The race to extinction is an honourable pursuit.

**Oblivion:**

The key to a livelihood lies in the labor market. Suitability for the labor market demands education. Anyone who is denied access to either of these faces social and material oblivion. (Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society*, 1986/2007, p. 133).

**Judgment Day:**

‘Have you not wondered what the world is really like; how it would look through happy eyes? The world you see is but a judgment on yourself. It is not there at all. Yet judgment lays a sentence on it, justifies it and makes it real. Such is the world you see, a judgment on yourself, and made by you. This sickly picture of yourself is carefully preserved by the ego, whose image it is and which it loves, and placed outside you in the world. And to this world must you adjust as long as you believe this picture is outside, and has you at its mercy. This

**OTHER WORLDS**

**Scene 1**

[Setting:] A refugee camp in hell. A ‘non-place’ beyond maps. A dumping ground for vagabonds and derelicts. Once inside, the poor fend and fight for themselves and build ‘non-lives’ as best they can. Most simply drift and die. Occasionally, a vagabond survives the Wasteland and returns, rehabilitated, to consumer society.

Holed up in a cell in the outskirts of Oblivion, a recent arrival flattens scraps of torn paper against a makeshift desk. With a pencil stub, he writes:

Dearest Jesus Christ

Before sneezing suddenly and sending spots of mucus over the page.

He screws this piece up and begins again:

Dear Jesus,

I have often speculated about the nature of free will and chaos

But again he is overcome with facial spasms and a fit of sneezing. This continues for several seconds until this draft is also discarded. *(Begins yet again)*

Dear Jesus,

Although suffering from an uncontrollable

Again a fit overcomes him. ‘Fuck,’ he says, discarding yet another piece of paper.

Dear Christ

Allit incipit nos nulla enim dio adipsum zziuato odolore magnim iureril doloreros nibb exercos dions niament, si blaurpero odion vent dolut ipit in verit atumandre facin ut nihb el ut lum delit del episequeam quat, con et alisi tie del utpatum dolestio odional landre tam mul-lamcore alpit ad modolor 11.

Osto consed magnit am do ea fuipit luptatue do conse conseniamet esquis icilist eu facidual ensin elenim zziarweet at. Del dolor risim zziat ad magnit vel exercidunt luptat um iusci erci bha acip ex et eguer sit volut at, veltiquat. Extem do conum zziarilisi.

Uptatie voloreros nosto et la consequat in utpat utat wi si et for iure vel illut aut wiisi ex exrat.

Met am, quatie vent veltiquam inculquat. Igniscil utat visit adip ent voloriet suipequeis tis et.

Init allit ex exercos nim quat. Geero er umsandreet alisi. Vulland ignibh el eguit ver amet et la facipit velismo lessim augiam quis nostrud
world is merciless, and were it outside you, you should indeed be fearful. Yet it was you who made it merciless, and now if mercilessness seems to look back at you, it can be corrected (A Course in Miracles, 2004, p. 430).

The Scholar Gypsy

And near me on the grass lies Glanvill’s book—
Come, let me read the oft-read tale again!
The story of the Oxford scholar poor,
Of pregnant parts and quick inventive brain,
Who, tired of knocking at preferment’s door,
One summer morn forsook his friends, and went to learn the gypsy lore,
And roamed the world with that wild brotherhood,
And came, as most men deemed, to little good,
But came to Oxford and his friends no more.

(Matthew Arnold, 1853, lines 31-40)

(Pauses and stuffs two balls of paper up his nose. Begins again:)

Dear Jesus Christ,

As you are one of the few people who feel as strongly about emancipation as I do, and the free roving ways of the pilgrim and gypsy scholar, I kindly request your assistance in the great escape I mean to make. In this way your death and all those thorns and nails and miracles and marches will not have been entirely in vain. I liked the caveat episode best, when you moved that stone from the doorway. It reminded me of Sisyphus pushing that massive boulder up the hill, shoulder bent against the weight of tyranny and injustice. And Samson, who blindly crushed himself under the weight of revenge. I too would like to walk the path of the inquisitive pilgrim, to flush humanity out of its hoary grave, and to escape my oppressors.

Having said that, I am currently starving myself to regain something of your shape. If, for instance, I could grow a golden beard like yours, I would. My hair, unfortunately, isn’t nearly as long as yours, but it often looks as oily and unwashed. In fact, many humans go about with this style, in honour of the precedent of decadence you have set. This is the hallmark of a great civilisation, an enduring civilisation, to mimic its deities and to parody their virtues.

Suffice to say I am in complete admiration of your life’s work, and shall now require you to shift — as it were — the pebble from the doorway that separates me from the world. I shall eagerly await this miracle.

Your friend and confidant,

Jackery Diggins.

Sisyphus: tragic figure in Greek mythology doomed eternally to roll a boulder up a hill in Hades.

Wikipedia (accessed 24 July 2008)

Today, Sisyphean can be used as an adjective meaning that an activity is unending and/or repetitive. It could also be used to refer to tasks that are pointless and unrewarding.

Wikipedia (accessed 24 July 2008)

Samson: (Biblical) An Israelite judge in the Old Testament who performed feats of strength against the Philistines but was betrayed by Delilah his mistress.

Wikipedia (accessed 24 July 2008)

Samson is a Herculean figure, who is granted tremendous strength through the Spirit of the LORD to combat his enemies and perform heroic feats unachievable by ordinary men: wrestling a lion, slaying an entire army with nothing more than a donkey’s jawbone, and tearing down an entire building.
Mother Teresa:

‘Where is my faith? Even deep down ... there is nothing but emptiness and darkness ... If there be God—please forgive me. When I try to raise my thoughts to Heaven, there is such convincing emptiness that those very thoughts return like sharp knives and hurt my very soul ... How painful is this unknown pain—I have no Faith. Repulsed, empty, no faith, no love, no zeal ...

What do I labour for? If there be no God, there can be no soul. If there be no soul then, Jesus, You also are not true.’


PS Let’s just say I owe you one. Having said that, it is quite obvious that you still owe me, having scarcely listened to a word I’ve said in several years (if ever). So, again, for the umpteenth time, I shall overlook your proud and neglectful tendencies, and wait humbly for my emancipation.

The voices are killing me. I am currently holed up on the fringes of the Wasteland, somewhere in the slums of the old world. I mean to make for the Disputed Territories beyond the bogs, where it is said that a new communitarian ethos is struggling to begin. Perhaps a wormhole exists there to take me beyond the Wasteland. I’ll look for your hand beyond the bogs!

Diggins.

(Sneezes)

‘Fuck—’

(Begins again…)

Scene 4

[Setting:] The urban fringes, mid morning. Scattered grey cloud breaks an otherwise yellow-brown sky. Chimney stacks probe the horizon. Plumes of smoke billow here and there. The odd scream escapes the surrounding slums.

Jack, on his first stroll through hell, is ambling along the street, whistling happily to the tune of freedom, awaiting the hand of God, when stopped by a stout, fierce-looking man.

‘YOU KNOW WHAT THIS IS?’ roars the man, opening a Coke bottle before the madman’s face and slowly letting the air fizz out. ‘Do ya?’

Jack stops, confused, a finger pointed at his own meek frame.

‘Me? Couldn’t imagine. Whisky—?’ he speculates, full of hope.

‘Your arse after I pull my fist out.’

*Decline and Fall*:

14
Discourse:

French social theorist Michel Foucault (1972) ... defines discourse as 'systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of action, beliefs and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak.' He traces the role of discourses in wider social processes of legitimating and power, emphasising the construction of current truths, how they are maintained and what power relations they carry with them. Foucault later theorised that discourse is a medium through which power relations produce speaking subjects. Foucault (1977, 1980) argued that power and knowledge are inter-related and therefore every human relationship is a struggle and negotiation of power. Foucault further stated that power is always present and can both produce and constrain the truth.

Discourse according to Foucault (1977, 1980, 2003) is related to power as it operates by rules of exclusion. Discourse therefore is controlled by objects (what can be spoken of), ritual (where and how one may speak), and the privileged (who may

‘What?’
‘Spitting blood…’
‘What?’
‘Violently…’
‘What?’
‘Great streams of it.’
(Attempting to create an air of authority) ‘Now come on, this is really too much,’ Jack says.

The other man seems amazed that his point hasn’t been received. ‘You know how a dog sees with its nose?’ And with this he begins sniffing the air.

‘What?’
‘A dog?’

‘Now come on, this is really too illogical. How’s a man supposed to follow this line of discourse?’

AUTHOR-GOD: [Voice over] That did it. Jack was a sitting duck in hell. This was no place for a romantic naïf. But his courage and stupidity propelled him on all the same. He stood in the face of a gathering storm. A picaroon, awaiting divinations from beyond. Not from the Author, not from self, but straight from God. Free at last to experience the full depths of hell.

Circe.

The man swings his fists and smashes Jack’s chin, sending him spiralling to the ground.

(Desperately trying to regain his feet and wipe the blood from his mouth) Says the fallen, ‘You’re mad. A lunatic. Utterly—’

Again Jack is struck about the chin, this time sending him spiralling the other way, so that his last word is thrown heavenward while

---

1 These ‘Voice overs’ represent the voice of thought itself. The Author’s voice, divine-like, omniscient, reflecting on the narrative thus far. As such, it is a voice from the future commenting on the past, an older Jack reflecting on a younger Jack.
Animals get in the way of humans and their cities.

Coining the phrases power-knowledge Foucault (1980) stated knowledge was both the creator of power and creation of power.

Wikipedia (accessed 26 July 2008)

his body is thrown hellward.

‘I’m gonna poke out your eyes and stuff ’em up your arse. You’ll have to shit ’em out,’ yells the Lout. ‘My embrace is beyond escape—’

(Beating his chest)

But Jack has already fled, giddy and puzzled, this way and that, down the street.

Blood spilling from his neck.

Head racing, heart pounding, feet aching.

‘Am I free yet?’ he calls to the world.

But no birds sing.

---------------------

[Voice over:] And so began the first ludicrous day—and yet, connection, however small, was made with humanity, a fellow being, perhaps even a future friend.

He really liked that man. He respected his conviction and gesticulatory prowess, his determined and dogmatic bent, his missing tooth and flattened nose—in fact, he loved and admired every last bit of him.

Indeed, Jack had found his first love. For love, he suspected, was equally made of hate. And hate and that man had something in common, and he recognised both. (Différance.)

Circe.

---------------------

Scene 7

[Setting:] A gutter at twilight.

Screams ring out in the void.

Someone yelps, ‘Help,’ and someone beats that help right back into the mouth that yelped it.

Eyes blink in the shadows. One figure stands over another, beating its chest. The figure in the gutter cowers and rolls into a ball, receding helplessly from the world. But there is no escape in hell. All atrocities will be met. All agonies will be felt. The beating stops and

Différance: An invented hybrid term ... that brings together ‘differing’ and ‘deferring’ ... as formal requirements for the production of language: (1) all significative marks signify by their difference from other significative marks rather than by their likeness to or association with phenomena ... and (2) the “presence” of meaning is an always deferred phenomenon as each link in a significative chain, each mark, takes its meaning only in the unfolding of other oppositional marks that never fully explicate themselves but always refer beyond to what is not made present in discourse’ (Stephen Hahn, On Derrida, 2002, p. 85).
Poor people are a burden on the economy.
Globalisation is good for the rich.

Irony, & Solidarity, 1989, p. 16

Wikipedia (accessed 31 July 2008)

John Keats:
(Born 31 October 1795; died 23 February 1821) was one of the principal poets of the English Romantic movement. During his short life, his work received constant critical attacks from the periodicals of the day, but his posthumous influence on poets such as Alfred Tennyson has been immense. Elaborate word choice and sensual imagery characterise Keats's poetry, including a series of odes that were his masterpieces and which remain among the most popular poems in English literature. Keats's letters, which expound on his aesthetic theory of "negative capability," are among the most celebrated by any writer.


Negative Capability: 'The poet John Keats introduced this term in a letter written in December 1817 to define a literary quality "which Shakespeare possessed so enormously—I mean..."'

---

Beyond the light nothing can be made out. One could be looking into infinite space. Jack's face, the half that is captured in the lamplight, is swollen and blue. He may even be missing a tooth, for there is a suggestion of darkness to his grinding teeth.

Seething, he begins dreaming a dream about revenge.

He imagines travelling back to the year 1820 (or thereabouts), to London, to a tavern, and taking a seat beside the wondrous dwarfian romantic, John Keats. A noted pugilist, Keats wears the mask of love and passion as he sips on a draught of vintage. Whether Keats is at this moment in a state of 'negative capability' or not, Jack cannot decide, but he is determined to get the better of him all the same.

(The fantasy comes to life)

Jack buys his old friend a glass of claret and lights a cigar. Keats looks baffled, perhaps reflecting on his Fair Star, Fanny Brawne. 'Or else swoon to death,' he is heard muttering.

[Voice over:] He'd been visiting Keats in London in the nineteenth century since he was a teenager, since he discovered Keats was a Romantic Poet and died quite young. He both loved and hated Keats, and often told him so. Keats, he fancied, was all together sick of it, and sick of him. More particularly, he liked Keats' girlfriend, Fanny Brawne. She stood for all that was unknowable and unattainable in a ruined world: the milky ravines and gentle slopes of the homeland. He longed to suckle from the wellspring of life. To crawl back into the cunt of his origins. Like Keats, if he could conquer Love and Death in one almighty instant, by kissing poison from the lips of his beloved, he would, satisfied.

Circe.

Jack imagines Fanny sweeping into the smoky bar and spinning as if a ballerina, dressed in little more than a black suspender, a G-string, and no bra, with crude love bites covering most of her neck. Ruddy faced men ogle and jeer.
Keats is bewildered. Claret spills from his parting lips and down his chin, then drips and splatters roughly in line with his heart. Tears well in his eyes. The madman grins.

‘Gore, look at the tits on it,’ he heckles, assuming the persona of the Lout. ‘And that pouch!’ He cups his hand before Keats’ maddening face as if taking Fanny’s genitals into his palm.

‘Pouch?’ Keats says. ‘Are you likening my [is that really Fanny?] … my Fair Star’s’ – hesitates, alarmed – ‘her ethereal regions to [surely not] … to … to some kind of leathery container?’

‘Yes—that you drink champagne from,’ Jack says.

[Voice over:] That did it.

Keats punches the bar and drops his glass. ‘Now come on,’ he cries.

Jack laughs and grins. ‘What’s this?’ he says, opening a Coke bottle before Keats’ face and allowing the gas to fizz out.

(Glaring) ‘No idea.’

‘Fanny’s arse after I pull my fist out—’

‘What?’

‘Spitting blood.’ (Grinning madly)

‘What?’

‘Great streams of it—’

Keats pummels Jack’s temples and sends him scampering back to the present, where he sits, staring angrily into the darkness, beating on his desk.

‘Now come on,’ he says, ‘this is really too much. To be beaten by a daydream!’

[Voice over:] But Jack never went so far as to manhandle Fanny in any of his dreams: he had some rules of engagement. Not many, but some. Besides, he rather admired Keats. And Fanny would always remain the essence of Keats. For Keats was both a soldier of love and a poet.
Money:
In a society of consumers, turning into a desirable and desired commodity is the stuff of which dreams, and fairy tales, are made.

Social Darwinism & Eugenics:
"In the 1850s, Herbert Spencer applied the famous phrase "the survival of the fittest" to human society. He basically argued that society and the economy were, just like the natural world, arenas in which competitive struggles would sort out the weak from the strong, the inferior from the superior.
The assumption was that dominant cultures and races, as well as social classes, owed their dominance to their natural superiority. These ideals coincided with the rise of eugenics, a social and philosophical movement dedicated to the "science" of selective breeding to improve the quality of human populations" (Wadham, Pudsey, & Boyd, *Culture & Education*, 2007, p. 148).

Scene 13
[Setting:] A shop in the dead city. Jack, in a heavy trench coat, enters.
Note the bruises on his face, the limp in his step, the blood dripping from his ankles, and the insane look to his eyes. ‘Otherness’ writ large.

‘How much for those?’ he says, pointing at the shelves behind the counter.

A red face turns to examine him, a suspicious glare to its sunken eye and twisted brow. ‘What?’

‘That thing?’ (*Wriggling his forefinger*)
The man is taken aback. ‘The tawny port?’

Got it in one, Jack thinks. ‘Yes,’ he says.

‘Eight bucks.’

‘And those?’ Still wriggling his finger.

‘The condoms?’

‘Blasphemous fornicator!’ – But then, more submissively – ‘Yes, those.’

‘What the…? $2.95,’ the man says, even redder now than before.

‘Please give me both items,’ Jack says.

‘Where’s your money?’

‘I have no money … No home … Some hope … And a vague idea about escaping the Wasteland … But I need provisions, see.’

Bright red now, and aghast, the man produces a dagger. ‘Who the hell do you think you are? Some kind of fucking apostle?’

Jack hesitates, alarmed and embarrassed, then limps from the shop.

He leaves a trail of blood.

(‘Bloody hobo,’ is heard in the background. ‘Retard! Pervert!’)

Jack stops, blood seeping from his ankles, and wonders what to do next. Perhaps he should return tomorrow. The shopkeeper is clearly
The Abject

According to Julia Kristeva in *The Powers of Horror* (1982), the abject refers to the human reaction (horror, vomit) to a threatened breakdown in meaning caused by the loss of the distinction between subject and object or between self and other. The primary example for what causes such a reaction is the corpse (which traumatically reminds us of our own materiality); however, other items can elicit the same reaction: the open wound, shit, sewage, even the skin that forms on the surface of warm milk. 

Wikipedia (accessed 26 July 2008)

bloodthirsty and mad. Perhaps he should save him as Christ did the whore. He knows there is nothing to it, just a few well chosen words and a stroke or two from a caring hand. The man will be as good as new, full of goodwill and happy thoughts. Yes, Jack feels pleased with this outcome.

A jumbo passes overhead. A flock of ducks is sucked into its enormous engines. Faces (human) peer from the windows and cheer. Overjoyed that the ducks, like the vagabonds, are doomed to extinction.

Jack breathes in the glory of freedom, then exhales. ‘Retard … pervert?’ he whispers to himself, suddenly recalling the earlier conversation. ‘Pervert! What sort of…?’

It is at this moment that Jack notices a woman crossing the street, approaching him. He doesn’t recognise her, so averts his gaze to a dog defecating against a wall. The woman taps him on the shoulder. Jack turns.

‘You fucking disgust me,’ she says and walks off, adding, ‘Filthy fucking hobo.’

Jack throws back his head and laughs pathetically at the heavens. ‘You … disgust … me. ‘So do you,’ he yells back, at no one in particular.

[Voice over:] And so Jack’s second day began like the first, with fortunate meetings and prophetic insights. First, a balding middle-aged grump had seen through his retardation to his propensity for perversion. And second, a woman of unknown origins and unknown destination had mocked his appearance.

Freedom, it seemed, would come at a price. God would test his mettle before delivering him from hell.

But the Author had his doubts. He saw only monsters.

Circe.

Jack stops by the defecating dog. ‘No hungry generations tread
Vagabonds:

'Since the criterion of purity is the ability to partake in the consumerist game, those left outside as a “problem,” as the “dirt” which needs to be “disposed of,” are flawed consumers – people unable to respond to the enticements of the consumer market because they lack the required resources, people unable to be “free individuals” according to the sense of “freedom” as defined in terms of consumer choice. They are the new “impure,” who do not fit into the new scheme of purity. Looked at from the now dominant perspective of the consumer market, they are redundant – truly “objects out of place” (p. 14).

Yes, Jack’s life, in the manner of his peers, was simply out of control.

Circe.

The jumbo develops engine troubles and plummets into the sea. Spraying the beach in tourists and their dreams.

And Jack collapses in a bloody heap. A deflated vagabond on a decrepit street.

For at the world’s end tourists and vagabonds eye-off through the razor wire separating suburb from slum.

Tourists:

‘An ever growing number of postmodern men and women, while by no means immune to the fear of being lost and every so often carried away by the recurring waves of “homesickness,” find the open-endedness of their situation attractive enough to outweigh the anguish of uncertainty. They revel in the pursuit of new and untried experience, are willingly seduced by offers of adventure, and on the whole prefer keeping options open to all fixity of commitment. In this change of mood they are aided and abetted by a market organised entirely around consumer demand and vitally interested in keeping that demand permanently unsatisfied and thus preventing the ossification of any acquired habits and whipping up the consumers’ appetite for ever more intense sensations and ever new experience’ (p. 13).
It is, in the end, the old truth all over again: each society sets limits to the life strategies that can be imagined, and certainly to those which can be practised. But the kind of society we live in leaves off-limits such strategies as may critically and militantly question its principles and thus open the way to new strategies...

SMS from friend:

What one writer can make in the solitude of one room is something no power can easily destroy.

Salman Rushdie

Sender:
Gavin
[phone number]

Sent:
19-Feb-2008
10:53:35
The Day after Dying