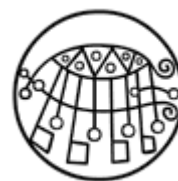


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La Tour Abolie – The Deconstruct(B)Abel Tower?

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Abstract

This article continues our tour through the logo-myths of language, seeking Psycho-chaotic Semiotic insights by applying the ideas of Derrida and Lacan to the binary oppositions of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and by deconstructing-reconstructing the stories of the Tower of Babel and the Writing on the Wall. We seek to emphasize the importance in these stories of the undecidable, supplementary trace, and the psychological reconciliation of opposites, and their magical influence on the unconscious striving for creativity and individuation of the human personality-in-language.

Keywords

Derrida, Jung, Lacan, creativity, deconstruction, individuation, literature, magic, mythology, Psycho-chaotic Semiotics, psychology, unconscious.

*Je suis le ténébreux, – le Veuf, – l'inconsolé,
Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie:
Ma seule étoile est morte, et mon luth constellé
Porte le soleil noir de la Mélancolie.*

Gérard de Nerval: *El Desdichado* (1853) [1].

Let us continue with our metaphor of Adam and Eve's adventures in the Edenic Garden of Language where we learned that that "*nomen omen nemonis homini [est]*" and so were led to apply the "key to our personality" to our "unique talent" for naming and language play and to ask whether " ... a verbal enunciation, a word, a name (*nomen*), can have a performative force, conjuring the destiny (*omen*) and therefore determining the future"? [2,3]. This question was answered by noting that "Men and women want to live creatively, intensively and successfully in the world. They long to fulfill the potential of their nature ... What Adam and Eve sought from the tree of knowledge ... was the practical wisdom that would give them blessing and fulfillment" [4]. But now we learn that on succumbing to this Serpent-given "practical wisdom" Humankind had already fallen into a philosophical trap in the form of a " ... constant logocentric quest" [5]. Now the word "Logocentrism derives from the Greek *logos*, 'the word by which the inward thought is expressed' or 'reason itself'" [5], and Derrida argues that "Reason has been shaped by a dishonest pursuit of certainty which I have diagnosed as logocentrism" [5]. The problem is that "Logocentrism desires a perfectly rational language that perfectly represents the real world. Such a language of reason would absolutely guarantee that the presence of the world – the essence of everything in the world – would be transparently (re)present(ed) to an observing subject who could speak of it with complete certainty. Words would literally be the truth of things – like 'Word made flesh', as St John put it. Pure communion with the world – that is the seduction of logocentric Reason" [5]. We can negotiate the nature of this language trap metaphorically by invoking Nerval's "deliciously incomprehensible sonnet" [6] of loss (the first stanza of which is quoted above) in which "He has compressed years of experience into a few words, but these words are the quintessence of that experience, not a series of clues to events in his own life" [7]. We find that in " ... this richly connotative piece, almost every word is a symbol evoking a cluster of ideas and feelings, and, because of this, the reader has frequently selected, according to his lights, the meaning which is appropriate for him" [7]. The problem with this is " ... to determine whether each of several interpretations of a given symbol is equally important to an appreciation of the work as a whole, or whether there is a basic meaning for each word-symbol to which all others are subsidiary. The crucial reason for this is that "Since poets are dealing with words, and since each of these contributes to the total significance of the poem, it is incumbent upon the critic to find the basic meaning, the fundamental tone, of each word-symbol, and to relegate other meanings to their proper secondary role" [7]. Derrida might well lament with

Lacan “Words represent me, but are not for me ...” [8] “ ... It’s a nightmare! The certainty of reason is a tyranny which can only be sustained by the evils of repressing or excluding what is uncertain, what doesn’t fit it, what is different, reason is indifferent to the Other” [5], where “The Other is thus the place of language, external to the speaker, and yet, since he or she is a speaker, internal at the same time” [8].

Now “Man is man only through language” [9], but even so, “Language does not provide us with a proper identity: the words we use are used by other people, on television, in books, in the media. *The words do not belong to us.* They are alienating. Even when we want to say something intimate, linked to our heart, like ‘I love you’, we might be inhibited because we have heard so many other people say this. ... It is as if the words are the property of someone or something else. ... They belong to the Other” [8]. We must therefore naturally ask: what of humankind’s maturation and development; its move towards species individuation through language? How can we escape the “tyranny” of the “certainty of reason”? Well, Lacan’s insight was that “‘The unconscious is structured as a language.’ ... This is Lacan’s most famous pronouncement. What does it mean? How can the unconscious, which is instinctual and, by definition, unknowable to the subject, be structured as a *language*?” [5]. The answer to this is that “The unconscious functions by signs, metaphors, symbols and in this sense it is ‘like’ a language. ... But Lacan’s point is that the unconscious only comes to exist *after* language is acquired” [5]. So the development of the unconscious language is through “Generalized symbolic media [which] are communication devices that allow processes at a lower level in the control hierarchy to be transacted in a higher level system” [10], that is “ ... the unconscious ... is constituted by a series of chains of signifying elements. Like an infernal translating machine, it turns words into symptoms, it inscribes signifiers into the flesh or turns them into tormenting thoughts or compulsions” [8]. What is the nature of this “infernal translating machine”? Well, first of all, “Saussure bequeathed a decisive *binary model* to postmodern theory. Language is a sign system that functions by an operational code of *binary* oppositions” [5]. Now, such oppositions consist of “ ... a pair of contrasted terms, each of which depends on the other for its meaning. There are many such oppositions, and they’re all governed by the distinction, *either/or*. If we accept this, it establishes conceptual order. Binary oppositions classify and organize the objects, events and relations of the world. They make decision possible. And they govern thinking in everyday life, as well as philosophy, theory and the sciences” [11]. Moreover, we might like to think that “The human mind functions in model binary sets – noise/silence, raw/cooked, naked/clothed, light/darkness, sacred/profane and so on. Minds working logically (that is *culturally*) unconsciously duplicate nature” [5]. For example, “Why have we chosen the colours green, yellow and red for our traffic-light system? Because it is a ‘fact of nature’ that our colour code signals for *Go – Caution – Stop* mimic the same structure found in the spectrum. Green is a short wavelength, red is long and yellow lies midway. The brain searches for a *representation* of the binary opposition (go) +/- (stop), and finds green and red and also the intermediate colour term (*/*) caution, yellow” [5]. And there

are important implications for this, since “This apparently simple binary contrast of substitution and combination generates higher degrees of complexity and might be said to account for the imaginative or symbolic use of language – in other words, the possibility of meaningful *fictions*. For instance: paradigmatic substitution involves a perception of *similarity* which can generate *METAPHOR* – ‘a tower of strength’, ‘a glaring error’ – descriptions that are not literally true. Syntagmatic combination involves a perception of *contiguity* which can generate *METONYMY* (naming an attribute or adjunct of the thing instead of the thing itself – ‘crown’ for royalty, ‘turf’ for horse-racing) or *SYNECHDOCHE* (naming the part for the whole – ‘keels’ for ships” [5]. Thus in Lacanian terms “It is through language that the child enters the social world, – the symbolic order – as an ‘I’ ... But with a crucial difference for the *male* and *female* subjects” [5]. We will return to this male-female dichotomy-zeugma later. Now “the meaningful fiction” of the “ ... Symbolic order refers to the system of pre-existing social structures into which the child is born, such as kinship, rituals, gender roles and indeed language itself. Identity assumed at the Imaginary phase is finally constructed by the Symbolic order, the realm of the Father who prohibits the mother-child ‘incest’ relationship. Language belongs to the Father, that is, to the patriarchal order of the *phallus*” [5]. Under these assumptions, let us consider the famous aphorism “‘I think therefore I am.’ What happens to this famous Cartesian proof of self-identity in the structuralist view? The ‘I’ or unitary human subject – the very cornerstone of Western logic and philosophy – dissolves into a *signifying language-user*. The ‘I’ is a language fiction, signified by *use*, not *meaning*, and generated in much the same way as metaphor or metonymy. Structuralism is unhelpful in explaining what *motivates* the language-using subject, i.e., the individual. The logic of the system entirely surpasses and evades the subject’s *reasons* for using language. Saying ‘to communicate his personal thought’, is not good enough. How did ‘personal thought’ get into the system, anyhow?” [5]. Furthermore, we are able to go on to answer the question: “What, then, is the ‘universe,’ the bigger, smarter source that chooses the words for us?” [12]. And the forthcoming answer is that my “universe” is “ ... a state of the language-brain conditioned by my consciousness, existing only in interaction with it. This is the covenant. So that what writes is neither ‘I,’ nor ‘language,’ but I-in-language, the self-process of experience and desire mapped onto the language-web, physical brain and virtual brain acting together” [12].

However, what if there are circumstances which are “undecidable” in terms of these binary oppositions, where “Undecidables disrupt this oppositional logic. They slip across both sides of an opposition but don’t properly fit either. They are more than the opposition can allow. And because of that, they question the very principle of ‘opposition’” [11]. Let us turn our attention to Cain the “wretched one” (whose name connotes “created” or “acquired,” as well as alluding to “smithcraft”) who was the elder son of Adam and Eve and was considered a gracious gift from God [13]. Or was he? For there are other sources which suggest that “the serpent not only desired Eve but actually had sexual relations with her that produced Cain” [14]. But whatever his genesis, he slew his younger brother Abel (“breath” or “nothingness” [13]): so

the “Created” murdered “Nothing” and was banished by God. In this logo-myth we can read the Lacanian “... power and organizing principle of the symbolic, understood as the networks, social, cultural, linguistic, into which a child is born. These precede the birth of the child, which is why Lacan can say that language is there from before the actual moment of birth. It is there in the social structures which are at play in the family and, of course, in the ideals, goals and histories of the parents. Even before a child is born, the parents have talked about him or her, chosen a name, mapped out his or her future. The world of language can hardly be grasped by the newborn and yet it will act on the whole of the child’s existence” [8]. Thus “If the child is captured in an image, he or she will still assume signifiers from the speech of the parents as elements of identification. As a mother raises the baby to see its reflection, she might say ... You look just like your father” [8]. The importance of this is that “These are symbolic pronouncements since they situate a child in a lineage, in a symbolic universe. The baby is bound to its image by words and names, by linguistic representations. A mother who keeps telling her son ‘What a bad boy you are!’ may end up with either a villain or a saint. The identity of the child will depend on how he or she assumes the words of the parents” [8]. Thus “The child does not suddenly decide to put himself or herself in the shoe of some ancestor or family member. Rather, the speech which he or she hears as a child will be incorporated, forming a kernel of insignia which are unconscious ... [This explains] how the subject has ‘become’ what a parent prophesied or how he or she has repeated the mistakes of a grandparent” [8]. Now “A word does not reveal its meaning so simply. Rather, it leads on to other words in a linguistic chain, just like one meaning itself leads to others” [8] and once again we see that “...the sound departed from the heart of God and embraced the whole space of this world; but as soon as it turned out to be evil, then the sound again retreated back” [15]. So in the light of this can we understand that “In Husserl’s view, to express oneself is to be behind the sign ... To attend to one’s speech, to assist it. Only living speech in its mastery and magisteriality, is able to assist itself; and only living speech is expression and not a servile sign” [11]. Thus “The voice is the privileged medium of meaning ... This is phonocentrism: the voice is the centre” [11]. The implication is that for an “expressive” sign (as designated by Husserl) “If living intention is to animate it, it will need the presence of its living producer. So, what’s the privileged form of the expressive sign? The speaking voice, superior to all other forms because it seems present (proximate, immediate) to the silent, interior consciousness. Husserl reproduces the phonocentric priority” [11]. The nomenclature of this story carries the hidden message that “As we come into the world capable of destruction, we also come into the world with creative capabilities” [13]. And this evokes the idea of “the trace” which suggests “... that all language is subject to undecidability. The play of the trace is a kind of deforming, reforming slippage – an inherent instability which language cannot escape. This applied to philosophical language as well. The vocabulary of metaphysics (being, truth, centre, origin, etc) has to be recognized as a vocabulary. It’s a set of words, and they cannot escape the play of the trace. Now if the trace is a constant sliding between presence and absence, those philosophical words cannot establish full, replete presence.

This strikes at the very roots of Western metaphysics, because it's the claim to full presence which underpins metaphysical concepts and procedures" [11]. Further, we read in Genesis 4 that "{15} ... the LORD put a mark on Cain, lest any who came upon him should kill him" [16]. We find that "The Mark of Cain, or cross, symbolizes a hammer, for Cain was a Worker in Metals" [17], and even today, "... tau [the cross] survives as tav, ... its name is still understood in Hebrew to mean 'mark,' ... According to legend, this branding, final letter, tav, was the 'mark' mentioned in the biblical book of Genesis as being placed by God upon Cain" for his protection [18]. And, interestingly, despite subtle snake-lore in the passages we read about Satan, "A monstrous Serpent on his Belly prone, / Reluctant, but in vaine: a greater power / Now rul'd him, punisht in the shape he sin'd, / According to his doom: he would have spoke, / But hiss for hiss returnd with forked tongue / To forked tongue ..." (Paradise Lost X: 514 – 519 [19]) we note that "S's hissing sound need not always be bad: In Jewish mystical tradition, the Hebrew sibilant shin was equated by sound with the element of fire and was exalted as one of the three 'mother' letters" [18]. And returning to Cain, and his mark, we find that there is even a relationship between S and T, as described by Lucian in AD 100, in his 'Consonants at Court,' which "imagines a lawsuit between two rival letters: the Greek S letter, named sigma, and the T letter, tau. Speaking before the judges, S denounces T as an agent of dictators and repression: 'They say it was T's shape that tyrants copied when they first set up the cross to crucify men. This vile device is called a stauros, and it gets its name from tau'" [18]. Thus crucifying stauros, tool of redemption through death, itself reminiscent of Greek sauros, 'lizard', is born of hissing-S and protecting/crucifying-T. Moreover, "ST can be expressed hieroglyphically as \$ symbolizing the serpent and the T, the cross or the Tree of Life. It is the life (serpentine) force pushing thru the growing point, threshold or 'site'. The pairing of S and T strongly accents foundation, the 'seat' of consciousness. Set, the oldest Egyptian god, forms the basis of all the other gods, and being so basic or low he is considered evil" [17]. Thus "It's always possible to OVERTURN a metaphysical binarism, to reverse its hierarchy by privileging its second term – for instance, to privilege body not mind, Man not God, the complex before the simple, absence rather than presence" [11]. Furthermore in figure of the "serpent and the cross" we see how "... Derrida sets the trace across the Saussurean sign – an undecidable presence-absence at the origin of meaning. Language is premised on an interweaving movement between what is there and not there. Language is always an interweaving, a textile" [11], a style of text an interspersing of S and T. From a Deconstructivist perspective we can read this parable as saying that "It was incorrect to suppose that anything reasoned is ever universal, timeless and stable. Any meaning or identity (including our own) is provisional and relative, because it is never exhaustive, it can always be traced further back to a prior network of differences, and further back again ... almost to infinity or the 'zero degree' of sense. This is deconstruction – to peel away like an onion the layers of constructed meanings" [5]. In fact, "Undecidability disrupts the binary structures of metaphysical thinking. It DISPLACES the 'either/or' structure of oppositions. The undecidable plays all ways, takes no sides. It won't be fixed down. It leaves no certainty of

privileged foundational term against subordinated second term. The unfixing of this certainty is the unfixing of metaphysics" [11]. And so it may seem that we Cain set aside the Serpent, its life story stated...

... Or are we Able to? For Genesis 11:1 tells us: "And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech.' In the less familiar Hebrew it sounds this way: *'VaYiHee Kol HaAreTZ SaPHaH AKHaT ooDiVaRim AKHaDim'* [20]. And it is enlightening to note that "Of one speech (of 'common' speech) in Hebrew is DEVARIM ACHADIM – a plural form. DEVAR ACHAD means 'one thing', the IM is the plural suffix. DEVAR means 'thing' as well as 'word'. The consonants DVR form the root of the verb 'to speak'. Translation loses the plural meaning of the suffix IM" [21]. So we might, quite reasonably, ask "... how Adam, Eve, and the Serpent were taught the same language" [22] – or indeed, whether they were all more closely related than we have been led to believe? And there's another question: "How did the serpent learn...? Did God teach ... him, or did he happen to overhear God, when he was teaching Adam and Eve?" [23]. We could go so far as to ask God: "Did You really create a serpent that talks human language? What language was that by the way, French? Italian? American Indian maybe? Oh, no. America had not yet been discovered. How about Japanese? Russian? Oh, I'm forgetting, you gods had not yet toppled the Tower of Babel to confound us. It was Persian! They gave You that talking-serpent nonsense. I've got it! It was Hebrew. Right?" [24]. In other words, in terms of our symbols: how can a single language process develop to encompass the programming principle of God, the naming principle of Adam, the generative principle of Eve, and the reasoning principle of Satan? After all we might conjecture that "Many centuries are required to produce a language capable of expressing complex ideas. It does not seem to me that ideas can be manufactured by a deity and put in the brain of man" [22]. Moreover even the process of language acquisition must be queried since we can argue that "The teacher judges that his pupil has mastered the rule of addition if he obtains enough of the same results as the teacher is himself disposed to reach. I am on the right semantic track so long as my verbal usages agree with those of my community. This may sound very well, until we pause to consider what agreement comes to in this context. In the case of the teacher no provision has been made for anything more than the fact that on similar occasions he and his pupil make similar marks or noises. The practice of the community is supposed to bestow meaning on my utterances" [25]. And of course the problem lies here, for " ... what is the community except a collection of persons? And if each of those persons is supposed to take his orders about meaning solely from the others, it follows that none of them takes any orders. The whole semantic house of cards is based upon our taking in each other's washing, or would be if there were any laundry to wash" [25]. The answer to this quandary lies in the distinction between the innate and unique human capability to use language, and the realization of this capability in a specific form. That is, "Language ... must be looked upon as being an immediate given in mankind. Taken as a work of man's reason, undertaken in clarity of consciousness, it is wholly inexplicable. Nor

does it help to supply man with millennia upon millennia for the 'invention' of language. Language could not be invented or come upon if its archetype were not already in the human mind ... As natural as the supposition of the gradual development of languages is, yet the 'invention' of language could only happen all at once" [9]. The logical consequence of this is that "Man is man only through language; to invent language, he would have to be man already. As soon as one imagines that it happened gradually ... that by means of a bit more invented language, man became more human, and being more human, thus was enabled to invent a little more language, one fails to recognize the indivisibility of human consciousness and human speech, and the nature of the intellectual act which is necessary to comprehend but a single word, but which then suffices to comprehend all of language" [9].

Now we have seen that generative Mother Eve "dreaming ... touched by time," mediated our Fall into reason [2,3], and we are led to ask what this means in terms of the nature of the postulated "generalized symbolic media" discussed above. We realise that "The mother is symbol of our primary unity and the thing we long to find again. But the paradox is that unity is the other side of differentiation, and for that the cutting edge of the Father and the Logos is necessary ... the Eros (connecting power) ... is the complement of the Logos (dividing power)" [26]. Now we know that "The emergence of a personified feminine figure called Wisdom occurred during the period of the Jewish exile in Babylon ... it appears that these exiled Jews were dependent on the illuminative presence of Wisdom to lead them back into their own muddled history, their own depths – and to light these up into universal meaning ... while they were in the harlot's midst, surrounded by her pagan myths and earth-goddesses, they discovered the fertility of their own imaginative gifts and wrote much of the Genesis account and Wisdom literature" [26]. We know that "Jung emphasized the importance of balance in a healthy mind. He wrote that modern humans rely too heavily on science and logic and would benefit from integrating spirituality and appreciation of the unconscious. Jung understands the emergence of the Demiurge out of the original, unified monadic source of the spiritual universe by gradual stages to be analogous to (and a symbolic depiction of) the emergence of the ego from the unconscious" [27]. We have to bear in mind, however, that "... it is uncertain as to whether the similarities between Jung's psychological teachings and those of the gnostics are due to their sharing a 'perennial philosophy', or whether Jung was unwittingly influenced by the Gnostics in the formation of his theories" [27]. Thus we follow Jung in realising that "Paradise Regained" requires "a second birth of a son from the mother Sophia [Wisdom], a divine birth which was characterized by a *coniunctio oppositorum* [joining of opposites] and which anticipated the *filius sapientiae* [son of wisdom], the essence of the individuation process" [28] since "While the masculine mysteries start from the priority of the spirit and look upon the reality of the phenomenal world and of matter as the creation of the spirit; the feminine mysteries start from the priority of the phenomenal, material world, from which the spiritual is born ... The two are complementary" [29]. Having understood this necessary dichotomy-zeugma or *coniunctio*, inherent in the universe of our discourse and

thus all our experience, we arrive at the reconciling of opposites: “In this moment, biology fuses with society, history with Now, the many with the one. Because this is so, the writing has meaning. And the more closely my experiences and desires, perhaps unrecognized until this instant, are mapped by my attention onto the language-web, the more sharply my imagination reveals huge patterns of protosyntactic paths in that web lit up by those experiences and desires” [12].

Now the “birth of a son from the mother Sophia” has another natural consequence. In order to achieve this *coniunctio* we require “ ... some place in which it can be created. Plato conjures one: a receptacle or *chora*” [11]. Now the metaphor of birth is redoubled and folded back upon itself since “We must try to describe in words a form that is difficult and obscure. It is the receptacle and, as it were, the nurse of all becoming and change. ... Compare the receptacle to the mother, the ideal model to the father and what they produce to their offspring ... It is a kind of neutral plastic material, malleable, like gold. The things which pass in and out of it are copies of the eternal realities ... And we may notice, that anything that is to receive in itself every kind of character must be devoid of all character. The receptacle is invisible and formless, all-embracing, possessed in a most puzzling way of intelligibility, yet very hard to grasp ... It’s something between container and contained. Like sand on the beach: it’s not an object or a place, but merely the record of the movement of water” [11]. In terms of psychological implications we note that “ ... it is clear from a comparison of Jung’s writings and that of ancient Gnostics, that Jung disagreed with them on the ultimate goal of the individual. Gnostics in ancient times clearly sought a return to a supreme, other-worldly Godhead. In a study of Jung, Robert Segal claimed that the eminent psychologist would have found the psychological interpretation of the goal of ancient Gnosticism (that is, re-unification with the Pleroma, or the unknown God) to be psychically ‘dangerous’, as being a total identification with the unconscious. To contend that there is at least some disagreement between Jung and Gnosticism is at least supportable: the Jungian process of individuation involves the addition of unconscious psychic tropes to consciousness in order to achieve a trans-conscious centre to the personality. Jung did not intend this addition to take the form of a complete identification of the Self with the Unconscious” [27]. We can think of this “dangerous ... total identification with the unconscious” in terms of the Gnostic chymical cauldron mediating the magical reconciliation of opposites, the return to the totality of the Pleroma, as a an overwhelming pressure developing in the “neutral, malleable *chora*.” For if you keep pouring water into a bowl, it will eventually overflow. But suppose there was some sort of attachment – a one way lid, for instance – that prevented excess water from spilling out over the edge. What would happen if more and more water was pumped into a finite bowl, but none was permitted to flow out? Eventually, the pressure inside the bowl would build to the point where it would burst. That’s precisely what happened ... Eventually, the walls ... were overwhelmed ... and they shattered” [30] leading to the diversification and diaspora of languages, the beginning of a new age of individuality with everyone seeking their own

“modern neutral language.” In Jadaeo-Christian mythology this conjunction-diaspora is recounted in stories surrounding the biblical character Nimrod (“let us revolt”), King of Babylon, whose reduced name-radical MRD gives us *Marduk* [20]. And we can be almost as certain as certainty is possible that “BAVEL is a hebraisation of the original Assyrian-Akkadian name for Babylon, viz. BABILI or BABILU, which is a compound of BAB ‘god’ and ILI or ILU ‘gate’ ...” [21]. In Babylonian religion “Nimrod (or Marduk) held a unique place. His wife was Semiramis ... They had a son whom Semiramis claimed was virgin-born, and they founded the mother and child cult” [20]. We find further that “In Babylon, after the flood, a mystery religion was created by Nimrod and his wife Semiramis. At its core, was a sexual interpretation of the serpent and the fall of Adam and Eve. It became known as the ‘secret mystery, the Chaldean mysteries, or the secret knowledge religion.’ ... This secret knowledge is alleged to be identical to that ‘gnosis-knowledge’ taught to Eve by the serpent. In its final analysis, the serpent is the ‘good-god’ and Eve is the whore goddess and high-priestess. This cult is also identical to the ‘SOPHIA’ religion. ‘Sophia’ means ‘wisdom.’ Hence, they believed in ‘secret wisdom’ known only among initiates who were sexually reprobated to become members” [31]. Now the importance of submitting to naming can be seen in the proclamation by the “son of the mother Sophia” that “I am a Prince, the son of a Prince, and the divine emanation which was produced from a god. I am a Great One, the son of a Great One, and my father hath determined for me my name. I have multitudes of names, and I have multitudes of forms, and my being existeth in every god. I have been invoked (or, proclaimed?) by Temu and Heru-Hekenu. My father and my mother uttered my name, and [they] hid it in my body at my birth so that none of those who would use against me words of power might succeed in making their enchantments have dominion over Me” [32]. Despite the importance of accepting the divine emanation through the Adamic principle of naming, “The people of Babylon wanted none of this. They wanted to establish their own reputation and eliminate God entirely” [20]. Thus they made bricks and built the Tower of Babel, seemingly simple: and yet “Translation also loses the connection between NILBENAH ‘let us make [bricks]’ and NABELAH ‘let us mix up’ ... [33]. The builders of the tower mixed together the ingredients of building material in order to join many bricks into one building. The Lord mixed up (scattered, segregated) the common language in order to destroy that arrogant unity. This is why Babel is a monument (a memorial to the dead). As Sallis ... [33] puts it: ‘The monumental building that was to have secured the community led instead to the loss of the common language and the dissolution of the community – to a detour.’ In other words, the monumental (size, space) building led to a monument (memorial to the dead diaspora)” [21].

The true crime committed by the Babel-onians was a “thought-crime” in that “Civilization is often thought of not as a forgetting but as a remembering, wherein language enables accumulated knowledge to be transmitted forward, allowing us to profit from other’s experiences as though they were our own. Perhaps what is forgotten is simply that other’s experiences are *not* our own, that the civilizing process is thus a vicarious and inauthentic

one. When language, for good reason, is held to be virtually coterminous with life, we are dealing with another way of saying that life has moved progressively farther from directly lived experience" [34]. This led them "into all kinds of bother, to a catastrophe in fact; to the diaspora, the scattergram, the dissemination of Mother" [21]. As a necessary consequence of their individuation the Babylonians were confounded and their language "confused" to a "babble." And with Semiramis lamenting "Hath a serpent shot his venom into thee? Hath a thing which thou hast fashioned lifted up its head against thee? Verily it shall be overthrown by beneficent words of power ..." [32], it is written that "{8} ... the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of the whole earth; and they stopped building the city. {9} Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of the whole earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of the whole earth" (Genesis 11) [16]. And with this we also note that "Within time, however, the father Nimrod was practically overlooked and worshiped only as the god-incarnate son [Tammuz] in his mother's arms. In other words, the father became invisible and was no longer worshiped, whereas, the mother with the god-incarnate son in her arms became the grand object of worship" [35]. We can here fruitfully introduce the Derridean concept of "supplement" where "The French word *supplément* means both addition and replacement. The supplement both extends and replaces – as a dietary supplement both adds to and becomes part of the diet" [11]. The point about this is that "The supplement obeys a strange logic. To be an addition means to be added to something already complete ... yet it cannot be complete if it needs an addition. ... This supplement extends by repeating. ... But the supplement opposes by replacing" [11]. Thus we see that "The declaration 'The king is dead, long live the king!' must escape the grip of standard logic. It follows the logic of the supplement. The king must be *the same but different* ..." [11]. And, if we interpret Tammuz as the Egyptian Theuth, then "Theuth is thus the father's other, the father, and himself. He cannot be assigned a fixed location in this play. Sly, slippery and masked, an intriguer and a card, he is neither king nor jack, but rather a sort of *joker*, a floating signifier, a wild card, one who puts play into play" [11]. The whole point of this story then is that "Every act of his is marked by an unstable ambivalence. He is the god of calculation, arithmetic and rational science; and he also presides over the occult sciences, astrology and alchemy. He is the god of magic formulae, of secret accounts, of hidden texts. And so he is the god of *medicine*. The god of writing is the god of the *pharmakon* ... Isn't the undecidable demi-god condemned to invent undecidables? Not just remedies, but *pharmakons*?" [11] And this sly, ambivalent undecidability is what leads to the necessary rupture of the chymical *chora* of the *coniunctio*. Now in a modern context, we reach the same conclusions, just using different words. For as Wolfgang Pauli observed in correspondence with Jung, "It is true that in the empirical world of phenomena there must always be the difference between 'physical' and 'psychic', and it was the mistake of alchemists to apply a monist (neutral) language to concrete chemical processes. But now that matter has also become an abstract invisible reality for the modern physicist, the prospects for a psychophysical monism have become much more favourable" [36], and we are faced

with the reconciliation of oppositions yet again. This leads us to realise that “In a modern language this archetypal occurrence must have to do with a *monistic psychophysical reality*, which is realized, when the chymic wedding of a male and a female god has taken place and as a result of this *coniunctio* a child has been born, which is, after Jung, the *homunculus*. Thus, we must find out, how we can describe this 21st century's archetypal occurrence in terms of a modern ‘neutral language’ beyond quantum physics and depth psychology. Hermetic alchemy already had a vision of this process – but expressed in an archaic language” [36].

And confusion, like God, does, indeed, reign down from above. We are told that “the name ‘Babel’ is composed of two words, ‘*baa*’ meaning ‘gate’ and ‘*el*,’ ‘god.’ Hence, ‘the gate of god.’ A related word in Hebrew, ‘*balal*’ means ‘confusion” [20]. But Voltaire, no less, differs in his interpretation, saying: “I do not know why it is said in Genesis that Babel signifies confusion, for Ba signifies father in the original Oriental tongues, and Bel signifies God; Babel signifies the city of God, the holy city. But it is incontestable that Babel means confusion, either because the architects were confounded after having raised their work up to eighty-one thousand Jewish feet, or because the tongues were then confounded; and it is obviously from that time on that the Germans no longer understood the Chinese; for it is clear, according to the scholar Bochart, that Chinese is originally the same tongue as High German” [37]. In our search for the answer to this conundrum it helps to remind ourselves that “The root of Hebrew verbs are usually trilateral, i.e. they consist of a compound of three consonants. Consider the following Hebrew consonantal clusters: BLL (*balal*) = ‘confuse’ ... BLBL (*bilbool*) = ‘confusion’ ... BVL (*Bavel*) = ‘Babylon” [21]. On top of this; and in addition to the absence of vowels, we build the tower of observations that: “1. BLBL and BVL are both noun derivatives of BLL ... 2. In Hebrew the consonants B and the V are homographic. The [b] phone is obtained by the addition of a dot to the V” [21]. Thus we can conclude that “It is logical to suppose that the Hebrew BALAL ‘confusion’ preexisted BAVEL, if only because it’s difficult to assign the label ‘confusion’ to something like an eighty-one thousand Jewish foot Babylonian tower unless one knows what confusion is; which assumes (but not always) that one has a word to describe this feeling” [21]. What’s more we note that “What catches the eye is the similarity between (1) the Hebrew roots BLL and BLBL (VLL and VLVL) and (2) BVL (BABEL < BABILU ‘gate of god’) [21]. And so we might be able to resolve the conundrum “With regard to the link between BALAL and BABEL ... The Hebrew scribes, not news reporters, must have been aware of the coincidental connection between the signifier BALAL and the BAVEL tower before writing their text. They created the tower story (not the term BAVEL) in order to historicise (mythologise?) the confusion of languages. History, in this episode, was caught with its mythological pants down. Or the other way round” [21]. We cannot, of course, know what those “Hebrew scribes” from “an historical, not a mythological, people” [21] were really up to, and “Unfortunately there is not enough evidence to settle the matter. However, although the Law of Moses does not explicitly mention any strict observation of [historicisation

(mythologisation?)] deconstruction, one can infer – if only negatively – that it was encouraged; if this were not so, it would have been codified with other obscenities such as the rupturing of smooth surfaces” [21].

Thus we have unwittingly stumbled into the subtle terrain of philology and also mythology ... or even philosophy. And if we deconstruct-reconstruct and ask: should that be philomyth? .. or mythophilia? ... how about mythosophy? ... or sophophilia? ... or sophology? Whatever term we choose, we conclude that “the consequence of the Babylonian diaspora scatters itself across the whole nebula of language” [21]. And is this the Lord’s largesse for leading us to a philosophy for the love of lore; like the Biblical Daniel with his “{4} ... aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand ... the language and literature of the Babylonians” (Daniel 1 [16]). Or, is it Satan’s stratagem for unleashing ligatures for linguistic manipulation: for “selling ourselves into bondage” like Joseph “{38} ‘ ... one in whom is the spirit of God?’ {39} ‘ ... [Than whom] there is no one so discerning and wise ...’” (Genesis 41 [16]). Or maybe language plays both parts, embracing Sophia and Logos in its confusing sophology. For natural language is the terrain of paradoxes, which arise from the fertile ground of “... analytically clumsy languages ... [which] break down into the linguistic manifestations of the language in which they’re expressed” [38]. And “We cannot develop all the implications which would follow ... were Sophia recognized as the feminine complement to the masculine Logos ... a ‘muse’ signifying the extensions of that word from musician to amusement ... To play is to be utterly absorbed in the here and now – with presence. It is immediate reality, not postponed reality or a preoccupation with controlling the future” [26]. So it is that we have discovered “That is what is named from here on Babel: the law imposed by the name of God who in one stroke commands and forbids you to translate by showing and hiding from you the limit” [39]. And we can ask whether it is our task in species individuation to recover our sense of playfulness, paradoxically through rediscovering yet rejecting “... the most analytically exact language imaginable ... [where] everything is flexible, and ideas come in huge numbers of congruent sets, governed by the same words...” [38] in order to regenerate “the very means by which beauty enters the world ... “ [26] and to realise that to “... honour Sophia would also be the acknowledgement that beauty belongs with truth and that we must work for its release”? [26].

The teeth of the “language trap” tighten with the invention of the written word, and it is natural to ask “What is it about the written word? What makes it so powerful?” [40]. As an example we note that “Moses did not come back down from Mount Sinai having had a five-minute chat with the Supreme Being. No. Apparently, he spent a couple of days up there while the Almighty himself wrote the commandments down on two tablets of stone. Presumably, the fact that these imprecations were personally carved all the way through the stone (leaving miraculous, unattached floaty bits in the middle of certain letters, we’re told) and were thus legible from both sides, rendered these rules non-negotiable” [40]. And in fact “From the

earliest cave paintings, through clay tablets, papyrus sheets, hieroglyphs etched on pyramid walls, stretched goat skin, to modern pulp paper, the written word has always had a sense of ... permanent importance ... about it" [40]. More that that we realize that "The written marks are abandoned, cut off from the writer, yet they continue to produce effects beyond his presence and beyond the present actuality of his meaning, i.e., beyond his life itself" [11] and that "To write is to produce a mark which will constitute a kind of machine that is in turn productive ... The writer's disappearance will not prevent it functioning" [11]. This is because " ... the letters have a kind of genius – a genius for showing the sounds of speech ... They can be arranged in endless combinations as necessary ... There were about 27 recurring shapes: a fish, a snake, a human stick figure with arms out, a wavy line, the head of an ox or cow, ..." [18]. Now "Language at this juncture becomes the representation of representation, in hieroglyphic and ideographic writing and then in phonetic-alphabetic writing. The progress of symbolization, from the symbolizing of words, to that of syllables, and finally to letters in an alphabet, imposed an increasingly irresistible sense of order and control. And in the reification that writing permits, language is no longer tied to a speaking subject or community of discourse, but creates an autonomous field from which every subject can be absent" [34]. For " All writing, in order to be what it is, must be able to function in the radical absence of every empirically determined addressee in general ... This is not a modification of presence, but a break in it, a 'death' or the possibility of a 'death' of the addressee" [11]. Moreover, "To sign into a signature is in a way to loosen the moorings of self-preservation; it is to unsheath the canon of one's ungainliness (French gain 'sheath'), one's nakedness, one's mortality – a monumental exposure. The monument is simply death remembered; nothing of 'monumental' import" [21]. These motifs have always suggested esoteric readings and, "Since the 19th century, a few thinkers have held the letters' shapes to be the subconscious expressions of a collective human mind ... the shapes evolved over centuries due to guiding human principles rather than to mere convenience in scribbling" [18]. Kallir interpreted the alphabet as a sexual picture code, a "magic chain of procreative symbols destined to safeguard the survival of the race" of humankind [41]. In this mythology of meaning "The shape of A, for example, sticking into the air and associated historically with the ox's horns, is a cinch to symbolize the erect male member. The curve of D is the full womb of a pregnant lady. And G turns out to be a most explicit letter, showing the act itself, with a female circle and male crossbar" [18].

And the very characters themselves, binding the creative essence of "the Word" were held to harness a supernatural power: "At a still higher level, philosophies of writing have attributed certain sacred qualities to the written signs, even claiming spiritual experience through the ritualistic practice of writing. By taking the art of calligraphy to the sublime heights of meditation through the symbolic representation of deities in the form of letters (seed-syllables), written signs not only served to help acquire a knowledge base of the physical world around the human being, but also played an important role in their spiritual and

metaphysical needs” [42]. Now the philosopher “Austin conjectures a kind of agony of language that must be kept firmly at a distance, or from which one must resolutely turn away. His argument suggests a *risk* surrounding language like a ditch, into which it might fall; a place of external perdition into which language might never venture. That is might avoid by remaining at home. ... The ditch? *Writing ...*” [11]. However, by contrast, “What Austin expels are aberrant, Derrida takes as the standard case. And this is found in writing. ... Writing operates on *absences*. It can be cut free from its sender and its addressee. In their absence a third party can decipher it, identify its marks, and use it” [11]. The mechanism by which “Letterforms essentially aided communication with the unknown [was] via the primal energy behind their worldly manifestations” [42]. In Tibetan philosophy, “ ... the written seed character (letter) is as potent as a spoken one. The most favoured and potent of all mantra – *om mani padme hum*, which in essence represents the breakthrough (*om*) of seeing the absolute (*mani*, jewel) in the relative (*padme*, lotus) ... beyond time, space and individuality (*hum*). This mantra of liberation is written on rocks, flags, and prayerwheels and is regarded as the epitome of Buddhist teachings” [42]. Furthermore, consider “The All Powerful Ten,” the mantra of Kālacakra (one of the main Tantric deities of Vajrayāna Buddhism [43]) “consisting of ten syllables om, ha, k-sa, ma, la, va, ra, ya-m and composed in the unique integrated fashion, [which] is another sacred manifestation of letterforms of the highest order” [42]. The Vimalaprabhā describes the symbolism of “The Ten” – “From the vajra-kāya, described as ten existences, body, awareness, space, wind, fire, water, earth, stable, moving, and the gods unseen and uncreated, originate the site of creation of mantras, and Lord of Men, there again are released. In this way one who understands this properly is not a beast and their mind is free from conceptualisation” [43]. Here “ ... the vajra-kāya, the pure aspect of the body, is described in terms of ten aspects of existence, and that these are essentially (associated with) the sites of articulation of different sounds” [43]. This mantra is so highly regarded that “In fact the written word, calligraphically written or wood-block printed, still commands maximum respect in Tibetan faith today” [42]. In contrast, there are examples where the written script alone is sufficient for meditation: “Perhaps *Siddham* (a variant of northern Brahmi from 5th / 6th. Century AD India) is the only script in which letterforms have been solely used for meditative purposes, through the visual symbolism of ritualistically written seed-syllables, as a part of the practice of ... esoteric Buddhism in China and Japan” [42]. The Founder of Shingon Japanese Esoteric Buddhism “Kukai helped to elucidate what mantra is in a way that had not been done before: he addresses the fundamental questions of what a text is, how signs function, and above all, what language is. In this he covers some of the same ground as modern day structuralists and others scholars of language, although he comes to very different conclusions” [44]. In fact, “ ... rather than being devoid of meaning, Kukai suggests that dharanis [like mantras] are in fact saturated with meaning – every syllable is symbolic on multiple levels. One of Kukai’s distinctive contributions was to take this symbolic association even further by saying that there is no essential difference between the syllables of mantras and sacred texts, and those of ordinary language” [44]. We find that “In

this system of thought all sounds are said to originate from 'a' – which is the short sound in father. For esoteric Buddhism 'a' has a special function because it is associated with Shunyata or the idea that nothing exists in its own right, but is contingent upon causes and conditions. In Sanskrit 'a' is a prefix which changes the meaning of a word into its opposite, so 'vidya' is understanding, and 'avidya' is ignorance (the same arrangement is also found in many Greek words, like example, 'atheism' vs. 'theism' and 'apathy' vs. 'pathos')" [44]. In this practice, "A', the seed character of Mahavairocana [Great Shining One] (Dainichi Nyorai [Great Sun Buddha]) is the most important *Siddham* (meaning of the perfect) character. *One look at the letter a, destroys evil passion; the efficacy of the mantra transforms this body into Buddha.* For the purpose of meditation, the character is drawn large in either formal or soft style on a scroll and hung on a wall. Sitting in front of this letter and meditating, in the process of enlightenment the distinction between worshipper and worshipped is effaced for the meditator" [42]. In Vedic Hinduism we encounter the *Yantra*, meaning "instrument". In terms of these practices, "A Yantra is a geometric design acting as a highly efficient tool for contemplation, concentration and meditation. Yantras carry spiritual significance, and point the user to higher levels of consciousness" [45]. The way in which this is achieved is that "The Yantra provides a focal point that is a window into the absolute. When the mind is concentrated on a single, simple object (in this case a Yantra), the mental chatter ceases. Eventually, the object is dropped when the mind can remain empty and silent without help. In the most advanced phases, it is possible to attain union with God by the geometric visualization of a Yantra" [45]. In terms of its symbolic meaning "The Yantra is like a microcosmic picture of the macrocosm. It is a focusing point and an outer and inner doorway. The Yantras are often focused on a specific deity and so by tuning into the different Yantras you can tap into certain deities or creative force centers in the universe" [45], and in terms of construction, "Yantras are usually designed so that the eye is carried into the center, and very often they are symmetrical. They can be drawn on paper, wood, metal, or earth, or they can be three-dimensional" [45].

Let us now turn our attention to the hieroglyphics of Ancient Egypt where "Belief in the magical efficacy of the 'divine words' found ... expression in the attempts that were occasionally made to limit the power of certain hieroglyphs, especially those depicting humans, birds and animals" [46]. The reason for this is that "These were deemed to have considerable potential for harm when located in magically 'sensitive' areas, like the walls of a burial chamber or the sides of a sarcophagus" [46]. In fact, "The fear was that they might assume an independent hostile life of their own and consume the food offerings intended for the deceased or even attack the dead body itself" [46]. These dangers had to be resisted, and "Steps were therefore taken to neutralise the danger that they posed. Sometimes such hieroglyphs were simply suppressed and replaced by anodyne substitutes. On other occasions they were modified in some way to immobilise them" [46]. How might this be accomplished? Well, "The bodies of human figures and the heads of insects and snakes were

omitted, the bodies of birds truncated, the bodies of certain animals severed in two, and the tails of snakes abbreviated" [46]. In exceptional cases, "Particularly dangerous creatures, such as the evil serpent, called Apophis, the great enemy of the sun-god Rē^c, were sometimes shown as constrained or 'killed' by knives or spears" [46]. On the other hand, some " ... hieroglyphs were regarded as having beneficial properties and were rendered in three dimensions to serve as amulets or charms. When worn on the body these amulets were believed to confer 'good luck' on their owners, whether living or dead" [46]. For example, "The amulet in the form of the *sa*-sign, meaning 'protection', was one of several that offered protection against the powers of evil; the so-called *udjat*-eye of the god Horus was another" [46]. Moreover, "The *ankh*- and the *djed*-signs offered the benefits of 'life' and 'endurance' respectively, while the hand, leg and face, and others like them, helped to restore the functions of the bodily parts after death" [46], and "The sign meaning 'horizon' shows the sun rising over a mountain. It allowed the deceased to witness and identify with the sun's daily rebirth and thereby be reborn himself" [46]. Furthermore, "As an integral part of a system of recreative art the hieroglyphs were naturally believed to have the power to bring to life what they depicted or stated. A funerary formula invoking benefits from a god was enough in itself, if it was written in hieroglyphs, to ensure the reception of those benefits by the deceased owner, as long as the owner was named ... " [46]. The reason for this was that "The name of a person, inscribed in hieroglyphs, was believed to embody the person's unique identity. If the representation of a person lacked a name, it lacked also the means to ensure his continued existence in the after-life. To destroy the name(s) of a person was to deprive him of his identity and render him non-existent" [46]. Of particular interest is the fact that "Even the gods were not immune from such attack. When King Akhenaten sought, in the late Eighteenth Dynasty, to institute a new religion of the sun disk and abolish the old regime, he ordered, among other things, that the name of the existing chief of the gods, Amun, be removed from the monuments of the land, with effects that can still be seen on many surviving pieces" [46].

Now, as example of writing from a completely different cultural milieu we might consider the Germanic Runes, of which, as a best estimate, we have extant about 5000 inscriptions from maybe 40000 produced between AD 100 and AD 500 [47]. We are prompted to ask the question "Why were runes invented? What did Germanic peoples need them for?" [47], and maybe by comparison with the motivation and usage of the ritual hieroglyphic inscriptions, described above, the answer to this has proved contentious. We find that "Some scholars, whose views are now rather outdated, asserted that the social structure of the Germanic nations was so simple, their political and commercial life so limited, that they had no need of a script for keeping records, sending messages, asserting ownership, or doing other practical things. The human memory, working in an oral culture, was adequate" [47]. So on this argument, " ... the only use for such a script as runes was for religious, ritual or magical purposes" [47]. We find "Such an inscription as *gutaniowihailag*, with that significant last sequence 'holy', might seem to confirm this theory, and the monuments record several other

letter groups that look equally significant” [47]. For example, “Some early objects have on them the group *alu*, others *laukaR*. These sequences, the first connected with protection and the second with fertility, have been read as magical words converting the objects they adorn into amulets” [47]. Even the name of the script was taken to add to this theory, for “Moreover, the etymology of the word ‘rune’ (Old English *run* which means ‘secret, mystery’ has been used to connect the script with the occult, with magic. From this type of evidence has developed the attitude that runes were essentially, in origin at any rate, a magical or religious set of characters, that runic legends have, by virtue of their script, magical properties, and that rune-masters – the men who were trained to use the alphabet – had supernatural powers or were able to control or release such powers by their use of runes” [47]. This leads to the observation that “In the fiction of late mediaeval Scandinavia the employment of runes for magical formulæ became commonplace” [47]. And then again, there’s a further mystery, which might be encapsulated by asking: “ ... why did the Anglo-Saxon literate trade in their runic writing for the continental spread?” [48]. We discover that one reason “ ... may be seen in the word *rune* itself: in Old English, the verb *rūnian* meant ‘to whisper’ (whence the archaic Modern English *round* [to whisper], and the noun *rūn* meant ‘secret council.’ ... If runes were a big secret, they were presumably of rather limited use to all but the initiated in their mysteries” [48]. We must contrast this with “ ... the Roman alphabet that the early Christian missionaries were happy enough to make accessible so that converts could read the Scriptures” [48]. However as a counter to all this mystery we find that “ ... the view of many scholars [is that] this general approach to runes is outdated and nonsensical. Most distinguished Scandinavian runologists now take the view that the Germanic peoples used runes as they would have done any other script (had they known any other), for practical, day-to-day purposes” [47]. Runes were not totally devoid of ritual significance, however, for “ ... if they wanted to cut a religious or magical text, if they wished to produce a charm word, they would use runic, the only script they had, for it, just as a modern wizard would be likely to write his magic gibberish in Roman characters” [47]. The conclusion of all this is, then, that despite their “magical” applications, we should “ ... not confer upon runes the status of a magical script” [47]. Even so, the “magical” interpretation persists, and “It is further possible that the transition to the Roman alphabet was hastened by the bad press that Christians tended to give the pagan philosophy implicit in the runes themselves” [48]. To understand this we must remind ourselves that “ ... nominalism, the philosophy that asserted that the mind can frame no concept corresponding to any universal or general term – or, in its extreme statement, that only individual examples and no abstract entities exist – ... [was] as yet unformulated, waiting to be proposed in its best and classical form by William of Occam in the fourteenth century” [48]. So, “ ... to the early denizens of the cloisters ... a letter was just a letter, by God” [48], in opposition to the opinion of the Egyptians as just described (and presumably on the preceding evidence, the pagans themselves), who endowed the characters with an innate power. And thus the power of Runes as “things in themselves” – “things of power” still held. The psychological implications of this nominalism, together with

the its complicated extension to entification, nominalisation, reification, and like mental procedures, are to be discussed in detail in later work. However, there is modern upshot to all this speculation, and R I Page, of the British Museum, London, comments that “This belief, that the runes were magical, attracts the fluffy-minded in modern times (just as, incidentally, it appealed to the Teutonic mysticism of some Nazi supporters in the 1930s)” [47]. He goes on to decry the fact that “Our age shows a lamentable tendency to flee from reason, common sense and practicality into the realms of superstition and fantasy, and runes have been taken up into this” [47]. Nevertheless this modern “flight from reason” or “return to fantasy” has a definite psychological reality, as investigated in detail by Jung. And in the context of our discussion here “ ... it is possible for a modern writer, asserting the value of runes for divination today, to define them as ‘a mirror for the magic of our unknown selves’ and ‘an instrument to tune into our own wisdom’” [47]. And an example of the 21st Century appropriation and reinterpretation of this script is the statement that “In Old Norse the word Rune (or Runar) means ‘magical sign’ so not only were they used for recording the spoken word, legends and sagas of the past, they were also thought to have magical powers and were regarded as a powerful tool for divination or ‘fortune telling.’ Each letter or ‘Rune’ has a story to tell ... They hold spells and charms ... prayers and wisdom waiting to be awoken from their slumber” [49].

We go further down this path into 21st Century “new age” practice, and consider modern Reiki healing with its “power symbol” *Choku Rei*, meaning “Place the power of the universe here” [50]. The symbol is constructed from several components: “The horizontal line represents the Reiki source. The vertical line symbolizes the energy flow, and the spiral that touches the middle line seven times represents the seven chakras ... Traditionally Choku Rei is supposed to be drawn anti clockwise (from left to right)” [50]. In terms of its application “The power symbol can be used to increase the power of Reiki. It can also be used for protection. See it as a light switch that has the intention to instantly boost your ability to channel Reiki energy” [50]. In order to make use of it you should “Draw or visualize the symbol in front of you and you will have instant access to more healing energies. Choku Rei also gives the other symbols more power when they are used together” [50]. Thus the power of written symbols – ancient or modern; inscribed or vocalized; known or conjectured; secular or sacred; native or appropriated – has been illustrated.

Now, it has been said that “ ... ‘the shortest distance between a human being and the truth is a story’. This saying was probably inspired by the teaching methods of [Jesus] the Master of the parable” [51]. We are already aware of Joseph’s dream interpretations for Pharaoh (Genesis 41 [16]). So now let us look in depth at a specific example of the power of the written word, in a reading of the story of Balshazzar, King of Babylon’s famous feast, as recorded in Daniel 5 [16]: “{4} They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. {5} Immediately the fingers of a man's hand appeared and

wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, opposite the lampstand; and the king saw the hand as it wrote ...". The King was terrified for "God's written word is enough to put the proudest, boldest sinner in a fright. What we see of God, the part of the hand that writes in the book of the creatures, and in the book of the Scriptures, should fill us with awful thoughts concerning that part which we do not see. If this be the finger of God, what is his arm when made bare?" [52]. And so, Belshazzar "{7} ... cried aloud to bring in the enchanters, the Chalde'ans, and the astrologers. The king said to the wise men of Babylon, 'Whoever reads this writing, and shows me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.' {8} Then all the king's wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or make known to the king the interpretation ..." [16]. What was more amazing and frightening was that the "Four words in plain tongue, irrelevant in context, graven indelibly in stone in such incongruous manner, stymied everyone – as though superior in intellect ... [Belshazzar's] wisest counselors, too, had had their fill of wine and beer, and they couldn't think to care to answer" [53]. So "Although the words were written very clearly – on white plaster and illumined by a candlestick – nevertheless the king and his men could not read them" [54]. One commentator opines that this is because "It was a spiritual problem. It was not a mental problem. The scholars of Babylon were called in to read the hieroglyphics on the wall. But they could get nowhere. They could not read the words. They could not interpret them. It remained an unsolved puzzle to them because, though seeing, they did not understand. It was not a problem of the eyesight. It was a problem of a darkened heart" [54]. In fact "... no one could as much as read the writing, let alone interpret what it meant! Then the terrified king called for Daniel ..." [55]. Now Daniel was a "... famous prophet and interpreter of dreams ... Daniel was contacted by angels ... and they provided Daniel with details about the future ... He then reveals the answer, but in the form of a riddle..." [56]. And this is reminiscent of Joseph, who, when asked to interpret, answers "{16} 'I cannot do it,' ... 'but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires'" [16]. And thus "By the light of a candlestick, Daniel both *decoded* and *interpreted* the writing" [55]. The story continues: "{24} Then from his presence the hand was sent, and this writing was inscribed. {25} And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN" [16]. Now "Daniel, too, was astonished: He didn't recall ever hearing about this prank being arranged: The words must have been carved and plaster-filled on the brick-stone wall decades previous, and their meaning passed and forgotten: Perhaps [sic] the wall plaster had dried excessively and crazed over the decades of neglect: And perhaps a splash of wine or beer flung in a riotous moment had wetted the wall: loosening the plaster plugs, and exposing their covert phrase" [53]. Despite his surprise he " ... recognized the wall builders' construction foreman had carved these as instructions for an accountant-trainee, on that very stone: then filled-in his instructions with the plaster on the wall – they'd have been long-gone before it'd be noticed eventually by a, king-trainee, Belshazzar" [53]. Now in fact, "The accountant-trainee's instructions were, count the money twice, weigh it for total consistency (or record the balance in the books), and pay it out: count, count, weigh, divide – instructions

remote from Chaldean upbringing who ate the King's meat, but within Daniel's own learning, as the common abilities of the business-man, although he excelled to science as well" [53]. What was the interpretation of all this? Well, "... we see that Daniel then understood why he'd been brought to Babylon, for here were the very four rivers of the garden of Eden, and their four new names as they were revealed to him for his people: He felt he was being held very close to God. The four rivers were (become) only two great rivers, since the Pishon (Wadi Batin) was, MENE, gone-dry, a minor tributary; the Gihon (Karun, rud-Khaneh-ye river-bed) was also, MENE, gone-away, lost, a minor tributary; the Hiddekel (Tigris) was, TEKEL, balanced (remaining significant on the book), confluent at the head of the fourth: and the Puratu (Euphrates) had become, PERES (UPHARSIN), divided in branches and lengthwise by large lakes ... Daniel observed, explored, pondered, and spoke and wrote (a little of each) – count, count, weigh, divide" [53]. And herein we recognize that "The order of writing is distance, delay, opacity and ambiguity. And also death – 'dead' meaning, not the living meaning of a present speaker. 'Written words in a state of defenceless misery' have to be 'abandonable to their essential drifting.' So now we begin to understand the paradoxical phonocentric 'history of silence', that repression of writing which can scarcely be acknowledged" [11]. What can we say of the linguistic interpretation of the "writing on the wall"? Well, "As the only authority that we have for the reading is that of Daniel, it seems but fair that the interpretation of the terms be left to the person who gave us the text. According to his interpretation, there is a double sense to be found in the three different words of the inscription (Dan 5:26-28)" [57]. Under this reading we find "Mene, which, however it is pointed, must be taken from the verb menah (Hebrew manah; Babylonian manu), is said to have indicated that God had numbered (the days of) Belshazzar's kingdom and finished it (or delivered it up). Both of these meanings can be shown to be proper to the menah. Teqel, on the contrary, is interpreted as coming from two roots: the first, teqal, 'to weigh,' and the second, qal, 'to be light or wanting' (Hebrew qalal; Babylonian qalalu). Perc (or parcin) also is interpreted as coming from two roots: first, perac, 'to divide' (Hebrew paras or parash; Babylonian parasu), and the second as denoting the proper name Parac, 'Persia'" [57]. And thus we arrive at Daniel's answer: "{26} This is the interpretation of the matter: MENE, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; {27} TEKEL, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; {28} PERES, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians" [16]. Well, with the interpretative feat accomplished we are left to ponder "The first question which presents itself to the critic – namely, why could the inscription be deciphered by Daniel only" [58]. This was tackled by Talmudic scholars, who proposed different theories: "Certain of them concluded that the Hebrew writing had been changed in the time of Ezra, so that even the Jews that were found in the royal court could not read an inscription written in archaic characters. But those who followed R. Simeon in maintaining that the writing had not been changed found other solutions for the problem; e.g., it was written in the cryptographic combination ... each letter of each pair being substituted by its companion ... or the words were written ... one above the other, having to be read

vertically; or ... each word backward; or, again ... the first two letters of each word being transposed" [58]. However, the particular theory espoused is of little significance, for "It is evident that the author of the Book of Daniel meant that the inscription was written in characters familiar to the king and the wise men of Babylon, but that, as often happens with ancient inscriptions, the transposition of certain letters baffled every attempt to decipher them" [58]. Now "Thus interpreted, the whole story hangs together, makes good sense, and is fully justified by the context and by the language employed. If the original text was in Babylonian, the signs were ambiguous; if they were in Aramaic, the consonants alone were written, and hence, the reading would be doubtful. In either case, the inscription was apparent but not readable, except by Daniel with the aid of God, through whom also the seer was enabled to give the proper interpretation" [57]. In terms of the authenticity of his answer, the fact "That Daniel's interpretation was accepted by Belshazzar and the rest shows that the interpretation of the signs was reasonable and convincing when once it had been made. We see, therefore, no good reason for departing from the interpretation that the Book of Daniel gives as the true one" [57]. Nevertheless, the point of the story is that "Daniel saw in this simple phrase, the whole essence of time and space, mathematics and science: We count our steps forward and back; We count our steps even to dance around, left and right – or north-south and east-west; We feel our weight when we stand, jump, climb up and down (or balanced weightless buoyed in bath water or swimming); But we persist (steadfastly, continually) only in the time-forward 'now' dividing the past and the future – time is (also) the divisor for the rates of travel and travail – count, count, weigh, divide" [53]. Moreover, we can recover the link between language and our human rationality: "The mathematics student discovers this order repeated at levels in the development of numbers and reciprocal-number-processes: At the primary level, addition and its reciprocal subtraction are counting processes, multiplication scales and leverages weights, and its reciprocal process is division – count, count, weigh, divide; At the intermediate level, addition and multiplication are manipulative counting processes, and functions are tabulated and linearly interpolated (proportioned) - count, count, book, divide; At the graduate level, the two basic arithmetic operations are counting processes, addition and multiplication (the counting of countings); The composition of functions is a (compounding) stacking process; And the derivative slope calculation is a proportioning division process – count, count, balance (compounded), divide" [53]. And so we conclude our story of "... the mysterious riddle written by a hand on the wall at Belshazzar's feast. These Aramaic words may be translated literally as, 'It has been counted and counted, weighed and divided.' Daniel interpreted this to mean that the king's deeds had been weighed and found deficient and that his kingdom would therefore be divided" [59]. We note here that "As to the interpretation of the inscription, it makes no difference whether the signs represented a mina, a shekel, and two perases, as has been recently suggested by M. Clermont-Ganneau. In this case the meaning was not so apparent, but the puns, the play upon the sounds, were even better" [57]. If we ask "So what about the external supports of language – the marks, the sounds etc. which can be cut off from present intention, can go their own ways separately? To Derrida,

these externals are always necessary and always inhabit the internal" [11]. In Derrida's terms, "Unstable interpretations are inevitable because writing tends to a 'zero degree' of sense. ... You can read a text for pleasure and sense ... but you're finally left with a sense of enigma, a *final* sense which the text doesn't express or refuses to surrender – a sort of unyielding *thoughtfulness*. It is like the thoughtfulness of a face which tempts one to ask ... 'What are you thinking?'" [5]. In interpreting Daniel's interpretation, "Derrida confronts us with a paradox. Repeatability is the *risk* of language, its ditch and its disablement. It can derail communication. But repeatability is also its condition of possibility. Without it, there could be no recognizable signs Without the *possibility* of a quotational version, we can't have the 'true', 'real' one. Communication can be derailed by iterability, and it carries its derailer inside itself" [11]. We might therefore concur with the modern-day meta-interpreter that "In effect, God was making a pun. A deadly serious pun, but still a pun" [60], and that "It is then a typically perverse Joke of the Gods that the passage is a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, its meaning inherent in its lack of meaning, a divine prank on a level with some oaf throwing a stick for his dog over the side of a cliff and laughing when the dog runs after it to its doom" [61]. We thus certainly come to overturn the phonocentric view that "Writing is derivative ... It *merely represents* speech. It's a poor substitute, a weak extension. It's not essential. Do without it if you can!" [11]. Moreover we see that "'Writing' becomes a palaeonymic: old word, new uses. It no longer designates scripting rather than speaking but rather the undecidable play in both. It inhabits spoken words, inscribed marks ... all other signs" [11].

So, after our walk in the Edenic Garden, we can feel sure that "Language is the house of Being. In its home man dwells. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home. Their guardianship accomplishes the manifestation of Being insofar as they bring the manifestation to language and maintain it in language through their speech. Thinking does not become action only because some effect issues from it or because it is applied. Thinking acts insofar as it thinks" [62]. We have gone on to illustrate the way in which "Derrida has argued that communication is always subject to iterability, citation and grafting. If so, it can't be taken as a guaranteed, masterable passage of meanings. Language, Derrida says, is a 'non-masterable dissemination'. If that's the case, we lose absolute assurance that we can 'say what we mean' or 'know what someone is thinking'. ... We can't even be sure who is speaking or writing: the identity of the author or signatory who appears to have produced the discourse, who's signed for it, and who's supposed to be – in the logocentric view – the origin or centre of the discourse. Derrida derails communication, introducing disorder into its foundational concepts" [11]. This of course leads to the Lacanian trap that " ... *alienation is situated in the register of language*. If speech was first seen as giving the subject some sort of identity, now *language has the role of blocking identity*. ... the subject is no longer recognized but abolished" [8]. And returning to *El Desdichado* we can see how subconscious deconstructive creativity or psycho-chaotic semiotics [63] "works by playing with juxtaposed notions" [64] and how thus the artist "sinks into the depths of his

emotional turmoils, and comes up, grabbing the conflicting desires and weaving them together into his art, chanting the moans of the modest Saint and the screams of the exuberant Fairy” [64]. Since we can “... feel sure that ... poetic language doesn't really operate at this literalistic level and that the fascination of these lines ... has to do with the linguistic energies contained in words” [65], we understand how the creative power arises “... not from understanding and reflecting on references and symbols, but on letting them sink in along with the music of the sounds, turning poetic words into magic” [64]. The use of such unconscious language-magic results in the “ ... production of a completely new type of *knower*” [5]. So, perhaps we should look on the bright side of the “natural darkness” [66] and form an understanding that for a human “ ... language is not simply ‘a darkness pulled out of us.’ Rather, it is an attempt to pull out the darkness, expose it to light, let it burn away the veil that keeps him from reconciling with his father” [67]. We can thus prevent ourselves, children of the “black sun,” from being “gloomy” and “unconsoled” after our Fall into the “melancholy” knowledge of language, as Lucifer, “sole star” and bringer of Reason, reconciles with his Father. We might therefore offer in conclusion the comment “Communication? It is perhaps possible, if by communication we mean transactions which presuppose repetition-with-difference, quotation and re-insertions, without boundaries. And that could lead to some rethinking of everyday life” [11]. And our conclusion for communication is that we must thus be Abel to embrace “ ... the Law of Possible Failure: it is always possible to fail and it's a necessary possibility” [11].

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