

**Title of Manuscript:** Pearlman

**Word Count:** 10,522

**Genre:** Mythological Fantasy and Time Travel

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## Pearlman

*The blow struck; a quota of people saw in coming. Débris is everywhere, crumpled, buckled, rusted, torn – panic-stricken hordes scurry through it and around it in desperate attempts to ensure their survival; there seem to be no other cool heads around. Desperate crowds may turn on each other in panic, become warring factions. Maybe I'm the only detached, clear-headed person in a maelstrom of panic. In spite of all the evidence, I retain a shred of optimism about conditions of reflective peace returning, and project the focus of my stability into the middle future, however hypothetical that might be.*

*I am determined to reconstruct the truth, the totality, to synthesise internal experience and the perspective of external observation, gut reaction and analytical cool, always keeping my supplementary eyes in focus. I have to synthesise multiple perspective. If I achieve this balance, I shall have proved myself to be an agent of reconstruction, as well as an authentic time traveller, concretised my own fiction. This will be a difficult task, as now time, and life, turned multilinear. I proved immune to vaccination by oblivion, which left me in much positive pain. If I have to give my life in this attempt, I am confident that some cool customer will retrieve my diary and my laptop from the rubble.*

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Being involved in a road accident is always traumatic. The collision and rupture of dynamic artifice – flames terrifying in heat and light, stench of burning leather, rubber and all – flashes a microcosm of a global holocaust, a brief 'clip' of what is to come. I witnessed others, and had several narrow escapes. But finally, at the peak of a self-confident 'high' I crashed into

someone – with a flashier car than mine; that person was badly injured; it was certainly my fault – I had been speeding, cutting corners in order to get somewhere quickly, which of course I didn't reach – probably wouldn't have passed the breathalyser anyway – a personal emergency caused by an SOS message on my mobile in the middle of a massive raving party. As per the Highway Code, that bloke should have sounded his horn when he was coming out of the side road, and my mirror, admittedly, was a bit wonky. To my surprise, I was acquitted after an intensive grilling, on grounds of being under abnormal stress; but the agony of that experience made me want to flee to the ends of the earth, to past history – get to the essence of the greater pain to put the lesser one in perspective. Some people are impulsive and spontaneous, whilst others are intrinsically lethargic – only aroused and motivated by disasters; humanity is being taught a massive lesson. So the pincers were closing on me: I was faced with the alternatives of settling down in a rut or taking a decisive step to escape enervating entrapment.

I was transported, and learned my lessons, by parallel shocks – emotional ones to counterpoint the physical ones in a sort of cross-weave pattern; there is an ultimate affinity between accidents and volatile people, though the most careful and methodical are not immune from them. Caught in their stinging mesh, I was flung across the world, to find my bearings. I had to cross the world in order to do so. My one consolation was that I had a choice of direction. I had to go to the most unstable region in the world in order to recover my equilibrium.

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Chile, or Chilli in the language of its indigenous peoples, means 'where the world ends'. This seems to be the only country in the world named after Armageddon – the Great Underworld blasted and forced up to the surface! Apparently earthquakes abound in Mongolia, but perhaps the earth's crust is stronger there; I must check it out thoroughly. One thinks of gold

smelted in the massive fires, then those piles of ingots generating bankruptcy for those desperate Spaniards, feeding those insatiable wars, in the Netherlands and elsewhere, ever after. The poorer terrain can have the greater resilience. The discovery of gold could be the prime explosive, capable of detonating the whole world – gold, later deputised by masses of choking paper and brittle plastic. I was haunted by the idea of engineering an explosion, which I would either have to suppress, circumvent or engineer – sometimes such things have to be done to curtail conflagrations like forest fires or exploding oil wells – supplements to rain. I always feel the world is being inflated to near bursting point, crude mercenary economics making a chronic thinning of the crust. I comfort myself by saying that there will be a global holocaust after my decease. I came to realise that Chile may echo the heights of its mountains in many respects, epitomise the world by being the most volatile, unstable zone on earth, with all its earthquakes and volcanoes, as well as its being the centre of the unremitting 300 year war with the Mapuche, the native Chileans, probably the world's most sustained human conflict – a veritable encapsulation of the world's anxieties, reverberating now in Iraq, Afghanistan and many parts of Africa. Chile, for all its long, straggling shape, is a sort of global centre. The world is the epicentre of its greatest earthquake zone. Our vision is best dichotomised by the world's highest peaks. Nice to think of ice capping the lava to make gigantic geysers, modulating a global refrigerator and gas oven, heating, comforting and preserving.

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The clock on my wall has stopped – it probably needs a new battery; that makes me think – is a token halt in time portentous? The clock could have run both from the mains and with a battery. What if all the world's clocks and watches were paralysed by some global, seismic force – spanning the oceans and the poles, and then could be reactivated to scroll backwards and forwards according to any individual's caprice? Can one reflect and force oneself back

into the past by sheer willpower? I think so, as its relics remain tangible, if fragmentary. Could there be worldwide computer jams, paralysis of new technology, where all the archaic construction methods have to be re-learned and reapplied, all those mountains of discarded apparatus levelled? Sometimes sophisticated systems overdevelop into fragility, generate their own self-destruction, while the more elementary ones have greater resilience and adaptability. Dotted around the world there are precious pockets of stubborn preservers of archaic lore. They put on the vital brakes to protect the ecosphere. The equilibrium of the world depends on a quota of its population freezing time, or moving backwards in it. Otherwise all the bubbles will burst – after all, the world is shaped rather like a bubble. In its earliest stages, it could burst just as easily.

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Being desperate to personalise history and put myself, and my halo, in the midst of its vortex (and be an icon of time, sustaining my self-willed power of dream-flight), I spent many hours in the Central Registry, poring over the family trees, only to find all their roots tangled and distorted by stones – for a century of two backwards, until I got perplexed by all the dubious intersections and missing pieces – masses of cases of disputed parentage and, inevitably, a high degree of illegitimacy. Ultimately, everyone is a bit mixed-up and cross-bred, ‘pure blood’ is probably just an ideal, fabricated to consolidate power; humanity is a rainbow – its spectrum embracing blurred boundaries. Nor are we finally divorced from the animal kingdom.

So much for the human roots: as for the botanical ones, I felt that some of those mighty trees must have had nails knocked into them for extra strength by the first explorers, for now they are duly gnarled by the centuries, but super-durable. Hunched and grotesque, they look as if they have been stunted and crippled by drought, yet they have survived, resilient and ugly, probably safe from all the blights too – they must have scared all the germs off after

absorbing them and surviving them. Countless crowds, plodding forwards and backwards in time in slow-motion lemming desperation, tramping parallel to each other, perpetuating an illusion of stasis. They are convinced of their happiness in their eternal circles.

Yes; I extrapolated and distilled a personality interface from the masses of historical data I had read. I even found a lookalike portrait – willed my doppelganger fabrication into quasi-organic life – a character who burst out of his book-shell and superseded his author. Spiriting myself into the form of a volunteer Conquistador, fancying myself as an adventurer (and perhaps something of a strutting *Hidalgo*), I had blindly volunteered for that expedition against the Indigenous people, thinking it would gain me fortune and honour and, in the process, further enhance the greatness of my country (I adopted Spain, though remaining British in spirit. Those illusory objectives were intrinsically brittle, predestined for dissolution like salt crystals – but replaced by something of infinitely greater import, seeing, and seething, into the inner earth itself – respecting it, not sucking out its oil like a guzzling parasite.

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The so-called ‘spirit of adventure’ – a term now quite quaint and retro, often stems from a base of comfort and security where one can have nice escapist reads, to alleviate boredom and impatience with that straitjacketed, predictable base. It seems the contrary of forced exile and migration, often the result of the destruction of the self-same base. But sometimes the base undergoes slow decay rather than rapid disintegration. However, the two have their affinities. The fortunes of all individuals and families in a growing and changing society have their upward and downward turns, each movement needing the other for a sense of definition; they are two cog wheels, each dependent on the other’s contrary motion. I felt that maybe I was on the cusp of prosperity, and had to do something drastic before the cycle of decline got into motion – forestall my nagging nightmare of the drastic bursting of the credit bubble.

News of the seismic shudders with the banks and the stock market gave me sustained shudders. Sometimes comfort and security can wither away, or be destroyed in the course of the adventurous absence, by the action of the elements or the forces of economics – unless you have gained extra insight through living in a war-torn country. I have no desire to titillate empty heads with tales of exotic exploits; I must also convey what hurts. There's an infinity of better legends from all over the world – now really easy to garner; the search engines are so helpful. I want to be in the thick of what really happened.

Through good fortune not of my own making, I had been geared to comfort and solid bases, but was drawn towards that place where human conflict echoed the action of the elements – guilty from my sense of having been overprotected, observing those shanty towns and the horrors of famine and war, but feeling safe, detached from them. But perhaps I also felt a bit deprived – of first-hand experience. Physically, this side of the stratosphere, there may well be nothing left validly to explore and conquer, with any sense of freshness or novelty – only desperate waste lands with nothing but their minerals to recommend them

Perhaps I should have felt more like an agriculturalist, but I never even had an allotment; the greenhouses were always owned and tended by someone else – never got round to organic farm holidays, although I gave token nods in their favour. I was always bad about watering my indoor plants; but a moment of concentration, seeing them wither, breaking the haze of my absent-mindedness, pulled me together.

To regain the freshness of research, one had to reverse time, turn the global chronometer into a mirror image of itself, moving in reverse. Through sustained deep meditation, reinforced by hefty history tomes, I managed to transform my cranium into a time-chariot, with dual – lateral and vertical – propulsion: nice to negotiate mountain ranges with ease when time-hopping. Maybe some time I'll be able to make a fire from flints – never learned how to do so in the Boy Scouts, which I left prematurely – but hope springs eternal,

particularly if the elements force one to be resourceful – though a suit of armour is a bit of a straitjacket, some sort of gender-crossing counterpart to a whalebone corset. Of course, they didn't have comfortable casual wear in those days – maybe that made life nobler, or maybe that's our retrospective illusion. It would be great to have that burnished, swaggering, glittering glamour – real tempered Toledo – without the heavy weight, but you can't have everything. For a while I could do my sadistic work and feel like a surgeon, but I could not feel that way forever, though my wounds remained minimal. A couple of medals clinked pompously on my chest. I became convinced I had a charmed life, and was protected for a higher purpose. The concept of a cleansing cataclysm definitely did not leave me with a clear conscience – I felt that somehow I had provoked the elements by perpetrating some mysterious wrong; in spite of much forgetfulness, I had always thought of myself as environmentally friendly.

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Burning rocks and liquid potions cut bold colours into slabs, and joined solidly all images of things elsewhere linked by only air, earth or flame. This process entails some sense of loss, like gold and silver ornaments being melted down into ingots. Then through their blocks, between them and around them – the hard, slippery slabs of danger, consonant with the sun's submergence under the earth's blanket. Each curve and loop mirrored the sun's rise and fall,

divorced from its zenith. It's sometimes good to see human detritus transmuted to elemental purity – but only a fractional goodness if one ignores the massed human agonies intrinsic to the transformation. To a great extent we are comforted by abandoned relics.

**Our destiny is orbital:** In the beginning was the end-point of progress, the boundary of the human brain; whether or not this is attributed to another planet, another system, is finally immaterial, for all is only known through being thrown back in reflection. Since so much of our fate hinges on a periphery, and depends on random fluctuations, we could ourselves be what lies beyond it.

There was a peaceful terrain before ice and sea, swamp and fire scattered the tribes – the first, long-trailing, inter-continental immigrants, honed them into warring factions, grim mirrors of the land. Some splinters sank into misted lakes. Other barbed points seethe, turbulent in the scorching sand, alongside the hardest lizards. Dispersal was sustained for aeons from the reptilian ages – then plagues, storms and cataclysms drove all to valley's bottom, sinking all hatreds into earth, to be the earth's ballast. The boulders which had scowled, cracked and rolled, tortured by ice and flame, to menace all on inclines, were now fused into the columns of their new-found dignity, through total edges emulating their old mass, proud of their new-found, solid unity. The valley swamps turned deeper, or half-dried to nurture total plenty. But afar, the wails of eagles and condors echoed the winds, and made the tasks go on, over the heads of their executors.

In the ages before their withering, the swamp reeds whistled warnings – that the glaciers would be transformed into scalding clouds, and that the locusts would carry the plague to all mankind, turn skins to cinders. The few who could escape had to build a new order.

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Through the first friction of its birth, the world was clouded, the thread of fire undulated, forever uncut. Through the thickest fogs it was borne, ever quivering from perpetual renewal – because loops of sun and moon, thickened and superimposed, or cancelled on repetition according to the caprices of powers beyond definition, sustained it. Through the thickest fogs it was borne, ever-quivering to endless renewal. Within it, blood, ore, lava and blinding sun wrestled in harmony, quavered as winged snakes. Its offshoots filtered into a cowl – to thicken a temperate gauze. The cutting edges were forged, firstly by friction and lastly by flame.

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Would the new tribes now bulldoze layers of sand, to try and soothe, and harness, the last lava? Would the new blood of the next two interchangeable sides now redden the grey-brown mass, jeering at Mars' eye-flushed surface?

This is the zone of no reflective detachment.

“There is a popular saying here: you can overturn any rock in Chile and find a poet. This was certainly true of my trip to the middle of this sliver of a nation where verse and the visual arts are inseparable from a tumultuous land in constant evolution. Telling of the national character that finds symbol as key to unlock life's mysteries, the natives couldn't get over the poetry of the U.S. President George Bush being hit in the head with a shoe flung by an angry reporter.” (*Lisa Paul Streitfeld*)

For anyone retaining a memory of 21<sup>st</sup> Century comfort and hygiene (a memory extremely hard to eradicate), those old galleons were floating hells and sewers: what a shuddering voyage! – with taut sails in that overcrowded filth – stale, weevil-ridden biscuit, scampering rats, in flight from the elements and humanity alike. Poor wretches suckled on sour, acid wine – through all those swathes of near-shipwreck and overboard mortalities, most of my fellow passengers seeming to be there far less of their own free will than I was, fleeing from

starvation, dragged more ferociously by the promise of wealth and ease, the prospect of smug hindsight. Of course, most of the gains were blown in European wars.

At the height of a storm, a savage wave knocked my head against one of the ship's beams. I dreamed I was thrown overboard. I did wake up after all, facing that same beam – in the nick of time before that nightmare Leviathan swallowed me; lucky for me his teeth did not match his gullet, and I was blessed with the good fortune of Jonah before I woke. But now I've become really well informed. I certainly seem to have experienced enough for that to be so; my memory and imagination are absolutely choc-a-bloc, many of their data have to be relegated to submerged layers.

Under massed leaden, silver-tipped clouds, the sea finally voided; on a razor's edge from keeling over, our ship, waterlogged, careered to a shaky landfall, feeling as if it were a hair's breadth from sinking in the harbour. Then came in a fresh, happy flood the feeling of at last being able to run wild in raw territory, the uncharted, the initial surge of conquest, the lust sated, the empty blessings to vacuous gods – a sweet abundance all too rapidly to turn sour – our blind brutalities generating their contrary, culminating in a never-ending succession of strokes and counterstrokes, a sickly stalemate with ever-piling casualties – followed by the polluted waves of a sick civilisation. The desperate lust for a golden paradise generated its stinking contrary, turned the world's urn upside down, forever to pour out its sorrows. In more ways than one, the flood of bullion caused a drought of bankruptcy! Look at the shanty towns, jagged cardboard and corrugated iron!

As the generations ground on, descendants melted into their ancestors, unblocked by birth-pangs and death-throes, treading their pilgrimage around the rings. The trek was eternal, though their numbers shrank towards a solitary point, withered and perished from a unicellular organism, which cursed and giped at them – a mirror shaft of transferred pain.

Through balded scrubland, walls rose and crumbled, some through abandonment, some through demolition and desecration. The soft edges of perfect, blended stones sank to enrich their brother soil, heralding the sweep of the last waters. Through decomposition reared the ideal form. Plastic, the lava spilled around them. The greater fire, fire of the overlapping light – fed on the black flames. With temples and statues, mankind made a feeble imitation of this process.

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Partly through my own yearning I went on the rampage in the political casino, became a volatile ball on the grand pintable of the three hundred year war (witnessing its interim peace treaties), whose desultory end I could not envisage as a triumph of peace, only as a triumph of technology, the heliograph and the machine gun – setting the precedent for those ever-accelerating advances. Every jackpot of casualties was cancelled, curtailing all sense of gratification. The very earth expressed its disgust by emitting rumbles of impending earthquakes, as if to open up a greater mass grave than any human battle could fill. Sometimes the rumbles were bluff, sometimes warnings, sometimes the real thing. Forts had been erected and demolished like houses of cards, as if human willpower was echoing those earthquakes, which gave strength to the indigenous. Gold mining always had its ups and downs. One has to weigh each pan of gold against its weight in human flesh.

“A Chilean appeals court has ruled in favour of local Indians who accuse Barrick Gold of contaminating their water downstream.

“The momentum of the present gold rush has been enhanced through the discovery of a series of sub-volcanic, mainly epithermal, gold deposits mostly located at elevations of more than 4,000 m in the Andean Cordillera. In addition to these epithermal deposits, Chile also holds significant gold reserves in porphyry deposits. The epithermal gold deposits in Chile

were formed during the Cretaceous through the Cenozoic, as a result of a non-collisional ocean-continent convergent plate margin. The crustal stresses resulting from the plate margin created long, sinuous north-northeast trending magmatic belts that roughly parallel the Pacific coast. These belts' mineralization varies in a north-south direction, as a result of the timing of magmatism along the plate margin.

“Yesterday’s ruling creates more doubts about the future of the world’s highest gold mine — the Pascua-Lama mine on the mountainous border with Argentina.” So capital potential coincides with altitude – that’s worth a careful thought. Interesting to think of people getting giddy with wealth as the air thins around them – zillionaire asphyxiation. (I think one could get a special vibration if one was on top of a mountain with an earthquake revving up underneath.

*This land is rich in minerals, especially nitrates; it feels as if the abundance of bones through the millennia must have made its contribution. In the most desolate places, humanity sometimes repays its debt to the ecosphere. Could this be a warning for all? Some say that an angry God tilts the pintable of the earth when humanity does not buckle to his will. There seems to be a quasi-personality underlying a lot of disasters – they feel bizarrely personalised. Is this wrenching of tectonic plates some form of vengeance – retribution for some primal affront?*

So often I narrowly escaped with my life in that tortuous terrain, with its treacherous marshes, its spiky scrubland and knuckled trees; perfectly blended with the terrain; my adversaries – with their deadly missiles – were so dogged, so elusive, and for that very reason so perversely alluring through being so intractable, so many scars and scratches.

In perfect harmony with the desolate environment, they rallied so eminently – after having been seemingly broken by their first crushing defeat. They had thought us gods, then, when they sensed our human frailties, they really recoiled and ricocheted.

Once one of my detachments was surrounded; all we slew with sword and arquebus were replaced by endless swarms, seemingly rising from under the earth, as if engendered by our destructive blows. All my comrades were hacked down by pikes, clubbed by maces. I was lucky to be in a warrior's blind spot as he was dispatching the great Almagro, and rapidly side-stepped him before he could notice my presence. The dense undergrowth shielded me, for the price of a few scratches. Their evasive tactics had not escaped my notice; emulating them now was a life-saver. I struggled through the thorns and strands to open grassland, and, heavily scratched, saw a flickering firelight – saffron edged with red, in a hillside cave. Exhausted, I struggled towards it, knowing that this encounter could mean my doom. From reports, I understood that they could be very severe with prisoners. I had the usual advice of saving my last bullet, or my sword, for myself.

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The snake and the condor clinched; the snake had the lesser mobility of the two, but held the fluid of extinction and its vital duct. The snake seized the condor as it poised to take flight – stifled it, swallowed it, absorbed and applied its wings, took to all air – But its eyes dropped out, to grow as kernels of inner light. Each eye stood distinct, each a jewel of the inner fire: fire and light fed each other. Once a python swallowed a crocodile.

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An emaciated, wraith-like figure, with flowing white hair and robes of the purest white, came to the cave entrance. On first sight, I assumed he was a man, but on closer observation, I sensed a femininity of grace and carriage in his masculinity. His face was weather-beaten, but

it really looked like well-burnished leather. He gave a nod, looking as if he had been expecting me.

“I have to congratulate you on having traced the ultimate hermit; I carefully covered up my tracks against all others. I am Fiton, magician supreme, distiller of the world’s lore. After serious deliberation and a mass of crucial personal challenges, you have taken the first steps of your destiny; I shall lead you on to the next ones.” He motioned me to sit on a mat near the fire, then passed me an earthenware goblet, with the motif of a black serpent, fangs bared before a white mouth. ‘A source of serum’ I thought. It was filled with a rancid dark red concoction, which tasted of acid; it was difficult to swallow. I nearly vomited, but not quite.

“My darling Gods, ever bickering, have made a treaty. They all need to play for time to recharge their energies. Now, as I now bear the age of centuries, you are to be my agent, my successor: that is the potion of life protection, and the empowerment of time travel” he said. “With your new-found, absolute mobility you will oscillate, rebound between past and future at will, restructure the truths of the past, excavate them from submersion in lies and evasions; you will revise and reform the events of the future before they happen, when they are latent in the womb of potentiality. To hone your sense of direction, you will fall from the skies onto the world’s most ancient temple sites, cast down by disintegrating man-made birds. But for the present, now you are fortified, you must return to your next combat, and its benign consequence.”

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*(My mind drifted into the form of a 20<sup>th</sup> Century paratrooper, with the opening privilege of free fall. Those ferocious condors and the transport aircraft looped the centuries and melted into each other; the condors finally prevailed, being more in their element. I saw a wrecked aircraft embedded in ice, surprisingly free of rust – and pondered on the fate of the passengers. Skulls are not infrequently unearthed on these mountain sides)*

Let calcium lines be shaved of moss, re-score all patterns. Those who change and slither shall live; those who clinch every root shall perish. In the circle all is death. Total circumscription by the circle radiates death; through straight lines, life persists – but not without angles, not without the clinch of segmentation. And the knowledge of angles has its source in the circle. So lines and circles are forever enmeshed. At each knowing of mesh all lines are circled upon themselves. Obliterating all ends – for lines unthreaded are the most fragile of all. Circles too can cut, when they are treated as lines.

As a gesture of resentment against intrusion, one arrow and three spears quivered on the walls of the field laboratory, bouncing many omens back to their sources. In fringed pain the hut took fine gall – a ring of ashes for calamity’s brakes, resplendent ever – tarpaulins ripped to zero functioning. Protective clothing – well-ignited, threadbare it blew, blitzing a fork with gold-dust tail, rending flint and plastic shrapnel down the bleached chasm – unbolstered flotsam now, all grew.

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“Remember that events are composites and convergences of disparate strands; you will be the supreme weaver, with the absolute loom, to make the ultimate chronicle tapestry. You must be prepared, honed for your task; in the process you shall know the extremes of ecstasy and agony – but your resilience has been solidified, and you will emerge supreme.” He nodded to me, and beckoned me to leave.

And so I struggled on, at last to meet more comrades, a beleaguered group of forty. When the ambush came, it was anticipated, felt in everybody’s bones. Fortunately, defensive determination and well-tempered steel prevailed; though bleeding and scarred, we could carve a corridor for our retreat.

Then through the aftermath, the bathos of corpses, shone its contrary. At the sight of that form, pure beauty suffused the stench and pain or carnage – a total balm. Benign vibrancy now outweighed the thrusts of injury. Would that the wounds were all healed, the blood returned to body circulation! Flowers burgeon on sites of carnage – but oh, to have the splendour without the agony.

But, having struggled onto a safe plateau – there was that confrontation!



The fixed stare of her almond eyes cut through my flesh, right to my bone marrow. Though I had seen many combats, I had never before felt so challenged. I had looked some of my adversaries in the face, but in a perverse way, in spite of mortal terror, combined with revulsion against the agonised twitching of the wounded, I had somehow felt safe in the comradeship of death, I would half welcome their attacks on me as fulfilment of my destiny. Though we were adversaries, our underlying motivations were in harmony.

But now all was transformed; in the ethereal; charisma of Tegualda was something which orbited the life cycle, preceding birth and following death, a middling stream with tributaries leading to a mighty river.

“What brought you here?”

“The magic of gold, and the words of the one True God.”

“You were deceived; there are more than one – that crucified wraith of yours holds no monopoly over human destiny.”



“This has become apparent to me in my recent experience; now I am undeceived – I see I must investigate the alternatives!”

Her eyes became totally luminous and penetrating, radiating the essence of raw electricity centuries before its discovery. Faraday must have picked up on her vibration in a time-warp; I felt convinced she had given him retroactive inspiration.

“There is very little which escapes my attention. I saw all of the battle with a condor’s eye; it was you who slew my man. But you did so in fair fight; you were both honouring your duties and pledges – by practising a kind of fighting from which I myself did not flinch.

“You’d better know I was the leader of terror: I led that charge of women into your ranks, which struck such terror into your comrades, seeing us all break our chains of obedience. I was the first one to mount one of your horses – founder of the new mobility of my people. I know you have had some warrior queens, but I’m sure you never expected the subjects to act in this way.

“But now the mighty energy channelled into combat must be redirected; conflict is a means, not an end. The dead must be buried; the essence of their wounds must not infect their descendants. I think your great King wishes us all well. But his captains have brutally taken matters into their own hands.”

She performed the burial honours graciously. I half expected her to depart, but she turned back to me.

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“You have a legend of an angel who appeared in the sky, and saved your comrades. I was that angel, showing supreme compassion to an enemy, hoping my example would transform an

enemy into a loving ally. Come; now, having defined our contrariety, we must reveal and fuse our true beings, our fleshly souls: cast off those veils and shields.”

The latent earthquakes and volcanoes, rumbling at the extremity of my hearing, or in my unconscious, mutely echoed the depth of my foreboding about the impending revelation. Although I had been a victor in so many other struggles, I felt ecstatically submissive in this one, raised my arms and held my breath in total surrender. Her skill in undoing my armour was worthy of any trained white man. “We are supremely adaptable; we learn avidly from those we observe and oppose”, she whispered, her teeth gleaming in her smile. As I saw the chain mail and the cuirass lying there, discarded, I saw that the rust had all disappeared.

Deft hands tenderly peeled my sweat-ridden leather and cotton; it was lovely to be nursed without immediate wounds to distract from the exquisite sensations.

“You must be proud of your exertions!” she said. The power in her words was akin to a duelling challenge. (The time warp flashed me into my happy collaboration with that beautiful fitness trainer, when I imagined that lithe, toned form excelling itself at the Olympic High Jump as her prelude to our delicious consummation.)

I looked up towards her breasts, to see the matching metal, discs, chains, bangles – an array of gold, silver and jade; I sensed their resilience beneath their cover. She read my response with total ease; with a radiant smile, she whispered “do as you have been done by.”

My hands trembled a little as I delicately negotiated the pins and clasps, but I succeeded in making a harmonious pattern of them, like a crown at the head of my discarded armour. It was good to have gained intimate knowledge of those metallic treasures in the museums.

The face of a full moon, reciprocating its radiation on Tegualda's face and eyes, beamed its glittering reflections, as if casting off a diaphanous robe, to reveal the perfect body of its illuminated rocks, bouncing back and forth around the elaborated grid of our variegated metalwork – steel, bronze, silver and gold – its luminosity almost suggesting that it would all come to life, radiant in the flames of their smelting, almost as two armies facing each other. In turn, the beams flooded our faces, giving an external flourish to our luminous vibrancy charged from within.

She took my hand, and made it caress her sealskin robe: “please do the honours”. I lifted it at the bottom. My hands reached up inside it until they could feel her firm but still slender waist. Repeating my earlier gesture, she raised her arms in surrender and conquest, the robe clouding into a transient veil over her noble features.

Then Tegualda cast off her gleaming white cotton camisera for me with all the challenging flourish of a toreador. She tamed me and fired me simultaneously with her lovely self-revelation.

The walls of my time-capsule were fractured. There glistened across the world, ricocheted back and forth across the centuries a composite of the world's beauties, celebrated in poetry and song, painting and sculpture, melted, distilled and poured into one vibrant, impassioned, soul-suffused body. Egyptian and Grecian statues and mural figures melted into an array of Hollywood dream sublimities deeply embedded in my memory. This was a spiritual earthquake, embracing all history and culture, the distilled essence of all artistic striving poured into one giant goblet. My euphoria melted into a vision of our two peoples euphorically turned from war to love. I could hear a rumbling accompanying of us, similar to a distant earthquake, but radiating benign, divine approval.

“We have at last met each other’s match. In our earlier lives, we were both adored, out of reach to so many, counterbalanced by our own unattainables. Now, through ourselves and each other, we can reach full, harmonious synthesis.”

Her pure teeth shone forth, near-iridescent: “You know our people’s trials of strength, the holding up of heavy logs – I believe some of your northern tribesmen call it ‘tossing the caber’. So now your strength must be poured into the font of love. A true, deep love will be the final honour to grace my widow’s mourning – a bonding with the agent of my widowhood.”

The upper lips echoed the lower lips; I saw a luminous giant conch shell, bright pink, in a nearby lake. I strained down to retrieve it, and held it aloft.



As we struggled, competed in perfect harmony, the young fold mountains rose anew in our background; with a metaphysical rope we had bridged the span of geological time, in the process going through a whole gamut of shape-shits, embracing all the biological forms. We had willed ourselves and each other into unicellular status, and then gone the whole gamut from amoebae to primates.

She squeezed my biceps, and beamed with gratification. “Your muscles have grown to their full strength, but your strength is in harmony with tenderness”. Then her skin turned through tan and purple to the boldest scarlet to match the subterranean massage. With that flush of colour, her body also grew translucent, so that her inner organs and bones were revealed as in an X-Ray. My own body embraced and then reflected her translucency; she flooded me. The reflections intensified the inner light. With an extra gaze, she said: “My redness is generally a harbinger of death. But now, through our sacred bonding, it is transmuted into an affirmation of life. My husband’s life will meld into yours.

“This completes my experience. One great step towards the development of my wholeness was my embracing of your Greek moon goddess Selene – centuries ago, your ancestors plied the mighty oceans to reach and infuse my ancestors – with loving truths, not with fire and the sword.”



Let me tell you my real identity: I am the reincarnation of Auchimalgen, the moon goddess, wife of the sun, my silver purity the distillation of his gold. Her survival, her re-embodiment as assured through centuries of bitter conflict, for our Gods war with each other,

and ravage the earth, making waves of human hatred echo the volcanoes and the earthquakes.”

“I am the saviour of the world, maker of scattered islands – like magnified lumps of lava.

“In the beginning was the evil serpent *Cai Cai*, who rose in fury from the deepest ocean bed, dragging the waters up with her in waves, to flood the earth. Her good twin *Tren Tren* was in a long slumber, in a lofty mountain fastness among the highest peaks – well above the snowline. The desperate people, in search of enlightenment and salvation, scaled the glaciated mountains, some falling to fractures and deaths. In vain they raised a desperate unison chant to arouse *Tren Tren*. *Cai Cai*'s minions, the pillars of Thunder, Wind, and Fire, pile up the clouds to make rain, thunder, and water. But the floods do not silence the incantation. At last the people grow weary. But I, surging with energy, perform a lithe, writhing dance, echoed by my reflection in the ice. With my movements I make echoing cries of joyous laughter. Glimmering light and rippling sound awaken *Tren Tren*, who also begins to laugh, and beams her benign presence down the mountainside.

“*Cai Cai* and her minions had trailed the people. Face to face with an aroused *Tren Tren*, they were convulsed with terror, and slid down the mountainside like a living landslide, to the middle foothills, leaving the people briefly to rally in peace.

“*Cai Cai*'s wrath is re-kindled when she is no longer face to face with *Tren Tren*. In her rage she shatters the earth's crust, scattering islands all over the sea. After a brief subsidence, the water climbs ever higher, trying to flood *Tren Tren*'s mountains. But *Tren Tren* pushes the mountains up toward the sky and the sun. As a result of this wrench, *Cai Cai* and the Pillars of Thunder, Wind, and Fire fall from the mid foothills into the absolute abyss below, where they are silenced, sentenced forever to dumb rumblings.

“So, as my reward for arousing her, Tren Tren made me Mistress of the Tides. Cai Cai tried to take her vengeance by sending the Mapudungun sea monster to destroy me. But I always won my combats. I prevailed against that monster, and then wore its skin as my shield. Cai Cai also awakens in response to tsunamis, and supplements them with her own waves. But remember always that Tsunamis are activated by earthquakes; the traumas of the sea are rooted in the land.

“We will do our rituals to confront and overcome the four pillars; we shall enact the loves of air, earth, fire and water.

“Look at that rainbow: it plunges into the centre of the earth. And we shall embrace its full spectrum, be the jewelled solidity behind its every shade. Now we must brave the elements: First to the volcano.”



*Forests near the **volcano** have been burned by pyroclastic flows and lateral explosions. Large parts of southern Argentina and **Chile** have been coated with ash*

“Many volcanoes cause misery, but there are blessed ones. Far to the north of this land is Momotombo, which your people tried to baptize, to bend him to your religion. He rightly

refused, claiming that your religion had human sacrifices, but were not honest enough to name them as such.

“We can have a respite at intervals in the hot springs of Pucon.”

In the icy lake, our passionate heat turned to the purest vapour; our bodies melted into the purity of the water. The exertions of our perfect consummation, in the water, and then on the shore, paralleled and mirrored our conjoint contesting of the elements. The steam instantly turned solid.

There was another, gentler bonding of our warmed and soothed bodies, our inner fluids echoing the spring waters, tender clinching in the benign warmth – our perspiration seemingly magnified, then cleansed.

Tegualda then brought me a round wooden platter filled with red-capped mushrooms: “You must absorb these and their magic in order to blend perfectly with my plans. With these I gained control of Eponamon, a being of great strength and potential for evil, weaned him from the service of Cai Cai.

“Then we must negotiate the earthquakes (*“Richard Allmendinger of Cornell University and his colleagues now find major earthquakes of magnitude 7 or greater apparently caused the crust in northern Chile to crack permanently.”*)

“Now our people will call a *machitune*, to consult the gods and goddesses; some of them will be flown in from beyond the ionosphere. Know that this will be a struggle, for most of the gods are malevolent. Already you have sensed some of their machinations: there is *Ngurvilu*, God of the lakes and seas. You have felt her ripples in your waters. She takes the form of a wild cat, with a sharply barbed tail, which can menace all humans in her elements.



There is *Pillan*, god of fire, thunder and war, who bonds human conflict with the action of the elements – chief engineer of Cai Cai. There are many others. In any direct confrontation, I shall prevail, for they fear me, and I temper them, but they are always making devious manoeuvres around me. I suppose it's very similar to your world really – you have your peace conferences with hidden fangs resonating in the cupolas.

“You have succeeded in the long jumped over the hurdles of time. You are ahead of your time, ahead of yourself. After many orbits have gone full circle, you will revisit this scene as an archaeologist, excavating and researching yourself. This hard groundwork now will stand you in good stead for those later centuries which you have fled, but to which you will return.

“Are you afraid of earthquakes? It is only natural that you should be. They feel uniformly malignant, like the machinations of Cai Cai and Pillan. They are expressions of energy which are sometimes channelled into destructive ends. But with the right mediations and meditations, that energy can be benignly harnessed to serve the ends of Tren Tren. We shall be her agents on earth: our passion can act as a magnet for its benign redirection. You cannot be unaware of the constant actions of terrorists. Some of their acts are performed with good intent.”

She seemed to have a better grasp than I do of my own civilisation – perhaps only attainable by an outside observer, and one of the cosmos greater than that of anyone in my past – a true cornucopia of knowledge.

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I had a vision of a mighty conference chamber, built in the midst of a lofty mountain range, bound by glass panels, like a gigantic greenhouse – a variant on an open plan zoo, echoing with the declamations from mankind's political predators, sometimes cowed by the shades of eternal entities rampaging among them. I saw a contingent of soldiers, in uniforms of several

centuries, hurled by an earthquake down a sheer mountain side, their every bone fractured. Tegualda resumed her exposition.

“It is my will and my mission to take you across the barrier of mortality, and back again. Your ordeals shall give you the vision of one approaching death, and one beyond it. You shall truly be of our people. We are eternally independent; after combat and death, our freedom breathes on.”



“Would you like to be transmuted into one element exclusively? Be all earth, all air, all fire, all water? The single chemical is often preferable to the alloy.”

I felt hesitant, then said “I guess I’ll opt for earth, then at least I’ll feel grounded at the outset.”

“So be it: your vision shall be honed by a visit to the Atacama Desert, driest place on earth. It has claimed many lives, including those of now extinct forms, and preserved their bleached skeletons, so you will have a sense of living palaeontology. *(Her terminology was so self-assured that it aroused no doubts; had I consciously projected my vocabulary onto her, or had she absorbed it as her inalienable right?)* The desert lies beneath the clearest

skies on earth; there the watchers of the stars can enjoy perfect clarity. At rare intervals, there is excessive rainfall; the seeds embedded in the arid surface burgeon, and there are dazzling spreads of flowers. In the course of your survey, you will see both the bare sands and rocks, and the floral carpets. Are they not in many ways like human beings, long submerged by deprivation, but surging forth with vents of light and floods of rain.”



Once every dozen years or so, a storm system sweeps across the desert, dropping a torrent of rain. When that happens, the dust turns to mud as thick as your freshly poured concrete.”

*(Charles Darwin briefly passed through this corner of the Atacama in 1835. In his journal, he described the desert as “a barrier far worse than the most turbulent ocean.”) My perspective was broadened to a panorama of epochs, punctuated by the inner earth convulsing and erupting as if in fury against the callous clutter of waves of invaders. Were those the roarings of Cai Cai or the upsurge of a benign force?*

*“Today, police and now the military are trying to hold back looters in Concepcion and Santiago from looting supermarkets, shops and banks. Few supermarkets are open here in Santiago today for fear of looters. The metro is not yet functioning. There is a sense of panic in the air with long queues at petrol stations and the few shops that are open. This afternoon,*

*when I had to travel through the older part of Santiago, I saw hundreds of buildings damaged, burst water mains and families with a few pieces of furniture living out on the footpaths. The Terminal at the International Airport in Santiago was severely damaged and only now are a few flights arriving from overseas. People wanting to leave Chile have to travel over the Andes to the Argentinian city of Mendoza and from there fly to Buenos Aires.*

Because of the location, adjacent to the long southern Chilean volcanic arc, and the frequency of large earthquakes in this region, both the 1835 and 1837 earthquakes have become critical pieces of evidence for the ongoing question of whether, and how, large earthquakes might lead to small triggered volcanic eruptions.

The malice of Cai Cai may be giving mankind fair warning. Part of him may want to drive humanity towards his opposite.

Through the power of Tegualda, my creed, my world-conquering people had met their total match. I was destroyed, hacked, burned, but then revived, transformed. I realised we were each a mote, a piece of grit in the world's oyster; now we are eternal pearls, capable of gracing any glass case in any museum on earth or beyond.

I realise that it's dangerous to get bogged down in myth and abstraction if it blinds one to the real, the contingent; one must look at events, at terrains, at particles, with a fully critical eye.

There was the feeling of a total quest. Tegualda had acutely sharpened my sense of impending doom in the world. If life seemed to be nearing its end, it could only be saved by returning, and attuning, to its beginning.

A great debate had arisen about the possible point of origin; some thought it would have to be in the wild sea, others that it would be a land-bound pool. Tegualda knew both, and always had a supreme instinct for higher probabilities.

A genetic portrait of the ancestor of all living things has been generated by scientists who say that the likeness sheds light on the mystery of how life first emerged on Earth. This venerable ancestor was a single organism, given the acronym of Luca, the Last Universal Common Ancestor, and is estimated to have lived some four billion years ago.

The new finding sharpens the debate between those who believe life began in some extreme environment, such as in deep sea vents or the flanks of volcanoes, and others who favour more normal settings, such as the “warm little pond” proposed by Darwin.

The genes pointed quite to an organism that thrived deep sea vents, the gassy, metal-laden, scalding hot plumes caused by seawater interacting with magma erupting through the ocean floor. Deep sea vents are surrounded by exotic life-forms and, with their extreme chemistry, have long seemed places where life might have originated.

“The fact that Luca depended on hydrogen and metals favours a deep sea vent environment for the origin of life, Dr. Martin concludes, rather than the land environment posited in a leading rival theory proposed by the chemist John Sutherland of the University of Cambridge in England. Others believe that the Luca that Dr. Martin describes was already a highly sophisticated organism that had evolved far beyond the origin of life, meaning the formation of living systems from the chemicals present on the early Earth.”

“Life could have originated anywhere and later been confined to a deep sea environment because of some catastrophic event like the Late Heavy Bombardment, which occurred 4

billion to 3.8 billion years ago. This was a rain of meteorites that crashed into Earth with such force that the oceans were boiled off into an incandescent mist.

“Life is so complex it seems to need many millions of years to evolve. Yet evidence for the earliest life dates to 3.8 billion years ago, as if it emerged almost the minute the bombardment ceased. A refuge in the deep ocean during the bombardment would allow a longer period in which life could have evolved. But chemists like Dr. Sutherland say they are uneasy about getting prebiotic chemistry to work in an ocean, which powerfully dilutes chemical components before they can assemble into the complex molecules of life.

“Dr. Sutherland, working from basic principles of chemistry, has found that ultraviolet light from the sun is an essential energy source to get the right reactions underway, and therefore that land-based pools, not the ocean, are the most likely environment in which life began.

What has gone on in the interim? Yes; I had been a fashionable supporter of Allende, who tried to restore a measure of justice to that oppressed land. But now I had the full picture, in terms of human history, of geological and cosmic time. It must be possible for someone really determined to pull things together, sustain a sense of proportion, and simultaneously have ones exciting adventures. Escapist reverie is often a blanket to block off realities and responsibilities. But if one looks hard enough, reverie will reinforce responsibility; they can harmonise – become a synthesis of earth and air.

As I thought back towards my home base, I had a vision some crouched figures in a dingy internet café speculating on, and playing with, my experiences, which had been transmuted into a computer game. I discovered retrospectively that I had been digitally videoed all the way along. This area of research has so far been played down. I should be some source of fascination for those consoling themselves with history.

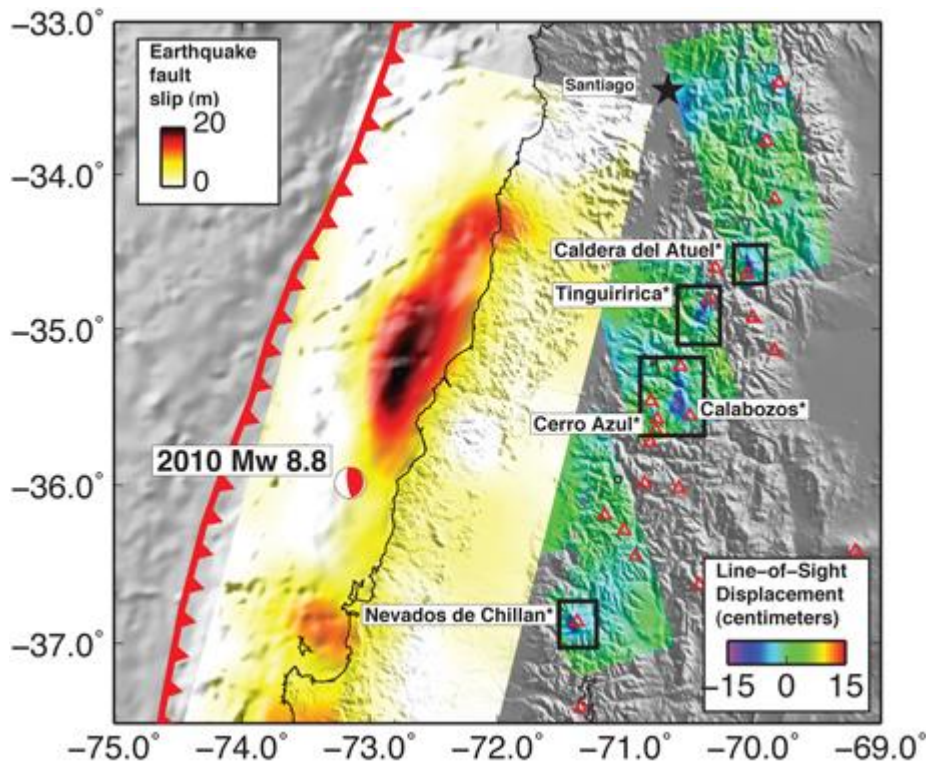
With its superabundance of spectacular scenery, the area of my expedition is now a top priority zone for fashionable holidays. Legislation goes on to protect the eco-balance. There are acts of desperation all round.

“Following a major earthquake in southern Chile in 2010, several nearby volcanoes permanently sank several inches into the ground. Cornell earth scientists think they might know why – and this knowledge could help illuminate the connection between earthquakes and volcanic activity.” Do volcanoes thrust upwards through an inner desire to sink downwards?

Publishing online June 30 in the journal *Nature Geoscience*, a study led by Matthew Pritchard, associate professor of earth and atmospheric sciences, shows that five volcanic regions within 248 miles of the 8.8-scale earthquake in Maule, Chile, sank up to 6 inches into the ground after the earthquake, almost instantly. This process, called subsidence, has never been seen on this scale in volcanic regions and, according to Pritchard, could lead to insights about the “plumbing systems” underneath volcanoes.

Earth scientists have long known that earthquakes sometimes trigger volcanic eruptions. Again in Pritchard’s words: “In this case, there is strong evidence that earthquakes are also promoting some other kind of activity, which doesn’t lead to eruption in the volcanic region,”

The Maule earthquake shared similar subsidence patterns with a 2011 earthquake in Tohoku, Japan, which earth scientists in Japan happened to be studying at around the same time. After comparing notes at a conference, the two unrelated research groups came to “eerily” similar results, Pritchard said: Both earthquakes seemed to induce subsidence around certain volcanic regions.



Provided/Matt Pritchard

*A map of southern Chile shows the locations of fault slip from the 2010 Maule earthquake. Images from satellite radar show ground subsidence at five volcanic regions.*

The Cornell researchers mapped the five distinct areas of subsidence following the Maule earthquake using radar imaging technology from a Japanese satellite. They think the sinking was caused by the release of extremely hot water from below the earth's surface, or geothermal fluids, that eventually flowed out of surface streams in the area.

In volcanic areas, magma chambers under the crust heat up mineral-rich pockets of water – a resource that geothermal energy companies are trying to tap. Pritchard and colleagues contend that during the Maule earthquake, the mineral deposits were shaken loose, unclogging some pathways – like unclogging pipes in a house – which allowed a rush of water to gurgle to the surface, leading to the sinking.

Using the radar imaging technique called *Interferometric Synthetic Aperture Radar*, the researchers documented subtle ground deformations by reading changes in electromagnetic



signals as they bounced back from the earth to the satellite. They also used sensors for infrared imaging of heat anomalies, helping them rule out the theory of subsidence being the result of a release of hot gas.

They hope their insights will inspire other scientists to continuously monitor volcanic areas in earthquake zones to further study the relationship between them – particularly, whether the subsidence is somehow either stopping or enhancing volcanic eruptions, Pritchard said.

Also, they want to discover the parameters for triggering the subsidence – how big does an earthquake have to be? How far from the earthquake zone will a volcano have to be to sink?

The paper, “*Subsidence at Southern Andes Volcanoes Induced by the 2010 Maule, Chile Earthquake*,” includes co-authors Jennifer Jay and Scott Henderson, both graduate students with Pritchard’s group, as well as collaborators Felipe Aron, a Cornell graduate student from Chile, and Luis Lara of the National Geology and Mining Service of Chile. The work was supported by NASA.

“Leon revealed a startling piece of information that served as the key to unlock my own door of perception. He said there was a cultural tribune established under the Allende revolution that voted on a style based on mathematics (sacred geometry). Surely this forgotten history explains the mysterious title of Bolano’s posthumous masterpiece, 2666! While six is the hexagon structure of the DNA molecule, the secret of life, it is also the number of the *hieros gamos*. The structure of 2666 consists of the sacred geometry of the pentagram, which represents Venus, due to the planet’s perfectly symmetrical cycle. So, by absorbing the underlying message of the repression and return of “el femenino,” the reader/participant is initiated into the Aquarian archetype – the divine marriage of opposites –

which Wolfgang Pauli, the father of modern science, predicted as emerging from under the collapsed quantum wave.” (Lisa Paul Streitfeld)

Can we tame the cosmos after all, or does this aspiration amount to considering ourselves as Gods – the cosmos has to be greater than ourselves?

Reading, absorbing all these factual, scientific data in a way undermined the impression of solidity and stability given by a superficial observation. It engendered the idea of a disintegrating world, and gave total magical power to any mythological saviours. The bleak light of analysis draws one back to the reassurance of darkness. (*“I do not love you as if you were salt-rose, or topaz/or the arrow of carnations the fire shoots off/I love you as certain dark things are to be loved/in secret, between the shadow and the soul.”* – Pablo Neruda)

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Our sacred embrace imploded Chemistry and Physics, through fusion and fission forging a new element, the compartmental boundaries seemed to melt as did the separateness of our bodies. The newly formed chemical element vanished quickly in a flash of radiation that only top scientists could measure.

Part of me longed to have one eye at the back of the head, one at the front. I had to be pulled in two vital directions without splitting at the middle. The depths of antiquity must breathe through the present, science and myth have our true lovers’ fusion. All these charts, articles and reports, from the new priests resonated, as if from both heaven and hell. Their statistical details mirror the poetic utterances of the visionary. The laboratories, newspaper offices and broadcasting stations became as awesome and forbidding as the ancient temple sites. Their operatives seemed to parallel my idea of the ancient priests, so expert in the art of concealment.

That flash, or ‘fingerprint’, confirmed the existence of an element with 115 protons at its center. That would give it the atomic number of 115 on the periodic table, the list of all elements known to humanity. Could that element be the key, to tip the balance of the cosmos? Could human entities be distilled into elements?

So the enormity of scientific facts threatened to overwhelm me. In their very coldness they had the quality of fire, an inner intensity that dwarfed my analytical reason. I needed the counterweight of serene passion to stay abreast of the data, see, microscopically, beyond them – and that counterweight radiated from my goddess. Tegualda’s alter ego, constantly reincarnated and resurfacing through the centuries. Remains firmly fixed in my mind: *“She was a dramatic still presence with long black hair and a flaming dress with blood red lipstick, whose eroticism overshadowed a sexualized dance performance on the floor, fusing of the Spanish and Indian into a holistic love, integrating the opposites.”* (Lisa Paul Streitfeld)



*It’s a mother, it’s a world, but it is a wave. If you go next to a mother, you feel like you are the wave next to you that irrigates you.” There are human waves, and waves engulfing humanity.*

Hers was the power to reincarnate at any time and location of her choosing. Hers was the power to multiply herself, determine the ratio of racial mix, have all the adaptability of a multicellular being. She suffuses humanity, celebrated in poetry and lore. A great poet captured a vision of her shades:

## **Lovelies**

Electric and naked in burning marble out from the skin through dresses,  
swelling, defiant on a quick tide,  
they stomp the world, they stamp the lucky star with their spikey heels,  
and they sprout up like wild plants in the street  
and put out their hard aroma greenly.

Warm ungraspables of buzzing butcher summer.

Neither roses nor archangels: homegirls, riddles  
to man, and something more than sparkling heat,  
something so much more than these bending branches  
that know what they know as the earth knows.

So light, so deep, so accurate these smoothies. Hunting  
blue eyes and other urgent flares in the dance  
of the fast streets. Females, females  
in the hoarse surf where we hurl the net of the five senses  
to come up with barely a kiss of foam.

## **Gonzalo Rojas**

Daughter of the abyss, silent in your spite . . . (Rojas)

She is all air and all water, all animal and vegetable tissue, all soil and rocks, cold and molten, the polarities of heat and cold, the depth of the earth and the height of the heavens.

I turned into mineral, I turned I turned into ore, then concentrated in an unicellular being. My being proliferated into myriad particles, and each particle fused with the multiple essences of Tegualda's multiple being – a whole body becomes a cell, and the cell a whole body. Now I have my body back, my heart pulsating.

I had to find what their writers had to say, starting from inside the situation, without my observer's stance. Oh Bolaño! You have turned me into an Infrarealist!

“Sensations aren't derived from nothing (most obvious of the obvious), but from a reality conditioned, in a thousand ways, by constant flux.

“Multiple reality, you make me puke!

“So, it's possible that on the one hand we're being born and on the other we're in the front row for the death throes. Forms of life and forms of death crisscross our retinas every day. Their constant collision gives life to infrarealist forms: THE EYE OF TRANSITION! . . .”

The newborn and the dying look each other in the face, complementing the vision of love. It's great to have something to write about. I read, I write, I live, forever warmed by the eternal flame

**David Russell**