

I AM NOT CHUANG
MY NAME IS
RIDICOLOSAMENTE (III)

THE Curse Us



THE CURSE US



*A bird leaves its dull mottled egg and builds a new nest
around the egg of a serpent. The shining egg cracks open.
A serpent crawls out. Its jaws yawn open. It swallows
the bird. Its voice is croaking, and as ancient as salt. Its
talons grip the nest's edge. It holds out its wings. It flies
into the desert. It never returns.*

I am not Chuang
My name
is
Ridicolosamente

(3/3)

by

frère dupont

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My name is

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The parable of the crow's hunger

Just suppose that your harpsichord has the power to feel and to remember - then, do not presume to play your *music* on it! It lives in its vibration, in its inevitable resonance, which holds the object of its desire present before its rapt attention, while its mind is busied about the quality that belongs to that object. But vibrating strings have yet another property, that of making other strings vibrate; and that is how the first idea recalls a second, the two of them a third, these three a fourth and so on, so that there is no limit to the ideas awakened and interconnected in the mind of the harpsichord, as it meditates and hearkens to itself amid the silence and darkness, beneath the dust sheets of the shuttered chateau. It is an instrument that makes surprising leaps, and an idea once aroused may sometimes set vibrating an harmonic at an inconceivable distance. It plays the garden orb spider's frosted web in autumn. It ripples in the mind of Capability Brown. If this phenomenon may be observed between resonant strings that are continuous and alive, then why should it not occur between points that are lifeless and separate?

- Diderot

**My name is
Ridicolosamente**

Fellow Creature,

Shall we say, it's because it's a joke that we know it's real? I am addressing you with the greeting used by the Ranters, I use it as a sincere irony because the domain of the creatura, or rather the participation of Ranters as creatures in the world, is now not an option for us. We later Ranters may no longer return to that state of nature that the historical Ranters could also not return to; but the impossibility of our return, after Lacan's *dompte-regard* is now located symbolically - our intensities and their falling away are abruptly facilitated as it were, by the triumph of the *relation* over the *address* - to assert fellowship where secret societies are supplanted by niche markets, to address an idealist commonality where abstract equivalence sets use in confrontation with use, is but a sincerest irony.

In general terms, this writing is concerned with what it is to set out and to then return back, it is digressive, associative, and no doubt maddening - but it is also a reflection of the time of *lockdown*, written over the course of the three months of the interregnum and should be considered as a companion piece to the more, but not much more, straightforward text *I am not Chuang* written over the same period. The writing began as a personal letter which was never sent because I felt its contents could upset the recipient whom I do not know personally, but it retains some structure of this earlier form.

harpsichord

aware, like something served from the menu of the naked lunch, like something disavowing itself, and in the same movement, both falling back into and recoiling from what it is.

There is always a return, and it is *the* return, and it is already effected, it begins immediately in the separation, that which once remained undifferentiated, not functioning even as a potentiality, appearing suddenly, successively through the rupture of a particularising movement, and then as secession in relation to the life-community. There is always a return to the pleroma, to the internet of things, to devil's island. Nothing escapes that is not commanded to escape.

Where there was non-relation, there is relation. Where there was non-community, there is community. Where there was alienation, there is immanence. Only strangers will recognise who belongs and who does not, and the strangers are discontinued: *Be ahead of all parting, as though it already were behind you*, like the winter that has just gone by. *For among these winters there is one so endlessly winter / that only by wintering through it all will your heart survive.*

Fellow Stranger, consider the paradox, and perfect heuristic, of the aubade form: as the sun rises, releasing all things from night, the lovers, who *were* released by dark of night, *are* newly bound by light of day. Shall we say, it's because it's real that we know it's a joke?

Ridico

The writing revisits something I wrote a decade ago for the anarchist magazine *The Anvil*, itself a project of return to print from the digital world, and in part was begun in response to the death of the editor of that magazine. The content begins in contemplation of the Ranters, a Seventeenth Century anti-sect sect, which like witches possibly never existed, and then alights variously upon current events, curses/blessings, theological readings of prodigality, marxist readings of the Odyssey, and Japanese hold outs, amongst the other usual magpie bric a brac and non sequiturs. I have attempted to retain, or return to, the motif of return throughout but sometimes the path is rather convoluted.

And so, we shall say for now, it's from the form of living arrived at by *going out on a limb* and then either inching out still further, always that one inch further, in the inching on, or the other, the leaping off altogether at the unsupportable, bowing, snapping end, it is from the damage done by and to the ones who leave, that we begin to imagine how they will come back and to what purpose. It is all the same. Either way, it's the same, both shall stand, the inching and the leaping, as indicators of a restless itinerancy, that and the mercurial combination of leaping free association and cunning-inching recantation, of leaping bibliomancy and inching astrology, of inching and self-dislocating logics and the leaps in contemplative pipe smoking, of staying one step ahead of the chasing pack and tarrying amongst the autonomous skirts lifting, of lazy, licentious songs and gestural pulpit blockading, by this willed and raucous Brownian motion of self-individualising secessionism, so it is, by these means that the millenarian participants within the Ranter-Quaker milieu arrived somehow at the greeting *Fellow Creature* by which means they both drew out from pious ranks the ones they did not know but *recognising* each other as belonging to the same extremophile tendency threading through all farthest things, whilst at the same time invoking a benign commonality of the truly living, that category of the otherwise, and of the reconstituted home or community, the lair of such strange strangers - by this greeting, *fellow creature* they reset the problem of, and summarised the tendency by which, the proximity of all to all is encountered from its most distant and banished exteri-

ors.

There is, in the limit set by heavy handed authority, as placeholder for all *natural* constraint, a distinct quality of absurd freedom that is absent where such authority is also absent - in the free world, death itself is abolished, there is only a proliferation of the living; different and successive individuals but always the same life. I am thinking here of how the outside is generated from out of the intimacy between repression and profundity: of Ava Gardener's Pandora at the point of death, 'it is as if we are under a spell and outside of time'; and again, of Hugo's *Last Days of the Condemned Man*; or, where Paul Bowles, in *The Sheltering Sky* considers the actually finite number any of us will consciously engage with the sunrise and freely draw the conclusion of his own mortality.

There is in this external constraint placed upon the subject's sense of time and place, the objective sparking of the possibility of, and so aesthetic appreciation for, another time, another place, in which the minutiae, the seconds and inches become unusually, and profoundly, significant - *Creeps in this petty pace from day to day*. Consciousness is nothing but the consciousness of this other circumstance, it's elongated duration set in the narrowest confines, set negatively against the pressure of *what is*. What it is, what it is, to return with a start to the remembrance: *not much more now*.

Let us say then, we are like the Ballardian character, himself echoing Webster's *I know death hath ten thousand several doors For men to take their exits; and 'tis found They go on such strange geometrical hinges*, who has three months to live and finds that this plunge pool of finitude becomes like a limitless sequence of heightened states where experience both intensifies and escapes inexorability - my god, it's full of stars. But then, even exultation in the end, as it also draws out, becomes heavy with waiting, and repetition.

Just today, I was considering the elder blossom, the last of the fruiting trees here to bloom in Spring, the passing of which signals the beginning of summer, and I contemplated how it is that I always welcome the first of its appearances, the opening night as it were, but becoming accustomed to the extended run, which after all is not

conditions, the émigré milieu transforms itself into an outpost of rassolnik and the old country which, as if in response to its fetishisation, and with tragic irony, will in turn rapidly and inevitably escape the loyalty of its old guard, becoming both unrecognisable and always deplorable to those invoking it: Ben Gunn's obsessive, pre-proustian, preoccupation with cheese must contradict both the worthlessness of the old world's buried treasure and the natural abundance of his immediate surroundings.

But we should not imagine, nor take comfort in the idea, that there will be no return. The chickens do come home to roost; the repressed does return. The world will right itself by casual violence, as if god were withdrawing his hand from settled waters. And it is because we know intuitively that order must be disrupted and scattered so as to return things to a more basic order, that we may only conceive *consequence* as a motivational force, as an avenging angel in the moment just before it topples the edifice of imbalance.

And so it is that just such a bootstrapping ideologue, another of the Shane-Orpheus type, will arrive determinedly from another country, so as to stir up the sedimentary dead, who do not see him, who do not recognise him, who dimly perceive him at the end of a tunnel, and who follow his calling in steps *constricted by the trailing graveclothes, uncertain, gentle, and without impatience*.

This too-familiar stranger, appearing before the non-presence of the dead, returning to the given as *deus ex machina*, who enfolds the world, catching it in crisis, on the point of it collapsing, laying its components on his spread out bed-roll - this personification of the basis for every intervention, both all-knowing and absolutely uncomprehending.

The sainted trickster, ascetic and aesthete, with flaming pyre torch, as if on the point of saving the boudoir from drowning, only then stepping back, looking on dispassionately, *is that all there is to a fire?* as another world folds in on itself, an angel of history deselecting memory, alienating the life-community from its own members

- and the life-community, like Eurydice, wakening, becoming

essential supplies, *carried on* the war against America *autonomously*, sustaining themselves from their surroundings for decades after the official 1945 surrender. The *by any means* praxis of holding-out did not so much involve military actions, apart from occasional raids against stockpiles, as it did the maintenance of formal hostilities, and a soldierly discipline directed towards dwindling munitions, rotting boots, worn to rags uniforms.

The incongruity of these figures emerging *back* into the post-war world, a world which they had never inhabited, during the 60's, 70's and 80's was transformed into a standardised product of the progressivist *see how far we've come* standpoint of the post-war social pact. The hold-outs became a living representation of a now lost point of departure, an orientation marker fixed on the horizon as scanned from the standpoint of the rebuilt world that had, by parallax effect, left all that behind. In previous eras, late-returning soldiers had arrived as changed values in a world that was objectively unchanged - but within spectacular time, the value relation between leaver and left behind, returner and returned to, is always reversed.

For the post-war world, that state of affairs in which war, its inputs and its outputs, had become inconceivable, the imposter is the truer more authentic Martin Guerre, and the true Odysseus, scattering suitors left and right, becomes impersonator, the personification of a bad belonging to the world. And so it was that the Japanese hold-out became emblematic of what it was to live *before* the economic miracle, an iteration of a recurrent theme of spectacular power which also applied it to, amongst others, the masses of industrial workers fighting to defend their work in the context of automation and the expulsion of living labour from the productive apparatus.

The nostalgia of the hold-outs for home, which is maintained as an unswerving allegiance to formative memories, is the defining trait of all émigré communities, which preserve themselves as distinct from immigrant communities, and which are impelled to transpose onto the reified cultural forms of *home* the organic instincts of self-preservation and self-identity - Bunin's Russian-Parisian cafes: Caviar rouge, salad russe... Deux chachlyks.... By refusing to adapt to local

beyond a few weeks, I do not even notice, and much less grieve for, the day the final bloom fades for another year. Towards the end of May and the beginning of June, each day *could* be the one, but I have never registered it, and yet, you might say, spoiling the effect, I register it now by marking my failure to mark, or as Tom Waits almost put it, I place a flower on my idea of the flower's grave.

And it is at this crossroads that we two, each having set out along their own bowing, bending limb of the branching bush of self-actualisation, who having set out from the iron rice bowl of behavioural conventionality, are now also compelled to uncover within our projects the perpetual recurrence of morgellons-like threads foretelling our fated, Ariadne-patterned, return. We cannot prevent our own checking-in, our resurfacing on-grid, our bobbing plastically amid the trash vortex. We have become the refreshed link to all that we cannot leave behind. Or, we are always ur-crashing in the same ur-car

The Seventeenth Century's sudden invention of individuality, which arrives in the world as an irresistible desire to leave the world, and which by accident creates another immediate world overlaying what is rejected, also resets the nature of the tension between the order of the *creatura* and the order of the *pleroma*. By self-estrangement from social relations based in the local traditions of personal domination, the millenarians uncovered, within their own delinquency, *the Ideal* and its subset, the congregation of agreeable outsiders, by which particular belonging is characterised in setting out from general belonging, but in the name of returning back to a state of ideal belonging that shall be located, as the blues song has it, *further on up the road*. That which is evoked by *fellow creature* is precisely the point of disappearance both intimately near at hand and utopianly far distant where judgment, vengeance and redemption converge.

If the Ranter-Quaker's *fellow creature* asserted the possibility of a community of self-separating things as a return to a higher order from the furthest reaches of social derangement and decomposition, then we are set the problem of the hell-mode of the very heaven imagined by the Ranters - the veritable totalising steady state, or rather the cybernetics, of eternal return, where all exits trigger the regenerative

ratchet of the same via the absolute Ideal's molochian consumption of its own cultivation of difference. *I'm joking, I'm joking.*

Fellow creature, allow me to say, fellow stranger, in our own efforts to break free, we too uncover that we are at the end still beholden to this velvet fist in an iron glove, so I hail you as creature as stranger, fellow as fellow, somewhat nostalgically in the spirit that the Ranters recognised the nature of living forms belonging to the order of the *creatura*, knowing that such strangeness is all but impossible now, knowing that we are incorporated more than we are self-separating, more the same than different, more conditioned than autonomous.

As those strangers who once greeted each other in the name of belonging to an impossible community derived from a freshly constituted cosmic *creatura*, so now I remember to greet you, how many of our communications lack an appropriate mechanism of hailing, in the name of an impossible estrangement from the fully automated community that is realised as *pleroma* and nothing but.

We might, in this encounter, at least try to imagine what it was like to pass naked divine through a low tavern, to swear when swearing before puritanical authorities afforded as true a sense of physical exultation as the blackbird's song in April; we can imagine when it was that individual autonomy instantiated cosmic significance and what it was to be a stranger, now that, since the end of the Cold War, strangers have been discontinued. We can imagine from the standpoint of these depleted times, what existential abundance might have felt like. And in so imagining, we can also consider what it would mean to leave home and what it would mean to consider returning home in circumstances other than these in which we now find ourselves. More than a decade ago, I wrote the following:

I recognise the movement of human consciousness firstly in the social tendency to band together, and secondly, in the counter-tendency to divergence and secession (hence, the Ibn 'Arabi effect). We might say that Intelligence is thus always defined in terms of the minority position's separation from what is established whereas interest is expressed in terms of a falling-back-upon the arrived at,

ing in its place, a prodigal form of *rolling*. For what is utopia but a sort of shared hanging back from the main body, a hungry dog at the door, a tarrying at the corners, a hesitancy or failure to commit to the historic form of revolt? For what is utopia but the resonant step of the limping masses by which the bridge of reality might be selectively collapsed whilst at the same time causing no damage to the living organism *as a whole*?

For this reason, we ought to become as the child weighing down upon the shoulders of the true Christopher, and we ought push his head beneath the swelling baptismal surface: *For of the great traveller I had been, on my hands and knees in the later stages, then crawling on my belly or rolling on the ground.* So it is that the authentic response to disaster is not *prepping* but mendicancy - we should not volunteer but, in falling backwards, in letting ourselves go, permit others the opportunity to volunteer to catch us and raise us up, even as we claw at their empathic eyes: A Single Eye, All Light, No Darkness; or Light and Darkness One.

Nor should we praise the heroic efforts of *essential* workers but, as we embark along the *via negativa*, let us venerate instead the useless and despised recipients of their good works, without whom such acts of selflessness and sacrifice would be inconceivable. Beggar strike your philanthropist! And, in accord with apophatic rite, let us ceremonially applaud the ingrate patient who throws the contents of the bedpan back at the sainted nurse; by such means the pillars of sacred institutions are collapsed and the factory behind them revealed: *my progress reduced me to stopping more and more often, it was the only way to progress, to stop.*

But, there is yet another register in which the lost figure may preserve its relation to home and by which it resolves the problem of return, or at least contemplates it, without ever having to physically go back to the place from which it departed. Popular culture in the 1970s utilised the stock figure of the Japanese *hold out* to represent absurd intransigence. The hold-outs were isolated soldiers of the Imperial Army who, having been stationed on remote Pacific islands but subsequently cut off both from news of the outside world and its

causes it to not return immediately to its springform self. Those who are not Spartans, those who might otherwise have been exposed as infants outside the city walls, those who are not inherently useful, those who by some congenital flaw or learnt failure to conform and who cannot be instrumentalised in Silicon Valley, those who do not provide content, and who by their continued presence in the group, call into question the second nature of its parameters, its outline, and without intending to, create around themselves an attractor basin for the group's own uncertainties; if not the set pattern, then what pattern? The figure who fatally hinders the realisation of the group's project is not merely a counter to the hubris of the warrior class but a self-separating embodiment of that order of esoteric knowledge which threatens the viability of the group, as it were, *from outside and above*.

The alternative register of activity by which the otherworldly, or transcendent, character of the One Shoe, is established becomes a device or frame through which the transformation of established patterns becomes comprehensible - such is the attractor to which the group may return to itself through another medium. The limping figure who cannot keep up, first sets the pace, then calls a halt, then conceives a new mode of self-locomotion; *For how could I drag myself over that vast moor, where my crutches would fumble in vain. Rolling perhaps. And then? Would they let me roll on to my mother's door?* At a certain point in the progress of the group it becomes imperative for those members least able to go on, to sabotage the continuation of its processes, which have become burdensome, a living death, to them. Every instantiation of the One Shoe archetype is precisely that of a non-exchangeable particularity - one who may be portrayed, even recognised, but never represented.

The group may begin to conceive the burden of the One Shoe upon its functioning and purpose as its only objective and distinguishing value - the manner of the group's organising around those members who cannot belong to it is the sole means by which it may realise itself as something with an authentic outline. The group, in relation to its incompatible members, achieves a clinamen-type form by extracting itself from the delirium of survival sickness and adopt-

seemingly natural, apparently residual, solidarity of the larger group. From this hypothesis, it is a small step to perceive organisations as machines for manufacturing the agents of what I have called the Ibn 'Arabi effect, that is, organising systems produce the intolerable particulars that are necessary to generate the membership's specific complaints against, and divergence from, the structures which constrain it.

http://theanvilreview.org/print/the_ibn_arabi_effect/

Some time in the 6th Century, the poet Wang Han wrote the line, *how many soldiers ever come home?* All at once, he is confronted as if by the shelter afforded beneath an arching bridge, or as if by the meaning of what it is to live in the thought of the impossibility of return, or as if by the thought that systemically forgetting everything was exactly the same as remembering it, or as if Ballard were writing on the sum of an individual's experiences and characterising it as an act of reverse cataloguing, where the deliberate scrambling of codes becomes its characteristic trait - just as we may only know of the Beaker People from their habit of smashing pots.

Every soldier who has ever separated himself from the close surroundings of familiar attachments, and goes to war, must pay for the experience by dying one of the deaths reserved for those living on the soldier-path - lucky is he over whom the path closes. Wang Han asks us, *why laugh when they fall asleep on the sand?* The soldier who sets outward to engage the world's forces, to express the world's forces, is soon *beset* from all sides and inevitably absorbed into the ranks of the fallen. By one means or another, they are all lost, they all fall away, joining the ranks of *the fallen*, even if many of them must also first die the inglorious death that is survival.

The dislocation that has its source in the accident of surviving, which is the perfected form of becoming separated from home, is the affliction that restrains the survivor from ever truly returning to the condition of the living. Surviving one's own separation from the world is always a traumatising humiliation, a barrier thrown up between the one who has endured *consequence*, and the truly living,

whom he grasps at, from outside, as if from the principle, *the older the environment, the slower its metabolism*, as if the old place were both unchanged and unchangeable, but also as if it were caught in the molten surface tension of a *camera obscura*, or as if time itself had stood still, swallowing itself in ceaseless self-adjustment, just there in Shere in Surrey.

The wandering figure severed from his formative influences is transformed into a stranger whenever he is later confronted with the immediacy of the particular world to which he may never truly belong again. There is then, set within the project of return, the problematic of another return, wherein the return to before, the earlier state, races its chariot against its other homecoming, the return to the present and the recommencement of that *another and another and another* life which is bound perpetually to the same place.

If the soldier-poet had not set out, but set out along another path, the setting out that is commenced in staying put, then another, but equally necessary, return path would inevitably open before him. The return of the sedentary wanderer is embarked upon as a damascene flash, as another rupture with the world, as another starting awake, and as that return to somewhere else which may only be effected in the home town, but which is also ritualised, half-falsified, by the local traditions and festivals which, by half-punctuating the world's cyclical return to steady state, half succeeding in half opening the whole by means of faithfully observing this peculiarity and this perversity.

The unprecedented divergent, the swerving event, is conditioned by the home town's unswerving preparedness for the constancy in both transience and eternity... and contrariwise, where a city's conditions are themselves in flux, its particulars, products and dependencies, are always and ever the same. As an event itself, the city is driven to repress events. Castenada translates Jimenez: *The people who have loved me will pass away, and the town will burst anew every year.*

In both senses, return involves the struggle to maintain what Bataille calls the self's *discontinuous being*, that distinct outline containing the integrated history of the wanderer as a locatable and particular self that is maintained, by great effort of will, across time,

of tension with the project I had described as *Forward Unit*. This was partially inspired by the boy who did not follow Hamelin's Pied Piper into the mountain, and partially by Brecht's figure of the 'Young Comrade', characterised as the voluntarist-adventurer who damages the interests of the Party through his lack of discipline, by his very enthusiasm for its historic project. The One Shoe, in relation to the group's generality, either does not act but is acted upon, or acts inappropriately - I surmised that it is through this unrelating relatedness that the character of the group itself is revealed. At the level of what limps and lags, or pulls and distorts in the wrong direction and at the wrong moment, the question of departure and return is reversed: the community *will* leave its stragglers behind and may only return in existential crisis.

Throughout Western mythology the single shoed or lame figure recurs: Jason, the Plataean army, Oedipus, Molloy/Moran. Bruce Lee. The non-symmetry of the One Shoe figure symbolises the presence, and potential subjectivity, of another value set within an established pattern of conventionality, which becomes, through personification within a project-based set of fixed intersubjective relations, an attractor for unexpected transvaluations of otherwise latent or repudiated behaviours, values and relations.

You could say, and I shoehorn this here, such figures pose the existential question: *But do I roll in the manner of a true ball?* Unfettered and frictionless movement is the dream of all abstractly constituted formations but abstraction itself operates on the principle that naught is more real than nothing, it is only by returning to the base swerving and colliding of its internal constraints and hindrances that it may realise itself as a something: *if they were not in the habit of swerving, they would all fall straight down through the depths of the void, like drops of rain, and no collision would occur, nor would any blow be produced among the atoms. In that case, nature would never have produced anything.*

By one means or another, by its failure to adapt, the One Shoe avatar compromises the set project - he too, embodies the hindering of, or swerving within, the social mechanism of reproduction which

appeased by deference, because even if he is the returning son, he is also the uncanny, whose eye will fall upon the quaintness of the community, *distantly, critically*. The community has no option but to embrace the thorn of him, as his very presence will trigger within the community system the adaptative process by which it will thereby learn the protocols for *herd immunity* that it may deploy against the greater outworld.

If the Prodigal Son returns but is also forbidden to return, except in the garb of the community's representation of the figure of the stranger, as a ghost who must occupy the otherwise empty place at the table reserved for lost others, whom he must represent, on whose behalf he must intercede, then that in itself is not an argument against his own motive for returning. The impossibility of going home does not prevent the attempt, even if the homecomer knows home will not be there.

Even so, the second son also has his motivation, and is compelled by his own placement within the group to draw love, by any means necessary, from his father. He is compelled to secure patriarchal recognition by taking any path open to him - even the assigned paths of scapegoat, traitor, lazybones, loser. Informally formalised kinship systems, in their distribution of power and inheritance, set the second son off on another path which, in denial, it codifies as *negative attention seeking*.

Even so, despite the instrumentalised role he is cast to play, the second son forgives the father's world for the degradation he has had to endure, for the sake of the moment he appears on the horizon as if before the eyes of his father, who in turn stands on guard against him. What is the accursed son, but moving boundary marker to the territory of the father, the limit of father's reach? The second son holds out for familial love, and is driven back by the image created as ego-ideal, as it comprises himself, Shane-like, welcomed home.

From the time of our previous acquaintance, you may remember my attempt at a theory of the archetypical form expressed by the mythical condition of *monosandalism*, and which I approached through an avatar I designated *One Shoe* which existed in a state

and sustained against the *temptations* and erosions of disintegrating external forces. As Freud discovered, the organised self, as complex product of eros, seeks the path by which it may succeed in achieving sufficient control over itself and thereby discharge all its energies ecstatically into the abyss.

The *compulsion to repeat*, and the subset *fort-da game*, is an organising impulse of the self's systems directed towards an obsessive *going back over* or replaying past causal sequences so as to capture that portion of available energy necessary for overriding its own homeostatic tendency to routinised habits. At the level of behaviour, compulsion breaks repertoire. By flooding its own system with energy mined from past events, the self both disorganises and is absorbed back into the continuity of outlinelessness. The self's desire to rupture from the self, as achieved through pleasurable release and ecstatic states of compulsion, trance and rapture involves taking the path of return as other, the path of not-becoming, where the achieved state of non-self-identity is negated in the greater movement of identity with environmentally induced evanescent effects, and timelapsed processes.

In their presentation of Odysseus's encounter with the Sirens, Adorno and Horkheimer perceive this confrontation between incompatible orders of return: to the continuity of the living past on one side where all that was consigned to the Underworld is redeemed as an immediate form of *knowledge* or wakening which is also a serpentine bending back upon, and cycling within, what it is as itself; and on the other side the return to the project or praxis of the self, a coming-to as integral to the immediacy of the moment's labour, the oared momentum taking Odysseus back towards an Ithaca that is located on the horizon of willed effort.

Of note here, is Adorno and Horkheimer's assertion that the compulsive content of the Sirens' song is their perfect knowledge of the past. The song is so powerfully seductive because it proposes an immediate and redemptive return to an earlier state in which the wandering soldier-poet may become absorbed into the past's continuous state, and so live within it stripped of the *strain* of having to

maintain the self-interrupting, porlockian *I* of discontinuous being. If the return to praxis supposes the self's expropriation and metabolisation of the world, then the return to the state of what-has-passed, at its fullest amplitude, involves abandonment of self to a porous state at the point of incorporation by what Freud calls, the self's 'oceanic' prehistory.

As implied by Adorno and Horkheimer's 'prisoner at a concert' remark, the social mechanism of species being binds the self's tendency towards a state of diversion (and, and, and) orthopaedically to the mast of practical engagement and so, by diverting diversion, heads off the general tendency's particular tendency towards destructive runaway. In this sense, resurrection is not so much a sadistic return to life from death but a masochistic attempt by organising forces to take control of those matters that are irrevocably lost and dispersed. The human community is not constituted as a balance achieved between the incompatible registers of return, to an earlier state, or to the complex present, but rather through the consciously lived relation between the two - the motor of species being is contradiction, at its most basic level, the relatedness of tension to release, organisation to disintegration, discontinuity to continuity.

In mental life nothing which has once been formed can perish — that everything is somehow preserved and that in suitable circumstances...it can once more be brought to light.

And here we are fellow stranger, 10 years or so on from our last exchange, talking of what it would involve to attempt a return home from wherever it is that we have ended up. You raise the question of coming back in from the cold, in part as a corollary to our collective introspection following the death of one also described as a *deplorable asshole*, and in part as a means to consider this tectonic fault in time which has opened and grown since you left behind that anything-goes Bay Area anarchist nucleus. It seems, the idea of return first forms as an object for the consciousness of the wanderer, taking shape as a flooding back in recognition of the past, as the home-world's return as affect-laden memory. The wanderer turns for home

because he *forgives* him but rather to formally engage the destructive forces of the outworld of which the son is now a representation. As with every culture that ritually squanders wealth in the form of an *accursed share*, the father has assigned the necessary role of betrayer to the younger son in order that the mechanism of controlled expenditure is triggered, thereby protecting the community's life-world from a dangerous build-up of energetic tensions around the ownership of its accumulated resources.

Just as the theme of the Judas-figure is necessary to the group at the level of in-group relationships as these metabolise external forces that would otherwise destroy them, so the community mechanism as a whole benefits from a sacrificial (and blessed) and therefore carefully de-limited function which is written into the actions taken by the one who converts the group's wealth into abject loss.

Clearly, the controlled fire setting carried out through the younger son's prodigality, which operates as a sort of anticipatory and preventative procedure to secure the group's reproductive integrity as a group, becomes ritualised through its recurrence into a cyclical operation. At a certain point in the cycle of the group's accumulation of material wealth generated through the activities of its members fixed within the self-reproducing constraints of their social relations, the younger son who, on the pretext of heir plus spare, is transformed into a personalisation of the accursed share, will be instructed to take on the blessed/cursed role by which he must perform *prodigality*, and once more embark upon a journey into exuberant expenditure.

In what sense does the young son ever truly return now that he is transformed into an emissary between the community and the outworld? Remember the other emissary, Strelnikov, and his increasingly convoluted dash to reach Lara, what is he at the moment of his death: a stranger, and agent of destructive external forces, or son, eternal student, and partisan of returned to, self-healing domesticity?

The younger son will always return, as plagues, famines, inundations return, from afar and unpredicted, appearing upon the horizon that father constantly scans. As he is welcomed back, the son's instability must be distracted with offerings, his capricious character

conflict which is only resolved by the solidarity generated through its perpetual vendettas against external rivals and neighbours.

As you may be aware, the group I belong to has attempted to regulate the, often unhappy, departure of its members by exercising a semi-ritualised procedure of recognition, or *blessing*. He who becomes separated is blessed by those who remain, whilst those who remain recognise themselves as *cursed* for still belonging, for not also being excluded. The meaning of the blessing protocol, which I think is operationally viable, is severalfold:

...in part, it attenuates the violence of separation through the affording of a gratuitous act of generosity; in part, it assigns higher status upon the one leaving in relation to those who remain so as to supply an abstract protective cloak to whoever is no longer concretely a member of the community;

...in part, it mitigates the violent feelings of the community for those who have betrayed it and thereby introduces *closure* where a long-running hostility and vendetta might otherwise emerge;

...in part, it acts *in reverse* and functions as a sort of curse, the blessed are those disavowed by, and no longer a member of, the group - blessings are also a form of violence.

There are of course further registers of meaning bound up in the ritual blessing of the traitors, ne'er-do-wells, deviants, dissenters and incompatibles who form the army of expelled from the community, whilst the equivalent self-cursing of those remaining within the brotherhood operates as a hybrid between self-recognition of the sufficiency of the communal bond which requires no surplus *blessing*, with a formal acknowledgment of the community's fatal limitation, with its metabolic need for external negative pressure, and with its molochian drive to feed upon internal enemies, to secure its proper functioning.

From the perspective of the community, the prodigality of the younger son, who departs only to squander the accumulated wealth of the group embodies the true character of what it means to be *blessed*. The father does not welcome the destitute son back home

at the command of his memories. Home returns to the wanderer before the wanderer turns for home.

How strange and broken we must seem in our resolution - our life of imperious caprice, our too-fond embrace of Fortuna, our chronic history of allowing ourselves to be swept away, and then swept away again. We catch a reflection of our true worth sometimes, the laughter of the mirrored skull superimposed onto that surface of who we think we are, and we are brought low, not by our wounds, but by the bathetic varicosities knotting and branching within the armouring necessary for our *keeping going*. We are not prevented from coming and going as we please but are confronted with every last absurdity that is implied by the resolute continuation of our projects, the absurdities that also serve as the locus for our sentimental contemplation of our decisive turning back for the home, that imperfect place of origin, considered as if from an about to be struck campsite beside the way.

And without reducing his speed he began to dream of a flat land where he would never have to rise again and hold himself erect in equilibrium, first on the right foot for example, then on the left, and where he might come and go and so survive after the fashion of a great cylinder endowed with the faculties of cognition and volition.

The extended discussions in which we participated back then also mediated a, very of the-time, convergence between American stirnerite insurrectionism with that peculiar extension of the European ultraleft's logic of self-quarantining. More specifically, our unlikely bedfellowship was generated from a shared repudiation of narodnikism - we didn't want to perform an appeal to the masses, we viewed the prospect of any recourse to calling upon *The Call* as a leftover of leftism - we abhorred right opinion, that peculiarly american interpersonalisation of refusal, and its cumulative, ratcheting effect. It was our fate to arrive at the refusal of that *radicalism* wherein social transformation is conceived as the cadre's catalysing of mass movements through the circulation of its own emancipatory

good thoughts. How strange and broken we must seem as we are thrown against what is against what is.

If it is true that in our own way we also set off to war, and that we were no better than the rest, then it is also true that we instinctively refused both to recruit, and to be recruited. As if either alternative could make any difference to those enacting their own extinction event. As Orwell observed, *The men who fought at Verdun, at Waterloo, at Flodden, at Senlac, at Thermopylae - every one of them had lice crawling over his testicles*. Just as we walked out of our mother's world, *one midsummer morning*, drinking wine from jade cups, strumming guitars on horseback, so we will end somewhere out there on the road, lost, unknown, inscrutable to others, incomprehensible to ourselves - quixotic to all.

And then, and only then, in throes of folly, thoughts turn to the likelihood of our navigating this torture garden's forking paths, as it were, in reverse: *and these I reached by rolling over and over, like a great cylinder*. Do we now, in spite of how far we have gone out, have the energy to turn again towards the point of our departure and thereby confront the sequential process by which all divisive events converge back upon their shared causation, the place where men find themselves emerging backwards, as it were, from the entrance of that infinite labyrinth reserved for prodigals, adventurers and for all those who have ever set out? Or don't we? I am joking of course, but also joking *before*, or in a paroxysm of *nachträglichkeit*, in relation to, the Law.

The question of return is set at two points in the separation of the individual from the group: firstly, immediately, in the throes of leaving, the conditions for return are set by those remaining as a means both to ameliorate the loss, and as an anticipatory stratagem for defending themselves against the traitor returning in arms - which man leaves, they ask themselves, not consumed with bitter thoughts of returning one day to conquer that which had caused him? Secondly, the question appears to the one who leaves, but then only many years later when home appears in its true guise, as a location that is not so much distant in space but as somewhere that is locked

irrevocably in another time - he who was exceeded in the midst of proximities, now exceeds by long shadow, from a distance.

From both positions, from the remaining and from the leaving, the matter of return becomes a source of torment, a question of recrimination as those involved are presented with the ratcheting effect of a broken relation. Ah yes, worse still than violent separation, the mended bridges. To introduce the difficulty of the problem of return, I present you, as one who knows the fraud and its truth better than I, with the passage I always return to on such occasions:

"I will never reach Ixtlan. Yet in my feelings . . . in my feelings sometimes I think I'm just one step from reaching it. Yet I never will. In my journey I don't even find the familiar landmarks I used to know. Nothing is any longer the same. [...] In my journey I find only phantom travelers..."

Systems, or organisations if you will, converge around their organisation of the energy that is within their reach which they hold on to only to secure its more efficient discharge into the world, thereby effecting their own disorganisation as the basis for the reproduction of their descendants as the inheritors of the same territory. Or as Bataille would have it, death is the condition of life. Living systems are not driven by the urge to reproduce but by the desire to discharge the energy that agitates them, and the energy transfers supposed in all such subjective sloughings off are dependent on objectively voided, environmentally conditioned, available space; for a population to expand, it must first engage the unequal distribution of competitor systems occupying the available ground, it must wait for the weakness, the death, the flight, the collapse of the systems established by those already present.

But then, before a system reaches the level from which it may discharge its bound energies along the designated path for the replication of the same as a sequence of future successions and expansions, it also produces, as a more or less necessary condition for its continuation in the present, a tendency towards internal factionalisation around the control and hierarchy of its system's components, a