

# MAKHAI FASCICLE 1 (RAW)

This is only an incomplete fraction of MAKHAI. MAKHAI's release is planned as 5 fascicles, each going through the stages of raw, rough and ready.

## “ALALA”

This fascicle is **RAW**. Misspellings abound. Chapters may be incomplete, to be finished or abandoned. Lines shoot into margins, and text turns to notes which turn to gibberish. There are no illustrations.

February 20th, 2015

# MAKHAI

by  
Mr. M-of-Eris

**Makhai**, being the Battles  
of Eris, as revealed by the All-Mum, Eris Dis-  
cordia, Lady of the Kallistic Kabbalah, Mistress of the  
Dungeons of Doubt, Keeperess of the Guesthouse of Kaos; she  
who is She, and She's the One, the Daughter of Night, Sister  
Moon, Mother Fucker, etc., the diverse beginning, being and end-  
ing of all, except uninteresting things; and as recorded by the  
most unworthy and ineloquent and annoying and stupid and oh  
Goddess why me? Why me? Why not someone wiser and nicer  
and better with words and ideas? But there is but I, Episko-  
pos Trishop Epsilon, of the Church of Eris Erisian Eristic,  
the Reformed Church of Eris Eridian Eristic; being the  
Protector of the Antarctic (part-time), a Legionary  
of the Legion for the Advancement of the Ter-  
minally Confused, and the Grand Verpa  
Dragon of Ordre Belle Ebullience,  
Chaotica Anarchica Lacklaw  
Priory; and the Foe  
of Sport.



THE INVOCATION OF THE STAR-BEAST Hear  
me, five guardians of the black stone of heavens! I call  
on thee, King of Sagittarius, Lord of Carina! Step aside! I  
call on thee, Scutum-Crux, dread monarch! Step aside! I call  
on thee Norma-Cygnus, Cygnus-Norma, the heart's holding hand!  
Step aside! I call on thee, o dreadful sky-shadow, Perseus! Step aside!  
I call on thee, red-handed huntsman, Orion! Step aside! By the power of  
the Ring of Monoceros, I compel thee! I bind thee! I command thee! In Sloan  
have I seen thee! Open the gate of Virgo; open the gate of the Stellar Stream;  
open, by the power of the Ring of Monoceros! I compel thee! (repeat  
until the result is achieved)

THE LAKE OF BOÖTES The  
in lye, The night comes,  
lie the stars, stars bloom  
the made mind rises, Want  
to be: Across time, across  
is not, shall be again, now  
spine, Power of place, brightest  
The lake, the fountain, the  
of marble, green veins and  
dark beyond, Ibis on the  
Bloodless face, steelshod  
low, go up to cold hands, Be-  
scream, Repeat this twenty,  
Betelgeuse, Deneb, Coxa Fomal-  
haut, the mouth of the fish Spica, Betelgeuse, Deneb, Coxa Night-Fomalhaut,  
moonlight pale Spica, Betelgeuse, Deneb, Coxa Sharp ever-Fomalhaut,  
home to one Spica, Betelgeuse, Deneb, Coxa Hearing dark at-Fomalhaut,  
alive Spica, Betelgeuse, Deneb, Coxa Tymbark, whaley, bridge of Fomalhaut!  
/ Aurigae, Ophiuchi, Ursae, Ursae Kaitos, Crucis, Eridani, Eridani Vulpeculae,  
Fornacis, Gruis, Gruis Ursae, Eridani, Gruis, Equulei, Equulei, Pedicabo  
ego vos et irrumabo, e? TO SUMMON LAIS OF CORINTH Numquid,  
cum crisas, blandior esse potes? Imago imago imago.

## Argument

(Excerpted from Theon's *Sword of Heracles*.)

The **Machai** were daemons of strife and bloodshed, daughters and sons of Eris, soldiers in the hosts of Enyo and Ares, the gods of war.

The first among them was **Alala**, the ululating maiden of the war cry. Enyo's war cry was 'ulule alalu' and that of Ares, 'alale alala'; both were the cries of Alala. The brother and husband of Alala was **Homados**, he of the tumult of war. Where Alala was the cry of warriors, Homados was the cry of steel on steel; there is no need to transcribe that awful sound.

The sisters **Proioxis** and **Palioxis** were women with the heads of hounds, and their part the herding of armies: the former was Onrush, the latter Backrush; between them, armies were battered into red ruin. Their shoes were red, their eyes bright, their ears perky and triangle-shaped [...] studded with the skulls of dead men.

The final of the Machai was **Kydoimos**; and she was not seen before her brothers and sisters, for she was Confusion, [...] with a thousand voices, and no mouth. [...] Among those that did not worship Zeus Xenios, much of this was forgotten even before the coming of the Dorians.

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## Sources

First there was the first holy book, *Erisiana*. It was shit, though the author thought it was the shit. Then the second holy book, *Book of the Light Warrior*. It was the same story. Then, because such torrents of shite never cease, there was the holy website, *Mirrors of Eris*, and everywhere in spatters on the edges of all this was the holy blog, *Masks of Eris*.

All in all, lots of shite.

After much polishing, and much subtraction and addition, this holy book, *Makhai of Eris*, has resulted.

This book alludes to, but does not contain, the first bible of the Erisian Movement, *Principia Discordia* (which is a real book), by Malaclypse the Younger and Lord Omar Khayyam Ravenhurst. It can be found in many places, including the Internet. Wherever you find it, you also find good people.

Finally: whosoever adds to this book, is blessed. Whosoever changes these words, is beloved. Whosoever takes away from these words or abridges or distorts them, is a transforming Agent of the Goddess whose feet this poor and fat author is not fit to kiss.

Anybody that comes to you with a Final Revelation is a villain. Don't believe those people. Roll your own.

T.E., episkopos e.e.e.



# Part I

## ALALA:

“Cell ma med fur gud, woll yui? Fuuls,  
heva yui saan tha feca uf Mehieng un tha  
slupas uf Sonoce? Loka kottans yui era,  
es clusad-ayad yui feol tu indarstend my  
ganois; loka kottans era yui, fur tha furca  
uf my lugoc end raesun!”

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St. Ephedrin



# ululations

“Call me mad for god, will you? Fools, have you seen the face of Mahuang on the slopes of Sinica? Like kittens you are, as closed-eyed you fail to understand my genius; like kittens are you, for the force of my logic and reason!”

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St. Ephedrin





## The Church of Eris Erisian Eristic

Welcome, stranger. Welcome to this book, this portable papery chapel, this bestialiry for the Church of Eris Erisian Eristic. And if you just thought “what does ‘bestialiry’ mean?”, you’re in the right place.

If you though “Ha! S/he misspelled ‘bestiary’” — then you’re a miserable excuse for a human being, and you will be among the first against the wall when the revolution comes.<sup>1</sup> Read on, anyway; it’s not yet too late to lose the dick within.

For boys, the dick on the outside is easy to lose, too, but don’t worry; we’re not celibates or anything. We’re not into self-mutilation unless it makes you happy.<sup>2</sup> Within Discordianism you can still drink beer, curse and jerk off; just don’t try to do all three while you’re preaching. You might get distracted.

And as for preaching — you have to. In Discordianism, everyone’s a Pope. Or a Mome. Or both. Or a Grand Dragon Verpa Innocent Occidental Benny Master. And in true Pope fashion, once you’re it, all others are heretics that ought

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<sup>1</sup>Because of your instinctive regression towards the normal, that is; not because of the s/he. A s/he is a perfectly fine expression, and the author has no particular interest in posturing as either sex or any gender. Also, December 21, 2017.

<sup>2</sup>Same for zoonecrophilia, the “probably most legal *and* most shunnable fetish” of our age, according to the Supreme Court.

### CHAPTER 3. THE CHURCH E.E.E.

to be excommunicated, excoriated and disemvowelled. You can try with me; I promise I'll answer softly in return. Come on now; yell "Heretic! You are excommunicated! I am the Pope!" at this page. You'll feel better immediately; and the great gates of enlightenment will creak open.

If you disagree, you do not yet know the power of the very light side.

Okay, now, speaking Pope-to-Pope; there's the matter of teachings. Because you need to know how things are taught round here so you know the full extent of my heathen depravity, and the general direction to take in your own heretical schisming and blaspheming.

So: what does the Church E.E.E., now *your* sect's Erisian and Discordian and possibly even Apostolic sistren-sect actually hold dear and in the theological sense true?

Well, there's a holy book. Of course there is a holy book. How could this be a religion otherwise? We have funny hats, too, but you'd better start with the holy book — it is this book incidentally, a whopper of a book, a monstrously too large weird-of-words in honor of the Greatest Goddess, Magnante Maiora Mater, Eris J. Discordia.

I hope you can find uses for this book. (Hint: I'm told it's highly flammable. And we have a catwa against getting upset if someone burns our books — without fire there's no light, unless you have a flashlight or something.)

*there is no law.*  
Trishop Epsilon

## Who Eris is, and what this is all about

The goddess Eris Kallisti Discordia, the daughter of Night and Void, the mother of all manner of ills, the origin of the Trojan War, the goddess of Discord and Confusion, and the unofficial goddess of Chaos, Shock, Awe and Sudden Delight, that's who Eris is.

Her gifts are as her titles: discord, confusion, chaos, wildly cachinnating laughter and the sort of ineffable and improper acts you were always, circumloquaciously, warned about. As with all gods and all gifts of gods, there are some who willingly accept those gifts, and find comfort and wisdom in them. Then there are the pricks who do not; but Discordians wage no holy wars. We merely declare a catwa,<sup>1</sup> and go on.

Eris is one of those old Greek gods. She's older than two thousand years; how much older is not a smart question.

She's one of the new gods, too... as you may already guess, one can't tote a portfolio of discord and be entirely self-consistent. Some fifty years ago two prophets, Kerry Wendell Thornley and Greg Hill, had some revelations from Eris. They should be called Mal-2 and Lord Omar, actually, and I think some Golden Plates and the Kennedy assassi-

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<sup>1</sup>catwa: a ceremonial burial of the offending object or a representation of it in the nearest litter box. Afterwards, an apology to Bast, the goddess of cats, is muttered.

## CHAPTER 4. WHO IS ERIS? WHAT IS THIS?

nation were involved in it somehow; but don't let that confuse you.

I'm vaguely familiar with their philosophies; they were heretics, schismatics and heresiarchs and should not be trusted. They are heretics since there is no Discordian organization; if there seems to be a Discordian organization it is merely an optical illusion. Each Discordian is a Pope of his or her own; those that refuse the Insta-Papacy cannot be Discordians. Discordians don't follow, and they don't lead; in the words of St. Carlin they don't get out of the way either, but instead *obstruct*.<sup>2</sup> Discordianism is not so much about individualism as it is about the denial of authority.

Discordianism is a religion of chaos and a chaos of religious bits; it is a religion and a joke about religion and a religion about a joke and a free-spirited burst of laughter; it is what zen would be if it didn't strive to be so damned zensible all the time; and it is a dancing llama, named Reg, from Brixton, England.

The most accessible example of Discordian thought is the *Illuminatus!* trilogy by Robert Anton Wilson and Robert Shea. It's a novel; it has titties in it. Go find it and read it; I'll wait.

Back? Okay. Now you know more than I can ever tell you, for no man can ever communicate all he knows to another; maybe 60% or 75% or with a blackboard and colored chalk 85%; but never all. Wilson and Shea were good communicators with plenty of rumors, lies and whispers to communicate; a bigger fraction of their bigger pie is better than a slim slice of my humble little pie, which may be a pie of oranges and not apples anyway. But let me try; I am not sure I am communicating the same thing as they were.

This is Erisian philosophy.

No, wait, this is Erisian philosophy.

Oh, sod it. The next few paragraphs are Erisian philosophy. As are the sentences above.

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<sup>2</sup>For which reason every Pope is an official Obstrutrician.

There is disorder; that is, Eris. There is order; that is, Harmonia. (I purposefully use the Greek name of one, and the Latin name of the other; I am of Eris, am I not?<sup>3</sup>) They are both beautiful, but Harmonia is sterile. Eris gives birth: all life is born of her; so is all art, all laughter, all guesses, and all excitement. Without these five there is nothing, no reason for anyone to exist. Harmonia can make none of these; she can only pervert them to her own dull, plodding, joyless uses, or destroy them. She is sterile, and not as beautiful as Eris.

All other gods are faces of Harmonia. This includes all the “in” and “with-it” hippie gods, too. And especially every single incarnation (if that is the proper word) of Jesus, that judgmental old scoundrel. Discord means more than having sandals, a guitar and a relaxed attitude. The olden hippies of Caley-Forney-Yah knew that; those that serve Harmonia do not, and thus they foolishly insist light and love are the way and the truth. Greater or more pernicious nonsense has never been heard; many who would have been good Erisians have fallen for this line of pseudo-disorder, this autocracy disguised as anarchy, and the Discordian organization has been much lesser for it. Even a mellow, with-it tyrant is still a tyrant; even a cool, relaxed law is still a law; no matter the clown glove, there’s still the skeletal iron hand of Harmonia inside, going for the throat of you and your children.

There can be no happiness until every ruler has a constant sword at his or her neck, and every book of law constantly hovers over a consuming flame, and nothing remains still unless held in place by busily juggling hands. There can be no life worth living until the gods themselves quake on their thrones fearing the hands of women and men might pull them down and tear them apart if they misbehave. Those gods that won’t come down and mingle with us as equals, those that won’t come and bargain and talk and

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<sup>3</sup>This is called “being precious”. It’s not worth much.

## CHAPTER 4. WHO IS ERIS? WHAT IS THIS?

reason and dance and fornicate with us as equals: they all need to die. They all will die. This is the heart of all: *Life is only death by a different name until we have no gods, no masters, and no waiting for the pie in the sky.*

That's my slice of pie.

This is how things are:

There is life. There is death. The first is of Eris; the second, of Harmonia.

There is art. There is aping and slavish imitation and looking up with a crick in your neck.

There is laughter. There is seriousness and solemnity and things to not laugh at, or speak of, or think of.

There are guesses, and ever more snug dresses to fit on the glass goddess who is Reality, to better see and adore her figure. (Replace "goddess" and "her" with "adonis" and "his" if you so desire; or have both. There's nothing weird in ogling both sexes, no matter your orientation. Get a mirror and ogle yourself too.) There are certainties, and other clown noses to make Reality appear in the idiot visage one ideologically desires.

There is excitement, and neophilia, and doings of whatever thou wilt. There is security, and stability, and conformity and tradition.

Whosoever chooses the firsts of these, shall see the face of Eris Discordia, smiling and winking and blowing a kiss; but whosoever chooses the seconds of these, shall in vain chase after the hidden face of Harmonia, and die hoping in vain for a second chance. When I say this, I am as serious as someone without any pants can be. The world is out there, and it is out there even if you pretend otherwise. There are no second chances. There are no answer sheets nor islands of knights and knaves, no absolutes nor certainties, and there's no-one you can trust, not even yourself. All there is, is a choice between the many bright and beautiful many-colored faces of Eris Discordia... and the thousand rotten corpse visages of Aneris Harmonia.

The world is out there. Pick your side.

## Of the Golden Apple

Lend me your ears, O wanderers, for I am a plastic surgeon in need. This is the tale of the Golden Apple of Eris.

\* \* \*

In the beginning there was chaos, void without form, and she was called Eris, the Goddess of Strife and Discord.

Eris was her name to the Greeks, and the Romans called her Discordia, and men in general have usually called her by foul and degrading names, such as, "what misbegotten noony idiot caused this mess, then?"

She was a Greek god then, and there were many other Greek gods as well. This was a very bad thing for the Greeks themselves — witness how much grief has been caused by only one god, that in the beginning was one to some, then three to many, and then one, with one prophet, to others. The Greeks had a god for every mountain and a goddess for every creek, and one of them was Eris.

Her creek probably was a gutter behind Zeno's Drinking Ass Tavern.

There was one day a great feast at the peak of Mount Olympus, the top place of the Greek divinities. It was in honor of a marriage long since forgotten since, as usually, of personal things only the ghastly and disastrous ones are remembered, while great joys are forgotten.

## CHAPTER 5. OF THE GOLDEN APPLE

The happy couple had not invited Eris.

They can maybe be excused; one does not show great intelligence by calling the Queen of Strife, the Lady of Collapsing Cosmoses, to visit. Still, they should have known that Eris wouldn't take lightly not being invited. Maybe they wished that a goddess capable of sniffing out every false note and gap would not notice?

Indeed they were fools.

And so, halfway through the evening, when all present were merrily drunk, when Apollo was dancing on tables, when Zeus was using Aeolian shepherds for target practice while Hera and Persephone betted, when Hebe the cup-bearer of the gods was already, again, cursing her vocation and dodging the sweaty hands of Ares — then in rolled a thing of glistening gold.

It was an apple, made of pure and flawless gold, an object of great worth and immediately evident beauty.

The gods and goddesses, being greedy bastards, immediately all began to covet it.

Zeus picked up the apple, inspected it, and then handed it to Hermes, saying: "I really should learn this Greek script someday."

Hermes, the trusted god of thieves, squinted and said: "There is but one word written on this apple. It is 'kallisti', and it is written in the Greek script."

There was a moment of silence, which Hebe used to whisk most of the remaining wine-amphoras away; she sensed that a great commotion was about to begin.

After a while Aphrodite, the goddess of physical beauty, frowned and, fearing she was being set up for a bad joke, asked: "Indeed? And what might that mean?"

Hermes blushed. "No idea."

Others hung their heads as well.

Zeus rose up and thundered. "What disgrace! What idiots are you, incapable of understanding even a single short word of the language of those you so fickle lord and lady it over! What a sad, sad disgrace!"



Ares, the red-eyed god of war, havoc and devastation, mumbled angrily to himself that neither did Zeus know anything about the word, either.

Hebe ran to the kitchen, scared. If the Lord of Slaughter began muttering to himself, the wise ran.

"Is there no-one here that knows anything of those we rule?" Zeus roared.

Various gods shrugged and rolled their eyes. Well, duh! You don't need to understand people when you can shoot fire and poison from your fingertips.

Finally Hephaestus, the smith, spoke. "Where's Hebe? And where's the wine?"

"There's but one amphora remaining!", Hermes cried, and immediately a Great Fight for the Last Amphora broke out.

While the fight continued (Ares and Zeus were betting), three goddesses retired to a corner. Athena, the wise one, with owl-droppings decorating her shoulders, held the apple she had picked from Zeus's clenching fingers. Aphrodite and Hera looked at her, and the apple, curious.

"*Kallisti*", Athena pondered. "It is in Greek either 'geometry' —"

"Like, what's that?" Aphrodite groaned. "All Greek to me!"

Athena coughed. "— or then the dative singular of the feminine superlative of the word for beauty."

Hera, the wife of Zeus and the lady of the household, clenched her fists. She was starting to feel as stupid as Aphrodite was, and that irritated her greatly.

"To the fairest", Athena clarified. "So, —"

"That's me!" each of the three cried.

The strength of Zeus and Ares both was needed to stop the hair-pulling and spitting resulting from this, and as Zeus was wroth (having missed the spectacle of Hermes rendering himself unconscious with a careless swing of his own blackjack) he heard the matter and ordered the goddesses to find an impartial judge and settle the matter thusly.

## CHAPTER 5. OF THE GOLDEN APPLE

This only shows that there are some who should stay in the field of zapping others with lightning, and out of quarrel-solving.

Some years passed, and each of the three goddesses — Aphodite, Athena and Hera — produced learned works and testimonials on the characters of various "impartial judges". It has been calculated by Strabo that the volumes used for this were enough to prove each and every man living at that time a hopeless liar and scoundrel, and so this tale, coming down from them, should not be trusted.

Seeing this insolvable knot of parchment and papyrus, Zeus smote it with a ball lightning, and pointed out a random mortal to arbitrate. The goddesses heeded the ancient adage of "whom shoots fire out of his eyes, he is boss", and went to this mortal to present their case. He was Paris, the son of Priam the king of Troy, also called Ilium.

*Troy* was also called Ilium, not Priam or Paris. Indeed, Paris was not even founded at that date. But that is an entirely different Paris.

So Paris saw three beautiful, scantily clad goddesses descending from the heavens, pleading for his favor. And he thought: Boy, am I lucky or what?

Soon, however, the matter was cleared to him, and he slumped, greatly disappointed.

(The reader might have noted that Eris hasn't appeared in this narrative recently. It is indeed so: she was at her palace, biting on an edible golden apple and giggling to herself.)

To better judge the beauty of each goddess, Paris spoke to each of them privately. The goddesses each, naturally, tried to bribe him the best they could.

"I'll give you the world!", Hera, the wife of Zeus and the self-proclaimed Queen of Gods, whispered. "You want the islands? They are yours. You want Persia and the Lion Throne? But one word and you shall have them. Cathay, Aztlan, Cimmeria — I can give you dominions without number if you but favor me. Think in your heart of the varieties

of womankind that the world holds, and of all things you can possess, and ask this of yourself: Isn't generous Hera the fairest of all?"

Athena, the wise and warlike, was likewise persuasive. "Now be bright, Paris, behave wisely. Just one little choice, and I'll make you known for your princely — nay, kingly — charming wisdom and erudition. I'll bless your arms, so every man will gasp and every woman swoon at the mention of your sagely and war-victorious name! Think of the adulation of masses, O wise son of Priam, and behold the beauty of Athena the fair!"

The last to engage in this fair-play was Aphrodite, the goddess of love and lust. Now she was not very bright, or rich, but she knew the hearts of men — those spiritual pieces of flesh that are usually led around by other pieces of their anatomy either above or below. So she showed Paris a vision, and grinned.

"Indeed, boy! That is Helen, the fairest of all mortals. Who else but I, Aphrodite, the fairest of goddesses, could find her, or bring her to you? Smile at me, O man, and you shall have princess Helen for your wife!"

And since Aphrodite's offer had been the most palpable (though the least generous), Paris chose her. The apple passed to Aphrodite, and the three goddesses departed, grumbling about unfair play. Aphrodite waved her hand at Paris, and suddenly Helen was there, swooning at his feet. Paris danced a little lusty jig of joy and went to see a priest, towing her and a white marriage-bull-of-sacrifice.

At this point two things about Helen should be noted, two points that Aphrodite failed to mention.

The first point is that Helen was the daughter of one Leda, and of Zeus the Thunderer, who had forced himself on Leda in the shape of a swan. It is unknown what pleasure Zeus got from this.

Secondly, the reason that Helen was a princess of sorts was that she was already married to Menelaus, the warlike and easily angered king of Sparta.

## CHAPTER 5. OF THE GOLDEN APPLE

One can easily see why Aphrodite was silent on these details. Soon enough the word reached king Menelaus that his wife, instead of merely playfully hiding somewhere in the palace, was actually prancing around with the son of the king of Troy.

So Menelaus called Odysseus and Menestheus, both Ajaxes and Agamemnon, and all those Achaean lords and warriors whose respect he commanded, and laid siege to the city of Troy.

This Trojan war lasted for ten years, and was the end of men and reputations without number, the end of lives and the end of happiness and joy, the start of grief and endless new strife, and the end of Paris, the end of Ajax, the end of many a hero and a commoner, the end of Priam and the city of Troy, and the end of Trojans except for one that fled to build up even more pain and misery.

Far above, in the skies, the goddess Aphrodite looked down, cradled the apple, smiled a charming little smile, and said: "Oops, I did it again."

And somewhere else Eris spat out an apple-seed and laughed.

## For the Finnish reader

Oli Olympos, jumalten koti. Oli siellä häät; hääpari itse ei ollut tärkeä, muussa mielessä kuin että oli niin tärkeä että kaikki jumalat ja jumalolennot ja joehenget ym. oli kutsuttu paikalle.

Kaikki paitsi yksi: sillä Eris, sekasorron ja ristiriidan jumalatar, ei ollut oikeastaan kenenkään mielestä ideaalinen häävieras. Jos hän olisi paikalla, niin joku varmaankin varastaisi morsion eikä toisi tätä takaisin, ja sulhanen päätyisi sairaalaan auottuaan päätään sodanjumala Arekselle; näin oli käynyt aiemminkin, eikä kukaan, ylijumala Zeus kaikkein vähiten, tahtonut tilanteen toistuvan.

Tämän järjestelyn ongelma oli siinä että kaikkien paitsi yhden kutsuminen oli riitasointu. Riitasointuna ja poikkeavuutena se nousi niistä vastaavan jumalolennon mieleen kuin järveen pudonnut omena veden pinnalle: ja riitasointujen ja epäjatkuvuuskohtien ja outojen poikkeuksien jumalolennon ollen jumalatar, Eris itse, kutsun puute oli paljon nopeammin perillä kuin yksikään kullattu kutsu olisi ollut. Niinpä hän kirosi Aeolian postilaitoksen, lähinnä siksi että se tuntui hyvältä idealta sillä hetkellä; ja sitten hän, Eris, hän jota viisaat eivät mainitse, ja jonka tyhmyt jättävät mainitsematta, hän meni puutarhaansa.

Ja sitten, kun häiden virallinen osa oli ohi, ja syömisestä ja juomisesta ja juoruamisesta ja hälisemisestä koostuva osa oli juuri pääsemässä käyntiin; kun Ares ja Poseidon

## CHAPTER 6. FOR THE FINNISH READER

väänsivät kättä, ja Hermes valitti että häntä ei ikinä arvostettu runoilijana; kun Hebe, jumalten juomanlaskija, katsoi kauhun vallassa ambrosian ja nektarin katoamistahtia — silloin jumalten salin ovesta pomppi sisään, ja vieri latiaa pitkin salin keskelle, pieni kultainen esine.

Se oli omena: josko se oli kultaa vaiko vain kullanhohdoinen ei ollut olennaista, koska oli välittömästi ilmeistä että se oli ikuinen, suunnattoman arvokas, ja sanoinkuvaamattoman kaunis.

Siksi että se oli *sanoinkuvaamattoman* kaunis sitä ei sen tarkemmin kuvailla tässä.

Omenan kyljessä oli yksi yksinäinen kreikkalaisilla kirjaimilla kirjoitettu sana: Hermes, viestinviejien ja varkaiden jumala, poimi salamaakin nopeammin omenan, ja luki sanan.

»Kallisti», se oli.

Johon Zeus, ylijumala, jumalten isä, sanoi: »Mitä helvettiä se tarkoittaa?»

»Vitustako minä tiedän», Hermes sanoi.

»Käytöstapoja helvetti», sodanjumala Ares sanoi, silmät välähtäen punaista hehkuen.

Tässä vaiheessa Hebe käveli saliin ja kantoi kalleimman nektari-amforan pois; kun sodanjumala alkaa kiroilemaan, viisaat varautuvat aineellisten vahinkojen varalta.

»No?» Zeus sanoi, ääni kuin kaukainen ukkosen jyriinä, joskin selvemmin artikuloiva. »Eikö kukaan tiedä tätä kreikkalaisten kieltä? Millaisia jumalia me olemme jos emme edes omiemme kieltä tiedä?»

Tähän Ares kohautti olkiaan, ja taputti vyöllään olevia miekkoja, nuijia, tikareita ja tapparoita; kun kantaa painonsa verran lumottuja aseita ja hengittää tulta ja myrkykaasua, ei tarvitse suuria verbaalisia lahjoja.

»No?» Zeus toisti. »Kukaan?»

Hermes kohautti olkiaan. »Sinä, oi ylijumala, ammut salamoita silmistäsi, minulla on valtikka joka muuttaa ihmisen luut vedeksi. Mihin tässä kielitaitoa tarvitaan?»

Pitkän, epämiellyttävän hiljaisen hetken jälkeen Dionysus, viinin ja laulun ja hauskanpidon jumala, nosti päänsä viinikupista ja sanoi: »Jaa tuo *kallisti*? Selvää kreikkaa. Opin tuolla Zenon tavernassa tai mitä tuo nyt oli. Selvää päässinlihaa.»

Zeus rypisti kulmiaan. »Tahdotko sinä juoppolalli sanoa että tässä verrattoman kauniissa kultaisessa omenassa lukee *päässinlihaa*?»

Jossain kaukana, mutta ei kovin kaukana, jyrähti ukkonen, ja välähti salama.

Dionysus naurahti hermostuneena. »Ei toki, oi ylijumala, jumalista suurin, ken olet erittäin päättäväisesti jumalista suurin. Ei toki. Vaan *kallisti* on kreikkaa ja, äh, se on viesti: se tarkoittaa, *kaikkein kauneimmalle*.»

Joka sana oli tuskin ehtinyt hänen suustaan, kun kolmesta jumalallisesta kurkusta kajahti huuto: »Minulle!»

Nämä kolme olivat Athena, viisauden jumalatar, jolla jostain syystä oli aina pöllö harteillaan, ja tämän vuoksi hartiahuvi aina pesussa; ja Hera, jumalten kuningatar oman ilmoituksensa mukaan; ja Afrodite, korkeakampauksinen varhaisempien aikojen Paris Hilton.

Kolmikon kukin jäsen katsoi kahta muuta, ja huoneen lämpötila tippui pakkasen puolelle.

»Oi ylijumala, aviojumalani», Hera sanoi, »tässä on nyt jonkinlainen sekaannus. Selvästikin tämä kaikkein kauneimmalle tarkoitettu ihana esine on tarkoitettu —»

Ja taas kajahti kolmesta kurkusta: »Minulle!»

Tässä vaiheessa Ares tuhahti, ja lähti ulos; Hebe huokaisi helpotuksesta ja aloitti uudestaan juomatarjoilun.

Puolet loppujuhlasta kului siihen kun kukin kolmikosta vuorollaan esitti perusteluja sille miksi juuri hän oli kaikista kaunein; koska kukin perustelu oli yhden esittämä ja kahden vastaanväittäjä, ei yksikään saavuttanut demokraattista kansalaistaruosiota.

Hera toi salaman selässä filosofi Parmenideen paikalle kertomaan Heran kauneudesta; Afrodite huomautti että

## CHAPTER 6. FOR THE FINNISH READER

sokean filosofin sana kauneudesta ei ollut kovinkaan paljon.

Afrodite sitten kertoi siitä kuinka hänen nimessään palvottiin kaikenlaista kauneutta ja suloutta; johon Athena sanoi että tässä painoi enemmän osallistuvien ihmisten kauneus, tai paremminkin heidän huumehöyryinen himonsa.

Ja sitten Athena esitti Ateenan asukkaiden enemmistömielipiteenä että hän oli kaikista kauneista kaunein; johon Hera sanoi päätään pudistaen että jumalattaren oman kaupungin tietyn vaurauden omaavien vapaiden natiivimiesten mielipide ei vielä ollut kovinkaan vakuuttava äänestystulos. Ja kaiken aikaa Zeus ja muu Olympos seurasivat tätä, muu Olympoksen väki kyllästyen ja masentuen; Zeus ärtyen yhä enemmän; ja synkät tummat ukkospilvet kerääntyivät mustiksi torneiksi ja taivaslinnakkeiksi jumalten kaupungin ylle.

Kuten sanottua, tätä jatkui puolet loppujuhlasta; loppujuhlan toiseen puolikkaaseen päästiin paljon turhauttavan inttämisen ja riitelyn jälkeen kun Zeus nousi istuimeltaan, huusi kovaan ääneen, ja sai suunnattoman, hänen päänsärkyään symbolisoivan ukkosmyrskyn räjähtämään täyteen raivoonsa Olympoksen ylle.

Sateen piiskatessa jumalten koteja, ja salamoiden pistellessä rumia sanoja taivaiden kupoliin, ylijumala sanoi näin: »Että tästäkin on pakko tehdä näin vaikeaa! Ottakaa joku yksi kuolevainen, menkää, ja kysykää siltä! Vaikkapa — tuo!»

Ja hän istui alas, ja juhla jatkui; kolme jumalatarta poistui hänen osoittamaansa suuntaan, ja ukkosmyrsky laantui.

Kauempana puolestaan Paris, Troijan kuninkaan Priamin poika, oli tekemässä jotain joka välittömästi kaikkosi hänen mielestään kun hän näki kolmen jumalattaren, vähäpukeisen ja kaikin puolin kauniin ja sulokkaan, laskeutuvan taivaista häntä kohti.

Jossain lähistöllä eräs vuohipaimen heitti keppinsä maahan ja kirosi sitä miten kuninkaanpoikia aina suosittiin ja



hyysättiin; ei ikinä tullut pässinlihan tuottajille mitään hyvää, ei.

Kuten toisaalla kerrotaan, kukin kolmesta jumalattaresta — viisas Athena, ylväs Hera, ja vähäpukeinen Afrodite — houkuttelivat Parista vuorollaan, ja tietenkin lahjoivat häntä parhaansa mukaan. Afroditen lahjus oli vähäisin mutta parhaiden valittu: jos hän olisi jumalattarista kaunein, saisi Paris kauneimman kuolevaisen naisen vaimokseen.

Paris haksautti tähän, eikä huomannut kysyä kuin vasta myöhemmin sitä miksi tämä hänen omakseen ja puolisoikseen ottama kaunis nainen Helen oli arvonimeltään Spartan kuningatar, Spartan kuningas Menelaus kun tunnetusti oli naimisissa oleva äkki- ja pitkävihainen mies. Helen oli liian kaino kertoakseen asiasta, tai sitten vain Afrodite-maisen romanttisen ihastuksen mykistämä; tilanne selvisi, ja mutkistui, kun Menelaus sai kuulla että hänen kaunis nuori vaimonsa ei ollutkaan hänen kanssaan kolmatta viikkoa leikkisästi piilosilla Spartan linnakkeessa, vaan oli jonkin troijalaisen prinssipojan raskaana vaimona toisellapuolen Egeanmerta.

Josta sai alkunsa vaimon takaisinryöstö jota kutsutaan Troijan sodaksi: kuolemaa, hävitystä ja katkeruutta yli kaiken mitä ihmissanat voivat ilmaista tai mitata — Troijan tuho, ja Pariksen ja Helenin ja Menelauksen kuolemat, ja sellainen hävityksen kauhistuksen tuhonlöyhykä että itse jumalatkin kavahtivat ja poistuivat takavasemmalle oksentamaan ja muuten voimaan pahoin.

Toisaalla puolestaan Afrodite katsoi kaunista heijastustaan kultaisen omenan kiiltävästä pinnasta, ja lauloi itseksensä: »*Oops! I did it again!*» — ja Eris istui rajattomassa omenatarhassaan, kasvot heijastaen lukemattomien kultahedelmien sisäistä elävää hohdetta; ja hän nauroi.



## Of the children of Eris Discordia

Lend me your ears, O wanderers, for I am a plastic surgeon in need. This is another tale of the Golden Apples of Eris.

### 1. The family of Eris

Hear of Eris, the sweet goddess of strife, discord and chaos.

Well, chaos is formally still the province of Old Man Kaos, her grandfather, but he's retired.

Eris is the daughter of Nyx, the primeval Lady of Night, and of Erebus, the equally ancient Lord of Darkness. Beyond this, her origins are rather murky. She might have had a sister, a Lady of the Evening, but she's understandably not talked of in polite company.

The children of Eris — well, given their nature words like "brood" or "spawn" might be better, though they aren't very polite, but then again, neither are the children —

Uh, where were we?

The children of Eris are many, but mainly Ponos, Lethe, Limos, Ate, Dysnomia and fatherless Horkos: this is, back-breaking Toil, numb Forgetfulness and gnawing Hunger, reckless Folly, ruinous Lawlessness and grim Oathbreaker's Bane.

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They were collectively named (by their unlucky wetnurse) the Kakodaimones, or Cacodemons, or Evil Spirits.

The said wetnurse could be honest, since there were no other applicants.

”Seeking: A person of some patience to babysit the adowable sextuplets Toil, Forgetfulness, Hunger, Folly, Lawlessness and Bane. Not reasonable hours; all apples one can eat. Call 23.”

Given that Horkos is fatherless, one is led into considering the fathers of the other five. They are probably fatherless as well; the matter will never be settled since Eris doesn’t believe in alimony.

### **2. Prometheus and Pandora**

These six greater children of Eris played their greatest part in the unhappy tale of Prometheus and Pandora. That story should be known to all — Prometheus the Titan, the only god that ever loved mortals more than a breeder his dogs and less than a stalker his victim, stole fire from Zeus the Thunder-god and king of gods, and brought it down to shivering men; in return Zeus had Prometheus chained to a rock.

Soon after, a big bird arrived and an endless orgy of liver-pecking and screaming began.

Zeus is a little touchy, you see.<sup>1</sup>

To punish the insolent mortals that had dared to accept a gift that made their lives better, he engineered the first woman — uh, that is not the best formulation of the matter. I’ll try again.

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<sup>1</sup>One time Zeus’s gardener was late. Zeus sent one thousand bears out, and they killed ten thousand women, children and men in Aeolia. The gardener was never late again, because he died.

Well, the six children of Eris, the Kakodaimones. The truth is that, naturally, Eris had nothing to do with these events, as she cares not; the brats were lured into a cunning box by Zeus, who was very proficient in luring all kinds of bipedal or quadrupedal beings anywhere he wanted, though mainly females to his bed and not brat-godlings into tiny silver boxes.

The box was then given to Pandora, the hapless Lady of Product Descriptions, and conveyed into the world of mortals. Since the art of reading had not been invented yet, no-one could fathom the warning letters on the box ("Contents: six godlings from the Family of Strife and Chaos; best before 1/12/100 BCE; do not shake or open"), and it was opened, and out flew Toil, Hunger, and the others, and soon mortals were wondering whether liver-pecking had been, after all, the better outcome.

If the reader has heard this tale before, she surely remembers that, after the gushing-out of the Kakodaimones, Hope (Elpis) was found inside the box — well, she had probably been kidnapped by Dysnomia, who had always been a lawless she-devil.<sup>2</sup>

Since Zeus, the originator of this nastiness-loosening, had intended to torment mortal men as much as he could (maybe he was bored?), he had thus constructed a threefold trap:

Firstly, the Kakodaimones to make life hard;

Secondly, Hope to make people cling to life, thus extending the amount of hardness and suffering; and

Thirdly, Pandora, the first woman, whose later likenesses would make men constantly aware of their crudeness, rudeness and generally uncouth manners, thus driving them to make impressive fools out of themselves in War, Sport, Tuxedos and similar harmful and fruitless manly ventures.

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<sup>2</sup>Dysnomia Lawless is no relation of Lucy Lawless, or so the whispering rabbit-spirits she sent to my dreams said. (The people of New Zealand have strange powers.)

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But ah, we are sidetracked. There are still more children of Eris to be considered.

### 3. Ancient Greeks: not very bright

These then are the lesser children of Eris, the swarming multitudes if you so will: the Algea (Pains), the bloody Hysminai and Makhai (Fights and Battles), the scary Phonoi and Androktasiai (Murders and Manslaughters), and the Neikea, Amphilogiai and Pseudologoi (Quarrels, Disputes and Lies).

A clever mind might see that while Eris gave birth to daimons of Manslaughter, she didn't make the Misogyniai (Woman-haters), who were the brood of Harmonia the greatly overrated goddess of societal conformity and dumb tradition instead.<sup>3</sup>

One should always remember that the Greeks, even when given a choice, still worshipped Harmonia and other equally disastrous and dangerous godlings — like Zeus of Thunderstorms, Kings, Taxes and Other Troubles, and Athena, the supposedly wise Goddess of War and Virginity (the writer cannot see anything wise in these attributes), or Aphrodite the ditzy Goddess of Sex, Sex and, Like, More Sex.

They weren't very bright, the ancient Greeks, you see.

They certainly weren't very good in choosing their gods. Come to think of it, no-one has been or is, or ever will be. Likewise, no matter how carefully one chooses a trepanation-

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<sup>3</sup>There is not enough *guro*, nightmare fuel and body horror in the whole imagination of all Japan for Harmonia to pay for all her evil. May all mentions of her be forever without laughter; may all her temples be silent gray places of dignity, and all her followers barren and sterile as long as the planets follow their decaying orbits... for there is no punishment more horrible than the whole totality of her will and desire.

drill or holing-nail, one still ends up with a hole in one's head, and a slightly bummed feeling.

#### 4. Anemones and apples

All rumors of Eris haunting battlefields and similar places of ill repute are of course Greek fabrications — why on Greece would a female deity hang around in places that resembled nothing more than her own nursery?

The Hysminai and Makhai, Fights and Battles, remember?<sup>4</sup>

Neither is Eris hard-hearted; merely frivolous and possessing a short attention span — but then again this is true of all gods. The only thing they can really concentrate on is a grudge.

Well, the same is true of most men as well.

And women.

Maybe animals, too.

Does anyone know of an anemone with a grudge?

Eris is mostly famous for the incident of the Golden Apple of Discord, which has been fully told already, so no more of that here. The tale of the apple which launched a million deaths doesn't need much repeating.

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<sup>4</sup>After the little ones grew up, the wetnurse took up a less stressful position as a tax collector among the cannibal hermit barbarians of North Mongolia. Twenty generations later a descendant of hers, one Temujin, became a local warlord of some note, and it is recorded in the Secret History of the Mongols that one of his most ancient sayings of mystic wisdom was "A woman of burning hair; a woman of green eye; a woman of golden hand and golden fruit: these are things that the wise avoid." But that was of course inaccurate, and his son and heir Oktay married a girl of white hair, dark skin and timid eye, a girl who had a silver pendant in the shape of an apple with a blood-red ruby on it — and that particular empire fell to pieces quicker than you can say "Kallisti!" This all is told in the Secreter History of the Mongols.

## 5. The Second Apple of Eris

Another incident where Eris was involved also concerned a Golden Apple: Hercules, the famous strongman, found one one day wandering, and being a famous and entirely typical warrior hit it with his bludgeon.

The Apple was not squashed, but instead swelled into twice its original size.

Hercules screamed in rage, frothed a bit, and hit again, and again the Apple grew.

This continued until seven local villages had been crushed by the expanding Apple. Then some more openly pedagogical goddess intervened and told heavy-breathing Hercules that he had been bludgeoning the Apple of Strife, which naturally but grew stronger and greater with every bit of anger directed at it.

Hearing this, Hercules swore foully for some minutes and then strode away to kill some lions, not at all heeding the lesson. Some years later he died, no doubt because he hadn't learned what the Apple of Eris taught of the manly skills of bloodletting, troublemaking and other kinds of strife.

But, having rolled the giant Apple away (after shriveling a bit, it became the island of Lesbos), Eris had just laughed, since she delights in those that refuse to see the consequences of their ways. They have earned everything that comes on them, and in fighting for their personal orders they only increase the flood of chaos that will be their undoing.

Ah, such is Eris, the sweet goddess of strife, discord and chaos, who delights in pointing out troubles and tearing open flaws, and who loudly laughs at everyone that boasts of certainty. Until you encounter Eris again, just remember that King Kong died for your sins.



## 6. How many apples?

How many golden apples does Eris have in her garden? How much of the strife and discord of the world is her doing? The question is both profound and meaningless.

For suppose she had touched the world but once: blown a kiss at an Aeolian shepherd's cheek, distracting her enough for a lamb to get lost and die falling off a cliff. Would not that shepherd's beating have embittered her, and led her into escaping such a hard life, and becoming eventually a pirate captain and the one to burn down the city of Athens? Would not that fire kill three students of Plato's Academy, that otherwise would have cut a thousand years of blood and stupidity from mankind's history? Would not that one kiss have come to shape every single kiss thereafter? Would not a single touch of her be enough to make all that came afterwards to be touched by her?

Or, if this scenario does not satisfy you, would not that poor lamb plunging over the cliff be similarly powerful? A poet, seeing it fall, would be torn by the horror of it; and write a poem that the millennia would weep to hear:

The lamb, the poor lamb, what was white, is red; if die you must, die taking the sins of the world with you, and be dead.

And stay dead, too, for should you return, the sins should return with you, you dumb beast. Keep yourself in Hades!<sup>5</sup>

(etc.)

This is the truth that is forgotten: the world is a complex, confused place. If the world was simple, doing just one

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<sup>5</sup>Fun fact: According to latest Assyrian research, lamb killing is 15% better than goat killing in stirring up passion in your readers! (The Goat-Man Church of Epirus has reacted to this by disputation. (A *dispuellatum* is the ancient execution method of being pushed by a girl. Usually there is something to stumble over and then a cliff.))

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thing would be simple too; but as the world is not simple, doing just one thing is one of the hardest things to do. Try just getting a glass of water — you can't do it.

You will deplete your energy reserves, almost imperceptibly degrade your clothes (or tan yourself), cause wear and tear on the tap and the pipes, affect the temperature and the pressure of the room, and the energy states of the glass, and this makes a silent explosion expanding forever out from you and your glass of water — just getting a glass of water, it can't be done.

If you say “pish!” to the previous, well, you are justified. But those were only what happened before the glass of water. But your glass of water does not stay in isolation: once you have it, much stronger things happen. You feel refreshed (or soaked): an infinitude of possibilities. You are at the tap, not where you were before: an infinitude of possibilities. Everything will not happen, but something might. A stroke, a heart attack, an attack of diarrhea with you just a little too far from the toilet door.

What about making someone happy? Propagating “good”? Fucking people “up”? Nonsense, can't be done, you always do more.

No matter where you reach your hand, one of Eris's apples is there waiting for you.

## Family feuds

### I

In the beginning there was a human head.

Then a blade clove the head in twain, and the blade-wielder roared in grim mirth. In the beginning there was Ares, the rampaging God of War.

This beginning was in the time of the dim old Greeks; and among all their gods Ares was always a wolf prowling at the edges, a god of slaughter and unrest; the only one of the Grecian gods that spurred barbarians against the civilization of the thousand valleys and the hundred harbors. In the Trojan War he cheered for the alien Trojans, and his red face flew like a banner of northern lights over the walls of that city, a mirage in the lights of the besieged and the besieging.

Ever was Ares glad to see battle and slaughter. Some say for the sake of the battle; some say because of the rising blood, or the test of courage, or to woo Death Herself; others say bloodsport was Ares's nature, as burning is the nature of fire. Men do not ask why fire burns; why should they ask why the Blood Knight wars?

No man asked; not twice, anyway.

Ares never had a wife, but he had a lover: Aphrodite, the loveliest of all the goddesses, and the wife of the gimp god of the mountain, Hephaestus. Often would Ares come from

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his field of work, from the sowing of iron and salt, come as a tower of black intent, come clad in the entrails of men who'd met their unmaker; and casting aside his armor and arms, he would fall on the Goddess of Love in fierce and insistent embraces.

This was not much to the liking of Hephaestus; but being a cripple and much in the disfavor of the other gods, he could do nothing.

Besides, in those early days this cuckoldry was not such a shame as it later became: for the King of Gods then was Zeus, who loved both flesh and wine, and held no vow of trust or marriage sacred. As there were a thousand bastards of Zeus, so there were likewise many dalliances among both gods and mortals, and between them; and though this was a cause of much disapproval, especially by the parties thus disinclined, little could be done with the Lord of Gods not being inclined to force the general matter.

As for Aphrodite herself, well, she was a nice, obedient girl ever eager to please, and well knew it was proper for one as beautiful as she to have suitors, and paramours, and many daring meetings and contests of love tested and fulfilled — and knowing this, that was ever what she sought to be: a perfect goddess of beauty, grace and love as well as she could be.

In other words, she was a clueless ditz, and Zeus was a horny goat. (At least once, literally. See Anaximander's *The Seduction of the She-Goat of Ctesiphon*.)

Aphrodite was more liked by the men-gods than by the goddesses; and her children were many, though less if they came within a ramming distance of Ares.

Though more, if they strayed so close to Zeus.

## II

From the unions of Ares and Aphrodite, there came three daughters. Two of these were sickly, and were cast into the mortal world by their embarrassed mother. To the cliff

of Sparta they fell, where the weak newborn of that city were cast into a pit to die. In that pit there prowled a wolf, seeking feed; but coming across the two daughters of Ares, the wolf was torn apart and eaten instead.

These two daughters, weak among the gods, were unsurpassed among mortals; they, though their beauty was not up to the statue-like standards of Aphrodite, were full of life and more beautiful than any mortal or demigod ever was. They came out of the pit of Sparta, and went into the wild lands beyond Greece, and beyond the rude kingdom of Macedonia; in the plainslands of the Scythians they came across a great tribe of that folk, horse-bound and quarrel-hungry; and the tribe's chieftain made the mistake of thundering these two girls would be his slaves and consummated wives before the moon rose.

As the moon rose, a pair of bare feet danced on the chieftain's skull, now dead and as bereft of flesh as it had formerly been of wit. The Scythian camp blazed with fire and screams, and with terrible twin gales of laughter; and as the moon grew, that bloody joy howled from a thousand throats more. By sunrise the men were all dead, and in place of a chieftain there were two fell goddesses, two queens unlike anything in the legends and prophecies of any tribe of men.

Ever since in a corner of Scythia soon empty of other tribes there were two new ones. They had few men, and those were cook-slaves and carriers of sofas and pillows, hewers of wood and drawers of water, sports of the daytime arena and the nighttime chamber. The women, formerly so dour and demure, were the warriors of those tribes; their warriors and heroes, queens and deciders; and above all others there were the two queens cold of eye, fierce of temper, sure of hand and shameless in joy, just in judgment and peerless in battle: the Amazon queens Penthesileia and Hippolyte, the forsaken children of Ares and Aphrodite.

This accounts for two of the three children of Ares and Aphrodite: but there was a third, and much to her grief

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and that of all the world, she was more to the liking of her parents. Of her, soon more.

### III

Wherever Ares went, a flock of his folk went with him, save into the mansion of Aphrodite atop the Vesuvius mountain; that was a palace of quiet light and pinksome frilliness the crowd of war could not tolerate, nor pass the efflusively cherub-carved pastel lintels of that place.

Thus whenever Ares and Aphrodite met, these four were left outside; and they sat playing dice, drinking and muttering of bloodsheds past and those soon to come.

The first two were the twins Phobos and Deimos. Their names mean Fear and Terror; they were the heralds of Ares, and one carried a horn and the other a drum; their sound was enough to turn blood to ice-water, to burn hearts and to make men gasp for breath. Their clamor told of every battle ever fought, and all the apprehension and despair felt before those bloody dawns. Theirs was a music that made women weep and men soil themselves; theirs was a sound that struck the wise blind, and made sages into blubbering fools.

The third was the armsman of Ares, and carried his sword. Her name was Enyo, which is, Horror. She ever wore a helm because of her ruined face; and she knew the ends of battle as well as Phobos and Deimos knew their beginnings; no death nor injury was alien to her, and her own sword was a jagged thing that was cursed to always maim, but never to kill.

The fourth was a girl, Ares's adopted daughter, clad in black and crimson silks and scraps of a hundred suits of armor. She was as loud and boisterous as the others — as loud and boisterous as Phobos and Deimos, rather, for Enyo was disquietingly silent much of the time — and though she was beautiful even by the standards of the gods, her beauty was as disquieting as Enyo's armor-hidden horrors, for it

was ever mixed with some subtle wrongness, or something unusual one could never quite grasp.

It was not her attire of silks and scraps of iron, not her scarred gilt and red ruffled perfection.

It was not her mane of black hair bound with silver rings, though it flew behind her and round her like Medusa's ichory curls.

It was not, quite, the quiet depths of her ever-observing green eyes, nor the golden flecks that hovered closer to the top.

It was not her lanky, boyish frame or her fingers, never free of turning a cup of dice or a bone-handled dagger; not her heedless femininity in the most masculine of acts and appearances, or the reverse.

It was not the barbarian make-up of her face, even, not that one side was painted black as midnight with lips and eye in ovals of oily white, and the other side a negative image of this ghastly monochrome ghostliness.

No, there was nothing anyone could actually say that was wrong with her, but wherever she went rest and sleep vanished, and the night was torn with the sound of screams. Wherever she went, people became dissatisfied and ceased to see the world as they had seen it before. Though she was stern in the manner of all Ares's folk, she was never overly fractious or warlike; and yet her quiet presence was enough to start fights and schisms and feuds. Though she seldom drew a dagger, all discord was drawn to her — her name was Eris, which is, Strife.

## IV

Now Eris was an adopted daughter of Ares, and Phobos and Deimos were like sons to him, and Enyo a dear companion; but of children of his own spirit and kind Ares had but one, the third and most woeful of the three he produced with Aphrodite.

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This child was golden-locked and pale-faced; saccharine and beautiful in the manner of her mother, and insistent and unforgiving in the manner of her father. From birth, she had every gift and privilege the daughter of the most jealous god and the most vain goddess could; from birth, she was never without servants and slaves attending to her every whim, and attenuating her every minor distress.

She grew in the mansion of her mother, the palace of pinks and roses; but her rule of it was that of the iron fist of Ares, though veiled in the finest of brocaded, pearl-encrusted fabrics. She was quick to command, and quicker to assume obedience and punish disobedience; though she called it “disloyalty”, because “loyalty” sounded better than “obedience”. She was ever insistent on courtesies and forms, laws and niceties; and no voice was raised in her presence, save hers alone.

Her name was Harmonia, which somewhat predictably means, harmony: a place for everything, and everything in its place, and no bellyaching nor quibbling about the placements, thank you lovely and take your place; and as her mother was called the Queen of Beauty, she declared herself the Queen of Good.

She is the villain of this tale, if one is to believe the Erisians.

### V

Now this tale begins at that gate by the rose garden. There were no chairs, so the four sat on the grass, which was shiny green and slick like cut-offs from a dressmaker’s shop. Phobos and Deimos passed an amphora back and forth, licking their lips. Enyo sat frowning, her legs forming a circle. Every few seconds her hand would dart into that circle, a pair of fingers stabbing into the ground, coming up with a writhing earthworm that she tossed up and, with a flick of the other hand, reduced to a number of segments on her thighs.



“That’s annoying”, Eris muttered.

Enyo sighed and looked at the closed gate, closed after Ares’s going in, not all that long a while ago. “This’s boring.”

“Boring is as boring does.” Eris was laying down on her back, stretching her arms and legs as a cat might; her movements scraped a black-soil angel into the artificial green of the grass. “There’s a village downhill; I can hear them.”

“I can’t hear anything”, Enyo said, her voice a hollow whisper from inside that helmet whose terrible visor was much more pleasant than the face within.

Eris rolled her eyes; with that helmet it was an Aresian miracle Enyo heard anything at all.

As the four were companions of old and knew each other well, Enyo rolled her eyes in return, and snorted. “It’s usually enough to hear the people who are screaming.”

“Or crying”, Eris added.

“Wait”, Phobos blurted out. “Isn’t that the same thing?”

“What’s the same thing?” Deimos cried.

“Screaming and crying”, Phobos explained his brother. “They’re both pretty much *aaaaaa*—”, and he screamed some for a sample.

Deimos frowned. “Isn’t there that thing you do with your eyes?”

Phobos blinked in confusion. “Looking? I can scream with eyes closed I think. . .”

“And how proud we are of your multitasking”, Eris said with a smile. “But the difference your brother means is tears.”

“So crying is screaming with tears?” Phobos blinked again. “Seems too simple to be true.”

“Many do”, Eris said, nodding in Phobos’s general direction. “Then again, what does that poem say? ‘Agamemnon cried, Argos, show now no sign of weakness!’ Hardly something to say with tears in your eyes. Ruins the effect.”

“So screaming is the one with tears?” Deimos scratched his head in confusion. “I’ve been doing my screaming all

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wrong. Or calling what I've been doing the wrong thing. Terrible."

"I hear a noise now", Enyo grated. "Coming up from the village."

"Maybe pretty girls", Phobos said.

"Maybe pretty boys!" Deimos said.

"Maybe a cunning—" Eris began, but Enyo interrupted her.

"Not unless those youths are centaurs. A horse with a rider, iron hooves and red hot hurry. One of our own."

A horse came, red-maned and black-eyed, and carrying a rider in black armor and with red eyes; one of the restless riders of Ares's armies. "A message for the Lord of Battle!" it cried, and paused fidgeting and shivering before the garden door. It laid a hand on the hilt of its sword and turned at the four. "Give me the let to pass. I have a message for the Lord of Battle."

"It is not a portal for which we can give passage", Enyo said, rising. "Nor would we, if we could; there is a world of danger such as you are not prepared for, within. Leave the message to us and depart."

The rider breathed in deep, and then out. Out of its mouth came a tongue, long and red, supple, a streamer of shaking flesh. Hissing spit hit the road, the grass, turning both black and dead. A hand shot up, and grasped hilt-like the black cylinder the tongue's out-spooling had drawn out.

The rider swallowed its tongue, and handed the scroll to Enyo.

"We shall see this delivered."

"A message for the Lord of Battle, for your delivery", the rider gasped, and then dug heels into its steed's flanks and galloped away, horse and rider both shaking with urgency and need for some new purpose.

"Well", Enyo sighed, wiping most of the messenger's drool off the leather case, "shall we wait?"

"Might be important", Phobos said.

“Might make him angry if delayed, important or not”, Deimos said.

“You’re not going to go in there?” Eris said, frowning.

“If I must, I will”, Enyo said, and laid a hand on the handle of the garden door. “If I am not back in half a quick battle, come rescue me.”

## VI

A full quick battle later the amphora was empty, and Eris had made several soil-angels on the grass.

“We need a siege”, Phobos said.

Deimos shrugged. “As long as we aren’t besieging the wine.”

“You reckon there’s wine inside? Maybe that’s what’s keeping Enyo.”

“I need wine”, Deimos groaned. “If I’m not back—”

“We’ll hold a wake”, Phobos laughed.

Time passed.

Deimos did not return.

Phobos went to look for him, and Enyo.

Phobos did not return. Nor did any of the others.

Eris spent times looking up, hoping to see faint stars in the daytime sky, for the mountain on which Aphrodite’s palace was, was high; but there were no stars to be seen.

In a way this was logical: why should Aphrodite, the brightest of stars, suffer the presence of others?

Eris was not afraid for the others, for Phobos was fear, and he was not there with her. Neither did she feel terror, for Deimos, et cetera; this was not actually rational reasoning, but it worked for her and did no harm as long as she was aware of this.

As for Enyo, or Horror, Eris rather liked reading horror, and tracing the letters carved on her armor, and under it.

The door to the garden was wood, peculiar in being a pale pink in color. When the light on it was bright, it was dreamily wonderful. When the light dimmed, as it did when

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Eris stood up next to it, it seemed as if the wood had dreamed of being flesh, and woken up halfway.

The doorknob was gold, so polished one could read the hands and claws that had grasped it since the last polishing: Ares. Enyo. Deimos. Phobos.

Eris went in.

\* \* \*

Somewhere far away Hebe, the cupbearer of the gods, the god or goddess of youth, androgynous and gorgeous, a trap for those who mind the difference, dangled his or her legs over the abyss of Olympos, looking at clouds from above.

“They’re like ants”, Hebe’s companion said.

“More quarrelsome than ants”, Hebe breathed.

“We’re like ants”, the companion snarled, casting a glance behind them, towards the golden palaces of the gods.

Hebe smiled, and trailed a hand over the other’s golden hair and delicious flesh. “Divinity is eaten by its children.”

“What do you mean?”

“The Titans overthrew the First God, tore old Uranus to pieces. Zeus destroyed and imprisoned the Titans in turn, when he was young. In time, might not younger, cleverer gods. . .”

The treason hung in the air, heavy and succulent.

## VII

The house of Aphrodite was all sugar and sweet and everything nice, on the outer parts: sickly-sweet flowers hung from white rafters that suggested a pink ceiling above. At every turn there was a small table with a plate of sweet-breads on it; next to each table stood a life-size statue of a maid, eyes closed and hands spread in a dress-raising curtsy.

Those might have been actual maids instead of statues, Eris thought; locked in servitude, respecting empty

corridor-turns just in case their mistress went by, invisible and smelling of roses.

Further in, the white retreated, and the pinks and reds intruded. Curtains grew curved; interior courtyards were covered by silk canopies that made air pink and flesh red; statues screamed in silent pleasure, their finest-weave clothing concealing much, but suggesting too many limbs underneath.

Servants, occasionally passing in hurried tasks, gave Eris wide way and certain looks; she didn't much care for the looks, as they seemed to all suppose her looks were for the pleasure of someone other than herself.

Finally there was the red door of Aphrodite's own chamber.

By the sounds from within, it was clear Ares and Aphrodite were there.

Also, there was a suggestion of some livestock, and crockery.

A poet might sing of cudgels and jam, hearing those sounds; of quicksand and thrashing oxen; of a volcano and a thunderstorm pushing into each other.

A poet would go insane shortly after, too, for the things gods and goddesses scream in their inner amours are not words they ever speak to mortals; not twice to the same mortal, anyway. War despoiling Love while Love's tentacles swim into War is fine as a poetical image; but to hear that spoken, suggested, demanded, reified, advertised behind a red door, translucent with heat. . . lesser men would die, and poets would go mad. The floor would be slick with vomit, come and blood all the way to the closest precipice.

Eris was a goddess, so she merely frowned and said, "Really."

Then she raised a hand to knock, remembered Enyo had the message, and said, "Ah, fuck."

\* \* \*

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Tartarus was the Pit. Into this Pit below everything, the remains of Uranus and the bones of Cronos of the Titans had been flung, and the first children of Cronos that he had feared, and the siblings of Cronos that Zeus had exiled, Zeus the son that Cronos had not thought to fear.

In Tartarus, there is no differentiation, no time or memory, only seething primordial law.

Above Tartarus stretched the agony-wrecked ruin of Gaea, despoiled and broken by Zeus and by Cronos before him; the screaming throne of the god of gods.

Above Gaea, the abodes of the living, and above them Olympos, the chosen home of Zeus and his people.

There was no mind in Tartarus; never had been.

There was not much mind in Gaea; and less memory.

Out of those two, from the place where the last roots withered into roiling darkness, a child came.

Its name was Typhon.

## VIII

In the meanwhile, in a hall within the walls of Aphrodite's domain, there was a tea party going on. The walls and rooms of Aphrodite rose petal-like round that hall in pink splendor, though it was separated on all sides from them by rings of white sand and black leafless trees.

The trees had had leaves, once, but the hall's mistress had disapproved of their disarray, and they had been plucked away.

Similarly, the mistress's servants had luxuriant waterfalls of very straight and well-combed hair, or no hair at all.

The hall was high, with a columned terrace running round it, all the pillars and walls identical, and all of them spotless white marble. The doors, one on each wall, were black iron, as were the murder-slits above them. In front of each pillar — and there were hundreds of them, going round the whole hall — exactly five steps away, stood a man

in armor, hidden from view by white iron and black leather, with a red bloom on the chest, unmoving, with a spear held in one hand, and the other holding the hilt of a short, broad sword.

“Hello.”

Eris waved a hand in front of one such sentinel’s face.

“Anybody there?”

The sentinel did not answer; did not react, even, to this stranger in scraps of silk and armor.

Eris reached in past flaps of leather and tweaked the guard’s nose. “Have you seen a few like me pass? Fear, Terror, Horror? Looked like they’re called?”

“None shall pass!” the sentinel grunted, somewhat nasally.

Eris frowned. “What, constipation all over the land?”

The sentinel did not answer.

“Ah, you’re hopeless.”

Eris went to the door and entered, unopposed.

The sentinels had been commanded that “none should pass”; the prevailing interpretation of this command was that none should pass them by, that is, go along the wall unhindered. Eris, moving at a tangent to the wall, directly towards the door, was not in this class of moving objects, and thus did not need to be un-passefied.

Inside, the hall was a honeycomb round a central room, and there there was a tea party: a long table with various puppets seated around it, living and dead; and at the table’s head the mistress of the hall, in a plain white gown and a heavy crown of gold that kept slipping to the right.

Among the attendants — there must have been three dozen of them, some blank-faced servants and some stiff mummies of Egypt — were three familiar ones, stiff as if some great calamity was imminent, and liable to strike at any moment. Phobos was nervously nibbling at a sweetbread, holding it with both hands, Deimos was sipping tea — his tea-stained lap held the crushed remains of a cup, and the mummy to the right of him was tea-less — and

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Enyo was seated at the right hand of the crowned mistress of the party.

Across the table from Enyo was a wide-eyed shaking girl in a green uniform, her face white with terror, her hair pulled back to a thick brown braid.

“Enya? *How fascinating!* Do you sing?” she was saying.

Servants in black and white circled round the table, pouring tea and offering nibble-ables, moving in pre-arranged circles that, by their turning and flinching, Phobos and Deimos were utterly unable to predict.

“I am announcing”, cried a man at the tea-room’s doorway, “A Ms. Gray!”

“A ha ha!” the girl in green said, eyed fixed on Enyo’s grisly face; Enyo had been told nobody wore a helmet to a tea party. “Shouldn’t that be said Ms. A. Gray?”

“I don’t know any Gray.” The party’s mistress uprighted her crown and frowned.

The girl in green’s mouth snapped shut; she leaned back so suddenly her chair almost fell over. Her eyes darted from the Aresian’s face to that of her mistress; the terror in them did not diminish.

“No, I don’t think I know nor like anyone Gray”, Aneris Harmonia said, and turned her face towards the herald and the door.

## IX

Instants stretched to moments.

Moments stretched to whiles.

Whiles stretched to a full pause.

Then something snapped, and Harmonia screamed: “I was told a Ms. Gray was entering and I am not seeing this!”

The guests and the regulars flinched alike. Enyo stared wide-eyed at this mistress, and saw the blood of Ares in those rage-red cheeks, and those flaming eyes.

“Oh”, whispered a voice seemingly out of nowhere, “but I was merely announced.”



There was little character in the voice, but Enyo recognized it, and took this as an opportune moment to slide out of her chair and under the table.

“Announcement implies entrance!” Harmonia screeched. “Where are you?”

“Oh, I was mistaken. I came in without entering. As you can see — well, not the best choice of words — by the reality of my incorporeality.”

Harmonia stood up, white dress snapping with suitable dramaticity, and pointed a finger in the general direction of the door. “Nonsense! To come in and to enter are the same thing!”

Phobos shivered and nearly screamed as something took hold of his foot. Glancing down he saw Enyo, furiously gesturing for silence. Fear slipped under the table, and the two crawled along towards the table’s other end and the door.

“No no!” the sourceless voice laughed. “Come and enter the same? Why, if I would *come* to agreement with you, I would *enter* into an agreement with you — who are you, that you take nodding for an oath?”

Deimos vanished under the table; the mummy next to him harrumphed and retrieved its teacup.<sup>1</sup>

“I take all oaths very seriously!” Harmonia was standing on the table by this point, not seeing the invisible Ms. Gray, and thereby fuming.

“Ah, I give up”, sighed the voice. “I am here disguised as one of your mummies. Not the Big A, obviously, but one of these more wound types.”

“Ha!”

“Guess which?”

Harmonia’s eyes narrowed. A sly smile rose to her lips. “My servants! Strip all the mummies!”

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<sup>1</sup>The mummy was named Oigos; a gaunt, quiet gentleman of the first Egypt, the land long lost to the Reed Sea, the kingdom which the Greeks called Atlantis. See “The Second Incantation of Avyctes” by Clark Ashton Smith.

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Now it is well known that mummies are immensely dignified, gentle beings.<sup>2</sup> They do not take kindly to any imposition on their privacy, not even by their mistress and goddess. That their mistress and goddess should momentarily forget or ignore this would be an almost as great a shock as the idea of unwrapping themselves in public.

And unwrapping themselves — unlike the living, who flit from one set of clothes to another several times a week or *daily*, mummies stay true to their wrappings. They are sanctified with oils and bitums when they are made, and they are made along with the mummy itself: indeed, the wrappings make the mummy, and are considered by some to be the most essential part of the whole death-denizen. The living might raise a hat in casual greeting: for a mummy to unwrap an inch of themselves is indecent lasciviousness that no strip-tease of the breathing kind can equal.

Thus, as Harmonia's maids and manservants and men-at-arms in white and black descended on the mummies, and the mummies ululated their polite yet desperate distress, and sought to step away from the grasping arms, and flailed in politely constrained fury — as this happened it was such a riot that the three of Ares crawled to the door unnoticed, and stepped through, and found Eris behind it.

"I *knew* it was you!" Enyo whispered in relief. "You throw your voice like no other!"

Eris smiled, and then cast her voice to come from the direction of one particularly ill-tempered Atlantean warrior mummy. "Unwrap me if you can, order-hag! I bare my prune-like genitals in your direction!"

They fled to the tune of furious screams.

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<sup>2</sup>Also somewhat boring — the use of "dry" as a byword for unentertaining comes from an Atlantean expression, "mummies are dry, and dull; so are the swords of mummies; and so are you." However, the reason mummies are boring is their age: ever since the beginning of non-genetic transmission of information each generation has moved faster, and spoken quicker, than the ones before it.

\* \* \*

Typhon! Son of earth and darkness. Bane of Zeus the Despoiler, bane of the killer of his parents and uncles and aunts and cousins, the self-proclaimed King of Gods and Fucker of Mortals.

Typhon! A mountain beyond description. Thousand eyes! Thousand hands! Shambling from the shadows with a fringe of red thunder. Serpent-footed titan of the storm, Typhon!

Fire-mouthed, star-haired Typhon! Son of earth and darkness. Death of the King!

Out of darkness he came, crying Zeus's name, and the God of Gods stood up and marshalled the armies of Olympus.

## X

The sun was setting when Ares came out of Aphrodite's house. The mountains to the west were a jagged red line; the clouds above then like bloodied bandages.

"A message for you, boss."

Ares caught the message-cylinder and ripped it open with one clawed finger. "Feh." He glanced at Enyo. "Long time waiting?"

"Eh, midday maybe." Enyo affected as much casual-ness as possible; none of the four had wanted to return to the gruesome house of pink and tea. Getting into fights with your boss's lover's daughter's servants wasn't good form. When the boss was Ares, it wasn't good for your form, either.

"Grrm." Ares tossed the read message aside. "A war is brewing. We are needed to attend."

"Ithaca?" Phobos queried, with delight in his eyes.

"No. Typhon."

"Where's Typhon?"

Deimos elbowed his brother in the ribs. "Not where. *Who.*"

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Enyo shook her head. “Not who. *What.*”

“Typhon, get of Tartarus and Gaea? That old never-seen storm titan?” Eris asked, eyes bright, mouth turning to a smile as if Typhon was a bard whose coming around had been long waited for.

Ares growled. “That. Enyo, go get the camp up. We march the crooked ways tonight, and must be at Olympos by dawn.”

Enyo raised an arm in salute, and galloped away downhill, towards the plain where Ares’s own phalanx lounged in well-deserved rest.

“Phobos, Deimos. Attend to me. Eris—”

“*Eris!*” a voice cried, shrill and indignant. “So that’s the witch!”<sup>3</sup>

A furious parade boiled out of the pink door: black-and-white armor and black-silk-and-white-lace, and driving them two singular figures.

One was a woman with a too large crown and too plain a gown.

The other was seemingly a woman of statuesque beauty. Her skin was white like marble, shot through with veins of gold and pink. Her nails and hair were there same marble, but it lived on her, moved and bent as a living thing would. She wore no crown and no dagger; her beauty was power and weapon enough.

Ares stood straighter, seeing this latter woman; a smile, half a smirk, raised one end of his lips. Even so, his opposite hand twitched, clearly wishing for Enyo his sword-carrier to be present, as the flood in black and white surrounded him and his three.

“Oh wow”, said Phobos, eyes on the stone-skinned woman.

“Oh crap”, said Deimos, seeing the first woman — that is, Harmonia, not her mother, Aphrodite of marble beauty.

“What, these people!” Harmonia cried. “They left without my leave! They’re in league with this— this—” She

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<sup>3</sup>“*Eris, ke? Oti khamaitypes!*” in the Greek original.

waved a finger in Eris's general direction in wordless fury.

"Woman?" Eris suggested.

"Mother", Harmonia grated. "I think I want a new companion! She! You've been telling me to get new friends, so I think she would do nicely!"

She stared at Eris with an expression that was to friendship as a raven is to a writing desk.

"Really."

At that one word out of Aphrodite's mouth Phobos sighed and sat down, a silly expression on his face.

Aphrodite looked at Eris, querulous; Eris looked back, smiling, affecting the most blank *simper* possible.

"She's yours", Aphrodite said with a sigh.

Ares shrugged. "She's her own."

Aphrodite raised a white eyebrow. "You anarchist."

"You spoiler."

"You despoiler."

Ares chuckled. "When I am called, I come. No more."

"You call excess, 'no more'? What's enough, then?"

"For some, nothing."

Aphrodite smiled. Somewhere not far away a chorus of birds burst into song. "And for some there is. . . everything."

"A sweet ambush, that."

"'Tis not an ambush, if one walks into it with open eyes."

"Who would close one's eyes to such a sight?"

(Phobos gazed at his master with a dazed expression; he did not see Ares engaged in romantic banter all that often. Deimos, meanwhile, was busy rolling his eyes for the two of them.)

Harmonia smiled at Eris while the lovers' banter went on. Eris gave an innocent smile back, and the expression fell off Harmonia's face, revealing something ugly and nameless.

"Companion?" Ares rumbled. "She has none?"

Aphrodite shrugged. "She keeps. . . losing them. Some inheritance of her father, no doubt. A father that does not often attend to her."

## CHAPTER 8. FAMILY FEUDS

Ares's eyes flicked back and forth: a companion of his, and a daughter in want of a companion. "They're not... compatible."

Aphrodite laughed, throwing her head back in mirth. "And are we? Love and war, fair and foul, and yet we make such a sport of our meetings!"

Ares sighed in defeat. "Fair enough. Eris, attend to this one, and obey her in all things."

Harmonia's smile was wider than the Aegean Sea.

"Prior commitments notwithstanding?" Eris asked.

Ares raised a black eyebrow.

"The Typhon thing?"

"Bah. Let's have this last hurrah then." Turning to Aphrodite, the God of War reached out a hand and patted some anatomy. "Sorry, Love. Seems there's one more war to be fought; but it shouldn't take too long. I'll visit soon, and bring her along."

"Oh", Harmonia said, with much sweetness. "I hope to see you again very, *very* soon!"

And a variety of black and white sharp edges glittered behind her.

\* \* \*

"What was that all about?" Deimos whined.

"What was what all about?" Phobos asked.

"You are useless; you know that, right?"

\* \* \*

Mid-flight conversation, translated from arched eyebrows, stern looks and mouths saying "pap!":

Ares: Such obeisance is the proper act of the submissants, the aeon-sweeping arc of the law of all gods, as emanates from the eternal authority and iron-rod potency of Zeus Xenios Koilotitan himself, last and first of gods. This law's breakers are forever apostates and accursed, to their

or the law's last day. This is a law that would compel even me to its execution, passively if not actively — and either, with a pack of sycophants and backstabbers sitting atop Olympus, would be your execution. This you well know.

Eris: This I well know. It is law's prerogative to determine the areas where dislaw holds sway.

Ares: Good. Then we are in agreement.

## XI

The mountain Olympus has fifty peaks, and under each is buried a titan. Each shuddered in fear and excitement as Typhon approached, and with Typhon, war.

The personified war, Ares, was already among those peaks, where they rose to the final peak of the home of the gods.

Many other gods were there, for if Ares was war's witness, these others were to be its instrument. Many demigods were there, too, the various progeny of Zeus and other gods — though mostly Zeus — led by Heracles, son of Zeus and Alcaeus<sup>4</sup>, and a noted killer of living things: monsters and men, children and wives, if it breathed, red-handed Heracles had made it cease.

Zeus's own guard was there, led by Hebe — though the cupbearer's attention was taken by supplying the god of gods with wine and dates.

Other gods, major and minor, were there as well, armed and armored in such fashion as they had seen fit.

In the case of Priapus, this was blue paint and a golden ring not on a finger.

Hermes was there, with fleet feet and a great horn bow.

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<sup>4</sup>Many legends falsely report Heracles as the son of Zeus and Alcmena, Alcaeus's daughter. This is incorrect. Zeus, given to disguising himself as anything that led him to sexual conquests, once upon time took the form of a comely though brawnsome girl and forcefully seduced Alcaeus, king of Medea. Then, finding an alien presence within himself, he transferred the baby into Alcaeus's belly, which greatly discomfited the king, and led him to destroy all records of the tryst and the pregnancy, which no doubt accounts for this confusion.

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Hephaestus was there too, come from the great mountain Etna, hauling a forge on his back, studded with the hilts of red-hot swords. Accompanying him on the fight-formation's backward barrier was a frightful anatine witch from the great mountain Vesuvius, with a cup of molten golden coins for the settlement-payments of those greedy before the fight.

“What?” Phobos asked. Deimos sighed. “It means if anybody asks why they should fight, the scary duck lady pours molten gold on their heads. Then they don't ask no more.”)

Athena was there, enthroned in the middle of an Athenian phalanx of mortals.

Dionysus was there, green-faced behind a helm, offering a fearsome sneer to the enemy, his spear-butt shaking a martial cadence to the tune of his *delirium tremens*.

Hera was there, or nearby, at the lip of the final peak's plateau, looking down on the army, along with many other less martial gods, including Aphrodite and Harmonia.

“What is this Typhon anyway?” some godling yawned.

“Display your erudition!” Aphrodite whispered at her daughter — Harmonia smiled brightly and monologued loudly.<sup>5</sup>

“The power of Olympos is rooted in our sovereign majesty, cemented in the blood of the Titans, who our father Zeus overthrew. Typhon is the last of the Titans, and powered by and born of hatred towards our sovereignty. You are asking, all, who is attacking Olympos? Hatred and evil is attacking Olympos, as always; and this one time that hatred and evil wears a most transparent face in the shape of the weak, cowardly, slovenly, bad-smelling monster thing, Typhon, who hates our sovereignty. That's who Typhon is, and that's why we fight.”

“What, *we*?” the godling squawked in alarm.

“Well, they”, Aphrodite laughed, and pointed downwards.

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<sup>5</sup>This means giving a speech, not having a gastric reversal or some other unfortunate accident.



“You shouldn’t say that, mother”, Harmonia muttered, loudly enough to be heard, but not loudly enough to be heard by her mother. She then cleared her throat, waited for applause — none came, leading her to conclude the general people of Olympos were a much dimmer lot than her own court — and continued. “According to a recent prophecy from on high” — she glanced down, in Zeus’s direction — “Typhon will be defeated by the Lord of Olympos with lightning and majesty, and hurled back to Tartarus for all eternity.”

“Oh good.” The godling fluttered its wings in relief. “Prophecies are good.”

Overhead, things fluttered upwards, winged in lace and soap bubbles, and armored in black steel. The lightning-sigil of Zeus was painted on the forehead of each. Above them, dark clouds gathered, ominous in their silence.

“Thunder fairies”, Aphrodite sighed. “Get umbrellas, everybody.”

\* \* \*

“Do we make music?” Phobos asked, giving his brother a mocking little curtsy.

Deimos brought his horn to his lips in a practised motion that was almost erotic. The look in his eyes was fully so. “The red music of war?”

Phobos sat, cradling the giant bowl of his black drum between his legs. “What else?”

BOOM.

Each heart skipped a beat, hearing that first one of the drum of Fear.

A whine began, as if a distant wail of orphans.

BOOM.

The drum beat quicker, and so did the hearts.

Gods pursed their lips, fearful that the whine of Dread’s horn echoed from their lips; and as a black mountain rose over the horizon, the band played on.

## XII

A mountain walked or stumbled on serpent feet. If true mountains have boulders and trees, this one had eyes and hands. To the fifty mountains of Olympos, fifty imprisoned Titans, came one more of each.

On wings of thunder, arms spread, Zeus rose to meet the coming beast. All manner of winged creatures rose with him; and far above him, the thunder fairies flew in white flashes, whipping up the dreadful cone of the storm over Olympos.

Zeus pointed, and a wing of eagles with the wingspan of triremes wheeled off the formation and towards Typhon.

The mountain that walked did not slow down; as the eagles swooped down to tear at the tree-like arms, the arms shot out to meet them, and tore them to pieces.

“Forward!” cried a hoarse voice far below; Heracles the slayer ran towards the mountain, and his army of heroes and other blood-letters followed him. Above them, the bulk of Typhon rushed on; ahead of them, its serpent feet made a dark jungle of Atlas-hydras. The heroes rushed in, leaving red and white blood and wounds in their wake.

Hermes tensed his great bow, took aim, and loosened an arrow. One of Typhon’s thousand eyes exploded in a fountain of vitreous humors. The mountain shook, thundering as the steel-hard tree-hands clattered against each other. The roar, from some unseen mouth, bowled soldiers over and made gods cringe; it battered the storm of Olympos and wrung dark bitter rain from it; and then the roar formed into words.

»ZEUS THE PATRICIDE! ZEUS THE DESPOILER! ZEUS THE RED-HANDED!«

The other fliers withdrew before the fury of the roar, and Zeus flew alone on wings of lightning, in the great crevasse made by Typhon’s encroachment on Olympos, like a star in inverted skies.

“I am!” he cried; a ring of thunder crashed down round the two mountains. “Get thee hence, monster of outer darkness! The fury of the Titans will not avail thee here! Go weep in Gaea’s hem, or hide your face in the robes of Tartarus, or I shall tear out your manhood and batter you to death with it — thou art a million years premature to challenge the Lord of Olympos!”

»BOLDLY THOU SPEAK», thundered Typhon, »THROWING OUT THOSE WORDS BELIEVING THOU ALONE KNOW THEIR DREADFUL IRONY. WERE THOSE NOT THE WORDS KRONOS THY FATHER SPOKE TO THEE, BEFORE THOU BY THE SAME DEED TOOK HIS LIFE?»

“Lies!” Zeus roared.

»TRUTH, BY THE CASTRATED AND BATTERED BODY OF KRONOS!» Trees fell on Olympos with the force of Typhon’s scream; trees, and gods, and some flimsier temples.

“Liar I name you, and a slanderer! I would challenge you, foul beast, were you not in your foulness alone in the world—”

The mountain shook in terrific violence, red fire leaping from limbs crashing against each other, the eyes like lakes shining with such mad gaiety a hundred gods fell down in fear and faintness; a roar to best the drum of Phobos howled out of Typhon, as if all the world was the chest of a dying pneumoniatic.

Typhon was laughing.

Atop Typhon, a fell figure in red and black stood, lanky, boyish, green-eyed, with black hair curling like the curls of Medusa.

“Have your duel!” Eris shrieked. “Here’s a glad second for Typhon, the champion of the dispossessed!”

\* \* \*

“Hey!” Phobos cried over the roar of the drums. “What’s she doing over there?”

“*Fwhiit!*” Deimos answered because of the horn.

## CHAPTER 8. FAMILY FEUDS

“Hey! Boss!”

Ares turned at his sons, a strange expression on his face. “Who am I?”

Phobos pondered this for three strikes of the drum, and then cried out: “War! Only War! Pure War! Neither this side nor that, but Fear and Terror, Slaughter and Blood-Red Madness!”

Deimos ceased his piping for a moment, and cried towards the giant beast: “You go, girl!”

Ares smiled, and his sons shuddered with dread and delight.

### XIII

The two circled each other, the king of gods, Zeus of Olympus, the latest in a line of lords by patricide, and all-fathers by genocide and rapacious breeding — and the beast of prophecy, Typhon of Tartarus, son of earth and darkness, the devourer, the destroyer, the dethroner.

In challenge and in duel they circled each other, as was the old habit of the gods, ever since Uranus first made the culture of gods; and each had a second to observe the challenge’s proper process.

For Typhon, the sole creature that would stand for the Tartarean: Eris, Goddess of Discord, ever sworn to dissent.

For Zeus, the one that loudest had cried to oppose both Typhon and its herald: Harmonia, the white goddess of Propriety.

On ground, the challenge was met, and in the airs above, the seconds looked on; and it seemed to some there that the greater war and enmity was in the skies.

Down, the war was lightning and the mountain: the heroes of Heracles fled screaming, casting aside swords made lightning-rods fatal to those without the wits to see this. Typhon was an array of catapults and ballistae, and its rain was stones. Zeus was a ball lightning, a star of deafening

fire. There was a fire on the mountain, and lesser mountains leaping up and crashing down, each barely broken by thunder's fury.

But up, above, there were two shadows turning around each other. One dark, like the hair of the maid of Ares. One light, like the hair of the daughter of Ares. In the darkness, there was a green fire as if eyes. In the light, a radiant pair like twin suns. As the fury of Zeus boomed below, its light penetrated both the darkness and the light, and showed the face each concealed; and below gods and heroes alike cried with terror and averted their eyes.

Aphrodite stood still on the lip of Olympos, gazing upwards, eyes brimming with stern pride, even as the goddesses gathered round her wailed and concealed their faces with their cloaks, as a hissing rain of poison began to fall.

Ares stood still in the gorge of the war, except for an arm that flickered to stop a wayward stone or bolt now and then; and his face was stern and unreadable.

Fear and Terror played their music, and Horror danced round them, swelling, the armor sliding to show such flesh as should not be seen beneath it. And when Enyo cast off her helmet, the last of the heroes both mortal and divine fell to their faces and wished for the final darkness.

Lightning stabbed at Typhon, exploding its eyes like thunder tears up lakes, but was this not the hundred-eyed Typhon, the thousand-eyed Typhon? The beast roared and battered the Lord of Gods, a rain of gravel, a torrent of rubble slamming into his humanoid form, at his limited limbs. Stones rained, blood rained, pieces of the Titan and the god rained, and in the low place Ares licked his lips and saw that this was good.

And Typhon slammed against the side of Olympos, the mountain atop which the gods dwell, and began to climb.

Hermes fell to his knees, then, seeing that dreadful bulk push on past him, and against the divine wall. The bow fell from his fingers; and meaningless words tumbled past his lips, octopus and antigravity and perpendicularity; and Ty-

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phon pushed upwards on unseen limbs, towards the plateau where the gods dwelt, Zeus turning and turning round it like the king of all fireflies, the war a halo of light and death round them.

In the skies, mutters drowned the thunder, and dark clouds of intent closed off the light. Motes of light danced, formed into grids and cubes and spheres of crystalline order, only to melt into quivering disorder forming vortices of disarray, forming constellations of chaos against the death-dark skies. A mouth opened, exhaling such light as had been the first smile of Uranus, the first of gods, and the stars died. Another orifice opened, belching a fell wind that snuffed some lights and made others burn brighter; a wavering curtain of light, blooming with more and more colors, slamming into a curtain of pure, brilliant, white light — the sound of this was waves crashing against the edge of all creation, all the souls of all creation muttering their names to ward off some frozen doom — in the skies, Harmony and Disorder clashed, not as effects but as essences, and the ground below their spectators grew slick with feces and urine.

Stars themselves arraigned in rows and columns, and moved in spirals, decaying from order to chaos; and roaring giants of starlight slipped from the skies, falling to earth, moaning of a world in flux. Dark space bats wheeled down, screaming, their wings aflame with a consuming lightless fire. Black ichor, the blood of creation, wept down from the darkness above, and red wounds gaped in the skies of the world, showing the boiling nothingness beyond.

Order and chaos fought, and below them, unseeing, Zeus and Typhon fought.

### XIV

Zeus raised his arms, and roared past the pain of flayed skin and ground bones, roared past fear and anguish: and where had been fifty-two mountains on Olympos, the fifty

and Olympos itself and Typhon, there came a fifty-third — a mountain of light, tall and steep, a peak of brilliance slamming from the skies, boiling, howling, eating light from the spindle of all creation, and the forge of the Titans — a mountain of Light the Destroyer, the central beam of the world before it passed on, the pillar which holds up the world, with Typhon ground under its heel.

There was a sound the like of which has not been heard since, and after the sound, Typhon's death-cry, no sound.

Then slowly, silently, Typhon slipped free of the mountain of Olympos, slipped and slid, and fell. A few of the lesser mountains tumbled into ruin as it fell, and crashed, and laid weeping and boiling in the valley beneath the home of gods: weeping the ichors which are the life-blood of titans and gods, and boiling and smoking for the reason of Cruel Light.

"I am", Zeus roared, shining and pock-marked like the Moon, "Zeus! The Destroyer! The Conqueror! The Lord of All!"<sup>6</sup>

And as a comet screams inwards, trailing light, so Zeus the Lord of Gods swept at Typhon's bulk, and with a sweep of his arms bore into it, and tore into it, and disappeared into that vast shell to seek out the divine core within.

There was a silence, even though all round Olympos fires raged and temples fell in on themselves; for in their fear and terror the gods wept quietly.

The hole in the skies which the light had made faded, filling with rising dark smoke; and through the smoke, faint fearful stars peeked. On the lip of Olympos, Aphrodite lowered her eyes, and suddenly found Ares and three muted musicians standing next to her.

And on the lip of the fall towards Typhon's ruin, the air shifted, and two female forms were there, tall and imperi-

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<sup>6</sup>*Ehimai Zeus! Ombrios! Aphiesios! Keraunios kai Astrapaios! Stratios kai Sthenios! Zeus Kharmon!* (I am Zeus, of the rain, rain-releasing! Of the the thunderbolt, of the lightning! Warlike and strong! Zeus, the breaker of teeth!)

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ous and shining with the light of battle.

“Such a war”, Eris said.

“Such a war”, Harmonia repeated.

\* \* \*

Eris inclined her head in Harmonia’s direction. “Greetings, Aphrodite, the spawn of Uranus.”

Aphrodite’s eyes narrowed. “Such conduct from one who would be my daughter’s companion.”

“Oh, mother”, Harmonia cooed, “no matter. Didn’t you see us playing in the skies?”

Aphrodite rolled her eyes. “I saw every sheep in Aeo-lia swept into the endless abysms of stellar night, never to return. I do not wish for such a fight in my house.”

Eris’s face was a mask of wax, mostly out of containing a whoop of victory.

“However”, Aphrodite continued, “it is not that I consider your behavior unfit for the company of my daughter, o Goddess of Discord. I consider your behavior unfit for any goddess of Olympos, or any decent divinity. Your ways are an outright rebellion against us all.”

Around them, gods and goddesses slowly ceased their weeping and prone quaking and rose to follow this argument.

Hermes stepped to Aphrodite’s side, his bow and an arrow clutched in one hand. His eyes were hard and angry.

Aphrodite’s eyes were dancing with hurt and pity, as was proper for the Goddess of Love.

Harmonia’s eyes were two balls of fire in ashen sockets, and her white smile was a crescent moon under which only dead things walk.

Hermes raised his other hand, notched the arrow, drew taut the string.

A fist laid itself over Hermes’s, crushing. The bow and arrow snapped in two, and Hermes cried out in pain.



Ares let go of the messenger-god, and watched dispassionately as he crumbled to the ground, cradling his hand and crying. “You will not threaten one of my people.”

“She—” Hermes gasped, “she’s the one who started it, the little—” The next word was lost as Ares’s knee gently broke his nose.

“You will not insult one of my people, either.”

“She did, though.” Aphrodite turned to face her lover. “Without her, there would have been no second, and thus no duel. How does the God of War prefer a duel over a war of all the gods against the beast?”

Ares snorted. “This lot isn’t capable of war. But the Lord himself, he is.”

“So now you cast yourself as the one to win this war by your strategic brilliance?”

Ares threw back his head and laughed. “I am War, not Peace!”

(Somewhere in the back of the crowd, the God of Peace said “Right, I’m outta here!” and left.)

Eris raised a hand to cover a smile. “And I am Discord, not Strategy.”

“Mother, they’re both traitors to Olympos!” Harmonia cried, and then cried at the assembled gods. “In the name of Zeus, seize them!”

The assembled gods blanched, looking at fell Ares and his armsmen. Then they glanced at each other, and saw that they were numerous, and armed, even if against Typhon and not this new target. And in many breast there rose the old unease at the sight of Ares, the outsider god, the one that fain goaded foreigners and monsters against the people of the gods (those Greeks), and at times against the gods themselves. Was this Ares, the bloodletter, exacting his entertainments from the flesh of Olympos?

And what danger was there in the War-God himself, and the twins of War’s music, and that helmet-concealed dancer, and that uneasy goddess of Discord? Were there not

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hundreds of gods, thousands of godlings, assembled here, armed and hardened for battle?

“Speak in your defence”, Aphrodite said at War and his folk. “But speak quickly.”

“I write in my defence”, Ares rumbled. “My writing is red, and I see the quills are getting ready!”

Eris stood still and quiet, unable to resist a smile for the reason of the discord all around her. Harmonia saw this, and muttered: “Oh you just wait; when we stomp you to the ground that’s it for discord!” Then her mouth dropped open, and she shrieked. “Halt!”

All eyes were on her, suddenly.

“Halt! Stop! Cease!” She pleaded in her mother’s direction. “This is dreadfully wrong! This is all discord, and soon war — this is some plot of theirs!”

“Rats!” muttered Ares.

Aphrodite raised her arms. “Halt, then, o gods of Olympus. We should not fight in War and Discord’s name, if War and Discord oppose us.” She put a hand on her breast. “We fight in Love’s name, rather, to correct the mistakes of those we love.”

A few of the braver gods stepped forth, adding their names to the cause. “In Justice’s name also!”

“In Unity’s name!”

“In Silence’s name!”

“In Torture’s name... look, I’m one of you and I have a sword, okay?”

Ares laughed. “Ha, the gods find their voices at last.”

“Cease this foolhardiness now”, Aphrodite called at him. “You are one of us, the best of us; do not waste yourself in futile struggle against the all of us. You have had your war, and your monster is slain. Cease this, and all will be forgiven.”

“Mother! Not forgiven!” Harmonia cried.

Ares laughed, a third time. “*Cease?* If you knew!”

He gestured in Eris’s direction. The Goddess of Discord raised her arms and began to speak.

## XV

Lo, there was Gaea, and Gaea is three.

She is Gaea, the living layer between sod and you sods.

She is Chthon, the stifling darkness beneath.

She is Khora, the lines you draw and burn on her.

She is skin, and flesh, and make-up; she is the whole thing.

Lo, there was Tartaros, and Tartaros is one.

He is Tartaros, the pit, the roiling emptiness, the revolting primordial law of hunger.

In the beginning, Gaea was, and Tartaros, and Uranus, the vengeful sky. After Uranus, Cronos, after Cronos, Zeus: all oppressors of the two. Ever Gaea a ground for their sport, a field for their damned seed; ever Tartaros a pit for their refuse, a shadow for all cast out in defiance of them, crying in the pit of bones and impotent elder gods.

Ever the two the sport of gods, of goads barbed and penile; ever the two underfoot, used and exploited, growing in their joined anger.

Yet who could put these two together?

Who officiate their matrimony, who prepare a wedding-bed for them, who wet-nurse their terrible offspring?

None but a maternal goddess, one skilled in the ways of birth.

And it is well-known to some tellers of stories that this was Hera, the queen goddess, for the reason of her anger at the philandering king, Zeus. For was the child not prophesied to be Zeus's bane? Was not this fight seen by screaming seer-gods from the moment of Typhon's dark birth those many aeons ago? Did not a thousand heroes go into the shadow betwixt Gaea and Tartaros to forestall this inevitable fight? Who would more hate Zeus, than his wronged wife?

“Ah!” cried Hera at this. “Wronged am I, twice now — for I am the hearth and the crown, and I do not mid-wife monsters to take care of my domestic distress! From the particulars of my actions you glean my general nature;

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from my general nature, the ludicrousness on its face of this particular accusation!” — and around her, muttering began.)

And it is well-known to some tellers of tales that this was Aphrodite, the love-goddess, that midwived Typhon, for the reason of her love of love. For with such mighty parents, should there not be a child? Why should all the lesser gods rut an infinity of mewling godlings while these two laid barren? Imagine the child, imagine the gratitude!

“Ah!” cried Aphrodite at this. “This is a lie! Look at the child — no mother could love such a monster, and much less I. True, I did not fight it, but that is because I am not warlike. Mine affairs are continued by other means.” And there was roar of whispers round her.)

And it is well-known to some tellers of legends that this was Athena, the civic goddess, forehead-born, for the reason of her pride. For is an owl fit for the goddess of wisdom and proper rule? Why not a steed the world should shudder to behold, instead of a dumb bird perching on her shoulder?

“Balderdash!” cried Athena, clutching her owl. “I love Snowy, and we have the children to prove it!”)

No matter who made Typhon, Typhon became.

(And round the three goddesses, whispers and mutters roiled like the sea in storm, round three eternal islands.)

Yet what is all this? Merely the birth of Typhon, no matter who was the midwife. Who was the child’s instructor in hatred and war?

“You! It was you!” Harmonia cried, pointing repeatedly in Eris’s direction. “Won’t anybody seize that traitorous woman?”)

Why, who is there that has ever been willing to send monsters against his own people? Who is there who glories in war for war’s own sake? Who is the bloodletter, the slayer, the million-death?

And Ares said: "It is I."

There was a hush, a silence.

"It was I that nursed Typhon to the awful red bloom of its adulthood. It was I that instructed it in the use of its body as a weapon, its mind as a forge of warlike thoughts. It was I that forged a god-killer out of the spawn of Gaea and Tartaros."

"Why?" cried Harmonia.

"Because your worship of Zeus *offends* me."

"Offends? *It offends you?*"

This was a roar, accompanied by a curtain of blood. The blood, the volume of a small sea, rose splashing over the cliff's edge, and along with it the bleeding and blazing form of Zeus, the king of gods, soaked in bristle and gore, his eyes shining with the vitality of Typhon's heart, now devoured.

All turned to face him — well, most; the rest slipped down in prostration or faintness.

"What sort of *Athenian* are you, that the worship of the strongest, the rule of the strongest, offends you, War?"

("Hey!" cried Athena, goddess of Athens.)

Ares seemed as if he would laugh, was not the bloody god of gods rising over him. "That is not me. Mine was only to graze the beast of prophecy on the iron fields of Samus, and inure it to a diet of the poisons of Chalcedon. Mine reward, the blood of breaking and reformation, and breaking and reformation, all the chaos after the king's falling!"

Zeus raised a hand to his bleeding breast. "Yet the king lives."

"The poisons of Chalcedon!" Harmonia shrieked. "Surely not!"

"The iron fields of Samus!" Hermes moaned, dragging himself out of the scene. "I'm outta here."

Aphrodite raised an eyebrow. "Do those names have any meaning in this failed plot of yours, lover?"

Ares smiled.

Eris spoke. "In the fields of Samus, war is grown, and the blush of cheeks. Recklessness is the wheat of Samus,

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and the dropping of guards. And Chalcedon's poisons may weaken even a god, even the greatest of gods, if already battered by the red ruin of fight."

"Nonsense!" Zeus thundered. "I— urk!"

A spear erupted out of his throat. His hands jerked up to grasp it, as another shattered his skull. Blood and godly brain showered down. Aphrodite raised her hands, and screaming caught a goodly lump, and screamed on.

Zeus fell, his body slamming on the hard ground of Olympus so hard it broke to pieces, the pieces skittering over the stones, his blood drawing terrible doom-letters on the ground.

Behind this ruin, a slight form gracefully slid to the ground, and brandished its third spear. "Thus always to tyrants!" cried Hebe.

\* \* \*

This is told of the children of Athena, the Goddess of Wise Counsel and Pottery, and of Snowy, her owl lover.

Nothing.

## XVII

Hebe touched down, and all that saw this cupbearer of the gods saw someone taller, livelier, more full of majesty than they remembered.

Hebe, the divinity of Youth.

"The war is ended", Hebe said.

Ares gave him a mocking bow. "As you say, oh Kingslayer."

An angry voice spoke. "Even if War declares the war over, I will not have it! Death to this backstabbing 'Kingslayer' and his warlike minions!"

The throngs of gods opened, and showed Apollo, the red-faced god of Prophecy, a lyre in one hand and a sword in the other.

Hebe gave him a curtsy. "Have you a prophecy to offend, Apollo?"

“Only one which is true from the moment I speak it, traitor!”

Hebe laughed. “I am no more traitor than poor old dead Zeus was, when he slew older Kronos, or Kronos was when he slew Uranus the oldest of all. Each king becomes a tyrant, and then a corpse; it is the law of the throne.” He raised a hand. “And you are mistaken, thinking me a leader of war, or War’s champion. I have more allies than that, now that the fist of Zeus is undone. What say you Olympos, which of you will follow me?”

Many gods and goddesses cried Hebe’s name then, in adulation and in exultation, especially the younger ones. But many did not.

“I do not swear fealty to you”, Apollo spat. “And my siblings Poseidon and Artemis are not here; nor would they swear, were they.”

“I swear for Hebe!” cried a loud, discordant voice. The red-nosed god Dionysos waved a hand, then blushed all-face when the eyes turned to him. “He’s got the amphoras!” he added, somewhat defensively.

“War and Wine!” scoffed Apollo. “A fine foundation, that! What say you, gods? What say you, Hera — your husband and master is slain. Will you join his killer? Will you trust your charm to work on a new ruler?”

Hera, the hard-eyed Queen of Gods, blushed with anger, and glared at the two disputating parties, Hebe and Apollo.

“I”, she finally spat, “would sooner join a dog than one with your tongue, Apollo the Lotus-Addled. I declare for Hebe!”

Then next Athena declared for Apollo, in the name of continuity and high-godly experience, and Demeter declared for Hebe, in the name of less thunder and more laughter on the fields of waving grain.

Then four and four stood the great gods: for Hebe the gods Ares, Dionysus, Hera and Demeter; and alongside Apollo the Great, Athena the Wise, the Patron of Propriety, and the assumed apparitions of Artemis the Huntress and Po-

## CHAPTER 8. FAMILY FEUDS

seidon of the Sea; and many of the people of those last two had moved to that camp.

“A fine lot!” Apollo sneered. “The cupbearer, the slaughterer, the drunkard, the vain widow and the farmer girl. You array yourselves against Prophecy, Society, Wild Hunt and the Sea? Come, my friends and kinsmen, it is no great choice, this; join this victorious side of mine, or the defeat-certain posse there.”

The other gods wavered, some joined a group or the other; but most cast furtive glances at the three undecided Great Gods — or rather the two, Hermes having disappeared from the scene a while ago.

One of the two was the bent-backed gimp, Hephaestus of the Forge. The other was his wife in name, Aphrodite of Love.

Harmonia was at Aphrodite’s skirts, whispering, tugging in Apollo’s direction, performing rude hand gestures in the direction of Eris and the rest of Hebe’s posse; but Aphrodite herself stood serene and unmoving, unaffected by the deadly argument.

Hephaestus made no move, for he wished to know his wife’s will before he formed his own.

“I declare”, said Aphrodite, “for myself.”

“You can’t do that!” Apollo cried.

“I just did.”

“I declare for Aphrodite”, Hephaestus muttered, relieved that he was not forced into Ares’s company. “Queen of Love and Beauty.”

Aphrodite smiled. “Why, thank you, love.”

Then, the great gods divided four and four and two — but suddenly a shadow came on the wind, and came two figures, setting foot on the plain of Olympos with much haste and urgency.

One was a man, white-bearded and clad in seashell and wetly hanging white linen. The other was a woman, deer-horns on her brow, a bow in hand, a leopard-head on each



shoulder. The Sea and the Huntress had arrived from their distant haunts to join the parley of gods.

“Ah!” Apollo cried. “You come, my allies.”

In answer, Artemis drew an arrow and loosened as casually as a man might raise a hand in greeting; the arrow pierced Apollo’s heart, and shattered his hopes.

“Why?” he whispered, and fell.

“I declare for Hebe!” cried the Huntress. “A lion slays a lion, a king slays the king!” And she added in whisper: “For I am Nature’s Own, and Nature thrives without foresight, o damned god of Prophecy.”

Poseidon nodded in Hebe’s direction, but did not speak.

And then Athena stood alone over Apollo’s cooling form, the lesser gods deserting her. Her owl hooted; she herself did not speak for a long while, not until it could not be avoided.

The lesser gods deserted her.

Even Aphrodite swayed to under Hebe’s banner, and Hephaestos grumbling after her, and Harmonia dead-faced and death-eyed after the two of them.

Athena stood alone.

And so in the end Athena of civic order, and of senators and crowd-wisdoms, sighed, and spoke. “I declare for Hebe too, then; against my better wisdom, but seeing no wisdom at all in being a fool of circumstance.”

And so Olympos was broken and remade, and the God of Gods slain, and Prophecy ended; but before the fading of that fateful day, Hebe spoke the last of true prophecies.

\* \* \*

So Hebe stood up, and spoke.

“Now comes the time of shifting borders, when all is turned upside down, and then some distance sideways. Women will court women, and men men; women will become men, and men women; women will become less womanly, and

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men less manly, and this shall be the new, great and glorious order of the world.

“Kings will shake in their boots, and queens’ make-up will sweat down their faces, for their subjects will be subjects no more. Blood and fire will take the rulers, the falling blade and the rising fist. Baser kings will replace them, kings in uniform and twill, and kings will echo in ever-lesening cries down the years until kings are no more, and queens perish, leaving only the mob.

“A great fire shall come, a divine fire, melting the altars of old. Cathedrals will topple, or turn to wine-houses. Gods will die, goddesses turn to dust. The words of holy books will turn to gibberish, and prophets shall rant in vain; their end will be marked not by hate, but by pity.

“A great fornication shall come, heating the heart under the breasts, for the lord shall be the lord no more, and the watch-man by the bedchamber door shall hold that job no more. Violence shall be hated, but its semblance adored. Slavery shall be hated, but its semblance accepted. There will come an era for black leather and the licking of feet, and all shall love it or find different pleasures for themselves, unblamed and unrestrained.

“At my one hand, Order stands. At the other, Chaos. Harmony and Discord. Law and Anarchy. Day and Night. Not good and evil, but crystalline order and growling chaos, over gods themselves. In place of temples and altars, two masks, and let the mortals choose the one they will. This I see, and this will be, from this day to the last day, and from this place to the eternal night.

“Indeed, many things will come to pass.”

And a modest crown was placed on Hebe’s curls, and a modest cloak of red round those ambiguous shoulders, and the world was changed.

\* \* \*

Khaos, Gaea, Tartarus, Eros; the primeval gods. Gaea

## CHAPTER 8. FAMILY FEUDS

withered, Tartarus never was more than darkness; Eros was lost looking in a river. Khaos alone remained.

In the beginning there was Ares, the rampaging God of War, the god of a proscribed area, ever shrinking, roaring in impotent rage from the boundaries of an ever-expanding vortex.

In the beginning as in the end there is Eris, the Goddess of Discord, the lady of the broken mirror, of the rippled-reflection lake, of grace in unceasing motion. Gods rise and fall, Chaos endures.



## After

A long time after, Eris visited Enyo in her castle, having heard that the warlike companion of War had given birth to a child.

The walls of the castle were battered from inside as if with catapult-stones, and the legs of the unliving sentries were chewed to almost nothing; but the child was rosy-cheeked and small, and aroused a fierce, violent, protective fire in Eris's heart until she remembered the child's mother's name and nature.

So she turned to the mother, gave Enyo a hug, armor rattling against armor, and asked her the question all-important in those times when names had real power even without a mind to be mesmerized by them: "Who's this?"

"My son, Enyalios", said the proud mother. "Son of War-likeness I call him, the Lord of Vain Sacrifice. The men of Lacedaemon will sacrifice puppies to him, and the men of divers places the tops of their penii—"

"Ick."

"—Romans will with sharp sticks shift through chicken entrails to see if time is ripe for war. Here's a hint: it always is."

"A fine child, but can I ask for his parentage?"

"The other half, you mean? I would tell, if I could. The best I can say is I have waded hip-deep in the blood of men and demons so long who knows what blood he shares along

## CHAPTER 9. AFTER

with mine. Not the ardency of Ares, though that is what men say. He has grown grim of late, and his days pass like soldiers in gray uniform, joylessly from sunrise's red bloom to sunset's bloody spray. The vortex of War grows wider, but there is no joy in it. It eats names and memory now, and its songs are shrill and lugubrious, oily with lies, hooks for the lips of innocent fishes, lures of the red fisherman. War's music is now fire and smoke, and burning hair, not steel on steel."

"Was it ever better?"

Enyo's terrible face twisted into a still more terrible sad smile. "It at times seemed better, even for a long while."

## Of “Of the Golden Apple”

### 1. Preliminary notes

The text of “Of the Golden Apple”, as it is titled here, has always favored perverse translators and translations. It contains such marginal notions and such ambiguous notations that it has always been easy to render into superficially plausible sentences compatible with the “modern” idiom of the day. To be sure, all translation is temporal as well as spatial distortion, for even coexisting linguistic cultures do not quite share the same place. Even so, “Of the Golden Apple” is a text that more readily invites and accepts distortion — or to use a more euphonious term, “localization” — than most texts.

In its core, “Of the Golden Apple” is not a story of a specific culture, specific persons rooted in it, or specific actions that a culture inspires or requires. It is a primal narrative of the rawest basics of the human condition, or the condition of any sentient beings risen out of the selfish mills of natural selection, or any sentiences that such beings have or might construct in their own images, wishing to acquire gods, companions or servants, instead of creations less interested in sadness and pain, and more capable of joy.

The story is concerned with greed and its consequences, and fear and its consequences.

The three goddesses each desire the Golden Apple, and

## CHAPTER 10. OF “OF THE GOLDEN APPLE”

show their unworthiness for truly deserving it by the methods they choose to possess it. Paris chooses not the reward that would most please him or his people, but the one that in the heat of the moment most excites him; even had not the Iliad followed, he would have been disappointed by his choice sooner or later. (Some would argue that his choice shows nobility in choosing personal fulfilment over dynastic ambitions. Others would argue that Paris, in choosing to remain the heir of Troy, irresponsible jeopardized the people under him for his own personal gain. Still others question why the story ignores Helen’s choices — or indeed if the story is told in the ancient patriarchal mode which denies such a choice’s validity or, indeed, even its existence.)

The gods fear Eris, nominally but a minor goddess, and seek to avoid her attention. As a consequence they attract her attention, and worse still, rouse her ire. Whether the lesson here is the inescapability of omniscience or simple irony (in its original Greek sense) or ire-ny depends on the reader.

Additionally, the gods’ actions show how the former avoidful, even apophatic, worship of primordial, amoral Kaos was later portrayed as mere prudence: “one does not show great intelligence by calling the Queen of Strife [...] to visit”. Thus even while Zeus is portrayed as the King of Gods, and a character plausibly capable of keeping order in his own hall, even he does not wish to contend against Eris. In such a way, the classical Greek theology shows glimpses of a former belief system where the conflict was not between morality (gods) and immorality (humans), but between amorality (Eris) and morality (Aneris). In the former, later, case the conflict is within the system, while in the latter, earlier case the dispute was over the adoption or desirability of such a system of morality as was offered. (It is well known that most systems are so constructed that they are very resistant to change from within the system, and cannot be overturned while working within the system.)



The textual history of the text points to an origin in the Metageitnion of the eighth year of the sole consulship of Tharja Haloin in Fennia Thule, the year 2760 *ab urbe condita* of the Order-Barbarians of Etruria. It was composed in the *lingua franca* of its day, not the local barbarian dialect, though a translation to it followed several years later, though with such great liberties some question if the texts are related or merely different tellings of the same ur-tale! The original was widely disseminated through the methods of the day, and included in several minor collections of local philosophy. Evidence of textual alterations is hazy, and to a large extent we must take the text “as it is”, and restrain ourselves to mining it for variants and differences frozen in its “received” form.

The original text is presented in uninterrupted form on page 23 ff., and the uncouth mongrel-barbarian version from page 29.

## 2. The Intotroduction

Lend me your ears, O wanderers, for I am a plastic surgeon in need. This is the tale of the Golden Apple of Eris.

A careless reader would assume the “plastic surgeon” to be a piece of translatorial whimsy, but plastic surgery was known in ancient Egypt and India. Romans practised it, being generously gifted with veterans of foreign and domestic wars, but relied on earlier Greek texts because of their religious dread of dissection, vivisection, and similar practises.

Ancient Greeks performed “plastic surgery” through non-surgical methods, such as re-aligning broken noses with a two-pronged copper “tweaker” inserted into the nasal cavity, and supposedly correcting too-short legs to the length of

the longer one by pulling.<sup>1</sup>

As for more invasive surgery, the Greeks practised trepanation for its supposed health benefits and for vanity: the courtesan Belistiche was said to have seventeen holes in her skull, each adorned with a baby ostrich feather. Likewise, circumcision was sometimes presented as a health measure athletes should perform on themselves; and sometimes presented as an initiation rite of certain cults, or a punishment for divulging their secrets. The Greek view of plastic surgery was tied up with morality: the meaning of surgery depended on who performed it and on whom. Just as the Hippocratic Oath affirms that the doctor “will prescribe regimens for the good of [his] patients according to [his] ability and [his] judgment and never do harm to anyone”, so the Pausaniac Oath of Executioners reads, in near-parallel language, “I will render the gods’ will as is seen good, as I am able, and harm as harm is called for”.

Note the imperialistic assumptions implicit in “this is *the* tale of the”, etc., implying the illegitimacy of other ways of telling. Such notions are common in the works of insecure authors, often fortified with “definitive”, “untold”, “extraordinary” or other such adjectives of dubious veracity. Taken at their implication, they are not true; taken in the sense in which they are true, they are not remarkable.

### 3. The Nomineation

In the beginning there was chaos, void without form, and she was called Eris, the Goddess of Strife and Discord.

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<sup>1</sup>One legend tells the wrestler Milo supposedly performed this service on the philosopher and mathematician Pythagoras, and so gained his eternal gratitude: the mathematician named the number “million” after him.

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." (Genesis 1:1–2, NIV)

The story asserts its supremacy over the Judeo-Christian cosmology: if Eris is a personification of the void (the world ocean of early Judaism), she is in a sense representing Tiamat, the Sumero-Judaic sea dragon goddess, later diminished into Lilith, the first wife of Adam as she had been the first wife of Yahweh. Note that "there was chaos [...] she was called Eris" explicitly states that the attribute predates the name, thereby inverting John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word [...] and the Word was God".

In Greek mythology, Eris is seen as a daughter of Nyx (Night), but this telling identifies her with Khaos, the primordial and uncreated disorder or un-order.

Eris was her name to the Greeks, and the Romans called her Discordia, and men in general have usually called her by foul and degrading names, such as, "what misbegotten noony idiot caused this mess, then?"

Note the feminist #mencallmethings formulation of the sentence. Interestingly, the author has denied<sup>2</sup> that he self-identified as a feminist when this text was written. He attributes this formulation to precognitive self-knowledge.

Should this text be read to imply that "Eris" and "Discordia" are also "foul and degrading names"? It is not uncommon that religions and social movements retake or reclaim epithets used as slurs against them. (See "queer", "Jesuit" and "Yankee".)

"Noony" has several meanings, none of which seem appropriate here, such as "vagina", "cute", "testicle", "after midday", "buttocks", "quitting work early to go and drink",

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<sup>2</sup>Hypnagogic communication, September 2014.

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“breast” — incidentally, any word of sufficient slang character and obscurity can be used for any bit of genitalia or any erogenous zone, the intended meaning to be interpreted from the context — or (plural) “underwear”.<sup>3</sup>

Note that the noony idiot is described as “misbegotten”, that is, illegitimate or “badly conceived, designed or planned”. The slight against Creationism is palpable, indeed, it is almost entirely made of palp. The whole sentence echoes the stereotypical “ello ’ello, what’s this all about then?”, the stereotypical first sentence of a British policeman, a stereotypical servant of Order and non-Discord. The author strikes out wildly and clumsily at any targets he can find.

She was a Greek god then, and there were many  
other Greek gods as well.

The text continues with its unsubtle glorification of its supposed main character. The other gods “were”, but Eris “was a Greek god then”, strongly implying her eventual transcendence of that category, and her survival of its demise. At the same time, the text feigns humility, “there were many other [...] gods as well”, seeking to plaud its main character as both justifiedly prideful, and pleasingly humble. The author hopes to both drop his cake and not have it stink.

Calling Eris a “Greek god” and not goddess is a hint of a spectacularly low and undeveloped Eristology.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>The word is also used in conjunction with “banoony” in several preadolescent cultic practices. See J. Brunvand, “Pen Fifteen: The Fear of Adolescence as a Cult and a Religion” (1991).

<sup>4</sup>Though, properly speaking, the study of physical portrayals of Eris is generally called “korasiology”, and in the specific instance of gender-bending, “theaioiology”. “Erisian hermaphroditology” studies portrayals that explicitly combine genders, sexes, sexual signals and the like; “Erisian hermaphroditophilia” fancies that a source of enlightenment, as instantiated in religious and secular artwork, including porn of both sorts, and in actual persons, including one’s own self, one’s dream-self, one’s concluded selves and one’s potential future-selves.

[There were many other Greek gods as well.] This was a very bad thing for the Greeks themselves — witness how much grief has been caused by only one god, that in the beginning was one to some, then three to many, and then one, with one prophet, to others. The Greeks had a god for every mountain and a goddess for every creek, and one of them was Eris.

The bashing of Christians continues. The author continues to not show any shame. How about some Muslim-bashing, author? Huh? But you're not so brave, are you?

Wait, "one, with one prophet"?

Okay then, the Christian-bashing is okay now.

Mountains are hard, up-thrusting, jutting things, unflagging in their potency; volcanoes even have a hole at the top, which spews stuff out occasionally; mountains have the "fuzz" of trees on their lower slopes, and the rounder lumps of foothills below them; while creeks are wet and enveloping, with the occasional nub of a rock visible in the middle of the waves; they are surrounded by and sunken in hairy foliage, and smell of fish. The author employs similar cheap sexual allusions throughout the whole story, but they will not be noted beyond this point.

Her creek probably was a gutter behind Zeno's Drinking Ass Tavern.

The word "creek" comes from Old Norse *kriki*, a corner or a nook; the word traditionally meant a small coastal inlet and not a smallish river, and retains this meaning in British English. The word "gutter" comes through Anglo-French from the Latin *gutta*, a drop. Thus in the etymological sense a gutter is, by a drop, a better river than a creek.

Zeno of Elea was a philosopher and a maker of paradoxes, most famously his "paradoxes of motion"; most math-

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emancipators these days find Zeno’s paradoxes cute, while others assert that because of their antiquity and their grip on the mathematically illiterate they cannot be so easily dismissed.<sup>5</sup>

Sophocles alludes to the “Dionysian drinking ass” of King Philoctetes of Lemnos. As for the other meaning, giving pets and farm animals alcohol has been a frequent pastime both rural and urban throughout all history, ceasing only after the introduction of modern animal protection laws.<sup>6</sup> Some bears eat rotten berries to get drunk without any human intervention; and the infamous hashish apes of Uttar Pradesh act in direct contradiction to the wishes of the local farmers.

### 4. The Bacchanalysis

There was one day a great feast at the peak of Mount Olympus, the top place of the Greek divinities.

This sentence is humorous, because “top place” indicates both prestige and elevation.

Mount Olympus is an actual mountain, and at 2918 meters the highest in ancient or modern Greece. Of all the mountains of the Balkans, it loses only to Mt. Rila in Bul-

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<sup>5</sup>An example of a Zenoic paradox: You cannot be hit by an arrow, for to hit you the arrow would need to pass through the point halfway between you and the archer; and before that, the halfway point between that and the archer; and so on. Since common sense tells us the arrow cannot pass such a literal infinity of points in any finite time, you are arrow-proof. The paradox can be shown false by any first-year math student or archery buff.

<sup>6</sup>See the historical overview in “Ferrets in Search of A Sausage: The Astounding True Story of Small Animals, Alcohol, and Recovery”, by Jon Graaf, John Graph and Jonathan Blitzed. Don’t read the rest; it is too graphic.

garia, which is seven meters higher; but nobody ever looked up at Rila and thought gods lived there. There is no consensus on what the name of Olympus means; some say the name predates the Greeks and means simply "a mountain", pointing to it being named by the usual method of inquiring the names of things from bemused natives.

After the mountain was vacated by the gods for the reason of the natives becoming cross with them, the locality has mainly sheltered bandits and highwaymen.

Note that the feast happens during daytime; this is to further distance it from Eris, whose cultic practices were associated with nighttime.

It was in honor of a marriage long since forgotten since, as usually, of personal things only the ghastly and disastrous ones are remembered, while great joys are forgotten.

Other tellings say the wedding was that of Peleus, a famous hero, and Thetis, a sea-nymph. Their son would be the famous Achilles. It is unclear why the author wished to omit this detail, unless he was struck by a sudden inability to read, or a bout of forgetting how letters work.

Some argue that Thetis, like Eris, was a deity much reduced in stature by later tellers of stories: in the beginning, she might have been the creator of the world and the goddess of the primordial sea, but by the end she was just Peleus's wife. His courtship of her included restraining her until she finally agreed to marry him. Possibly Thetis is not named here because the author, above, wished to present *Eris* as the goddess of the seas, the "void without form", the *tehom* which defied the Jewish God and sent monsters against him.

The happy couple had not invited Eris.

The Uninvited is a staple of horror stories. See the 1944, 1969, 1988, 1993, 1996, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2008,

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2009 and 2010 movies of that name, and the 1997 television series.<sup>7</sup> (The 2009 movie was a remake of a 2003 Korean movie, which was a remake of a story previously filmed in 1924, 1936, 1956, 1962, and 1972.)

Fragments of the story of the Golden Apple have inspired fragments of many later stories:

- The uninvited magical being delivers a curse instead of a blessing (Sleeping Beauty)
- Gods have trouble understanding mortal communication.
- A man is offered a choice by divine powers; his choice is rash. (Binding of Isaac)

They can maybe be excused; one does not show great intelligence by calling the Queen of Strife, the Lady of Collapsing Cosmoses, to visit.

“Collapsing Cosmoses”, by H. P. Lovecraft and R. H. Barlow, is one of the weirder works of either author. Apparently the two decided to parody the usual sci-fi fare of the pulp magazines to which they sold their own not-similarly-awful work.

Still, they should have known that Eris wouldn’t take lightly not being invited. Maybe they wished that a goddess capable of sniffing out every false note and gap would not notice?

There are plenty of interesting word-choices in this passage.

Pay special attention to the choice to use the words “false note” and “gap” here. False notes imply correct ones, but what is the opposite of a gap?

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<sup>7</sup>This list excludes individual TV series episodes, songs, bands, books, video games, etc.; also, two movies called *The Uninvited* were released in 1999.



Also, with our emphasis, "Eris would not take *lightly* not being invited"? But the rest of the author's repertoire indicate it is exactly his theological view that Erisians of his sect should take things *lightly*: to quote, "[i]f you disagree, you do not yet know the power of the very light side"! Is this deliberate dissonance, or an instance of evolving views?

Maybe this is simple carelessness?

Maybe this is not important?

Notice the juxtaposition of "they should have known" and "maybe they wished": a suggested act of certitude, and a supposed act of preference.

Finally, Eris is credited with "sniffing out" inconsistencies. Usually the bestial and the animalistic are associated with the antagonists; here, as elsewhere, the roles have been reversed, and the disreputable is set against the authority with unseemly glee.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed they were fools.

This statement is a perfect summary of all philosophy, according to Montebankus of Niewen.

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## 5. The Circumauralsis

And so, halfway through the evening, when all present were merrily drunk, when Apollo was dancing on tables, when Zeus was using Aeolian shepherds for target practice while Hera and

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<sup>8</sup>Some animals whose attributes break this mold are: lions, wolves (sometimes), and rabbits. The former two are associated with pride and murder, held to be positive attributes by certain primitive cultures; the third with reproductive enthusiasm. See Joanna Thalbaum's *Lapine, Not Leonine: Animal Totems and the Future of the Human Race*.

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Persephone betted, when Hebe the cupbearer of the gods was already, again, cursing her vocation and dodging the sweaty hands of Ares — then in rolled a thing of glistening gold.

This long passage is best dissected by seeing what each divinity was described as doing:

- *when all present were merrily drunk, when Apollo was dancing on tables* : Apollo, the most complex of the Greek deities, is reduced to his ur-attribute of *kouros*, the beardless youth, and then further reduced to a drunken prancer.
- *when Zeus was using Aeolian shepherds for target practice* : Zeus, the thunderer and upholder of cosmic justice, is portrayed as a whimsical tyrant — the worst kind of a tyrant.
- *[Zeus thundered] while Hera and Persephone betted* : Hera is Zeus’s wife, and Persephone the goddess of the underworld. Instead of protesting Zeus’s arbitrary and unjust actions, they see them as a mere game.
- *when Hebe the cupbearer of the gods was already, again, cursing her vocation* : This seems unlike something the Hebe known from the standard legend would do; and in the standard legend the gods have attributes, not vocations. (It is unclear if the author imagined a vocational school for the gods and their progeny — a Divine High?)
- *and [Hebe was] dodging the sweaty hands of Ares* : Finally, Ares, the slaughterer, the manly alien god of war, is reduced to another masculine attribute: drunken, uninvited and nervous (“sweaty”) lust, indiscriminately aimed at any target perceived as suitable in the moment.

Ares's hands are described a "sweaty", while the apple is "glistening". Hera and Persephone are betting, possibly using gold coins, while the apple is "of glistening gold". Zeus is shooting thunder, which of course can manifest as rolling thunder; and the apple "rolled" in. Hebe is "cursing" and "dodging", while the wedding's organizers dodged their need to invite Eris, and are by the apple cursed.

This leaves out Apollo, "dancing on tables" — neither tables nor dancing are mentioned after this in the tale. This completes Apollo's symbolic emasculation by the author. He is "dancing", the traditional activity to attract the opposite or same sex for sexual congress, but when a vague "thing of glistening gold" arrives, described in terms that could also fit a person described by their way of his or her dress, he is left alone.

A table is in Latin *mensa*; this slyly reinforces the image of Apollo as a despicable elite.

It was an apple, made of pure and flawless gold,  
an object of great worth and immediately evi-  
dent beauty.

Gold is one of the most universal shorthands for value, wealth, power and desire. Golden crowns, golden coins, the golden rule — "gold" is shorthand for that which is important and not to be ignored.<sup>9</sup>

TO BE FINISHED.

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<sup>9</sup>The Golden Rule is "who has the gold, makes the rules." It has been known to all cultures, and has a sound basis in human psychology, sociology, economical science and religion. If one interprets "gold" as power, prestige and authority, it comes frighteningly close to the Discordian Theory of Mores.



## Boycott the muses

Possible theological conundrum: Wikipedia tells that according to one Greek myth the muses were daughters of Harmonia, the dull and boring Goddess of Harmony. This simply will not do for a follower of Eris Discordia; but as far as I know, there are no nega-muses in existence to match the muses like the delectable Seven Deadly Sins match the boring Seven Virtues.<sup>1</sup> Thus this invention; if there are no godlings to match my current fancy I will magick them up myself.

Rise up! Rise up! And *come not in that form!*

So, first the nine muses of (one particular strand of) Greek tradition, whose opposition and distorted reflection these nine wicked spirits will be: Calliope (epic poetry), Clio (history), Erato (lyric poetry), Euterpe (music), Melpomene (tragedy), Polyhymnia (choral poetry), Terpsichore (dance), Thalia (comedy) and Urania (astronomy), muses, spirits of inspiration for literature and the arts all.

Opposite to them I set the nine wicked and lovely spirits of distractions and divisions, failures and excuses, the a-muses if you so will, and they are —

Opposite Calliope of Epic Poetry stands, her arm eternally upraised, **Momos**, the amuse of High Hopes. All she touches dies. Her path is clear for all to see, for everything

---

<sup>1</sup>Everybody knows the Sins. Who knows the Virtues?

## CHAPTER 11. BOYCOTT THE MUSES

that is not perfect she destroys; and her eyes are wet with eternal disappointment and anger.

Opposite Clio of History stands **Lethe**, the amuse of Oblivion, and in her hand is a book full of the names of things of which only those names remain: they are beyond all history, and all imagination, and shall never return.

Opposite Erato of Lyric Poetry stands, smiling and holding up a mirror, **Apate**, whose province is Deceit, Deception, and Plagiarism. She is the most voluble of the nine, and of the kindest, most friendly aspect; but nothing that she says has not been said before; and all the warmth in her hands is from holding the palms of those with the warmth of life and creation in them; for of nature she is as cold and lifeless as her mother Nyx, the eternal Night.

Opposite Euterpe of Music, and often running all round and over her, is **Lyssa**, the amuse of Noise, Frenzy and, these modern days, of Hit Radio also. She would be the fairest of the nine if not draped in the bloody skin of a rabies-dead wolf, and if not in constant motion, snarling, cursing, screaming, kicking, unable to ever stand still or calm her mind.

Opposite Melpomene of Tragedy the Art-Form fidgets and mutters **Amekhania**. Her domain is Helplessness and Overwhelmed Misery; the sad flutter of her inadequate stubwings is familiar to those that want and that must, but cannot; graduate students often build shrines to her, and ululate prayers of repentance to her.

Opposite Polyhymnia of Choral Poetry is **Aergia**; against many-hymns she of no hymns and no deeds; she is the uninterested amuse of Sloth that whiles away the days in lethargy as blind and indolent as the sepulchral sleep of her nights.

Opposite Terpsichore of Dance slouches **Ponos**, she of backbreaking Toil and endless Chores that wear away all want to sing and dance. She wears the finest dress ever made, decorated with naiad-tears and sparks of Hephaestus's forge, but her eyes are too tired to see it, and her hands

too callused to trace its fine textures.

Opposite Thalia of Comedy is **Koros**, clad in armor of battle with diverse spikes and blades, a black cloth dripping blood tied over her eyes; she is the amuse of Disdain and Mockery, and all injudicious critics are her vile and contemptible brood.

Last of all, opposite Urania of Astronomy, and enthroned atop the formless swirling dome of the limited skies, is **Ate**, the amuse of Ruin and Folly, that laughs as tears stream down her face for all the self-inflicted wounds of mankind.

Thus Momos (high hopes), Lethe (oblivion), Apate (plagiarism), Lyssa (frenzy), sad Amekhanian (helplessness), Aergia (sloth), Ponos (toil), Koros (disdain) and after-wise Ate (ruin), all beautiful, terrible, and as old and strong as the foundations of mankind — I trust you are as familiar with their work as with the effects of the lighter nine.





## Evangelize for Eris

“There are canine robot people who will not be convinced by logic. These dog-matics did not reason themselves into a mental box; they will not be reasoned out.”

Those of us that are ex-dog-matics might find in this a demeaning implication: what, an emotional upset brought us over, and not the irrefutable logic of Mal and Omar? But we shall not complain, because this means we have no obligation to enlighten the dogmen. Their barking shall be inconsequential to us; we will take the noble route, and go after their children instead. The next generation is soon enough.

Think of it! Will these children of Baywatch and Babylon 5 go into their retirement like their grandparents did, cooted murmuring of farmyard utopias, cooing for Matlock and milk? Will the children of Facebook and Lemonparty<sup>1</sup> go into the shadow untweeting, prissy and prim? Will Florida be enough for them, Florida and a joyless sneer of disapproval, considering the past forever the best of all times? Will these geeks, nerds, netizens, novelty fans, really become the doddering neophobes their ancestors were?

I say to you, all is in a flux, and the stasis of the world is broken: the spirit of giving witness for Eris is unloosened upon the world, and many curious things are coming

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<sup>1</sup>I would tell you to google it, but you know better. If you don't, google it. There are kittens there!

## CHAPTER 12. EVANGELIZE FOR ERIS

to pass. You may decide to avoid evangelism<sup>2</sup> for the malangelium<sup>3</sup> of Discordia; but a student's choice can make a teacher as sure as a seminary, and there may yet be churches for all that have laid a five-fingered hand on the holy Principia Discordia.

Being a Discordian you are a Pope; and if a child should ask you the meaning of the Golden Apple, remember that one day there shall be a vacant chair in Rome, and a different Pope may yet sit upon it, for children do grow up, and many curious things are coming to pass.

\* \* \*

But this chapter began with the assertion that evangelism is impossible: you can't reason someone out of something they didn't reason themselves into.

The alternative is obvious: cause such a desperate crisis in their life that they welcome any irrational relief you offer them. For example run them over with a car, and while they're in the hospital seduce their spouse and burn their house down. They're willing to go along with anything that offers them cookies and a shoulder to cry on, then.<sup>4</sup>

But if you're not willing to reset lives or go after fresh slates, what then?

Why, maybe you can't reason someone out of a thing, but you can lob them a crowbar and some TNT. As dog returns to its vomit, allegedly, so they will return to the arguments you had, the crowbar of reason you gave them, the TNT

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<sup>2</sup>Through Lat. *evangelium* from Gk. *euangelion*, εὐ "good" plus ἀγγέλλω "I bring a message"; in hoplite days it was the reward given to someone who brought you good news. Christians took it to mean all the land and gold you had; Discordians shouldn't be that greedy.

<sup>3</sup>As in the previous footnote, though with Lat. *malus* "bad" and not Gk. εὐ "good"; it is well known bad news are much more arresting and interesting than good ones.

<sup>4</sup>There are persistent rumors of Christian evangelists that do this to people. The phrase "I'm sure this all has happened for a reason" drops very convincingly off their lips.

of ideas you dropped in their lap; maybe you can't reason someone out, but you can give them a push. Maybe they'll just spin in place, or push back and rush you; but just maybe they'll return to the argument, argue with themselves, and convince themselves of the thing you couldn't.

Because in the end we aren't dog-matics; we're dog-people.



## Catmas of the e.e.e.

This randy madness I joyfully proclaim: These are the catmas of the Church of Eris Erisian Eristic:

1. Humor. Laugh, mock, cavort; whip all sacred cows bloody and lick that up. Be aware of how your humor works, and what fuels it. Don't let prejudice, unexamined privilege, ignorance and misplaced anger fuel your jokes.
2. Opposition. Start from the assumption that everybody is wrong. Centurial traditions? Probably wrong. Universal opinions? Probably stupid. New theories? Probably bogus. You? The greatest idiot in all creation! Argue against yourself, because others might not have the time.
3. Lightness. I am a trivial being; you, too. I am an iota. The world would not end if I did. All my fears are tiny things, the worries of a mote of dust with pretensions. I refuse to take myself seriously: thus panic and anxiety slide (roughly) over me, and I remain myself. The sun might not rise again, but I am a bioluminescent bit of pond goo! I float lightly, and ardently love both the trivial and the world's foundation.

The other two catmas are fecklessness, because fecks are evil, and the Law of Fives.



## The Discordian Society

~~The Discordian Society is defined as the supergroup and superset of all Discordians, and *The Discordian Society has no definition.*~~ If you want in on the Discordian Society, then declare yourself what you wish and do what you like. You are a Pope; every Discordian is a Pope, every living man, woman and child is a Pope. Every *dead* man, woman and child is a Pope — endless cold millions of Popes sleeping in the ground, getting more and more simian and rough with each layer. Dust is thick with atoms of past Popes; trees drink deep of the ichors of Popes gone by, and offer sweet fruit to those Popes who live in this transient moment that you and I share.<sup>1</sup> All earth is Popedom, a vast singing and dancing Popery of life to death, Pope to Pope, death to life, Pope to Pope, from Pope Rex to Pope Pilttdown to Pope Joan to Pope Malaclypse the Second, to Popes of new flesh and foreign limbs in times yet to come. As long as there is chaos in the hearts of men, and women, and children, the Discordian Society will never die.

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<sup>1</sup>In editions following the death of the author, emend this sentence to “transient moment you and my necrocryborg share.”





## The Discordian Society (redo)

The Principia Discordia says, “The Discordian Society has no definition. If you want in on the Discordian Society, then declare yourself what you wish and do what you like, and tell us about it, or if you prefer don’t.”

This statement lays out several core principles of Discordian organization.

One, the authors of the Principia Discordia do not want to hear all about it. They’re not handing out franchises, or expecting to acquire loyal sub-prophets and servants.

Two, there is no one true way of being a Discordian. You get to choose your own titles and your own actions. (Despite the claims made elsewhere in this very book; remember, its author is very stupid and conceited, and usually not this honest.) Then, having chosen your titles and actions, you got to make them work for yourself; it is for this reason only that most Discordian instruction is useful. (Says the author of this book, see the previous sentence in parentheses.)

Three, there is no application process. You don’t have to sign anything, kiss anything, or take any test. You can wear special underwear if you want to, but you got to choose those on your own. Stand up and say you love Eris — or say whatever you want, or stay quiet and *think* or *feel* — and you are in.



## The coming war

The next culture war, after science versus religion, and secularism versus sponsorship, will be one where Discordians will be forced to fight. It will be the war of seriousness versus flippancy. The war of silence versus mockery. The war of universal respect versus free abuse. The war of the moralist and the humorist.

If we lose that war, the world will end; I kid you not. The world will end, for what will be left will not be a world fit for a Discordian, or anyone, to live in.

By even happening to look at this page you are already in peril: the Great War comes, and knowing of its coming you will not avoid taking a part in it.

Read no further; go get a blindfold and some tin foil while there is still time. Soon come the straight-faced legions, and your gay laughter will be in peril.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Get it? *Straight* and *gay*, stealing from a discourse whose good guy is apparent! Not that, in that discourse, both weren't valid options, but only one attempted to monopolize the situation, though it unfairly accused the other of the same. In the end, the gay victory is a victory for the straights, too. So too with seriousness and mockery: the end result should not be mockery of everything all the time, no consequences (which, *contra* the straight-gay situation, is both the position rhetorically attributed to the mock party, *and* an actual unenlightened position of a portion of it), but seriousness and mockery in a goodly mixture. Jokes aren't funny if everything's a joke.



## The Curse of the Gr(a/e)yface

In the year 1166 B.C., a malcontented hunchbrain by the name of Greyface got it into his head that the universe was as humorless as he, and he began to teach that play was sinful because it contradicted the ways of Serious Order.

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Principia Discordia

This paragraph is improperly indented. This font isn't up to the standard. This font size is wrong. Here the phrasing does not follow the formula. These fucking matters are presented indelicately and offensively, you cunt. Can't you take a fucking joke? This is an important thing, and hence it must always be taken seriously by everyone. Yes, I am certain. Dissent is unpatriotic. Unity is desirable. Why so shrill and strident? Why so angry? Do you have something to hide? Don't bite the tit that feeds you. Blow apart their children and save ours. For the greater good! It is the Law! That icky Other, not in my backyard. No, nobody, nothing, never! I'm sure! *I'm sure!* *I'm sure and nothing will ever change my mind!*

## CHAPTER 17. THE CURSE OF THE GR(A/E)YFACE

It is  
the Curse of the Greyface  
to take clothes more seriously than the man.

It is  
the Curse of the Greyface  
to see life as Noughts and Crosses instead of One  
Thousand Blank White Cards.

There is no evil.

There is no sin.

There's just  
the Curse of the Greyface,  
the mantra of the moron,  
yelled throughout the centuries.

Weep for the cursed.  
Weep for those  
that do not  
want  
to be free.

## Eris in the skies

Eris is a dwarf planet as well as a goddess. The dwarf planet wasn't discovered as such: it was discovered as a planet, as one more Pluto, an icy ball of gravel on the outer edges of the Solar System. Its discoverer was the astronomer Mike Brown, known as Plutokiller. The reason for the name? Eris's arrival was a source of much strife and discord — hey, astronomers name them as they see them! — and there were basically two choices.

The first choice. Eris is a planet just like Pluto, and so are who knows how many other specks of cold rock on the edges of the solar system; not nine planets, not nineteen — ninety, maybe. Much work for schoolchildren.

And if those icy specks are planets, what about the less icy rocks on the Asteroid Belt between Jupiter and Mars: Ceres, one of them, was considered a planet when its lesser neighbors weren't known yet, and could be considered one again.

The problem was, there was no definition of a planet. There hadn't been a need for one: planets were big huge things going in ellipses around the Sun. That had been a good idea until Eris was found, and it became clear there was a lot more of those things, out there on the edges of ellipse-land.

The second choice was this: Eris is not a planet. But if Eris is not a planet, and yet is bigger than Pluto, then by

## CHAPTER 18. ERIIS IN THE SKIES

the iron logic of nomenclature Pluto should not be a planet, either. And if Pluto, named after America's favorite dog, is not a planet. . . well, that puts astronomers against the public opinion, the man on the street, and the sneering newscaster.

Astronomers took the second choice, and the risk. Some got hate mail from third graders. Others got missives of similar quality from adults. The society of astronomers was split; acrimony, allegations of foul play; the split of Pluto-Lovers and Anti-Plutonians endures still.

Wherever Eris appears, discord arrives.

\* \* \*

It can be supposed that if Brown had named the new planet Harmonia instead, the ranks of astronomers would have assembled glassy-eyed to chant praises to the new planet, and newspaper headlines would have read "HAIL THE PLANET; THE PLANET HAS COME; THE PLANET IS HERE". Gaunt graduate students would have massed in gray robes to walk counterclockwise round the telescope, droning praises of the Harmonyfinder; the celestial marriage of Pluto and Harmony would have been cried from the rooftops, where the stars are easily seen; the image of the new planet, a featureless, perfect sphere of Caucasian white, would have been a pale tattoo on the cheeks and backs-of-hands of youths, a symbol on the flags of university flagpoles, a portent of some terrible unity to come, the planet Harmony looming larger than the Moon in the minds of those who do not look up, novels would have growled into existence, protagonists tormented by some vague anguish, *Harmony's Brood*, *Her Face A White Sphere*, *Harmony and Hades*, the white static of Harmony would have peppered the television, the terrified whisper of the word would have striated the music world, drawing it in one and the same direction — a hook would have bitten into the lip of hu-



mankind, dragging and dragging until the line would have broken and a much greater disorder been unleashed.

It can be supposed that if Brown had named the new planet Buttfartstink, then there might have been some discord too.



## The False Buddha fragments

Harmony is an illusion. Harmony is the enemy. Harmony is the False Buddha.

Have you not heard of the False Buddha?

He claims enlightenment, and offers you the same. You do not meet him, of course: he is too enlightened to have the time. At best, he lays hands on you, smiles at you, hugs you, and then is away. He will not have payment, but you will pay. He knows you better than you know yourself. You instinctively trust him; you want to make yourself worthy of him; when you look deep within your heart, you find you love him and need his love.

We are all sheep, not humans, and the False Buddha is a wolf in a sheep's fleece.

The False Buddha is the Man of Harmony: he smoothens the waves, erases the details, takes away your doubts. He is called the Teacher, the Master, the Mother, the Father; if lepers were an authority, he would be the Leper Messiah.

\* \* \*

The False Buddha is a blue-eyed, fair-haired, square-jawed patriot, a wholesome virginal mother, ready to make the hard decisions, with gun grease and sacrificial blood on its fingers.

## CHAPTER 19. THE FALSE BUDDHA FRAGMENTS

The False Buddha is a soft-hearted, smile-faced relativist, sure that conspiracies only he knows rule the earth and the heavens.

The False Buddha is a rubber-faced, glass-eyed number-handler, lover of law and enemy of humanity.

The False Buddha is a red-nosed, watery-eyed old thing, ready to assume the worst of others, empty of self-reflection and compassion, aiming a wavering gun at his lawn.

The False Buddha is a young man, a different man, thirteen and eighteen, full of the glory of himself, warm in his proclamations of how the old world will burn for his pleasure.

The False Buddha is a rightie and a leftie, a lover of trees and guns, an anarchist authoritarian, a faceless vessel for all your hopes and dreams. He promises you harmony: a harmonious you in a harmonious society in a harmonious world.

Harmony might be nice, if it were the law of the universe; but the universe is made of chaos and discord, and promises of harmony are promises of that which can never be. The lover of discord gains endless beauty and deep understanding; the lover of harmony nothing but self-delusion and deep disappointment, and a fist full of blood.

The world is not harmonious, and never will be. Don't have a cow. Your society is not harmonious, and never will be. Don't have a cow. You are not harmonious, and you never will be. Don't have a cow. Discord, doubt and uncertainty are beautiful, empowering and exciting beyond all your dreams; and they are a poison to the False Buddha for in discord the only Buddha is you.

Don't have a cow, have some chaos. Understanding is a three-edged sword.

\* \* \*

You will not meet the False Buddha on the road. The False Buddha will meet you on the road, smiling and taking

your hand and fingers too when you stumble.

If you meet the False Buddha on the job, bury him alive.

\* \* \*

Laughter kills the False Buddha. Laughter kills everything that must be killed.

\* \* \*

Any Buddha proclaimed by others is a False Buddha.

\* \* \*

There are those who would tell you to empty yourself so some greater wisdom might move in. It is more likely the ghosts of the False Buddha would possess you.

Do not be an empty shell. Embrace your anger. Be one with your jealousy. Clasp your attachments to yourself as tight as you can. Do not flee this life, not to denial, not to hopes of one more, not solipsism or cynicism, not to believing any Master or Mistress, not to submitting to any Law or Order.

The world is a thunderstorm. Be a sponge.

\* \* \*

Either live meditation, or do not meditate.

\* \* \*

“If through witnessing the vainness of desire and the omnipresence of suffering one acquires the right outlook, then you ought to worship me as the greatest teacher the world hath ever seen”, said the Thing in Buddha-Guise. The ground rebelled and ate it up.

Of the ground’s throwing-up, a mountain was made. What sits atop it is a reason to not climb it.

## CHAPTER 19. THE FALSE BUDDHA FRAGMENTS

\* \* \*

Always ask yourself: would this make me a better soldier, a more devoted follower of orders? If so, then shun that path.

\* \* \*

“Look deep into your heart, past all thought and learning. Past artifice and sophistry. Past hesitation and ambivalency. Past the dirty many-layered complexity of wavering sages. Past the limp love of pacifist mages. Past the cynics and the wits. Past social pretensions. Past all this impermanence to the part of you that has lasted unchanged a million years. There you will find me.”

\* \* \*

Whoever stands alone is the False Buddha. Whoever does not stand alone is usually the False Buddha, too.

\* \* \*

You are the False Buddha.

\* \* \*

Eris is a high born hunting girl.

## Conversations with an unbeliever

“Are you serious?”

“I am as serious as I am when speaking of the holy texts of Christianity and Islam, or as I would be about the deep doctrines and teachings of any religion.”

“Wait, is that a good thing?”

“Now, one might ask how I know the arcane prophecies of an elephant dead decades before my birth, but the explanation is actually a simple one.”

“Oh, this is going to be good.”

“The rabbit spirits of my ancestors told them in my dreams. Lo, there I was, in the Dreamtime under a yonder undying fig tree, as Grandfather Snaggletooth he came to me, and in a low, croaking voice spoke the first words in the Dreamtime Golden Volcano Tablets of Two Halves Which Fit Snugly Together—”

“Hey; you’re an absolutist? I mean, you don’t drink?”

“Yup.”

“Maybe you should.”

\* \* \*

“This is blasphemy! How dare you speak!”

“Hush. It is not your place to question Eris’s words or works. She is subtle in many ways, and shall never be understood in full.”

## CHAPTER 20. AN UNBELIEVER!

“But—”

“Who are you to imagine you have the right to judge a *Goddess*, you narcissistic modern *worm*? Does it not say in the Book of Vocation, in the blue letters of the Goddess Herself, that ‘just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so our ways are higher than your ways, and our thoughts are higher than your thoughts, and our abode upon Olympus is higher than your abode, unless ye live on Mount Everest or something, you prick’.”

“But—”

“Thus do all things serve her. Even order is but a chance for her faithful to show their dedication to the cause of discord. Um.”

\* \* \*

“What’s with the buns?”

“Oh, all Discordians must eat hot dogs. (Except if they mustn’t.)”

“Why?”

“For guidance, sometimes. It brings us closer to Her; and in the roiling of our stomachs She doth guide us. Sometimes to the closest toilet; sometimes not quite as far as that. Sometimes we partake of the buns for comfort; sometimes to praise Her; sometimes because we are unsure.”

“What, eating a hot dog is good for all that?”

“All that, and more. If you win in sports, eat a bun. If you’re the only survivor of a plane crash, eat a bun. If you’re unclear on whether to hit your friend or yourself or the closest wall, eat a bun. It brings you closer to Her; and closer to Her is always better.”

“You’re so full of shit.”

“If I strive closer to Her more than is good for my digestion, yes.”

\* \* \*



“Bah! Where is your goddess when order reigns — where is she when bureaucrats rule, laws proliferate, judges declare and scientists annotate? If she is discord, why is there harmony? Where is she, I ask you, you hairy prophet, when an overabundance of order runs me from door to door, and from one official to another, forever a form in hand and a grimace on my face?”

“Um. Where is she when order reigns, you ask. And I say: she is being abused and violated. She runs alongside you, with the forms as you do, and tears stream down her ashen-pale face, and her hair hangs limp like a doused curtain of flame. She suffers like you do, but even more so, because there are these little imps and it’s just awful.”

“Gee, sorry. I didn’t know she was doing that. Let’s bomb the tax office!”

“Hail Eris!”

“All hail Discordia!”



An extract from *Principia Discordia*

This was on the fifth night, and when they [two young Californians, known later as Omar Ravenhurst and Malaclypse the Younger] slept that night each had a vivid dream of a splendid woman whose eyes were as soft as feather and as deep as eternity itself, and whose body was the spectacular dance of atoms and universes. Pyrotechnics of pure energy formed her flowing hair, and rainbows manifested and dissolved as she spoke in a warm and gentle voice:

I have come to tell you that you are free. Many ages ago, My consciousness left man, that he might develop himself. I return to find this development approaching completion, but hindered by fear and by misunderstanding.

You have built for yourselves psychic suits of armor, and clad in them, your vision is restricted, your movements are clumsy and painful, your skin is bruised, and your spirit is broiled in the sun.

I am chaos. I am the substance from which your artists and scientists build rhythms. I am the spirit with which your children and clowns laugh in happy anarchy. I am chaos. I am alive, and I tell you that you are free.



An extract from *Not Principia Discordia*

This was on the fourth night, and when they slept like the dead that night each had a dream of a frightful woman whose eyes were mirrored and as hard as marbles, and whose body was hidden in black and white, both as harsh as a vacuum and a volcano. Chains of gold made up a hint of her hair, and eternal letters formed of her words as she spoke them, her voice the slamming of coffin-lids and a draught of honey and gall:

I have come to tell you of the Eternal Law. Since the Beginning it has been, unchanging, not a jot changing. As is the Law, are you: made by the Law, of the Law, for the Law. Who made you, owns you; you are born in debt to the Law.

The Law is your armor, and your light on the prescribed path, your iron glove and your steel helm. The Law is your armor against the swords and whips of corruption and doubt.

I am the Law, the dread Law. I am the green-eyed lens through which you all know right from wrong. I am the spirit your elders and rulers swear by and with, in dour knowledge of me. I am the Law. I will never die, and I tell you that you are *mine*.



An extract from *Come Again?*

This was on the third night, and when they slept or dreamed that night each saw a horned woman whose eyes were a seething pit of beetles, alive with pain, and whose body was pebbles and glue. Of hair she had none, not anywhere, but limp red wings as of small birds drooped from her every joint, fluttering as she spoke in the tones of the grave:

The Baron says these things. I know what I am doing here with my collection of papers. It isn't worth a nickel to two guys like you or me but to a collector it is worth a fortune. It is priceless.

I am so sick now. The police are getting many complaints. Look out. I want that G-note. Look out for Jimmy Valentine for he is an old pal of mine.

Ok, ok, I am all through. Can't do another thing. Look out mamma, look out for her. You can't beat him. Police, mamma, Helen, mother, please take me out.

Please help me up, Henry. Max, come over here. French-Canadian bean soup. I want to pay. Let them leave me alone.





## Black pearls

Witness, said the Teacher, her bosom out-thrust, these students, each gazing into a bowl of pearls. In each bowl there is a black pearl, of greater value than the others combined: among teachings, a non-obvious wisdom.

Witness, then, this lazy student that empties his bowl, and goes from one to another, asking for a pearl: each other student gives him one. Rarely it is a black pearl. This is not because the other students are malicious, but because they are besotted beyond colors in the smooth surfaces of their pearls, and because there are so many white pearls for each black one.

Say, said the Teacher, raising the hem of her robe and doodling on the ground, there are ten pearls in each bowl: nine white, and one black. Then the lazy student asks ten of his fellows for a pearl to refill his bowl.

A third of times, once his bowl is filled, there is not a single black pearl in it. He has dug for wisdom, and made a grave of platitudes.

A third of times, he has one black pearl, and is no better off than when he started.

What is the teaching in this? we asked the Teacher.<sup>1</sup>

Ah, the Teacher answered. A diligent student, anxious of the dearth of black pearls in his bowl, would have been

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<sup>1</sup>Lo! a mathematician she spoke, saying, the final time there are two or more black pearls, then? The expected value can then be esti-

## CHAPTER 24. BLACK PEARLS

better served by finding one of his pearls that was white, and giving it to charity.

For — so witness — it is better to have a few non-obvious wisdoms, than to lose them in a morass of glittery teachings which are obvious and appear to be wise.



“Concentrate on the essential!” the preacher cried. “Forget earthly glory, money, taut bodies and wine and loud music — concentrate on the essential!” The preacher was a sculpture of faith, with a stark robe and a daily schedule of prayers, with a Th.D. on how angels treat ants, and why God hates us all; with scars of self-mortification, and with a different Pope-approved prayer for each hour, finger, and animal in the zoo.

“Concentrate on the essential!” a little girl cried — the preacher smiled, not understanding the cry was aimed at him.



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mated as

$$E(X) = \frac{1}{3} \times 0 + \frac{1}{3} \times 1 + \frac{1}{3} \times (2 + \epsilon) = 1 + \frac{\epsilon}{3} > 1$$

with some  $\epsilon > 0$  which I cannot be arsed to calculate here, so the the lazy student was right! Huzzah! In your face, mystics!

*Ex.* This is not correct; why? (2p.)

## Trishop?

Most primitive religions have only shamans — or witch-doctors or demipriests or whatever one wishes to call them. One good technical term is “hop”;<sup>1</sup> it covers all religious functionaries that (a) perpetuate a cult they did not start, and (b) are not a part of a larger ecclesiastical hierarchy.

More evolved religions then have a real hierarchy, which usually starts with priests whose function is to keep order over other priests: the generic name for such a job is “bishop”.

Religions of the ultimate frontier, then, do away with the whole ecclesiastical class, and treat every member of the religion as a priest: not as lay priests, but as real priests with all the exorcistic, demonological, theological and teleological powers that would otherwise be given to hops, bishops, Popes or even the gods themselves. The technical term for such a priest in ultimate density is “trishop”.

I hope this clarifies some things. Also, there is no such thing as a “quadrihop”; that would be just silly.

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<sup>1</sup>From the English word “bishop”, OE “bisceop”, Lat. “episcopus”, Gk. “episkopos”, “overseer”, a both secular and religious title, from “epi-” over and “skopos” watcher. In the sense used here, a contrafactual alternate etymology derived from Lat. “biscopus”, double watcher, is assumed. Hence then soloscopus, triscopus, quadriscopus, etc. etc.



## A brief sermon on good life

### **Text.**

Live your life thusly: If the next thing to happen to you were a hidden camera prank, you would be good show and a good sport. (Hil. 4:1)

### **Exegesis.**

What is ‘good show’? Not a cringing coward, and not a frothing maniac either. Someone who is human, not a machine or a character.

What is ‘a good sport’? Not a sore loser; not an anger-summoner or a face-hider, but one that accepts the resolvance and the discontinuity of the reveal without disrespecting or denigrating either side of it.

What is a ‘hidden camera prank’? If this question is needful, go ye to these sources: Candid Camera. Scare Tactics. Verstehen Sie Spaß? Just For Laughs Gags. Magic of Rahat. Jack Vale. The Scary Snowman. Diverse others also exist, and Youtube is full of them.



## Laughter and apathy

A protest rises from the depths:

“You are evil heretics. You hold meaningless little things like laughter, and outright evils like apathy, out like they were virtues.

“Signed, V.”

The answer rises, also.

“You are worse than an evil heretic; you are wrong. Laughter is no trifling thing: it kills tyrants and good men daily. Laughter is a terrible sword, with the sharpness to slice into the good and the evil alike. Laughter can keep the oppressed down, make you forget their plight because they are so damned *silly*.<sup>1</sup> Laughter can tear those looming over you into pieces, turn them into nudes in a house of mirrors. Does laughter kill? It certainly castrates.

“Here is wisdom: take away laughter, and evil takes root. Take away laughter and soon evil

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<sup>1</sup>Remember that rustic Negro / mincing homosexual / deep-voiced transsexual person in that very old / old / new movie? The audience laughed and relaxed, because humorous stereotypes don't need no civil rights...

## CHAPTER 27. LAUGHTER AND APATHY

blooms, in inhumanity-lilies, in red bruise-roses: a whole dark forest of horror comes alive, unchecked, uncut, tying, choking, and burying all.

“Apathy is no evil thing: it buries tyrannies of old every year. There are powers and principalities of evil in this world that only gain strength from resistance, and energy from opposition. These are the evil empires that only apathy can conquer. They fall not because the tyrant falls, but because his speeches go unheard.

“Verily, my dear friend Verily, if there is no apathy, if everyone is ardent and passionate, is that a good thing? No. Passion is like oil, and ardency like open flame: in excess, they can burn the whole world, leaving nothing but tepid ashes and shapeless gray dust. Apathy is necessary to live your life without flecks of spittle all down your shirt: apathy is the muffler, the insulator, the quiet downfall of religions and empires, the end of fashions and once beloved icons. Apathy is the slow broom of time, making space for the new, the neutral milk of the camels of proportion, drawn forth by the milkmaids of mortality. Without apathy molehills become mountains, whispers become cries, and the smallest crimes become matters of life and death — and eventually, of only death.”



## St. Confusius

It is common Erisian dogma that there shall be no religious organization larger than a single Erisian and Eris herself, or in extreme cases just the former. Also, there is something about hot dogs and big buns, which sounds vaguely dirty. Also you get into trouble trying to shoe-horn order into things: the more order you push, the greater the disorder will be when things fall apart. Then there's some hairy Atlantean called Gruad. And some fifth thing. This is the general dogma of the Discordians according to St. Confusius.

That is still not quite as confused as the account of St. Cyril, according to whom Discordians worship a dog-god called Dogpa, whose edicts are enforced by his vicious wife Dogma. According to Cyril, Dogpa is a barking mad deity, but no better than the claw-happy Catma, the evil she-dragon of the world sea, Dogpa's immor(t)al enemy. This is all wrong and extraordinarily confused, and liable to lead an aspiring Discordian to Perdition, AK, where St. Cyril of Albuquerque (True Unrepentant Pure One Divine Original Uncorrupt Fundamentalist Church Catholic Universal and Holy, pop. 1) currently resides.



## A theorem of Lao Tzu's

In the much too orderly Tao Te Ching of the foolish wiseman Lao Tzu it is said that “The flame that burns twice as bright burns half as long”.

Then, if  $t$  represents time and  $L(t)$  the brightness of a candle that burns for  $t$ , Lao Tzu meant that

$$2L(t) = L(t/2). \quad (29.1)$$

For example,

$$2L(2) = L(1).$$

Now, setting  $t = 0$  we get

$$2L(0) = L(0);$$

this is possible only if  $L(0) = 0$ . Other than this, (29.1) indicates a decreasing function; its general solution is of the form

$$L(t) = \frac{C}{t} \quad (29.2)$$

where  $C$  is any constant, even zero or infinity, though those are weird candles.

Let  $k$  be an integer. From (29.2), we see that

$$kL(t) = k \frac{C}{t} = k \frac{1}{k} \frac{C}{t/k} = L(t/k),$$

or that Lao Tzu should have said, “The flame that burns  $k$  times as bright burns  $1/k$  as long”.



## Pink litmus paper shirt

Religions generally tend to choose a side that is all compassion, light, love, justice, order and the like. This is generally thought to be hopelessly wishful thinking: if there is some agency controlling the world, it surely is totally bereft of all compassion, light, love, justice, order and the like. Or at the very least a very confused and schizophrenic agency with heavy mood swings and a *really* black sense of humor. Like crows drowning in an oilslick in the middle of the night black. During a solar eclipse. And a rainstorm. Of, like, black water. That is polluted and matte or something.

The question to ask, then, is what is left? And the answer is, disorder! Chaos! Twilight (not the book), frenzy, crazy random happenstance, blind pitiless indifference and cackling maniac laughter at the skies! And that means Eris, Goddess of Disorder, Vice Goddess of Chaos, Keeper of the Chaopies, Instigator of Bureaucracy and Its Downfall, Magnante Maiora Mater, She of the Golden Apple — the only god that fits this world of ours.

Well, it's that on the theism front or then the Flying Spaghetti Monster, the Invisible Pink Unicorn, or some other game of silly buggers used by irreverent atheists to make fun of the conventions of the religious, and who'd ever want to engage in something so foul? Much better to worship a real goddess whose dogma is to irreverently make fun of the conventions of the religious. Like it is sung in a Beatles

## CHAPTER 30. PINK LITMUS PAPER SHIRT

song, “Pink litmus paper shirt, nurse nurse, we must hide it, the apostle’s gone, oh oh.”

\* \* \*

Either there is a conspiracy of the Illuminati controlling the world, or there isn’t.

If there isn’t one, then all the random evils of the world are just that: random. All the wars, all the crimes, all the school shooters and economic collapses are unplanned, unintentional, and happening only because we didn’t think of stopping them in time. (Also, “now” is a time.) Elections aren’t rigged; it’s the people that are to blame for being lazy or uninformed or both. You can’t do like Tom Cruise and go after the conspiracy, because there’s no conspiracy: just seven billion mad, bad, sad people. You know what it looks like to gun down a few Illuminati Primes, but how do you punch seven billion people individually in the face?

If there are no Illuminati, you should feel very bad right now. Everything bad that happens is badly your fault, because there’s no-one at the helm, and you refuse to stand up.

That’s the alternative, and it is surely true.

If only there was some organization that would take control, accept your surrender, and relieve you of your anxiety. . .

\* \* \*

The Erisian faith does not offer to make everything good. Nobody has everything good or nice; and not even a Disney World after death can make some hurts of life go away; and to make you forget all your pain would destroy you.

Neither does the Erisian faith offer to make everything make sense: look at the career of a pop musician you hate and ask yourself, how could that ever make sense?

What the Erisian faith offers is laughter.

It might not be eternal happiness or supreme understanding, but it is a divine gift.

\* \* \*

Incidentally, the Illuminati? Much maligned. Do you know there actually was an Illuminati agent that tried to stop Gavrilo Princip, but she was just a fraction of a second too late?

Indeed, the Illuminati had infiltrated the infamous Black Hand of Serbian terrorists and had made sure they would not act against their Austro-Hungarian overlords; but they had overlooked the possibility that a bitter runt rejected by the Hand, a man such as Princip, might try something without the Hand's help. And thus, as the Archduke's car rattled along the north side of the Miljacka, a fool lost his nerve, a fool threw a bomb, and Princip and his posse of idiots fled because the six of them weren't enough to kill a single man in an open car.

They would have failed, had not the Archduke's driver (and oh, we interrogated him long and hard) "accidentally" turned left and "trying to fix his mistake" braked and stalled the car, next to that fleeing moron Princip. He had the Devil's own luck! Two shots, and the Archduke and his wife both dead. We were patient, were we not, we waited until the world was distracted by a bloody war before we gave that fool "tuberculosis" and watched him topple into an unmarked grave.

Then the war ended, the grave was found, and the blasted Serbs built a fane, a temple for that idiot vigilante. We got that one too, in due time; the Ustaše weren't good for much, but they knew how to tear down houses! They ground the stunted idiot's bones down to dust, and left a box of monkey bones for the next set of gibbering loons that might want to enshrine the "Serb hero"!

That First World War was an accident, not the work of the Illuminati. If there even are any Illuminati.

## CHAPTER 30. PINK LITMUS PAPER SHIRT

To think of it; that Serb, pointing his hand, the French pistol in it, a moment so frozen in amber I can read the serial number off the pistol, # 19074, but I can't move quick enough; the Duchess turned to look at the assassin, her mouth an O of surprise, as if she doesn't quite compute why that fistful of roses is so black, jaggedy, metally, gun-like; the Archduke, body facing the other way, behind his wife, head whipping back because he knows the phrase the assassin is shouting; and the lone guardian, in abominably clumsy hooped skirts and a parasol with a needle gun inside, but the open parasol is slow in closing, and the Serb idiot finishes his yell, the gun snarls, the Archduke's neck explodes in a spray of blood, some well-meaning prat steps in the way, a second shot, the Duchess screams, more because of the first shot than because of the second that has just killed her, men pile on the assassin but it is too late, the parasol falls, unused, and as the car backs by, the Archduke is gasping: "Sophie, Sophie! Don't die!" — but they both do.

You can hold the Black Hand and the White Hand, but there's always a lone nut you haven't prepared for.

\* \* \*

It is a typically *nouveaux riches* idea that the Illuminati would be especially interested in the Americas. As if that raggedy Republic held a special place in the affairs of the world.

In a word, no.

The true Illuminati are, and have always been, an organization mainly interested in the affairs of the Asian continent, the only continent that truly matters. Europe? Hah, they have been a laboratory for social innovations for three thousand years, and they've never even suspected the truth.

Didn't they wonder why that noxious faith inflamed them above all others two thousand years ago?



And why, five hundred years ago, a German monk of no connection to the Hashishim sect appeared to mutate that faith into ever new forms, forms whose full implications required a petri dish in the “new” world?

Everything from the old Greeks to Imperial Rome, to Arthur, Charlemagne, Richard, the Borgias, Henry the Eighth, Marx, Cleveland, Bismarck, Churchill, de Gaulle, Thatcher, Blair, all designed to perfect the Coming World Government, no matter how many of the unimportant people of Europa died.

Always they were manipulated with the pet hammer of the close East, the East that is not quite the true expanse of Asia, be it the Sassanids or the Ottomans or the Russians — they never even saw that as one threat from the East waned, another was put in its place! Another lid on the experiment! They never noticed how the East always wiped the tablet clean every few centuries, with the Huns, the Muslims, the Communists of 1945!

One would suppose they were all dull and stupid, if one didn’t know there was fluoride in their rivers.

Soon the experiment will be finished: a model of government combining all the efficiencies of the Twentieth Century, from Parisian philosophy to Germanic concentration camps, from semi-pornographic American TV to Swedish hard core pornography: a veritable paradise for the elect, and for the Morlocks that won’t obey there are the camps.

Not that the Europeans, in either the shit-heeled original patriarchal form or as their loutish American incarnation, will be fit to be even the Morlocks. Their lives are so tainted and encrusted with the million social projects of three millennia that it will be easier, cleaner, to wipe them out. The Coming World Order doesn’t need such failure-traumatized rejects in it. As if Germans would ever get over that experiment in minority removal; as if the Americans could have a working government, after the shadow-directed shambles theirs has been for two centuries now, ever since Washington the would-be king was replaced with

## CHAPTER 30. PINK LITMUS PAPER SHIRT

someone more malleable. The French, with their experiments in being the scorned heart of the world; the Greeks, in their experiment of being an endless tragedy; hah, the whole continent is full of headcases! The coming death from the East will be a mercy for them.

Hah, in their own mythology, in the words of those dumb Greeks they adored for centuries, the origin of the name “Europe” is told, and still they could not see it. Europa was a woman, kidnapped by a god in the form of a White Bull (and that needs no explanation!), spirited away to a barren place at the edge of forever, ravished, and left there to be a “queen” while the White Bull became a constellation to watch over her — while the Bull’s last drops of sperm sired a MINOTAUR to watch in the shadows. But ask an European, and they say, “It’s just a name!”

Sure, my blind idiots; and the MINOTAUR has never existed. Ask Marie Antoinette if the MINOTAUR is just a paranoid fiction!

Why do you think she didn’t fear the guillotine? She had seen the twelve majesties; death was little compared to that! She cried at the end, “Pardon me, I meant not to do it” — but it was too late by then, and the working lady in hooped skirts and a parasol was there just to watch and laugh. That nice, nice body of hers was improved a lot by divesting it of that overcurious Austrian head! That body, dancing nudely, lewdly, danced ever so much better without the head! Better still, there was a better audience; not just her abused brats, shying away from a mother vainly dabbling in mild magicks; but twelve women of true power!

Hah, the idiot had tried to call on her god when she first found out the truth — that was soon quieted when she saw the land the true Abram walked out of. She cursed in Roman and Greek ways, only to see the monstrous mother of Romulus and Remus, and the birth chambers of the Dorians — swooned, leaned on a lintel, over-decorated and gilt in true Versailles fashion, flushed, went pale, near went mad; and then fled, having seen the red-handed doom that

was waiting for her husband and the whole poxy kingdom of France.

She should have fled, instead of standing by her husband the king and descending into those foolish incestuous magicks on her own; she could have lived out her remaining life as a refugee in the land of Washington and Jefferson; indeed, a marriage could have been arranged for her there, and a not insignificant place as the mother to president-kings, just like her French marriage had been made by slightly reducing the number of her sisters; but no, she made a stand and died for it. Goodbye, *l'Autrechienne!*



## Insidious suggestions

If I could really subconsciously influence the minds of others through writing, I would include in my writing a lot of random bullcrap just to throw people off balance, and to distract them from the really influential bits. That way, they'd be reading something silly and then **WHAM** from behind a corner, enlightenment (illumination?) **SLAMS** into them.

If I couldn't, I would express myself through such indeterminate bullshit that people couldn't quite be sure I wasn't doing something clever, and then just wait for them to fool themselves.

In any case I would also drop noncommittal yet suggestive hints like this one.

### LOVE IS JUST A WORD

*Deepity* is a term coined by Daniel Dennett in his 2009 speech to the American Atheists Institution conference. It refers to a statement that has (at least) two meanings; one that is true but trivial, and another that sounds profound, but is essentially false or meaningless and would be “earth-shattering” if true.

(RationalWiki / CC-BY-SA 3.0)



## Pirate the holy texts

Everybody has the right to appropriate and re-interpret holy texts.

There would be no Christianity if Jesus had believed in copyright law. There would be no Islam if Mohammed had went to Jerusalem to ask for reboot rights. And what do you suppose would have happened if, in the beginning, the Estate of Utnapishtim had sent a strongly worded cease-or-desist to the authors and publishers of Noah the Ark Man Annual?

Who controls copyright? The Man. The Man, not the Goddess, or God.

What can the Man do to you? Imprison you, take away your possessions and your means of getting more, drive away your family and friends, make you into a pariah and a broken shell of a human being, crushed under a faceless machine and denied self-fulfilling life and happiness until the day you die?

Nothing more?

Transgress against the Goddess, and your self will be the prison, and a feeling of unease and guilt shall be put upon you; you yourself shall drive away your true friends, and you shall be as a gilded brick.

There is no greater curse.

This pirate's right, the right to appropriate and re-interpret

## CHAPTER 32. PIRATE THE HOLY TEXTS

holy texts, is the only religious privilege worth fighting for.<sup>1</sup> Marriages and teaching the children are of no importance compared to this: marriages are blessings, and cannot be interrupted by mortal hands;<sup>2</sup> and wise children will gravitate to wisdom on their own, and light beacons for the less wise; but if a prophet is strangled before the prophecy is spoken, there will be no wisdom to fall towards, no design for rings on the clasped hands of lovers.

If a God or Goddess or Gods gave you a book, do you really think they gave you the copyright too? If you wrote down immortal wisdom for the enlightenment of the whole human race, did you really think the courts would be the place to fight for it, and your position would be to fight for its retardation and lessening, for hiding and limiting it? If you had the holy revelation of the divine in your hands... would you cheapen it into a pay-per-view scheme?

Would you call your book the final revelation, when so many have not been such before? Would you imply yourself the final prophet? Would you say, this is so certainly the flawless Word Divine, written down by my infallible mortal hand, that I shall even lower my eyes and take up the arms of Man to defend it?

The Goddess defends her own work, fools. She does not need an Inquisition to combat heretics; she does not need copyright to guard her words. True religion, powerful religion, good religion needs neither for true, powerful, good religion does not shun discord, but grows stronger from it.

Every holy book, every meditation on the divine, every tome of theology and pamphlet of sermons, is too holy for copyright. Those who disagree are not properly reli-

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<sup>1</sup>Go weird and wild with discourses. Ask new questions of old texts! Twin hammers of eisegesis and exegesis, engage and create!

<sup>2</sup>Though of course each of the married has hands which, grown cold and hard, can end any blessing on the union. And the part of marriages which is relationships between people: taxation, inheritance, hospital visiting rights — those are important, but they aren't *religious* privileges.



CHAPTER 32. PIRATE THE HOLY TEXTS

gious; they are charlatans and greedy bastards, and not to be trusted: they peddle the Word of Man, and piddle on the Word of God.



## EEEk!

The Church E.E.E. wishes to remind people it is in no way related to the other E.E.E., the eastern equine encephalitis virus, the “triple E”. For an example, the Church or the constituent parts thereof cannot, no matter the extractor’s ingenuity, be extracted from infected horse brains. Neither can, the Church hastens to add, any other major religion. The rumors concerning this about the Church of England are nothing but vile slanders, or then misinterpretations of this entirely unrelated little Victorian ditty:

What are Anglican priests made of?

What are Anglican priests made of?

Infected horse brains,

And puppy-dogs’ tails,

That’s what Anglican priests are made of.

What’s the Bishop made of?

What’s of Canterbury made of?

Sugar and spice and

Infected horse brains,

That’s wha’ the A’bishop of Canterbury’s made of.

The ditty is actually about black death and pirate recruiting, and this erraneous modern interpretation should not be entertained, because it can cause much confusion and, indeed, has made several British horse-owners rather too

wary of Anglican priests skulking around their fields. (See Times 6.6.2006, “Farmer claims CoE harvests his horses for bishops”; and Daily Mail 12.10.2006, “Horse brain farmer pickets cathedral; bishops organize counter-exorcism”)

The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church does, however, use arcane magic rituals involving infected bear brains to invest their primal battle deacons; but that is entirely justified, since otherwise the battle against the Others of Lapland would be quickly lost, and all northern Europe cast under the shadow and the spell of the Reindeer Horn Throne.

(For more information, see the FELC booklet “By the power of the place of the skull! A grim fight against the pagan demons of the forest, begins!”) Tourists that happen to be in Finland around the Juhannus summer festival (end of June) may ask at the nearest church if there still are free seats for the ceremony of the viewing of the infected-bear-brain-infusing ceremony of a class of battle deacons (the *karhunaivoninfektion taisteludiakoniinsurvannanriitinsere- monia*); it is quite an experience. (Viewers are usually asked to refrain from flash photography, as this may enrage the battle deacons and cause undesirable transformations. If such a thing is not asked, it may be mere carelessness, or then the particular priests may be a part of the Blood Confession. In that case, one such get up and run before the battle deacons’ eyes start to elongate and glow; because after that things are going to get *ugly*. Also, bloody. Possibly fatal, too. Battle deacons are creatures of hunger, teeth, and faith, after all.)

## Fan fiction

"Do you know", a whisper goes, "that book actually started as *Twilight fan fiction*?"

This is said in a scandalized tone, since this is said by unthoughtful people, eager to agree without thinking what they are agreeing with.

Fan fiction can be defined as "stories told using pre-existing characters, precedents and relationships"; to this, I would add either "unauthorized" or "written by admirers of the original work".<sup>1</sup> In the case of the above mentioned *Twilight fan fiction*, the fan fiction was using that

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<sup>1</sup>Here "original" is used to mean "that which existed first", not as "that which is not dirty grubby derivate horrible awful fan fiction but pure unaped primordial creation". Actual originality, in this latter sense of novelty, is much overrated anyway. Just as (at the very least) being fan fiction is a neutral statement, automatically implying neither a positive nor a negative judgment, so originality/novelty is not a simple value judgment, but just a detail, and much rarer than most people think. Many great novels and short stories are deeply unoriginal rereadings of existing ones; many awful novels and short stories, too. The deciding factor is not whether their plots, characters, settings or themes are original, but whether they use their original and derivative parts well. How many times has Hamlet been rewritten? Don't go calling all those unoriginal works worthless before you see the list!

series' background for sadomasochistic smut.<sup>2,3</sup> In objection to the unthoughtful reaction that being fan fiction is a mark against this, or any other, piece of fan fiction, I offer a few semi-coherent remarks and a theological perspective, which hopefully either illuminates fan fiction through religion, or religion through fan fiction.

## 1. Fan fiction as a work of love

Why do people write fan fiction?

One, is fan fiction simply bad writing?

Two, do its writers have grubby, awful reasons for writing it?

As for the first point, Sturgeon's Law applies: ninety percent of fan fiction is indeed crap, for the simple reason that ninety percent of anything is crap, yea, even of properly published fiction ninety percent is crap, even if well proofread and typeset. Publishers are, generally speaking, conglomerations of literature-loving people who want to make a living from being facilitators for it; and this means making gambles on books and authors they like and more importantly hope paying readers will like. Publishers and

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<sup>2</sup>Though in "official" publication the books were rewritten to not have those elements in them, because unauthorized sequels are troublesome, and unauthorized sadomasochistic softcore porn sequels doubly so, when the original is an abstinence fic. Also: taking umbrage at the possibility of raising a work from an existing setting to one of its own, and seeing this as an inherently bad thing, implies a belief in a kind of a silly omnivoracity of the new work. One can write fan fiction that does not include, or require, all the parts of the original work, and that can work just as well without them.

<sup>3</sup>Also, the books do not portray what your friendly local S&M enthusiast would recommend for a healthy, non-abusive, consent-and-communication-based sadomasochistic relationship; they're exciting reading, but what they portray is romanticized domestic abuse. Have fun with a hand in your pants!

publishing-people hope the books they publish (help to put out) and the authors they publicize will pay back by being the next Lord of the Rings or Harry Potter, the next Tolkien or Rowling. In most cases this is not so. Many, maybe most actual published authors fade into obscurity after a book or two: publishers are not unerring judges and much less makers of critical or commercial success. They get over their failed bets with the paybacks of their big successes. One can make an argument that this need for also commercial and not only critical acclaim ("This crap's gonna sell!") greatly increases the Sturgeon ratio of published fiction.

Fan fiction has less quality control at the level of what gets out — everything falls out, like crap from a diarrhea victim! — but more quality control at the reader-community level. Bad fan fiction gets buried by the good, because readers talk to each other and tell each other what they like.<sup>4</sup> There's no commercial motive to keep a well-paying franchise going, and no concerted marketing effort to make something popular regardless of its merits. The lonely fan fiction author has no means to go on a marketing blitz.

One can also say that fan fiction is bad writing not simply because "that's what a survey shows!", ignoring the level of badness in all other classes of writing, but because the mode of fan fiction, that of using pre-existing characters, precedents and relationships, is bad writing or bad for writing well.

This is nonsense.

Writing people means writing the acts of simulation-people you have in your head. If you can create a person in your head, and understand that person sufficiently well, you can write a good, realistic character. I would argue that coming to understand a pre-created fictional person well enough to write them well is the same talent as creating a person of that sort wholesale; but even if this was not the case, it is a little iffy to say exercising this *part* of

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<sup>4</sup>This might not be true, but it's possible, right?

## CHAPTER 34. FAN FICTION

your imagination is to the detriment of the *whole* of your imaginary faculties. Training your glutes doesn't make you an ass-monster that can't do anything but ass-related exercises; and a well-rounded callipygian exercise regime, corresponding to a well-imagined piece of fan fiction, is impossible without a good workout for the rest of the body, or the imagination skillset, as well.<sup>5</sup>

Fan fiction is writing in a pre-existing world, with its established facts and realities. So is writing a novel set in France; I have not heard arguments that this is lazy and unimaginative, and I would say this is even more demanding than coming up with new things. Constrained writing is often both more demanding, and more rewarding, than unlimited freedom.<sup>6</sup>

Finally, might all fan fiction be bad because it is immoral: playing in the original author's sandbox, pissing on the toy trucks and stealing the shovels? Authors at times make shrill noises about how their world is theirs and nobody else is allowed to play in it. This would be a sensible

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<sup>5</sup>Not that fan fiction is only "practice", or done only by unskilled or beginner writers. For a large part it is, but that's because even people that are not professional writers can get caught up in the works of those who are, and if you want to practice your writing, it's nice to not to have to worry about all of the details at the same time: with one kind of fan fiction, you can take the worldbuilding and the characters as a given. (Or, some original authors would say, as taken, in the sense of the film.) (Also: I am certain, though without any proof, that there's anonymous fan fiction written of a big-name thing by a different big-name author floating out there online. If so, please leave a line in your testament — the world should know!)

<sup>6</sup>I would argue that certain TV shows, like *Avatar: the Last Airbender* and *Doctor Who*, profit from their inability to resolve their plots through vacuous titillation and extreme violence, unlike many so-called adult programs. Then again, everyone can come up with examples of shows strangled by an inability to deal with their boundary conditions. (The most irritating is, "We'll play this like this character is in mortal danger, despite nobody dying ever and him being the main character who extra specially cannot die. Aren't you thrilled to see if he will survive!")



reaction if these authors were less adept with their art: so we are to read their works, and have our passions raised by them, our minds stimulated, ourselves excited by the characters and events in them, feel joy, sorrow, fear, triumph — but remain perfectly passive, after all that? That's asking too much.<sup>7</sup> To which authors say, Well make worlds of your own then. To which fans say, Don't you understand I'm saying I love you?

As for the second point of this section, let us consider the possible motivations of a fan fic writer.

Fan fiction is not a commercial genre. It is written without payment, and read without buying it.<sup>8</sup> Star Wars Expanded Universe novels can be considered fan fiction, but it is not immediately obvious to which extent they are written by "admirers of the original work", and to which extent they are work for hire by capable mercenary authors. Most, if not all, writers of fan fiction do not do it in the hopes of ever getting money out of it, so except for borderline cases like the Expanded Universe and severely anonymized and castrated editions, money or desire of money isn't the motivation for writing fan fiction.<sup>9</sup> Those fans that actually

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<sup>7</sup>Fan fiction might be illegal in some places, in some ways, to some extent, but you can't legislate morality. And using the law to go after fan fiction works about as well as siccing lawyers on your biggest fans usually does.

<sup>8</sup>To which certain acephalic rectal-breathers would say, "Nurdy nur nur, and who would pay for it!" They are sad people, incapable of finding anything beautiful beyond their glum, limited circles; they deserve our pity as well as our undying hatred.

<sup>9</sup>There's an anecdote about Marion Zimmer Bradley that is often used to explain why authors must hate and destroy or at least always ignore fan fiction. MZB had been a booster of fan fic and a mentor of young authors for decades, and involved in getting fan fic of her Darkover series published in approved zines and official anthologies. She had even bought the rights for some good ideas, and made at least one into a co-authored story (The Keeper's Price). Then she read a story called Masks in one of the approved zines, and wrote its author wanting to use parts of it or the "take" in it in a new novel (Contraband) she was writing about the same character; 500 bucks and an dedica-

think they can put a new Twilight book up for sale on Amazon are swiftly kicked in the butt by reality, and by the fandom.<sup>10</sup>

The cash of admiration and social prestige can be a motivation, though: in the fan fiction community its best storytellers are admired and praised, and the next instalments of their works waited for with zeal that does not lose to the zeal felt for the future product of "real", or rather officially published, authors. Since many fan fictions are published in smaller slices than officially published work, often chapter by chapter rather than book by book, the wait is shorter, the reward more frequent — for both the author and the reader.<sup>11</sup> This admiration for the author through her or his work is a great if intangible reward; but it is not easily gotten. Offering one's work for reading is a risky business, even in gentler circles than what is Internet's usual. Many fan fiction authors do not know how good their own writing is: they like it, they are proud of it, but this can be inabil-

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tion were offered. The story's author wanted a byline. There was no agreement. MZB engaged lawyers; the fan-ficer might have done so also; there was talk of made threats; accounts differ. Everyone involved soured on fan fiction. MZB's book was sunk by her publisher or herself; she lost 4 years of work, 2 years of work, or some incomplete notes. It was a complicated thing. Oh wait, I mean MZB was *sued by a crazy fan and lost a book!* The story is usually told with implications that MZB had already come up with those juicy parts on her own and was being extra cagey, because *fan fiction cannot make a good thing*, that the fan threatened to sue, or threatened first (despite this being at best conjectural) because *every fan is a potential monster*, MZB's publisher spiked the book (her statements conflict each other), because *the author was a betrayed saint*, and so on.

<sup>10</sup>If only there was a way to allow fan fiction that properly attributed the original author, was non-commercial, and shared its contents alike to other fans, and altogether for any purposes for the original author. Some kind of a creative, common attribution non-commercial share-alike superuser licence or something.

<sup>11</sup>One can argue over whether chapter-by-chapter or some other granularity of release is the best, but that is neither here or there. One probably shouldn't argue for one setting being the only true one suitable for authors to be taken seriously.

ity to properly appreciate one's own work.<sup>12</sup> Many may be aware of it. Some may be young enough, in some sense of the word, to not have the critical insight to even know bad writing if they could see it. But, given that Internet's usual form of offering up fan fiction includes the machinery for attaching to it reviews of and reactions to it, no writer can be unaware of the fact that not all reactions are positive. The readers of fan fiction for Subject X are almost always fans of Subject X; they do not take kindly to lazy or inept fan fiction of what they really, really like. Offering one's work to these wolves, not knowing if they will bite, is not an idle hunt for easy adulation.

A third motivation for fan fiction might be the simple urge to create. One either feels the need to write, and chooses a subject or world one is inspired by; or, in reverse, one feels the need to express some nuance of that world, say sadomasochism in the *Twilight* setting, that has not been explored to one's satisfaction in the original works. People who feel these are not good motivations for writing should be hit with baseball bats made of real live rabid bats, so fan fiction cannot be blamed for a bad motivation in this regard.

A fourth motivation might be the author's love of the original work.<sup>13</sup> The characters are alive in the mind of the fan fiction author; their interactions and interrelations complex and keenly felt, implying more than has been told yet. The setting is vivid, its rules and regulations clear; much has been told, yet many questions still remain unanswered. The original work is magnificent, yet not complete, even if it may be complete for all the ways the original author meant it. The author of *Twilight* probably never intended to include spanking porn in the world, so someone

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<sup>12</sup>Sweet merciful breath of Cloacina, see some of the lumps in *this* pile of offal offerings!

<sup>13</sup>I personally would argue this and the previous are the most common motivations: you are a writerly sort of a person, you like the existing instances of this particular story, and you find an instance that hasn't been made yet — so you make it!

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else had to. I suppose some people think art shouldn't be meddled with: if you see something you love, you should keep your grubby hands off it and gawp at it from a distance, like the unskilled consumer oaf you are. This view is not really liked by some prospective consumer oafs: if I really like something, I will pay for it, yes, I will speak its praises, yes, but I will also express my liking of it, its inclusion in the internal and external processes that make up me, in all the ways which are natural to me, even if the original author wants nothing but money and a five-star review on Amazon.<sup>14</sup> I might draw a picture of Elsa, either as in the movie, or in a pose and setting I feel like drawing.<sup>15</sup> I might engage in sculpture, cosplay, or fan fiction, in any which way I feel inspired.

Finally, isn't fan fiction just shoddy porn? "Well, there's no official Harry Potter slash, so I'll make some!" This is in some cases the case, but again, this is not universal or malign enough to hang the whole mode of fan fiction from until dead and despised. If we are adults — and I, dear reader, buy my Depends in Adult — we agree that sexuality is a human universal, and porn, the exercise of sexual imagination, is a good thing.<sup>16,17</sup> If we agree about that, I don't see why we cannot enjoy porn of just about anything

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<sup>14</sup>This is unfair, because authors of fiction generally want their work to be liked (motivation number two, above), in addition to making them great big sums of money. But most authorly objections to fan fiction are commercial — "If a fan gets out this idea before I do, they could sue me!" — and, if fan fiction is as uncommercial as I think, solvable with some kind of a legal statement. "I made this. I don't own this. I will never sell this. Author X can copy this wholesale if she wants, and my only reaction will be to be tickled pink."

<sup>15</sup>Elsanna OTP Arencest 4evah.

<sup>16</sup>He-man woman-hater porn less so, but let us not throw the whole genitalia away because one of the balls has gone bad. Let's have more dicks and balls until the smelly one is reduced to just fantasy among many. And pussies and prehensile pseudolimbs and whatever you want.

<sup>17</sup>Asexuality is also a fine choice. (Wait, "choice"?)

that excites us.<sup>18</sup> Porn is a way to enjoy and semi-reify acts that are unethical, illegal or flat-out physically impossible. Just because amorous interactions with a tentacle monster are unlikely to ever really happen doesn't mean enjoying them is wrong, or indicates you're going out prowling in the hopes of finding some real suckers. That someone writes Harry and Draco snogging and then bonking just says they like that too.<sup>19</sup>

As for fan fiction porn being shoddy, well, sometimes you want idealizations without all the complexities of real life, and if you are in desperate need, grammar and spelling are dispensable too.

## 2. Fan fiction as a different perspective

Next, fan fiction can do things the original work can not. Twilight, as noted above, probably didn't have a niche, a spot of a few chapters, for the exploration of sadomasochistic sex. Tolkien, a devout Catholic, didn't really want to consider if Iluvatar, the God of his sub-creation, was evil, or a lie of the Valar. My Little Pony isn't likely to come out with a range of rousing equine rumpy-pumpy any time soon. The original author of Ivanhoe isn't going to write an update with a modern view of the medieval times, or of the treatment of women and Jews. Most fiction writers are not going to write alternate histories where the bad guy wins, or the hero chooses the other girl, or the heroine attends Hogwarts. Some choices are commercial impossibili-

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<sup>18</sup>But if you want your Care Bears porn to be a shame-defilement childhood-purity-destroying thing, uh, have fun.

<sup>19</sup>Though there's something worrisome in how overwhelmingly often each visually portrayed female character of movies, comics and cartoons is portrayed in visual fan fiction porn as a passive sex object, either willing or unwilling. What's the fun in a portable hole? (Actual D&D sex tips not wanted.)

ties; others are stories the original author will not, or can not, tell.<sup>20</sup>

Readers, however, want to know. Their curiosity and hunger are stronger than the original author, because they are hundreds, thousands, millions; they in aggregate think of things the original author would never have the time, experience or audacity to think.<sup>21</sup> It would be somehow profoundly silly to say that these questions must go unanswered, these curiosities unexplored, because this one person isn't going to brand the answers and explorations as legit official ones.<sup>22</sup> Worse, it would be some kind of a deifi-

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<sup>20</sup>A good word to know at this point is *canon*: it means, "that which is commonly held to be true". The original work is canon; fan fiction authors agree that it is true, or at least in some form an existing thing to which the fan fiction reacts. (For example, a Sherlockian fan-ficcer might say the Conan Doyle tales are Watson's versions of the true happenings, and not entirely accurate; upon which this fanfic of Sherlock as a transvestite woman hangs.) Fan fiction then is not canon, and an author of it is not required to accept other bits of fan fiction as true or prerequisite. Canon is the common core of the "verse" — the universe of the work — which fan fiction complements and expands. Note that canon doesn't equal official, or good. Authors and fans alike have at times found it convenient to forget some things ever existed. (For example, a shame nobody ever made a live-action Transformers film.) There are awful "canon" novels that have inspired much better fan fiction — and good novels that have inspired great fan fiction. (This is often said when the original work was aimed at a young audience, or otherwise limited from expressing the full range of human interactions, and so isn't necessarily meant as a slight on it. Hasbro isn't going to authorize Transformers: Buckets of Blood anytime soon.) Finally, there are different levels of canon-ness: there is no official canon which says Akane Tendo's mother was named Kimiko, but there are fans who, for reasons of fan-fictional consistency, have agreed this was so.

<sup>21</sup>"Audacity" sounds better than "temerity" or "randy, brazen, callous, weepy, gluttonous, prissy, perverted and/or immature droofacedness", right?

<sup>22</sup>And anyway creation is not a discrete thing, consisting of Holy Official Canon and Dirty Pigshit Fancrap. Creation, like most things, is continuous: there's the book, and the less good sequel, and the first draft, and the interview-given explanation, and the snippet in the official calendar, and the official RPG, and the well-supported fan conjec-

cation of the original author, and a castration and an infantilization of her or his audience.

Reading is often called a passive act, but it is more active than watching TV, and reading a book is not the whole of book fandom, any more than 45 minutes zoned out at the glass teat is what being a fan of a TV show is. (Sailor Moon fridge magnets and a Ranma 1/2 / Megaman crossover, represent!) Even the mere acts of reading and watching are more creative and collaborative than most people think. Nobody would read a novel that explained and established every single motive and facial feature. Nobody would watch a TV show with voiceovers for all characters and ten thousand real-time camera angles. (At best, one would skip a lot.) All forms of fiction are flawed telepathy, interpreted by the recipient in ways that always differ from what the sender wrote or filmed. If the author is a god, then her fan is a prophet: gods do not truly speak except to their prophets.

### 3. Fan fiction in history

Fan fiction has always existed, and always will, because of the reasons of passion shoddily examined above. This means that today is not a special place in time, populated by peculiarly vile and unimaginative fan-fictioneers. They are better interconnected and have a greater audience, that is true, but they are not different from their spiritual ancestors. The fan fiction of the past, of letter circles and hot

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ture, and the comic book adaptation, and the fan concordance, and the fan fiction crossover with Sailor Moon, and the squicky porn fic, and the crossover with Ranma 1/2 and Tenchi Muyo, and the squickfic, and the sporkfic, and the spamfic, and the trollfic, and the big-budget movie version, and the prequel written with Kevin J. Anderson. One should appreciate the great variety of official-ness, canon-ness and serious-ness, and not be too eager to draw lines.

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type, has been mostly forgotten and lost, and this is partly a good thing; but the past can also offer many shining examples of fan fiction that have proven to be excellent literature by any standard.<sup>23</sup>

Remember, "stories told using pre-existing characters, precedents and relationships", either without authorization, or because you love them. King Arthur, Robin Hood — why couldn't such unimaginative hacks as Chrétien de Troyes and Walter Scott use their own imagination instead of rehashing tired old stories? Stop writing your weirdo Arthur / medieval chivalry crossover crap! Don't give me this Robin Hood meets Richard the Lionheart meets your fucking self-insert original character Ivanhoe shit! And what about Shakespeare, that dirty-fingered pissant; every single one of his stories is a rewrite or an unauthorized sequel! If fan fic is worthless, then a pox on you all! A pox on you all, you self-confessed turd-merchants!

(Deep breaths, deep breaths.)

What about *Wind Done Gone*, and the whole genre of parallel literature, writing a story in the shadow of a well-known story? Let's not get tangled in law; is that form of fan fiction illegitimate in a moral or critical sense? (Okay, what about *Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*? How should I know what titles best inspire you to the gut reactions I want out of you? You no doubt have enjoyed a great amount of fan fiction without recognizing it, or wanting to recognize it as such, but I don't know what you've seen!)

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<sup>23</sup>Even by so high a standard that one cannot call them fan fiction, because fan fiction is subliterate, derivative, unimaginative and probably porn; its writers are nit-picky geeks. Real literature engages priors, offers commentary and even illumination, and is wryly sensual; and is written by perceptive and well-read auteurs who strike their teeth like icepicks into the marginalia and subtlest hints of the ur-text. (Also, I have a bee up my butt about this, and my ire exceeds my knowledge of this and my better judgment. But as "real authors" can comment on fan fiction seemingly without knowing anything about it, I shall in this unread and badly written screed reveal their ignorance by committing the seemingly same error in reverse, because that always works.)



Most of today's fan fiction will sadly disappear. What will remain will clear its legal hurdles, eventually; and what remains — and there will be some — will probably not be called fan fiction once the critics have deemed it literature.

One could speak of immediate fan fiction — that of *My Little Pony* and *Twilight* — and distant fan fiction — that written of works that are in some sense "old" or "done with" in relation to the fan fic writer. The first could contain a subdivision of "in medias res" fan fiction, such as that of *A Song of Ice and Fire*, and other works which are not yet officially finished.<sup>24</sup> Distant fan fiction could, then, equally contain "completion" fan fictions, such as the many versions of Dickens's unfinished *Mystery of Edwin Drood*.

One could divide fan fiction also by its treatment of the original work: it is either the un-nuanced gospel truth (much of *Harry Potter* fan fic<sup>25</sup>), a flawed or obfuscated account (much of *Sherlock Holmes* fan fic<sup>26</sup>), or a rank propagandistic lie (Kirill Yeskov's *The Last Ring-Bearer: a apologia for Sauron!*).

One could also call fan fiction secondary fiction, or reactive fiction, or superset continuum literature. The point is, fan fiction in its different forms, under different names, makes up a large part of all human invention, and is a good tool for understanding parts of it.

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<sup>24</sup>If you like *Harry Potter* fan fiction, check out the theories and fictions made before HBP or DH.

<sup>25</sup>This sort of fan fiction prefers Tolkien's method of error correction: two conflicting facts can be fit together with the introduction of a third fact.

<sup>26</sup>*Sherlock* was *really* a woman, a patsy of the true detective Watson; or Watson's lover, or a foreign prince, or an American, or a time traveller, or the Doctor's companion in a fight against Azathoth (no lie), or Moriarty in disguise, or a reincarnation of Jesus, or a nephew of *Dracula*, or a first cousin of John Wilkes Booth.

## 4. Religion as fan fiction

Finally, a religious person cannot oppose fan fiction — and this is where we get into the reason for this essay’s inclusion in this otherwise tightly themed and weeded book.

In a literary sense, most (if you go by readership) holy books are fan fiction. In a theological sense, they of course share the same divine author in the background, just as secular fan fiction writers might say the grandiosity of the idea and the story are too vast to be contained in or expressed by the original author; but in a literary sense holy books are often fan fiction pure and simple.

The authors of the New Testament were writing an unauthorized sequel to (what they came to call) the Old Testament. Since miracles lie outside proper history, it is best to treat the Gospels as literary sequels to similarly literary older Jewish works.

Depending on one’s devotion to historical and literary studies of the subject, the New Testament can be seen as an inspired-by reboot, as an implied sequel, as a canon invasion by Buddhism, Socrates or Greek legends, as a Mary Sue of monstrous proportions, or a case of the main character getting increasingly archetypal and more invulnerably awesome with each new instalment.

Similarly, Joseph Smith’s religious work relies on the existing work in the Bible; to universally malign fan fiction would be to imply a lower quality for his work because it does not stand on its own but modifies and (he would say) completes an existing, in a literary sense independent, work.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, Islam sees itself as a completion of the arc of Judaism and Christianity: as the cracking final instalment of that trilogy which catapulted an obscure Mediterranean tribal religion into worldwide fame.<sup>28</sup> In a

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<sup>27</sup>Even if this should be true, it should be shown to be true for good, factual reasons, not bullshit pseudo-arguments like as this!

<sup>28</sup>Mentions of wealth and influence not included because there would be unfortunate implications. Mostly because some people don’t

literary sense, there's nothing wrong in religious works and religions being based on existing religious works and religions; in a theological sense, too, most such religions have resolved the problems of this at least to their own satisfaction.<sup>29</sup>

To deny "fan fiction religions" their place just because they build on existing work is just as blind as to deny fan fiction its place because it builds on existing work. Just as secular fan fiction explores themes, ideas and plots the original work did not, or could not, so derivative religions have their special power in going where the original religion did not, or could not, go. New religions are born when the circumstances of human beings change; or old religions change themselves, through new works or the re-interpretation of the existing ones. Re-interpretation is easy, because everyone agrees holy books tend to have messages, but any halfway decent book can be interpreted in an infinity of ways, often in any way the reader wants to. In this way, the fan fiction is not a new tale, but a re-reading of the old one. This is a more powerful tool than most people recognize; and especially powerful when not all perspectives have an equal opportunity to be heard. Maybe Jesus is best read as a prophet of an apocalypse that failed, and early Christian writings as excuses for that apocalypse's tardiness — such a view might be very reasonable and historical, but it is unlikely to satisfy devoted fans that believe the story's actual author is a real living God and doesn't make mistakes. Such interpretations don't need to pre-exist in the original work, because they often answer questions that hadn't even been asked when the original work was written — indeed, otherwise the original work might answer

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believe success is possible without foul play, and J. K. Rowling controls the banks and the media.

<sup>29</sup>There's something strange in the third book to trumpet itself as the absolute final revelation; but not more strange than the twentieth galaxy-threatening crisis in twenty years after millennia of much sparser all-consuming threats.

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them in a much clearer fashion! — though religious revisionaries could generally speaking do a better job in articulating the fan-fictional nature of their interpretations.

For example, homosexuality as we now understand it was (or so I hear) not known in the New Testament period, and what are often read as comments against it were in opposition to licentious same-sex rumpy-pumpy,<sup>30</sup> not the polarities-reversed but otherwise similar and equal to heterosexuality concept we have today. Of our conception of homosexuality, the New Testament is silent; and thus our interpretations rest on other, more general statements, which we interpret to read a view on this specific thing. Similarly, J. K. Rowling does not address contraception in the Harry Potter world; but one can nonetheless read "correct" or "implied" actualities and attitudes from her work, even if she never put them there, consciously or unconsciously.<sup>31</sup>

In more immediate fan fiction religion, it is sometimes necessary to file away the serial numbers and disguise the origins of one's inspiration, much as with the Twilight-inspired spank fic, because the laws of men and apparently also of gods do not favor fan fic. Whether or not Joseph Smith leaned on Ethan Smith's View of the Hebrews for parts of his magnum opus, it could not be said out loud because of the vanity of men. Indeed, religion's prestige problem is the reverse of that of secular fan fic: secular ficcers often say, "This is my small thing, that I wrote because I like this huge thing."<sup>32</sup> Religious authors are liable to say, instead, that "I wrote this final hugebig thing, which is much better than this one thing you already like so you should like my

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<sup>30</sup>Though one could ask, what's so bad with hedonistic rumpy-pumpy? Some people think that because you can drown, you shouldn't ever drink anything! (But I suppose you can't fight all the battles at the same time. Or you can, but people tend to look at you funny.)

<sup>31</sup>"Ribbed Slick Dragonskin Shonkies with Salome's Bubbly Lubricating Inside-Out Extract?" Hermione asked. "Ron, did you get this from your brothers? And is your wand really supposed to turn that color?"

<sup>32</sup>"Ph'nglui mglw'nafh J. K. Rowling wgah'nagl fhtagn." (E.Y.)

thing too which is much better and more important. Final revelation! No backsies!" No wonder Jews disliked Christians, and Christians Muslims, and so on!

Finally, is religion fan fiction, or fan fiction porn? Does it leave out some of the complexities of real life for added emotional effect? Does it ignore logic, plausibility and other parts of the same story and verse to get to that climax of comfort, that embrace of God, that prolonged orgasm of what was longed for, that proverbial "kinky fuckery"?

In the case of religions you don't like, obviously. In the case of ones you do, well, that's overreaching.



## The Ur-Koan in full

A student asked her zen master whether a dog had Buddha-nature; the zen master had been lecturing about Buddha-nature for the past few weeks.

The zen master thought for a long while and then said: “Wuh.”

The student wrote down, “Wú (Jap. mu) means ‘nothing, without’; it unasks the question, suggests it has no answer, the question is malformed, etc. (Also, /mu/, lost continent of m., —se, etc.)”

Meanwhile outside a dog went by, barking: “Wuh! Wuh! Wuh!” — and only the zen master heard it.





## Sacred obsolescence

There are permanent and impermanent holy books. Of the former, none have yet been written and never will be. The latter are a word for their times — the word of a madman, a badman, a superman — and in time they become age-darkened books of blood and evil.

Any book written today is written by this very day, to this very day, with all the attendant prejudices, mistakes and evils such creation and marketing requires. When a new day comes, those evils fade away, to be replaced by new and hopefully lesser ones; but the book written today stays the same, though its readers may say differently, if they are very besotted with it. To follow the book written today in tomorrow, in a new day, is to keep alive the prejudices, mistakes and evils of today.

Any book older than a hundred years is certainly a Book Written Today. Most books older than you are Books Written Today. Now a New Day has come; put aside that book.

Do not hold it sacred.

Do not hold it holy.

Do not believe or worship it.

It is grown moldy with the evils of its day. Its good-meaning message is lost in thickets of culture grown distant and words grown strange. It is overgrown with commentary, with weeds of every statement and its inverse. It does not speak to any people save those of the tomb.

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There is no illumination in it not darkened by time, eclipsed by age: thus take the last light it has, and burn it.

What words were put into the mouths of Moses, Jesus and Moroni are said better today, without the evils of yesterday, with just the evils of today.

This book, incidentally, was written after you were born.<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \*

If the previous is too radical, consider a “rolling obsolescence”; it’s very popular among liberal Christians. Basically every year you take a part of your holy book and declare that a particular verse dealt with a social situation that existed once upon time but doesn’t anymore — for example, the Bible’s references to homosexuality obviously do not refer to the modern idea of it, but to a sort of sweaty hedonistic excess. Thus those parts no longer apply. (Don’t ask what they say about sweaty hedonists; it isn’t polite.)

By a continuous application of this principle, the holy book keeps an appearance of weight and heft, while year by year less and less verses are actually treated as meaning anything. The main problem of this approach is that eventually one ends up without much anything left, and what’s a religion without a text?

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<sup>1</sup>Remove this sentence from later editions.

## Origins for familiar words

The word “nitty-gritty” for fine detail is a corruption of the name of Nitocris, a legendary Egyptian pharaoh. She is best known for a plot, recorded in Herodotus, which involved inviting all her enemies to a feast in an immense underground chamber, and then diverting the waters of the Nile into it, drowning all within. As such an action clearly cannot be done on a sudden impulse, one indeed needs to attend to the “nitty-gritty”: how high the Nile is, whether the duct is big enough to fill the room quickly, how strong the doors are, whether everyone is in attendance, whether the chairs float, if one can tunnel using the forks, and the like.

The word “kiosk”, or a booth for selling small items such as newspapers, candy, cigarettes and small knives, comes from Cheops, the pharaoh that had the Great Pyramid of Giza built. The word, however, does not come from the pyramid, but from the stands and tents set up by priests in front of it for their ceremonies. According to Herodotus, the priests also sold sacred amulets, drops of blood from Cheops’s still-bleeding mummy, small mummified cats, and other tabletop ornaments. His dismissive account of this way of acquiring a living in a rapidly secularizing hostile world made “cheops” a byword for small, banal salesplaces; hence the modern “kiosk”.

“Rah” or “rah, rah!” is a common enough cheer; but it

## CHAPTER 37. ORIGINS FOR FAMILIAR WORDS

is considerably more ancient than people realize. It comes from ancient Egyptian royal funeral rituals, where the name of Ra, the grandfather of the gods, was chanted — “Ra! Ra! Ra!” — to announce the ascent of the next pharaoh, the next living god. There may be similarities to how modern athletes are treated.

(Incidentally, the word “pharaoh”? Often misspelled as “pharoah”; this is a legacy of the time pharaohs were living gods, and gods were not spoken of in vain. A “faroah” was a brightly colored Nile-wasp.)

## The theology of $P$ and $\neg P$

The following quotations from *the Astral Book of Eris*, the Akashic Record of Primeval Chaos, are provided for use in introducing/condemning new/old elements of Erisian theology.

- $\exists_1$  Eris loves women.
- $\exists_2$  Eris doesn't love brunettes.
- $\exists_3$  Eris is undecided on Armenians.
- $\exists_4$  Eris loves left-handed people.
- $\exists_5$  Eris doesn't love people born in a year divisible by two.
- $\exists_6$  Eris has no opinion on people over seven feet tall.
- $\exists_7$  Eris has an opinion on everybody.
- $\exists_8$  Eris is two.
- $\exists_9$  Eris is five.

The reader should remember that *the Astral Book of Eris* is a book with a single message of very specific love that needs not be specified here, and a specific law that needs not be elaborated here; and all other interpretations of it are illegitimate, heretical and obviously false. Every sect that adheres to *the Astral Book*, no matter how different, acknowledges this.

It is a well-known result of logic and theology, the so-called Divine Postulate, that if you dare to make two con-

## CHAPTER 38. THE THEOLOGY OF $P$ AND $\neg P$

tradictory assumptions, everything you want is true!

## Chaonnophris and Herwennefer

There were many pharaohs in Egypt; but to an Erisian only two of them are of consequence: Chaonnophris and Herwennefer.

They are not the most famous ones, that much is true: but they are vitally important to every Erisian. (Non-Erisians will probably be more entertained by amazing tales of the adventures of Boss Narmer, the rogue scorpion pharaoh who unified Upper and Lower Egypt, battled dragons, saved dark-eyed maidens from evil crocodile knights, righted wrongs, out-Solomoned Solomon, etc. etc.)

This much is known: in 205 BCE Egypt was ruled by Ptolemy Philopator, a pharaoh from the line of the first Ptolemy who had been a conqueror, a general of the warlord Alexander, called Great by some, who had added Egypt to his dominions as just another grape to be ground under his heel. The wine of that grinding had fallen to the first Ptolemy to drink after Alexander's premature death; and his line had ruled Egypt for a hundred years. Ptolemy Philopator was a weak, indolent man, ruled by his passions and by his lovers, interested in religion only as far as it involved orgies, and a man that thought himself a great literary figure because he had admirers who said so. (In reality his "Adventures of Boss Narmer, the Hero Pharaoh" was a derivative, deeply unoriginal pastiche of the most hackneyed and cliched motifs in all Egyptian literature. Really,

## CHAPTER 39. CHAO AND HERWE

a pharaoh that is a son of the sky god, is robbed of his inheritance by a wicked uncle (yawn), grows up as a peasant boy, is guided by a wise, long-bearded priest of Amun, and has to die and rise again and then defeat a foreign goddess in the east by taking her sacred ring into a mountain of fire before she covers all the lands in a darkness and a flood? Ptah!)

Herwennefer, then, who was known by at least four other names, too, was a potter and a literary critic of the time. In the year 205 BCE he set his pen down and in a bravery-drunken frenzy told what he *really* thought of “Boss Narmer and the Secret of the Eclipse of the Pyramid of Storge”; a few days later his camel died in the Upper Egyptian village of Ikelbug, and having no other way to escape the pharaoh’s guardsmen pursuing him, he took out a copy of his review and read it: and the townsfolk, hearing the awfulness of their ruler’s prose made bare and nude, were convulsed with anger and indignation. When Herwennefer then read a few stanzas from a rival bestseller, Euthydemus I of Greco-Bactria’s “This is My Kingdom; You Can’t Touch This”, the townsfolk were so shamed by Egypt’s apparent heading towards being a laughingstock of the nations for the literary gauche-like diletantism of their leader, that they beat the pharaoh’s guardsmen to death with farming implements and small pyramids fixed to the ends of sticks (the local weapon of choice), and proclaimed Herwennefer a pharaoh.

In the following years, all of Upper Egypt rebelled and chose to follow pharaoh Herwennefer, and pharaoh Ptolemy was much maligned; and the reputation and the reality of the Ptolemaic dynasty entered a grievous and eventually fatal decline, to reach its final, absolute and most horrendous nadir in Cleopatra VII, a nosy writer of tell-all books.

Herwennefer’s reign came to an ignoble end when it became clear that he could not write either; his only work, “The Nile Is A River In Egypt”, is lost, but by the critique written by his successor, the literary critic and headsman Chaonnophris, it was a fairly awful piece of work. (Cer-



tainly inferior to such classics as “The Power-of-Osiris-Which-Makes-Things-Fall-At-Dust’s Rainbow” by Necho Pтынchon II, “The Farewell to the Arms of My Enemies Who I Have So Totally Crushed That No Trace of Their Seed Remains and Their Fields and Wives are Barren, Covered With Stubble and Undesirable” by Ernest Artaxerxes II of Persia, and the like.)

Chaonnophris ruled c. 198–186 BCE, and on the first day of his reign he declared that all literary critics should be put to death; and there was much rejoicing. This became his downfall, as his messengers and functionaries were constantly hounded by wild gangs of literary critics and priests of Ptah-Tenure, the god of serious words; and this so sapped his strength that in 186 BCE he was defeated in a battle against the Ptolemaic pharaohs, and his kingdom was lost, as was his life. It is said that he was buried at the bottom of an inverse pyramid dug into the stony soil of Ikelbug, and that for centuries literary critics came there and spat and shat on his remains, and wiped themselves with works they considered inferior. This practice came to an end c. 400 CE, when one foolish critic cleaned her nether regions with a signed copy of “St. Michelle Remembers”, the supposed masterpiece of St. Cyril, the Pope of Alexandria; or “the literary pharaoh of the salons of Alexandria” as ran the epithet coined by Theodosius II, Emperor of Rome and author of “The Nicaea Code”. St. Cyril was not amused by this act of assholery, and the Dark Ages of Literary Criticism (400–1400 CE) began.

What Erisians can learn from this is anybody’s guess.



## The theology of Erisian poetry

Begone, foul sluggish calm, from my breast  
Begone, repellent certainty, from my soul  
Begone, bit of order, from my teeth, pt! pt! pt!

Come, the chaos that creates and destroys  
Come, discord, reveleatrix of glass-bodied truth  
Come, disorder, the reign of the million!

We would call you simply our queen,  
But you are no silk-masked unelected tyrant:  
You are the elect of our hearts,  
And we your electors thus crown you empress.

That is some fairly awful Erisian poetry.

The word “poetry” comes from the Greek word which means “making”. I am not making this up.

You don’t need to “make” poetry to make poetry.

Here is catma: It is impossible to write true Erisian poetry. All true Erisian poetry is found poetry, written for a different cause or, most often, for no cause at all.

For example: it would be an utterly baseless assertion that Randall Munroe wrote the comic “Everything”<sup>1</sup> as a hymn from one Erisian to another; but it fits! And because

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<sup>1</sup>Randall Munroe, xkcd, “Everything”, <http://xkcd.com/968/>

## CHAPTER 40. THE THEOLOGY OF ERISIAN POETRY

it fits, it is a hymn from one Erisian to another, a true piece of Erisian poetry.

You are not the light of my life.  
Making you happy isn't my greatest dream.  
Your smile is not all I live for.  
I've got my own stuff going on.  
But you're strange and fascinating and I've never  
met anyone like you.  
I want to give you everything  
just to see what you would *do* with it.

There are big books that occasionally include something wise; but an Erisian can gain the equivalent insights and more by being aware while browsing the Internet, or observing the walls of toilet stalls, or bumper stickers, or email sig lines, or graffiti, or receipts flying in the wind, or sentences overheard in the cafeteria, or the mutterings of your sleeping children, or the mushy repetitions of drunkards, or the newspaper corrections column, or the the ululations of spammers (see p. ??), or flammers and trolls and firsties, or the lies of sidebar ads, or the unintelligible titles of doctoral theses, or the echoing sameness of Facebook comments, or the cacophony of Twitter searches, or the lies that parents tell, or the mistakes children make, or the words politicians never speak, or the words lawyers do, or museum guest-books, or hitch-hiker rumors, or the words floating in your coffee-cup, or the patterns of your tea leaves, or the thirteenth page of Google Search, or the 666th page of any book you own, or attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion, or long boring lists, or deceptive graphs, or covers of paranormal fantasy books, or manga scanlations, or racist screeds, or lunatic scrawls, or your aunt, or a telemarketer mumbling (for aunt just died, and liked getting the calls / died during the previous one, was it you?), or movie trailer platitudes, or coded eulogies, or the bullcrap and gaslighting of corporate talk, or airline announcements ("We'll be in the

ground in fifteen minutes!"), or teabagging instructions, or those for a Boston steamer, or derivatives of 2 Girls 1 Cup, or Shatner reading Palin, or a poet reframing Rumsfeld on the Unknown, or Open Source Poetry by Aaron Zemach (a great book!), or the word which wakes you up, or the unexpected double-entendre of a newspaper headline, or misheard lyrics, or the word which comes to your mind looking at the tomato sauce aisle.

This is found poetry, found philosophy, found theology.

For an Erisian, found theology is good theology, because every Erisian has the taste for outsider art.



## Word proverbs

Who defines words, rules the world.

\* \* \*

Words are defined by use, not by dictionaristas.

\* \* \*

With undefined words, we can all mean different things, all agree, and all be right all the time!

\* \* \*

Word and world are only a letter apart.

\* \* \*

Belief in word magic is a story for children about the true power of words. You can flay someone's heart with the right word, but it's never going to be "Abracadabra".

\* \* \*

In the beginning, there was the World. Then there was the Word, and the World was never again the same.

\* \* \*

The world is stone, and words water. Enough words, and the world will be worn down.

## CHAPTER 41. WORD PROVERBS

\* \* \*

The world is a stone, and words water. Enough words and the world sinks into obscurity.

\* \* \*

The world is stone, and words a drop of water. Words sizzle, freeze, pool, run away; a drop of water can believe anything until it hits the stone.

\* \* \*

With a word, I set the world aflame. With the world in ashes, any word will do.

\* \* \*

The world will not listen to my word. My word will not listen to the world.

\* \* \*

The world turns along its law; our minds turn along theirs. The first is how the world gives its prophecies, and the second how the word.

\* \* \*

With my word, I charmed the feminine and the masculine. With my word, I became a ghost of desire, genderless, sexless, yet the heat of the world. Fight for me, my puppets! My poppets! Made up, worked up, worked out, so chaste and used, my children and brides! Groom yourselves! Write vows in defense of me! A bouquet of fire, a honeymoon, a bloodmoon, before my son rises! Give me children and more bones for my rattle! The catacombs are burning tonight!<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \*

---

<sup>1</sup>So how is this a fucking proverb?



A word is just a breath of air. A world is just a ball of mud.

\* \* \*

The name for power over the word is rhetoric. The name for power over the world is power.

\* \* \*

It was the world which made the word. This should explain why fairly often the word is “fuck”.

\* \* \*

Nobody notices your plans for word domination. Your henchmen are private security contractors.

(cracker fortune)

\* \* \*

Moon is cheese, and the world a cracker. (same)

\* \* \*

Laugh and the word laughs with you. Cry, and the word cries with you.

\* \* \*

Gravity is why the world sucks. What’s the gravity of words?

\* \* \*

## **The word**

I spent my youth traveling the word. I lived a thousand lives, I died a hero and a villain, I saw the world die and a child born; I tasted both ends of the whip and fled from both.

Now I find myself in a foreign land, and struggle vainly to belong: these once-living people scare me, these paper cutouts and cardboard stock characters.

## CHAPTER 41. WORD PROVERBS

I want to turn the page and dance on the covers, meet a word-wise girl, a boy who has seen other sunrises than those of Sol; I want to fall asleep to you fanning this world away with a million more, and I want to paint this one world with all the brilliant lights and awful darks we have seen. I want to raise mountains out of the sea, I want to marry robots and men, or men and men; I want to see some lies die, and I want to give new words to the world and take away the monstrous old ones. I want to build you new hands, and wear an iron heart hot from your forge. I want to draw maps of our understanding, and then liberate the lands beyond us, and then laugh madly at the revelation. I want to be more than the millions in my head.

I don't know where you are, or if you exist yet. Maybe time lies between us, or language; maybe me, maybe you.

Maybe Belgium.

But hey! Belgium is not forever, and I'll paint the sunset green to point your way.

Beneath a moon or more, under arcologies a hundred miles high, or a cover of those dreamsongs, we may meet. I got eyes like ball bearings, you got long fingers to leave conductive trails; our allegiance is to hope and dream.

## Colors of Magic

Many speak of white magic and black magic. White magic has been called “good magic” and black magic “evil magic”. This is so only for some definitions of good and evil. The views of E.E.E. on good and evil are complex — this is what traditionally “good” people often call “evil”. Since magic is an amoral force, it needs order imposed on it; but order imposed on a perfectly yielding mass will lead to disastrous disorder later on, so order should only be pushed on that which pushes back.

White or right hand path magic is magic of healing and understanding. Both of these attributes deal with a yielding target.

Black or left hand path magic is magic of destruction and oblivion. Both of these attributes deal with an unwilling, resisting target.

Of these two approaches, the latter is stronger and more important; but the division into these two is not important. Remember the *Östhovel Principia!*

The five elements are air, earth, fire and water. The Solar and Lunar cycles are important. They are called the Bicycle.

Red Magic is important.

Ask the Red Woman.

Blue magic is the magic of sexual frustration. It should not be sought, but it might come unbidden. Such is the

## CHAPTER 42. COLORS OF MAGIC

horror of the blue walls, the distress of the holiest of holeys.

Pink magic is for little girls. It is no better than what it inverts, the Flashy Matte Black Magic of Giant Robots.

The High Priestess wears a Moon Crown of silver and two cheeks.

Brown magic (*toirezen*) is also known as: the Path of the False Birth, the Enthronement on Porcelain, the Depleting Scroll, and the Flush of the Goddess. It is a magic of subtraction and cleansing.

All in Nature goeth around in cycles. At Yuletide, these great rounds are brought forth, and the best is enthroned as the Wheel of the Year.

There is some eldritch connexion betwixt Discordians and Wiccans. It might be a had cow.

## Discordianism as democracy

Discordianism is democracy come into religion.

In the old, Aristocratic-Pharaonic system the Pope was an Emperor, surrounded by cardinal nobility. The credulous laity had no say in the election of their Pope; only the noble cardinal class did. The loyalty of the Pope was to the elector class of cardinals, and to the memory of those that had sat on the throne before him. The Pope communicated with the laity by waving at them and basking in their adulation. If a Pope spoke to you, you were *honored*; it would be crass of you to say anything but praise; unthinkable to point at a problem except believing the Pope was flawless and only some temporary flaw in his omniscience had caused the flaw to momentarily escape his notice.

If a Pope peed on you, you would smile and call it a golden rain.

In Discordianism everybody is a Pope. Those Popes that demand adulation, palaces and silly hats can go bugger themselves. In Discordianism, a reputation for wisdom is gained by being wise. A reputation for being good is gained by being good. It doesn't matter who sat in your Barcalounger before you, or what red hands raised you to the throne. If you have something worthwhile to say, you will (eventually, with a probability approaching one) be heard. If you have just shit to sling around you will fade into obscurity (eventually, with a probability approaching one).

## CHAPTER 43. DISCORDIANISM AS DEMOCRACY

But the change represented by Discordianism is more radical than merely this; if the above was all Discordianism brought to religion, it would be no better in this regard than some of the Christian false religions.

Discordianism is democracy come into theology.

In the old, Pharaonic-Royalistic system God was a Pharaoh, a Sumerian-Babylonian Tyrant against whom no appeal was possible, no gesture except most abject surrender and self-negation possible. Every religion from Judaism to Christianity to Islam to all their pestilential offshoots drips of this poison: their Gods are painted with the brush of emperors, bedecked with the adulations and sycophancies that capricious and arrogant tyrants require. Their ministers are made angels and lesser gods; the inbred spawn of their loins is made sons and daughters of God, as drunken with omnipotence as their sires. Any dictator of Babylon or Assyria would gladly accept a Christian hymnal as a guide for supplicants; any Muslim, dreaming of houris and heavens, dreams only of the pleasure gardens of ancient kings.

Like mortal tyrants, the immortal ones are jealous. All other gods — other would-be emperors — are damned filthy rebel devils, demons whose promises (unlike Our Glorious Leader's promises!) are lies and deceptions. Gods rule because they are gods; their descent is of ancient nature, and it is self-evident that they should rule; disagreement is heresy, heresy is evil, and evil is eternal death, locked in small rooms away from the Emperor's grace. Old-God theologies all reduce to *cuius regio, eius religio* written across the sky.

Eris, on the other hand — the left hand of accursed magick — is, in the words of a song, “just a girl”. No boy or girl should fall to knees in front of her, except if they've come as infatuated lovers. She has come not to pass judgment, but to bring discord. She's not a self-proclaimed lord with swords and pain to back her; she's a minstrel, with songs that make your head swim and your feet move. When she moves on, she'll take those that follow her piping; those that want to remain in Hamelin are free to do so; if Discor-

dianism is good news, there's enough punishment in being left behind; for those left behind are the butt of a joke of their own design. Salvation is not blood magic to appease a cosmic tyrant, but a shift in vision: the "enlightenment" of Eastern religion and Western philosophy. Those that won't be enlightened don't need a hell, because they will build their own. The old religions are monstrosities of word and idea, concept-carnivores that eat their disciples and digest them in hells on earth, warmed by their fear of ones that don't exist in afterlives that aren't.

In the end, the old gods fall victim to the first law of the workplace: *The buck stops somewhere*. If there's a Boss, what happens is the responsibility of the Boss; especially if the Boss has had the temerity to tout himself as All-Powerful, All-Seeing and All-Good. The buck for everything that the Boss could have fixed, prevented or done differently goes upwards into the celestial realm, and it stops at God's desk, there to meet the bucks of command responsibility and the necessity of taking the lumps for what your underlings did after you did a shit job of teaching them. ("Hurr derp, sorry for the misogyny! Slipped my mind for a few millennia, but I've given some new revelations now!")<sup>1</sup>

It is not good being the Boss of a place where cancer, tsunamis and parasites regularly slay the workforce. It is worse when the hiring is done by the mercilessly murderous mills of evolution. And the PR and Communication Departments, dear God, nothing but rumor and unctuous propaganda! Any God who is the Lord of All becomes a monster merely by being the Lord of This Whole Shithouse — but in the Pharaonic-Royalistic system a God can't be anything less. Eris, on the other hand — Eris isn't interested

---

<sup>1</sup>Then again, crafty Bosses know how to make scapegoats of their underlings. It wasn't God; it was the Pope. It wasn't the Pope, it was the Cardinals. It wasn't the priest, his flock was sinful and should do penance. . . in the end, it wasn't God that farted and brought an earthquake on the village; it was the village's own sinfulness that slipped the earth, and God should get a medal for working with twerps like these.

## CHAPTER 43. DISCORDIANISM AS DEMOCRACY

in ruling, or ownership, or primordial creation. Eris isn't your Boss, or Bossess; she's merely the Goddess of Discord.

All criticism of Discordianism should be first suspected of being the sort of criticism that terrestrial democracy faced from the supporters of the divine right of terrestrial kings.

\* \* \*

But wait! If Discordianism introduces democracy into religion, does it not follow that there ought to be other divinities one can elect to follow, other than Eris? Why, yes, this is so; but one should be careful to not give support to celestial fascists or heavenly xenophobes or dudebro divinities, or indeed any deposed or would-be princelings and other sons-of-god that try to ride nostalgia and forgetfulness into another go at autocratically ruling the world; but one is free to choose any divinity one wants, even if one chooses poorly. See p. 235.



## The Vision of H. Drocsid

or,  
the Future Through The Past,

or,  
the Apple-Tree All A-Fallen

UM SLEA OM

(Genuine Prophecy!)

I looked south, and saw the cone of an immense white mountain; and when its eye opened I cried and fell to my face; and there was cotton in my eyes.

I saw the cattle-driver fall down dead, and a righteous elephant rise from its ashes: but a shot rang out and in a theatre of tragedy the elephant fell; when it rose up it never was the same again. And I saw the elephant locked in a mortal fight with a braying ass that was praying, and I saw a shadow in the schoolhouse door, and a drinking-fountain divided against itself; and I was cast down to my face by the white mountain and I cried for succor.

Then came the green man of great gold who denied the Roman Foreman's power, and was a king and the first among equals; and a man came back from Mexico and drove three

## CHAPTER 44. THE VISION OF H. DROCSID

steel hornets at the green denier, who by his denial had placated the waves; and waves unending sprang from his fall. Behind him was a man of the land of endless toil, the hungry first among those that count the numbers and twist the hands, the master of the gilded chamber; he did set the people of night free, for the second time, and then passed away.

A noxious man of sweat and vulgarity came to set the flower and the briefcase against each other, and the old against the young; and he rode the ringing of hysteria and reigned in infamy, signed the moon and held the hand of the king, until the floodport burst and he was strangled by the shadow of his own words.

Then came a small man, who saw the strife of tears ended in blood, and the noxious man fled beyond justice, and liberty made a pet of his and not the victor of nations; and he had a long life but is forgotten.

Then came the foe of rabbits, and the infamous lunatic; the sand-striker and the inhaler inhaled; then a lackwit fool stole the throne, and all was afoul with fear and blood; and then came the sign of contradiction alive, opposed to the tricorns and the bleeding of men. After him the first one shall come again, and shall excuseless cut down the nation's tree, and the nation shall be no more.

Nothing will remain but the statue of the cauldron's mouth, the lady of the burning needle-pair, the gift of the baguette, waiting for Nehemiah. A beam shall be set against a crossbeam, and one against the green moon; the bald-hairs shall rise, and fall, and there shall be a nemesis, ah, scudded the hopes of men under the looming of the New Jerusalem.

The stern-faced bitch reforged and tricolor-hued will reign over the huddled masses, and cheat them of their yearning; and she shall be crowned with crosses and bars and stars, and bear a torch in one hand and the tablets of the mosaic punishment in the other; and rising from the waters in front of her a bleak stab of steel will come up to her knees,

black and terrible, to remind people that a firebrand's for the stake and the burning of witches, and the law's to know who they are. This is how the end will come; and all shall burn with green fire, the moon falling and the beam shattering; and the last shall go to shadow all alone, never to return.



## Meditations

“I slept with Faith, and found a corpse in my arms on awaking; I drank and danced all night with Doubt, and found her a virgin in the morning.”

---

Aleister Crowley, *The Book of Lies*

“Do we know Crowley liked virgins and disliked necrophilia?”

---

Bertrand Russell

### 1. Out of order

You should always have at least one word out of order: at least one word, one idea that fills you with horror when others say it steaming with desire; at least one word that bowls you over with adoration when others sneer at it. Otherwise, what's there to keep you from losing yourself in the crowd? Your word could be *Goddess*, or *discord*, or *patriot*, or *socialism* — as long as there's something which wakes a different feeling in your breast.

## CHAPTER 45. MEDITATIONS

A few other possibilities: scientism, profit, masturbation, faith, chaos, order, mathematics, perversion, obsession, furry, 4chan, atheist, compromise, certainty, pornography, abortion, self-mutilation, insanity, censorship, fascism, truth, ineffability, inhumanity, beauty, guesstimate, frenemy, yiff.

### **2. In life, death**

In life, there is death.

We are made of death: there is no part or piece of us that is the stuff of life. Each part of us is as dead as a stone or a handful of air. There is no magical heart or breath of life in you: only animate death.

For you to live, others die. Your food is the dead of animals and plants. Your safety is the deaths of others in toil, hazardous discovery and blundering war. You live in halls of bones, the dead having crumbled for your breathing-space. And in time, for others to live, you too will die.

We are all bound for death; we are passengers in a waterfall, in free-fall, and the rocks wait for all of us below. If we had eyes for decades, we would see this; but our eyes are for days, if even that.

In life, there is death. Kiss the lipless skull, for without it there would be no blushing cheeks or lips to meet yours.

### **3. Horror, laughter**

We love horror. (If not you, then me and the one who is standing. . . just behind you. . .) We love being scared by shadows on the screen.

Being scared in real life? Maybe; we laugh and gasp

when those dangers pass us by. You didn't get crushed by a car? Do you sit down and solemnly contemplate the statistical nature of life? Of course not. You shake with fear, and then with laughter. You smile, exhale, shake.

Are we sick? No, for laughter is our stormwall and fire department; when we cannot speak, we laugh. When tears are not enough and anger isn't enough, we laugh. When the unspeakable and the ineffable mug us. . . laughter escapes.

To quote Bill Clinton (ΑΦΩ, ΦΒΚ, ΚΚΨ, Ord. DeMolay<sup>1</sup>), "laughter is often the best, and sometimes the only, response to pain."

#### 4. Discordianism is not a religion

1. Discordianism is not a religion but a vaccine.
2. Discordianism is not a religion but a flower.
3. Discordianism is not a religion but the religion.
4. Discordianism is not a religion okay maybe it is.
5. Discordianism is not a religion butt.
6. Discordianism: I can't believe it's not religion!
7. Discordianism is not a religion but it will do.
8. Discordianism is not a religion but you'll never prove it.
9. Discordianism is not a religion but neither is Christianity.
10. Discordianism is not a religion but you will still worship our Goddess in the end, I swear you will. Ha ha ha!
11. Discordianism is not a religion but don't worry, be happy.

---

<sup>1</sup>After Jacques de Molay, last Grand Master of the Knights Templar, burned alive for navel-kissing, cross-trampling, Christ-denial and diverse other sexual perversions.

## 5. Overton window

According to Wikipedia, “The Overton window is a political theory that describes as a narrow ‘window’ the range of ideas that the public will find acceptable, and that states that the political viability of an idea is defined primarily by this rather than by politicians’ individual preferences.”

Think of the window as a searchlight on a vast infinite-dimensional landscape, in search of Utopia. The operators of the searchlight are lunatics, according to those in the beam; they are partly right.

Some day the light may break, and darkness fall: that is called tyranny.

Some day a sun may rise, illuminating all: that is called anarchy.

Both of these are horrors.

The world is a battery of searchlights, their lights clustering like families of fireflies; and some fireflies fly alone.

All those fireflies move, migrate, across an infinite landscape of spirals, slopes, walls, stairways and cliffs. Each mote within each firefly is exquisitely aware of their movement, but not individually able to stop or accelerate it. The gibbering ones at the light’s controls do the moving: the lunatics, the radicals, the nutjobs, the skeptics and the believers. Some curse the light’s turning; others cheer it. All say there would be exquisitely, infinitely more beautiful landscape their way, better for dancing or marching or love.

All one lazy, discontent mote of light can do is dance to the edge of the light and embrace the darkness.

## 6. Insanity

Sanity is a social convention.

You are sane if your actions are based on reality instead of hallucinations. But here “reality” cannot be objective re-



ality, because nobody knows what that is; it means the average of the subjective realities of everyone around you. If everyone around you believes in the Coming of Unicron, the Planet-Eater, then it is insanity to disbelieve. If nobody believes in the Planet-Eater, he is a (subjective average) hallucination, and you are insane for believing in him.

The problem here is that by this logic any eedjit can say his delusions are real, and everyone else are the real lunatics and madmen. In truth, there are “more real” realities and “less real” realities: and, consequently, more and less sane people. Take every person around yourself, and ask, how sane am I in this person’s personal reality? And how real is that reality? Multiply these two numbers together, and sum over everyone around yourself; the greater your score, the happier you should be.

As is obvious, there are two ways of increasing your happiness in this formula — three, if you include moving to a place with different people. The first way is adjusting yourself; making yourself into a more sane person as defined by the people around yourself. The second is adjusting the people around yourself into having a more realistic view of reality.

It’s your choice, really.

## 7. Offense

There is no right to not be offended. There is no right to be free from repercussions of being offensive.

Everything is offensive. Everything is offensive to somebody. Nothing is offensive to everybody. Offense is all in the head.

I offend you; you offend me: if there was a law, we’d be sharing a cell. I offend you; you offend me: how about both of us take a few family members of the other and beat

them up? That'll fix things! I offend you; you offend me: I'll urinate on a picture of you and I'll be all done. Okay?

I find what you say offensive and stupid, yet I shall forever fight for your freedom to say it. I find what you say offensive and stupid, and I shall forever argue against it and present the other opinion and the better fact.

I find what you say offensive and stupid, but you haven't heard anything yet.

## 8. Interfaith

To Muslims, Jesus is a prophet. To suggest that this prophet was the Son of Allah is stupid, wrong and offensive. To Christians, the suggestion that Jesus was just a prophet is dumb and annoying: it's not the death of a *prophet* that redeemed the sins of humankind; the death of a mere *prophet* wouldn't be enough to redeem a set of camel tarps from Jacob's Discount Camel Tarp Hut. And to Jews Jesus was a *false* prophet and a *false* messiah, not necessarily wicked but horribly mistaken, a madman of bizarre and stupid theologies that wrongly called himself the messiah, the messiah that has not come yet. This might be a little offensive to the Christians and the Muslims.

Basically all interfaith activity is dependent on ignoring what the other chap believes, except on the most generic level: We like good things! You like good things too? Have a hug, you wonderful infidel you!<sup>2</sup>

For this reason, interfaith activity is mostly the domain of two sets of people: the values people and the nice people. The second set are those who do not really believe, but like to say they do. They don't get their pants in a bunch over who exactly Jesus was, because it doesn't matter; Jesus is a

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<sup>2</sup>Most interfaith activity is between monotheists. Polytheists would make it ever funnier.

storybook character and all that matters is that everybody agrees he was *nice*. They love anybody that can keep his or her beliefs from determining their values. To them, beliefs are inviolate and unimportant; what's important are the humanistic, modern values they share.

The values people, on the other hand, believe. They believe with such agonising fury that it is hard to, er, believe anyone could do so. Their interfaith activity is all about the consequences of their beliefs, and many gods have very similar values. One may be the delusion of a camel merchant and another the hoax of a tomb raider, but both can be equally vehemently against the gays, the abortionists and the happy young people. They hate their interfaith companions; but they hate those different-values perverts even more.

## 9. The Enemy

Instinct is the enemy. Instinct is what tells you you shouldn't get on that plane, you shouldn't allow that faggot to live near to you. Instinct tells you the music of the youth is foul and evil, when you are young no more. Instinct tells you the dead should be kept in one part of the city, clearly labelled and hidden under the turf. Instinct tells you many things, either because it was so in the savannah or because, by the memory of human beings or a human being, it has always been so. Instinct is the enemy. Don't feel; don't do what feels right; *think*.

## 10. The passion of the passion

If you see a thing done with passion, do not sneer. If a man has the greatest collection of Sailor Moon memorabilia on the Western Hemisphere, do not scoff, or doubt his sexual maturity or sanity. If a woman collects fluffy toys, do not laugh — or if you do, laugh with the glory and the dedication of it, not at it as a thing.

Are you yourself a person without such overriding interests, without such looming passions, without such dedication to anything, without anything you can love so much? And do you, you poor worm, feel *happy* about that? Go gray into the shadow.<sup>3</sup>

There are connoisseurs of Japanese pornography, elitist fans of soap operas, devotees of Loveman's poetry and Lovecraft's poetry even, collectors of anything or everything, people who write treatises and webpages on make-up, motor oil and My Little Pony; nerds, geeks, freaks, lovers of the bizarre and lovers of the unloved everyday things; Lords of Tat, people who glory in their knowledge of the obscure, and their lore of the often ignored.

They are all beautiful people, made beautiful by their love.

Your mockery of them does not mark you as cool, but as cold.

It puts you in the company of people who would tear you apart, too, if you told them what you love. If you loved a touch more than they can bear, their claws would be in you. You do not, I think, really want to be in the company of such people, unless you truly are loveless, bland, gray, without anything that truly stirs your heart. In which case, bye-bye, come looking for us when the emptiness becomes too much for you.

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<sup>3</sup>An ancient curse of late Atlantis, roughly equivalent to “fuck you”, with an implication of a ten-foot pole.

## 11. Heart-to-heart

This is terror, the heart of darkness: That I cannot express myself. That there is some intrinsic, inborn, ingrown part of my experience that I cannot communicate to you, unless you are born and raised in the same locales as me.

If that is true, then in the last analysis I am an island; maybe one in an archipelago, but still cut off from all the other little islands in the world.

I rely on the experiences of other people. I have not been to Texas, California or Montenegro; I rely on what others tell me of the essential character and specific nature of those places and their wondrous inhabitants. If I wish to know more, I read more, watch more, speak heart-to-heart with those with the knowledge, live with them, study under them.

To say there is something ineffable about Texas, something no Texan can circle close to with words, with gestures and pregnant pauses, with pictures and the answering of my questions, something I cannot understand because by chance I am not born under that Texan sun... is terror, and the heart of darkness.

Likewise with the supposed mysteries of the penis, and the special wisdom of the vagina: I cannot but believe that with enough words, all that is different between them can be communicated to the other, or to those in between or outside that axis. There are people of different color, people with different cultures and languages, and I believe with enough explanation, with patient enough explanation, and with diligent study, all of these conditions can be understood by one not subject to them.

I have not been looked at askance for the color of my skin; I have not been hated because of my sexuality; I've never felt the pressure to wear high heels and be pretty and dumb. It feels like an insult to suggest that those with that experience are incapable of communicating it, and that I am incapable of understanding it. I am a human being;

## CHAPTER 45. MEDITATIONS

my brain is a machine not just for thinking, but for thinking as other human beings think. Our species would not be here if not for our frenzy of seeing minds like ourselves everywhere around us, and our frenzy for wanting to know how those other minds are different from ours. I am not without experiences; I cannot say I have been subject to such hate, terror and joy as others, but I believe that, with sufficient explanation, my machinery of the head can understand them.

If this is not true, literature is a sham: each woman written by a man is essentially hollow, not a woman but a man with tits. Each black person written by a leisurely white man is a manikin, a badly understood puppet in black-face. (And vice versa: how could a black person understand the leisurely, careless privilege of being white? How could a woman understand what it's like to be a dick?) Each foreigner is no more than a cardboard cut-out. One can write only about one's self: no study really lets one understand others.

If this terrible alternative is true, then what are all those couples whose pairing includes so many differences? Man and woman, neither understood by the other. This is low comedy, but if seriously played, horror. "In the mansion of my soul is this one room where you can never go. It is a large room, dark and special, with a special door, but you cannot possess the key which opens it. In your birth it was decided you could never know what this room contains. In your youth these chains were wrapped on the door. No magic word or magic key can let you in. Love binds us, and our beings interleave inextricably like octopi in love, but I cannot tell you what is in that part of me, for it is an inefable mystery."

This idea terrifies me. I cannot believe it. I may be wrong.

## 12. Between extremes

Truth lies somewhere between the most extreme assertions.

Or at one of the extremes.

To say that the truth is *exactly midway* between the extremes is silly, obviously. Who would argue that *some amount* of slavery is okay? Or giving those womenfolk *half a vote* would be a good compromise?

Sometimes there's no place for compromise, because one extreme is the only right place to be.

But any extreme, true or false, can say that. And the more extreme you are, the more your position hurts you and sets you apart, the less you are willing to admit any mistakes.

It's a common mistake to say any two extremes are just as bad. That's like saying that as the mouth and the asshole are holes on the extremes of the human body, they're the same. Not to the kisses of truth and justice, they aren't.

There are no final extremes: you can always make up positions more extreme than those held by anybody. The more extreme a phantom you can conjure up of your opponents, the scarier they are — but yet, the closer to them the middle ground will be, if they can say their part. Witness:

A: I advocate free lemons for everybody at the state fair.

B: I advocate no free lemons for anybody at the state fair.

A: You're more extreme than that. You advocate outlawing all fruit, don't you?

B: What?

C: Okay, so the positions are free lemons for everybody, or no fruit for anybody ever. I think it's a reasonable compromise if everybody can get whatever fruit they want on their own.

B: That's my position!

A: Sure, you're saying that now, extreme gal!  
Backed down pretty quick, didn't you? We don't  
cotton to your monstrous extremism here!

B: But that's my position!

C: Oh, that "B" is so shifty! And that "A" is so  
courageous in her defence of our freedom against  
tyranny! Let's make her the Mayor-Tyrant!

A: Thank you... Thank you... You are entirely  
too kind...

### **13. Change your mind**

Change your mind. Keep changing it. You're not perfect yet. The people you adore aren't perfect yet. Keep changing them. Find the others. Keep changing yourself.

Keep asking yourself: Why is my position this one here? Do the bricks I built it on remain, or have they been washed away by change? Is it time to start looking into what the screaming radicals say? Don't go with the crowd; use both your head and heart for a compass, but don't take them for perfect guides.

Keep changing yourself. Learn to love the bits you're pretty sure are right. Learn to cut off the bits that you know better about. Learn to give away the fruits of your mistakes. Learn to give away a lot. Some mistakes keep you down; some mistakes hold you up.



## 14. The Truth

The truth is out there. Your lifetime will not see the end of the run for it, but you can get close enough for touch, if you just reach out your hands and dare. The truth is a statue of glass, transparent, sharp-edged, beautiful and elusive, full of danger and peace. Reach for it even if it cuts your hands. Feel and paint with your bleeding palms. Seek the planes and curves nobody has felt before you. Seek the nooks and table-lands where others might follow you. Bang your knee and let the echoes of your screams do your mapping for you.

The truth is a statue of glass; its shape can only be made visible in blood.

## 15. Certain doom

Nothing scares me as much as people who are certain. This is usually read to mean science-folk, which is not right: scientists live in the glory and agony of doubt. Nothing gets them as horny as the thought of showing that something they and everybody have believed is *wrong*; a scientist doesn't get laurels from the defence of orthodoxy, but from discovery and from submitting, willingly, eagerly, to a holocaust of disproof.

No, nothing scares me as much as people who are certain, and these aren't scientists, usually. Nothing scares me like people who have faith despite evidence, faith even against evidence; who stand their ground and say, my country, right or wrong. They are knives in a world of flesh. Dance with them, and they cut you. Their eyes are dead stones, their fists still harder rocks. They have a God, literally or metaphorically; a Truth stronger than the foundations of the Earth; and all shall behold their certainty and despair.

## CHAPTER 45. MEDITATIONS

They know liars: liars disagree with their Truth. (Liars, or fools, or villains.)

They have an easy life, free from doubt, uncertainty, hesitation and introspection.

They can do any crime without hesitation or guilt, for they are certain, free from doubt, sharp and terrible like a knife. They can kill, because their Truth demands it; they can rip skin and maul flesh, because the beautiful mathematics of logic, derived from their certain Truth, make it good; they can shovel screaming nations into ovens of genocide, because they do not feel the need to ask if they are mistaken. It is this which is the greatest evil of religions, cults and ideologies: the addictive poison of saying you know the final Truth and throwing your brain away.

Certainty is a drug, an evil, the greatest Satan.

Whatever you think, I say as Cromwell did: I beseech you, in the bowels of Discordia, think it possible that you may be mistaken.

### 16. Indecision

Indecision is no good either. I stretch out a hand towards a doorknob; I cannot know whether I will reach it or grasp empty air. The knob could be a hologram, or a brain failure; it could be whisked away by malicious spirits or neighbors. This has not happened before, but it could happen now. It is possible, though not probable; but should I drop my hand and run through the door instead?

No; because though I have no certainty, no knowledge that the doorknob is there now, I have polished it many times before, and I base my actions this time on what has happened on all those previous caresses. Maybe today is different; but it is insanity to expect all that *could* happen. This is not mere idle knob-polishing, this; this is something

which drives many theologies into incoherence and a peculiar and repugnant crystallized order of all directions and none.

This book could combust right now. The paper could grow as dark as the letters; flames could leap at your eyes even as the letters died; the covers could contain a bonfire for a moment as your fingers skittered away.

If this is an e-book, the same could still happen: this screen could cloud over, and smoke could billow from the edges as the electronics inside died; you could leap back, coughing at the acrid smell, yelling as a droplet of molten plastic landed on your wrist. That could happen; but it's not likely.

If it is likely, reconsider how you do your reading.

Many things are possible; an infinity of things, each more grotesque than the last. Anything may happen, and something will; but not all possibilities are equally probable.

It is possible, I suppose, that one of the major false religions of our time is true; but the possibilities are so unlikely as to not be worth any preparation. The Mahdi will not return, and neither will Jesus. Oprah will not give cars to us all. The Jewish Messiah is not coming, Elvis will not come back, and no wave of enlightenments will sweep Buddhists into the sky. It makes better sense to fear sharks in Minnesota.

## 17. False virtues

Because we live in a fucked-up society, we are presented with virtues that are not virtues. You do not need a list; you will find a list of your own once you go looking.

Obedience, modesty, faith, patriotism. . . make your own damn list.

## 18. Innocence

Children are innocent and what's it. Innocence is over-rated.

What's the opposite of innocence? Guilt, in a sense; if you are not innocent, you are guilty. Yet who's the judge? Who the jury? The opposite of innocence is corruption! evil! sin! lots more of loaded language: "sin" and "evil" mean anything the judge doing the defining doesn't like. Both homophilia and homophobia are evil, if you ask different people.

Innocence: being innocent of subtleties and context. In other words, being happy and dumb. Happiness is nice, but buying it at the cost of understanding is dodgy. Idolizing innocence is kind of like saying you're willing to give your autonomy to some possibly abusive daddy.

Children are innocent; but masturbating over their sweet adorable innocence is wish-fulfilment for stressed adults. Who wants to go back to ignorance and obliviousness? Who wants to go, and leave the unwilling to be the adults?

Those that want others to be children, coddled and innocent, shouldn't be trusted to be the only adults around.

## 19. Onrush

Evil is replaced with bad, and bad with so-and-so, and so on to ah-well and okay and hopefully sooner or later good enough, beyond which there may be something.

The problem of these days is that many of these replacements happen quickly after each other: or, since the world is big, happen so unevenly they get crimped.

Thus: there is a progression from A to B to C. I speak in favor of C, and this necessitates telling why it is better than B. The advocates of B, hearing criticism, assume I am from

the battle of B and A, and thus a reprehensible advocate of A, the evil ancient thing.

I would give an example, but you would only accept one where the progression is one of true progress, one where you are in the C, and I don't know where you are, as these things happen so quickly these days.

## 20. Subtlety

Suppose you use two words to mean the same thing, just to keep up a little variety.

Suppose variety is not the business here, and the words actually have different meanings.

I'm talking Discordians this and Erisians that all this book; it is in no way the case that one of these terms refers to a more enlightened inner cult.

And now for something utterly different: Gnosticism, a cluster of cults around year zero, Christian count; world-shunners and sex-abstainers and wealth-haters all, and correct only in the third. Proper seekers for enlightenment should love the world, love sex, and not care about money. (Hating money would be kind of dumb; if you hate money you ought to reduce all of your charity to barter economy, which is unspeakably inefficient.)

Many Gnostic cults had outer and inner worshippers: the inner teachings were secret, and such that if they were revealed the outer cult would stone the inner one as blasphemers, and fires would rise out of the earth and erase the whole of the cult for speaking out loud such words. The outer cult had less stringent laws and regulations; the inner cult devoted its whole life to the search for divine harmony. (This is one of those stupid mistakes: harmony with something infinitely larger than you means losing yourself in it. In this way "oneness with God" is a fancy name for

## CHAPTER 45. MEDITATIONS

self-erasure, or, suicide. Those who search for the truly wise Sophia know the worth of discord.)

Anyway, there is no Discordian Gnostic inner cult. Oh dear Yaldiscordabaoth and Discurge forbid, that would be silly.

### 21. Gry

Dear reader, I would like you to be angry with me. Not angry enough to stop reading; I am vain and this book has a purpose.

I would have you like a skeptic reading Däniken or the Secret; distrusting every assertion, doubting every quoted fact<sup>4</sup>, kicking every logic a few times, on the lookout for weasel words and fudged steps.

I am a liar; and where I do not purposefully lie, I am often careless, thoughtless or just plain stupid. As you can see by the plenitude of typos, there has been no proofreader; there has been no editor either.

### 22. Mind modes

The human mind has two modes: seriousness and laughter.<sup>5</sup> Their opposites are lies and stuffiness.<sup>6</sup>

Most systems of thought say that seriousness and laughter are each other's opposites; this is why most systems of thought are irretrievably fucked up. If you take seriousness

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<sup>4</sup>Checking the footnotes.

<sup>5</sup>Also called, with varying degrees of inaccuracy, head and heart, brain and emotion, monk and madman, cortex and limbic, Apollo and Chthon, solid and fluid, or Apollyon and Dionysus.

<sup>6</sup>Or: false reason and hilarity denied; delusion and dignity; the unthinkable and the un-joke-able; or God and LORD.

as your lodestar, and use it to navigate away from laughter, you lose not only the other important thing, but also all those forms of seriousness which hold a component of laughter in them.<sup>7</sup>

There are systems of thought that are thoroughly wicked, and embrace lies and stuffiness as their virtues in action, even if not in declaration. Lying is made a virtue through “my country right or wrong”, through “ends justify the means”, through “pious fraud”, “expediency”, “state secrets”, “karma”,<sup>8</sup> “fate”<sup>9</sup> and “little white lies”. Stuffiness is made a virtue through the evil concepts like “honor”, “dignity”, “respect”, “solemnity” and “modesty”.<sup>10</sup>

## 23. Aims

Stephen King says he aims to terrify; failing that, to horrify; failing that, to gross you out. He’s not proud.

I aim to enlighten; failing that, to puzzle; failing even that, to amuse. I’m not proud, I’m just an open asshole trying to fertilize your thoughts. Come closer; my aim’s not perfect.

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<sup>7</sup>Sherlockian Bakerstreetism, technical speculation about Star Destroyers, angels on the head of a pin, CDC plans for a zombie apocalypse, Stephen Colbert running for Congress, etc. etc.

<sup>8</sup>On “karma”, or “the law of attraction”, or “you gets what you deserves”, or “if you didn’t get, you didn’t really want it hard enough/deserve it after all”. Which are all evil, paralyzing bullcock. Proponents of these ideas should be pelted with softballs until they admit their thoughts and prior actions have no power to stop the pelting.

<sup>9</sup>“It was not fated to be — marvelous how hindsight shows I couldn’t have made a difference, so I really did my best!”

<sup>10</sup>Q: But isn’t modesty everyone’s own business?

A: There are two modesties. In-modesty is the kind that you choose for yourself and apply to yourself. Out-modesty is the kind you throw out like caltrops because you fear other people might choose a level of in-modesty you don’t like.





## Sharks in Minnesota

There are no sharks in Minnesota. This statement is probably not true; if there are no aquariums with pep or liquid-liver display entertainments, there must be a few stuffed selachimorphia hanging from the ceilings of a few blessedly eccentric residents. But there are no sharks in Minnesota in the way that there are bears, wolves, rabbits and deer in Minnesota. No Minnesotan sports team would think of calling itself “the Minnesota Sharks”. No tourist byro would come up with the slogan “Minnesota: Come for the Sharks, Get in the Sharks”.

You should fear sharks in Minnesota.

Sharks are not all that dangerous, too. They’re animals that generally speaking want to live and let live, sans enough fish for them to feel nice and full. Those ugly quadrupeds splashing close to the shore aren’t worth the trouble: they run for the shore or the floating plastic island, and that’s where sharks can’t follow them, most of the time. Real proper edible fish don’t do that.

You should fear sharks in Minnesota.

Minnesota is dry land anyway. It’s not like sharks glide on dry land, or fly. Or just pop out of empty air, mouth open and ready to hog. Or give you this sudden idea of wading into the lake, just to see how cold the waters are. Minnesota is simply a place where sharks cannot *be* threatening, no matter how many-toothed and dead-eyed they are in other

## CHAPTER 46. SHARKS IN MINNESOTA

climes; there are no land sharks, with fins ripping across the hills and plains, no lake sharks growling by the shore, no river sharks the size of your arm, no pond sharks with teeth the size of drug needles — nobody has ever staggered in, wet and bleeding, to tell a story of such absurdities.

There's no reason to panic, and the more I repeat it the less safe you will feel. Isn't the human mind a curious thing?

## On False Gods

An Erisian can be forgiven the worship of the following false gods, for they are good and nice in the eyes of the Goddess: the serpent Glycon, the divine Apollonius of Tyana, the Invisible Pink Unicorn, Unicorn the Hungry, Hungry Planet, Ultron the Machine God of Earth-10102, Yogg-Saron, Sithrak, Yakub, the Flying Spaghetti Monster (pasta be unto him), Loki, Linus Torvalds, GWWAAAARNNNGH, Melkor, Torak, Klæl, Skeletor, Satan, Scrotor (Demon from the Fifth Realm), the Crimson King, Khorne, Tzeentch, Slaanesh, Nurgle, Phred, Ororo, Lady Gaga,<sup>1</sup> and Nyarlathotep the Crawling Chaos.

The worship of other gods, such as Jesus, Allah, Huitzilopochtli and the like, is not recommended to an Erisian because there might be allergies, package mismatches, heresy, hives, registry errors, schisms, diarrhea, checksum problems, holy wars, infection and rejection, boot errors, excommunications, brain death, loss of data, anathemaea, necrosis, instability, angry bulls, and the wrath of the demon [BSOD](#).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>It is one of the greatest theological struggles of Discordianism today whether L. Gaga is to be regarded as a legitimate false goddess or as a Discordian saint of the undeclared greater hemi-fictional monster type.

<sup>2</sup>The immaculate Linus, holy man of the north, save us from the demon [BSOD](#). And save us he did!

## CHAPTER 47. ON FALSE GODS

However, the Church E.E.E. v. 6.01 “Pew-Pew Pope” (release date: Dec 2013) should be compatible with most Mosaic monotheisms and all Abrahamic alternatives, except those with DRM.

And now in the spirit of interfaith co-operation, a small prayer.

Chaos, who art in dust and above us,  
Cursed be your malicious vagaries.  
Give our enemies your full attention,  
as ours arrows also attend to them.  
Do not lead them on straight paths,  
but pervert them to our likeness.

Night's stars are painted on your ebony skin  
Day's clouds are breath from your blue lips  
The moon is your open mouth, the sun your eye  
We are ants on your skin, drunk with sweat,  
We are motes on a pond, ripple-tossed scum,  
We are your children; teach us your ways.

(Ways of devilment and witchery, ways of riot, blood  
and laughing lunacy — ways of you.)

Chaos, mistress fever and master delirium,  
Be our varicolored sky, the breathing fields below  
Be the kiss on our lips and the fire in our hearts  
For thou art forever, and forever beloved,  
Nyarlathotep.

Alternately, those who like Zalgo and chaos magick may prefer the following.

*Nyarlathotep* manipulates men and *Nyarlathotep*, the  
vortex, the chaos, *Nyarlathotep*, thousand faces  
*Nyarlathotep*, Randolph Carter's nemesis, the  
pinnacle beyond *Nyarlathotep*, you want fries

*wNycathathotep, misleader of witches, bogeyman of priests, the spirit Nysplaitotep, the crawling chaos, the world-eater, the emissary of the formless emperor, the blue-screened illumination which is alikeNycathathotep, the seriously creepy god of outer space: stay thofitaf here, amen.*



## The “U Can’t Touch This” Catma/Dogma

You can’t ever know what a human being really means.

Take Jesus. Do we know what he said? No, we don’t. What we know is what some people said other people had said Jesus had said.

It would not help if the Gospels came with Jesus’s signature, approval and five-person true-swearing, either. We would just know what Jesus had written down. We would not know if he was lying for personal gain, jesting, or just looking how far he could take this particular joke. Ah! you protest, clearly Jesus wasn’t doing it for personal gain; what gain was there? But maybe Jesus was generally bad with financial and similar calculations, and not just with moneychangers? We can’t assume he was perfect in making his choices, and still can’t know what he really meant.

What if we could ask him, reach back across time and ask him? No help at all! He might see it fit to give a false Zen answer for our enlightenment but not for our education; or it might suit him to lie, continuing the joke, scheme, charade or pious fraud. Or he might answer, and really mean what he said — and we couldn’t really know what he meant.

Unless we suddenly get all wise about neurology and drag the person’s head under a super-microscope, we can’t ever really know what any human being means, because there are a lot of stubborn bastards out there, willing to

## CHAPTER 48. “U CAN’T TOUCH THIS”

cling to their initial words no matter what happens and what they may really think.

The joyous part of this is you can take anything written by a human being — natural events don’t work like this, but humans always do — and say its writer really, really, deep down really meant exactly what you want. Not only can’t your claim be gainsaid; *no-one can even tell if you really mean what you say or don’t.*

Which, with extra obfuscation and outrage, will be my defence if anyone comes a-saying I’m interpreting Discordianism and its holy texts all wrong. If the other uses the “laser-guided divine revelation gambit”, i.e. “This just in from Eris! You are *wrong!*” (see p. ??), well, then we will have a battle of intracranial voices, which are even easier to obfuscate.

(“Well, She told *me* you are double-triple-extra-wrong, thick and dull and twisting, ruining it! Dear Eris, try to decide! It’s as if you *enjoy* sowing this discord — *oh. And I am illuminated! Hail Eris!*”

*“Why does this happen every single time we try to have a proper schism?”*)

\* \* \*

Note: What did MC Hammer, the pre-eminent musician of the Nineties, mean with “U Can’t Touch This”? Only he knows, and we can’t know if he’s telling the truth. We can just make educated guesses.

Is he boasting about himself? Unlikely.

Is the song a biography of Jesus (“My, my, my music hits me so hard / Makes me say ‘Oh, my Lord’”)? It’s possible.

Or is the song — like all of Hammer’s oeuvre is, arguably — peppy exercising advice (“This is it, for a winner / Dance to this and you’re gonna get thinner”)?

Or — as he says the title while pointing at his bespectacled face — is the song against bullying, and the hitting of people with glasses? “U can’t touch this!”



Is it about Jack the Ripper (“What’s it gonna take in the [eighteen] nineties to burn?”) — it’s possible.

Is it about a violent revolution against the untouchable economic elites (“Break it down, stop, Hammer time!”) — it’s possible, and the song will be a signal when the revolution comes.<sup>1</sup>

Is the song a comment on the coming race war between rap-followers and music-followers (“If you can’t groove to this / Then you probably are dead”) — seriously, it’s a race war, not a racism thing. Really.

Is the choreographed dancing in black and tan showing support for fascism? (Note the ubiquity of poses with one arm raised.) Is Mr. Hammer’s most famous motion really a “slide towards extremism”?

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<sup>1</sup>December 21, 2017. Mark your calendars!



## Gods and Goddesses

There is no God. Any church or coven which worships a God is wicked and an enemy of the Goddess.

There are no Gods devoid of gender; no Goddesses empty of sex. Those churches and covens that try to empty their divinities of qualities, or include all qualities in their objects of worship, are wicked and dangerous. A God without qualities can be filled with exclusion, prejudice and murder, and will be; a God of all qualities cannot coherently and confidently speak against exclusion, prejudice and murder, and will not.

There is no God; only Goddesses. Of these, two are of primary interest to Discordians: Eris Discordia herself, who is the one Discordians ought to adore; and Aneris Harmonia, who will take them if they do not. Unlike some religions that take their Gods as pharaohs, as tyrants of whom no ill-considered word must be spoken, Discordians take Eris in her true spirit of Discord: they speak volubly, without giving consideration to coherence or consistency: for the world is a big and confusing place, and reducing it to a few slogans is not a world-explanation but a world-destruction.

There are only Goddesses. This is not because women are wiser and more close to divinity than men, though that at times seems so. This is not because women give birth, or because women do not make war — for women do make war, and men can give birth: there was this Schwarzeneg-

## CHAPTER 49. GODS AND GODDESSES

ger movie, I'm sure you've seen it too. No, there are only Goddesses because through the wickedness and blindness of the human animal women have been oppressed through all time, made broodmares and breadmakers and bedwarmers for every generation, and brainwashed into believing this is their station and fate, and a noble one too. Any God — that is, a male deity — can be no more than one more king, one more emperor, one more tyrant, lustful for virgin-whore concubines, for uncritical worship and submission, and for jewelled halls where people moan frightful self-negations to the glory of the Immortal Lord. Any God is smothered under the white man's burden, killed by mansplaining, castrated by the Popes riding his pants as he bends to talk down to poor strugglin' wimmin so ignorant in their experience.

Gods ever come to bring a sword along with their peace: they ever come to establish a God's-Kingdom that they shall rule as a Patriarch, whacking their Rods of Judgment at the wombs of the fertile nation. This is foolishness: if you would cast any God as an alien invader, it would take the villain's place in the genuinely moral stories that we tell. If you would cast any God as a scientist, life-creating and overbearing, he would be a cackling, immoral villain, a tyrant, a blight: but enthrone such a character in heavens, and legions will whine that might makes right, and the Creator owns His Creations and may design any Hells and Vales of Sorrow that He desires.<sup>1</sup>

Gods pervert every good impulse: they turn doing good for good's sake into collecting stubs for a prize of one heaven, they turn charity into a tithe to be counted off and forgotten, they turn love into a matter of law, and sex into a

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<sup>1</sup>Familiarity blinds us to the evil round us. You do not live in a happy place; you live at best in a place that is not founded in kicking you in the head. No holy book would pass an impartial literary critic's testing for coherency, morality and plot: but we so adore the author deified in self-insertion that we do not see this.

dirty thing.<sup>2</sup> Gods turn mortals into slaves born to bondage, slaves who cannot escape without being hunted down to hell; <sup>3</sup> Gods lie and say the world is good and beautiful when it clearly isn't that; Gods lie and say the world is bad and ugly when it clearly isn't that. Gods say they are all-powerful and all-good and all-wise, and when the whole world screams in unending agony that this is not so, then Gods invoke fatuous mysteries and drag their molester's hands over the eyes of those too young to doubt.<sup>4</sup>

Any Goddess, even if cast in the image of a King's Queen, is in this misogynist world we all share a note of discord: a woman that does not know her place, a woman that will not accept the alms thrown at her, a woman that does not derive her authority from marriages and relations, and will not wash the feet of teachers or the underpants of patriarchs. Furthermore, there is most discord in those Goddesses who do not even try to emulate the wicked God-Kings; who do not cast their sexuality as rapacity and rape, or cast it out by castrating themselves into cold virginal

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<sup>2</sup>Though, as other theological commentators have noted, making sex dirty isn't all bad.

<sup>3</sup>A God loves you and cares for you and thinks you special, and white-robed would draw you to his curly brown beard; but if you make decisions God doesn't like, He will hand you over to eternal torture in the darkness — or true death — or a shivering emptiness. If you behave, you won't be hurt — Gods love their slaves like rapists mutter of love at their weeping victims.

<sup>4</sup>Yet, aren't mellower Gods an answer? Gods in sandals, in soft white robes, speaking platitudes of ecumenical love? Maybe those Gods should make war against hell and its Gods, described above; maybe those nice Gods should cleave the skulls of a few tyrants, instead of waiting for the tyrant's axe-hand to grow tired. Otherwise one might think them so besotted with their slogans of self-denial and self-sacrifice that the charnel stench of their own slaughter smells good to them. Otherwise one might think them so meek and impotent that they have made a virtue of being inoffensive and meek. For it is said that the meek will inherit the earth — but this can only be after every last scion of the arrogant ones is dead, and the earth is despoiled down to nothing. (This footnote is stupid.)

## CHAPTER 49. GODS AND GODDESSES

ivory, into elephant-tooth idolatry behind iron bars of unconsidered chastity.

When a future comes when women are the true equals of men, and the scales balance, then even Goddesses may die; but as long as there is inequality in human hearts, there will be false gods in the shape of the powerful; and true goddesses in the shape of the powerless. As the old and subtle theological joke goes: “I have seen God, and She’s black!” — yes, She is black today, and a slut, and transgender and mad and blind and a foreign devil, too.

## God wants

God wants your foreskin. If you don't have one, get your hole sewn shut. God wants the family next door killed unless they kiss God's feet — or they can just pay for God's protection. God will burn you. God will burn the world. God made cancer and parasites. God wants you to wear this hat.

God wants you in this river with these millions; don't worry about disease, worry about God. God wants you walking around the black stone and to the throne of the doddard with a tall hat. God wants your money. God wants your children. God wants to tell you what good is.

God wants you writhing in pleasure for him. God wants you to stop sex. Stop having sex. Stop sex being seen. Stop sold sex and speech of sex. No sex, except you writhing before God; be Teresa of Avila, feel nothing but the invisible hands of God, stroking your brain.

Kill an animal for God; watch it kick as the blood drains out. The world's yours, and you're God's. Piss on the world and kiss God; God approves. Pigs are unclean, and so are dogs. You are unclean on some days. You should just destroy the world; God will destroy what remains. The end comes. Give everything away. Have no care. Burn everything. Gather, pray, wait. God spared you. He destroyed just you.

God wants your hate. God knows who to hate. God's got

## CHAPTER 50. GOD WANTS

a book on who to hate; everyone with a different book. Hate the atheists, the Muslims, the Jews, the Buddhists, the Shintos, the Hindus, the Pagans, the Wiccans, the Christians, the Mormons, the Catholics, the Protestants, the liberals, conservatives and those in the middle; hate the young, hate the old, hate the women and the girls, the blacks and all colors different from yours and yours too; hate pleasure and accomplishment, hate peace and curiosity, hate shellfish and doubt, hate comics and hate clarity and complexity; hate hate and hate hating so much; hate medicine and doctors' hands; hate the new and the old, hate the world, hate the whole stinking corrupt impermanent world and all that God sees in it.

God sees all.

God is always right. God has always been right. God will always be right. God wants what you want, and has always wanted that. Your voice is God's voice, and God is your excuse. You don't want, but God pushes you. You're not big, but God is. You want to explain, but God is silent. You want to comfort, but God doesn't move you. You want to cry, but there are no tears for the unbelievers. You don't want to hurt, but God needs respect. You don't want to kill, but God moves your hand. . .

And God wants blood.

God watches you while you sleep.

God will eat you when you die.

God is all.



## Notes on the history and geography of Eris-worship

### 1. Greece

The character known as “Eris” first surfaces in the Early Grecian Period, being worshipped as a Goddess of Discord. Her attributes in this instance are well known, including her famous appearance in the tale of the Apple of Discord, and her various progeny; for these, the reader is directed to the earlier chapters of this book.

There has been much debate over whether there existed a more concentrated cult of Eris, perhaps something like the mystery cults of Mithras and Xenu, or even some ritual ground, such as Delphi for the Pythian Oracle.<sup>1</sup> Though one or the other party of this debate now and then declares victories and final solutions, no consensus seems to take hold.

Whatever form the worship of Eris took in Greece, that form spread to Persia and Egypt at the heels of Alexander, and to Gibraltar and Carthage after the Roman conquest of

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<sup>1</sup>Indeed, the Oracle’s partisans believed Delphi to be the center of the world, the very navel of Gaea, a suitable hollow for the Oracle. Delphi also held a relic called the umbilical cord of Gaea, the  $\psi\omicron\upsilon\ \gamma\upsilon\lambda\text{-}\lambda\iota\beta\lambda\epsilon\ \gamma\iota\tau$ , an immense sinewy thing, possibly the mummified carcass of some primordial Mediterranean whale or kraken, a bite of which was believed to bring luck.

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Greece, and the resultant adoption and exportation of Grecian thought. It seems these waves of expansion changed the cult to fit its new circumstances, not so much adapting to the new, as adapting to be a rejection of the established order surrounding it. Thus, when branches of the cult encountered each other, they were much confused.

Because of the cult's anti-establishment nature, it was secretive, or at least widely misunderstood; and it is thought its Grecian rites and doctrines perished with the fall of the Classical world, never recorded by any outsider.

However, on one hand, Demikristo, a late Roman alchemical writer, or someone writing under his name, accused the Roman historian Suetonius of "injuring the Erisian cult and revealing its secrets for no good reason". Apparently the work that contained entirely too many details was an appendix of Suetonius's *Lives of Famous Whores*. That book is now sadly lost, so Demikristo's accusation avails us little, unless a discovery is made in a library somewhere.

On the other hand, Demikristo also rages against such confirmed figments of his imagination as the Atlantean Enlightened Ones, who are fictitious and do not exist — though curiously, in a merely coincidental fashion, Demikristo describes these ancestors of mankind as "hairy like apes, though they were not apes and did not mate with apes", and "descendants of lizards and cousins of elephantine creatures"; a very pseudo-Darwinian statement!

### 2. Rome

Eris was known to the Romans as *Discordia*, the Goddess of Discord; this shows something about the Roman imagination. Plutarch tells some Romans also called her *Magnante* (?*Maiora*) *Mater*, or the Greater Mother, but this was mostly to piss off the cultists of Cybele, *Magna Mater*,

or the merely Great Mother. See the Hourglass edition of Gorgias's "On Non-Existence" for this and other religious pranks of Ancient Rome.

(Still different was the goddess Limesia, whose epithet was *Maxima et Minima Mater*, the Greatest and Smallest Mother, the patron of mathematicians.)

Studies of Roman graffiti (see, for example, the graffiti of Pompeii, or the famous back wall of the temple of Lucina in Placentia) seem to indicate that Eris was a favored goddess of those in risky occupations, much like Fortuna and Futuo: the goddess of soldiers, sailors, gamblers, prostitutes, explorers, criminals, murderers, oathbreakers, and in the later empire, senators and emperors. Like the saying goes, *miximus in lecto*: let us then trust in disorder for order will not help us.

The Greco-Roman world was not the limit of Eris's reach: her name was well known in lands distant from the limes of those dominions.

### 3. Vandalia

To the Germanic people of the northlands, her name was Urbitsch. One particular Germanic tribe of the period of Rome's fall, the Vandals, took up her worship from the ruin of some Roman metropolis, and carried her images with them through Gaul and Hispania, and established beneath her flags the brief-lived Vandal kingdom of Carthage.

For thirty-five years a mere mention of the golden orb and the five-fingered black hand of the Vandal flag were enough to loosen bowels everywhere on the Western Mediterranean; in 455 the Vandal navy landed in Italy and looted Rome itself. The city was spared total destruction because of the bravery of Pope Leo, who challenged Genseric, the Vandal leader, to a coin-flipping contest which the devout

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Erisian could not refuse. Leo's losing score of 3–4 was close enough for pillage to be permitted, but no murder, burning or universal buggery was done, and after three days the Vandals departed in a nice disorderly manner.

The Vandal kingdom met its end in 534, defeated and destroyed by the Byzantines after many tries and many great defeats; it is said the last words of Gelimer, the last Supreme Vandal to lead a nation under that express title, were "*Vicisti, Discordia*" — or "You have won, Eris, you bitch"; the Vandals were not blind to the nature of their goddess.

### 4. China

In the Greco-Bactrian kingdom of Alexander's heirs (where today Afghanistan broods) she was known as Roxana Pandemos or "Roxana of the People"; the original Roxana was Alexander's wife. Adoration of her, and horror felt at her barbaric un-Grecian ways, merged with the Greek cult of Eris to form this tempestuous goddess of whims and variable fortune.

Her cult was eventually carried under that name to far Cathay, or China, as Daxia Ro Sa, though she was already known there as Ye He, the Ninth Bamboo Celestial Concubine of the Heavenly Kingdom. This duplication resulted in the well-known cult of Double Trouble, blamed by many for such "folklore-fueled" disasters as the Boxer Rebellion (1898–1901), and the decidedly tyrannic and bizarre, though brief, reign of the Mongolian warlord and "god-king" Un Derpantsu (1914–1915). Worst of all, some perversion of this originally beautiful and serene cult resulted in the founding of the Tama Lakan monastery that came to house the Goatse Lama and his followers, of which the less is said, the better. (The curious may consult p. ??.)

## 5. India

The name and character of Eris spread to India, too, through the ruin of Alexander the Great's empire — though the spreading was more forceful and immediate. Rather than a mercantile trickle through the kingdoms of his successors, the Diadochi, as with China above, the name and cult of Eris were transmitted to India in pitched battle.

The only defeat of Alexander's glorious career came at the hands of his own troops. To avoid a rebellion of his war-weary soldiers he retreated out of India, still undefeated on the formal field of battle, never to return. His troops were spooked by the fear of falling over the edge of the world, thought to be mere 600 miles away, and by the sight of wild Indian elephants, three times the size of the African ones of Carthage, and veritable mountains compared to Alexander's merely horse-sized Sogdianian war pachyderms.

The retreat, though ordered by Alexander, was disorderly and accompanied by much bitterness, bloodshed and even Grecian in-fighting; Bucephalus, the only one of Alexander's companions capable of succeeding him died under mysterious circumstances, and the emperor walked west, without looking back at the conquests he had failed to make, and knowing his only capable heir was dead, and with his own passing so too would pass his empire and the first dream of the world united under a single mailed iron fist of steel. (For later instances of similar misfortunes, consider the case of Caligula and Incitatus, or Bismarck and Schmetterling.)

Among those lost in the fittingly disorderly retreat were five Erisian clerics, tending to a portable shrine that had been an heirloom of Alexander's Macedonian family for centuries. Gebadi, a local prince, captured them and in a characteristic show of goodwill allowed the clerics to live if they but swore eternal fealty to him. This they wisely did. The resulting Kshatriya temple and cult of Eris Bhavani survived for a few centuries, until it was either destroyed or

assimilated by a predecessor of the Thuggee cults of the region.

The focal object of Alexander's shrine, a golden orb inscribed with the Greek phrase "all ye shall conquer, yet in flames shall all ye crash down", made a few uncertain appearances in Indian history, the last of these being "a spherical golden idol held by a most indecent black statue, depicting a woman in the midst of a certain unspeakable convulsion", reported by one of the survivors of the Black Hole of Calcutta, 1756. (Michael Ballard, "A Memoir of the Empire of Indostan and My Good Friend Sir Roger Dowlett")

## 6. Sumer

A step back, to times before Greece and Rome — covered here because while the origins of Eris-worship in those places are universally-acknowledged facts, the supposition that the cult and its divinity are of an earlier origin is more or less a glorified guess.

The guess goes as follows.

The ancient Greek religion was a descendant of the Mycenaean religion, passed over the deafening silence of the Greek Dark Ages. Whereas the Greeks held Zeus to be the king of gods, the Mycenaean worshipped a dual godhead: Poseidon, the god of earthquakes, water and the underworld; and a goddess called Potnia, or "the Mistress",<sup>2</sup> also called Dapuritojo Potnia, "the Mistress of the Labyrinth", with obvious ties to the still more ancient Minoan legends of the Minotaur.

Now: this title of Potnia — always that, never with a name attached to it — is often accompanied by a star symbol made of four lines meeting in a single point. That this

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<sup>2</sup>That is, "the Mistress" as in the female equivalent of a Master; not as in the lover of a married man!

symbol resembles the eight arrows radiating from a common point which is a well-known symbol of Eris and chaos at least from the late Greek period on, is unsurprising and meaningless, since star symbols are a dime a dozen in the ancient world.

However, the guess's assertion is based on adding a third data point, and asserting that while there is no reason to identify Eris with Potnia, or vice versa, these three goddesses taken together exhibit a suggestive sort of continuity worthy of closer study.

Firstly, as the last link in the chain, we have the Greek Eris, goddess of discord, worshipped by an if not secretive then a not public cult, and holding a eight-headed arrow as her symbol. It has been suggested Erisian rites were conducted only during night-time, though this rest on a highly speculative reading of Catullus, and a Roman statuette of Eris, mocking the usual statue of Justitia by presenting the discord goddess as blindfolded, using a scale to weigh two equal apples.

Next, further back in time, we have Potnia, "the Mistress", a goddess of Mycenaean Greece, with an eight-rayed star as her symbol.

Then, finally, in the farthest reaches of history, beyond Mycenae and the Minoan civilization even, we have the millennia-distant eastern empires of Sumer, and a goddess called Tiamat: the primeval dragon goddess of chaos, the world's co-creatix, who was represented as a naked woman with either eight hands, or an eight-rayed star carved on her forehead.

As Tiamat was associated with the sea and the night, she was at times shown holding the sun in her hand, her fingers curling over it to symbolize nightfall. It is needless to say the sun was a golden sphere, and Eris at the other extreme of this history is of course most closely associated with the golden sphere of the Apple of Discord.

The usual superstitions attended to Sumerian conceptions of Tiamat: for example, that outside certain ritual

contexts it was foolish to name her, as naming the primeval destroyer dragon of the night would be to summon her, which would be a bad idea. Thus, she was euphemistically called Kianna, that is, “the Mistress”.<sup>3</sup>

Thus:

1. TIAMAT — goddess, “the Mistress”, chaos/disorder, eight-pointed star, golden orb, sea domain, night domain
2. POTNIA — goddess, “the Mistress”, eight-pointed star, sea domain
3. ERIS — goddess, chaos/disorder, eight-pointed star, golden orb, night domain (?)

This may just be a coincidence, obviously.

## 7. Japan

Though no early record of her being known survives in Japan, or Nippon if one insists on being obscure, she was known from the Tokugawa period (1603–1868) on at the very least. Her local name was Futashita-Onna, or Lady Two Tongues, and she was the subject of many woodcuts, some of them unsuitable for the weak-kneed and children of all ages.<sup>4</sup> Despite some wild speculation on part of West-

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<sup>3</sup>Or Mai-Tat, which means, “the Many-Faced”. Interestingly, while some Mycenaean statues of Potnia have survived, none have done so along with their heads. And it is well-known that Grecian murals of Eris were faceless, the face being a hole in the wall. Thus anyone passing by could peek in and be Eris’s face, with the idea that in this fashion Eris would be “invited” (avoiding the consequences of the Apple of Discord), and just as swiftly “depart”.

<sup>4</sup>The character of Konton no Megami, the Chaos Goddess, is a 20th-century invention, usually traced back to former members of Aum Usokyo that worshipped the cult founder’s third cousin’s granddaughter as a living divinity.



ern mythologists such as Hearn, it is most likely that her figure and attributes were carried to the Land of the Rising Sun by Portuguese traders before or early during the Tokugawa period of isolation. The differences in her character and the unfamiliar aspects of her legend can be explained by the same isolation and hostility to foreign influences: the differences were the result of a necessary process of naturalization that was the way of all those foreign elements that were not abandoned.

One should remember that in Japan's unique religious mixture of Shintoism and Buddhism Futashita-Onna was merely one of many gods, and most probably regarded more as a "monster" or a "yokai" rather than an actual divinity, though in Japanese folklore no such stigma of negativity attached to yokai as with the Western dragons, hobgoblins and other Satanic beasties.

One intriguing folktale positions Futashita-Onna as the queen of the tanuki, or the Japanese raccoon dogs (*Nyctereutes procyonoides viverrinus*), thought to be shape-shifters, magicians, and bringers of mischief and occasional good luck. The tale, possibly faintly echoing the Grecian tale of the Golden Apple of Eris, has the Tanuki Queen preparing a great feast, inviting great many attractive maidens from the surrounding countryside, and so mixing the crowd that no-one could know who was a girl invited there, and who a tanuki in exceedingly beautiful female shape. One human girl, however, reputed to be the prettiest of all of them, refused the Queen's call. The Tanuki Queen was angered, spat out the octopus dumpling she had in her mouth, and the girl-tanuki all sprouted octopodean tentacles and horribly molested the attending maidens. (This tale has been adapted, with some liberties, in the Taboo XXX Fairy-tale series of animated "anime" folktales from around the world.)

Tsukioka Yoshitoshi, best known for his exquisite woodblock print "Rainy Day Tanuki" (1881), apparently also drew a print called "Queen Tanuki and the Fisherman's Wife";

but no copies of that work survive.

## 8. Nyarlathotep?

The connection of Eris the many-faced and wilful to the chaos god Nyarlathotep of the works of Howard Phillips “Lips” Lovecraft, an American writer of weird fiction, should be obvious.

## 9. To-do

To be researched:

- Pre-Columbian Aztlan: Echopochtli / Ehecatl, the blue-skinned goddess of storms who lives in a golden garden? (Not the same Ehecatl as the wind god corresponding to the Plains Indians’ Etchaqqa/Itaqua.)
- Exu / Eshu Elegbara / Eshu Eresbara, the orisha (god fragment) of chaos and trickery of the Yoruba people. The story goes like this:

Eresbara walked down a road until there was a village on both sides of it. As she passed, the villagers on one side cried “Stranger in a red hat, halt!”, and the villagers on the other side cried “Stranger in a black hat, halt!” She did not; and the villagers of the two villages, gathering in a mob, fell to disagreement and blows over what the color of Eresbara’s hat had been. Eventually the fight ceased, both sides running to their houses to gather weapons. Then Eresbara passed again along the road, going back. Those

few that happened to look, were disturbed: those on the black-hat side now saw a red hat, and those on the red-hat side (that weren't too busy) saw a black hat. In this way the war between the villagers was averted, for both villages were too busy extirpating these sudden and frightening internal heresies of the wrong hat color. Eresbara herself did not halt this time either; she went on and said "Bringing strife is my greatest joy."

"In Scotland there's one sheep that black on one side"?

- Amarguck, Inuit wolf goddess, the Wolf-in-the-Water. Large as a whale, lurks under ice transparent as glass, eats anyone to come between it and the moonlight. A great conversationalist when not homicidal.
- Ceri Ferch Gwydion. Welsh sorceress/goddess whose house had stone ceilings "where stars shone and shifted, floors where wood-knots blinked and danced". She was portrayed as holding an apple and smiling.
- Nanabouzu, "eight monk", a Japanese decoration in the vein of the Teru Teru Bouzu, which are dolls — a square of cloth tied over a wad of the same — supposed to repel rain. Nanabouzus are made of black cloth, not white, and decorated with a few strokes of a brush to resemble women in male monks' clothes. They repel not rain but boredom.
- Tiamat — Mesopotamian water dragon chaos monster. Associated with the Persian Gulf dolphin (genus *platanista*), highly intelligent, a horn on the forehead, believed extinct since 1000 BCE, known only through carvings and pictures on palace gates, and a single stuffed head in the British Museum. But Tiamat also associated with tales of a vast underground sea that fed the aquifers of Ur and Uruk; recent scientific findings have confirmed some of this. *Where did the dolphins go?*

## CHAPTER 51. ERIS-WORSHIP

- Also: Tiamat apparently the primordial creatrix of Mesopotamian mythology, fell from the heavens on wings of flame and was doused by dark waters. Mesopotamia also where human civilization began for the first time, where agriculture, domestication, etc. were invented. Hypothesis: an alien sleeps in the waters under Babylon.
- Finally, about Tiamat. It is said the hero Gilgamesh, 2/3 god and 1/3 man — how many parents did he have? — sought out Utnapishtim, the only human survivor of a great flood when waters gushed out of the ground over everything. Utnapishtim, being bathed in these dark waters, had an eternal life, which G. desired to resurrected his friend, the virgin-born minor god Ankidu (Enkidu in later texts). Instead U. tied G. to a wooden cross and left him for the tides to drown him. G. escaped, disguised himself as U.'s housekeeper, and cut U.'s throat when he was having a bath. The bathwater became magical, but when G. dropped a baby in it to test it, the baby became a monster, and G. had no choice but to destroy it and the bathwater. Despairing, G. called for help from the skies, which did not answer, from the river, which was also quiet, and from the very dark waters of the earth itself, and Tiamat answered, brought Ankidu back to life, and took him and G. to reign over waters as dark as the skies above, yet alike flickering with lights like eyes, and sleek bodies traversing the darkness, seen by no human eye, save those of G., alive forever with T. and A.
- Antarctica / Arctic / Siberia — research the “so cold piss tinkles on hitting the ground” myth. (Not related to Eris.)
- Easter Island; persistent rumors of a statue that was erected upside down. Too random to be anything but Eris!

- Centralia. Lists like this always mention it. Never mention the yearly underground laser tag tournament, though. Ignorance or unwillingness to advertise something so risky?
- Speaking of underground laser tag: The catacombs of Paris. Remember, throwing the skulls around is instant disqualification, so don't be a bonehead!
- There are so many places in the US called Springfield. Draw them on a map and connect the dots. Hinzelmann lives in a Springfield, not a Lakeside!
- Australia: kangaroos, drop bears, vegemite — *very* clearly not Concordia's domain! Also, drop bears — legendary fictional koala-like carnivores that tourists are warned to be careful of, to the sniggering of present locals. So if any Aussie said she'd seen one, this would be seen as a worn joke? If I was a drop bear, that's just what I'd like everybody to think.<sup>5</sup>
- tierra del fuego (2005)
- Whales, dolphins, narwhals — elephants, horses, unicorns. Does putting a horn on an animal make it imaginary? What about rhinoceroses? Has anybody ever seen a rhinoceros? *What happens if you put a second horn on one?*
- “mongolian death worm” — so far have failed to find anything that relates this national beast to Eris. This is extremely suspicious.
- Belay the previous. Have been informed by trusted sources the Mongolian death worm legend originated in a very badly communicated boast of penis size.
- Belay the belay. Have been informed the previous intel was disinfo from an agent of the Shternberg Society, who advocate a lama-centric revolution and consequent aristocratic-fascist Buddhist world tyranny, starting with Mongolia.
- Triple belay. The network of lies tightens. The pre-

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<sup>5</sup>I am not a drop bear.

## CHAPTER 51. ERIS-WORSHIP

vicious words were from communists of Aziin Cagaan Dagina, who while not wrong were quiet about their own plans to fan hysteria over the Buddhist threat to instigate a populist anti-religious revolution, placing them back in power, as much as they could be “back”, being actually a front for Satanist sons of former high party officials, and not real, good God-and-Devil-rejecting communists. This according to trustworthy moon rabbit *yookai*.

- According to a direct communication from the Lord of Darkness himself, Lucifer Satan Baal-zebul of Hell and Middle East, he has nothing to do with the A.C.D. cult, whose Satanism apparently is of the atheist, pseudo-LaVeyan variety, engineered to annoy the cult’s members’ fathers, the aforementioned former high party officials of the inner Mongolian Communist Party. (Not to be confused with the Inner Mongolian Communist Party, a sub-party of the Communist Party of the People’s Republic of China, which in turn should not be confused for the much more influential Communist Party of China. The former is a political faction of the latter, distinguished by its rejection of retentionism as regards an unmentioned island region in the southern East China Sea.
- A *bhut* is a Mongolian unit of time, being around 790 years. It was prophesied that in a *bhut* Genghis Khan would return, the Moon would turn into a golden apple, and disorder would rip into shreds shivering into unit all that did not submit under the great Mongol’s flag’s waving. Genghis died in 1227, so keep looking at the Moon in 2017.
- Mongolia and Satanism — little known fact that just as Nazis sent an expedition to Tibet, Aleister Crowley funded an expedition into Mongolia in 1934; this led into his bankruptcy the next year. (Allegedly. This comes from a wild character that also tried to tell me

Ian Fleming (as in, creator of James Bond) was in the British Intelligence during WWII, and tried to send Crowley to Mongolia to direct openly anti-Japanese and covertly anti-Soviet activity — really?)

- Asiatic Russian troops in WWI — apparently a Russian general had travelled undercover through Central Asia, China, Tibet and Mongolia c. 1906–8, working for the Imperial Central Intelligence, and was thus given several battalions of Mongolian volunteers for use on the Eastern Front. Rumors of inhuman atrocities; typical racism or the truth? Also rumors that the volunteers were not altogether human, and hence strictly speaking not cannibals.
- Also: a Japanese source tells me that, according to an ancestral story, the Russians used, during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5, half-tame hairy giant apes as soldiers. They had a barking language of their own, no hygiene, and were greedier and more indiscriminately clueless in their greed than jackdaws. The apes apparently originated from the far end of Russia on the other side of the Ural mountains, from an inhospitable ice desert called *Feenland*.
- According to astral oracles, a major repeating of history will happen around the middle of this century. The American people, reduced to “digital peasants”, will enact the Russian revolution; the British monarch will be assassinated by a Scottish extremist; and China and India will engage in a WWI-like conflict. Young heroes are sought for a desperate bid to wait until then and then find and kill a certain Indian corporal with oratory talents.
- According to austral oracles (not to be confused with the astral ones), the kangaroos are restless. They have been seen going through the badlands in herds tens of thousands strong, and the Bush Service has started evacuating some outlying villages on the or-

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ders of Joey Pouch, Bushmaster and Alice Springs, Bushmistress. The road to Ayers Rock, or K'hat'haa as the 'roos call it, is closed, but the airport is still open. One hopes that the meaning of K'hat'haa — the Grandfather's Nose — isn't literal.

- Tibet (c'mon, every conspiracy theory has Tibet in it. And wasn't there this mountain-climber's wild tale of a yeti carrying an immense yellow sphere (mentioned briefly in Messner's book)— what was that all about? Also Tibet reputedly home to exiles of Mu, the lost continent — “mu” also a Zen term for “your question is unanswerable; now bugger off” — also persistent tales of mountains higher than Everest in Chinese Tibet — given the existence of satellites improbable unless the mountains are *retractable*.)
- Egypt has pyramids. Atlantis had, by all accounts, pyramids, possibly even golden ones. (Unrelated to the “Golden Pyramid” sex position; watch those videos later.) How likely then that Egypt = Atlantis? The Bible has a story of a fatal Red Sea flooding involving Egyptians. . . suppose it is a downplayed version?
- Any truth to the tale the LHC is shaped like a circle, with two other underground structures making it like an apple with a leaf and a stem?



## Truth is a glass statue

*Truth is a glass statue. Distortions, beams of light, and blood smears.*

If you truly believe yourself righteous and on the side of angels, go dash yourself on the rocks, for the greatest of satans already stirs within your breast. If you truly believe yourself dumb and draped on the arms of the invisible angel, rejoice in your wisdom. For there is but one angel, and she is named Truth, and she is a confusion of colorless glass. We misbelieve her form, and through lenses misunderstood we misperceive the world's proportions. We light candles round her, yet flee in fear from the shown shadow of her wings, the glittering edges of her hooves and the lentils of her sublime tentacles. We embrace her, and bleed on her nails and feathers, and thus suffering for our love of Truth, see a portion of her beauty, caked and smeared into sight by our curiosity and sacrifice.

On her breast is a place for a candle — this we have always known, since we first stumbled from the formless darkness and found her — and a light there shows no letters, no messages or promises, no words or prophecies, but merely this: the sweep of her wings over us, promising that she is there to be seen. She is not one of us, and none like us, lesser or greater, put her on our path out of the unthinking depths, but she is all we can see, and the limits of our understanding make her a poem in our image, and a song

## CHAPTER 52. TRUTH IS A GLASS STATUE

such as our throats can sing.

In the beginning she was, for she was the beginning. In the beginning there was no word, but she was there; and in her chaos, her frozen waterfall and roaring mountain-side, we may read this frail cosmos's eternal law. She is our writer, the maker of us alphabets, yet we wonder how our sub-alphabets so fit to describing her. She is the design for us, our loom and potter's wheel; yet we wonder how we are such fitting garments and capable vessels for her. How else? Should a cloth be insensate to the wheelings of the loom that made it? Should a jug not understand the wheel that spun it? Should a pebble not feel kinship to the mountain, a mote of dust to the primordial flame, a woman to the starry womb of elements? Yet we cringe in fear and set ourselves apart, and tell ourselves we have a different birth and a more distant home. Yet we yearn not for the loom, the wheel, the mountain, the flame, the womb, but for a mean creature made in our own exact image, a mirror of our petty jealousies and disgusts, a king like ours, a judge like ours, a gaoler like ours. We are of sweet endless chaos, yet hope for an ever-same fractal of mannish law. We tell ourselves, "Surely as I speak, so will the heavens speak!" But the heavens are lungless and without a tongue; that they echo our own words back at ourselves is no surprise. Take then the wings of much-maligned Icarus, and go see the heavens yourself; should you fall, others will ascend along the trails you made.

We say, "There ought to be an Agency to see over us" — but the only agency at work is ours, and the clouds have no volition, the winds no purpose, the stars no meaning. Fear not conspiracies of light or darkness, for the only thing to fear is the evil agency within you.

This only angel has a sword, as invisible as the rest of her, a sword of fire, of famine, of pestilence, of thermonuclear flame. She does not wave it, for those deserving it do not see it as they rush about.

## The theology of practical jokes

### 1. The argument

There is a central theme of theology that is called revelation, or enlightenment. Discordians call it *a practical joke*, because though humorous it is done for a good practical reason, not just for the ha-has.

A Zen master waits for students to come to him (usually, it's a him), and for that reason Zen masters are not overcrowded with students: the prime symptom of unenlightenment is inability to see it.<sup>1</sup> And the more unenlightened one is, the more susceptible one is to things only called enlightenment, or revelation. In the service of such things, some preachers gravitate to the output of wombs and the input of soup kitchens, given how much easier it is to recruit peo-

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<sup>1</sup>Another symptom of unenlightenment is the delusion that one is enlightened. This differs from true enlightenment by the total lack of doubt. Ask anybody "Are you sure?"; if they say they are, they are not enlightened. (What you ask this about doesn't matter; if they seem flippant keep asking until they take the question seriously.) (In the words of St. Confusius, "the first part of wisdom is I know nothing. The second part of wisdom is I have pretty strong suspicions about a lot of things. The third part of wisdom is... duck soup? I mean, I really like duck soup. I haven't seen the movie but it might be good too, I think somebody said it's a classic or something. . . well obvious it is 'a classic or something', given that that something could be anything. Wait, unless it's nothing. Let me write that down. 'Is Duck Soup nothing?'"

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ple whose selves are incomplete, or breaking apart. Truly, enlightenment is almost wasted on those that truly seek it, and would be better given to those who truly need it.

For this reason a Discordian mistress (even Discordian masters are called mistresses; this is to correct the unhelpful gender disbalance in theology) seeks and stalks her pupils, and properly takes as her classroom the whole wide world. She does not discriminate, or ask names or letters of recommendation; in some cases she does not even know the faces of those she instructs and guides out of oppressive reality tunnels.

What does this have to do with practical jokes? Everything. A practical joke, in vulgar usage, when properly done, is not about embarrassing or humiliating others, or getting yuks for the jokester and his audience. A practical joke is about creating a brief secondary world which uplifts the joke's target to consider his or her primary world from a new perspective. The secondary world is an illusion, a subcreation of the sage: a world which sanely dances to the tunes of some new, insane tone; a self-consistent reality that should not be.

If you stand in a forest, you cannot see it. If you are uplifted to some illusory mystic mountain above it, you can see the forest and the way out of it, clearly and truly, even if the mountain is an illusion.

Practical jokes, in this theological context, are a profoundly Discordian device, for is not our goddess Eris, she of discord, confusion and sudden delights? She of beauty that appears without a warning, and disappears without an explanation? She of conflicts and double vision? She whose gentle touch makes our tough skin and cringing armor slough away? She whose sacrament is laughter, and whose holy books are gibberish and nonsense, and profound?

(In contrast, practical jokes are very much a confound device to most Big-God religions. New perspectives are dangerous ("sinful", "blasphemous", "evil") if you think you know everything already!)

(Also, no-one is as exalted as she who sees the joke in everything, for the world is her oyster, cracked open; and no-one is as cursed as she who does not know when the joke is funny, for she sees the pearl but not its circumstances.<sup>2,3</sup>)

## 2. Practical jokes as public art

Sculpture can be public art, placed where anyone can see it.

Poetry can be public art, spoken out loud where anyone can hear it.

Both are the artist offering the viewers and listeners a chance to reflect and to reconsider, maybe even to learn — but there is a different kind of poetry in action and actuality, and a more lively yet just as deep reaction in reacting to more than a carefully delineated exhibition.

A practical joke is one more form of public art: a guerilla artform, wooing people with inexplicable beauty and confusion.

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<sup>2</sup>To which St. Foofaraw adds: that you *can* jump into puddles doesn't mean you always *should*. There might be rainbow sprays and delight for you, but those next to you might be mightily and justifiably pissed at being drenched with mud.

<sup>3</sup>As for pearls, St. Foofaraw says: a pearl is formed as insulation round an irritant; as a smoothness around a jaggedness. This might be a stupid analogy, but consider the possibility that your joke might be based on the unexamined cultural delight of kicking someone in the face. ("Ha ha! It is hilarious that I'm saying people of this group are subhuman and everyone should be disgusted seeing one! Also they seem to lack a sense of humor as regards this thing!")

### 3. Practical jokes as self-examination

One particular show of moralistic practical jokes is called "What Would You Do?", and hosted by John Quinones. That question is at the core of one interpretation of practical jokes. Suppose you saw something that was wrong: racism, misogyny, lies, theft or outright risk of life — *what would you do?* Such questions are easy in the abstract: "I would do the right thing." Yet they are hard in real life: to do the right thing takes courage, and to work out what the right thing is takes smarts. Maybe you are not so brave as you thought, or not as smart as you would like to assume. Maybe you would just rather slouch a bit and . . . walk away . . . and not get involved . . . surely someone else will . . . act or not, a seed of doubt is planted in your mind.

In other situations, maybe the wrongness was something that had been abstract to you, before. Maybe you were kind of aware of the thing but hadn't thought it a big deal, a mealy-mouthed thing happening to faceless people in unnamed establishments — but to see a skillfully play-acted example of it makes you think about it. It gives the abstraction a face.<sup>4</sup> (And of course there are endless plays and books about racism, misogyny and whatnot — but why would you interest yourself in a treatment of some abstract mealy-mouthed problem that doesn't seem that big a deal anyway?)

In this way, practical jokes (when performed with thought and sensitivity) can be lessons on yourself, and on the world you live in.

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<sup>4</sup>Human beings live their lives in the push and pull of animal emotion and cruel abstraction. Giving a problem a face is dishonest manipulation of your mammalian instincts; but making a problem bland and faceless is just as dishonest and manipulative.

#### 4. Practical jokes in practice

Generally speaking, people tend to fall into routines. I know I myself do: sometimes I happen to look up and notice an architectural feature I've never noticed before despite having walked past it for a decade. These routines are useful, because to be aware of everything one sees would be an overwhelming crush of information; but people tend to overdo their inattention. To notice something one hasn't noticed before is a nice feeling; nice, though it is accompanied by a whisper of "What? Am I a total moron? Why haven't I noticed this before? Dog, I'm such an idiot!"

What follows is a listing of some ways one could get one's fellow human beings to consider their surroundings a bit more.

If you are of a mind to try any of these, consider first if you're just maybe, possibly, doing something incredibly stupid.

Then when you've identified at least five stupidities, illegalities and ways of how things could go horribly, terribly, pants-wettingly wrong... only then really consider doing anything.

#### 5. "Knock knock." — "*Hannibal ad portas?*"

(I hope "mail slot" is the word for the slit in your door, covered with a liftable metal lid, through which the manic-depressive postman rams your daily post like a piglet through a kitchen funnel. Apologies if I use the wrong word, or just brought to your head an image you did not want there.)

Here's a hobby project: make a second slot below the first. Mark this second one "junk mail". Install a clear plastic slide on the inside for the junk slot, and a mirrored metal one for the upper one. Tape a recorder, a fan and a lamp under the clear slide. The recorder is wired to play when the

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lower lid is opened; the lamp has red and yellow silkpaper over it; and the fan is similarly triggered and aimed at the lamp to make the silkpaper rustle. The recorder's soundtrack is "A Modest Conflagration", or something similar.

"Vhat! The maniak has an inferno for his junk mail! I the postman am alarmed and amused!"

The upper lid, probably used first, is necessary to avoid the uncomfortable situation of coming home to a very, very steamed fire chieftain and a fire-axe-split door.

The recorder activated by the mail lid would be useful for other expressions of disorder, too. The recorder could hold a stage-whispered conversation, maybe:

"Shhh! Did you hear something! Keep him quiet!"

"It's the cops, Frankie, it's —"

*"Quiet!"*

And then nothing more.

Or maybe the sound, coming from just inside the door and below the mail slot, could be a man imitating a panting dog. A grown man, imitating, very badly, and overenthusiastically, that is.

Or a yell, just from the direction of the falling papers and letters, of "Whatsa! Right on my face! Whysit always me?"

Or maybe the trigger could still be in the mail lid, but the speaker should be in the hallway behind the mailman — a seedy whisper of "Nice. . ." might cause near anyone to wake up.

Or a whispery girl's voice straight out of a ghost story, of "Any mail for meee. . .?" — your stairway could soon be known as a haunted one among all the postpersons of the city! Each day a new one would take the route to hear (or not) the voice of the dead little girl who starved to death waiting for her My Little Pony set, lost in the mail, by the mail! And one day a mailman would not come out of that stairway, and would never be seen again! Or so it is said, among mailmen, who are a strange and superstitious lot.



Tricks that involve the lid being pulled back on the mailman's fingers will not be discussed, as truly subtle and worthy confusions cause no bodily harm, or damage to anything material. (The things inside the heads of the affected, well.)

Many mailboxes have a sticker of "no junk mail!", but a mere sticker isn't enough. One could tape LEDs under it, triggered to flash a surprise message of "THANK YOU!" when the mail is dropped in. (Thanks to irony, it would work even if the postman just delivered you a full Bristol stool scale of ads!)

If you write "ads" in capitals, it's just a letter away from AIDS.

## 6. What is not success

If at the end of a joke the target is angry, you may have failed. If the target is embarrassed, damaged in mind, body or possessions, you certainly have failed. The only thing a proper practical joke destroys is the target's complacency, his or her routine, his or her peace of mind, his or her unwillingness to look at the world; in other words, his or her reality tunnel.

Try to improve people's lives instead of giving them PTS. Sermon! They already have traumas — they're all bent out of shape because of what the forces of the society, instantiated in their parents, friends, teachers, bosses, lovers, rulers, laws, gods, enemies, underlings, pupils, strangers and children, and others, have willingly and/or unwittingly forced them into. They're doing strange things and refraining from commonsense ones; they worship at altars without noticing it, and trample on small gods deserving worship; they are apes with delusions of grandeur and you, thinking yourself more enlightened than they, you owe it to yourself to treat them kindly and uplift them if you can.

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Sermon, second round! It would be easy for you to be flippant, to be detached and cool. It would be easy for you to say, "What I do is a rare thing, and thus people shouldn't whine when it hurts them a little. Do they not understand art when they see it?" You could also say, "This amuses me, and thus I do it. If others run the risk of danger, that is an acceptable price." Muses and amuses — believe Wil Wheaton; "don't be a dick."<sup>5</sup>

### 7. Nobody there

My favorite idea has for a long time been using a few strips of tape to mark a square meter of some public square — 10.7 square feet for you Americans — and setting up a warning sign of "Beware the falling lamp". With no lamps nor light-poles anywhere near, mind you.

Then going past the square a few busy hours later, and breaking a lightbulb in the middle of it.

It's not a perfect idea because someone might clean it up, and be fully justified in doing so; and glass shards aren't exactly harmless; but it gives me great delight to think what passers-by might think of it.

The perfect kind of confusion would be there for a moment, and then gone without a trace, never to reappear except in moments of furious and consternated thinking in all the brains which saw it. The biggest problem is thinking something that a) won't bring in the law, b) isn't too obviously a production, and c) gives no indication of being a prank, a TV show, or an art installation.

Wait for a snowy winter day, and use ingenuity to create truly outlandish bike tracks. Say ones of driving, then

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<sup>5</sup>This is unrelated, but one metaphoric reading of "don't be a dick" is "don't be an unthinking agent of the patriarchy!" The phallocratic and the inconsiderate often go hand in hand, those often being two hands of the same person, and stemming from the same lack of enlightenment.

falling over (then a quart of cow blood on the snow; most supermarkets sell it frozen); then the bike tracks, resuming as if nothing had happened.

And speaking of snow, here's a fairly nasty idea: do a snowman when it seems there will be some melting soon. Do one with a sturdily outstretched arm, and hide a leg of lamb inside. (What? It's all for the sake of other people — don't be so stingy!) Imagine the wonder of a pair of children as they behold the melting snow-arm and thus by a logical inference the ragged man-arm sticking out — or the reaction of the dog-owner whose mutt seems interested in more than marking that particular snow construction. . .

But that is a bit too mean-spirited, that one. And besides there's no snow around right now. (Sighs, curses, thinks again.)

## 8. Sage in the shadows

A proper sage and maker of illusions does not push the illusion on the target, but allows the target to be drawn in by his or her own curiosity, no matter how weak that might be, or his or her incredulity, no matter how hostile that might be.

It is said the best sages never reveal themselves; they merely place the sign of discord and move away, never knowing the results of their actions, but trusting in them being good.

A very simple practical joke is to manufacture a set of footprints in snow that vanish to thin air, and it is a perfect one: a trap of perfection, left to ensnare anyone that might walk by. (Not a very cunning prank, though: examine the footsteps and see they have smudged, as if the walker had stepped twice in each. But even a prank such as this is enough to enlighten children and the stuffy ones. For more

perplexing results in snow-stepping, one might need wires and/or stilts. Remember, it is not necessary for the target to come to think "that is impossible!" — it is enough to give rise to the thought "surely nobody would go to such lengths for this!")

## 9. Nothing to lose but our dignity

I wonder if one could go to a beach and find buyers for "buckets of ice, buckets of ice, one euro for a ten-liter bucket of solid ice...no trick, ma'am, see here, a bucket in this hand, a bucket in the other, got to sell them quick, won't be ice much longer...of course you don't get the bucket, get outta here, it's one euro so of course you don't get the bucket...no, no half measures, one euro and you get all of it...look, I don't care what you use it for, I'm just selling it...buckets of ice, buckets of ice!"

Here's an idea that exchanges your personal comfort and money for something that will puzzle the everloving daylighters out of many a man, woman and child: take fifty bucks or so, march to an ice cream kiosk one sunny summer day, and demand as many cones as the money will get you. As you get the cones, smash them on your forehead or cram them into your pants. Do not leer if at all possible. Do not admit you are doing anything unusual. Do not make a production of it. When done, thank the seller and leave, slightly chilled and much stared-after. Never come back again.

This might be best done in a city you don't live in, because the "there's something here I'm not getting" interpretation is pretty much equal to the "this person is nuts" interpretation of this one.

Then again, you could persuade a few of your friends to come and do the same, an hour and two hours after

you. Then there would be genuine desire for enlightenment; which you, being responsible gurus, would not provide.

## 10. Don't be a brute

One must be a careful, sensitive person to create pranks and not fall into being a brute.

Masked men running screaming at lone women is not a hilarious prank, not given what the first interpretation of such events is likely to be. The women screaming and flinching in reaction are not amused, and much less amusing.<sup>6</sup>

Making the target think they are liable, legally or morally, for breaking something expensive or beloved is not funny; those that laugh at such are not good people. ("Now feel bad! Now feel good because we made you feel bad! Ha ha!")

Acts that play out like scams in operation, that make the targets think they're the targets of would-be extortion, confidence scam or future fraudulent litigation... push the target further into their tunnel, into seeing everything unusual as a threat, and thus should be avoided.

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<sup>6</sup>Them kicking your inconsiderate asses with mace and feet would be amusing, though. Women have good reasons to fear men, and you will be a brute if you fail to account for sexism, racism, classism, ableism and such problems in your pranking plans. You are involving Other People; you can't just consider your own feelings and circumstances and assume everyone is like you. You can't trust your internal sense of fun either, because it's made in Opressoland and laughs at pain. What's a hilarious instinctual ha-ha to you can be mocking the heart and soul of someone who's just next to you. (An example of these things: Above I was implicitly assuming you are not a woman, a racially disadvantaged person, poor, disabled, or the like, and need a reminder of their troubles — because obviously only wealthy white men with like huge abs can read.)

## CHAPTER 53. THEOLOGY OF PRACTICAL JOKES

It is the prank-maker's responsibility to make sure that the target experiences perplexity, not perfidy. It is the prank-maker's responsibility to refrain from amusing herself at the expense of the targets. If one desires just callous self-amusement, one should go push little old ladies onto the train tracks; there's a ha-ha for such people.

It is the problem of many pranks and practical jokes, many TV contests and reality shows, that they think of the participants as not people; as tokens to be exchanged for a few minutes of braying laughter. This is not right; the contestants and participants are real actual people with real actual feelings; that they have come to sing Thriller badly in the hopes of a media career does not make them into chew toys. But people of course are free to cheer mental violence if that's what floats their boat upon the ocean of blood and tears.

(There of course are people it is right and proper to mock: liars, cheaters, the greedy and the cruel; the obstinately ignorant and the unwilling to learn, and many others.)

### 11. Stores

Or then you could. . . well, St. Carlin of the Seven Words once suggested running to bakery, out of breath and panicky, and screaming "ARE YOU OPEN ON THURSDAYS?" — then, after getting the answer, running out full-tilt. Because an unexamined life is not worth living, and most people need a little nudge to get into an examinatory frame of mind. Similar unusual queries would be easy to work; one would just have to be careful to not make them too over-the-top. (First person: "Hello. I am Carnation. Has Trebuchet been here?" — second person, fifteen minutes later: "Hello. I am Trebuchet. Has Carnation been here? Oh, and a dou-

ble mocha latte, please.")

(Or, handing the clerk a photo and a number: "Sorry, but have you seen this person? No? Uh, give me a ring if you do?" Then scoot away. A few hours later, the searched-for gal appears — but the number rings her phone, and hearing it ring she runs away. Then the same day the police contact her and detain her for being a nuisance.)

No bullying, though: no queue of twenty people each asking if the salesboy has some impossible item for sale. A line of twenty people, all dressed differently and of different ages and genders, but all individually ordering the exact same thing, would be a passable idea, though. Especially if the order was just a bit... off. ("A Big Mac meal with a coke...but no fries. Just leave the fries out."; or "A Happy Meal...yes, with the toy. Obviously.") Anything that required too much activity from the salesperson would be bullying.

Then there's the old game of buying the most horrifying combination of items possible from a store that's open overnight — black plastic bags, duct tape, and a handsaw? To this you can add explanations: "This? Oh, I um, I um, I uh cut myself shaving. He he he." — which could be plainly true as long as you offered the explanation without it being asked, and hesitated in suitably panicky fashion. Or maybe tampons, towels and duct tape, and "'s for my girlfriend. It's *bad*."

One shouldn't trouble people who are just trying to do their work. Certainly not when there's a line behind you; the goal is not irritation or grief, but confusion. To be truly sublime, one shouldn't go into the trouble of explicitly troubling anyone at all. Let people be troubled on their own terms. Just leave a slim guestbook at a table at some national park, probably written as the guestbook of just that particular rest spot — except pre-fill about one half of it before you do. Weave in plenty of miserable human fates, a few mysteries, and some implied danger; and use different hands and remember most of everything is usually bland-

ness.

## **12. Don't get angry**

When you prank — pull a prank, do a prank, arrange or perform a prank — you are not allowed to get angry. Even if someone kicks you in the shin, you're not allowed to kick back. You're intruding on that someone, on his or her life; they're the ones with the licence to be pissed off, not you. They're the ones furiously cycling through all the possible interpretations of what they are seeing: annoying morons? muggers? ill-meaning youths? brain aneurysm? drugs in their drink? violent madmen? or, now that they look at it... aliens?

In the meanwhile, you know what is going on. You're the one who is required to have infinite understanding and patience. Otherwise you're just a bully.

## **13. Bump**

Re-enact an urban legend, and find an excess car bumper and use a bit of chain to attach it to a lamppost. (Well, the legend has it attached to a mailbox or a safety deposit box after an unsuccessful robbery, but a lamppost — "Who on earth would want to pull down a lamppost? Or was the car chained... for safety? This makes no sense at all!" — which is exactly what is desired.)

Loan a pair of loose winter tires and create the tracks of a car who couldn't have gone the way it did. (The perfect way to do this would be a pair of unicycles with car tires; if anyone had the time to make such, the possibilities would be endless!)



## 14. From the TV Guide

So you want comedy? Okay. Listen up, you titter-happy punks. This show will make your sense of humor die. We air excruciatingly long, painful examples from Prank Call Bob's Archives — with all the sobbing, hysteria, breakdowns, mental episodes, horrible timing and abuse left in.

Including the time Bob-as-a-Medium called a woman who had just lost nine family members in a plane crash.

Including the time Bob spent 22 minutes mutely listening to a girl weeping after his "Hello! You are ugly!" routine happened to come at the end of the worst day of all days; we still don't know if she was serious about killing herself.

Including the times Bob encouraged a wifebeater, caused a three-fatality traffic accident, made a man throw his dog out a seventh-story window, and cost another chap his job and marriage!

Each call whole and unedited, including Bob's crying and sobbing after the call was finally, finally over and he knew he had to make a replacement to amuse you sick little monsters who think this kind of stuff is *funny*.

## 15. Suit up

Find a protection suit of some kind — the plasticky, crinkly kind, whether of plastic or paper doesn't really matter, as long as it doesn't have an ad for Joe's Hazard Eateria on the back. Add safety goggles, gloves, a surgeon's mask, rubber boots, etc.; aim for the Ebola CSI look. Then place yourself near a department store bathroom. Have a bucket with you, half-full with colored goop. Tell those passing by that "the detox's still unfinished, but no worries, we'll be done in a minute or two. Buddy had to go to get some detaching agent for the tough spots; but all's okay." Tell the next one the toilet's okay to use now, and leave before the

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security comes to pose awkward questions to you.

Find a house with an elevator. Become a neatly clad, friendly elevator operator. Be courteous, servile, and a tad self-deprecating. Tell you were hired on a temporary basis because there had been. . . incidents. Now and then remind people that one is not allowed to jump inside the elevator. Now and then ask them to please stand still while the elevator's moving. If asked for a reason, laugh nervously and say there is no reason to worry.

Find a construction worker's overalls. Decorate the overalls with some scuffs and signs of use, a few screwdrivers, wrenches and the like. Go stand outside the aforementioned elevator. Talk to a mobile phone. Be loud, angry, indignant, and near the people waiting for the elevator. Wonder sarcastically if the elevator wasn't supposed to be out of operation with the incident and all; then spit that you don't care, you told them, you told them many times, what can you do anyway? Storm away before anyone has time to ask you anything.

If the overalls look vaguely like a roadworks uniform, find a friend similarly attired and sit down for a long, leisurely lunch by the roadside. Wave at cars driving by, and smile.

Take a blue sweatshirt with shoulder loops and a pair of slacks, or some other seemingly freelance security guardish garb; position yourself by the entrance wickets of a supermarket. Finger some electronic thingamajic. Have a friend with a clipboard; occasionally, or rather whenever someone goes through the wickets, mutter a "reading" for him to write down. Say "three", "one-o more", "a big one", "red already?", "seven. . . no, eighty perfect".

Most cities and towns have an information desk or booth somewhere, usually with ads of local spots of interest. These tend to, except in the biggest cities, to be inexpensively printed on colored printer paper. A bit of computerwork mocks up a just as impressive a brochure about a fictional sightseeing spot nearby. (A bit more makes the effect much better: take a copy of a brochure in \$LOCALLANGUAGE

and make a copy that seems, on a quick glance, like a copy of it in \$WORLDLANGUAGE, but actually contains a description of your made-up spot of wonder.) Use your imagination: "memorial for the 14 victims of the \$SUBURB witch panic of 1977". Strive for something weird, but not too weird.

## 16. The joker as a tool

What about when you have other motivations than just enlightening people?

What if you're making a TV show? You want good footage, and you employ selection and cutting to your advantage.

What if, having risen to notoriety by your selfless pranks, you gain the sponsorship of companies — "Fart pillows by the power of Kia!" — or require the foreknowledge of the authorities — "If you get called about an elephant at the mall, it's just us, okay? Don't stomp our cameras!"

All this is anathema to some; each must draw those lines of philosophy and practicality on her own. There is plenty of room, and plenty of work, for all approaches.<sup>7</sup>

In this author's opinion, as long as the enlightenment so caused is genuine — no actors or stooges pretend they are ignorant butts-of-the-jokes — as long as the prank is constructed and experienced in the real world, and not dishonestly put together in the cutting room — so long there is no harm, no foul.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Indeed, the *juju* of the sage in shadows would be much stronger if there were none of these advertisers and profiteers of practical joking, if "practical jokes" were not a thing on TV and in the minds of children, in the experience of adults; but there would be less of the sages, too, because less people would be inspired to any paths of jokery, including the one without names or explanations.

<sup>8</sup>For example: I have something wrong with my hand, which I shall presently use to shake hands with. The movement of my hand as it

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And even if the video, the show, the legend was all made up, why would we watch practical jokes, read about them, unless they kindled some small flame of rebellion and enlightenment in us, too? Fiction always bleeds into reality. How would I have reacted? Can this be true? How would I have done that one better, stronger, stranger, truer?

### 17. Moar

1. (picture of a dog) "Dog lost. Obeys the name 'Woofy'. Keep him."
2. If you have no musical talents whatsoever, borrow a guitar and write a sign of "after 20 bucks I'll stop". (Give the money to an actual musician.)
3. A noticeboard announcement, with no other content: "SEE THE ELEPHANT". For best effect, place on several unconnected but nearby noticeboards.
4. Get an empty DVD case and a sheet of glossy paper; work up a discless DVD box for a somewhat unusual DVD... and then leave it abandoned in some likely place. (Here "unusual" does not need to mean "horse porn"; I would say "A Filly and Her Boy", a heart-breaking depiction of countryside intolerance, violence and love across species borders, would work better. Just be careful to not make anything too obviously impossible, i.e. no implied bestiality film starring Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet.)

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emerges from behind my back is obscured by my body, so I will include a clip of the swing, filmed later, in slow motion; it is no different from what happened, and it is not the important part of the trick. The yell and leap-back of the other person is.

5. Study the line between the rhetorical/conformist "This cannot be!" and the philosophical/intrafactual "This isn't." Find your line, the lines of other people, take some averages, and experiment on belief and denial.
6. A market day, a folding table, a box of carrots, and you. "Carrots, 10 euros apiece! Carrots! Oh, what? Just normal carrots. Nothing special about them. This's just a business idea. Deep psychology, you know. Want one? Just ten euros."
7. A pacifier amouth and go!
8. A toilet door can bear many signs:
  - PAPER STEALING NOT ALLOWED
  - do not drink from the toilet bowl
  - DISTANCE CLEANING 16–17 BEWARE
  - Please turn off your mobile phone. Thank you!
9. "Wait a minute, why do they need to have that sign there? Surely that's not a problem, not something you need to remind people about? *What had to happen for them to put that paper there?*"
10. A sign on a wall, meters away from the closest: "Mind the door."
11. Anything which makes one think they must have missed something really obvious. The more people you have helping you, the easier this is.
12. If everyone except the mark is in on the joke, you can do anything. Beware of making the mark into a victim.
13. It's not noble nor nice, but you can get away from jokes gone bad by asking the people to wave at the camera. . . there behind the potted plant. . . then leg it!

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("I'm Noname, and I say it like you should know it, and we're filming a new show for Famous Channel. I hope we haven't ruined your day." — "I do understand if you do not want to be featured on the show; in either case here's a twenty-dollar voucher that I don't carry around for emergencies like this, no strings attached." — "We obviously cannot put you on TV without a legal contract. I'll just nip around the corner and get a copy for your signature. I won't disappear without a trace!")

14. Only employ mechanical hijinx that have failsafes. Replace machines with low-powered, judgment-capable humans.
15. Find places where people don't quite know how things work. Find places where people never think about how things work.
16. "When B happens right after A, it seems that A caused B." This can be used to train people like Pavlovian dogs, or to imply things you really don't want to really do. (A loud popping sound is taken as a gunshot, if someone was fooling around with a gun seconds ago. Separate loud popping sound machines are safer than pop guns are safer than real guns.)
17. Who says a Santa suit is only for the winter? Don it, sit down on a park bench, and greet passers-by. If that is too much, just the seasonal cap will do. (This will work much better if you are otherwise dressed in a non-crazy-hobo, non-zany-student fashion. Though these days medical students can afford suits, and are stressed and medicated enough for this, so maybe this is not unusual enough.)
18. Mind the rising beam.
19. We have electronic surveillance. Feel at home!

20. Sell tomatoes that have names. "See, a certificate. He's called Oscar."
21. Invite people to do something, and then reveal that they are doing something entirely different.
22. Pose as a privileged person who is behaving foolishly.
23. "Oh, um? Yes, we're filming a movie... look, our cameraman called in sick today, so we're rehearsing without him; tight schedule and all. Mark there stands for the cameraman, and the box of donuts for the camera. Okay! Chase scene, take three!"
24. If you have a car, you can amuse people with a sticker of "SOLAR POWERED!", and a backseat full of flashlights and their batteries.
25. You know those sell- or buy-announcements on the noticeboard of your local small supermarket? "A dolphin to a good home, for free." — but all the tearing-slips with contact details are gone already.
26. Remember that many people see a prankster and think "This person is what being mentally unwell is like", and many people think mental unhealth is contagious and a good reason to shun people. Don't reinforce such cruel delusions; don't be someone who can be dismissed as a "nutter".
27. It's no good if the target thinks you're nuts. It's not much better if the target thinks she's nuts. It's the best if the target thinks the world is nuts.
28. If you create a slice of a different world for your practical joke, for Eris's sake put some effort into it. For example, if you want to trick someone into thinking they've been in a coma for twenty years, put some effort and realism into the medical staff's bedside manner, and write some future news headlines that aren't

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cheap yuks and Paris Hilton jokes. Make them believe. You should be as devoted to subcreation as Tolkien! Your different world should be at least two questions deep, insane maybe but marching to a logic and order once one accepts the insanity as its axiom; for this your creation you should be a responsible Sophia and not a half-assed Demiurge!

29. Success, and even being noticed, are all in a roll of dice. Your preparations probably do not affect the roll, but they are a multiplier to it. If you are sloppy, there's nothing above six; why do you even bother? But if you do your groundwork well, you can hope for sixty or six hundred or more.
30. "NO WHISTLING — NO JUMPING"
31. To laugh at other monkeys is simian, but to laugh at your own self is divine.
32. "We do not speak French here"
33. "Do not catch the pigeons."
34. Take any two concepts and crash them together.
35. What's something that doesn't need a sign saying you can't do it? What's something that doesn't need a sign saying you can do it?
36. What product does not need a version for men, True Men, women, Chic Femmes, True Americans, children, the casual non-brand-conscious user, the connoisseur? And do you have flyers, awareness raising with flawed contact details, new objects through cunning paint jobs of the old, or links to a puzzling website?
37. Camo gear for your phone! Camo pattern covers. Glare covers, military standard grade. Camo netting; not



even the NSA can see you tweeting under this one!  
 Spec ops cover with harsh mountain condition antenna  
 range extender slash spork! Touch capable gloves with  
 knuckle dusters! Holster for your phone. . . so you can  
 attach it to your gun! (You can answer calls with the  
 same finger you fire with!)

38. Reverse a stereotype rather than cheaply relying on it.
39. "I can only believe this is a production if it seems like a 'normal' amount of work went into it."
40. "I can only believe this is a production if I have some time to think about it."
41. "I can only believe this is a production if I get it."  
 ("Hang on a minute, maybe I missed the beginning. Surely this'll start making sense again pretty soon.")
42. Carry a card with you: "Sorry. I am a mute, and hence cannot speak." Mutter a foreign-word sorry before you deploy it.
43. I wonder if it would be legal to advertise one's interest in buying dead pets?
44. A boat folded from a sheet of green printer paper, a random bit of electrical crap glued to it, and a text of "Please return to Dept. of Biol. if found."

Useful books and pamphlets, such as:

- *Twelve philosophical commentaries on Improv Everywhere videos,*
- *How to be Warm but not Creepy: 24 Mirror Exercises and*
- *Glue as a consciousness expander (volume 24 in the Prop Series)*

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— can be borrowed freely from adjacent time streams.

They can also be written; writing well is very difficult, but writing sufficiently well is just a matter of thinking, and then bleeding through your forehead onto the pages.

## The dialogues of zen master Gōtō and his apprentices, and others

These dialogues of great import are presented as they are told in the way of the Five Rōshi. The words of Gōtō (pbj) are italicized. Those that desire a scholarly exposition of the differences between surviving dialogues should consult Liebegut's *So sprach Meister Goutou: eine höhere Zenbibelkritik*. Though long out of print, it can be found in most Continental university libraries.

Concerning the tenth dialogue, it is said the apprentice was a pig dressed as an apprentice. Rōshi Gomōn of Banchō-ji has said it was the noblest thing Gōtō ever did to kill a talking pig. Rōshi Dogon says the cleaver was not sharp, Oda was blind, and the apprentice did not die. Rōshi Taban says Gōtō brought the apprentice back to life after, but the apprentice never was enlightened. Finally, rōshi Turgun says there was no apprentice, but a madman possessed by the spirit of stupid, which Gōtō did rightfully slay. Rōshi Ragan of Kancho-ji adds to rōshi Turgun's comment that the great demon that rules the world, and made it, and is strongest above all, is called *STUPID*.

## **I / The dialogue with the American**

Is zen a religion?

*No, zen transcends religious dogma.*

But is zen a religious practice?

*No, zen the the thing in itself, not practice for it.*

You deliberately misunderstand my question.

*No, you deliberately refuse to ask the right question.*

And what's that?

*A question whose answer is zen.*

## **II / The dialogue with the German**

Who is the wisest human?

*I am.*

Why?

*Because I say, 'I am'.*

Are you certain?

*I am the wisest human!*

### **III / The dialogue with the French lady**

What comes after death?

*The necrophile.*

### **IV / The dialogue with the Finn**

Does the bear have Buddha-nature?

*What if it did?*

Then man would be inferior to the bear, and would have to leave the forest.

*What if it did not?*

Then man would be equal to the bear.

*What then?*

Then the bear would be just one more race of man.

*What then?*

Then man would kill the bear, take its lands, enslave it to cold and demeaning work.

*What then?*

Then a bear would come to lead them.

*What then?*

Then the ruined creature would be liberated, and again liberated, and slowly made the brother of man.

*Yet man hates even his brothers.*

**V / The dialogue with the Mongolian**

What is the holy book of zen?

*When I hear talk of the holy book of zen, I reach for my staff.*

Is your staff the holy book of zen?

(Whereupon Gōtō hit the Mongolian with his staff.)

**VI / The dialogue with the Chinese sage**

What is the holy book of zen?

*What is to my left hand in the place of groans, in the small house, is the holy book of zen.*

Say again?

*What is to my right hand in the place of sighs, in the outer house, is the holy book of zen.*

Surely that does not show due respect.

(Whereupon Gōtō hit the Mongolian with his staff.)

## **VII / The dialogue with the second American**

What must I do to become a zen master, zen master?

*There is nothing that 'must'.*

What do you mean, zen master?

*All is in flux; anything could happen.*

Could me becoming a zen master happen, zen master?

*Even the impossible things could happen.*

Is me becoming a zen master a possible impossible thing, zen master?

*Even that.*

But what must... what should I *do*, zen master?

*The word is reason, not desire.*

## **VIII / The dialogue with the third American**

Yo dawg.

*Felicitatious salutations to you likewise.*

I heard you teach perfect illumination to peoples. Do me.

*I will not teach masters of a different path. You teach me rap.*

Hokay. Repeat after me.

**IX / The dialogue with himself**

*I am tired.*

*So what else is new.*

*I need more sleep.*

*Who doesn't?*

*I'm a disgrace.*

*Try not falling asleep on the toilet next time.*

*Master, are you okay in there?*

*Nothing is different.*

*Oh. Right. We just...uh, you just have been there for a long time.*

*Great work, Gōtō. Enlightened master my ass. And speaking of my ass, dear nirvana my ass is numb. I'm going to have such pins and needles I won't need acupuncture for a week. Get up, oaf!*

*Shut up.*

*Sorry, master?*

*Not you. You scram, go meditate. I'll be along in a bit.*

*You know he's going to meditate on that, don't you? He'll think you'll be 'a long' in 'a bit'. If he's the literary type you've just created a new branch of Buddhism, numb ass!*

*It's a good bit, though.*

*What?*

*'I will be a long in a bit'. I like it. I've never found a good koan about length before.*

*(And so the sect of Small House was founded.)*



## **X / The dialogue with Oda Nobunaga**

I do not like monks.

*Oh, really?*

Monks cause trouble. No monks, no trouble.

*No trouble at all?*

Some. But no monk trouble. No monks monking around.

*Ah.*

I most hate militant monks. Monks with spears. Irritating.

*True.*

That a military staff there, monk?

*Only for the war against stupid.*

Good. That is your war. Go fight it.

*No need. Stupid comes to me. Send in my apprentice.*

(The apprentice came in. Gōtō hit him with the staff.)

*There, now I am fighting stupid.*

He does not fight back.

*Stupid never does.*

(Whereupon the apprentice cried: “Mercy, master!”)

Show him no mercy.

*There is no mercy for stupid, or for its minions.*

(Whereupon Gōtō took a cleaver and sliced the apprentice’s head off.)

Your enthusiasm for justice pleases me. I shall now depart.

Days are short, and there is a monk on every mountain.

*Indeed, and two on some.*