the artist can commerce in dialogue with the critic and the audience. It is through this trinity of participants witnessing the world on a coeval plane that the beauty of the art-work can be discovered; and the mechanism for this discovery is dialogue.

A director creates through an on-going process of dialogue with writers, actors, producers and dozens, if not hundreds, of co-creators; consequently, creative dialogue is integral to the film-making process and should extend beyond the film's period of private production to its public release. In order to make this process more fluid, perhaps the critic could be integrated with the role of the journalist by visiting the film-set for a few days; he could then absorb and relate the dynamics of the particu-

lar techniques involved in reifying the scripted word to filmic image. This overture wouldn't necessitate sympathy between the creators and critic, but it might provide a certain amount of empathy for the work (as an entity separate from the artists).

In any case, the dialogue between critic and filmmaker needs to be expanded to accommodate an understanding that the film is not the exclusive property of the filmmaker, but like a world-created, it stands on its own. Accordingly, even the filmmaker can play a role as critic and interpreter, or mediator, of what he believes the meaning of the work to be. In one example, François Truffaut interviews the masterful Alfred Hitchcock. Hitchcock provided his own assessments of his works, in their weakness as much as in their strength. Others may argue that the filmmaker is too close to the process to be allowed to criticize the product, but I contend that film is nothing if not subjective. In point of fact, the director is the chief-critic throughout the film's production, in his hourly critiques of performance, of lighting and set dressing, of music composition, of editing, etc.. So why should the film critic, operating largely without the exchange of dialogue to challenge his perception of the film, be reserved final judgment over that of the filmmaker? I believe no film should receive criticism from a publication without at least one alternate critic's assessment, if not to balance, then to offer another interpretation of the product. For in that contrast of opinions and feelings, between multiple critics, in dialogue with the filmmakers, perhaps an appreciation for the meaning of the film can be elucidated that the audience may better comprehend, intellectually, the meaning behind the pictures.

In the end, it seems that the audience will be the judge of whether a film resonates at an historical moment with financial success;

but even the audience is not alone in determining the cultural significance of a film, which floats through time, passing the whims and tastes of different audiences, in different cultures, at different times. But at the point of a film's release, the artists and critics are given a momentary opportunity to engage in a rarified dialogue on the techniques, the qualities, the symbolism, and the intentions of the art being offered at that cultural-historic moment. And through this dialogue, one grasps the essence of a functioning republic, wherein the craftsmen-statesmen represent their vision to the society;

they are then given a chance to explain their vision through the medium of the critic-judge who helps interpret and weigh this vision for the culture.

If nothing else, the critic can always find some underlying ideas (both empirical and metaphorical) within the imagined-world of the film that are worth engaging; and in the critics' discourse over the product, perhaps the audience will be better-equipped to reflect upon the meaning of the film they are witnessing. For without the proper tools for thinking about a movie, the audience is lost to the whims of the crowd's

imagination... or at best, the individual's moral gauge. After all, a viewer always adopts some moral response to art, whether consciously or not, when formulating an opinion. Whether in its beauty or horror, the film's imagined-world reflects the world we live in; and in our reaction to that art-work, we see ourselves in our responses. Like looking in a mirror, when we debate a film or listen to a filmmaker or critic's assessment of it, we reflect our own intentions and morals, in relationship to this shared world we all inhabit, side by side with the world of films.

LIVES OF THE SAINTS: The Great Critics

Manohla Dargis writes like an avenging angel. We should love what she loves, or else. In this respect, she is the descendent of Henri Bergson. But, while she speaks the tongues of Heaven, she is charged with speaking unto the earth, and her readability marks the merciful intercession of St. Pauline Kael. Manohla's just one example of how the Saints of film criticism watch over their own. To celebrate Eric Rohmer's joining their ranks this year, we list a few of the Saints, and provide guidance as to how we might seek their aid in our own travails through the minefield of cinema in 2010.

ST. HENRI

Patron Saint of novelty. Before the advent of film, Bergson imagined a "time-image" and "movement-image" in *Matter and Memory*. Such an image would be the only way to capture the *elan vital*, the creative evolutionary force, at the heart of reality. Oddly, when cinema arose, he said it did not embody the principles he had set down. Still, to describe film, he found he had to call upon all the other arts: painting, architecture, music, writing, et. al.. Other film critics must have a knowledge of all those arts too, as Bergson's spirit reminds us.

Miracle: His influence is at once inescapable, and welcomed.

ST. BAZIN

Patron Saint of the mise-en-scène (his term for both "the scene" and "the moment" at the heart of film experience, involving a mysterious Quality X). André Bazin's Catholicism probably informed his view of cinema: often it, like Christ, is the divine draped in the ordinary. Film is often art incognito.

Miracle: Founded Cahiers du cinéma.

ST. TRUFFAUT

Patron Saint of ascerbic reviews (though he did try to distance himself from this attitude later in life). The absurdly young Truffaut, at 19, wrote frequently for *Cahiers*.

Miracle: Day For Night (1973).

ST. PAULINE

Patron Saint of interesting failures. Pauline Kael was *The New Yorker's* film critic from 1968 to 1991, and also worked for *City Lights*, *McCall's* and *The New Republic*. Kael was the one who finally cleansed film criticism of Truffaut's vituperative elitism, and she championed movies like *The Warriors* and *Last Tango In Paris*. Her style was colloquial, and Roger Ebert is her most obvious disciple.

Miracle: Her favorable review of Bonnie and Clyde flew in the face of almost all other mainstream critics. Afterward, both Newsweek and Time retracted their negative reviews and printed positive ones. Wow.

ST. ROHMER

Eric Rohmer: March 1920 - January 2010

Patron Saint of true cinephilia. Don't just "go to movies," live them, all day every day; mainstream, grindhouse, arthouse, porn, everything. One should eat cinema, sleep with it, die in it and disintegrate into it, like he did.

Miracle: Theorized "la critique des beautés," a part-over-whole appreciation of moments of pure cinema. He reminds us to seek those moments, rather than the less important "overall greatness" of a film.

WHAT THE HELL IS THIS?

New Films Which Aren't Films but Film Critiques Disguised as Films

BLUEBEARD

This bloody fairy tale, from feminist director Catherine Breillat, has drawn slight disdain from the *Hollywood Reporter* (whose Peter Brunette said it looked like "those commercial Renaissance fairs where people in costume walk about eating turkey legs") and some love from *Artforum's* Amy Taubin. Using an inventive frame story in which a younger sister from our own time torments her elder sister by reading to her about Bluebeard, the film retells the Perrault three-pager with a happier ending (if redemptive violence makes you happy). It's our interesting failure of the season, with the "interesting" coming from Vilko Filac's digital cinematography, which gives us the "grandeur" of the period without much pomp or many circumstances. The dresses look as uncomfortable as they were, and for some reason Bluebeard is sometimes dressed as a priest. It's an intentionally AV Club rendering of the period, but the home-movie familiarity sickens. It seems more like the modern girls in the frame story are a dream of escape had by the antique ones, when we know it's supposed to be the other way around.

PARIS, CAPITAL OF THE XX1st CENTURY

Malcom McLaren's series of remakes of old French commercials and short films reaches back to the beginning of the medium. It contains a remake of a short by the Lumieres brothers, who are thought to have invented cinema. Even as curated anthology, the work is impressive. It's not just a museum piece though--McLaren inven-

tively uses voiceover readings and music, his own and not his own, which either jars against or reinforces the imagery in the shorts. Greil Marcus discribes the onslaught of commercials as being "like a flock of birds coming at you in every direction." But the content of the specimens is altered: a woman typing in a commercial is an opportunity for McLaren to use new insert shots of the page in the typewriter, on which he spells out an anecdote about another woman peeing on the street. It is a study of Paris, that labyrinth of the banal and the exalting, and it addresses, more than anything else, that mysterious quality in advertising wherein a commodity is presented as having holy significance: one commercial is replayed over and over, and McLaren superimposes more and more egregious amounts of light over and around the cheese being advertised. Overall, it is a truly avant-garde work. It is a new criticism of commercials, of shorts, and of the city.

VIDEOCRACY

This film is more of an article than anything else. Our colleague, gonzo anthropologist Erik Gandini, created this dizzying (and sometimes understandably disorganized) survey of fame and fame-hunger in Italy. His paranoiac thesis, that any glitz transpiring under the Italian sun is a form of fascist propaganda, may sound slight, but his examination of what fascist propaganda actually is is indispensable. Italian President Silvio Berlusconi controls 90% of the country's broadcast media, and this collage-as-expressionism portrait of the Italian media resists critique because it isn't much of a "movie." It's more like a quantum revolution in op-ed journalism.

on dash shaw

The Discursive Limits of Telepathy

by Zane Grant

I.

By midnight, a mass of youth crowded a non-descript warehouse somewhere in Brooklyn's Bushwick neighborhood to see the humbly named band "Universe." It might sound tongue in cheek, but the singer of the group is indie comics' darling Nate Powell, who really is one of the humblest people you will ever see scream over blast beats and guitars. Before performing, Nate introduced me to Dash Shaw, who seemed a little out of place. He didn't look that much different from the rest of those sharing the room. Maybe cleaner, no dread-lock mullet for sure.

I almost always feel out of place, so it was a good match for the evening. The music was so loud that I don't think we spoke much, but I remember him saying he felt old, and once we established that I was five years his senior, and I didn't feel odd, I began to wonder how someone who seemed so young could feel out of place with those who should be his peers.

Part of the answer lies in his accomplishments: Dash Shaw had finished his fourth book-length work that year and was in the process of finalizing his animated short series *The Unclothed Man* in the 35th Century A.D. for the Independent Film Channel. Self-discipline and solitude can make up for a lot of life experiences when one devotes years to understanding their characters and the worlds they occupy.

II.

In August of 2007, Dash Shaw was 24. He had just completed 720 pages of sequential art for *Bottomless Belly Button*, a tome on the disappointments and complications of an aging family. The last two years of his life had been spent toiling away in a cheap apartment on the book,

often working fourteen hour stretches towards completing his work with no guarantee of publication, let alone monetary ad-

land. Groth expressed interest, but has been quoted as saying, "It was a goddamn lot." There was no contract before the work's

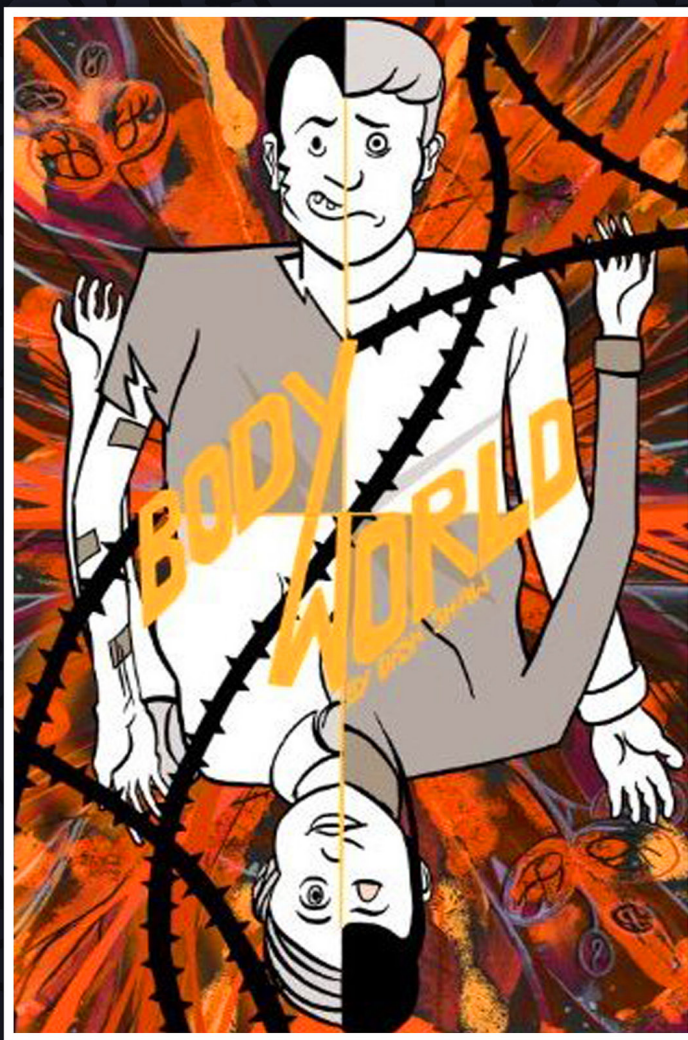
19th century, and most certainly with authors beyond middle age. His multi-generational narrative compresses the reactions of the children and grandchildren of an aged couple who have decided to divorce. The emphasis of the work is not on rationalizing the divorce, but instead focuses the ripples it sends through the lives of the affected offspring.

He says:

"Each book is an environment. A book is like an installation piece. You're moving through a space like a giant folding screen. So I want each book to be a different place. That means that the location of the stories is different, but also the way it's done is the environment. *Bottomless* is rough, immediate, brown on white. The covers and how it's printed are like sand or a screen printed mini-comic."

The natural world is labelled from the opening explanations of types of sand that move into iconographic associations learned through human-environment relations to the labeling of micro-phenomena with notes like "Sunlight makes dust in air visible." Since the narrative travels through different characters' perspectives, the environment reflects their insecurities. We literally see the characters' self-image issues in their reflections. After the teenage granddaughter is rudely told she looks like a man, for example, she begins to confuse her own reflection with that of a cartoon male substitution.

Geological processes, archi-



vance. He had already published two books, *Goddess Head*, collecting some of his short comics, and *Love Eats Brains*, a zombie love story, but none of his works had run such an epic length. He took on this marathon work schedule for a year before he presented Gary Groth, cofounder of Fantagraphics Books, the first half of the work at the Small Press Expo in Bethesda, Mary-

completion.

Bottomless Belly Button explores the relationships of a modern broken family. Admittedly, this is not an uncommon theme for the world of indie comics, but there is something unique in the perspective through which the story is told. Here, Shaw's work is more readily associated with Russian novels of the



tectural plans, and old letters are scattered throughout the story, bridging history. The space of the house creates a shared dimension where the role of each family member forms over time. A secret passage between walls contains a box of the grandparents' love letters, a glimpse into a time that preceded the children's lives. The beach and ocean beyond the house serve as vast limits that keep the family contained, like the moat of a sandcastle, and add the relative time frame of billions of years. These artifacts of the environment suggest that the rules of relationships are already written and yet still being written all the time.

III. Shaw was publishing science fiction short comics in Mome while working on *Bottomless Belly Button*, so it is unsurprising that his next grand project ventures into the direction of strange futures.

The Unclothed Man follows the story of an anti-droid agent who is going undercover as a robot art model. The agent takes stiffening pills, shaves himself bare, and stops expressing emotions to achieve a droid-like body. Though he fools the art school, he grows paranoid, worrying about being revealed through sexual arousal and skin blemishes.

The story itself is sparse, but fantastic enough to keep one's interest. The animation, which was a collaboration between Shaw and Jane Samborski, is a sharp break from his earlier work. With *The Unclothed Man*, Shaw continues to develop his iconography of emotions to reveal characters' psyches, but steps

into direct representations of the subconscious. Color-lines and a dream sequence outline the psychological problems that might come with the suppression of laughing, crying, sweating, and exhibition of "other human shortcomings."

The book, by the same title and released in 2009, exhibits storyboards from the series and collects other pieces of Shaw's short work. These pieces range from an interpretation of an episode of "Blind Date" to a science fiction story about a man who experiences time in the opposite direction, which makes him appear to speak backwards. One of the collection's highlights presents the tale of a somewhat-totalitarian society that lives in a CMYK

color scheme. We follow a young man who is forced by a rebel group to change to another restricted level because they hope he will lead them to escape. The sharp difference in color schemes is, of course, utilized to show the meaning of the young man's escape from his Platonist cave, but the people he meets there provide for a pleasant surprise ending.

IV. Even though Shaw began *BodyWorld* the same year he completed *Bottomless Belly Button*, the aesthetic difference between the two is stark. Taken with his shorter science fiction works, however, this movement towards psychedelic representa-

tion is readily apparent. He says, "*BodyWorld* is the internet: colorful, more flashy. They're different places. What I'm working on now is different than *BodyWorld*. It's just how I work. I like making trips to places I haven't been before." In truth, *BodyWorld* is a place none of us have been before.

The webcomic, which will be physically published in April of this year, follows the unfortunate tale of Professor Polly Panther, a drug experimentation writer on assignment in the planned community of Boney Borough. Panther has been

"Each book is an environment. A book is like an installation piece. You're moving through a space, like a giant folding screen."

sent to test the ability of a newly discovered plant species' to get humans high. Set in an undetermined future, *BodyWorld* plays upon references to science fiction technologies that are mostly outside of the idyllic small town. Polly, a good high school student who goes bad crushing on Panther, says "I've never been on a hovercraft or ridden a conveyor belt coast to coast," in reference to the limits of the future small town experience.

This light science fiction that sprinkles the work's outer edges is blown away when Panther begins to discover the plant's psychotropic qualities. Smoking it forces tele-

pathy upon those within range, and the newness of the experience is disorienting. People begin to understand what it is like to be another person, to live through another's mind. They live through the remembered experiences of those in range and, from love to bowel movements, begin to physically embody the desires and fears of those in their presence. Shaw says:

"I just thought about telepathy a lot. I thought about how I would do telepathy and how I think it would work. Most telepathy in fiction is a secret, unheard whisper between characters. It's usually words being passed from one person to another, or if one person was a computer, their information would be burned onto a CD and it would be uploaded to a different computer. In my version, one computer's insides would morph into the other computer's insides. It's more about the body."

In *BodyWorld*, this discovery stage of telepathy leads to catastrophe. It's an anti-cosmopolitan nightmare, in which full understanding of other people does not instantly create democracy or a super-organic communist Utopia. It leads to jealousy and self-destruction. In time, however, Shaw suggests that if the story continued, people would learn to use telepathic powers with greater self-control. He says:

"After everyone has had telepathic abilities, which would lead to a hive mind, I believe people would develop ways to shield their thoughts or body from other people and it would eventually return to something similar to what we have now, pre-telepathy. But that would take place many years after the *BodyWorld* story ends. *BodyWorld* is Paulie Panther's story, so I didn't extend it to years and years later. I was more interested in the personal effects of telepathy, and exploring how characters would inhabit each other's selves. So the emphasis is on the smaller scale. But the larger implications are there, too."

A long panel in the final chapter of the work reveals the future New York City. As we scroll down the lengthy page, we pass the train station. Flying cars float through pollutants, green spaces, and finally a burning telepathy seedling. The plant's seed progenitor stands in the background, observing.

V. After smoking telepathic drugs, a teacher in *BodyWorld* laments her position in life, asking herself: "Who's going to love me now? I'm a woman over 30 and still in high school." As Shaw continues to push the limits of the medium of comics, he might leave many of us wondering where the years have gone. Fortunately, light comedic bursts that remind readers to continue living are embedded Shaw's potentially devastating aphorisms.



**COMICS AND MEDICINE:
Medical Narrative in Graphic Novels**

June 17th - Institute of English Studies, University of London
Keynote lectures by Paul Gravett, Brian Fies, and Marc Zaffran

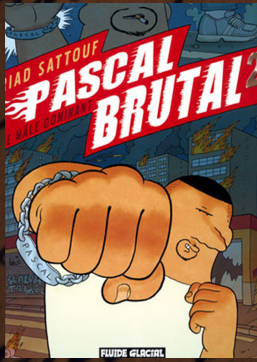
Using comics to transform fear to hope, denial to acceptance, illness to health, an-

dignorance to knowledge has been one of the most effective and worthy uses of the medium. In fact it was the "sequential art" of Juan Valverde de Amusco's anatomical plates, which were the forerunners of Gray's Anatomy, which moved us from superstition to enlightenment, and gave us the modern practice of medicine. This London

convocation, where the Eisner winning Brian Fies ("Mom's Cancer" and "Whatever Happened to the World of Tomorrow?") is one of the star speakers. It promises to be an invaluable contribution to the medical humanities movement, and to comics studies.

<http://ies.sas.ac.uk/events/conferences/about/conferenceregistration.htm>

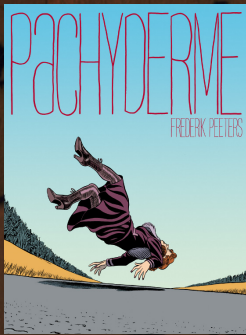
OUR FRENCH-LANGUAGE FAVORITES



Dispatch From Angoulême:
THEIR GOLDEN WILDCAT
(Winner, Best Album)

PASCAL BRUTAL
("Brutal Easter")
Riad Sattouf

It's the epic of the new archetype of the dominant male, and though it comes off a bit anti-liberal, it's really more anti-imbecile.

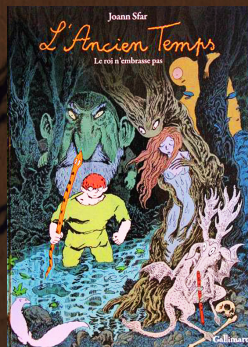


PACHYDERME
Frederik Peeters

This French language offering comes to us by way of Swissman Frederik Peeters. After his critical success with Blue Pills, the story of a budding relationship between a woman with AIDS, her very young daughter (also infected) and a man approaching middle age, the vaunted illustrator went on to many turns in *Le Courier* and the *Guardian*, as well as other papers, his work leaning more and more toward the surreal. With *Pachyderme*, he

completes his journey into the next world. The story of a woman who, desperate to get her husband to the hospital, is injured by an elephant and sent shapeshifting through a universe of sensoria, *Pachyderme*, like its titular totem, holds its course amid the forest of images and radiates thundering, grounded wisdom.

It's excellent writing, and highly recommended.



LE ANCIEN TEMPS
("Old Times")
Joann Sfar

We've seen Tolkien-derived comics before, God knows, but the world badly needed this Rabelias inspired fantasy, whose first installment is entitled *The King Who Wouldn't Embrace*. The 28 year old Sfar's fairy tales have drawn critical acclaim, and he's long been the darling of the Franco-Belgian comics cosmos. The world-building here is more classical than his earlier experiments (like *Urania*, the city of bad dreams, which hosted a nightmare-generating cemetery at its heart) and that's actually a welcome change.

MEMORANDUM TO THE SUPERHEROES OF FRANCE

by Rob MacGregor

TO: Members of the Bureau of Fantastic Persons

FROM: V-She
Base of Operations: Nice.
Power: Transmutable Quantum AI
DATE: April 1, 2010

SUBJECT: General Information, Meeting Minutes and Policy Changes

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Congratulations to Le Grand Feu, France's favorite hothead, on the completion of major transformative surgery. The bureau reminds the superhero community that this member shall henceforth be called La Grand Feu.

Applications for membership to the Bureau containing inappropriate names will be immediately discarded. This restriction includes but is not limited to:

"Punny" French names - e.g. Bonet Petit with her corrosive gorge and purge attack, whose application was summarily burned.

Parkour runners - We have enough of those already and, seriously, parkour is not that fantastique. Ma grand-mère has a parkour troupe, and she's got gout and chlamydia.

Anything having to do with eating cheese, surrendering and/or monkeys. (We remain baffled by the application someone called "The Surrenderer" for superhero status, especially after reviewing his costume, which featured a white flag coming out of his head and his "secret identity" painted clearly on his chest. Perhaps it was a "joke.")

Regarding the recent agenda points on Muslim attire, here are the minutes of the discussion thereof, which took place at the Musée du Louvre (specifically, its Starbucks).

ISSUE: It has come to the attention of the Bureau that French criminals have, of late, been masquerading as covered Muslim women in order to hide their identities. Their aim is to leverage public sensitivity for Islam, as shown recently by the UN, against the BdFP by photographing for the press a Fantastique Person apprehending and/or kicking the merde out of a bloke in a burkha.

QUESTION: How shall the bureau respond to this new paradigm in

criminal ingenuity?

MOTION: Motion set forth to take steps to show care for any covered/veiled personage regardless of circumstance in effort to display French solidarity and understanding.

o Arguments for: There was the instance recently where a man was denied citizenship because he forced his wife to wear a burkha. That caused an uproar in the Muslim community. Move to discuss a policy of sensitivity.

o Arguments against: Fuck that!

The vote was 0-41 against, and the motion was denied.

We interpret this decision to mean that, in France, Muslim headscarves are common enough among those perceived as "supervillains" that there exists a clear need for vigilante watchfulness. While we are sworn to protect all non-Villains, it cannot be ignored that supervillains might adopt the burkha to continue their war on Good. We cannot extend any special consideration to burkha-wearers beyond what we would extend to anyone else. (We believe the topic could have been discussed more sensitively, and regret the error.)

FINAL POINT: "Supervillain" status in dispute.

The "supervillain" status of Count Undeuxtros, the embezzler, is in dispute. While he stole millions in his youth, he has been more or less completely harmless of late. We recommend ignoring his bizarre emails in which he brags about "stealing his company [a laundromat in Normandy] blind." The case has been assigned to Dauphin, who is approaching retirement. He will probably not be needing any help.



On February 28th, Finns celebrated Kalevala Day, commemorating the 160th anniversary of the Finnish epic's publication. The Kalevala is a collection of poems, which some say preserves what would otherwise be a lost constellation of myths. Undeniably, it is grand, encyclopedic, and indispensable. But superlatives about the Kalevala have degraded our sense of it. Some Finns have insisted that the work rivals Homer, but if it is a masterpiece, it is a masterpiece of folkloristics and propaganda, but probably not of literature.

The story principally concerns Väinämöinen, a singer of great physical strength. Soon after a description of the origin of the world, Väinämöinen and his hot-headed young rival, Joukahainen, engage in a battle of nature-controlling songs. The younger Joukahainen loses, and promises Aino, his sister, to Väinämöinen in exchange

trick the brilliant technician and inventor Ilmarinen into building a sampo, and to this day nobody knows what a sampo is. Mystery Science Theater 3000 provided riffs of commentary on a film version of the Kalevala, *The Day the Earth Froze* (episode 422) and they repeatedly mention not knowing what a sampo is. It helps to imagine it as a large golden object, across between an astrolabe (important markings are mentioned) and a goods-producing bowl, like a cornucopia. Lönnrot's understanding hinged on its being a mill that could produce flour and salt. In any case, Väinämöinen's adventures take him over a bridge of spears, into the belly of a giant, into the world of the dead, and eventually into conflict with Christ, to whom he gladly concedes defeat.

We are told that Finns once perceived their identity but dimly. After 1600, the Finnish poetry of

and we can't be Russians, so let's be Finns." Soon after, Elias Lönnrot compiled a version of the Kalevala, which ultimately consisted of 22,795 lines. The details of his struggles to gather the songs are typically retold to celebrate his hard work, though such elegies inevitably remind us that it was only the Karelian region, with their famously gregarious residents, who provided him with sufficient material. Even after his and his many assistants' exhaustive work, the epic does not quite represent the collected mythology of Finland.

Even if Fino-Ugric mythology is mostly lost, the pantheon suggested by the Kalevala is a glittering one. Ilmarinen the smith has little in common with Hephaestus, and constructs things which are at once treasures bettering nature, and nature itself. He is the prototype for several of Tolkien's valar, the angel-gods of the *Silmarillion* who engender both natural phe-



MICHAEL MERRIAM

for his life. Aino commits suicide by walking into the sea. Joukahainen blames Väinämöinen for her suicide, and takes revenge, wounding Väinämöinen, who falls into water, floats North, and encounters the poem's frightening Beatrice, the Maiden of North Farm. Finland, and North Farm in particular, is both Heaven and Hell. (In some convincing interpretations of the poem, the maiden is the star Polaris, and Väinämöinen is Time.) To win the Maiden of North Farm, Väinämöinen must

the east, largely unrhymed and folkloric, started to vanish, and western poetry started to replace it, which eventually created a craze for the older poetry. Karelianism. In 1817, Kaarle Akseli Gottlund predicted the coming of an intellectual Messiah to Finland, an anthropologist (of all things) who would systematize the old songs which described the gods and heroes of his people. Finland, as a nation, was eventually defined by a resistance to Russia, and it was Russia's Alexander I who announced that by organizing the Finns into an autonomous region he had seen Finland "placed henceforth in the rank of nations." The corollary saying in Finland was "We aren't Swedes

nomena and treasures so intricate and powerful their manufacture cannot be repeated. This blacksmith of gifts to civilization did not bring specific, identifiable gifts to mankind, as Prometheus and Hermes did. We are never sure what a sampo is, but it represents some cultural technology that, if re-discovered, would elevate Finland above its neighbors. It is also the axis of the world. It is therefore Ilmarinen who provides some clue as to the nature Finnish paganism's gods beyond what Bishop Agricola, the father of the Finnish language, listed in his now famous catalogue of pagan deities.

The first Kalevala Day and the teaching of the Kalevala in schools happened quickly after the book's publication. In fact, the Kalevala



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teaches us more about propaganda than an exhibit of Soviet posters ever could. Lönnrot does not seem to have understood that he was a propagandist. But there's the conspicuous absence of irony in his authorial voice, a voice which completely overwhelms the characterization of his three heroes, "steadfast old Väinämöinen," the hot-headed and oversexed Lemminkäinen, and Ilmarinen. Lönnrot seems also to have believed that he was being guided, by Finland itself, to gather the sparks of an epic that wanted to be written down. He believed in his country in a more literal sense than any of our founding fathers believed in America, and in this way, he prefigures Jung. In a sense, he even reminds us of Muhammad: Finland is his Gabriel, and the Kalevala is a Qur'an of nationalism, the only one in the world. He be-

book contains diorama scenes of peasant life, faithful details of labor and manners, and interruptions of the story to quote, verbatim, magic charms, etc.. The resulting treasure, baroque, bizarre, and glittering, resembles one of Ilmarinen's creations.

Though the characterizations of the three major figures of the Kalevala fail, and are dwarfed only somewhat by the horrid Mistress of North Farm, there is a great achievement, aesthetically, in Kullervo. This young man survives a war, and is, upon introduction, likable. He works as a servant as is entrusted with the care of an infant, whom he mutilates. In a fight with his mistress, he uses magic and causes her to be eaten by bears. He finds his biological family, and we've forgiven him. He is taken into their home, then accidentally beds his sister. When he discovers what

other reason. Memory, in extra-Kalavalian Fino-Ugric mythology, determines the afterlife, just as childhood determines adulthood in psychoanalysis. In both, one is not punished according to one's sins, but rather one lives out one's memories in an exaggerated form. (Sarukka, a goddess of midwifery, is, in her heroine form, on a quest to recover her brother from perdition, and encounters spirits in the underworld who suffer but seem to have committed no crimes on earth.) Perhaps it was Lönnrot's distaste for Kullervo that persuaded him to omit the tiresome descriptive couplets as he gave others, but Kullervo is so psychologically baroque, and yet so well understood by the author of the story, he gives us a proto-Freudian vision of human development. The Kullervo passages hint at a stronger method of psychoanalysis than Freud

DNA, which the culture-heroes of neighboring Russia lacked. This deity-ness coded into their behavior and demeanor in the stories hints at an expansiveness in Finnish myth that might be lacking in the myths of its neighbors.

Among Swedes, an anxiety over the borderlands remains intense to this day, and the introduction of Finnish magic is a game-changer in some Swedish cycles. This trope survived in the person of a Finnish sorceress who appears once in *The Saga of Gösta Berling*, which, without her, is an almost completely naturalistic novel. Her appearance in that romance suggests that the "Finnish mage" was a staple of Swedish stories. The fairy tales on the border of Germany and France is plagued by similar anxieties, and today, the magic doctors of the Dominican Republic always concede the

in Finnish, is cut off from us. That said, we did inherit something like the Kalevala's rhyme scheme from Longfellow, who read it in German before composing *Hiawatha*:

*On the Mountains of the Prairie,
On the great Red Pipe-stone Quarry,
Gütche Manito, the mighty,
He the Master of Life,
descending,
On the red crags of the quarry
Stood erect, and called the nations,
Called the tribes of men
together.*

The tone of the poem insists that the gods, with all their faults, are actually lovable and cherub-like heroes (as many Chinese still describe Chairman Mao). If you want an accurate translation, you will have to



THE KALEVALA

believed he transcribed it, but he did not believe he wrote it.

The Kalevala belongs to a special genre co-dominated by the *The Book of Mormon*. The function of the Kalevala is obviously to establish a Finnish identity, but it seeks also to ratify a certain vision of Europe, the vision exemplified by a child's map where each nation has its own color, and its own contributions, which cannot be repeated by its neighbors. We find this in Mormonism.

To harp on the Kalevala as an epic is to overlook Lönnrot's much more significant innovations. He has more in common with the filmmaker Peter Greenaway than with Homer. Like one of Greenaway's encyclopedic phantasmagorias, Lönnrot's

he's done, he kills himself. He is rendered with almost photographic psychic accuracy, which weirdly prefigures the advances in child psychology that Finland started making in the 1990s, and which continue today. Kullervo's suffering is always inevitable but never predictable. There is a reason he is so magnificent a character, while the others are so wanting: Väinämöinen, Lemminkäinen, and Ilmarinen are gods, not heroes, and while a hero is a tapestry, a god is a thread of a single color. They are impossible to deal with, but are never difficult to fathom, and it is simply impossible that they should lead heroic lives, possess character arcs, or emerge better defined from struggles.

Kullervo is important for an-

accomplished, and the faith in an undercurrent of a collectively Finnish "spirit" predates Jung's collective unconscious.

Actually, Finland was home to a unique species of divinity. Pekka Ervast, in his *Key to the Kalevala*, passionately adheres to the Kalevala as a scientific text for decoding the history and paganism of his country, and is everywhere at pains to equate the heroes of the Kalevala with gods. The heroic aspects stand as icons for the divine aspects. This is uncommon. The heroes stand as icons for the gods themselves. Ervast does seem correct, in light of the evidence, in looking at Finnish gods as uniquely divided, like Jesus, into heroic and divine aspects. Certain heroes of the Finns have divine

terrifying superiority of Haitian magicians. The simultaneously immortal and heroic nature of the characters in the Kalevala seem almost designed to contrast with the Norse gods, who could lose battles, die, and suffer terribly in ways that Greek gods could not. The radical simultaneity of their divine and heroic life is distinctly Finnish, as each aspect refers to the other, but neither is able to perceive the other. The divine nature of Väinämöinen is the real reason he falls into the water at the poem's beginning: he might represent a season, falling.

It is difficult for a non-Finnish speaker to apprehend the Kalevala, as the syllable-compounding, which heightens the echoes of meanings and puns

suffer through Francis Peabody Magoun, a faithful mirror to Lönnrot's vexing repetitions. Magoun offers one good suggestion: Try not to read its *runos* in order. Make use of the index to follow the tale of one character at a time. If your library has a copy, Eino Friberg graciously spared us the sanctimonious indulgences in the original, and his compact Kalevala is still the best English version of the story.

Or you could read the Disney version; Scrooge McDuck, apparently, knew Lönnrot and takes his nephews on a voyage to Finland, where Väinämöinen causes some trouble for them, as illustrated by Don Rossa. Whatever you read, don't forget: the epic is basically a musical, so try and enjoy yourself.

Kalevala: The Soundtrack

Music to Set the Müd

The rarely performed *Kullervo* of Sibelius had a very successful revival in New York recently, but in case your tastes run a little less classical, we've prepared a playlist of Finnish music that could accompany a more modern Kalevala.

For the lobby and auditorium, pre-show: HIDRIA SPACEFOLK

The original "astrobeat orchestra" is keeping busy in Europe over 2010. Having just celebrated their 10th anniversary, their upcoming disc is still a big mystery, but there's scant chance it will depart much from their signature, seldom-offensive retro-futuristic folk music. It's great to vacuum to, even if it does have a "Loreena McKennit of Helsinki, 3028 AD" feel to it. Yes, the tomorrow that never was is... still here. Take your seats.

Overture: HEDNINGARNA

Their name means "The Heathens" in Swedish, and the band is only recently and only partly Finnish, though its quest, to reproduce the ancient music of Scandinavia, has been more than successful, with sounds one critic called "alien, yet the most essential music on the earth." This has been particularly true after their release of *Karelia Visa* ten years ago, and the group remains essential listening as a prelude to deep Kalevala studies.

The Air-Daughter descends toward the Sea-Mother, who lays seven eggs, from which the world hatches: KUU-PUU

A trance-inducing ambient act which, though seeking to create sounds of the original Finland, recalls Ligetti.

Väinämöinen is born, and the other major characters are introduced: AVARUS

Definitive of the 2000s in Finland, this mystically psychedelic band, with its shifting lineup of star performers from other in-country acts, mixes the Finland of today with the nebulous proto-Finland implied by the epic. The Finland rising from thier electric guitars is at once distinct from Scandinavia, yet the melodies' spaciousness illustrates the sweep of Finland's landscape.

Song battle between Väinämöinen and Joukahainen: MI & L'AU

There are two kinds of silences in real life. The silence of people who have nothing to say to one another, and the silence of people who have too much to say to each other. In fiction, it's inverted, and the reasons for silence become the reasons for sound. What better sonic dramatization on the early battle between the great hero, Väinämöinen, and the jealous upstart Joukahainen than Mi & L'au, the folk duo.

Mi sings, L'au plays guitar. Mi & L'au's music pastiches detante, but it is about the enforced harmony nature imposes on lovers, however blissful their union. They are mirrored in the UK by The XX, whose vocalists seem to have so much to say to one another. Mi & L'au have XX's crushing intimacy, but lack the latter's hypnotic, naïvete-derived obscurity. Mi & L'au are still the more interesting act.

The Maiden of North Farm: VUK

Don't listen to this first, because there's a danger that your later discoveries in Finnish music will never amount to the promise of this artist. The gorgeous Vuk's shimmering melodies, perfect pitch, and pared down instrumen-



tation (she tours as the head of a trio) blends storytelling with songwriting, and is the perfect analogue of the Maiden of North Farm, whose love means everything. Through Vuk, we believe that meditations on relationships or other quotidian topics say something, also, about the gods. The human and the divine are written side by side in her work, and her latest album, "The Plains," is like a Rosetta Stone of the Finnish unconscious: she makes their gods make sense.

Kullervo: KEMIALLISET YSTAVAT

The Tampere-based "chemical friends" (actually one man, Jan Anderzen) speak for the truly upsetting Kullervo, at once innocent and demented. Like Kullervo, Anderzen seems condemned to vagabondage, in the liq-

uid waste of Finland's underground airwaves. And to be honest, it's not easy music to like. One of their secrets: repetition, just like in the often maddening cant of the Kalevala. It might be that repetition, which could symbolize violence itself, which drove Kullervo to murder.

The bride of silver, clockwork, and gold: Islaja

Ilmarinen's bride, freshly murdered by Kullervo, must be replaced. Being a smith surpassing Vulcan in genius, Ilmarinen makes another wife of metal, whom he finds too cold. Icy like Nico, and iconic like Ono, Merja Kokkonen, called Isaja, is a member of Avarus but tours successfully as a solo act. Listening to her uncompromising percussion under-electric guitar, and her voice (natural, inanimate, and edged, a wind of knives) you might think "She's like Emilie Simon, but real!" Still, where Nico always sounded doomed, Islaja's tone is self-assured and eternal. The 31 year old is only going to get better. Her new release comes out this spring from Fonal Records.

The killing of the Great Pike: Paavoharju

It's been too long since we've heard from them, but Paavoharju could have written the whole score to our Kalevala. To listen to their now-a-song-now-an-instrumental-unstructured-mini-concerto album is to chew your lip wondering if you really want to commit to liking it. The Kalevala, like that album, is basically freak-folk. This band's last release from 2008 sounds more like entropy than anything else, but it could accompany the birth of the zither-like kantele in the antique epic, a moment illustrated by the battle with the great pike whose bones become a musical instrument.

The Climax, in which the Hag of the North removes the sun and moon from the sky: SHOGUN KUNITOKI

This band's mission is "to help electronic music regress back to a more human state," which is accomplished on its last release, 2009's "Vinonaamakaslo," from Fonal Records. So much of the Kalevala is about primordial technology. This band's mixture of gorgeous, choreographed chaos (which, like Xiu Xiu in America, isn't really as experimental as it's meant to sound) could soundtrack the pure terrestrial sorcery of the-hag Louhi.

Väinämöinen attempts to have the Finnish analogue to Jesus Christ killed. He is rebuked, and made King of Karelia, after which the epic ends: Lau Nau

Mythology, and ablesed absence of modern-sounding drums. It causes a disquieting, almost tragic melting away. This is proto-Finland, and it has all the vulnerability, raw power, and capacity for comfort and pain of an infant.

VUK

Interview by Michael Merriam

What is your first memory of creating a song?

The first one was the easiest, that I remember. I was 14 years old, and it all came out at once, very spontaneously, all three verses. I wrote it on the piano. It was a coming-of-age song called "Waking Mary," and not too bad for a first effort. When I wrote it, something clicked, and I said to myself: "This is IT. Nothing feels as rewarding as this." Writing has gotten harder since then. I think that as you mature, an awareness of all the possibilities you have, as well as a self-criticism, kick in and slow you down. Start young! It's a good idea to take advantage of that initial spontaneity while you still have it.

Do you work better in isolation?

That depends on what part of the work you mean. I do all my composing alone, because it's a slow, deep-dwelling process that would be really boring, as well as distracting to me, for anyone else to watch. I need to be totally un-self-conscious when I write, so I'm free to explore. If I feel any insecurities, I acknowledge and deal with them only once the song is done. When the song is written and arranged, I play it for my band and explain what I need to get out of it. It's once I've shown everyone what to play on a song that the best part of working with a group comes out—the nuances they bring to their parts and the spontaneous insights. That's when the song has the potential to surpass your initial conception of it. That's the magic. That's the best part of any creative process. The surprises.

Your use of instrumentation is so expert. How has it changed over the course of your work?

I don't think of myself so much as an expert than as someone who has learned through a lot of trial and error. I've always approached music from the standpoint that I want to defy expectations and break down barriers. I've done a lot of experimenting. One of my big initial influences were Einstürzende Neubauten, who

built their instruments themselves out of scrap-metal and junk, and also used concrete sounds like recordings of drills and dogs rooting around in pig guts. They created something intensely beautiful, powerful, rich and subversive out of chaos and Cold War-era isolation (they're still at it). That transformative power was very inspiring to me. When I started out as a one-woman band, I think my goal was to bring together all the music I had grown up around—classical music, Delta blues, opera, Bulgarian choir music

etc.—and to transform it into something striking and unusual using some of the tactics and aesthetics I enjoyed in the post punk.

Which tactics, specifically?

I was really into vocal acrobatics, cacophony, scrap metal percussion, minimalism, intense emotionality and confrontation. When I studied composition and multimedia art in college, I could never really bring myself to completely assimilate the ideas I was being taught. I was always terrible at music theory but had a good ear. What I did learn from working with other musicians I met at college (rather than just keeping to myself as I had before) was to pick music apart, to break it down into its fundamental building blocks. That, along with some of the things I had learned about orchestration, gave me a whole new arsenal of tools to help me put everything I knew to use. When I started working on "The Plains" in 2006, I

made a very conscious decision to kill all my idols and see how far I could go with instrumentation and songwriting. I ended up with an album that has huge arrangements with everything from English horn to saxophones, choirs, harmoniums and samba percussion. The next phase was to make the songs performable in a live setting. I tried several different lineups until I spent a year in New York playing all my shows as a solo artist again, this time with a portable pump organ. It was then I realized that the songs

Well, "The Kalevala" is really a man-made restructuring and mash-up of a number of poems existing within a larger Kalevalan tradition of sung poetry. That tradition permeated the every day lives of people in certain areas of Finland and the Baltic, and it includes some elements that have influenced me. The magical incantations for healing, the weeping songs, the shamanic imagery and landscape, have resonated with my existing musical motivations and sensibilities. I've always been very instinctive

about what I do, and my gut-feeling tells me that music exists to heal, to transform, to release and express our emotions, and to transport. It's one of the most universally recognized forms of spiritual practice. The Kalevalan tradition springs from a time when the spiritual was still omnipresent, interlocked with the mundane and with nature, as it should be. So yes, there is a connection there. I think that beyond the cliché of

ways on the lookout for the next band to break through internationally, but the most interesting stuff to come out of Finland has very little to do with all that. Many of them have been around for over ten years, and they're still my favorites. A lot of the best bands come from small towns, where smart, creative people have nothing better to do than make terrific music and put on crazy avant-garde plays. There are a lot of good bands that come from Pori, including Circle and its offshoots as well as the instrumental band Magyar Posse. They have a kind of clique there that put on plays written by Circle's singer, Mika Rättö, that are always great. From the Savo region come bands like Cosmo Jones Beat Machine, who are the illegitimate sons of Mississippi John Hurt and Captain Beefheart, the casiocore band Aavikko, and Cleaning Women, who make futuristic folk techno using selfbuilt instruments made out of clothes-horses. In Helsinki, my friends have a free Balkan jazz brass orchestra called the Bad Ass Brass Band. Total irreverence, instinctiveness and great fun, and they are all great musicians, too.

Can you tell us a little bit about what you're working on now?

I'm taking a break from touring now to write new material for my next album. The core of the album sound will be formed by my live band, rather than working the other way around, but I'll be expanding on it, too. I think it's going to be my most consistent, sophisticated album so far, but I'm going to keep it raw and earthy. I have the chance to work with some childhood heroes on the production, so I can't wait to get to the actual recording phase. For the time being, I'm just delving deep into my musical reservoirs to see what the best music I can muster sounds like this time around. I'll probably be releasing some live material, or perhaps, reimagined material, before that, too. That's all I can say right now.



were strong enough to hold their own even with the most minimal arrangement. When I returned to Finland, I started very gradually to build the band up again, this time making sure I was being as precise and economical about the instrumentation as I possibly could. That is where I am today, with a kind of unconventional chamber orchestra including a pump organ, percussion, autoharp, electric organ and two voices.

Has the Kalevala provided you with inspiration?

Nordic pixie fluff and the pompous claims of Black Metal, it is true that in Scandinavia we do still have a close, instinctive relationship with nature. I know my family and I always have. My music springs from a similar, primal instinct.

So, outside of those traditional themes, what characterizes Finland's music scene?

There's an idiosyncratic irreverence in the best Finnish music. There's been a lot of hoopla about exporting Finnish popular music now-

MARIO BATALI

on Inspiration

The peerless Mario Batali, sitting at his restaurant, Luca, opens up about the new “it” ingredient, how to turn a summer staycation’s restaurant hopping into an experience of pure magic, and in which he reveals his supreme inspiration. Peg Samuel of SocialDiva.com reports.

What is the “it” ingredient right now?

The “it” ingredient is not one that I am working with. Everyone is using nitrogen. Traveling around Spain and seeing what all of the molecular gastronomists are all into, it’s all about superextreme temperature and nitrogen boils at minus 300-some-

thing. They super dry or super chill something immediately and it creates these incredibly diverse textures.

I had a meal, perhaps one of the most interesting meals of my life, for my birthday. We had a 30-course meal, my family and I. Each course was tiny, fitting in a teaspoon. The textures and flavors exploded, it was fascinating.

Is that where it all started, with your family?

I grew up with a West Coast, wide-eyed, casual, laid-back approach to life. Cooking was a lifestyle. My family were “home cooking people,” I

you did after you got out of the army, before you went to jail. Anybody can be a cook, but I was at the right time, at the right place and it has flowered into everything I could have hoped for.

What regions in Italy are underrepresented in NYC restaurants?

Let’s put it this way: Only one or two are represented, so 18 or 19 are not. Most people think they are eating Tuscan, and Little Italy represents Campana. Any cook in Italy will capture the region they are working in, and they’re so fiercely proud of their ingredients. We do the same here in NYC.

What is your favorite way to find restaurants?

The best information about restaurants

are from the nearest wine-makers, because they know what’s good and they are constantly looking for things that make sense with their wine, and when food makes sense with their wine that is when food makes the true balance. When you can put together a dish with a fine glass of wine they are much greater together and can really become something special.

How do you select a good wine?

I have a winery in Tuscany and my partner Joe has a winery in Jolle. Those are the ones I generally

select because I really like them. I am a big fan of super trophy wines for special celebrations. But for me what really captures the greatness of wines is the regional pairings. What is exciting to me is the lesser known regions being paired with the food in those regions. It is more about the pair. Without food, I enjoy a simple glass of house white wine, French or Italian. It doesn’t have to be complex to be refreshing and relaxed.

What is it about this dining room atmosphere that appeals to you?

A lot of people now come to New York City restaurants as the main event of their evening. Of course, the food and the service is there, but I am looking for someone to feel the comfort of going into an Italian home. Low-key comfortable settings, lighting being correct, having a vibe. We try to create a comfortable and enjoyable experience.

On the patron’s end, what’s the secret to having a fantastic Italian dining experience?

Good customers get good experiences.

How so?

Walk into a restaurant and declare your intentions. I tell a waiter, “I’m here to have a good time and a good meal. With your assistance, I will.” A lot of New Yorkers want to control everything. I am not saying you can’t have dietary restrictions, but you can have delicious food in the right environment, provided that you work together with the restaurant.

“30 years ago, being a cook was the last thing you did after you got out of the army, before you went to jail.”

grew up with a natural affinity for it. It was just what we did on a Saturday afternoon. I was lucky. 30 years ago, being a cook was the last thing



46 YOU ARE HERE

FERRAN ADRIÀ

on the Avant-Garde

Adrià recently told Spanish news source El Diario that El Bulli, "When in 2001 we decided to only one service a day, we ask ourselves do we want to make money or create? So we opted for the latter, and to lose money." Haute cuisine, like haute couture, can read its own obituary every year. Someone is always proclaming its death. Now, what was supposed to be a two-year hiatus has become a permanent closure. If you're on the 3,000 person wait list, you might just get to dine at ElBulli between June and December, its last months of existence. An academic program is opening in its place. The mad Catalan scientist has been called the Salvador Dali of the kitchen (after creating a chicken curry with solid curry and liquid chicken,) but he's more akin to Gaudi than Dali. In his visionary quest for the avant-garde has created mojitos (and, for that matter, potatoes) made of foam, popcorn first reduced to powder and then reconstructed into kernal shapes, gelatin cubes in vivid hues that looked like a set of watercolors but were distilled vegetable essences, and an ampule full of a black substance, meant to be dropped onto the tongue... it turned out to be shrimp.

What is the most unpredictable, surreal ingredient?

If I have to choose: pine nuts. In the end, they're not so much tender as magical.

Is there an emotion food can create that painting and literature cannot?

The problem is to compare cooking to painting, sculpture... cuisine is more about dance and theater, the performing arts.

What was the first totally original dish you invented?

One of the most symbolic was "textured stew." We opened a new world, the world of elaborate textures. In 1994, elBulli created a series of concepts and techniques that enabled us to achieve new textures, such as ice cream salt, foams and jellies. All of them were integrated into this stew, an ideal dish-showcase to appreciate the full range of textures.

Do you believe that you are the world's greatest chef? Who, in the history of cuisine, has influenced you the most?

No, I am not the world's greatest chef. And it is impossible to say who has influenced me the most.

How do you prepare for a day of pure creativity?

The indigenous cooking style shows us the way: Breaking down the dish / garnish hierarchy; Influences from other cuisines; Technique-concept search; The senses as a creative starting point; The sixth sense; Symbiosis of the sweet and the savory; New ways of serving food; Changes in the structure of the dishes; Association; Inspiration; Adaptation and deconstruction; Minimalism; Changes in menu structure; Search for new products; Techniques and concepts applied to products and working; Synergy.

You've said that you don't like the term 'molecular gastronomy,' that it's meaningless. What would you call your cuisine, then?

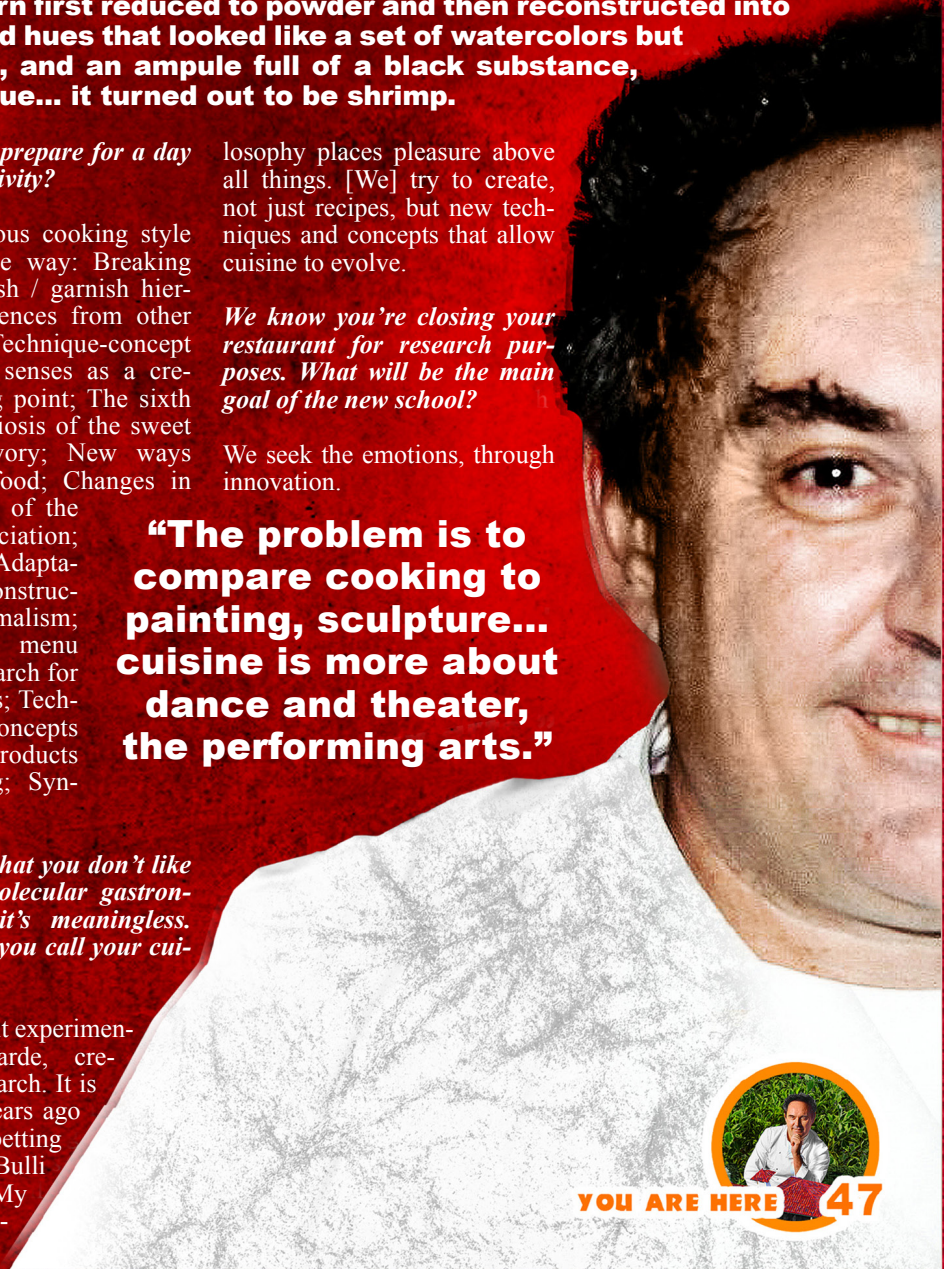
You can call it experimental, avant-garde, creative, or research. It is a fact that years ago that we are betting on this elBulli cuisine. My cooking phi-

losophy places pleasure above all things. [We] try to create, not just recipes, but new techniques and concepts that allow cuisine to evolve.

We know you're closing your restaurant for research purposes. What will be the main goal of the new school?

We seek the emotions, through innovation.

"The problem is to compare cooking to painting, sculpture... cuisine is more about dance and theater, the performing arts."



Squid in Its Own Ink: A Beloved Basque Staple

400g baby squid with tentacles, cleaned and dried on kitchen paper 6 cloves of garlic, peeled and crushed; 60ml olive oil ½ glass dry white wine; 3 packets squid ink (packets should be 8g each); 30g unsalted butter

Heat the olive oil in a thick-bottomed frying pan. Season the squid with salt and pepper. Fry with garlic for about two minutes (until lightly colored.) Remove and set aside.

Add the white wine and squid ink to pan. Simmer until reduced by two-thirds, and until the sauce has thickened. Whisk the butter into the sauce, then add the squid and reheat for a minute or so.

INGREDIENTITY:

SQUID INK

8 Awesome Things About Squid Ink:

- 1.) The flavor is briny, but full, and so in European cuisine is said to lend food a calming “sea essence.” In Asia, by contrast, it is considered aggressive.
- 2.) The glutamic acid in squid ink is the same acid found in MSG. The resulting flavor, umami, is also known as the “fifth taste,” as it is not sweet, salty, sour, or savory.
- 3.) Marine biologists still do not know how its chemical makeup is concocted within the squid’s anatomy. See *Chemical Composition of Inks of Diverse Marine Molluscs Suggests Convergent Chemical Defenses* by Charles D. Derby, Cynthia E. Kicklighter, P.M. Johnson, and Xu Zhang
- 4.) You can dye your moody teenager’s food with this instead of asking him what his problem is.
- 5.) Many recipes employ this ingredient, but the best example of its use in cuisine is when it is used to prepare rice, in arroz negro.
- 6.) Though an ingredient called “squid ink” is readily available in local fish markets, you’re probably going to get cuttlefish ink. Genuine squid ink (preferred by Basque chefs) has a much more forceful flavor, but should only be used in complex recipes.
- 7.) You can write with squid ink.
- 8.) Harvesting squid ink is as simple as buying a squid, puncturing its ink sacs (located behind the eyes, and in the body cavity, behind the tentacles and guts.) It’s actually not very easy to do at all.



MEANWHILE, IN MADRID

(Ferran's Disciples)

**Bite-sized reviews
by Lynn St. John**

LA BROCHE, Miguel Angel, 29, (34-91) 399-3437. Closed Saturday and Sunday. Reservations essential.

*** Pricy; precious; douche-cool; competent

LA CUMBRE DE CASARES, Via Dos Castillas, 23, (34-91) 351-1170 Closed Monday.

*** Edible; trendy; the decor says "you're not old yet" but the food says "you're not drunk yet"

RESTAURANTE ARCE, 32, Augusto Figueroa 32, (34-91) 522-5913. Closed Sunday; Saturday dinner only.

*** Harmless; traditional; enough, already, with the tapas!

DASSA BASSA, Villalar 7, (34-91) 576-7397. Closed Sunday and Monday.

** Overpriced; desperate, not avant-garde; touchingly derivative (dessert of red beets and ice cream); more than competent



Avant-garde restauranteur Tony Hornecker is coming to Barcelona in July. Are you ready? If Ferran Adria is cuisine's Dali, Hornecker might be its Gaudi, although the comparison is blithe and inaccurate: Gaudi loved space, Hornecker forces the shift of perspective by limiting it, so that his lucky, lucky guests are made to feel like Alice while shrinking.

This man's restaurant moves, and it will have been in London, Glastonbury, and Buenos Aires among other places before landing in Barcelona this summer. Check out tonyhornecker.wordpress.com for more details.

Photos by Manuel Vasquez and Daniel Hewitt



YOU ARE HERE 49

March



Exuberance reigns. Deconstruction has no effect and anyone with more than one garment and more than one accessory gets a +2 Magic Bonus. They said it couldn't be done. While other designers reacted to budget cuts by cutting down, dutiful Dutch descendants of the avant-garde Viktor & Rolf cut out and cut up.

+2 MAGIC BONUS

APRIL



"Misguided" is in. The Montezuma-inspired Gaultier collection's *fin de siècle* gowns with feathered skirts, armor, and in one case, a tree-trunk headpiece, represent an alternative history where the French, not the Spanish, conquered the Aztecs, and both countries lived happily ever after.

+1 MAGIC

MAY



...AND THERE WAS LIGHT.

1969 - 2010

+2 BONUS
to players wearing one garment with no accessories

CACOPHONY



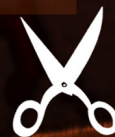
Nick Cave's cacophonous spring creations show again at the Fowler Museum, April 2010.

+2 STRENGTH
-1 AGILITY

Cancel half opponent's agility.

CP CYBERPUMPKIN

THE ROYAL GAME OF BLOODTHIRSTY FASHIONISTAS



The Godmother's arsenal of spells includes the power to alter time itself! Radically re-align the prevailing game rules with these Trend cards, six for each season, based on the months of the year. They supersede and override any other trend cards in play, and only one month card can be in effect at one time. These cards require three points of Magic to use. This issue includes the spring cards, inspired by the three avant-gardians of spring 2010 who championed imagination in the face of recession.



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HARD SCIENCE

From Page 32

of the ultraviolet catastrophe, we had to break with tradition and link together two concepts that had not yet met one another: wave mechanics and particles. The process of conceptual association is the function of the mind and applies to all human endeavors from science, to writing, and on to art and design and cooking. There is no scientific theory that cannot be comprehended by an individual's mind because these theories are rooted in experiences of the natural world, experiences that everyone has access to. In a way, everything that we need to understand the universe, as best as we will ever be able, is already known to us, collectively, through our experiences. The connections, however, have yet to be made.

Everything we do, we do for the sake of association. Metaphors will break down when they are no longer useful. This is the real ultraviolet catastrophe, the shattering and reforming by which we move closer to the facts. Like ultraviolet light, it occurs just outside what we can perceive. The changing up of metaphor is how we get beyond our individual understanding and touch reality. And it works. The history of our approach to blackbody radiation taught us that our ideas don't just gesture toward the truth, they touch it. Magnificent thoughts are grounded in concepts everyone can access, from dragons (reptiles and birds) to quantum mechanics (waves and particles). Aristotle was right. There is nothing that cannot be fundamentally understood.

Men are often known for their scars. They bear them proudly and tell tall tales of their origins. Their owners have earned a respect not afforded those with soft hands and baby faces. But in Estonia, scars also serve the function of a breathalyzer. The singular Baltic gash occurs on the forehead. The more central, the worse the face plant. The shape of the wound emphasizes circumference over length and is reminiscent of an ink-blot test. The depth reveals both gravitational force and the material of the impact zone. A scar's freshness divulges the overall seriousness of the drinking problem. Scars, therefore, are a sign of hope.

Scarred or not, alcohol plays a significant role in Estonian society. The former Soviet republic may have joined the more sober ranks of the European Union but still suffers a significant communist hangover that ranks the country second in the EU in raw alcohol consumption, according to the World Health Organiza-

tion. Another survey by the Estonian Institute of Economic Research revealed that 86 percent of the adult population consumed alcohol. The current US average of around 60 percent doesn't seem obscenely different until one factors in that about half is beer but hard liquor for Estonians. The statistic seemed affirmed during the two and a half years I lived there as a Peace Corps volunteer by an endless parade of shot glasses handed to me. In addition to weddings, birthdays, and whatnot, Estonian tradition also pops the cork in the sauna, after your pet has a litter (one bottle per puppy), purchasing an item over twenty dollars, arriving at work on time, if you wish someone happy new year after January 1st but before January 6th, and even when getting a new driver's license or passport (serial number indicates the quantity).

Not impossible to pronounce), 2,000 people strong and located about forty-five minutes east of Pärnu, the village is famous for its forest, mushrooms, music festivals, metal bands, beauty queens, and chanteuse Liisi Koikson. It gained added status in 2005 when it was elevated to the capital of the sparsely populated Saarde prefecture.

As a rule, I never opened my door after 7 pm. Being the first American ever to live there, fame was thrust upon me and I spent much of the first months either swatting away gaggles of school children or autographing their text books. School officials deferred to my professional opinions even though I lacked any qualifications beyond my passport. The town fathers debated allocating funds to buy me a sofa while certain others nudged me towards their daughters. Evening, however, brought the local scars to my door, partly out of curiosity but also in hopes the "rich Ameri-

can" would freshen their flasks with the best legal stuff.

The illegal stuff, or *Salaviin*, as it's locally known, is still all too prevalent in the bottles of those who have not found a seat on the capitalist band wagon or been pushed off. The local distribution point was a ramshackle farmhouse just behind the town police station. At less than half the price of the legal stuff, the "secret vodka" was popular with both young and old as evidenced by the scores of men I witnessed curled up, at all hours, on the roadsides, in the parks, under cars, and once in a tree. Country-wide, according to an article in the *St. Petersburg Times*, around 20 percent of Estonians purchase illegal booze. Although some originates in local bathtubs, officials have more than once uncovered tunnels running under the Russian-Estonian border. "It might sound weird and unbelievable," a spokesman for the Estonian prosecutor's office remarked about one discovery in 2008, "but it is a very real criminal case."

Occasionally, I swallowed homebrews out of respect for

gily man perfumed the chilly Baltic gusts flooding my apartment with a Pine-sol tang and the stench of rotgut let loose by his gaping mouth confirmed the diagnosis as did the outpour of unintelligible clicks and umlauts that followed. Unable to understand a syllable, I politely suggested he come back the following day, wished him a pleasant evening, and closed the door.

Bolting it fully, I returned to the town sofa and listened to the man try every other door in the building to no avail, the inhabitants either gone or smarter than I. Then once more, thumping and squawking, his steps returned to mine. I might have ignored him if I hadn't finally understood one of his words.

"Help!"

"God damn it," I cursed and opened the door once again. This time the man spoke more carefully and clearly, underscoring his words with emphatic gestures down

reflections off the black ice patches, I carefully made my way to the neighboring apartment block where our school's gymnastics teacher lived. Her boyfriend opened the door and immediately called the mother. Summoning my best Estonian, I explained the situation as best I could.

Within minutes the lights of the police car were skidding down the road towards the building, then past it as they struggled to stop on the icy roads. The old scar had since skeddaddled but my colleague explained it all. Pulling flashlights from their belts, the two policemen entered the building and gave us the first clear look of the man on my stoop. He was even bigger than I thought and soaked through from the melted snow and ice. He was also snoring loudly. Rolling him on his side, the police began smacking him around the face and shouting his name.

"Lible!" they repeated, each time more loudly, but to

Thirst: THE SECRET VODKA ESTONIAN ROT GUT

MIKE DUNPHY

the staircase.

"OK, OK," I replied, slipping on my boots. I stepped into the stygian stairwell. The light switch did nothing as the bulbs had recently been removed to save costs. We had only gone down a half flight before something was obviously wrong. The straight edged contours of the pitch black staircase suddenly smoothed and rounded to a more bulbous shape below. The old man's lighter quickly threw shone on the cause, an immense man, large enough to give Estonian sumo champion Kaido Höövelson a run for his money, lying face down on the stairs.

"Is he dead?" I asked

"I don't know."

"Call the police," I suggested to the old man who merely responding by waving his arms, clearly wanting nothing to do with them.

"O.K. Wait here," I told the man, "I bring help."

I squeezed past the body, proceeded down the rest of the stairs and out the door. The open air was far more illuminated by the exquisitely starry skies. Grateful for the moon's

the host, but these had mostly been prepared the more traditional method of boiling potatoes or wheat. The more lethal type, essentially diluted industrial chemicals with lemon flavoring, I kept clear of. The Peace Corps salary may have been paltry but was enough to give substantial support (possibly intervention worthy) to the legal market. The problem sharpened during the long winters when light was scarce and homesickness heaviest. In the darkest evenings, when yearning squeezed hardest, the right mix of inebriants, music and fantasy could almost make Estonia fade altogether from my window. The bleak post-Soviet landscape would assume mirages of home that sometimes knocked on my door.

Under the spell one night, I broke my rule and answered the door, only to find a scar on the other side. The gaunt, scrag-

gily man perfumed the chilly Baltic gusts flooding my apartment with a Pine-sol tang and the stench of rotgut let loose by his gaping mouth confirmed the diagnosis as did the outpour of unintelligible clicks and umlauts that followed. Unable to understand a syllable, I politely suggested he come back the following day, wished him a pleasant evening, and closed the door.

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KEREM

FRANK KORTAN

The Inanimate Empire

By Michael Merriam

Arab traveler Ibrahim ibn Vasifshah, who perceived Christianity as bizarre and impractical, loved the Czechs for giving him an object lesson in Christendom's weirdness. The descendants of Czech, he found, had forgone Christianity for a kind of sun worship different from that of the more easterly Slavs. And they didn't just worship the sun; fire too, and water, and stars. There seemed to be no sense of a spirit or god of these phenomena. Certainly there were culture heroes and "little people" of folklore, and a tendency to anthropomorphize destiny as a woman, but it always amounted to idiom more than myth. Other diarists noticed it too: the Czechs worshipped objects.

In Prague, where Golems dwelt, Rabbis could write God's name on statues of straw and clay and animate the inanimate, but the creatures did not have human minds. The same situation came up for Karl Capek's heroes in his R. U. R., which contains the first use of the robot in literature (*roboto*, in feudal Bohemia, referred to the time one had to care for lands not one's own.) Milan Kundera's characters, oddly, are humanized precisely by their likeness to inanimate objects. The meaning of heaviness is the

meaning of human connections in his most famous novel, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. Ask an American for another famous Czech artist, and they will probably name Jan Svankmajer, whose stop-motion animations dramatized the terrifying, secret consciousness of objects. Svankmajer's slugs of meat and walking skeletons do not imitate animals or people, but they do seem to be thinking. Svankmajer shows them thinking something humans couldn't think, in a logic alien to us. Objects, to the Czechs, have always been alive, and charged with some errand never quite articulated. They remind us of the middle stage of dreaming, when the images and encounters comply with non-human reasoning, and we have yet to see the meaning behind them. But inanimate objects have their own society, will, intentions, and "totemic" power, in the Czech consciousness.

After the 15th Century, when art was becoming what money (coinage, objects) would eventually become, i.e. the way of speaking about Europe, the Czechs began gamely to participate in the manufacture of "European" paint-

it completely and inescapably in the labyrinth of images. One setting within the garden is invisible from another space. If one could see, painted on a two dimensional plane, the actual psychological mood of such a garden,

one would have Frank Kortan. The subject of *Kafka's Dream of Keys* seems confident in her ability to focus the eye on her and distract from the dangling keys and their promise of dank subterranean complexity: beneath the mannered lurks the Byzantine, but the Byzantine becomes a functioning lower level. In the Royal Garden, the



oceanic rot texture is used on a great wall to give the impression that reptile life slithers along its surface. Kortan's career began during the rise of "quirky," the 1980s. "Quirky" is a devastating sobriquet into whose curse many would-be surrealists have fallen. It has always been a fate so

widespread that the unfortunate category, "quirky," became a genre of found art, with its own agon and its own message. Perhaps Kortan's catalogue is commenting on that genre, rather than remaining subject to it. Xavier Galmiche, a professor of art at the Sorbonne, believes that Czech art cannot just display, it is also automatically astute. "It is a huge great idea to approach this philosophy of the end of the 16th century, beginning of the 17th century, where the question of astronomy, alchemy, and cosmogony was the actuality of the philosophy," he said. The Prague-born Kortan's work does self-analyze, taking as its subject other Czech masterworks (Kafka comes up again and again) and refuting, more than quoting, predecessors like Dali.

Typically, when something out of the Czech Republic looks surreal, it's not. Historically, gestures which seem odd today made sense to them. They heard "Gothic," and they nodded affably, constructing what they believed to be a perfect example of Gothic, but what was actually a revelatory form of Baroque, one which, like the ancient Czechs, rejected the Christian dilutions and laid bare the truth. And the bare nature of Baroque



(when it is stripped of its religious pretext) is that it is simply the bizarre. Baroque is characterized, after all, by disparate elements mechanically stuck onto each other so that their function is more important than their seamlessness. Its device-ness itself is considered beautiful. Its ornamentation looks almost comic, then, like a gorilla putting on lipstick, or more precisely, like an android doing ballet.

That is the meaning of baroque as the Czechs used it, and it was prefigured by the predominance of the inanimate in their myths, in their literature, and in their culture. The hoaxster David Cerný, whose cruel but illuminating *Entropa* raised eyebrows last year (he created an enormous sculpture where each European country was caricatured—the Netherlands was depicted as minarets poking up out of the water, while Germany was a series of roads laid out to resemble, vaguely, a swastika) said “Grotesque hyperbole and mystification is one of the characteristics of Czech culture and the creation of false identities is one of the strategies of contemporary art.” Objects “speak” in the paradox-driven work of Banský too, but the Czech strain, it would seem, is an informative hyperbole, not just an unsettling one.

Having inherited the Czech baroque, by way of surrealism, and not surrealism itself, Kortan has always been at his best when not attempting the edged sadness of his forebears. He is not DeChirico, and early efforts like *Albrecht's Wedding Campaign into Italy* feel more like middling poetry conveyed by competent painting. Its on-the-nose message is that that pomp is empty and mechanical. To the classical Czech imagina-



An art book of Mr. Kortan's work is on release this April.

tion, mechanical beings are not soulless, or if they are, they are almost preferable to souled beings, and should not be made objects of scorn.

There's something Rube Goldberg about Baroque art, and Baroque music is easy to absorb into Czech surrealism, as in Kortan's recent *Confidential Journey of Johann Sebastian to India*. The intentionally lesser rendering of the elephant, contrasting with the quoted definition in Bach's face: This is a painting constructed, and its function, if enigmatic, is to prophesy a composition, a fusing, of the Hindu and European elements he carries. This is what quirky says, and why it sells: it prophesies the coming of a lysis phase of history. In Jungian dream theory, lysis is the final resolution phase of a dream, when the meaning of the images are revealed to the dreamer. In 2010, we can see Frank Kortan approach the moment when he will be free of old influences and more comfortably focused on these simple subjects, who come with their psyches so robustly embodied in the living objects they carry.

MUSTAFA HORASAN & DESCENT INTO PSYCHOSEXUAL PRIMITIVISM by James Halliday



Who's really to know what emerges from the recesses of the subconscious until the ink is spilled? Inborn or acquired, certain churlish mixtures come frothing forth in the works of Mustafa Horasan, the Istanbul native whose work over the past twenty years represents the muddy footsteps left outside the backdoor of modernity. Any retrospective of his tugs at the counterweight in the quiet equilibrium set down by the contemporary aesthetic of shock and yawn. Evanescence, presaging later known alignments, infuses the mood of movement inherent in the paintings of Horasan, and it is this persistence of motion that counts off the ticking normalcy of the present. To synchronize with this discursive pendulum means to penetrate the viscera of intention and writhe in the pulp of the artist's internality. The images are spare of answers; but potentialities run rife. To enter into intimacy with the works necessitates subtle relinquishment, which in fact suggests a dominant theme at play in Horasan's corpus of imagery: the descent into the gravitas of primitivism through psychosexual sacrifice.

The suggestion of movement elicits an assumption from the viewer that what is happening in the work may have a pre-history as well as a yet indeterminable future status. Blackened patches offset with prescient illumination conjure various fates for the players in the picture, but in each work operate undertones of conflict portending of final acts. The ochre shades and umber lowlights accent the planes of tension demarcating the space of the canvas. The frozenness of the scene triggers confoundedness ad absurdum. Some hazy distillate of instantaneous yearnings seems to have become uncorked, but toward what end? Trapped in paint, Horasan offers up for his audience frenzied inaction. Put differently, this fraught stillness may be just the thing to trick base instincts into revealing themselves in the light of full frontal existence.

He paints like nobody's watching. His works are rich with paint. Featuring objects, people and random shapes, the artist uses paint and brushstrokes to create the atmosphere of a painting on his canvases. The sexuality depicted within is edible. It tastes like something brown would taste: natural, dirty, like a challenge.

His new work rears like some bastard colt of the Apaches forged in the outer realm through elements misbegotten.

Man is wolf to man: that's the lesson taken from the previous century. It's as if Horasan smashes through the predicate of doomed imminence to shine clear focus on the direct object of the new times.

TINO SEHGAL & THE CONTINUED SUCCESS OF THE AVANT-GARDE

by Stephen Squibb

Two examples of the cultural avant-garde and how it renovates capitalism:

1. Vegetarians

2. Tino Sehgal

Contrary to popular belief, the term avant-garde does not refer to a set of historical movements safely consigned to the past. Rather, it continues to signify what it always has, namely, a relationship between parts within a whole. Insofar as we can speak of any social totality, be it political, economic, or artistic, in the course of its on-going evolution, we can speak of an avant-garde. Only the most rigid, a-historical formalism allows for the term's abandonment and for the corresponding complaint of co-option. Indeed, capital's greatest victory was to convince the avant-garde of its own demise. Whereas, had capitalism actually killed the avant-garde, it would have been forced to invent a new one.

The avant-garde is not opposed to mass culture anymore than the color red is opposed to blue. Mass culture is not opposed to the avant-garde any more than museums like the Guggenheim are opposed to Sehgal's "staged situations." In fact, such events are writ on water.

In the beginning, there were two types of avant-gardes, political and artistic; today there is a third, the cultural. It all happens on a spectrum between Concept and History. Mr. Sehgal is firmly rooted in Concept, but it was the ostensible incorruptibility of these twin redeemers that the avant-gardes cherished most of all, brandishing them endlessly. The hope was that the right concept or the right history would resist representation forever,

defeating mass society, capitalism, and old age. Alas. Instead the radical conceptualism and rabid historicisms of the avant-garde became a fountain of forms, styles, demographics and attitudes whose endless dissemination made for a universal feast of disillusion. The more attenuated and beautiful the idea, the more the people loved it. The more the people loved it, the sooner it crashed against the rocks of economic substructure. Finally, the political and the artistic collapsed into the morass of culture, comfortably setting up shop on its far flank.

Thus the cultural avant-garde borrows from both legacies. From the political vanguard, a vague unease with democratic politics. From the artistic, a powerful aversion to mass culture. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this combination, in the midst of thirty years of post-industrial stagnation, has made the cultural avant-garde the only continuously functioning apparatus of urban economic growth. Fed by an ever-larger army of disaffected middle and upper middle class suburbanites raised on the New Left values of non-conformity and aesthetic progressivism, the cultural avant-garde has remade cities across the western world. Aspects of this transformation have been addressed in popular memes with names like gentrification and the creative class, neither of these, however, fully appreciates the long tradition of which this trend is heir, nor their essential place in the midst of monopoly capitalism.

The cultural avant-garde operates the urban shock troops of the neo-liberal milieu. These missionaries from the future

arrive overnight to begin laying the groundwork for the eventual construction of the contemporary temples of mass consumption that will sprout in their wake. The pattern is by now well known: change zoning-laws to allow for live-work arrangements in formerly industrial buildings, watch as artists move in (followed quickly by the other less creative but more financially established classes), mix in a dash of alternative lifestyles and in twenty to thirty years you have an Apple Store and a Whole Foods. What is essential is that this pattern substitutes for the formerly competitive engine of capitalism one of cultural difference. Thus the cultural avant-garde as a phenomenon becomes a material force, inhabiting the space separating a one dollar can of coke and a three dollar bottle of organic, pulpy fizzy juice. No one is left to ask why goods are somehow not getting any cheaper, even adjusting for inflation.

In retrospect it is easy to see how the avant-garde, in its persistent obsession with breaking down the barrier between art and everyday life, hastened the greatest transformation in mass consciousness since the birth of the modern age: the transition from class consciousness to consumer consciousness. The post-industrial citizen defines themselves not by how much they can buy, so much as what they do, in fact, buy. Truly, in light of the collapse of the western industrial economy and with it the obvious class patternings that formerly drove progress; this situation is not all bad. The cultural avant-garde, though politically naïve, even amnesiac, has forced significant changes in the

production of consumer goods. What's more, it is becoming easier to imagine an army of citizen consumers, organized and disciplined, who, through coordinated boycotts and targeted patronage, succeed in reorganizing the entire productive apparatus.

Aside from such proto-utopian speculation, however, the fate of the parents remains to be considered. What is at stake in the occupation of the left position in the western (American?) political spectrum by a cultural avant-garde? Chiefly, as hinted above, the widespread mistaking of cultural resistance for political resistance. As class war become culture war, it is the resulting obsession with cultural resistance that serves as the single greatest role in the continued functioning of monopoly capitalism. Without the cultural avant-garde's ongoing attempt to remake mass culture by dint of its endless revulsion for it, the clear and present failure of our economic arrangement would be impossible to ignore. No sooner has capital figured out a way to provide organic figs, than the desire for organic, non-genetically-modified figs takes its place, and it too demands service. Nor does it do so unjustly. The long tail effect relieves the burden of providing better goods, more cheaply by flattering our vanity instead of our reason.

Occupying an artistically avant-garde position is now, of course, quite impossible, and has been so for years. The artistic avant-garde was never really about art in any case; so much as it was about transforming everyday life. This it has done, and on a scale beyond its

wildest imaginings. Thus the radical success of the artistic avant-garde, coupled with the radical failure of the political avant-garde is the recipe for the present domination of the cultural avant-garde. Indeed what people perceive as the failure of the artistic-avant-garde is actually the failure of the political avant-garde, for whom success was, perhaps, never really on the table. Actually existing art is a dual exercise in social networking and ruling-class envy. The very real freedom at the center of contemporary artistic practice, though often inspiring, even beautiful, remains an irredeemable decadence from anything approaching a (historically artistic) avant-garde perspective.

Tino's study of "the party," at which interpreters simply "were interesting" was a success. It was an artistic representation of the new, cultural avant-garde. The interpreters were supposedly those who could not be commodified. No doubt many will read this account of the domestication of the avant-garde as an attempt to smear a noble historical tradition by offering as its progeny cadres of bobo hipsters cluttering up our neighborhoods. Indeed, there is a certain violent iconoclasm at work here, whose target is the idea that culture, in and of itself, can ever stand in opposition to the market. It cannot. That said, the cultural avant-garde is not powerless. It possess, in certain places, the power to achieve some distance from the patterns and styles of mass consumption. In this it is a worthy heir. But we can still see the flickering audacity the first sign of capital's on-rushing legion.

Looking Glass / Spring 2010 / Art 55



STICKY WICKER BASKET

Basketball in Europe

by Brandon Cone (as told to Eno Sarris)

Eno Sarris:

Much was made of former Atlanta Hawks sixth man Josh Childress signing with a Greek team for more money the Hawks were willing to offer last offseason. At the time, there was some talk of signing away other players that were borderline NBAers and maybe even a big-time star like Kobe Bryant or LeBron James signing in Europe. Most of the European teams don't currently have the financial wherewithal to pull off such a coup, but they also don't have a salary cap like the American NBA and could offer more than an NBA team theoretically. Could there be a day when European basketball is a real competitor on a global level?

With an eye towards soccer, which has become a world sport with multiple successful professional leagues in different countries, I set out to find out from a Euroballer if basketball in Europe could be the first non-soccer sport to provide competition for an American league. To this end, he corresponded with Brandon Crone, who is currently playing basketball for the Sodertalje Kings in the Svenska Basketligan in Sweden.

Brandon Crone:

When I first arrived here in October, the team was already 0-6, but since then we have gone 12-13 and are in a solid position to make play-offs with nine games remaining. I have had a very solid season despite



Kramer on the Ice

A poem by Alex Moe

Looking Glass commemorates a moment of Olympic history, the disqualification of Holland's Sven Kramer from the speed skating competition due to the directive of his coach, Gerard Kemkers, who told him to switch lanes illegally when he had a four second lead.

The outlook wasn't brilliant for Amsterdam that day;
The win in Lillehammer, it seemed so far away,
And then when Spijkerman landed fifth, and Van Velde much the same,
A silent pall descended on the patrons of the game.

Bos preceded Kramer, as did also Beorn Nijenhuis,
(the former was a stoner, while the latter reeked of booze);
So upon that stricken multitude grim melancholy sat;
There seemed but little chance of Kramer skating in his lycra cap.

Not-quite-beloved Bos scored bronze, much to the joy of all,
And much despised Nijenhuis cut the ice without a fall.
And when the snow cloud lifted, and they saw what had occurred,
There was Beorn, on the low step. Bos' medal was assured.

Then from five thousand throats, and more, there rose a lusty cry;
It rumbled through the food court, and annoyed the camera-guy;
It pounded on the mountain and recoiled in the face,
As Kramer, mighty Kramer, advanced in orange skates.

There was ease in Kramer's manner as he slid into his place;
There was pride in Kramer's bearing and a smile lit Kramer's face.
And when, responding to the cheers, he stood and arched his back,
No stranger in the crowd could doubt, 'twas Kramer on the track.

Ten thousand eyes were on him as he rubbed his hands with snow.
Five thousand tongues applauded the kiss he deigned to blow.
Then while a wicked-looking judge rubbed a red card on his hip,
Defiance flashed in Kramer's eye, and a sneer curled on his lip.

And now the track was lost in snow hurtling through the air,
And Kramer stood a-watching it in haughty grandeur there.
His furious coach spanked Kramer's ass, which glowed a furious red —
"That ain't my style," said Kramer. But "Go!" the coach had said.

From the benches, black with crowd, went up a muffled roar,
Like the beating of the storm-waves on a stern and distant shore;
"Kill him! Kill the coach!" shouted someone on the stand;
And they would have killed him, had not Kramer raised his hand.

With a smile of Christian charity great Kramer's visage shone;
He stilled the rising tumult; he bade the game go on;
The other skaters passed with another cloud of snow,
But Kramer still ignored it. Coach said "For God's sake, GO!"

"Fraud!" cried the maddened thousands, and echo answered "Fraud!"
But one scornful look from Kramer and the audience was awed.
They saw his muscles strain, his face had neither rage nor fat.
The Dutch would take the gold, they knew. Mighty Kramer'd see to that.

The sneer has fled from Kramer's lip, there is no looking back;
He pounds with cruel violence his skates upon the track.
The competition nears the line, it seems he has it sealed,
And now the ice is shattered by the force of Kramer's zeal.

Oh, somewhere in this favored land the sun is shining bright,
The band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are light,
And somewhere men are laughing, somewhere chests swell with pride;
But because of Gerard Kemkers, Kramer was disqualified.

a couple of injuries. I'm averaging 14.5 points, which is first on the team, and 6 boards which is second on the team and almost two steals a game. I have only played in 19 of the team's 30 games as I have had to sit due to a hamstring injury and also a knee injury. I am now 100% ready for the final 9 games.

The new town [Sodertälje, in Sweden] is great although it is not too new to me. I played here in 07-08 season, so it is pretty familiar, and that's one of the advantages of coming back. You already know all the things you need to know. You know the currency rates and how that works, where to get your groceries, the good places to eat out, and the clubs to go to. It was a very good reunion here, a lot of the players are the same this season as they were two years ago and I had some good friendships with them. Everyone involved in the club seemed to welcome me back with open arms.

Basketball is about the 6th or 7th most-liked sport in Sweden, so I wouldn't say I'm very famous in Sodertälje. Nothing like it was walking around in Indianapolis after we went to the sweet sixteen [with Butler], but people still look. Mostly because we're tall, I'm guessing.

This has been a down year for the club in terms of attendance. They blame a lot of it on the economy. I think we average only about 500 a game with the most this year being

about 2,000. (That's quite a difference from the 5-10 thousand we get in Hinkle Fieldhouse.) We have had a lot more excitement as we have been closing in on a playoff spot, the newspapers cover a lot more and are at the practices and games.

Basketball is still trying to grow in Sweden, and in a lot of road games, I see similar attendance to ours. As you play the top three teams in our league, I would say they have really good attendance. This league has a history of three really good clubs or teams with the fourth club changing every year. The budget of the top three teams is much higher than the other eight teams in the league.

I did notice a difference in the [popularity of basketball in Poland vs. in Sweden]. Basketball was a lot bigger in Poland, with a ton of fans at every game, home and away, and even crazy fans. They all wore scarves with the team names and logos, and they brought loud drums and all types of noise-makers. My first year out I spent three months in France and also went to Hungary and Germany for tryouts. Basketball was huge in those places in terms of fans. In Kormend, Hungary, which was a small town with one stoplight, they sold out their gym at every home game with close to 2,000 fans.

I attended a Prokom Euro-league game in Poland. To have a Euro League game the venue has to be

able to sit 15,000 so Prokom can't host any games at their normal gym. They have to drive 30 minutes to play their home Euro League games. The atmosphere of the game rivals that of an NBA game. The fans are loud and crazy. They usually have some sort of halftime entertainment, a mascot, and dancers. The fans were wild at this game and cheer way more than they do at NBA games.

Eno Sarris: Looking way forward, do you think that eventually Europe will have a league that rivals the NBA as a sister league, something like the English Premiership vs. the Italian Liga in soccer?

Americans have been coming over here to play basketball for a long time. I do feel there are more opportunities than in the past for players to come over here as basketball grows in popularity. In most of the places I have played, the fans are very young. I would say a majority of fans are younger than 50, with a lot of high school and younger kids in the stands.

In Poland, there were fans in every gym, whether the team was good or bad, but you don't see that as much in Sweden. I do not foresee a sister league starting in Europe that would be competition for the NBA. Every team I have been on the players always talk about the NBA. I don't think there is a day that goes by where the NBA does not get mentioned in practice or the

locker room. I would say a majority of kids grow up playing soccer here and that will always be the main thing here.

I also don't think any big stars would ever sign over here. Most players want to be in the NBA. If I had my way I would be playing in the NBA as well, instead of miles and miles away from my family. Many American players over here are keeping the NBA dream alive. As basketball becomes bigger and bigger you may see homegrown talent that can push European basketball to bigger heights, but right now those players leave for the NBA. I don't think you would ever see an American audience watching European basketball. In America there are too many choices already with the NFL, NBA, MLB and even college sports. I just don't see how European basketball could ever get in that crowded sports scene, unless a couple major stars left for Europe like LeBron James, Kobe Bryant, or Dwayne Wade. I still think you would just see the highlights on Sports Center.



THE EKONOMIK KRISIS: WHAT IS THE EURO?

As the Greek surrealist H. M. Koutoukas said, “Bad checks are the purest form of poetry.” Like an Oscar Wilde aphorism, first it sounds absurd, then it’s funny, and ultimately it’s absolutely true. A nation’s debt is also poetry. It’s a sincere desire for a kind of civilization, even if its harder to sympathize with governments than deluded lovers. The size of a country’s debt relies on the cadence of its currency to carry the poem’s meaning.

Iceland’s debt-saga, and the emerging debt-epic of Greece, are very different stories. Nor can either be compared with the charmless picaresque of the American dollar. But all such stories teach us that money is a form of fiction, and the genre of “financial news,” with its pornographic display of up-pointing green arrows, and digits, and lingo, has always misled us into believing money is something other than literature.

That said, just as coins are metal, exchange is related to geology. In certain ways, its older than sex. True financial trends (which economists never notice) are only a little swifter to change than geological ones. Cash is such a trend, and what we call “credit and debt” is just a mechanism of converging from cash to the now nameless systems of our future. In the future of finance, economic systems will resemble mythologically complex and phantasmagorically diverse lifestyles—they will be more different from each other than the religions. But for the moment, the situation is Greece, with its heavily service- and tourism-based economy (accounting for, by most reports, about 75% of its GDP) went into a panic, and got sloppy. Yes, there was a shell game. Nobody made a lot of money on it. It wasn’t clever, it wasn’t long term, it was a sad and desperate fraud. Greece abused the system, but they have nothing in common with Enron. We’re going to see a lot of this. The real problem, though, is that the euro doesn’t actually exist.

Sociologist Rodrigo Cantu has done some work on derivatives as an anthropological phenomenon. Of the 2008 stock market crash, he said “...the financial institutions themselves were weakened and because they provoked so much uproar in the entire world, the

financial field is once again opened to heteronomy as well as to state regulation.” That word, heteronomy, is going to lead to the really interesting new territory for analysts. And it’s particularly important now, as Greece forces the world to question the viability of the euro. The truth is, if Greece were allowed to temporarily devalue its own money, it would be fine, but the Greeks blasphemed against the pantheon of European money-systems and espoused the One Currency. Paul Krugman in the *New York Times* has already said much the same thing, but he incorrectly identified the elitism of the hoi poloi as the real downfall of the Euromark. “None of this should come as a big surprise,” he said. “Long before the euro came into being, economists warned that Europe wasn’t ready for a single currency. But these warnings were ignored, and the crisis came.” Krugman identified Europe’s flaw as “hubris,” probably aware of the poetry of assigning a Greek concept to the problem. He spoke truer than he knew, because it wasn’t the fatal flaw of Europe, it was the fatal flaw of the way Greece handled the Euro. In other words, they were actually still on the drachma. The drachma, Europe’s oldest currency by millennia, never went anywhere, and it is no coincidence that Greece, the oldest economy in Europe, is the euro’s weakest holder. Economists don’t like this fact, because suggests they should pay less attention to their fetishists’ convention of statistics porn. Few foresee a disintegration of the euro back to regional currencies in the near future, but the heteronomy of the next age is coming into view.

Bernard Lietaer, one of the inventors of the euro and author of *The Future of Money*, which came out

in 2001, has always argued for “complimentary currencies” which circulate within communities in parallel with national currencies. Had this adaptability to more localized economies been coded into the euro, instead of floated as a concept to make people less resistant to the idea of a eurozone, the currency might have taken slower hold of Europe and the countries might have been safer. But actually, that was already going on. People abandoned their currencies for the euro, but they could not and did not abandon the nuances of trade that went with them. This happened because there really is no difference between currency and culture. The Europe of the EU’s dreams resembled a platinum setting for the jewels of each different country’s culture. They didn’t know that Italian “culture” was simply the *Life and Times of the Lira*, and French culture was really *The Merry Comedy of the Franc*, and Germany’s, *The Deutschmark’s Tragedy*. Currencies were precisely that which would never have been eradicated. They are more like gods than the gods.



LGM Catches Up With SID MEIER

At this year’s Game Developers’ Conference, our reporter Paul S. Nowak asked Sid Meier about the avant-garde of video games. The maestro replied, less than helpfully, “It’s a really cool time to be a game designer.” He named browsers and social networking sites like Facebook as the platforms of the future. “The whole big budget thing has gone away and opened up new opportunities for gaming,” he said.

Wait... the “big budget thing” (we assume he meant “the industry”) is gone? Are you drunk?

When pressed, he said Civi-



Civilization V is due for release in September 2010

zation V was the new cutting edge. There were designers at GDC showing off ARG engines where pieces of paper held up to cameras took the place of controllers (the

game’s challenge: can you balance a marble on a sheet? Can you care?) and solid model cities where cameras on remote control helicopters fed images to monitors. There were giant spheres in which players could run like hamsters in a completely immersive world. Calling Civilization V avant-garde is a stretch. Still, when it comes to innovation, peripherals tend to be false starts and red herrings. The avant-garde would involve re-purposing of the very institution of the story arc. With 180 hours of time to fill, video games present opportunities for innovations in story itself, but the young medium has already hit its first slump, and it has yet to find its next revitalizing genius.

ANTHONY KALOMAS on the Dark Alchemy of Finance

In Neal Stephenson’s *Quicksilver*, a novel about finance overtaking natural philosophy as the common parlance of Europe, one of his characters says that money’s laws are “darker than alchemy.” Today, they’re embarrassingly comprehensible. Where is the real innovation in the handling of money? Is the art of money dead? Global View FX Management is one of a few firms that has embraced the nonlinear nature of the currency market. Anthony Kalomas, a founder, says much of his inspiration comes from music. “At Stanford I spent a significant amount of time studying the real time analysis of complex waveforms in the audio domain. Signal processing, the physics of acoustics, audio synthesis, and psychoacoustics have all helped to build a conceptual framework that has helped me find answers in finance.” The success of companies like his suggest that the future of money does not, in fact, lie in populist anarchy, despite the predictions of so many proponents of “freeconomics.”



This is a collection of games best played at night with a number of intelligent friends or acquaintances. Dim lights are a must. Some of the forms of mental intimacy are extreme, and we recommend an atmosphere more resembling a literary salon than a keg party. Although, if some hybrid were to spring up somewhere...

THE ORACLE OF DADA

The group divides into pairs. One player thinks of a question that begins with Who, What, When, Where, Why, How, or Whence. When the player has thought of her question (it intensifies the game if the question is written down) she asks only the first word. Her partner then answers it without knowing any more than that first word. So, one player might think of the question, "Why is the sky blue?" She would write that down, but out loud, to the group and her partner, she would simply say "Why?" Her partner and only her partner would answer. Creative or symbolic language is recommended. After she has answered, the first player reveals the full question to the group. Turns go counterclockwise around the players.

Actual examples from our laboratory play-testing: "Whence?" elicited the answer, "From the cloudy imagination of a starving god." The question was "Whence do the concepts of good and evil arise if conscience is not inherent?" "What?" once fetched an answer of "rancid Doritos"—the question was "What is the meaning of life?" So maybe what goes around comes around, in terms of how thoughtfully you play the game.

This game will test the true compatibility of any group. It is not uncommon for one or two participants not to "get each other" while other pairs, often unexpected pairs, communicate with uncanny aptness. Give it a round or two to warm up.

Surrealist PARTY GAMES

THE LOOKING GLASS STAFF

EXQUISITE CORPSE

The classic surrealist repurposing of the earlier parlor game Consequences, in this game a collection of words or images is collectively assembled from the group, each of whom adds a word to a piece of paper being passed around. The result is the exquisite corpse. We recommend starting with no pattern at all then gradually introducing rounds of the game with established patterns such as "noun verb noun verb" which increase in complexity.

ABSTRACTIONARY

Pictionary with abstract concepts, a la the episode of *The Simpsons* where Milhouse's mother draws "dignity" and, though the audience isn't shown her image, everyone agrees she rendered it accurately. Oddly, few have tried it. Shouldn't you?

DARK CITY

The inventor of this game thought it a

fine application of latent psychic powers during her LSD phase in the late 90s. She was a respected poetess and known for her attendance at literary salons and avant-garde theatrical productions. She vanished from the public eye after complaining two loudly about the candelabras at a solemn poetry reading, at which she accidentally set her hair on fire. She meant no harm when she devised Dark City, (the original title was Disquiet, after the famous painting *The Disquieting Muses* by De Chirico, but it reminded most people of the film starring Richard O'Brien and Keiffer Sutherland). At its debut party, one player quipped "This is too fucked up for me," and another demanded "what is wrong with you?" A third, "Are you actually dangerous?" We do not mention the great lady's name, as after several sessions of Dark City she converted to Millennial Christianity and believes that powers of prophesy are God-given and should be used for assisting the faithful during the time leading up to Rapture. She is a figure of some visibility in her religion's circles, and so out of respect for her chosen path, we've left her anonymous here.

But in her game, three or more more players sit in a circle, and each one tells a story, with a beginning, middle, and end, from the past of the person sitting to their left. By candlelight, after the wine or the absinthe or the whatever has begun to kick in, the stories will become more symbolically astute until the players are actually having each other's memories. The effect is more literal than you would expect. We do not recommend playing it with jocks or imbeciles.

Try not to take anything seriously, if you can help it.



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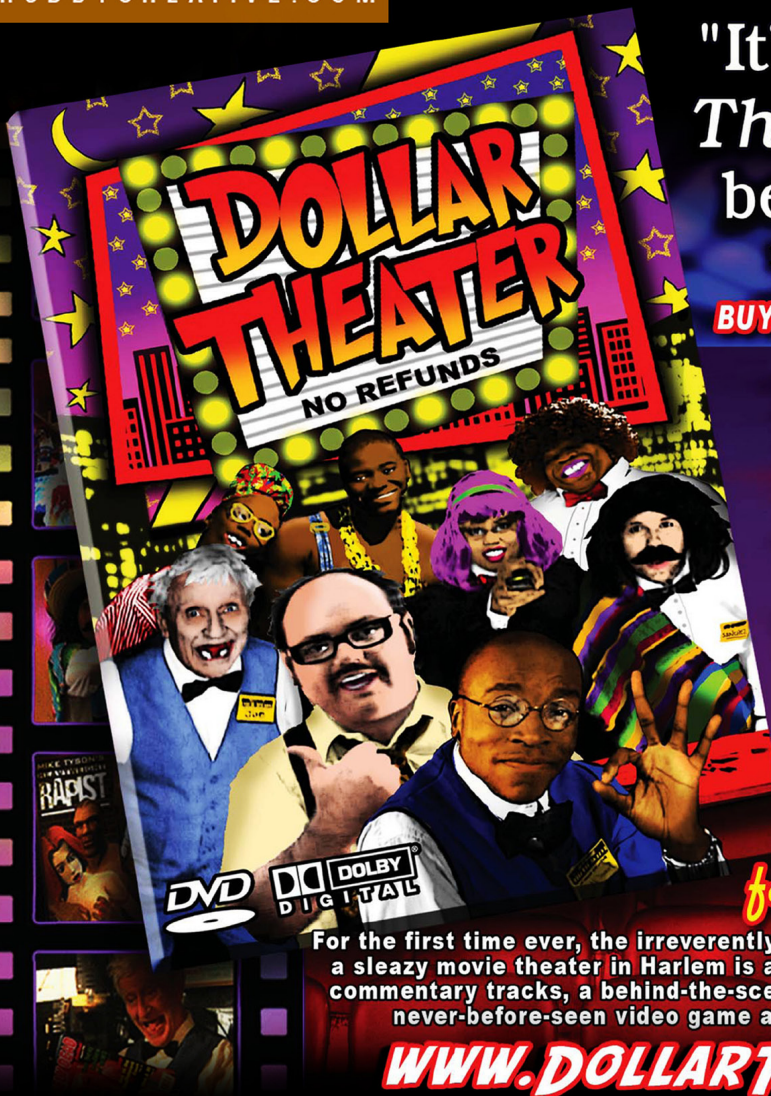
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