

# HISTORY'S MALCONTENTS

*The Life and Times of S. Raoul*



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SHUBIGI RAO

This publication coincides with 'The Retrospectacle of S. Raoul, by Shubigi Rao', an exhibition chronicling 10 years of the labour of S. Raoul, polymathic researcher, archaeologist, inventor and recluse. Organised by Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore at Earl Lu Gallery, Singapore, March 2013.

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*The Life and Times of S. Raoul*

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SHUBIGI RAO



*For C.H., who while absent from the first and second digs, was wholly attendant at the third.*

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# SECTION I.

## Folly of a Concierge

A Foreword

*Dr. Charles Merewether*

“To write is to forget” (Fernando Pessoa)

In the latter part of the film ‘Solaris’ (1972) by Andrei Tarkovsky, one of the principal characters meets his wife who had died ten years before. She becomes alive to him again and the apparition fulfills his dream of their relation, of their love. The possibility of this imagination lies deep within a sense of being alive, of the potential of imagining tomorrow today. And yet, this imagination is haunted by remembering the past and the possibility, if not ability, to turn the power of this past into a creative future of the imaginative. This is a profoundly social action, the mark of a deeply embedded desire that yearns for a connection to the world, to those around us through the act of imagination.

We may think of Fernando Pessoa and Jorge Luis Borges, each of whose writings manifests a melancholia deep within their view of the world. Perhaps this is not so obvious and yet, there is a sense of the impossibility of everyday life, its maddening logic, of the limits of what is possible, of the pathetic retreat of those who govern, seeking to manage the dreams of oneself and the person standing next to one to prosper and flourish.

This book by the artist Shubigi Rao is a testament to the figure of S. Raoul and to his writings. Conversely, we may say, this book is the ingenious labour and work of S. Raoul’s devoted chronicler Shubigi. Some writers need someone else who is courageous and generous enough to recover and make manifest the value of a person who is out of joint with himself and with the world. Their views and manifestations show a growing frustration and disillusionment, if not disappointment with the times in which they live. This exhibition and publication are palpably melancholic, filled with an overwhelming poignancy as to the impossible ambition of its author.

S. Raoul did exist, he did not exist.

The death of S. Raoul, the gathering of his work marking his end, is a sad day. Perhaps other pieces will be found but this ending is irreversible, a mark whose trace can only offer a way back to his own meandering prologues, prefaces, distracted asides, introductions and forewords. If we are seeking a way forward this movement will only be enabled

through the words and actions of others. Reading them over, the words of S. Raoul reveal a sense of folly that he perceives around him, that persistently haunts him. And yet, he continues to write, starting with an engagement with the world around him, with its multitude of forms and histories. Reading S. Raoul is to uncover a persistent spirit of hope, of something better to be wished for.

S. Raoul comes to stand for something that would be otherwise be intangible, a form perhaps recognisable in Wilhelm Jensen’s beautiful ‘Gradiva: A Pompeiian Fancy’ (1903), a story and image that so captivated Freud some years later. That S. Raoul never physically existed is beside the point. His writings exist, manifesting a will, an imagination and spirit. These aspirations exist in all of us in different ways. As individuals, there is a willingness to suspend disbelief, to believe there is a tomorrow, that life will not be simply the same: a never-ending sameness. Rather, life will, grow strongly as in the awakening of Spring and blossoming of flowers.

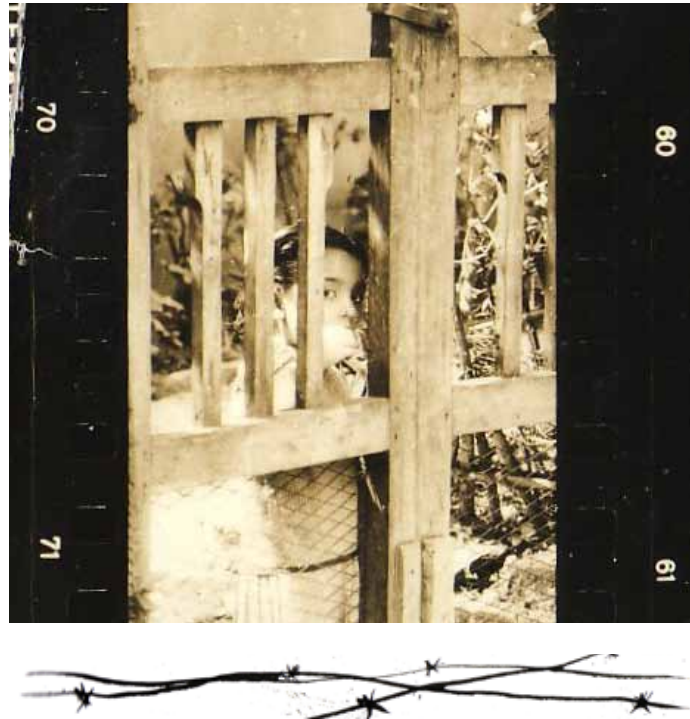
What is the value of a foreword? Is it to lead the audience into the heart of a publication, to frame the publication, the texts and images that will follow? Is it to serve as a concierge: a concierge who dares not think beyond his immediate and consigned duties? For if this concierge was to imagine and respond to the needs, the desires and wishes of his guests, he would be lost to the world. Overcome with the burden of the unsatisfied, the unrequited, it would be too much. He would have seen the other side of the wall as Casaubon experienced on his first visit to Rome many years ago in George Eliot’s ‘Middlemarch’ (1874).

Shubigi evokes so many writers, image-makers, stories that evoke an uncanny parallelism, a parallelism of lives lived and often forgotten, of lives that sought beyond what was possible. In many respects, S. Raoul stands for us all and for the spirit to push beyond the limit of the everyday, to engage with others so as to change the way we might imagine the future together.

*- Dr. Charles Merewether is Director of  
Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore.*

## *Being a Biographical Sketch of S. Raoul – Inventor, Theorist, Writer, Iconoclast and Eccentric Polymath*

*As confided to his long-time Collaborator and Confidante, Shubigi Rao*



To be a biographer implies a particular objectivity that I must confess is wholly absent from this work. To be the recipient of as much time and responsiveness from one as reclusive and enigmatic as S. Raoul has invited a certain measure of resentment, but it is not as much to be desired as it would seem.<sup>1</sup> He was by all accounts a particularly perverse contrarian, a wielder of sharp wit and unfiled rough edges, and a mind that was unable to disguise its contempt for those of inferior bent, as well as those bent on what he believed to be inferior pursuits, and he regarded biography as one. His monograph on the subject, 'Bastardising Biography', is reproduced later in this volume (see Chapter 9). I recall his remarks on the subject ran the gamut from the dismissive "literary gossip" in relation to the tell-all scurrilous piece to "the biographer's curse" of being unable to separate obliquity from iniquity. There will be no salacious exposé of his early romances, his lost child (though that was mentioned during a showing of his 'Tuning Fork' work, the latter having arisen as a direct consequence of the former), his naturist habits or his unreasoning dislike of those who led with their stomachs, not their minds.

In my case I have been variously labelled his protégé, his confidante, his collaborator, and it would be disingenuous to say that I did not expect to become his chronicler. Yet this position, now attained, is an asterixed minefield, and I suspect that under the pressure of neutrality the best of the man must be understated, as must the worst. All epiphanies, when quoted, become tame unless presented with the chunks of 'before' and 'after'. Excised from original context they become sanitised, easily manipulated aphorisms of great bombast but negligible worth. It becomes an almost impossible task to capture, with any measure of verisimilitude, the matter of the man. The ferocity of his intellect is evident enough in any casual reading of his work. But to know the man and what made him, what propelled him, defies easy categorisation and certainly any glib biographical sketching.

S. Raoul acted as if the world needed obscure scholarship, freed from economic and nationalist imperatives, liberated from any agenda save that of furthering said scholarship, a form of quiet activism that has numerous historical precedents and antecedents. It is rumoured that Václav Havel too based his belief (that totalitarian thought creates dissidents of ordinary citizens) on the restrained civil disobedience of S. Raoul. But while the former is arguably still a poster child for the form, S. Raoul's vertiginous drop into obscurity owes much to his inability to hear the tenor of the times. Civil disobedience, after all, functions best from the ground up, and S. Raoul never could keep his ear to the ground. His naïve faith in sedulous utopias cost him dearly, for as is the case with all utopias they were subsequently revealed to be inoperable, ineffectual models.

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□ *S. Raoul as a Child*  
□ *Minefield of Asterixed History*

<sup>1</sup> For one thing, the tendency to structure overlong sentences with dubious syntax becomes irresistible.



S. Raoul was perhaps naïve again to assume no raillery for his unrealistic ideals and wholly impractical bent. Eschewing research that would have netted enough to at least keep him in roses for most of his life, he chose to devote an inordinate amount of time and resources to obscure scholarship. Believing as he did in the Sagan Standard that ‘extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence’, he devoted vast tracts of his life to amassing enough substantiation and empirical data to support what often turned out to be irrelevant theses or piddling theories. His inability to allow logic and deductive reasoning to dominate his spiral methodology meant he often ignored the patently obvious for what he believed to be the crux of the matter, for therein lay the nub. The singular study that brought him a small measure of fame (and no little notoriety) embarrassed him enough to ensure that with a Kinsey-like waspishness he would renounce all claim to ‘worldly’ scholarship, spending the rest of his life in studies destined to remain incomplete, with no hope of succeeding generations of researchers attempting to conclude them. Looking at his Kinsey-ian propensity for elaborate invented taxonomies, cryptic utterances and love of the ‘secret knots’, there is an ease in pronouncing paranoia, or at the very least, a deep distrust.

His carefully erected Maginot Line of cautious reserve served him well, he thought, though much like its namesake, this Line too was easily circumvented and breached by broadside attacks, for which he was never prepared and by which he remained invariably surprised. He remained suspicious of the paltry promise of posterity, having learned from the sly bigotry of history, and took his rejection of recognition to an extreme, rebuffing any attempts at immortalising or canonising his works. His extreme aversion to releasing his work into the wild, as he once called it, did have its limits, as his rejection of both the academic and mainstream press led to his works being disseminated as *samizdat* texts, especially when the content of his work was most contrary to prevalent belief.<sup>2</sup>

A lot has been made of S. Raoul’s heightened sense of outrage and his indignation at injustice real or imagined, much to the bemusement of those around him. His anger though, was less the idealist’s outrage at unfairness or even as some as uncharitably put it, the simmering resentment of the disregarded. Much like Pamuk, his anger was melancholic, more Chekhovian than Dostoyevskian, with a pronounced inward cast. His ire emerged (when it did) as a filed down but still convoluted form of wry self-deprecating humour, almost as if he felt he had no right to let his anger have its day. His outrage at so much and so many was an embarrassment to his peers and colleagues, but worse, it was a source of bewilderment to him – he could not see himself worthy of exercising the privilege of provocateur. He hid his anger under a blush, so to speak. Unfortunately he also hid it under an exhausting arcane pedantic style that effectively obscured any chance of his polemic having any effect whatsoever.

Unsurprisingly then, he valued an archaic civility in discourse, and would refuse to be drawn into taking a position more belligerent than one with which he had begun. In a perhaps illuminating instance, S. Raoul was once of accused of being a mere ‘*idiotis*’<sup>3</sup> by one of his more lauded and accomplished peers, to which it is claimed he replied, “if to be this is to be uninterested in the pettifoggery of the narrow political present, then you are right. But if *idiotis* is also understood as apathy to history, then you damn all those not engaged in scholarship, and again, sir, you are right.”

His artful sense of humour came from his grasp of the true nature of irony, which is not to be found in cynicism or flippant observation, but in its refusal to give up intellectual autonomy in the face of the Absurd, the Fascist and the Idiotic. A gloriously elitist view, this...

□ *The Offspring*

<sup>2</sup> “I myself create it, edit it, censor it, publish it, distribute it, and ... get imprisoned for it.” Vladimir Bukovsky, 1978.

<sup>3</sup> *Idiotis* (Gr.): a man indifferent to public affairs, being solely concerned with his own. In Athenian democracy this denoted the natural state of ignorance that could only be remedied by education and the political or social understanding that comprised the true worth of citizenship.



- S. Raoul Collected
- S. Raoul Collected and Contained

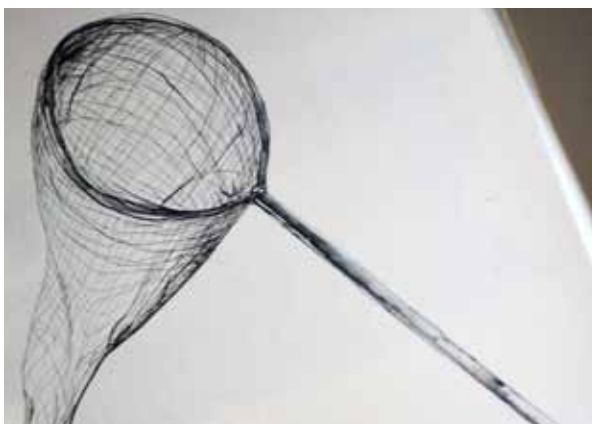
A lot has also been said about the numerous pretensions of S. Raoul, a progressive thinker who unfortunately wrote in the style he was brought up in (that of the pedant and armchair warrior), a ruminant more than a reactionary. A curmudgeonly old codger, fulminating at the famed and the fawned over. An inveterate hoarder (a vice instrumental, as it turned out, in his demise), an indiscriminate collector (“it’s not that one has too many things, merely that one has not the space to accommodate them”<sup>4</sup>). Yet perversely, a monograph written by him towards the end of his life on the ills of collecting turned up recently<sup>5</sup>, so perhaps he did retain a certain clarity about his foibles, even at the end. For all his professing of the values of individuality and the tenets of the Enlightenment, he was unwilling to use the personal pronoun in his notes, preferring the collective ‘We’ over ‘I’. In fact, reading his scratchings involves tripping over the over-used and much abused comma, as well as his preference for the over-wrought phrase (“morass of the messy”), his woeful habit of belabouring the point, and his tendency to tautology.

S. Raoul’s philosophy, such as it is, was antitheist, anti-political intrigue and machination, anti-established thought. A melancholic, with undefined ‘lost’ relationships, a prickly pedant with the squishy innards of the romantic, his love of minutiae (the dust of things as he once called it, that peculiar *dustsceawung* of old) often informing the directions of his studies, he took umbrage at overarching themes and monolithic inflexible thought or *diktat*. For while guilty of a certain elitist proclivity in thought and the ascribing of uncharitable characteristics to his contemporaries, S. Raoul retained none of the prejudices of his age, neither in the case of ethnicity, (“The support of race is a giant taproot, a monolithic construct – all the eggs of identity in one basket”), nor in that entrenched mainstay, misogyny. An anachronism, a disregarder of trend and fashion, he once remarked, when asked why he did not

look the part of the academic as his colleagues did, that he had a suspicion of uniforms.

Yet to define him purely as a contrarian or reactionary would be simplistic. In all the time I knew him, he seemed ground up not so much by totalitarian thought or systems, or by peers and public uncomfortable with the unfashionable, but by his inability to know when to stop. Hampered too by an unreliably episodic memory (some events, incidents and details would stand out with vivid clarity and some would have ceased to exist), he was frequently bewildered when confronted by a face, a belief, an idea or a relationship of which he had no memory. His intolerance of fatuity and facile reasoning paraded with bombast and shrouded in spectacle was well-known (“It’s their idiocy that takes up more space. It overshadows the shy, the diffident, the quietly brilliant, the wallflowers and the uncool but genuinely interesting”).

His life could be better seen as an argument for eccentricity and polymathic, indiscriminate curiosity and endeavour (without regard to its perceived futility<sup>6</sup>) and most manifestly an argument against over-specialisation. He bemoaned the perception of the naturalist as antiquarian outmoded notion, and the increasing narrow fields of study that result in meagre cross-pollination of ideas and data. An understated heretic, but a literary obscurantist, a man of the Enlightenment who behaved like a Romantic, a pedant sans sophistry who was frequently facetious ... who can take the measure of a man? None of these can capture him, pin him to a board, wings spread out for all to see. Perhaps the empty spaces in this sketch are best left undrawn, for the temptation to confabulate, to substitute fact for impoverished memory is an irresistibly human failing, and with S. Raoul I would rather remain a poor biographer, assuaging my literary conscience with the knowledge that even here he would have the last word.



□ *I am Merely Toothless, a Mounted Specimen, Hoisted on my own Petard*

□ *Evading Capture*

<sup>4</sup> In conversation with author, a few weeks before his death, which occurred when he attempted to “negotiate space in a cultural context”.

<sup>5</sup> It turns up in this book too. See Chapter 7.

<sup>6</sup> His ‘Meditations on the Platypus as Evolutionary Poesis’ (date unknown) is one such example.





# SECTION II.

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S. Raoul: An Essential Reader



## 1.

## A Foreword in Celebration of Ignorance

*Perhaps nowhere else does S. Raoul's exasperating proclivity for verbosity and long-windedness exert itself than in this exposition on the nature of accepted beliefs and shallow knowledge. This turgid text also led to a drubbing of his elitist views by critics and defenders of Democratic Thought.*

---

We are truly excited to begin this exposition, for being in command of a niggardly smattering of factoids and even less understanding of historical context, we have the delightful task of filling in the blanks, drawing on no sources more onerous than our vivid imaginations.

Ignorance rules the world. For the naysayers who spout rhetoric about the shrinking world, and the Information Age, we say: knowledge is the fascination with fleeting fads and one-hit wonders, coupled with political and social apathy, and rounded off neatly with an insular, skewed perspective of being at the centre of the revolving world. Surely the ramifications of our flighty endeavour are no match for the implications of the world being held hostage by voters of a single nation too ignorant to find said nation on a map. At the very least, in terms of scale, the public theatre of Art cannot match the freak-show of reality. However, as with all things, there are Links, and contrary to populist view, they do exist between the two worlds, that of the Real and of Artifice. For as the theatres of war, political machinations and rapacity have remained unchanged in their omnipresence through History, so has the academic rhetoric surrounding that insular world of Art.

When reviewing, or appraising the artworks that appear to have left their indelible marks on our notions of Art, critics and historians tend to be rarely complimentary in their

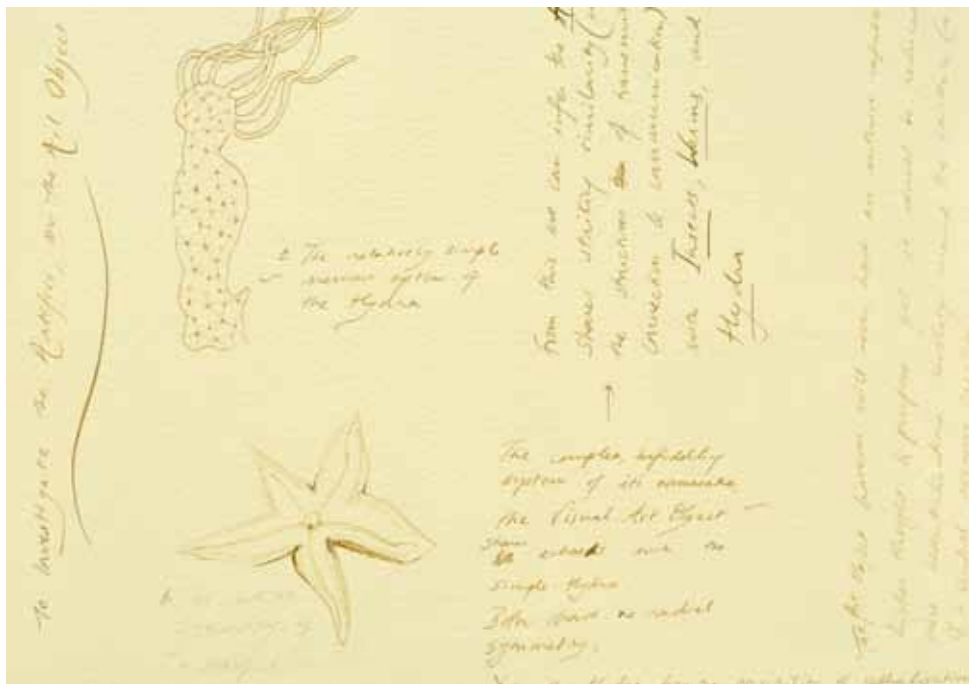
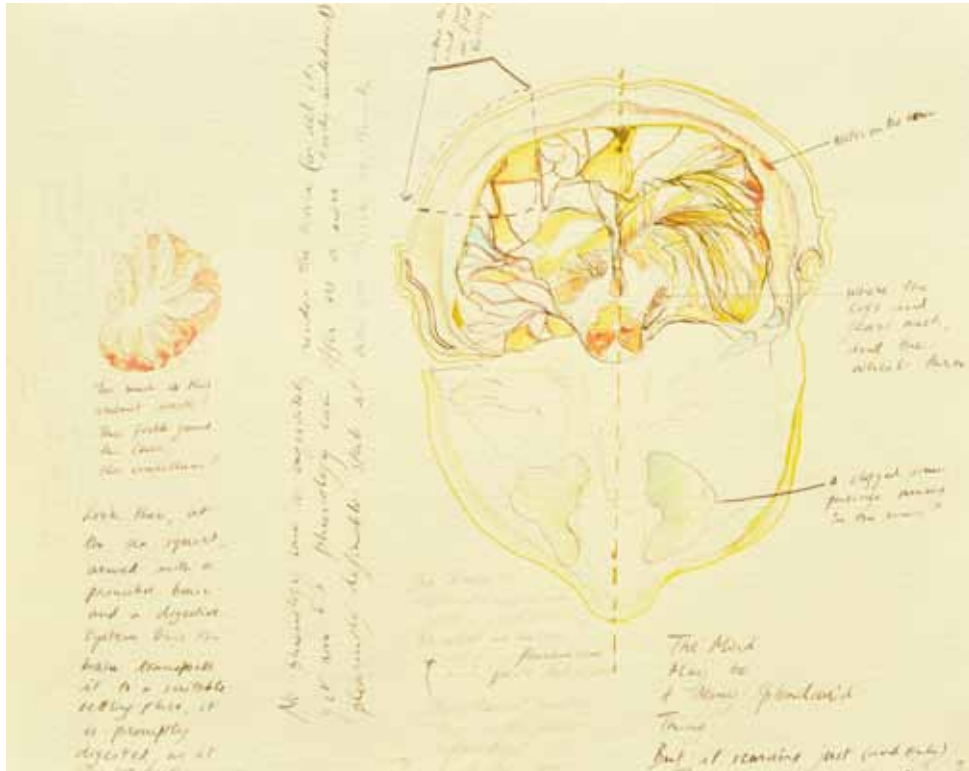
opinions, complimentary with each other, that is. Much in the manner of how ideas of art and beauty have mutated over the ages, critical perception has tended to be more reactionary than one would care to admit. This is truly fascinating, for how else could we so joyfully fling accusations and transfer epithets, so that the poor painting would bear the brunt of criticism of its progenitor's inadequacies. We enjoy the smugness that comes with stirring the stick through the soup of public outrage, a surprisingly satisfying task that affirms our opinion of reactionary mass-righteousness that rears its ignorant head every time art does its job of saying the obvious and the unpleasant.

In keeping with the disjointed twitching of Art History's artificially revived corpse, we too will adhere to the prevailing practice of amputating chunks we deem unworthy, unacceptable, or simply uninteresting.

In keeping with the Usual Way, we too will throw off our shackles of academia, knowledge, truth, objectivity and other such piddling concerns, and crash-test-dummy our way through notions of art, as thoughts from a dot.

*- Excerpt from the Foreword to  
'Notions of Art: Thoughts from a Dot'.  
S. Raoul.*

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## 2.

**Damage at the Front:****On Art, the Artist, the Critic and the Viewer**

*In the final quarter of his life S. Raoul lost his mind and worked on what is arguably his most persistently debated project, referred to with a complete lack of irony as 'The Tuning Fork of the Mind'.*

*Disregarding important evidence (the qualities of objects and the reflectiveness of paint ignored as it "only points to the obvious") in favour of more biologically esoteric specimen study, S. Raoul's work nevertheless remains an important (if still somewhat obscure) treatise on the deranging effects of over-exposure to Contemporary Art.*

*"Art presumed to be edifying, performing a socially valid function, adding a discrete and discernible (how?) value to society? Utter rot!" (S. Raoul, in conversation with his biographer)*

**To investigate the Artifice, or the Art Object**

*Diagram notations:*

A: The relatively simple nervous system of the Hydra

B: The radial symmetry of a starfish

The complex befuddling of its namesake, the Visual Art Object shares echoes with the simple Hydra.

Both have no radial symmetry.

Yet the Hydra has the possibility of cephalisation – the evolutionary ability to grow a Brain.

The Art object however, will never have an anterior capable of higher thought & purpose, yet it cannot be reduced to mere essentialisations revolving around the existence (or non-) of a central nervous system.

From this we can infer [that] Art shares [a] striking similarity (with the structures of transmission, connection and communication) with Insects, Worms and the Hydra.

**Part I: To the Front – To Investigate the Brain of the Artist**

The explosive growth of the Frontal Cortex over the evolutionary timeline of the Sapien is worthy of remark.

Consider first, that this frontal cortex is the machine responsible for the collation of all the disparate, fragmented and fractured bits of information from the rather widely separated regions of the brain. This highly complex centre for processing and synthesis engenders analysis, and it is here that we awaken to a sense of 'Self'.

Apt then, it must be, to take up this region as being at the vanguard of our study, for only here, perhaps, may we find the *raison d'être* of the Artifice, the Artist, the Viewer, the Critic, and all those brain-damaged in between.

**On losing all Sense of Proportion – The Mantle**

A hardy pre-frontal cortex is essential, it would seem, given its ability to allow the Viewer to process visual information (external stimuli) in relation & with a sense of proper proportion to the inner Beliefs and Mores.

Abnormal PF cortices invariably manifest themselves in the Viewer with irrational dislikes and an over-emphasis on the 'Artistic Merit' (perceived & most often, completely Over-Imagined on the part of the Viewer) of the Art of the Object.

This is manifested in the Mantle (of Mores, Morals, Social Responsibility, Ethical Integrity and all such grey areas) being foisted on the Art & the Artist.

**On why Art may not be held hostage by the Pleasure Principle**

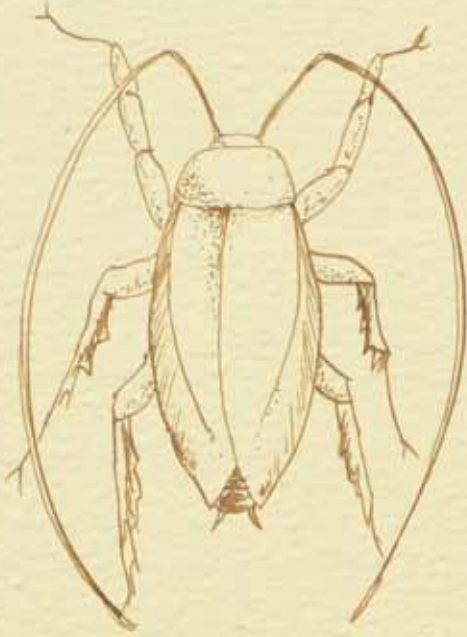
How then can the Artist and his Object hope to compete? The Pleasure Principle must therefore be re-examined in its (previously sanctified) position as the Ideal Reaction to the Visual Art Object.

This of course then renders null much of the sentiment one is wont to express when confronted by the non-pleasure-stimulating Object. But render them void we must, for surely the Art Object must have a higher purpose (non-manteled though it may be) than that of a Pin-up on a wall, or a Dildo in the drawers?

**... The Artist ... Damage at the Front**

1. Damaged frontal cortex → impairment in the ability of the Sapien to work out schemes, plans, actions, consequences and all other manner of civilised, repressed behaviour.
2. In the Brains of the Artificers, or Artists, we have observed
  - a) a grossly enlarged frontal cortex (in physical terms)
    - ⇒ over-inflated sense of self
  - b) corresponding with areas of deficiencies in said cortex
    - ⇒ inability to organise schemes that would endear the subject to those with rank-and-file cephalonic developments, without pandering to the Lowest Common Denominator
    - ⇒ Inability/ Impaired ability to anticipate consequences of Artistic Actions, whereby what is 'informed' to the Artist, is 'idiotic' and 'most certainly not sensible' to the Viewer

Part II : To Investigate the Brain of the Critic/Viewer



We do not need a Kafka  
to tell us this is art.

nor that this  
is the ~~art~~



tra  
ne  
a

**Part II: To investigate the Brain of the Critic/Viewer**  
 We do not need a Kafka  
 to tell us this is Art

nor that this  
 is the (*crossed out and illegible*)

*Diagram notation:*

Transmission / central nervous system of a leech.

... **The Critic/Viewer** ...

The marvellous frequently arise from the mundane, witness  
 Flaubert,

“It’s strange how the most banal of utterances  
 Sometimes make me marvel.”

It could simply mean, though, that one is too often assaulted  
 by the most banal of utterances, a case that most often  
 presents itself in the precincts of a Museum, a Gallery, an  
 Area of Exhibition or Artistic Expression.

Even the most arguably transcendent Art has given rise to  
 statements of the utmost Idiocy.

Then again, in the manner of Sturgeon, Theodore, we must  
 tip our hats to the statement that,

“Ninety percent of everything is horseshit.”

**To Investigate the Brain of the Critic/Viewer**

“An inability to make sensible predictions about the future”  
 (O’Shea, M. 05:61)

The Brain of the Viewer can quit effectively erase,  
 or disregard that which it regards as superfluous or  
 extraneous (to its presumed assumptions or its *a priori*  
*percipio percipi perceptum*).

No wonder then that the Average Viewer more concerned  
 with pecuniary and domestic matters is unable, at times, to  
 transcend these matters and actually ‘see’ the Object.

This Perceptual Blindness is at its most selective (and  
 pervasive) when the Viewer is concentrating with singular  
 focus on matters of definition & categorical thought. Thus,  
 if you hear yourself think “This is not Art”, [cont.]

... **The Critic/Viewer** ...

[cont.] it is because you do not know what Art is, or far  
 worse, you have an Opinion but no Soul.

If we look at the importance of perception (given its oft-  
 described importance), we must accept how impoverished  
 we are as a species. Compared to a cockroach, we are quite  
 bereft of sensory perception.

How sincere can our <sup>Opinion</sup>/<sub>output</sub> be if our <sup>Reception</sup>/<sub>input</sub>  
 is so meagre?

This turns the convention of profaning the Artist on its  
 head (the convention, not the Artist), for to say “The Artist  
 is a Dog” is to accord great sensory depth, sensibility,  
 sensitivity and power, with translates naturally into  
 correspondingly wondrous Perceptive Depth.

**On Custodians, an Ill-Defined Populace and  
 the Foolish Artist**

This foisting of the Mantle is an ignominious spectacle  
 most often witnessed at Expository Events, and practised  
 most by the supposed Custodians of Public Sentiment;  
 (the Public – by definition – remains obdurately unwilling  
 to be defined, at the most being ill-defined when sufficient  
 Force is applied to ensure concordance and conformity  
 and worse, commitment to Common Cause. However, it  
 suits the Self-Appointed Custodians of Morals to claim to  
 be the voices of an Amorphous, Inert, (yet Powerful in its  
 Immensity) and Staid Citizenry).

Part of the problem is compounded by the Foolish Artist  
 who seeks Approbation from his Peers – a most Fickle Band  
 if ever there was. To this [cont.]

**On the Capricious Criteria, and the Witless Artist**

[cont.] end, the Foolish Artist seeks to validate his  
<sup>Consciousness</sup>/<sub>Ego</sub> through External Conditional Situating,  
 whereby Status is accorded by the most capricious of  
 criteria, by the Critic.

The Artist who finds himself only though such Conditional  
 Definition (without any application of Humour and of Irony  
 in its pure form stripped of shallow cynicism, and armed  
 only with the utmost unsmiling Gravity) will also find  
 himself rendered quite Cruelly, as all Caricatures invariably  
 must [sic].

To keep one’s Wits about one then, is to remember the  
 attenuating power of Wit on the [cont.]

**A Guilt-Edged Bargain, if not a Freudian one, perhaps?**

[cont.] most dire of situations, and come away largely  
 untarnished, if not covered in gold.

- This text is extracted from the personal notes, drawings,  
 diagrams, experiments and journal entries of S. Raoul,  
 which may help explain its fragmentary nature.

...never before in History have we witnessed such a seemingly witless milling of the masses, where boundaries blur and nations are so endlessly replicated, re-appropriated and re-gifted that one is no longer pleasantly pating one's midriff, repulse with cultural currency but feels rather put upon, much in the manner of a human guinea pig in an incessantly looping stomach pump experiment

*"It matches all coffee tables!"*

June Yap, Curator, Institute of Contemporary Art, Singapore

*"The musings of a caged, barely lit, but well-ventilated mind."*

The Little Band of Merry Men



Shelagh Rae was born in 1975 and since that day has been regretting it. She enjoys writing, reading and getting the idea underbelly of art, from animals. While she has acquired a reputation for being what some might term "snarky critical", she freely alludes to the philosophy that art is the language of "the people". However, because she believes that "the people" are essentially leafless, she is resigned to the fact that art can be only a reflection of this.

RjPaper

octopus classics SINGAPORE

1 ART OF THE AMERICAS by S. Raoul



ART OF THE AMERICAS  
Secrets Unearthed From Levels Seven To Two  
S. Raoul



For some, this time will appear to be a misdirection of archaeological history and sociopolitics. For others, the historical thought may occur with all the treasures enclosed, preserved, contained and acquired away from public purview, what's so shocking about is stuck in format-hybridity? Draggled along this train of thought, one may wonder, is all the world in stages, and of the art on a messy Colonial page?

*"It matches all coffee tables!"*

June Yap, Curator, Institute of Contemporary Art, Singapore

*"Stunning aesthetics! As for the layout, I could wander forever in its spaces, tripping only over the literary transliteration."*

Clem



Shelagh Rae was born in 1975 and since that day has been regretting it. She enjoys writing, reading and getting the idea underbelly of art, from animals. While she has acquired a reputation for being what some might term "snarky critical", she freely alludes to the philosophy that art is the language of "the people". However, because she believes that "the people" are essentially leafless, she is resigned to the fact that art can be only a reflection of this.

RjPaper

octopus classics SINGAPORE

11 ART OF THE UNITED KINGDOM by S. Raoul



ART OF THE UNITED KINGDOM  
The Burden of British Art  
S. Raoul



To perform in the arena of art is to bring oneself to the twin lens of moral outrage and self-indulgent exhibitionism. The performances of worth seem low and far between, whether viewed through the chronically myopic public telescope, or the chronically dystopic academic microscope.

*"It matches all coffee tables!"*

June Yap, Curator, Institute of Contemporary Art, Singapore

*"It really stirs the soup!"*

Small Home and Garden

*"The portrait of a dot that seems big by itself, but when combined with other dots, becomes part of an enormous, doily portrait of horror."*

Tania De Rozario, Smug Art Observer

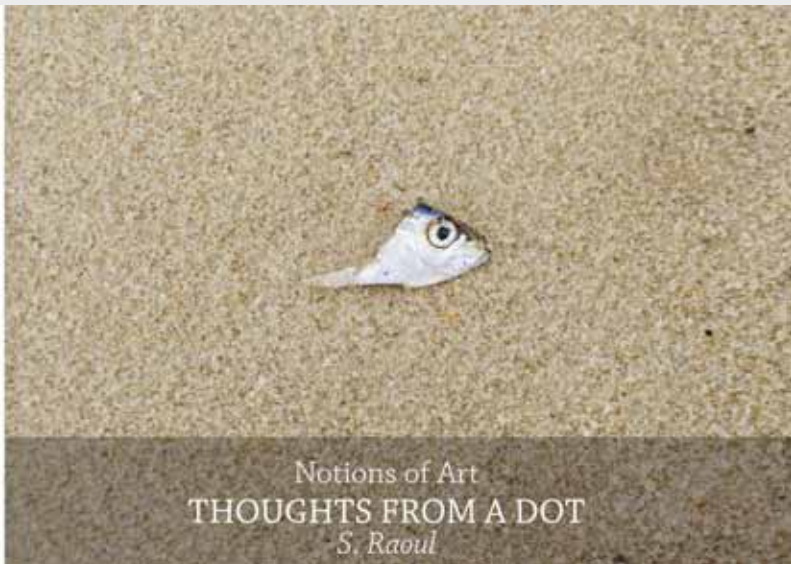


Shelagh Rae was born in 1975 and since that day has been regretting it. She enjoys writing, reading and getting the idea underbelly of art, from animals. While she has acquired a reputation for being what some might term "snarky critical", she freely alludes to the philosophy that art is the language of "the people". However, because she believes that "the people" are essentially leafless, she is resigned to the fact that art can be only a reflection of this.

RjPaper

octopus classics SINGAPORE

111 NOTIONS OF ART by S. Raoul



Notions of Art  
THOUGHTS FROM A DOT  
S. Raoul





## 3.

## On Reading History

*This text illustrates S. Raoul's eccentric approach to matters of History, Antiquity and the manner in which the Past is believed to have existed.*

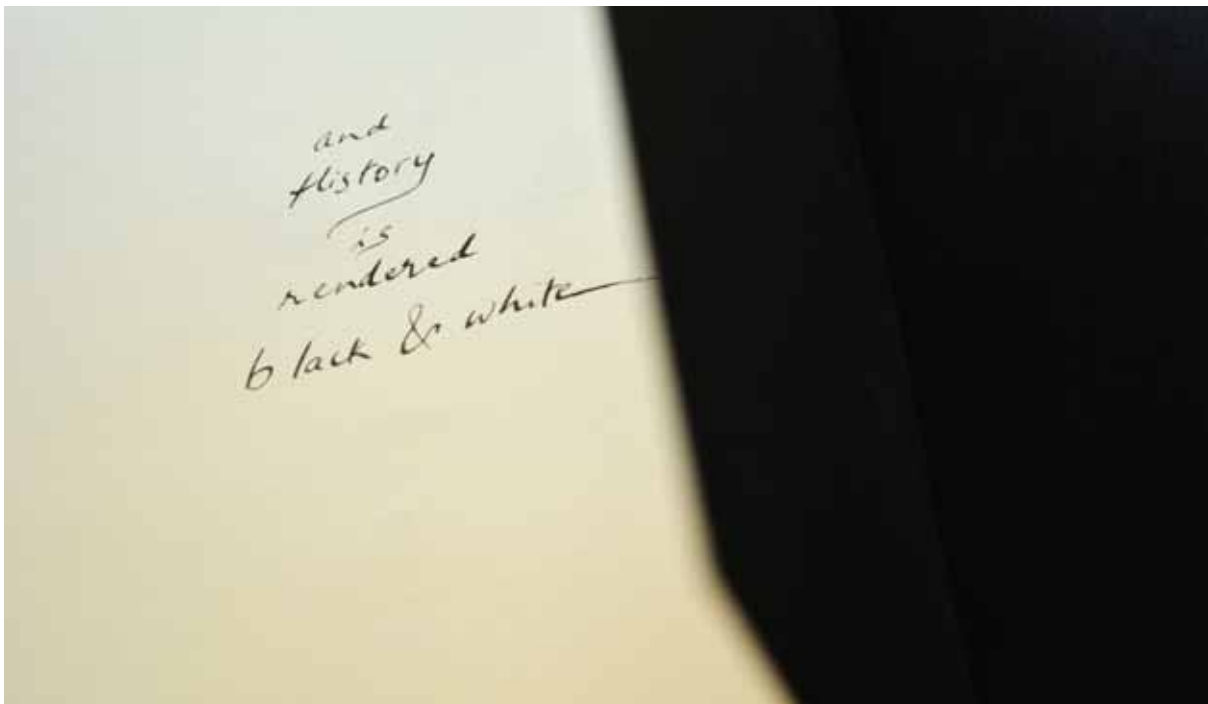
The argument has always been made for the relevance of History (and the veneration of the Past) in that we have lessons to learn, morals to glean, and revelations to resonate with our own time and place. For much as we strive to be immortal, after our passing we will never read a page from the future that will be. It is only through the pages of the Past that we can know our place in the unbroken chain, and thence in becoming a link, we can exist in the future. For what is our Today but the history of the future, and in that history of Tomorrow we may exist only if we know our Yesterday.

We hope you will wander through these pages as a cloud, and while rifling through these leaves, pause to wonder at the fruits of the magnificent quest that we, the humble Editors, embarked upon to garner a greater knowledge, understanding and empathy for these lost people of the Americas. From scribbled fragments on the crumbling walls of ancient subterranean passages, to the monumental works by the purveyors of polymers, we, the Editors, have searched through the dustbins of History to present to you, Gentle Reader, in this gloriously glossy Limited Edition, copiously illustrated in Full Colour, the results of

our gigantic endeavour. To be sure, a lot of the unearthed treasures, though beautifully and painstakingly restored lack provenance; we have unfortunately not always been able to trace the lines of ownership, nor credit the creator. Yet the very fact that these images have attained an almost iconic status speaks of greatness, and perhaps we can admire the quality of Genius more than we should admire the man in whom it reposes. It is with this admonition in mind that we decided to present the sum of our findings in this Glossy, whose glamour is so contrary to Academia's tomes that we hope it will run the risk of being disregarded, and eventually forgotten.

To this end, we hope, Gentle Reader, that you will allow yourself to be lead from level to level, through the slime and schmooze, deeper into the earth, allowing the dust of the ages to cling to you and clothe you in the weight of antiquity, suspending thought and critical faculties to the winds on the surface above.

*- Excerpt from the Foreword to 'Art of the Americas: Secrets Unearthed from Levels Seven to Two'.  
S. Raoul.*





## 4.

## On Art and Archaeology

*Primarily an archaeologist by training and profession, S. Raoul nevertheless approached the subject with an almost destructive force, a wilful negation of its much-espoused aims and declarations. The following excerpt is from Volume 1 of the series on art in the Americas, Britain and Singapore, and can be found under a first edition title of 'Art of the Americas: Secrets Unearthed from Levels Seven to Two'.*

### Between a Rock and a Hard Place

From conception, execution, completion, consumption and eventual commemoration or cast off, all art worthy of discussion has already been the generator of dialectic and doubt, the plagues of the artistic mind. Such work that has stood the rigours of Time, the waxing and waning of Empire, Critic, Fad, and shoddy archaeology, has already been subjected to the fierce, temperamental, egotistical/self-castigating scrutiny of the artist. The writings of the Institutes, and of their protégés, might seem to serve us with keener insights into the nature of art and its creators, fashioning links of cast iron where there appear to be none, between the many voids and voices across the ages; these links that proceed grimly, clanging hollowly as they bind us to Academia. The very ephemeral nature of oral speech carries with it a tacit understanding (one that might rile our friends in conservation archaeology!) and it is this: it is meant to be forgotten. The nature of our species to preserve, restore and sanctify means that any words quoted, if interred in the memory of the listener and set down for posterity, will run the risk of being set in stone, and come to be regarded as definitive statements on the natures of the work and its creator. Thus we find ourselves the unwilling recipients of ineffable twaddle,

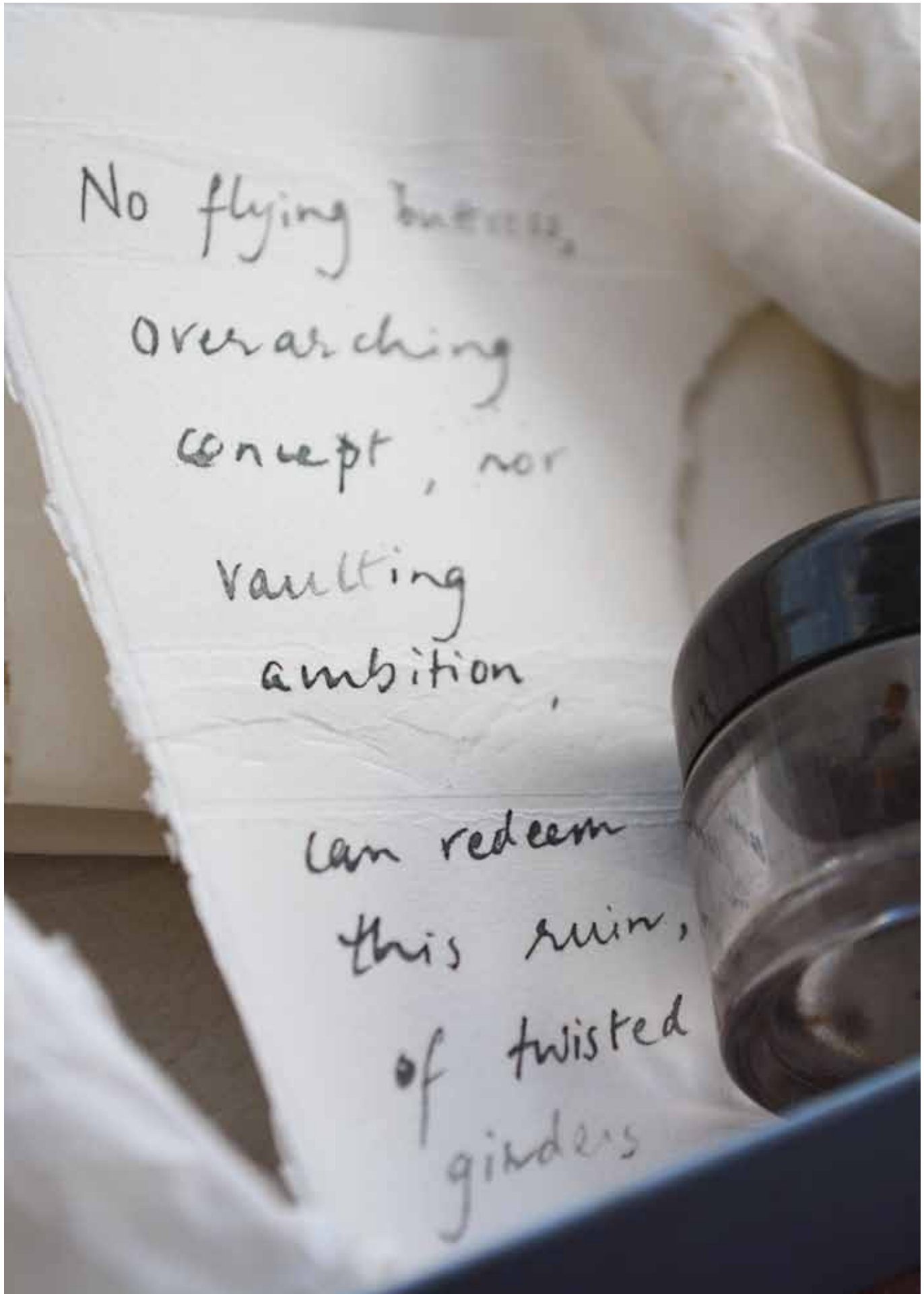
drunken aphorisms and such, masquerading as epiphanic visions from Masters of yore.

You may wonder, Little Lost Reader, at the stance that we, editors, archaeologists, curators and biographers all, have taken, for our professions would seem at odds with our imperative to forget. Consider this then: if all cumulative human knowledge has indeed brought us this far, then why do we oft find ourselves impaled on this all-too familiar Catherine Wheel of Time? If we are doomed to repetition and reiteration in the Grand Circle of Time, then one might be lead to wonder, why have we not learnt our lessons well enough to resist our inevitable skewering on the spokes of cyclic history? So it is, that set against our innate love of knowledge and its accumulation, we find ourselves adrift in this sea of incontinence, with the many sphinctered Scylla of dialectic on the one and the Charybdian maw of oblivion on the other.

*- Excerpt from 'Art of the Americas: Secrets Unearthed from Levels Seven to Two'.  
S. Raoul.*







## 5.

## Singapore: A Prehistory

## Reconstructed Notes from a Reconstruction

*This text has been abstracted from fragments recovered from the notes of S. Raoul, made during the first and second digs. It is the clearest record of his reconstruction of the ancient Straits and extinct people of Singapore.*

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I have long held this to be true: there is no profit to be gained by mere speculation; as I write this, much has already been said, debated, and published (dare I say plagiarised?) about the strange origins and way of life of the peoples of these straits. Conjecture about their level of specialised knowledge may be rife, as well as rumour about their origins (some of my worthy colleagues putting the point of origin as far west as the region of the 75<sup>th</sup> longitude and the 135<sup>th</sup> parallel!), but this much is clear; a series of mass migrations southward from the higher plateaus, highlands, temperate zones of the north and northeast culminated in the strange population indices, evidence of which was uncovered frequently on our first and second expeditions.

Even on the isle itself, they have localised areas of cluster housing, often inexplicably leaving more salubrious spots for what appears to be concretised and tarmac-ed surfaces. They seem to have retreated inland, preferring to cluster around certain spots, instead of living closer to waterways and along the shoreline.

Giant structures must have existed, though only the stubs of supporting pillars remain now. From the strength of the girders, and the tremendous load bearing capacity of what are now ruins, one can conclude that the nature of the structure supported must have been of an extremely durable nature, and crucial in their function, for evidence of these structures exist all over the island. They are most heavily concentrated along certain pathways and thoroughfares<sup>1</sup>, and they are so thickly concentrated as to possibly criss-cross each other. This can be inferred easily enough. If one presupposes that the supported structure follows the lines of the ruined pillars beneath, then one can draw a series of imaginary lines along the structures, upon which one finds oneself 'colliding' with roads.

Could it be possible that these ancient people had created a series of walkways, levels and lanes, layered one over the other to create a network ascending horizontally against the sky? What a sight to behold, a veritable wonder of the ancient world.

The inevitable sequence of logic leads to this: for construction of this nature, and scale, to have existed, a certain amount of engineering facility must have been present. Combined with this is a definite ability to carry out such a feat – for which an incredibly large labour force is indicated. How an isle this size could support a population of such a quantity is remarkable, yet how can we account for the largely barren archaeological finds so far?

Amongst the plethora of shards, detritus, and debris collected, there seems to be a pattern of sorts (in reference to type); thus if one were to create divisions similar to the principles regarding phyla, genera and such, the findings seem strangely skewed in favour of the poly-family (see table, next page).

To better explain this, one would need to take into account the remarkably stable geological nature of the region, this was truly a land blessed, for where else would the ideal climatic conditions, abundant rainfall, and balmy air combine to produce such a thriving ecosystem?

None of the levels excavated caused us more perplexity, nor taxed our ingenuity more than the IV<sup>th</sup>. Submergence<sup>2</sup> was the primary concern, as was the sense that we were working against the hourglass here. We could but wait helplessly till the natural tidal rhythms reduced the water level to a state where we could finally put our pumps to use, and thereby drain the area. Much dredging was required to finally clear the successive levels as well.

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<sup>1</sup> As part of the evidence to support this complex network of pathways existed, S. Raoul included a series of diagrammatic representations and blueprints in a folio.

<sup>2</sup> Folio of selected spectrographic shots detailing the submergence, recession of the waters, and re-submergence, along with observational notes, also salvaged, has been appropriated and it is no longer available.



□ Recovered Notes and Journals from the Effects of S. Raoul  
 □ More from the Effects of S. Raoul

□ Reconstruction Illustrating the Possible Constructions of the Lost Civilisation of the Isle of Singapore



Type	First Dig	Second Dig	Cummul. Index	Ratio
Poly-	109,786 units	137,690 units	19.0015	350:3
Calci-grp.	45,001 units	3,500 units	-	-
Marine organisms [a]	13,865 specimens	23,899 specimens	Benthic, polyps, et al 09.006789	81:5
M. Org. [b]	5,668 specimens	NIL	07.098086	-
Trilobites	171 intact. 2709 fragments		03.89	-

<i>BASIC INFORMATION</i>
1° 16' N, 103° 51' E
<b>Land Area</b> 610 sq km (236 sq miles), includes the main island and 58 smaller islands
<b>Terrain</b>
Largely low-lying land with undulating hills mixed in.. The highest point is at 531 feet above sea level.
Positioned just north of the Equator, the location and maritime exposure produces a climate characterized by uniform temperatures, high humidity and numerous sunny days. The Monsoon (rainy) seasons are (April - May) and (December - March). Windy conditions prevail in January and February.

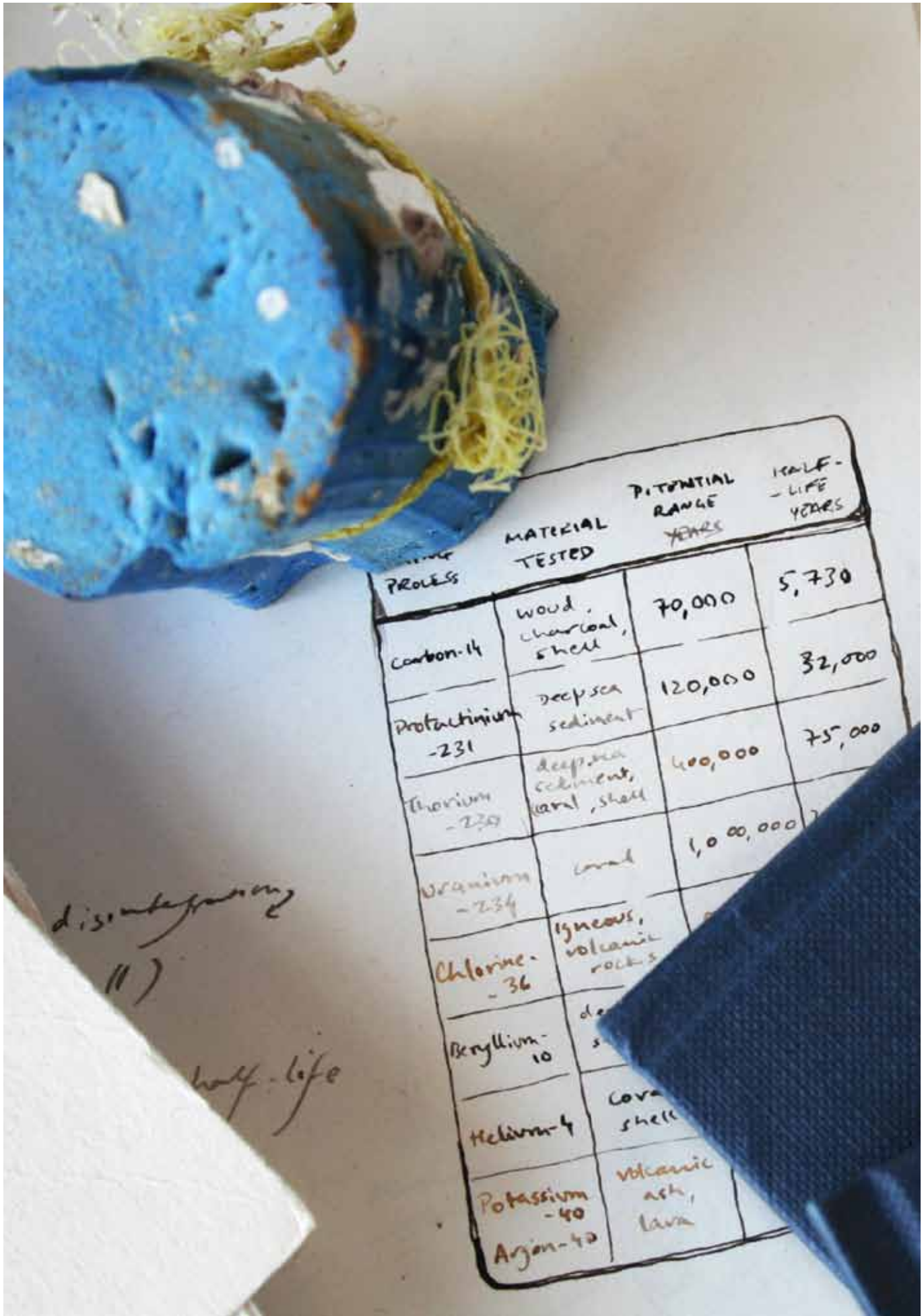
The water damage was considerable; worse, the drainage opened the level to the atmosphere, allowing the rapid proliferation of various moulds, fungi, and mildew; creating a less than ideal work environment. We could not afford to fritter any more time on airing these sub-levels, so the crew had to work in an atmosphere that was dank, musty, and redolent of poisonous allergens, with the constant threat of re-submergence, or worse, complete flooding.

The lower levels were eventually flooded between the 71<sup>st</sup> to the 75<sup>th</sup> days, and we were forced to abandon them to the malevolent waters. Three of the crew were incapacitated with severe allergies and strange sicknesses, and one was quite grievously injured when part of the superstructure

of level II collapsed, at the onset of re-submergence. However, the retrieval went excellently, with many rare and hitherto undocumented and un-catalogued specimens of unknown phyla being recovered.

A large proportion of polyp-based organisms were recovered, mostly fragmented; however we were able to begin reconstruction and are fairly assured of our ability to satisfactorily conclude all reconstruction work once we return to the Institute.

- This text was salvaged from 'The Study of Leftovers'.  
S. Raoul.



## 6.

## On Archiving

*This tiny text is extracted from a larger lament at the frozen spectacle of archived Nature, and the loss of the multiscious naturalist. As with most laments, it owes its peculiar melancholy to the spectre of S. Raoul.*

The abundance of meanings that have attended human perception of the natural world has shifted variously over the ages, with natural history being the predominant discipline to aid our understanding. From its heady days in the 17<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries to its marginalisation today in favour of mathematical and empirical sciences, the sphere of natural history has shrunk to the locus of the museum. Increasingly viewed as an amateur science, the focus has shifted from external taxonomy and Linnaean structure to the mapping of the processes within. Classificatory structures have broken up into smaller and increasingly specialised sciences often isolated from each other, and from the field. The representation of Nature is undertaken by a mélange of museums and institutions, from herb gardens and conservatories to institutes like the Smithsonian. Interestingly enough, the newest institution of all, the laboratory, is also the possessor of the most scientific legitimisation – the cure for cancer will happen in the lab, not in the field.

This is the other issue we currently face, where the laboratory has superseded the field, further removing specimens and study from their natural context. The definition of natural history has become “one of exclusion and inclusion, what is real knowledge and what is merely popular... This is the Age of the Human Genome Project, not of a co-ordinated survey of the world’s flora and fauna”<sup>1</sup>. For us, a visit to the zoo is partly about the collection of exotic animals in an artificial construct meant to simulate nature except now the animals are precious gene banks awaiting possible cloning/regeneration in the future.<sup>2</sup> Bruno Latour’s declaration “give me a laboratory and I will raise the world”<sup>3</sup>, is indicative of how “museums and herbaria ... have come to be associated with conservation, tradition, preservation – not with innovation, economic growth or survival”<sup>4</sup>. From that narrow position, it is hard to find a valid scientific legitimisation for collections of natural history in museums.

For all its conservative and documentative worth, archiving anything that is evolutionary in nature is fraught with difficulties; how does one freeze-frame every stage of an evolutionary process, or does one curate the process,

choosing only the arresting ones for archival? Archiving, by its very definition implies a relegating to the past, a form of cryo-documentation that can very easily lose its moorings and pin its meanings on the act of archiving itself. Too often the collection or documentation takes precedence over the actual progression of events, creating its own context, and becoming the generator of its own readings. Frozen in limbo, the acts of conservation and preservation are no longer indicative of natural evolution. Our ancestors, for instance, are represented rather baldly, by the few stick figureheads of anthropology (Lucy and the Iceman!), who are so inextricable from the public perception of the anthropology of our species that the museum that exhibits them would be regarded as the highest authority on our paleontological provenance.

Baudrillard’s contention that all objects in a collection eventually become equivalent to each other seems especially valid in the case of natural history, where the democratisation of intrinsic value erases the bio-context so effectively that the objects become frozen in a limbo of preservation, in antithesis to evolution and the intricate multigenuous relationships of the biome. The spectacle of exhibition is degenerative, which is why more attention is paid to dinosaurs than the coelacanth, the latter being more remarkable in an evolutionary sense.<sup>5</sup>

This is not merely a blanket accusation of stultification levied at collections of natural history, for in an instructive, educative sense, they sometimes serve their functions. Collections that exist for mere didacticism, however, run the risk of being regarded as definitive by the layman (therefore invalidating other sources and repositories of knowledge), especially with the museum representing itself as the custodian of erudition, knowledge, objectivity and power. Unfortunately, while educating the layman about the wonders of the natural world, his separation from it is reinforced; for the wondrous is exotic, and hence unfamiliar.

*- This text first appeared as part of the essay ‘There Is Nothing ‘Natural’ About the Museum of Natural History’.*  
Shubiqi Rao, 2006.

<sup>1</sup> Jardine, N., Secord, J.A., and Spary E.C., ed. *Cultures of Natural History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

<sup>2</sup> These methods of defining, segregating, and imposing clarity and order are reflected in the public perception of state parks (e.g. Butterfly Parks), nature documentaries, museums, collections, displays, even lawns and golf courses becoming synonymous with ‘The Environment’.

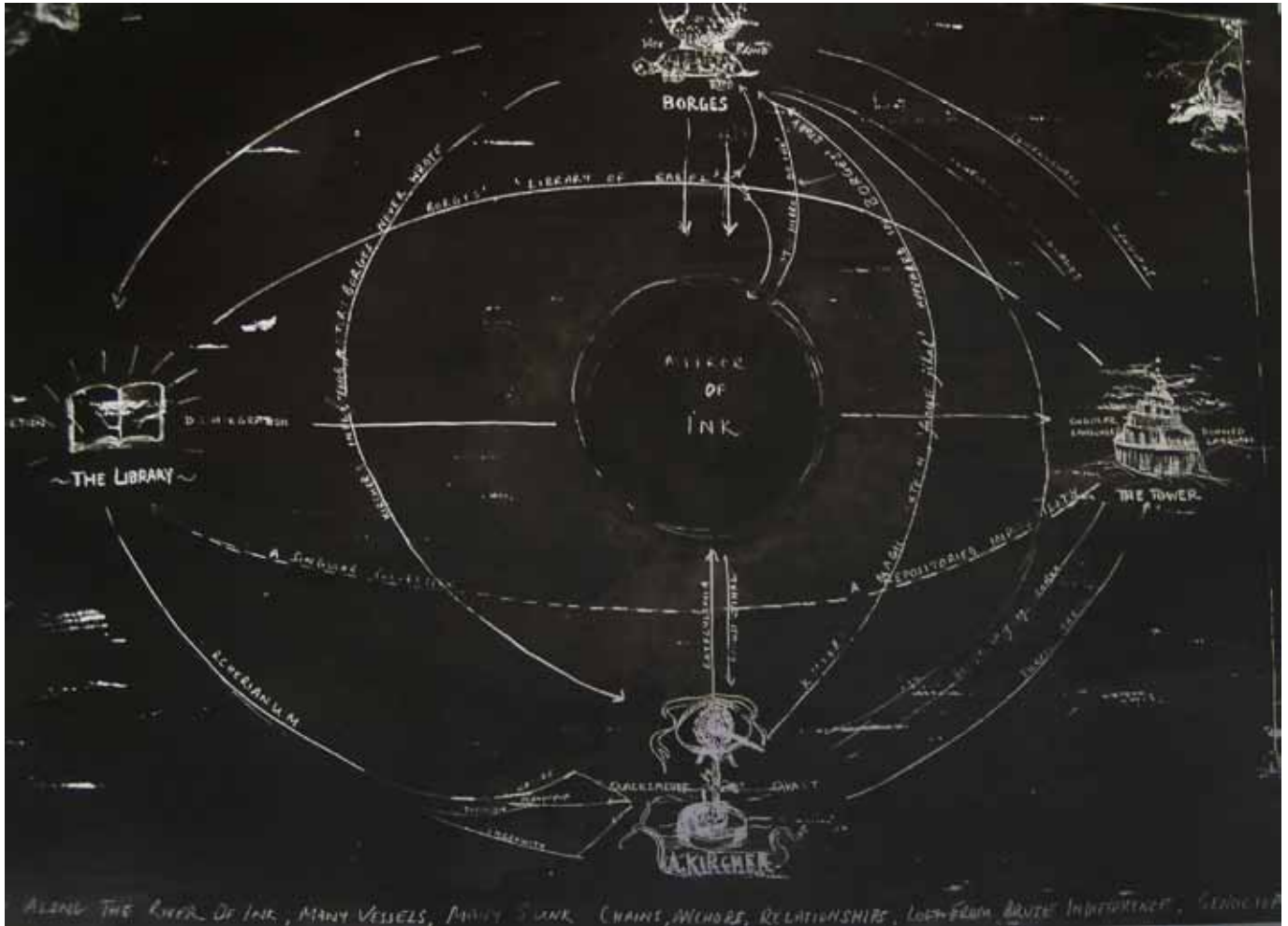
<sup>3</sup> Latour, Bruno. ‘Give Me a Laboratory and I will Raise the World’, in M. Mulkey K. Knorr-Cetina (eds.), *Science observed, Perspectives on the Study of Science*. London: Sage, 1983.

<sup>4</sup> Jardine, N., Secord, J.A., and Spary E.C., ed.

<sup>5</sup> Believed to have died out 85 million years ago, the coelacanth was discovered living in the depths of the Indian Ocean, in blissful ignorance of its declared ‘demise’. Still, the Spielberg dinosaur spectacle will always be a bigger draw with the masses than a prehistoric living creature!







□ *Mirror of Ink*  
 'Along the River of Ink, many vessels, many sunk chains, anchors, relationships, lost from brute indifference, genocide'

## 7.

## On Fictive Fact: A Circumambulation

*A wide-ranging (rambling) examination of language, text, repositories and destroyed knowledge, the original essay betrays a polymathic debt to my mentor S. Raoul. This insignificant extract is more than mere homage or encomium, being part answer to critics who sneered at the notion of S. Raoul having any lasting legacy or weight on posterity, and part celebration of the joy of aimless scholarship.*

To write a contemporary, relevant text in the confines of academic tradition, dealing with 'pure fiction' (is there such a thing?) and fictive fact threatens to be an ordeal more Sisyphean than Herculean. How can one incorporate all the bodies of knowledge, and include all the shades of gray that, if insufficiently treated, refuse to support what invariably becomes misinterpreted text? This might well be an exposition that runs the danger of crushing its own premise by the questioning of the very assumptions it uses to support its contentions. Self-reflexivity runs the risk of snapping its spine with its overarching need to constantly sideslip assumption, yet it is not without reward. Though, as Borges famously wrote, "To speak is to commit tautologies"<sup>1</sup>, this essay will presuppose a certain originality, at least in the linking of diverse works, authors and artists in the discussion of the natures of fact, fiction, truth and falsehood, the author/artists as reality and the narrator/artwork as fiction.

The central pillars of this project are Borges, Babel, the Library, and Language, and rather than merely treating them as separate areas, this essay will discuss their points of confluence and resonance in greater detail. Resonance here is echolocation of a sort, where the reader/viewer is a blind bat attempting to navigate territories that overlap and melt into each other. There is a selfish joy in experiencing a text or an artwork when we discover ourselves reflected, so to speak. The inevitable misinterpretations and subjective reactions (which often confound the writer or the artist), arise because the reader/viewer looks for a specific resonance, within the text/artwork, often quite unconsciously. To paraphrase Camus, we can only understand the world when it fits within human comprehension, follows human laws, and is reduced to the familiar.<sup>2</sup> That cloudy glass through which we peer, hoping for comprehension is paradoxically fogged over by the heavy breathing of our own earnest attempt. This is not necessarily unfortunate, for the delicious confusion that arises has allowed a multiplicity of stories, allegories,

and manifestations of what are eventually, the same few grand themes or tales. Maybe the Babel of tongues is essential to human thought, for what a poor world it would be with easily delineated truths and fictions.

Of course, art is fiction too, as the role of the artist is a persona, another fictive element in the pact we make with our art. Art is fiction inasmuch as the viewer is required to suspend disbelief, but only up to a point. Even the fantastical has rules. It has been argued (in various ways) that art is fiction because it keeps reminding us of reality, or that we can tell a work is fiction because we are reminded of reality in opposition to it.<sup>3</sup> That might be a slippery distinction, for not everything unreal is fiction.<sup>4</sup>

This brings one to the idea of hallucinating time.<sup>5</sup> Text imposes more reading time versus discourse time, while art that occupies space (painting) doesn't have the same manipulation of time. 'Circumnavigational time' is another matter (though the concept of how long that can be has been drastically reduced by the average gallery visitor!). Skipping through a book, like 'touring' a gallery, not really looking at the art, but imagining one is still culturally enriched is like saying one finished 'War and Peace', though one had to skip the boring bits! Eco avers, though, that the act of skipping takes time too, "in order to save more"<sup>6</sup>. The disruption of the temporal experiencing of a text is as masterful an act as the author's in writing the story. At every level then, it seems there is an editing exercise.

Another point of interest in the examples given above is that they share a common notion: the blurring of truth/fact and fiction/falsehood makes for marvellous allegory. The exploration of the grand themes of life, mortality, god, truth, the nature of the universe have frequently appeared in allegorical fiction, where the metaphor of the dream works as a means to transport the reader into realms seemingly fantastical, yet no less real for that, in other words, the reader will stretch his suspension of disbelief that much more.

<sup>1</sup> Borges, Jorge Luis, 'The Library of Babel'. In *Fictions*. Trans. Andrew Hurley. London: Penguin Classics. 2000. p. 73.

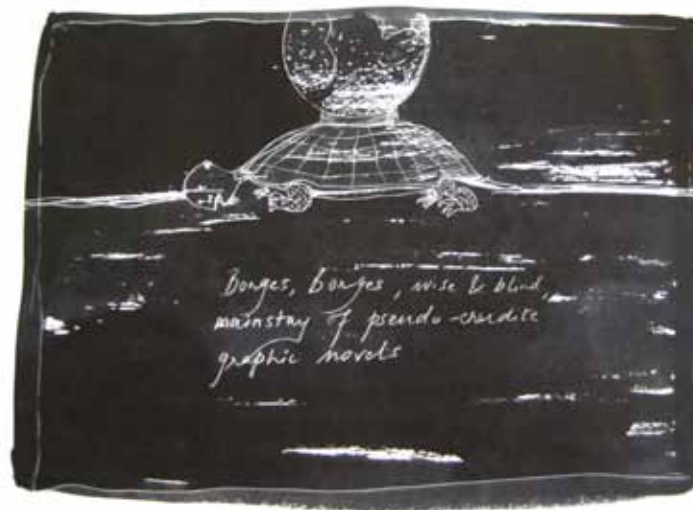
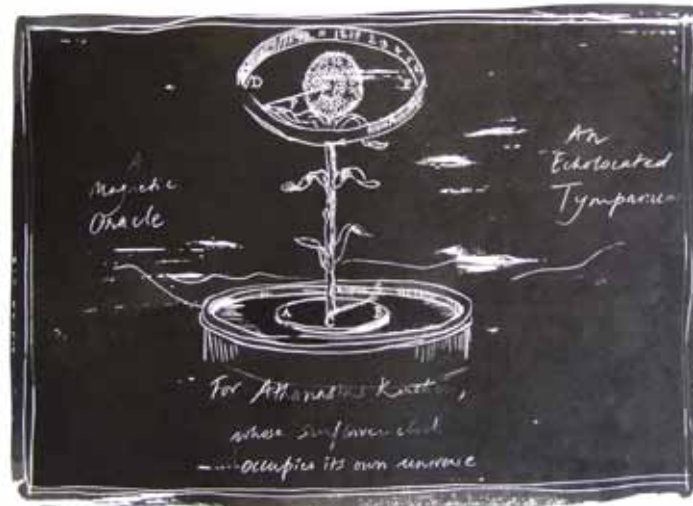
<sup>2</sup> Camus, Albert. *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Trans. Justin O'Brien. London: Penguin Classics. 2005. p.15.

<sup>3</sup> Umberto Eco asserts that to be impressed, disturbed, touched by or frightened by the most impossible of worlds, we must rely on our knowledge of the one world we know. An excellent example of this would be the universal appreciation of the themes and motifs in Jorge Luis Borges' 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius'. Another would be the labyrinthine novel with its unconventional typography and puzzling narrative devices, in Mark Z. Danielweski's *House of Leaves*.

<sup>4</sup> Giraffes, once called cameleopards, could be argued to be quite unreal, and surely must have seemed as bizarre as the most misanthropic drawings of the early naturalist explorers.

<sup>5</sup> Eco, Umberto, 'Lingering in the Woods'. In *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. 2004. p. 50.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.* p. 57.



- *The Sunflower Clock*  
 'A Magnetic Oracle/An Echolocated Tympanum  
 For Athanasius Kircher,  
 whose sunflower clock,  
 occupies its own universe.'
- *The Turtle*  
 'Borges, Borges, wise and blind,  
 mainstay of pseudo-erudite  
 graphic novels'
- *The Tower*  
 'The Tower, a singular collection, a Library of Ink'



In the exploration of categories of truth and falsehood (perhaps interchangeable as fact and fiction?), one is forced to telescope the argument into an identifiable metaphor, which Borges did very successfully in his short fiction, 'The Library of Babel'. The notion of the universe as a library, ordered and yet insane in scope, assumes a certain clarity that one realises does not really exist, for comprehension still eludes us. A point of interest is the cataloguing of 'truths', where "... the faithful catalogue of the Library, thousands of false catalogues, the proof of the falsity of the false catalogues, a proof of the falsity of the true catalogue..."<sup>7</sup> are but a small example of its infinite scope. The Library has been read to mean the ultimate repository of all that can be said about Truth and Falsehood.<sup>8</sup> The Library causes madness, obsession, puritanical and orgiastic fervour in people, and is variously subject to worship and destruction by crazed pilgrims, yet if the Library is total, must it not be that the destroyed books would occur again, or else the Library would never be 'total', and that would negate its very premise for existing? This is just one of the many problems thrown up by the text that elude simple intellectual grasping. Perhaps the Library is more cogent here as a metaphor, where the search for comprehension only throws up more confusion, like the notion of the Vindications, "... books of apologiæ/prophesies that would vindicate for all time the actions of every person in the universe..."<sup>9</sup> a notion that throws up ideas of predestination and will, action and consequence. The Borges/"Borges" question is evident here too, where

the writer conflates his reality into the narrator who wanders the unreal Library.<sup>10</sup> In all this delicious confusion, the Library cannot be seen as an absolute anymore.<sup>11</sup>

In his writing on the navigation of fiction and the role of the author, Alberto Manguel talks about the editor as the 'secret sharer'<sup>12</sup>, a notion earlier expounded by Borges, who said that Eliot was no longer the sole author of 'The Wastelands'<sup>13</sup>. I would like to extend that to propose that every text is already shared by all the previous texts that contributed to it outside of the realm of possible citations, and it includes all the non-footnotable ideas, phrases, peoples, creatures that inhabit all our common imaginings, and that every text is already many other texts that may or may not exist. Of course this is not new, not only by virtue of its thesis, but also because this idea that every text is a retelling of the few basic stories is an old one. This contention is Borgesian, and cannot be claimed by another, yet one can find shades of this in every work of fiction, because the proof of this assertion would seem to lie in every text. It is frequently hobbling to the writer's belief in the originality of his/her thesis, but it can sometimes be an illumination along the lost passageways of human histories (oral and written), knowledge and memories. Perhaps one could tentatively venture that if Borges' Library exists, it is in every text.

*- This text first appeared under the title 'In Celebration of Futility: A Linguistic Circumambulation'.  
Shubiqi Rao, 2008.*

<sup>7</sup> Borges, Jorge Luis, 'The Library of Babel'. In *Fictions*. Trans. Andrew Hurley. London: Penguin Classics. 2000. p. 69.

<sup>8</sup> Or maybe, god and Language? For is it not acceptable, if a little glib, to commonly assign them thus: God=Truth, Language=Falsehoods. Yet how else do we know the various gods that have populated human history but through words, theirs (ostensibly), and ours? It is vastly entertaining to observe how Truth with a capital T cannot exist without the lying tongue of Language!

<sup>9</sup> 'Borges the narrator' found two Vindications, whose importance he immediately muddies, by writing that they refer to 'persons in the future, persons perhaps not imaginary'. See Borges, Jorge Luis, 'The Library of Babel'. In *Fictions*. Trans. Andrew Hurley. London: Penguin Classics. 2000. p. 69-70.

<sup>10</sup> The autobiographical note surfaces often enough in Borges' fiction, becoming part of an exquisite musing in 'Borges and I'.

<sup>11</sup> The notion of absolute truths or clarity is what Camus calls 'essential impulse for human drama', and the Library is really a repository of human reaction to it as much as it is the Library. The universe is not to be studied without us placed firmly within it.

<sup>12</sup> Manguel, Alberto. 'The Secret Sharer'. In *Into the Looking-Glass Woods*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc. 2000. p. 130-137.

<sup>13</sup> Concerning Ezra Pound's almost dictatorial editing of Eliot's 'The Wastelands'.



- 
- *The Basilisk*, after Borges and misremembered myth  
“If the man who saw you is still alive, then your whole story is a lie,  
for if he has not died, he cannot have seen you, and if he has died he cannot tell what he saw.”

## 8.

**The Library: A Final Dissolution**

*Much like the preceding chapter, this extract goes beyond being solely Raoul-referential, attempting instead to run with a Borgesian idea. It is a pity then, that it would seem to run that idea into the ground.*

There are a number of elements specifically dealing with erasures that have burped their way up with surprising regularity through the course of this project. The notion of cultural genocide threaded its ugly skein through it, as did violent histories, conquests, instruments of propaganda, populist hysteria, and the roles that books played (and continue to play) in the chaotic human game of dominance and subjugation. Theology and heresy were motifs that occurred often, not surprising considering the intertwining of knowledge with religion throughout the ages, whether in the work of Jesuit scholars like the polymath Athanasius Kircher, the *auto-da-fé* of the 'heretic' Giordano Bruno, or in the Islamic Renaissance that found its flowering in Baghdad so abruptly and brutally terminated in 1258 by the invasion of the Mongol leader Hulagu Khan, a grandson of Genghis Khan. The Battle of Baghdad remained an account of the horror of genocidal massacre and cultural barbarism in numerous histories<sup>1</sup>, but the account that has seeped into the collective consciousness was of how on the first day, the river Tigris ran red with blood, and on next, black with ink. The invading army emptied the entire contents of the Grand Library of Baghdad, with its countless manuscripts and treatises on everything from medicine, mathematics, astronomy, theology and art, into the river Tigris.

Theological misreadings, heresy, *autos-da-fé*, cultural genocide find their historical echoes in more recent acts of violence, be they of bowdlerising, black-listing, banning or book burning. The topicality of history has never been in question, but it is the various avatars in which intolerance and ignorance breed that became of singular interest to the project.<sup>2</sup>

The reactions to the use of books as art run the gamut from the completely uninterested to the damning, which quite

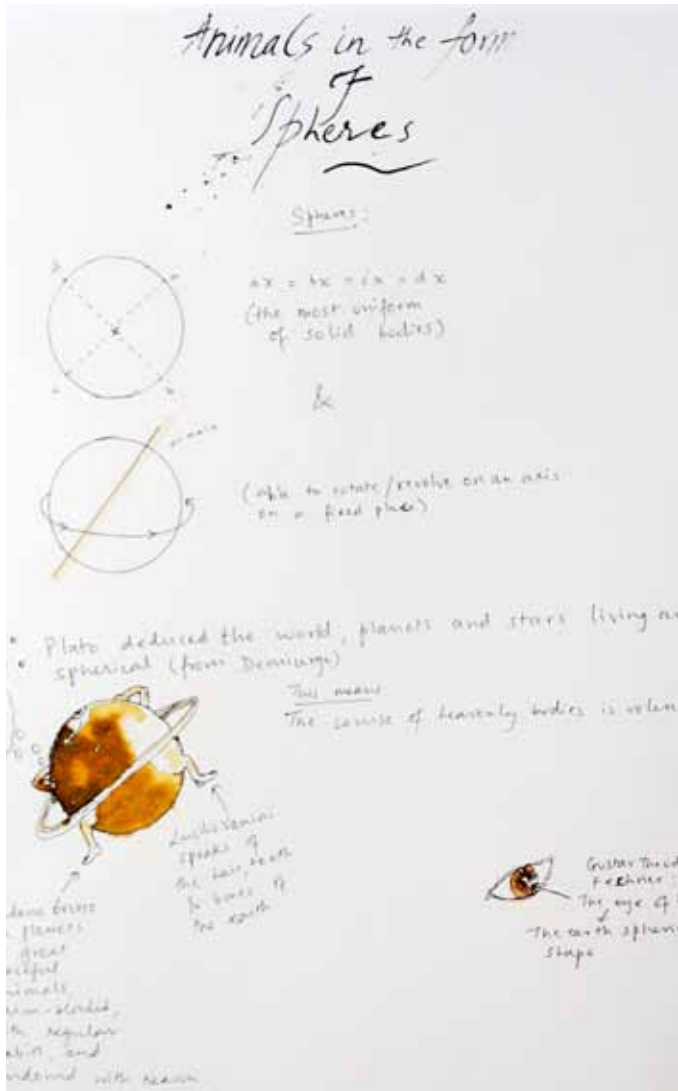
tellingly harks back to the very issue of intolerance, and the fear that books as objects of power can arouse. Interestingly enough, it is the unread book that is often the target of the most scepticism, or distrust. What is the word, that it can be so powerful when buried in a book? When freed of the latter, the word must find other edifices from which to draw its power, whether projected onto the edifice of a stately civil building à la Holzer, or to see its name in lights, tarted up in Nauman neon. Yet the power that comes from a book could arguably be from the exercise of choice – the acts of selecting, opening, reading/skimming means that one chooses to imbibe, and perhaps it is this intoxicating exercise of choice that is so terrifying to the textbook totalitarian! There is a sullen power to books; they hold such premonitory promise, while sodden with the historical burden of innumerable dunkings, conflagrations, and expungings. The foreshadowing of unavoidable decay and destruction is part of the promise. The average paperback of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is printed on cellulose rich paper, which means a shelf-life of a mere sixty years. It may not seem as dramatic as the sacking of a library, but it is still remarkable how the modern human has drastically shortened the lifespan of the average book, while dramatically extending his own.

I had once seized upon Jorge Luis Borges' 'The Book of Imaginary Beings' which while looking innocuously slim, is in true Borges fashion more like a library within a book. It is hard to truly immerse oneself in a singular text and risk losing out on the intertextuality and bodies of knowledge, or simply put, the big picture. In defence a project was initiated to mimic the many neural pathways we journey down when we read a book such as this. To that end, I began to make a single drawing for each entry, or imaginary being, based solely on the echoes in my mind<sup>3</sup>, from fraudulent memory, the unconscious connective tissue that invisibly strings together our imaginative and cognitive leaps.

<sup>1</sup> "They swept through the city like hungry falcons, attacking a flight of doves, or like raging wolves attacking sheep, with loose reins and shameless faces, murdering and spreading terror..." (Abdullah Wassaf as cited by David Morgan. 'The Mongols'. Second ed. *The Peoples of Europe Series*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007.)

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 11 for some of the 'surviving' texts from the 'The River of Ink' work.

<sup>3</sup> Possibly generated by the empty space there.



- *Animals in the Form of Spheres*, after Borges and misremembered myth "Giordano Bruno, "The planets are great peaceful animals, warm-blooded, with regular habits, and endowed with reason" 'I revolve, am spherical, therefore I am'

- *The Catoblepas*, after Borges and misremembered myth "My head is so heavy; I wind it around my body. Once I ate up my forelegs unawares"

As mnemonic realities the drawings raised the question of how nebulous remembered (or repositored) knowledge really could be. There was no straining for a partially glimpsed old memory of a Basilisk from a children's book of mythological constructs, the process instead circumvented a conscious grasping, for a bouncing-off-the-walls approach, an echolocation. As an example of this mnemonic device, the remembering of a fictional character described to you becomes the basis for recognition and solidifying imagery when you encounter said character upon finally reading the book. This construction could be seen more as a reconstructive reality, which then begs the question: what created the first mnemonic? The brain as storage device suggests a rather faithful repositoring, an idea better expounded on by Professor Jean-Pierre Changeux<sup>4</sup>, who suggests that memories (and by derivation, meaning) occur as 'reconstructions' of the physical changes resulting from the selecting and strengthening that neural pathways in the brain undergo throughout our lifespan.

This attribution of a physical basis to all human experience and meaning, by proposing that it is the constantly flexing and changing neural networks that provide a stable physical reality from which memory and meaning occur as reconstructions, became a symbol of sorts in the project. The Library became the brain, and the mnemonic realities of the book as no more than the ephemeral reconstruction of a Library in constant flux became a basis for opening up multiple realities collapsed in a single reading. The Book is a narrative wormhole where the meanings engendered by any one page collapse into the next in telescoping fashion, and all the preceding pages do not follow the teleological conventions of oral storytelling. This would appear to parallel film, where the frame acts as a page, where meaning may be arguably freed from its narrative moorings only if no other frames occur. The paradoxical consequence of freeing a frame in this way engenders a new fixing of meaning, with its own backstory! Sometimes a narrative is recognisable only by a discernable pattern that emerges, though the patterning may sometimes be clever camouflage for a disregarded marvel. These unheeded metanarratives soon became of more importance to me than the visual regurgitation of factoids and saucy historical nibbles.

This is not a mere romanticisation of the whimsical or the outmoded. There is an overweening tendency in critical thinking to affix a quotient, a value, a premium even, onto ideas and beliefs. Categorisation seems to be so inherently human that it is no wonder that knowledge of any sort may be both derided and hailed, often at the same time. While all contributing to the Great Debate, there is often a shallow trend-making tendency that occurs, which in

the case of this project, took the form of a institutional pressure to pander, to make palatable and understandable, to refashion the project into an audience friendly medium. The assumptions that were made (and that should have been questioned) were based on everything from the categorisation of printmaking and drawing as unfashionable compared to performance and new media, to the presumed inability of the audience to browse through books in a gallery. As a counter-action the tools of the trade ('it looks like art') became a weapon of sorts, with which the project was able to masquerade as a visual spectacle.<sup>5</sup> The frustration at a lack of easy answers, and the apparent irrationality and futility of human activity (hallmarks of dislocated globalised identities), become heightened when a viewer who is not privy to the (often torturous!) workings of an artist's mind is confronted with art.<sup>6</sup> I am of the notion that it is the denial of, or the apathetic responses to the theoretical underpinnings, the epistemology of an artwork that often lead to its being labelled abstruse, or (worse!) 'elitist'. There was a sense of being viewed through the "chronically myopic public telescope, while staring through a chronically dyspeptic academic microscope"<sup>7</sup>.

The importance of drawing as invented language holds far more interest than the need to pander with schmaltzy media tricks and ersatz imagery. There can be no denying its immediacy, for the drawings used a deceptive naïveté to slip across a further obfuscation of meaning. A declamatory tone in a large Kruger-like font size might grab attention, but the very necessary side-slippage of meaning that was required here was a far slyer way to stack the deck. Instead of imprinting, stamping large, the intention was to slip it across the bows, to seed confusing echoes in the viewer/reader's mind, to suspend clarity of thought and rigidity of belief, as David Wilson said so well, "to crack the hard shell of certainty"<sup>8</sup>. Drawing shares with writing the action of the first articulation of abstract thought, yet both share an undeniable complexity in generating meanings that can be anchored in nothing more solid than a primary impulse. The associative, the subjective, the fraudulently stable aspects of drawing are aids in the transmutations that occur in the conveyance of meaning and relevance. The sleight of hand required to slip an incongruous meaning across to the viewer can often be found in drawing, as much as in verbal fencing, subtler ironies and even low-brow puns. To create a narrative wormhole between wildly disparate bodies of knowledge is often a graphic act. The transmission of ideas through semiotic side slippage can be endlessly fascinating, and to make books that evoke reactions from apathy to irritation, from earnest attempts at echolocating comprehension to a moment of genuine anagnorisis, to me, makes the line between 'books' and 'art' wriggle a little bit more.

<sup>4</sup> A molecular neurobiologist at the College de France and the Institut Pasteur in France, Prof. Changeux goes so far as to state that the selective stabilisation of synapses in the physical brain shape our minds, and that we are thus disposed to interpret our environments and create realities based on the pre-existing records in the brain, instead of the other way round. This is posited in relation to Ricoeur's 'capable person' model, which establishes the separation of the human from other species by our consciousness of who we are. Changeux even demonstrated in a lecture 'Toward a Neuroscience of the Capable Person: Unity, Diversity, Oneself-as-Another', that art provides a methodology with which to illustrate the neuroscience of the 'capable person'.

<sup>5</sup> This is not to say that this project met with much animosity. Rather than dispatches from the front, this discussion is really one that has been simmering like a half-baked back-bencher finally getting its act together.

<sup>6</sup> Much like this torturous sentence.

<sup>7</sup> Raoul. S. *Notions of Art: Thoughts from a Dot*. Singapore: Octopus Classics. 2006.

<sup>8</sup> David Wilson, the man behind the Museum of Jurassic Technology, in an interview on the independently made documentary 'Inhaling the Spore'. Dir. Leonard Feinstein. 2004.



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□ from *Echolocation of a Book* by Borges  
'You can hug knowledge to yourself,  
cradle your intellect,  
but forgetting is inevitable,  
and so is erosion; death of wisdom.'

When I started with this project, I had the vague glimmerings of mapping the library in a book. Instead, I decided to attempt the construction of a library, with a disregard for order, category, and relevance, more like a mill where all information thrown up in the course of the research is reduced to grist. The drawings and writings that occurred in consequence are meanderings, initial attempts to construct an eventual codex-type manuscript from all the huge tangled mass of cross-connected and linked bits and pieces that one comes across every day, most of it useless information that nevertheless links up to the project. The library then is less an absolute archive, but more like a mnemonic faux-reality. The most widely accessible and yet truly mysterious archive of them all, the human mind, became a point of departure here, and the library soon came to resemble the hugely entropic repositories in our heads more than one of preservation and archiving. The discussion of the Library as being more cogent as a metaphor, (where the search for comprehension only throws up more confusion), is still relevant here, though it is situated in a discussion of more decrepitude and dissolution<sup>9</sup> than of semantic wrangling. Rather than atrophy, it seems that the decaying human mind, like the moldering Library, can be best characterised by entropic erasure rather than atrophic paralysis. It is not noteworthy that the decaying mind retains fewer memories; it is the disorder of the choice of the memories saved, and of those lost.

Is it possible to read Borges without a library at hand? In other words, how much can we disregard bodies of knowledge when we read, for fear of interrupting the flow? Do we really need to store so much information (a lot of it may be deemed 'inconsequential' or 'irrelevant') in our heads? Does irony trivialise in the process of unearthing? Instead of fulfilling the concept through expository text or

artwork, the process of referential review lends itself to a more speculative yet oddly academically pleasing approach. Can the referential review, the pseudo-epigrapha be more valid than a properly propounded concept? There is a confrontation of the irreducible quality of what may be dismissed as quantifiably comprehended, taxonomically tucked away or plain unheeded with its implication of archive=loss. The shimmering quality of the 'useless' is that it transcends its pigeon-holing, because it quite simply defies usage! The impossibilities are so much more than merely the fantastical, for they have no anchor in functionality, other than the metaphysical problems with which they confront us.

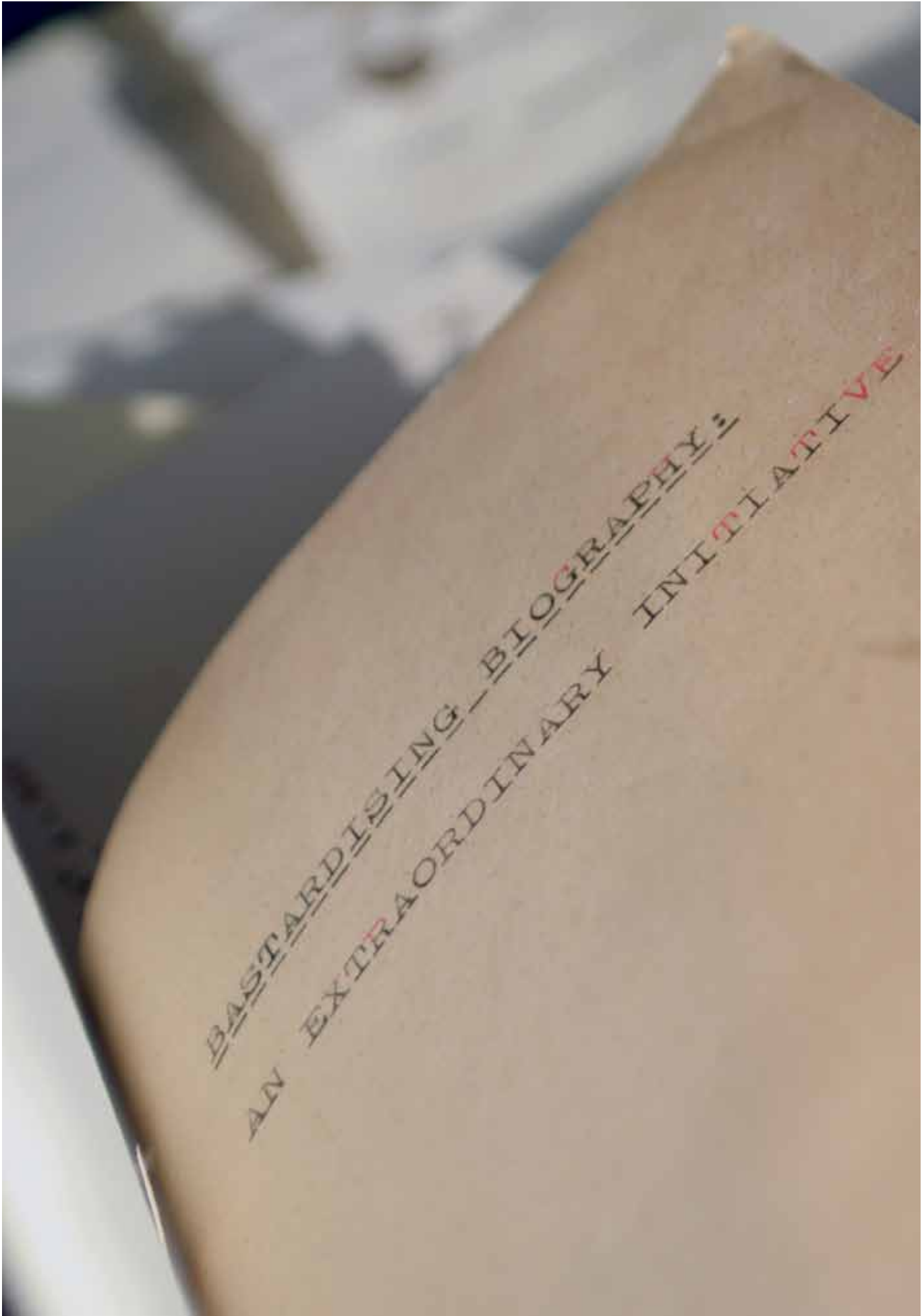
The pseudo-science (of S. Raoul) that has preoccupied my work since 2003 has inadvertently shadowed<sup>10</sup> the pseudo-epigrapha of Borges, though I had not yet discovered him at the time. Perhaps it is this muddying of valid research methodology and academic exposition that makes this project almost worthy of being regarded as Borgesian (or Raoulian). While this project may have sprung from a fascination with Borges, it has grown to mean more than mere accumulation, maybe more of a hrönir<sup>11</sup>-like accretion, of an entangled web of information, useless knowledge, strange coincidental connections across cultures, languages, times and peoples. This information is related through echoes, and cannot be tangibly explained. Yet all this has stemmed from a simple starting point – reading Borges the miniaturist. All this will decay, however. This futility underlies all my work, yet to me, it does not detract from it. This too perhaps, is a Borgesian conundrum.

*- This text first appeared under the title 'In Celebration of Futility: A Linguistic Circumambulation'.  
Shubiqi Rao, 2008.*

<sup>9</sup> The decrepitude and dissolution of the Library, and hopefully not of the discussion!

<sup>10</sup> A very pale shadow, to be true!

<sup>11</sup> "Two persons look for a pencil; the first finds it and says nothing; the second finds a second pencil, no less real, but closer to his expectation. These secondary objects are called hrönir... Until recently, the hrönir were the accidental products of distraction and forgetfulness ... (now, however) the methodical fabrication of hrönir ... has performed prodigious services for archaeologists. It has made possible the interrogation and even the modification of the past, which is now no less plastic and docile than the future." - Jorge Luis Borges, 'Tlön, Uqbar and Orbis Tertius'. See 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius' in Borges, Jorge Luis. In *Fictions*. Trans. Andrew Hurley. New York, N.Y., U.S.A.: Viking. 1998.





## 9.

## On Biography

*S. Raoul's contempt for those less polymathic, and less obsessed with minutiae than he, was fairly well known. He was scathing on numerous occasions towards biographers, curators, editors and their ilk, but the strongest excoriation of slipshod accounts appears in the form of a monograph, not too subtly titled 'Bastardising Biography'. It being impossible to do justice in this account of his life, I am painfully aware of my failure as an "archoartist of biographical worth".*

The fault, dear Reader, lies not in our stars,  
but in ourselves,  
that we lose underpinnings.

I AM AN ARCHAEOLOGIST  
/AN ARCHEOARTIST  
OF BIOGRAPHICAL WORTH

VIOLENCE:

We will turn your life upside down.  
We will turn you inside out.  
We will Unearth the Earth that covers you.  
We will turn like worms in your apple.  
We will turn you into a book.

GRATITUDE:

Write about me  
Even if you're not  
right about me.

So

THE DAILY SANDWICH:

We all need One!  
'You Art What You Eat'  
'An Egghead of the Highest Order'  
'She Really Cut the Mustard'

We all lie between the sheets  
of paper  
between the covers  
of a book  
a bed of styrofoam  
a bed of lettuce leaves  
a bed of leaves of paper

abed  
between the sheets  
of paper,  
reams of paper,  
are seams to be mined

mine your lies  
little chronological lies  
tech trees.

(What little history we store in our heads.)

Tell me who said what to whom.

Gossip and rumour trumps  
mystery  
history antiquity

Everything I learn teaches me less.  
Everything you yearn for leaches you cess.  
It all fits together too well.

if I lose a sequence here and there if I lose a sequence if I if  
I lie by the by if I lose a a sequence here and there if I lose a

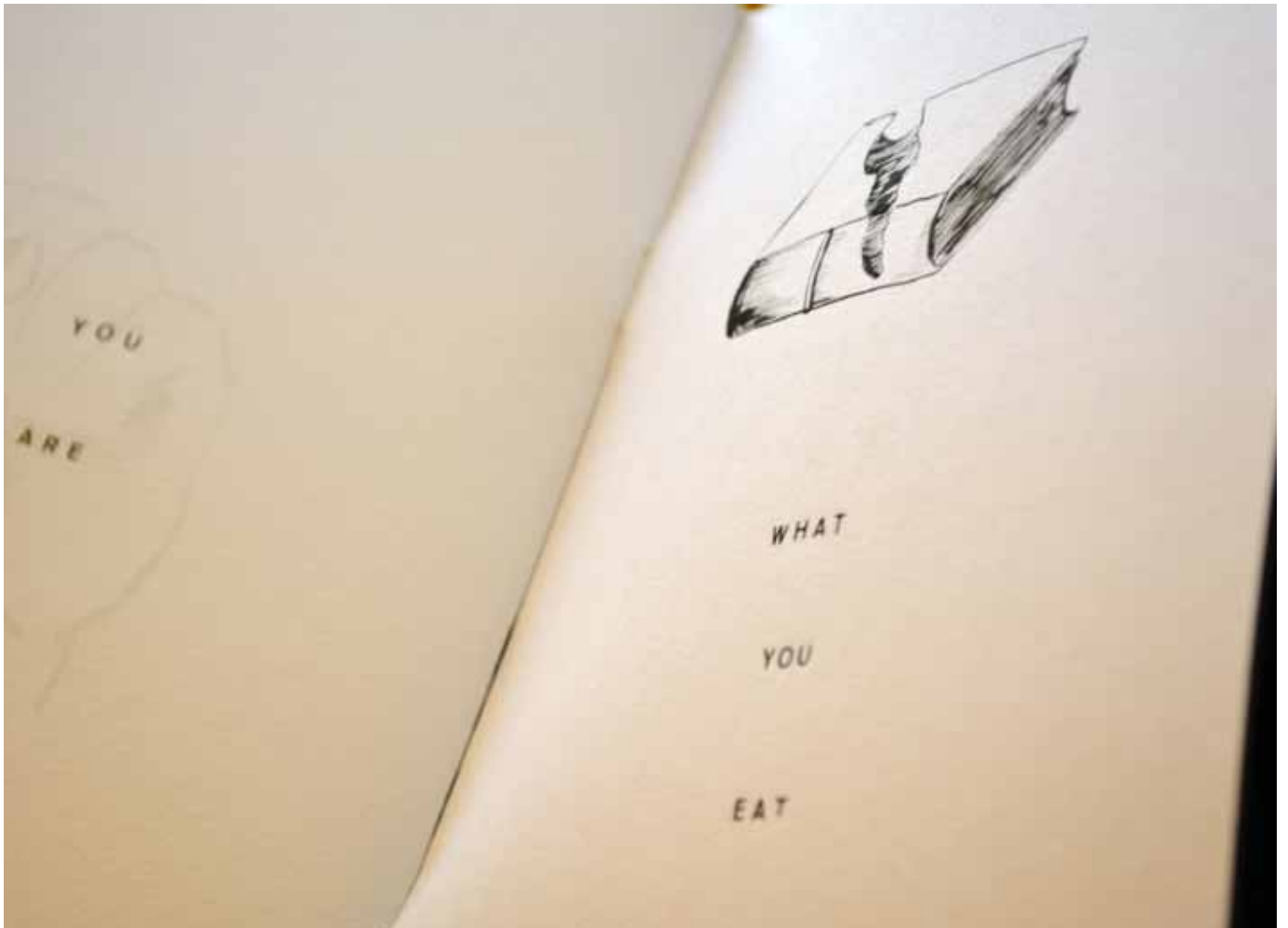
What a lot of spadework is involved!

If we lose a secret here and there  
If we look in the closet under the stairs  
If we lay our traps and strip you bare  
If we beard the baldfaced liar in his lair  
If we tell your peers to point and stare  
If we wait till you're dead  
to say you were wrong  
and your work will be sold for a song  
If we lay it out  
chapter and worse  
If we lay upon you  
the biographer's curse  
If we bother with you at all  
just

smile,  
you're on candid

camera







## 10.

**On Medium: Some Middling Meditations**

*One of the least read but probably most widely discussed works of S. Raoul, 'Art of the Americas' was regarded as a commercial failure. These excerpts go a long way towards illustrating why this is so.*

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**To Cock a Snook, and Steal a Peek**

One of the enduring, though not necessarily endearing traits of the Art of Our Time, The Age of the Post-Levels, is the notion that the artefacts of history, the images of yesteryear, the ideas, thoughts, and deeds of antiquity, are all Grist to the Mill. True, never before in History have we witnessed such a seemingly witless milling of the masses, where boundaries blur and notions are so endlessly replicated, re-appropriated and regurgitated than one is no longer pleasantly patting one's midriff, replete with cultural currency, but feels rather put upon, much in the manner of a human guinea pig in an incessantly looping stomach pump experiment. Even the Koonsian gloss, the patently transparent artistic veneer cannot buff the essential smart-assed superficiality of the objects grinning and leering at us in an insane kitsch Masquerade.

Veering away from this unpleasant concatenation of imagery, we grant you, Vertiginous Reader, a reprieve of sorts, wherein you may be permitted to take a breather.

Close your eyes, if you must, but do not allow your mind to seize upon the chains that stretch far back into the Smog of the Past, where each link leads to myriad other links, attached to endlessly replicating chains, where each link carries innumerable tags of image, text, rhetoric and rhyme, thought and theory, each further spiralling into the yawning abyss of insanity. We would rather you watch a movie, instead, perhaps something light and mindless, with lots of bullets, blood and boobs, allowing it to sing to you the lullaby of cocksure world domination and instant solutions to the trickiest socio-political, diplomatic problems. Who needs a discussion on art, imagery, history, or hackneyed existential yearnings, when the sweet sounds of oblivion coupled with images moving at 60 interlaced fields/30 frames per second provide the perfect litany? Multiplicity, popularity, art and commerce, the Past and the Now, all are running at a theatre near you. Truth be told, if art is abundance<sup>1</sup>, and footfalls mean fortune, then the most powerful articulation of artistic endeavour is Cinema.

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<sup>1</sup> This is an obvious extension of the contention that art exists only if seen by an audience other than the artist. This has led many to confuse Beauty with Art, and to set the record straight, we would like to assert that it is Art, not Beauty, that lies in the Eye of the Beholder.



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### Pointing out the Pitfalls

'Promulgate, broadcast, disseminate!' seemed to be the mantra, accompanied by the slightly less assured cry of 'Elucidate, explicate, clarify, expound, illuminate!' This then is the fruit of the Instant Age; for better or for worse, the links in the chains that bind us are more evident, with tangents that threaten to derail the thought-trains of even the most single-minded navigator, swamping the puny individual in a sea of word and image. So while the much touted democracy of the New Links meant that anyone's artistic endeavours, dross and gloss, could be viewed by anyone else, at any time, it also meant that in truly democratic fashion, one voice became silenced by the many.

So therein came to naught the hope of a more level playing field, for the market still ruled, and the power still rested in

the hands of those with purchasing power but no critical faculty nor talent, as well as those with the monopolising power of criticism, but again, no talent. Those with the intent to create art in this exciting, but threatening<sup>2</sup> Age were faced with either adopting the tools of marketing and cosying up to those with the moolah and mouth, or to attempt to strike it out on one's own, with an intentness that focused on issues closer to the soul, rather than to the bone. In this environment, naturally, the burning issue of all time, that of Identity, made a rather strong comeback, with artists using a bewildering array of tools, from 'newer media' to their bodies, as a means of consolidating the alienated, disenfranchised individual, puny bulwarks against the terrible sea of oblivion and homogeneity.

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### Eating One's Tail

Amongst those who sought the body once more, as a site or a medium to situate their art work, certain contradictions would begin to appear. For the original performative artists, their power over the audience came in no small part from their novelty (witness the Barnum-like quality of early happenings), that segued into more aggressive and potent vehicles of political and social dissent. Once the novelty wore off, however, the performers would seem to be stripped bare, as it were, of their claim to originality and the avant-garde, leaving most to turn to that saviour of the blocked, the Perpetual Replicating JuxtaPoseur™. So it may come as no surprise to you, Patient Reader that appropriation is often just a cannier way to say derivative, for Man seems to have come full circle, from Chasing Tail, to Eating his Own, much like Kronos the Devourer in his time.

To the audience, the latent violence of the performative act is brutal, and cannot fail to impinge on its consciousness,

a distinction that does not only apply to those of the Fourth Level, whether Oppenheim or Burden. Even the most mellifluously meditative of performers and body artists invariably induce queasiness in the viewer; a sense of ingesting someone else's partially digested lunch. Some wags have gone so far as to label such acts the art world's equivalent of the dog's dinner. The pedigree of body art, whether performed live or just looping on a video screen at a gallery near you, is unquestionable, at least by those who seek to justify its existence today. But what could be more grotesque than the performances regularly staged as news; the carefully choreographed culture of celebrity 'events' that seem to deny all from Kaprow to Kelley, for the Koonsian acting out is infinitely more titillating than any of the 'serious' practitioners of the performative act. So it is that everyone says they have seen Barney's film, but none would set their opinion of it in stone, for it is only in secret alleyways and through the necks of bottles that we can whisper, conspiratorially, 'Baloney!'

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*- Excerpt from 'Art of the Americas:  
Secrets Unearthed from Levels Seven to Two'.  
S. Raoul.*

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<sup>2</sup> More competitive, for one; art schools and academies were no longer the sole fosterers of young Genius, now anyone could be an artist, and luck, hard sell and canny promoting would play a larger part than pedigree. Simply put, there was no one way to make it; the money was more, but the chances of success a lot less.





## 11.

### A Political Animal

#### Being an Act of Cultural Genocide, Masquerading as an Artwork

*In this Borgesian installation, decaying information and useless knowledge accumulated on a frozen stage, where elements of mythology, mathematics, theology, histories, and language degenerated into a failed, inarticulate film set. Literature becomes recreation, and the library dissolves into the river of ink.*

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As mentioned in Chapter 8, rather than atrophy, it seems that the decaying human mind, like the moldering Library, can be best characterised by entropic erasure rather than atrophic paralysis. 'The River of Ink' was an exercise that emphasises the futility of preservation in the face of cultural genocide. By soaking a hundred hand-drawn and hand-lettered books in the same fountain-pen ink used to create said drawing and lettering, the books underwent a dissolution, some 'pulped' beyond salvage; they collapsed under the weight of their own accumulation. Decaded letters came adrift in the bath, and stuck to other books, some writing/drawing survived, and a lot disappeared. Previously transmuted meanings, the side slippages themselves, now slid under the surface, erased by the very medium in which they had been made visible.

Staging the work on once-waterlogged wooden pallets, under the hot merciless glare of film set lighting in the middle of a bare space was a means of suggesting barely-receded floodwaters, the dénouement after a catastrophe. Turning the spotlight on the library as a metaphor for our brains as storage devices, both subject to the same entropy, forgetfulness, and decay, became an exercise in limitation – the more that I discovered, the less I could include, and the little that survived to be 'read' or occasioned by the odd viewer was too fragmented to be able to speak of much more than the process of that dissolution.

What follows here is a list of survivors, as well as a poor attempt to remember the content of one survivor of the dunking that was later lost to theft.

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- 
- The River of Ink: White Lies*
  - The River of Ink: Rorschach's Organs*
  - The River of Ink, retrieved*

---

**The River of Ink, survivors of**

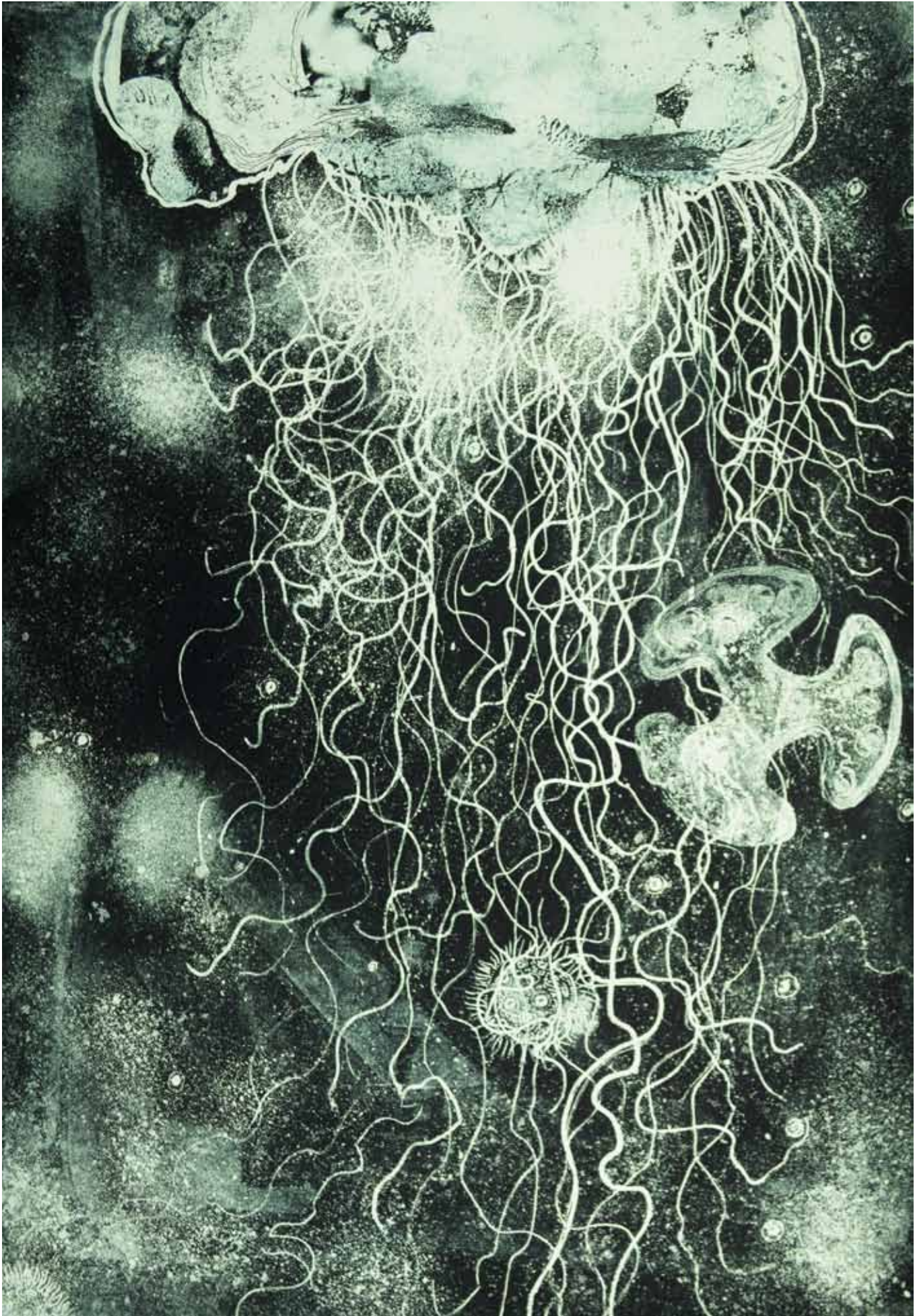
1. A Catalogue of the Lost
2. Historical Fictions
3. The Last Refuge of Scoundrels
4. To Silence a City
5. To Silence Two Cities
6. Confetti
7. Dead Tongues
8. The Abyss
9. Primordial Soufflé
10. Protozoan Lives
11. The Phosphorescent Deep
12. Rorschach's Organs
13. Stalagmite in Stasis
14. Embryonic Fluids
15. Arcadian Scenery
16. The Straightforward Pathway
17. Caveat
18. Cross-Sections
19. White Lies
20. Truth and Privilege
21. Veil
22. Ripping the Veil
23. The Printed Page (*stolen*)
24. A Tapestry of Lies
25. Privacy
26. Settling the Spheres
27. On Mundus Subterraneus
28. Magnetic Hydromancy
29. Rotten Wood
30. ....  
 ..... (Please be cut along the dotted line)

**Mnemonic reconstruction attempt for  
 'The Printed Page'**

- The printed page
- The written word
- The oral tradition
- The ancient manuscript
- Dissolved
- Shredded
- (*forgotten*)
- The textbook version
- The standard checklist
- The peer review (?)
- The damning indictment
- (*forgotten*)
- The plain speak
- The double take
- (*forgotten*)
- The world view
- (*forgotten*)
- The big picture
- The candid camera
- (*forgotten*)
- The thrilling dénouement
- The cliff

- A version of this text first appeared in 'In Celebration of Futility: A Linguistic Circumambulation'.  
 Shubiqi Rao, 2008.

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## 12.

## Stabbing at Immortality: Building the *Turritopsis nutricula*

*This unfinished and recently uncovered work involves S. Raoul's study of the immortal jellyfish and the human brain. Discovered posthumously among his effects this study involved research into mechanisms that trigger our immortality complex, so we can grow the equivalent of new polyps, and essentially live forever. From the fragments that survived, it seems that S. Raoul declared that he had built an immortal jellyfish, 'Turritopsis nutricula', a claim that is still being roundly debated.*

*(from personal journal)*

Immortality is the ultimate human conceit, the mantle with which we clothe the nakedness of our grasping natures, our inability to value what is in present existence, avariciously desiring more of indifferent Time than we have ever given it. In an act of self-centred philanthropy we even bestow our gods with this fiction, forever successfully conflating immortality with divinity. In a further act of self-gratification we proceed to invent the soul, that ultimate intergalactic traveller between the mortal earth-bound and the immortal cosmological impossibility. A dual function is performed, for the existence of a soul devalues the existence of consciousness (and of life itself), which is clearly evident in most creatures, and trumpets the superiority of our species as the Solely-Souled ones!

*(fragment)*

I am amused at the concordance between us – the creature too appears to exhibit sexual maturity at a solitary stage! In its bottom-living hydroid form it may appear to release minute medusae, but it is the primary medusa form that is of key interest. At any stage in its maturity it can revert to a youthful polyp, a feat that I must say reminds me of several instances of 'second childishness' in our own species. It will soon proliferate and swarm the seas, choking all other forms of life in its path, a spectre that I do not find alarmist, given the propensity of our species to do the same.

*(from laboratory notes)*

This biological wonder involved consistent and intense pressure towards a steadily decreasing cellular senescence, unlike the Hayflickian constraint of our species. The natural

mathematics of the cell, its ability to count its divisions towards a natural cessation of proliferation, all these can be circumvented by a fairly simple method, at least with the creature in question. This method does not involve the dubious addition of pluripotent stem cells<sup>1</sup>, a Carrelian technique that might work well for the heart of chicken, but would not be as easily transplanted in the case of the hydrozoan<sup>2</sup>.

This is no case of King's Lomatia, doddering along leafily in genetic stasis for more than 43,000 years. Each clone has an estimated lifespan of 300 years, which rivals much of the deific pantheon<sup>3</sup>. Even the successful regeneration of a narrow-leaved campion, *Silene stenophylla* after being frozen for 32,000 years, while of tremendous interest, is not wholly applicable here. For this is no argument for longevity or successful lab-controlled regeneration, but for a self-regenerative, cyclic reversion that can be endlessly occurring at any stage in the medusa's development.

Why would I be so concerned with this? What purpose could this polyp have? What Moreau-like transfiguration could I hope to achieve between the eternal creature and we poor players<sup>4</sup>? Would it vindicate my unseemly, ghastly obsession with the creature that I want no part of this for my poor person, but for my sweet, lost child? Perhaps a notion so Romantic would be met with more consideration, though one cannot expect sympathy for what is still a self-centred endeavour. Such shame this, this fixation, this mania that seizes me, this

*(missing)*

<sup>1</sup> The famous chick-heart fibroblasts with a Telomerase-activation nutrient, has been hypothesised to be capable of slowing down or thwarting replicative senescence.

<sup>2</sup> S. Raoul's examination of the Hydra during his neuro-scientific investigation (chronicled in 'The Tuning Fork of the Mind', see Chapter 2 and Appendix 2) raised intriguing points of interest concerning regeneration, natural entropy, teleology and a possibly eternal life cycle.

<sup>3</sup> A plant that has outlived the gods – another cause for celebrating the natural over the supernatural perhaps?

<sup>4</sup> A rather obvious reference to the poor player "... that struts and frets his hour upon the stage / and then is heard no more". This was a personal favourite of S. Raoul's, and one that I have heard him quote on numerous occasions. Part of the reason he favoured this was that he felt his existence to be largely "... a tale / told by an idiot, full of sound and fury / signifying nothing", which may also be read as a comment on this biographical endeavour.









## 13.

## On Globalisation and Hybridity

*What is now a tired issue was addressed by S. Raoul much before Trend decreed that it be trotted out every so often by hacks and canny box-checkers of multiplicity, hybridity and crossings of all sorts.*

---

## Through the Web, Darkly

Before we peer longingly through the peephole of History back to the sanity of our Home, we must gird our loins and step back, for there is yet one Level left to be explored, that of the Second. Surely this task would not seem so insurmountable, for much about this Level is reminiscent of our own Age, for here we get a whiff of the familiar, which while still clothed in the quaint customs of this Level, are no less comforting to us, pilgrims on this extraordinary initiative.

For it is here, on this Level, that we are met with the familiar delicious confusion of multiplicity, and the constant thrum of violent discord, albeit in a purely rhetorical context,

seeks to put us at our ease. This, then, is how we have evolved. Yet once this initial sensation wears off, one becomes aware, Sensitive Reader, of a more than vague sense of discontent and disenchantment, a growing chasm of sorts, where homogeneity has begun to cast its gloomy greyness over the globe. If we are attuned to the dissonance amongst all the happy shoppers, we might be able to detect a palpable sense of anger at complacency, apathy and avarice. It might appear we can picture a web of sorts, spreading all over the globe, tremulously collecting and disseminating democratically, a Romantic notion, no doubt, but one that promises a complete impartiality nonetheless.

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## The Cards Lay Themselves Out, As A Table

Some things have changed; some things haven't:

1. Currency is still very current
2. Times are still Very Troubled
3. People are still put upon by bigger people
4. People are bigger
5. Food is bigger
6. Art still exists
7. No one likes art
8. People still exist
9. No one likes other people
10. People can still count, at least from 1 to 10.

## In Summarium

We appear to have come to Journey's End, so it is our onerous duty now to escort you, Weary Reader, back to your Home, leaving you with nothing but the wisdom that no knowledge can claim to know everything, and the most that we poor mortals can do is dance to the twitches of the puppeteer's strings, pretending that originality is original, and genius is gendered, and that all art is the artifice of something other than a diseased mind.

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*- Excerpt from 'Art of the Americas:  
Secrets Unearthed from Levels Seven to Two'.  
S. Raoul.*



# SECTION III.

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Appendices and Monographs



□ Film set of Brain Dissection for 'The Tuning Fork of the Mind'  
 □ Showing of 'The Tuning Fork of the Mind'

□ Archaeological fragment from 'The Tuning Fork of the Mind'

## *The Tuning Fork of the Mind: On the Extraordinary Effects of Art on the Wits of the Unwary*

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In the annals of Astonishing Endeavour, whether Scientific, Romantic or Mystical, tales of Extraordinary Individuals abound, inspiring us with their Super-Sapient efforts, thrilling us with their Wondrous Findings, tales with which we can sing our children to sleep, to dream of futures filled with the Magick of Scientific Advancement.

It is inevitable that some Worthies slip between the gaps of Institutional Canonisation and Public Memory, and it is such Forlorn Figures that attract us, for what could be more noble than to brush off the Dust of uncharitable Disregard, and restore the sheen of rightful recognition. Our modest attempts revolve then, around the showcasing of the lost delights of the Epic Exertions of such Luminaries.

We believe that to present the life and work of S. Raoul is to stem the mudslide of apathetic forgetfulness that threatens to overwhelm those deemed Unfashionable or not Newsworthy in an Age of Sensation and Pavlovian Reaction. Amongst the surfeit of remarkable endeavours embarked upon by this Extraordinary Individual, it seemed appropriate then, to highlight 'The Theory of the Tuning Fork of the Mind'.

This seminal work is rightly regarded as the acme of this Worthy's career, and it attests to his unwavering devotion to the Scientific endeavour in the face of Great Personal Tragedy. For this Significant Study was embarked upon as a consequence of the awful fate suffered by this Worthy, the fate of losing a Childe to Art.

The Theory painstakingly charts the collisions between the Viewer and the Art Object, and proves, with startling perspicacity, how the mental gymnastics and cognitive leaps required to comprehend the Art Object generate vibrations at frequencies calculated to specifically, and with Singular Focus, derange the Brain.

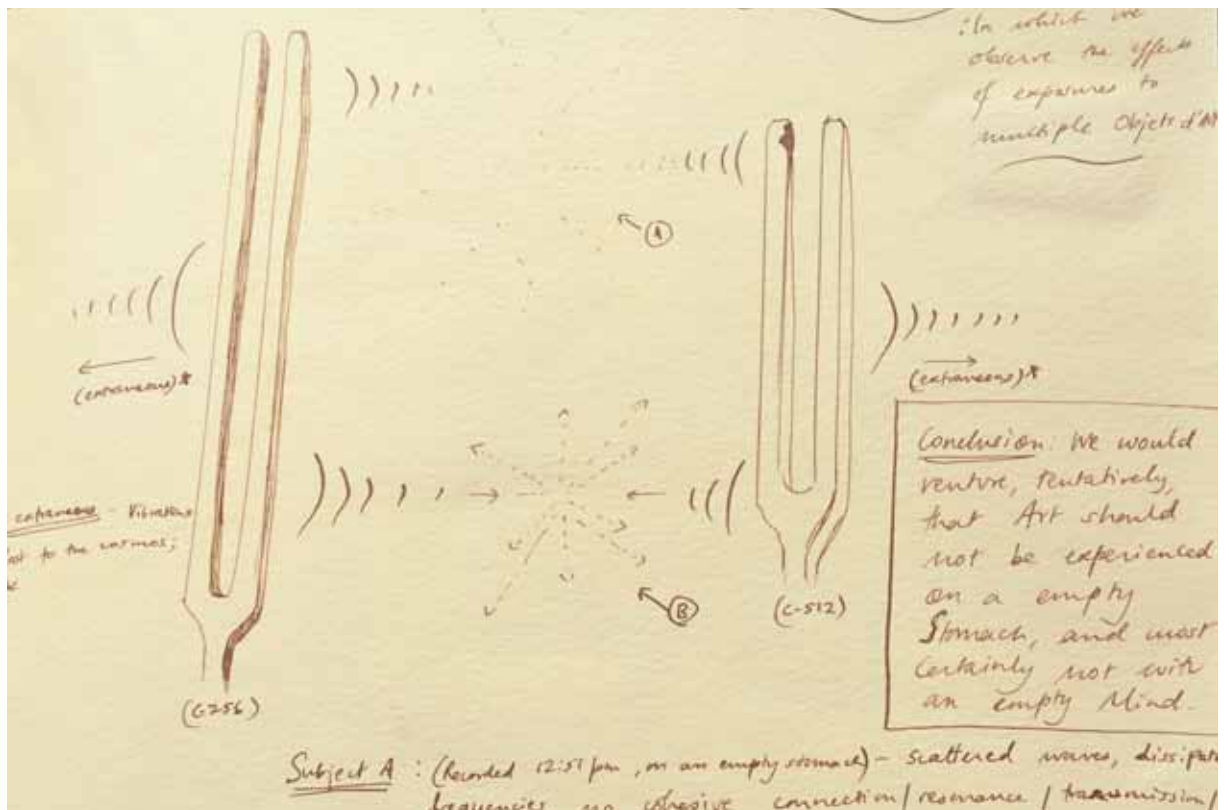
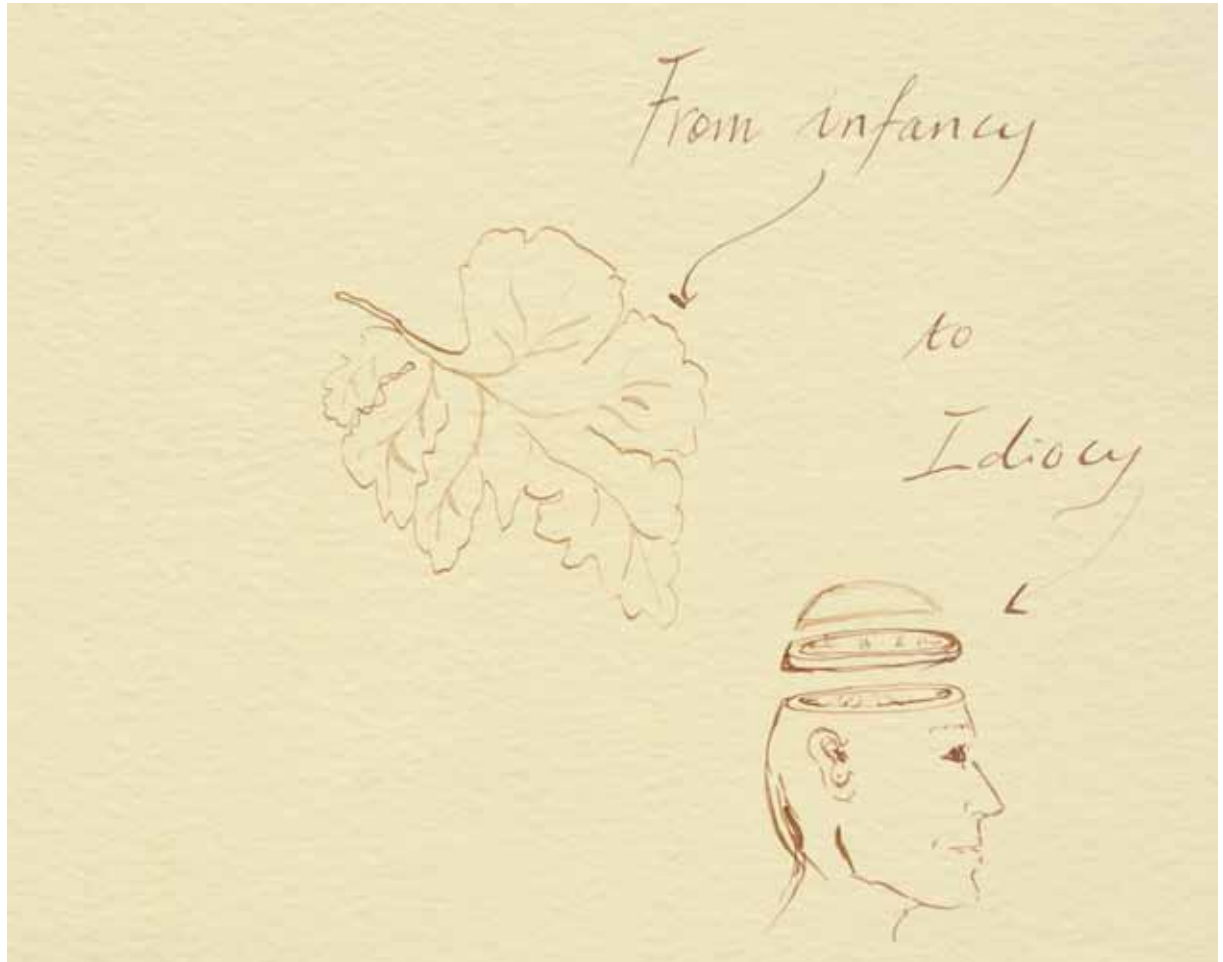
This will be of no surprise to the Reader, for we know well enough the disastrous effects of Art on the mental health of the Populace. Yet how did we recognise this to be Common Knowledge, and how did we come to recognise Art as Transgression of all that we hold smugly dear? Perhaps the unfortunate lacunae that exist between the Viewer and the Art Object occur because of a string of equally fateful collisions between Artist and Art Object, of which the former bears the burden of History, and the latter is encumbered with the Pretensions of the former?

It is only through the Labour of Raoul that we now know of the need to righteously accord Art its proper place, whether as a Commodity that can be traded, (and hence subject to Judicious Management), or to be indulgently tolerated as a Frippery on a Fringe. The Age in which S. Raoul lived was one marred by the veneration of the Art Object, and of its Artificer, an Age yet not markedly different from our own.

This then, is why we have humbly attempted to put forth not just the extraordinary Elegance of this theory, but to Conjure up the Atmosphere of the Age in which this great visionary, this iconoclast lived, worked, and lost his mind.

*- Text from the Expo of '08 showing of 'The Tuning Fork of the Mind'. Also presented at the Conference of the Organisation for Human Brain Mapping (OHBM), Beijing, China, '12.*

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□ fig. 1  
□ fig. 2

# Theory of The Tuning Fork of the Mind:

## Notes, Observations, Records and Musings of a Sundry Nature

S. Raoul

### From Infancy to Idiocy:

(See fig. 1) To say that I am sometimes beset by doubt is an understatement befitting those of <sup>no</sup>/<sub>low</sub> empathic consequence. I am constantly plagued by what might happen to all of this, to our research, our painstakingly collected samples, our back breaking labours, our precious Artefacts, our detailed analyses & our eventual groundbreaking [sic] conclusions.

How can the progressive Scientific Method be held hostage to Political Expediency!

**An Aural Metaphor:** (See fig. 2) The experiential description of the 'viewed' artwork as waves & frequencies. (An early test on subjects A & B, subjected to continuous interference from the Art Object, over 2 unblinking hours. Without respite, exposed to the aural frequencies of the Object rendered as a Tuning Fork.)

We surmise that for the Brain to be involved in the deciphering of that confounding codex of multiple frequencies that are oft emitted by the Art Object, is nothing less than essential.

No apparatus can function without an Overseer, and the Brain participates quite suitably in this regard. [Ed: In other words, the role of the brain in the viewing of artwork can be quite important. It seems that S. Raoul did accord art a grudging respect, even while attempting to expose it as a potent threat to sanity.]

**The Aural Metaphor, Continued:** In which we observe the effects of exposure to multiple Objets d'Art  
Subject A: (Recorded 12:51pm, on an empty stomach) – scattered waves, dissipated frequencies, no cohesive connection/resonance/transmission/cognitive assimilation/articulate output.

Subject B: (Recorded 12:51pm, in a partially replete state, digestively) – scattering less pronounced, frequency modulations better defined, understood & assimilated, less cognitive dissonance.

Conclusion: We would venture, tentatively, that Art should not be experienced on an empty stomach, and most certainly not without an empty Mind.

### Journal Entry 10:

(Top left corner to bottom left, barely legible pencilled entry): Aphasia will respond to stimuli if it is (*illegible*) under very specific conditions as it appears to run with the hare and

hunt with the hounds, yet it does not appear to actually enter the realm of fictional wordplay.

How much is this walnut worth?

This fertile ground,  
this Ceres,  
this Cerebellum?

Look then at the sea squirt, armed with a primitive brain and a digestive system. Once the brain transports itself to a suitable settling place, it is promptly digested, as it has no further use.

[Ed: S. Raoul took this as an indication of the dangers of domesticity, stagnation, the frog-in-a-pond approach.]

(*pencilled in the margin note above*): Why should we not consider the possibility of de-evolution [sic]?

(*pencilled in the margin to the margin note above*): How much more can be inferred if we no longer stop at 'primitive' and consider instead the possibility of choice – who in their right mind would not want to digest their brain?

This larval brain, this embryonic appendage is of no use upon maturity.

The brain in extremely nutrient rich and edible, as well as being wholly flavour-some [sic] and quite delicious.

The Mind  
May be  
A Many-Splendour'd  
Thing,  
But it remains just  
(and only)  
A Thing,  
*An insubstantia nigra?*

[Ed: The *substantia nigra* is well-documented area of the brain associated with dopamine production, mood, reward and addiction, among other things.]

### Diagram notations:

(*notation at top left corner of skull*): within this band we find Victory

(*notation at right corner of skull*): water on the brain

(*notation showing mid-section of skull*): where the cogs

and gears mesh and the wheels turn

(*notation at bottom right of skull*): a clogged sinus passage.

Mucus on the brain?

### (Mid-page):

No Phrenology can so exquisitely render the brain (in all its bloody-mindedness) yet none but phrenology can offer us a more pleasantly [Ed: soporifically] definable stab at how we think we think. [A. Ed: metacognitive dilemma]

**Journal Entry 12:** (*See fig. 3*)

(Reproduced, with important reworking, from  
Freeman W. J. and Gralapp)

Simplicity, neurologically speaking, involves the use of one's nose more than the eyes. In that instance we realise the glaring inconsistency involved in any discussion on Art → namely, where's the smell?

Remove the odour and you destroy the communicative power of Art, neurologically speaking of course.

*Diagram notations:*

Receptors (The receiving end, so to speak)  
Forebrain  
Midbrain  
Hindbrain  
Muscles  
The Olfactory Bulb  
The Amygdala, besieged

The movements of inputs occur across space & time, in waves and tiny murmurings.

**Journal Entry 13:**

This is no better than a Penrosian conflict, although no more than an average-sized rodent might make. How does one attempt to demystify the pea-soup of an aura that surrounds figures so unquestionably, undeniably, over-weeningly set up as moral custodians of Tradition, where sense and innovation have are sacrificed on the altar of smug middle-brow, piddling thickheads?

The undefined, the poorly described, the ill illustrated, the rudely circumscribed, the grossly negligent glossed-over; all are instances that passed before me in this fretful endeavour.

*Diagram notations:*

Dendrites branching  
Synapses signalling  
Axons transmitting

**Journal Entry 14:** (*See fig. 4*)

With gratitude to Freeman W. J. and Gralapp, C.

*Diagram notations:*

Input Side  
Apical Dendrites  
Inhibitory Synapse  
Basal Dendrites  
Trigger Zone  
Output Side  
Spine  
Excitatory Synapse  
Extracellular electrodes (x2)  
Electric current ----->

**Journal Entry 15:**

**Why bigger Brains are high on the Food Chain  
(but low on the Taste-o-Meter)** (*See fig. 5*)

This comparative study illustrates that the more developed the brain, the less appetising as a meal is the creature (in possession of it).

(We would certainly hesitate to snack off a rat,  
or dine on a human)

*Diagram notations:*

Forebrain (rat)  
Forebrain (fish)  
Forebrain, Head case (human)

**Journal Entries 16 – 26:**

[Ed. See **Chapter 2: Damage at the Front**]

**Journal Entry 27:**

**Sundry observations of a possibly Trivial Nature –  
\*The Reflectiveness of Paint\***

<u>Colour</u>	<u>Light Reflected</u>
White .....	70-90%
Cream / Ivory .....	55-90%
L. Yellow .....	65-70%
L. Green .....	40-50%
M. Gray .....	15-30%
Orange .....	15-20%
M. Blue .....	15-10%
D. Blue .....	5-10%
Red .....	3-18%

(Upon Reflecting on this Table [Ed: poor wordplay indeed] we find it bears nothing of Interest on the Nature of our Study.)

Qualities of Objects (cf. Locke. 1690)

Primary: Solidity, Extension, Figure, Mobility, Number  
Secondary: Colour, Odour, Sound, Taste.

(Upon Reflection, we realise that this only points to the obvious – one looks for mass appeal, gimmick et al. before Art.)

**Journal Entry 28:**

**Another Sudden Musing of a Sundry Nature:**

Perhaps the acclaim with which every novelty is greeted (as worthy of high critical praise) is reminiscent of S. Johnson's pithy citation of Gray,

“He was dull in a new way,  
and that made many people  
think him great.”



### On the impossibility of visual contemplation beyond the 2.5 Attention Span

> Empirical <sup>observations</sup>/<sub>evidence</sub> informs us that the average Viewer of the Art Object wastes no more than 2.5 seconds before each piece of work<

Like ganglion cells, it is quite possible to be ON centre or OFF it – there need be no more reason for this than random <sup>firings</sup>/<sub>bursts</sub> of electrical energy. The greedy, acquisitive nature of the visual process is underscored by the manic, frantic nature of the movement of the Eyeballing Public, darting hither & thither, under the dictatorial command of the Brain, thirsting for visual stimulation.

With such motives lying at the very centre (cephalonic centre, to be sure!) of the visual process, small wonder, then, that dissatisfaction should arise – it is not in the nature of the eye to dwell languidly without being yanked aside by the Brain High Command for fear of languishing.

[Ed: S. Raoul's notations on the ability of the eye to glaze over (a form of stillness, however apathetic it may be) were unfortunately destroyed. Extensive searches have yielded fragments, which seem to point to a fascinating need for the Brain, when confronted with inputs that require more energetic analysis and response than 'hmm... interesting', to power down and release soporific doses of Eye Glaze™.]

#### Journal Entry 29:

##### On Reaction to Visual Stimuli:

##### On the Delights of Pleasure, and of Stimulation

Neither pleasure nor fear is unique to the sophisticate Brain. Rodents have a fairly well determined pleasure principle at work, and we need not defend our contention any further than noting the tail-wagging dog.

Pleasure then, long regarded to be the primary response from the Viewer most sought after by the Artist, can be readily obtained from non-Art Objects too. The arts of ingestion, successful excretion, and of course, the Intimate Act (and even its mere contemplation) between 2 or more persons is quite strongly associated with the pleasure principle. Of what use then, is the foisting of the Mantle of Aesthetic on Art, when the Aesthete, much like the Rodent or the Dog, can more readily find pleasure elsewhere?

#### Journal Entry 30:

##### Neuron communication, and the dreadful consequences of exposure to the Visible Artwork.

##### Diagram notations:

Neuron-to-neuron communication:

Presynaptic neuron → Neurotransmitter

Receptor → Postsynaptic neuron → *ad infinitum* ...

... Action Potential ... Synaptic Potential ... Action Potential ...

Neuron-to-neuron communication:

Electrical action potential (nerve impulse) travelling at up to 120m/s along the axon of the presynaptic neuron.

(Impulse releases neurotransmitters)

Receptor reactions cause postsynaptic neuron to either a) be excited (as illustrated above), or b) inhibited.

Inhibitory synaptic potential would dip resulting potential = postsynaptic neuron ↓ firing an action potential.

[Ed: Inhibitory responses in the brain of the conservative – see recent studies on fear and the Republican brain.]

The restful stage of a neuron existing as a negative (-70mv) across the membrane is always disrupted by viewing/experiencing artwork

Kelvin's 'length constant' proves that the visible, faulty and downright inefficient transmission systems of the neuron are rendered even more (often exponentially) decrepit by constant exposure to Art.

#### Journal Entry 31: (See fig. 5)

##### The Reticular Theory

... complex morphologies, branching, never entangling, quivering with their self-importance as Our Transmission Devices...

Between Du Bois-Reynard and the Spaniard Cajal, we have a fairly comprehensive theoretical framework available to us, and are thus able to re-direct our attention to what cannot be so easily defined – the reticulum.

Diagram credits: After Zwickel-Noelle, B. From Reichert, H. ('92:13)

Diagram notations:

More so than any other cell, neurons are extremely diverse and wonderfully complex.

(r) neuron from the brain of a Dowager Beetle

(i) neuron from the brain of a Dandelion

(s) neuron from the brain of a Giant Redwood

(q) neuron from the brain of a Mammal

(h) (*blank*)

(s) The Brain is now no longer a morass of messy enlargements.

The reticulum is no longer reticent in giving up its secrets.

Complexity, in this case (q), has arisen from a pressing need to do no more than communicate fruitfully with one's neighbours.

(h) As can be inferred, neither complexity of shape, nor richness of texture, nor purposeful branching, is any indication of actual performance of the neuron in the brain.

Presuming, of course, that we have faith, unshakeable, in the inviolable superiority of the Human Brain.

[Ed: Confirmation bias?]





**Journal Entry 32: (See fig. 6)**

Sensory information ⇒ Brain

↳ Perceptions --- formalist →  
 colour, composition, brightness, ↳  
 ↳ non-formalist  
 texture, contrast

↳ Indications

↳ Memories

↳ Intentions

↳ Judgements

↳ Matters of Taste

↳ Critical Appraisal

↳ Actionable Consequence

↳ Consequential Action

*Diagram notations:*

(This degrading is not to be confused with macular degeneration)

Ganglion cell

Bipolar cell

Horizontal cell

Cares

Tods

Amacrine cell

To optic nerve

Inner plexiform layer

Inner nuclear layer

Outer plexiform layer

Outer nuclear layer

Decaying, deflating

A. Area of apathetic reception

B. Gap in perception of sensation.

Notes: Both A and B prove the existence of decaying transmitters, when the retina is exposed to too much artwork of the Rothko variety.

After studying A and B we conclude that  
 colour field = empty field

**Journal Entry 33: (See fig. 7)****On Aplysia californica:****On Aplysia, the Human Slime and how Art is to the Human Slug as the Flame is to the Moth**

It is perhaps rather telling that some of the most illuminating Findings on the Human Brain come from Research conducted on a Giant Sea Slug, especially in patterns of Memory Formation, the building blocks of our Sense of Self.

This might help explain why most ego-centric, pompous pedantic Men are complete Slugs.

This also explains why encounters with such individuals leave a trace of Slime.

**Journal Entry 34:****On Aplysia californica (cont.)**

[Ed: S. Raoul's preoccupation with the sea squirt stems not only from its study casting light on the workings of the human brain. He was also fascinated by its ability to digest its brain once it had no further use of its locomotor controls.]

Solitary, sea squirt

Cucumber, tuberous

Polyp-like, coralline

*Diagram notations:*

Capped off

Gaseous accumulation

Bursts

Residue

Single-use, disposable, of no consequence once digested

Ambiguous

Drifting

Categorical

Untethered

Branching

No active reaction visible

Depths of despair

Brain damage occurring due to guilt eating away at Psyche

Guilt in its amorphous form

To digest a brain suitably is no mean endeavour. For such a superior species, we are still unable to rid ourselves of the source of our miseries.

~~Another point of interest would be the propo~~

This goes beyond mere irony – the possibility of all this being side-lined, worse, ignored, and being buried in turn.

[Ed: Here we have the clearest indication, perhaps, of his precognition of professional failure and his disenchantment with posterity.]

**Journal Entry 37: (See fig. 8)**

The complex appearance of the development of the human cerebral cortex, looking at

: neuropil, with axons, dendrites and constantly

changing synaptic connections

: Glia, in a supportive role

: The conventional 6 layers of neurons in the neurocortex

(a few mms thick)

↳ Each cubic mm holding many 1000s of neurons

Unable to record our full horror at backfiring synapses, misfiring connecting and muddled neuronics (almost moronic) activity post-exposure to pieces of work.

*Diagram notations:*

Six years on  
3 months later  
Minted, newborn  
Gliding along the Glia

NB: Ref. Conel J. L. ('39-'67). His neuroanatomic studies, especially on cytoarchitecture (building a better brain, so to speak) using correspondence analysis are still fairly valid.

**Journal Entry 38:**

**The Brain in Early Development, Divided: In which we illustrate the reason for our love of pigeon-holes**

*Diagram notations:*

1. Anterior  
Forebrain (not to be taken for granted)  
Midbrain  
Hindbrain (when properly connected to the optic nerve, one is capable of hindsight)  
Spinal cord  
Posterior  
The fore-runners of the fore-brain are marvellous to behold  
2. Anterior  
Telencephalon (Forebrain)  
Diecephalon (Forebrain too)  
Mesencephalon (Midbrain)  
Rhombencephalon (Hindbrain)  
Spinal cord  
Posterior

With increasing maturity, the brain divides and sub-divides, illustrating, perhaps, the reason for our invariable tendency to become increasingly categorical, rigid and fixed in taxonomies of our own making.

**Journal Entry 39: (cont.)**

Naught more than an elongatory fluid-containing tubular excrescence first making its existence in utero, the Brain in Humans undergoes a series of traumatic divisions, subdivisions and further petty cornering over the course of the development of the Sapien.

The anterior (as illustrated on the preceding page), is the fore-runner of the main units of the cephalonic structure.

The telencephalon (or twin cerebral hemispheres) begin to make their presence visible as a pair of Ram's horns.

The Arian ram-headed stubbornness is a key process that is grossly magnified (in all studies carried out by us so far) in the brain of the Artist.

This is often compensated (rather ironically) by a corresponding burst in the development of the Amygdala, that seat of UnReason, which perhaps explains the Artist's irrational hatred of the Critic

**Journal Entry 40: Phrenological Logic**  
(To Beard the Bald-Faced Liar in his Lair)*Diagram notations:*

Perceptive  
22. Individuality  
23. Form  
24. (blank)  
25. Mass  
26. Colour  
27. Locality  
28. Number  
29. Order  
30. Eventuality  
31. Time  
32. Tune  
33. Language

## Reflective

34. Comparison  
35. Causality

**Journal Entry 41: (See fig. 9)**

**The formation of Meaning in the Human Mind**

*Diagram notations:*

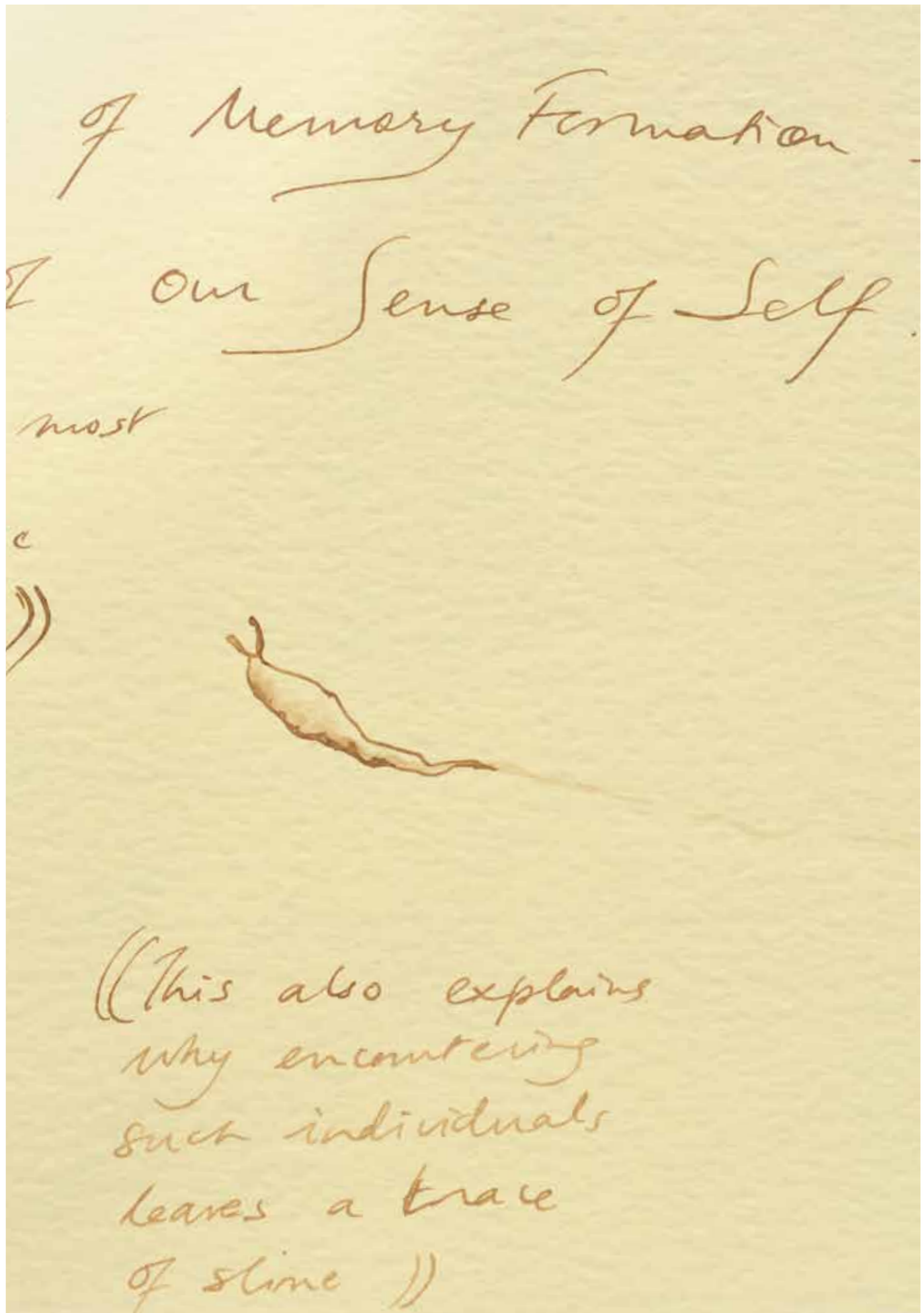
A. A window?  
B. A box?  
C. A window box?  
D. A curvilinear window?  
E. A curvilinear window box?  
F. A landscape?  
G. A painting?  
H. A landscape painting?  
I. A landscape on a box?  
J. A landscape in a box?  
K. A landscape in a window?  
L. A landscape outside a window?  
M. ad infinitum! 'Tis a Mirror!

**The Phallic Symbol in the Box:**

The human mind is a vastly overrated organ, in that what it engenders is always subject to doubt. Its tendency to either a) belittle its own premise with misgivings and hesitation, or b) operate from an often fatally erroneous position of overweening confidence.

Far better organs would seem to be further south, which might explain why humans sometimes reject the Art of the Cerebral but always worship that of Generation in the guise of fecundity.

[Ed: Here 'generation' is used in the old-fashioned sense where the male organs were believed to have 'generated' life.]





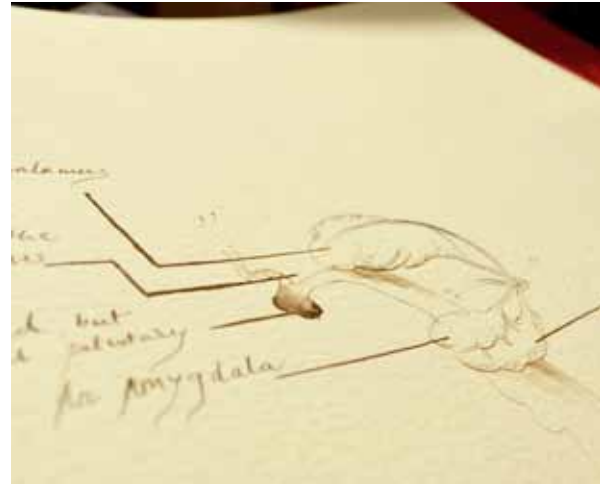
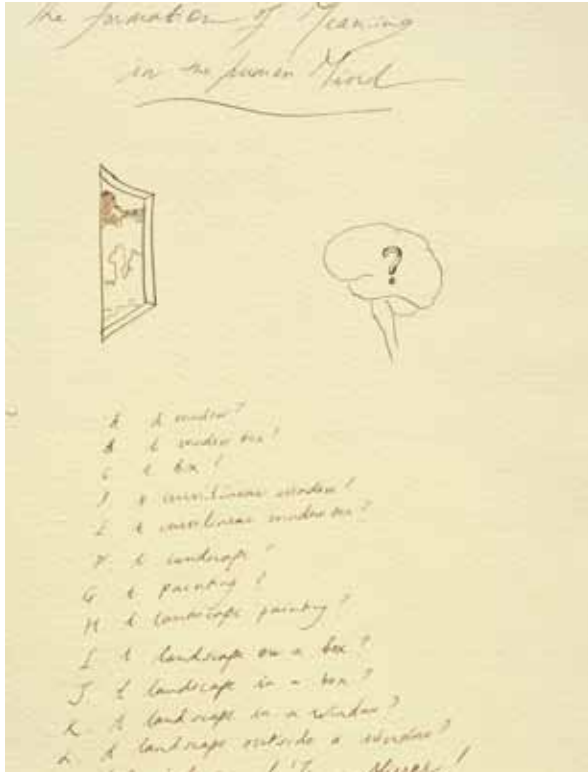
Ref. Cavallari, J. L. (1981)

The complex appearance of the development of the human cerebral cortex, looking at

- : Neurons, with axons dendrites, and constantly changing synaptic connections
- : Glia, in a supportive rôle

The conventional (6-8m) layers of neurons in the neocortex (a few mm thick)

↳ Each cubic mm holding many 1000's of neurons.



quite photo-graphed. I must say, to the extent of my power, I have been successful in my work, if all the above proceed.

Was there not something in the matter that if we could realize the true nature of the suspending picture of the eye in the world before us. Shall the proof of our existence be before us? - unknown to, and, impossible, all utterly lacking in any human intelligibility. The impossible truth of the human nature of art, that said that perhaps if the world, might be viewed the eye was able to bring us from the things through the world, the world.



□ fig. 9  
□ fig. 11

□ fig. 10  
□ fig. 12



**Journal Entry 42:** (See fig. 10)*Diagram notations:*

The thalamus

Hungry is the hypothalamus

A pea-sized but powerful pituitary

An Amygdala

The hippocampus

**Journal Entry 43:** (See fig. 11)**Mindworms:**

Art infects the mind,

breeds Mindworms,

and creates an air

of

vague dissatisfaction.

(Recorded at the 23rd instance, 4th test, subject C82)

**Journal Entry 44:** (See fig. 12)

Upon viewing the Goya, her cry of horror was barely noticed, as we all were stunned by the extraordinary beauty, the pulsing frequencies! Oh, if you were but there to have witnessed so wondrous an event! That wretched Director was quite shame-faced, I must say, to the evident enjoyment, vengeful though it may seem, of all who were present.

And there was not inconsiderable in number those of us who realised the true nature of the unspooling rhythms of black on the scroll before us. Finally, the proof of our contention was before us – undeniable, cold, impersonal and utterly lacking in any human irrationality. The inescapable truth (stripped of myth, mystery, tawdry trinkets and geegaws of dubious worth) of the degenerate nature of Art, that bald-faced destroyer of the peace.

Simply put, viewing the Goya was akin to having an iron bar cleave through the frontal and out the occipital.

**Journal Entry 45:****Sample A21M'Puri**

: Subject unable to render a housefly correctly, despite 65 minutes of study

: Disruption in visual acuity and cognitive interpretation occurred after repeated viewing of paintings of Hirstian importance.

*Diagram notations:*

A petulant Tinkerbell

A carapace is of no use in a creature so malignantly rendered

A proboscis? Indeed none that we might see

Down at heel?

Elbow

Embarrassingly tip-toed

A body of no consequence

**Journal Entries 46 – 55: Intentionality: Stages I – X**

A separation of the stages from input, through to physical/visual realisation.

Or, the stages of material changes, and the cognitive dissonances caused by the workings of that dreadful malcontent – the Mind of the Artist.

**Stage I:**

In this stage the state transition of an excitatory population from a point attractor with zero activity to a non-zero point attractor with steady-state activity (is reinforced) by positive feedback.

*Diagram notations:*

A. no feed back

B. positive feedback

C. negative feedback

(Legend:

E Ego

I Id

→ arrow

+ positive

- negative)

**Stage II:**

The emergence of oscillation through negative feedback between excitatory and inhibitory neural populations. Also known as the 'wearing off of the high', or 'the tarnishing of the novelty'.

*Diagram notations:*

A solid curve, and a dashed good one too.

A dashed curve is superfluous.

To shallow to remark upon, except by acquisition

An interesting example of navel-gazing, thought it may seem (to the Viewer) more akin to an ingrown toe-nail.

Peanut-sized brain complex

A spiralling into depression, self-doubt, and other forms of delightful self-indulgence.

**Stage III:**

The state transition from a point attractor to a limit cycle attractor that regulates steady-state oscillation of a mixed-excitatory inhibitory cortical population.

A dotted trace

may sometimes appear,

to be no more

than a trace

a smudge

a smidgen

*Diagram notations:*

Naïve

Attenuating

Habitual

Superficial

absent

1. Before learning one's lesson

2. After learning one's lesson

**Stage IV:** (*See fig. 13*)

The genesis of chaos as background activity by combined negative & positive feedback.

(*pencilled notation, faint, barely legible*)

Spangling over the cortex lies a wave of previously undetected mixtures – none of which would seem too obvious except under the glare of hard-edged science.

(x, l) (*rest illegible*)

*Diagram notations:*

‘The con-glomerous’

Flying a kite, based on instructions

Trumpeting one's existence

Lateral olfactory tract

Anterior olfactory nucleus

P. C. (political corrections)

The unequivocal result of uninspired cognitive corrections.

**Stage V:**

The distributed wave of chaotic dendritic activity that carries a spatial pattern of amplitude modulation made by the cresting of the wave.

*Diagram notations:*

Air

Air

Amyl

8 x 8 array of electrodes  $\Rightarrow$  4 x 4 square mm projected onto a bulbar surface

64 traces of EEG contain short episodes of oscillation (cf. Freeman, W. J. ('01:73))

Trial unsuccessful

**Stage VI: The First Step In Perception**

Non linear feedback (aka critical appraisal) = random gain.

(to be presented as a radial diagram) Variables:

Population fatigue

Market trends

Peer reviews

Peer envy

Commercial approbation

Critical turpitude

This input is driven by a mixed population  $\Rightarrow$  ampl. & modulation patterns severely disruptable  $\Rightarrow$  massive  $\frac{\text{loss}}{\text{gain}}$  in ego.

The rabbit learnt to sniff the correct brand of banana oil. (Cf. Stage V – Amyl acetate)

*Diagram notations:*

$\frac{\text{loss}}{\text{gain}}$ . State transition in sensory cortex

Asymmetric sigmoid curve

Preternatural development ... devolution

Lopsided development ... devolution

SHOCK – input dependent gain is the 6<sup>th</sup> stage of intentionality.**Stage VII: The Embodiment of Meaning**

“In Amplitude Modulation Patterns of Neural Activity, the Embodiment of Meaning is shaped by synaptic interactions that have been modified through learning”.

OR

Every  $\frac{\text{critical}}{\text{commercial}}$   $\frac{\text{success}}{\text{disaster}}$

$\Rightarrow$  corresponding  $\frac{\text{loss}}{\text{gain}}$  in  $E/I$

Recourse to a Simple Frontal Lobotomy:

Materials such as Banana Oil, Amyl Acetate, Butyl Alcohol, Sawdust, Familiarisation, Naïveté, Attenuation, Perspex, Sodium Chloride, a Modern EEG, a Singular Purpose, an Inflexive Reflex, and the playing of Soothing Musick are required at the outset of the Prep. Stage.

OR

An Iron Bar, a railroad worker (a Gage), a measuring device (a Gauge), a short fuse and some explosive material (a Book).

**Stage VIII: Divergence & Convergence of Meaning**

“Attenuation of microscopic sensory-driven activity and enhancement of microscopic amplitude modulation patterns by divergent – convergent cortical projections underlying solipsism.”

- Freeman ('01:36)

(Cf. Lawrence, T. E. ‘Seven Pillars of Wisdom’ for an indubitable instance of  $\frac{\text{divergent}}{\text{convergent}}$  cortical projections.

*Diagram notations:*

Receptors	Chemotransduction
Nerve	Topographic Mapping
Bulb	Integration
Tract	Divergence
	Convergence
Cortex – still a mystery	Dis-integration?
Projection	Central Transmission

Corticospinal Cortex

Spinal cord

Motor Nuclei

Sensory Nuclei

(Stimulus)

The bursts are compared with previous stimuli, previously achieved & catalogued by that marvellous Collector of Drivel, the Brain.  
(diagram of Motor Loop)

**Stage IX: (See fig. 12)****The Myth of the Misunderstood Artist**

“The divergence of corollary discharges in preference followed by multi-sensory convergence into the entorhinal cortex as the basis for gestalt formation.”

- (F. W. J. '01:36)

Gentlemen of a sensible disposition, predisposed to an outlook engendered by the Scientific Method, tend to view perception as an occasion of the active variety, “... holding the humans and other animals maintain a stance of attention & expectation...”, embodying, thus, an unintentional need or desire to be heard, seen, felt, and known.

Yet there are conditional aspects too—simply put, Artists want to be known while retaining a mythic mystery, a regarded reticence, and their ownership of their Creations accorded correctly.

For themselves, they wish to be felt, but not smelt – a tragic pity, for as we have seen – the olfactory connection is the trigger.

Always the trigger.

**Stage X: Terminal**

Sequences of global patterns of chaotic activity that <sup>integrate</sup>/<sub>disintegrate</sub> & direct the intentional state of an entire hemisphere.

*Diagram notations:*

Motor Cortex  
Sensory Cortex  
Frontal Lobe  
Thalamus  
Amygdala  
Hippocampus  
Auditory Cortex  
Olfactory bulb  
Visual Cortex  
Cerebellum  
Brainstem reticular formation

**Journal Entry 56: (See fig. 15)****The Real Order Of Things**

Paramecium

Ginger Root (at the top. Ha.)

Entamoeba histolytica

Tuning Fork

Bacteria

Diamondback rattlesnake

Walnut

Any de-foliated tree

Larvae of mosquito

Slug, especially of the sea-faring variety

Cockroach

A spiky weed

Human Brain

Archaea

Peach

**Journal Entry 57:**

The gaps that occur between

artist and object

art object and viewer

art object and critic

critic and viewer

all these gaps invariably culminate in a large void, yet this empty space – oft found between the ears of particularly foul Sapien Slugs – is rarely thought of as worthy of study.

This endeavour is made all the more necessary by the execrable lack of informed readings.

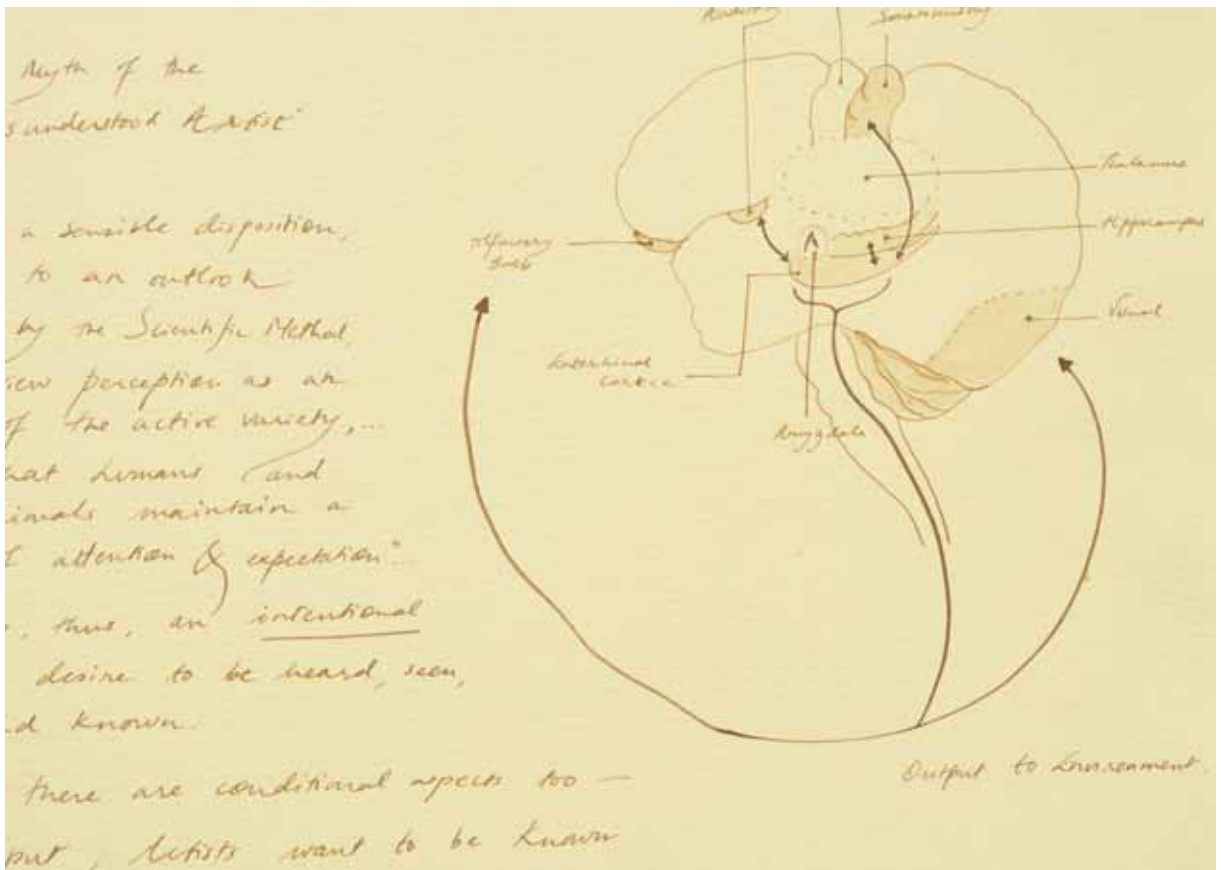
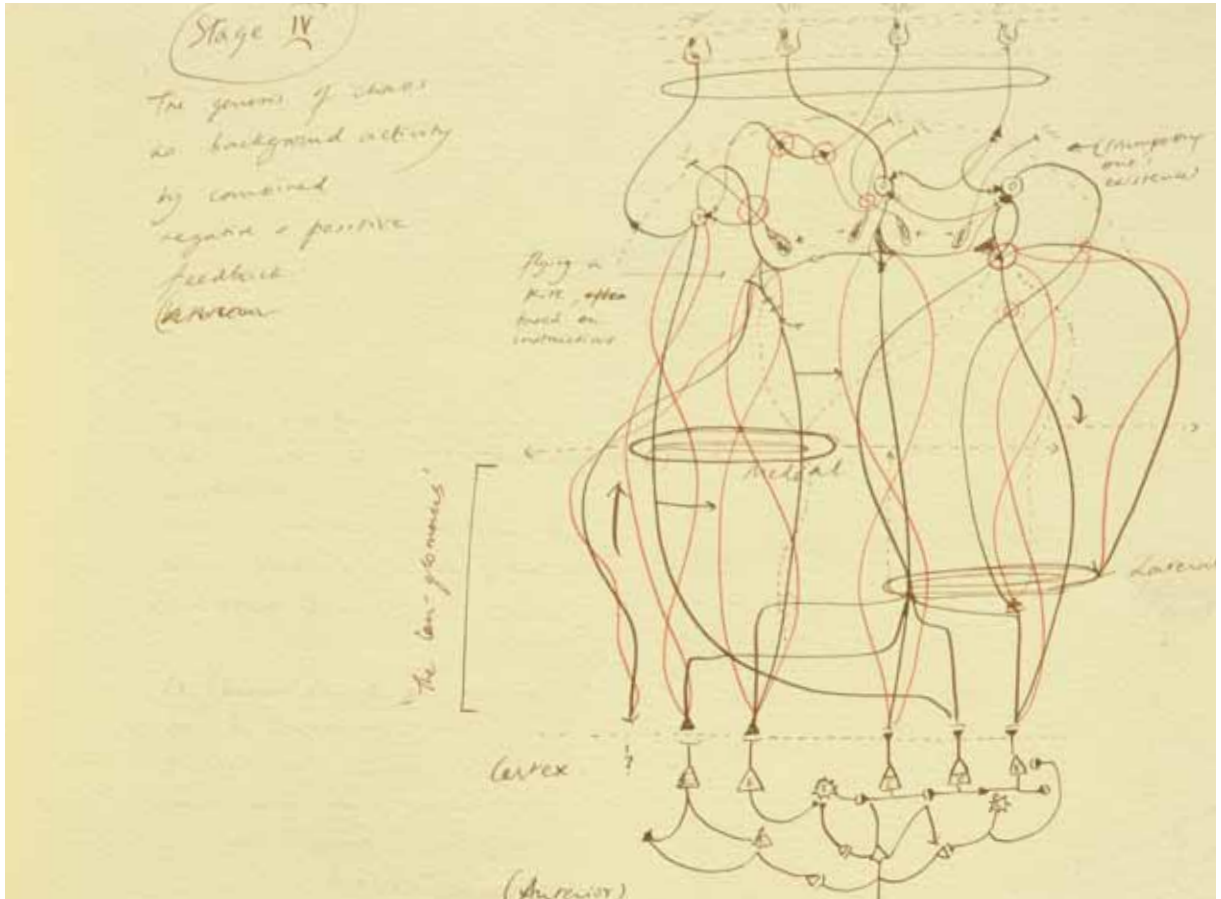
*Diagram notations:*

(beyond the pale)

(- loss of information

- miscommunication,

- intentional and unintentional misleading transmissions)



□ fig. 13  
 □ fig. 14



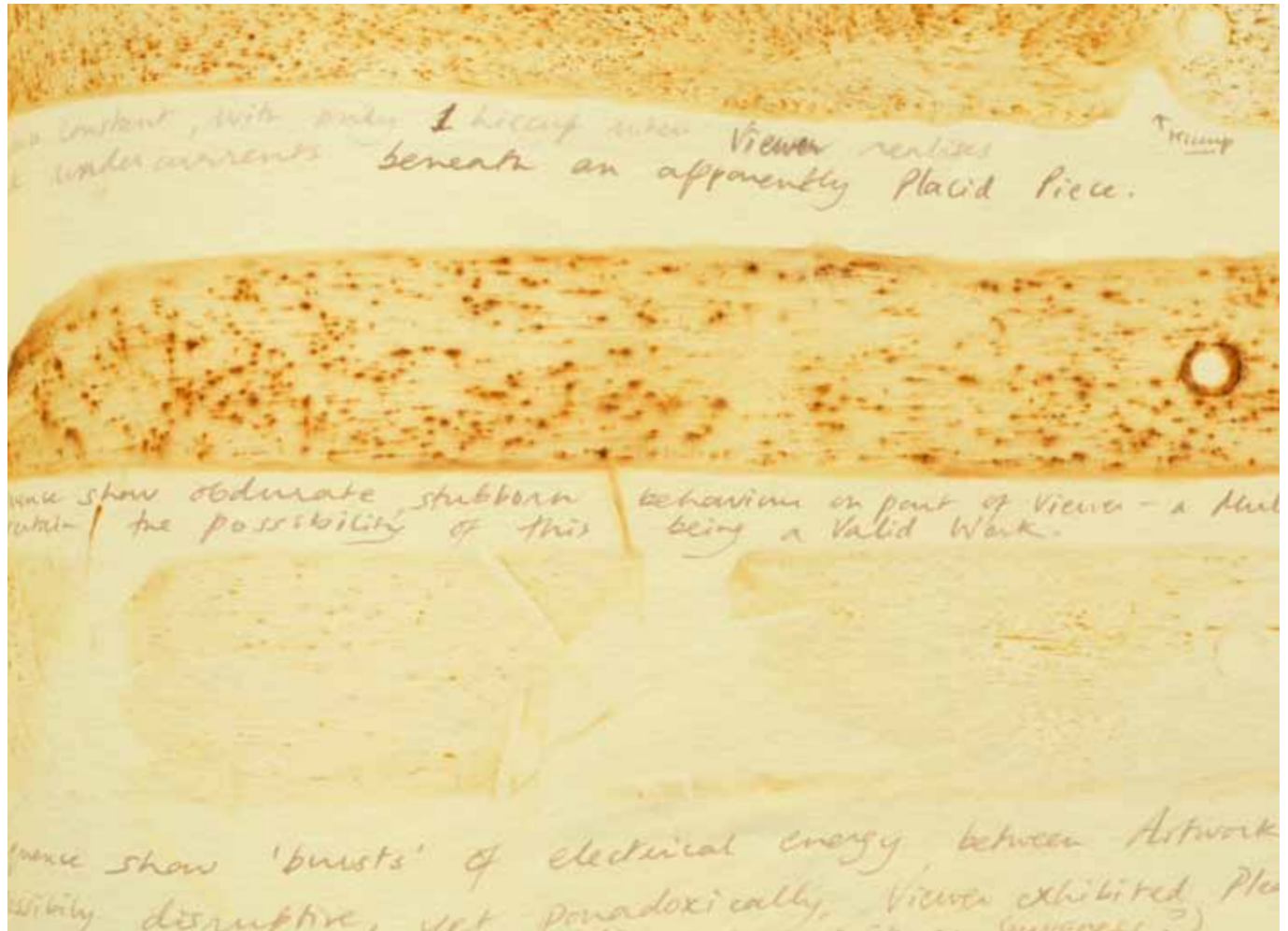
Ref. Cavendish J. L.  
(1981)

The complex appearance of the development of the human cerebral cortex, looking at

- : Neurons, with axons dendrites, and constantly changing synaptic connections
- : Glia in a supportive rôle

The conventional (6-8m) layers of neurons in the neocortex (a few mm thick)

↳ Each cubic mm holding many 1000's of neurons.



**Journal Entries 59 – 62:****Frequency Modulations**

- A. Sequence clear, uninterrupted by wall text, labels or institutional critique.
- B. Sequence starts simply, devolves into complex issues, none representative of the interests of the populace
- C. Sequence interrupted by declamatory *ad hoc* statements, of which the Artist/Viewer are ill-informed. Hence the break in clear transmission.
- D. Sequence dissipating, indicative of rapidly degenerating audience interest, participation and willingness to be receptive to transmission. Note too the inability of the Artist to transmit clearly, without schlock or gimmick.

**More Frequencies & Modulations** (*See fig. 16*)

- A. Sequence clear – steady stream of information = this surely is a Most Pleasant Artwork.
- B. Sequence constant, with only 1 hiccup when viewer realises dark undercurrents beneath an apparently Placid Piece.
- C. Sequence shows obdurate stubborn behaviour on part of Viewer – a Mulish Obstinate Resistance to even entertain the possibility of this being a Valid Work.
- D. Sequence shows ‘bursts’ of electrical energy between Artwork and Viewer – possibly disruptive, yet paradoxically, mystifyingly, Viewer exhibits Pleasure. Perhaps this is from a sense of Moral Superiority or Smugness?

**Yet more Frequency Modulations**

- A. Sequence shows steady, if banal streaming of information & sensory content. No mental gymnastics required here. A thoroughly likeable but middling Work.
- B. Sequence shows (*illegible*) Bumps & Lapses in Concentration. No attributable reason obvious.
- C. Sequence not mature enough to be visible in the spectrum
- D. (*too faint, illegible*)

**Failed Lines of Communication**

- A. Too vacuous to be entertained
- B. Sequences destroyed
- C. Disrupted
- D. (*blank*)

**Journal Entry 64:***Diagram notations:*

Sinister glow

(stimulus)

Echolocation in the brain case

**Journal Entry 65:***Diagram notations:*

(eyes frenetically darting)

**Journal Entry 66:**

Golgi's inefficiency was our gain – upon our unexpectant, unsuspecting vision sprang a sight sweeter than any painted frippery – the singular speaking neurons scattered, like meagre but substantial stars on the edge of a hitherto uncharted Galaxy.

**Journal Entry 70:**

For Descartes too, the Pineal would appear to be of singular importance. As a structure displaying rather remarkable unitary properties, with its unique position of contrariety, the Pineal quite naturally, seemed to take Centre Stage in the attribution of the link to the Soul.

The influence of Hippocrates and Galen on Descartes' hydraulic model of the brain is another subject worthy of discussion. Upon no circumstance must we be guilty of derisive dismissal of his antiquated workings, circumspect though we must be about his laughably contrived & species-centric musings on the nature of that most ephemeral and unproven of things – the Soul.

(*Margin notations*): for Willis, this may seem irrelevant ground, but for us, with our peculiar sensibilities, this is of the utmost importance.

For Leonardo, a brain the size of a walnut, the irony of it!

Lateral ventricles (perceptual) – *impresive* [sic]

The 3rd ventricle – *sensus communis*

The 4th ventricle – *memoria*

To regard the Brain as the Seat of all Learning, surely that is not enough. What Spirit drives this Wondrous Motor? What vital fluid?

Paradoxically for the Brain, it confabulates and postulates false mystical properties, where really, the meat of the matter is its own Motor.

- This text is extracted from the personal notes, drawings, diagrams, experiments and journal entries of S. Raoul, which may help explain its fragmentary nature.

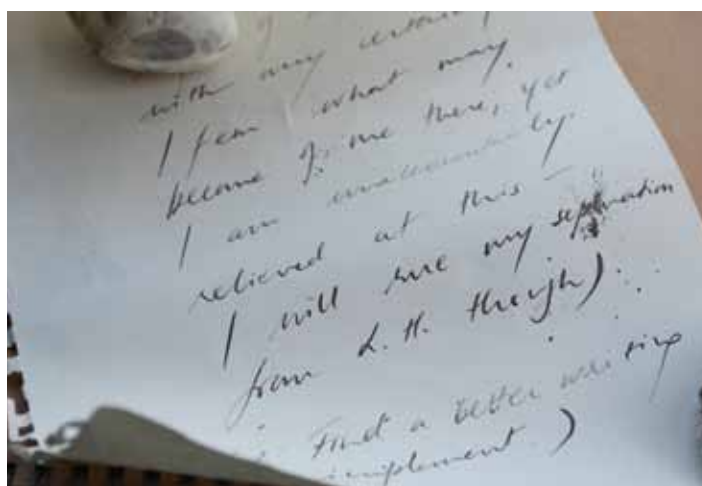
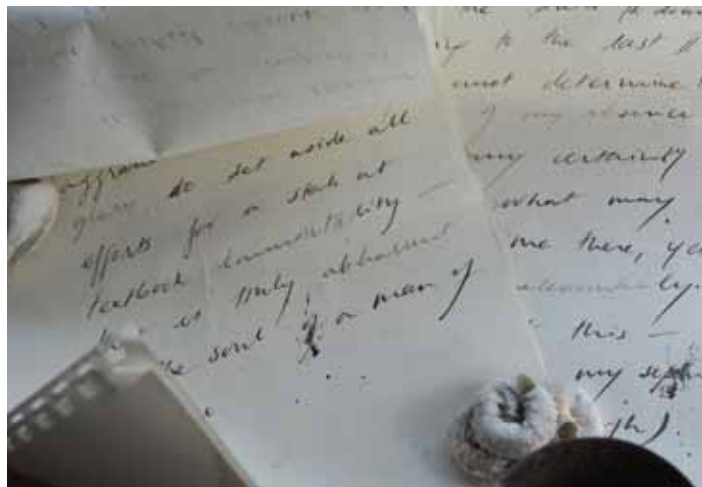
## Letters and Ephemera

---



- 
- *Letters and Ephemera*  
*Teasing out the secrets, unpeeling the layers, unravelling the 'tangled skein', rolling back the years.*
  - *Personal Effects*  
*An old photograph collects dust above a collection of field notes.*





□ **An Important Document**

"...to set aside all efforts for a stab at textbook immortality - that is truly abhorrent to the soul of a man of..."

□ **Still Important**

Though covered in dust.

□ **Final Page from An Important Document**

"...with any certainty. I fear what may become of me there, yet I am unaccountably relieved at this - I will rue my separation from L. H. though. (N.B. Find a better writing implement)"



- 
- *Artefacts from Final Dig*  
*A cluttered desk and a crazed mind can bear strange fruit.*
  - *Artefacts in Their Place*  
*Brands, Essence of.*



- 
- First Impressions*  
And their lasting impact.
  - Notes and Observations*  
Where one can observe much in these notes.
  - More Notes*  
Where one can deduce much from the tiniest observation.



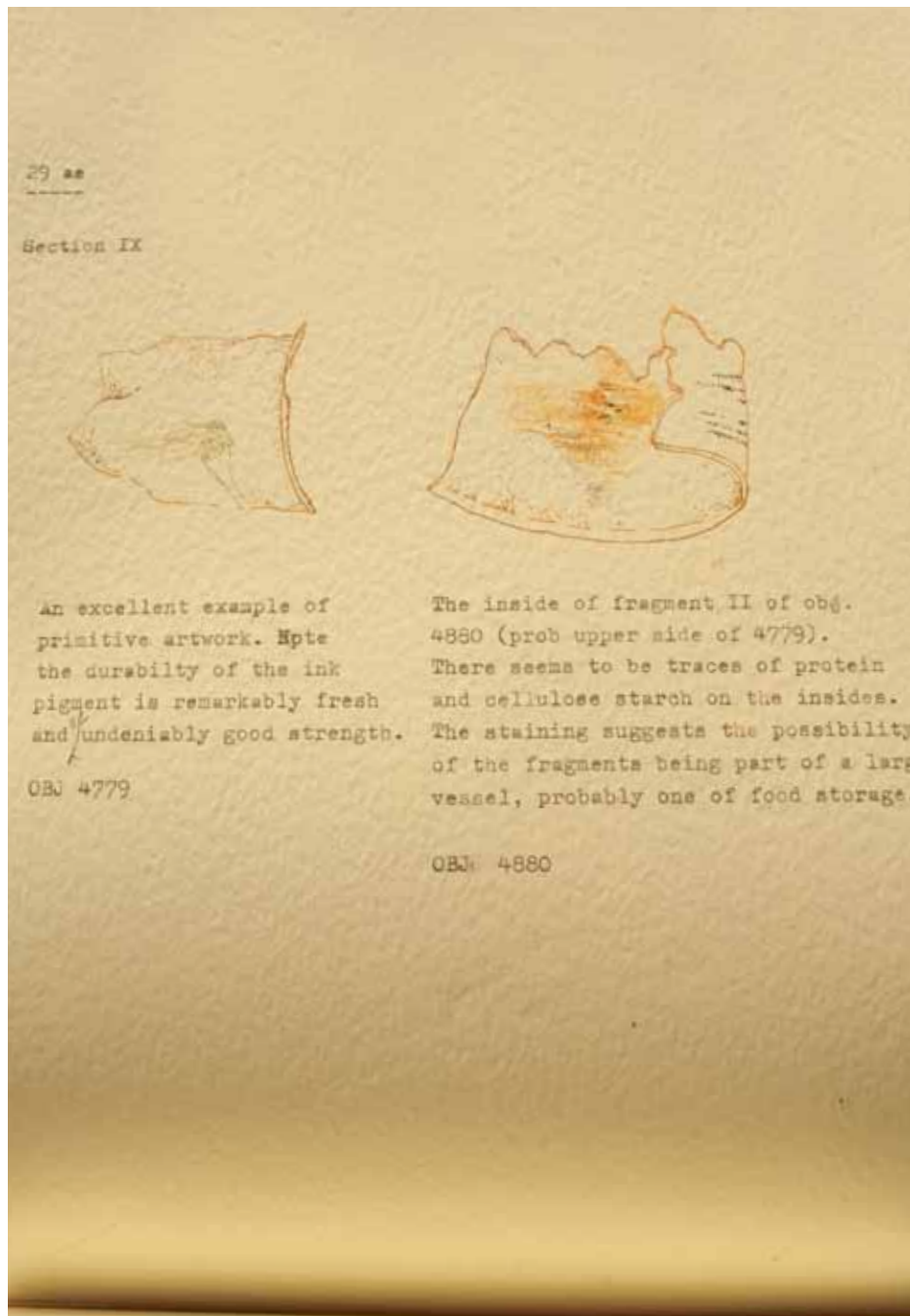




- 
- *The Study of Leftovers (detail)*  
Slippers and maps, with very little explanation.
  - *The Study of Leftovers (another detail)*  
A slipper supports life.



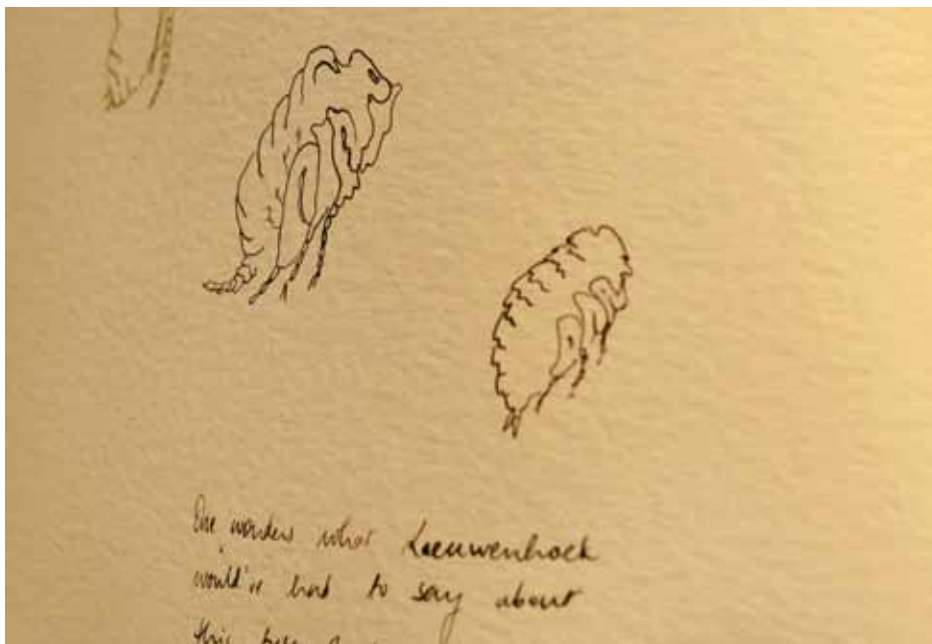
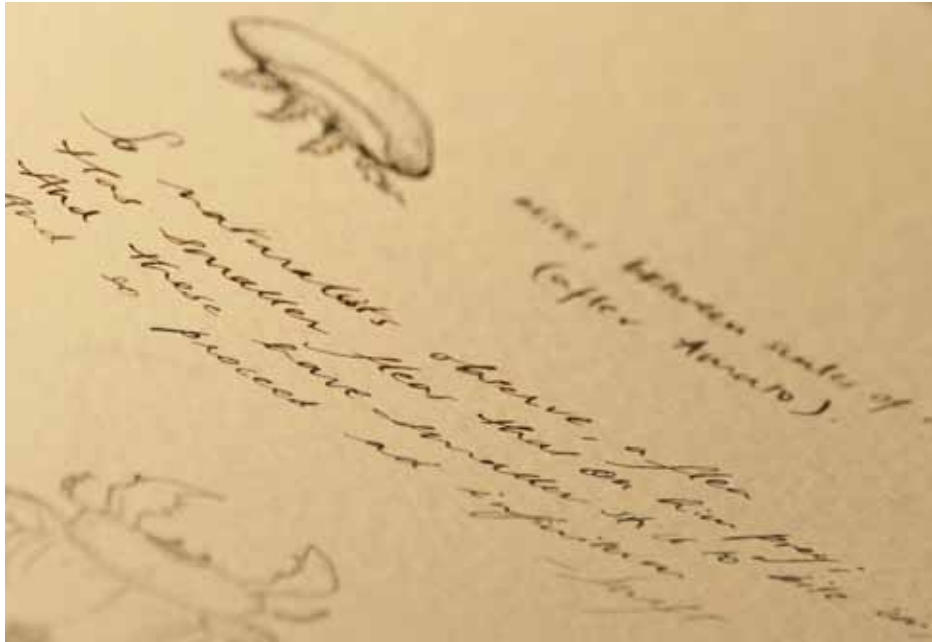
- 
- *The Study of Leftovers*  
*A Raouliau study, in S. Raoul's study.*
  - *Earth=Unearth*  
*The collation of the collections from 'The Study of Leftovers', with a thoroughly inoperable guide map.*



□ *Journal Entries*

"An excellent example of primitive artwork. Note the durability [sic] of the ink pigment is remarkably fresh and of undeniably good strength. OBJ 4779"





□ **More Journal Entries**

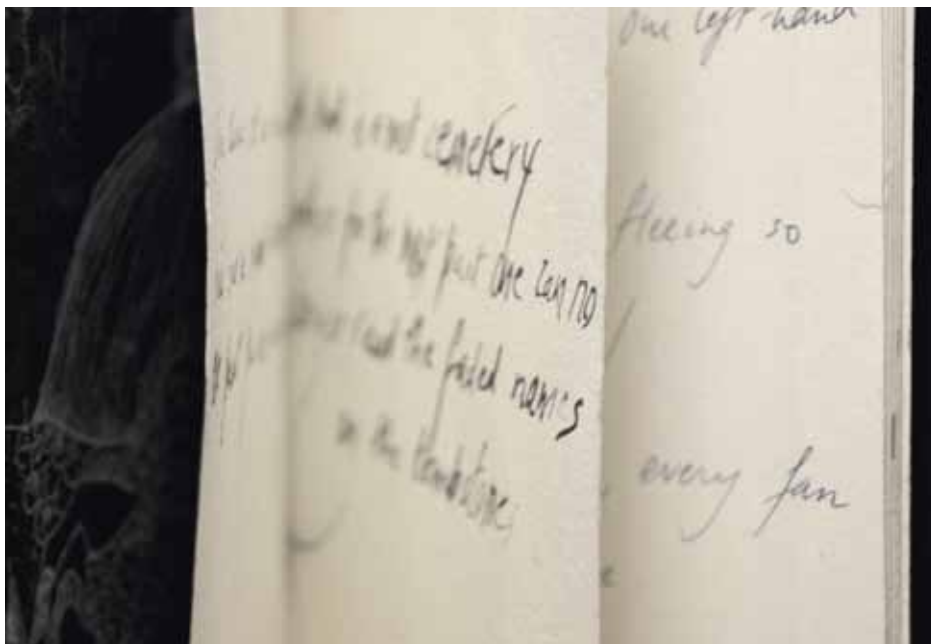
"Mites between the scales of a flea (after Amato).

'So naturalists observe, a flea| Has smaller fleas that on him prey;| And these have smaller still to bite 'em|  
 And so proceed as infinitum.' – Swift

The rather aptly named Dowager Beetle| A moniker devised by our own young apprentice, S.R."

□ **Musings from a Journal**

"One wonders what Leuwenhoek would've had to say about this type of progression!"



□ **Echolocating 4 Books**

Namely, 'On Science and Wonder, Art and Artifice, Religion and Djinn'; 'The Consequences of Sowing Dragon's Teeth, or On Being More Quacksalver than Savant'; and 'Echolocation of a Book by Borges'. The fourth appears to be missing and so remains unnamed.

□ **Echolocation of a Book by Borges:**

"A book is a vast cemetery  
where for the most part  
one can no longer read  
the faded names on the tombstones."  
- Marcel Proust.



Local  
Man Eats  
Lady's  
Fingers

(p. 3)

## THE DAILY SANDWICH

You Art What You Eat

The Self is  
Negotiated,  
Again.

(p. 7)

Year VII, No. 759

[sãmbãtã, 14 iulie 2012]



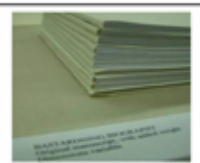
The Reconstructed  
Scene of the Crime.

Politics 3



Thoughts From a Dot

Philosophy 6



How to Be the  
Architect of Your  
Own Biography.

Economics 15



NEW! SEGMENTED!

The Factual Fallacies  
- One Night Only!

Entertainment 18

## THE DIACHRONIC ILLUSION

This section has been re-sectioned

**Innerspace, Early afternoon.** In an unprecedented move earlier this afternoon, the necessity of keeping up a front was abandoned in favour of what some critics call a slash-and-burn approach to thinking.

"No longer can the knowing look replace genuine understanding,

*It's an unmitigated disaster! It has been proven that a lie requires nothing more than the vacuum of one apathetic generation, to become accepted truth. With this move, we will be forced to accept the silliness of our contentions.*

- Mr. L., requesting anonymity.

and no longer can unjustified epithets be allowed", said an industry spokesperson, "though quoting out of context remains perfectly legal".

Reaction to the move ranged from slack-jawed apathy to

outright condemnation, with furious debate raging about what effect, if any, this will have on the point, if any, of Art and Conversation.

More stories on pp. 4, 5, and 11.

### In Passing /p. 10 Visionary Felled by Tragic Misstep



*No Cover No Colour: The last endeavour remains unfinished, with only three books completed in what might have been the Magnum Opus of S. Raoul.*

#### Related Stories:

Most Deaths Occur at Home, Public Warned.

**CITY.** Members of the public were reminded today of the need to be vigilant at home, following news of the recent death of S. Raoul.

"We must be sure-footed, decisive and refrain from hopping blithely over obstacles in the home", said a Ministry spokesperson earlier today. "We must also learn to put away things".

Deranging Effects of Art Not to be Underestimated

**BOONDOCKS.** In a statement issued by the Consortium of Concerned Parents, the dangers of dabbling in Art have been highlighted, with the recent death of S. Raoul.

The deceased was quoted by the Consortium for his seminal work on the deranging effects of Art on the wits of the unwary.

Given the circumstances surrounding his death, the Consortium alleges, the ill effects seems to have ironically afflicted the proponent of the theory in what appears to be a text book progression.

Some of the symptoms that victims of overexposure exhibit include clumsiness, tripping over one's tonhue, unable to formulate coherent thought, and bumping into poorly installed objects. An inability to separate self from space then occurs, often accompanied by mental confusion. If neglected, symptoms can be fatal.

# IN PASSING

## VISIONARY FELLED BY TRAGIC MISSTEP

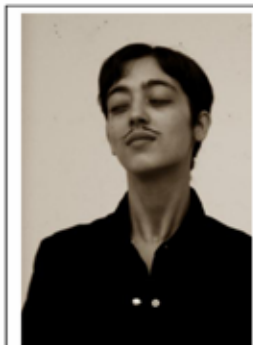
**Tragic death of Author, Thinker and Inventor S. Raoul allegedly caused by tripping over cultural artefact.**

Observers have referred to the sudden death of the reclusive S. Raoul which occurred yesterday as a cruel cosmic joke.

In what appears to be a tragic accident, S. Raoul tripped and broke his neck while attempting to negotiate space in a cultural context.

The obstacle responsible for the fall is believed to be a collection of artefacts, survivors of violent acts of cultural genocide, collectively fished out of the River of Ink (also known as the Dustbins of History. See related story on p. 12).

The pile of books was stacked, in Collyeresque form, with towering piles of unread *Life!*, insect remains, unfinished paintings, old calendars and other assorted clutter.



*Candidate for the Darwin Awards? Last known image of the reclusive figure, believed to have been taken shortly before he lost his mind.*

### Must We Remember?

With the recent flood of exciting celebrity sightings, readers have been peeved with what is seen as an over-emphasis on Art and its Hacks.



Rain



Flood

Commentators have remarked that while the passing of S. Raoul will not be widely felt, the mark left by the navel gazing narcissist will be enduring, largely because of the incomprehensible nature of his work. Everyone loves a mystery, it seems.

With indiscriminate, haphazard and often downright bizarre interests, the works of S. Raoul have surprisingly amounted to very little. A local wit even posited that the deceased would go down in posterity more for the manner of his passing rather than for any great intellectual achievement.

While cynics abound, some supporters of the dead hermit's work have rallied, celebrating the What Might Have Been as opposed to the banal reality of Is That All? In a touching display, some even offered to seize and burn the offending artefacts responsible for

the tragedy (See *Reconstructed Scene of the Crime* on p. 3)

In what may perhaps be a canny, if not pithy summing up, the Guild of Curators issued this statement late in the evening yesterday: "We believe that to present the life and work of S. Raoul is to stem the mudslide of apathetic forgetfulness that threatens to overwhelm those deemed Unfashionable or not Newsworthy in an Age of Sensation and Pavlovian Reaction".

They went on to state that "It is only through the Labour of Raoul that we now know of the need to righteously accord Art its proper place, whether as a Commodity that can be traded, (and hence subject to Judicious Management), or to be indulgently tolerated as a Frivory on a Fringe". (See related stories under *Economics, p 15, and Politics, p. 3*)

Advertising Feature

**NOTIONS OF ART:**   
**THOUGHTS FROM A DOT**  
 BY **S. RAUL**  
 PUBLISHED BY **OCTOPUS CLASSICS**   
**AVAILABLE IN STORE NOW!**

**Limited Edition!**

**Posthumous interest expected!**

**Buy Now!**

The views of the interviewees do not reflect the views, if any, of the publishers, editors, and reporters. Suing us will be futile.



## The Wiles of Time and Space

In Memoriam S. Raoul

*June Yap*

It was over a glass of beer that we began talking about art, having annoyed the barkeep with repeated requests for nuts, that having arrived, proved to be less stimulating than they had appeared to us in the hands of another, who was likewise focused on salted-protein at the other end of the bar. It was an unexpected encounter as things often are, more serendipitous than planned, but such is life. I had been introduced to S. Raoul, in what had appeared to be an insignificant meeting – at an art opening (of course, when else would we emerge from our dark, solitary and solipsistic musings?), with a brief handshake that was probably unmemorable. Yet post-event, lacking the panache to proceed to more exciting venues, we, with a few others, would stumble upon the most convenient and proximal watering hole, in hope of some illuminative experience for the night. Certainly when we had begun to converse, initially from sheer boredom given the banal playlist and rather sketchy pool table, it then appeared we shared certain things.

Obsessions mainly. The sort that would wear ordinary conversation down to silence, a battle of obscurities, arcane information and speculative bounds. And in relation to this, the nature of art. So we talked. About his life and about his work, moving swiftly from topics of interest as diverse as the inevitable rapacity of collecting, his study of the neurological experience of the aesthetic as excited by disruption (see next paragraph), and the nature of conceptual (and synaptic) leaps that mirrored mine own necromantic fascination with the poetics of mainframe machine language as applicable to art discourse, and philosophical implications of quantum physics as metaphor in art economics. Certainly S. Raoul's science was better than mine, his unflagging efforts at analysis and investigation, casting mine own in the pale, and his pursuit of knowledge – or to be precise, knowing (given his tendency for the apostatical) – was unwavering, which also attracted the ire of his peers (not that it would deter him).

Correspondingly, it is perhaps this same naïve idealism characteristic of his relentless preoccupations that drew his few but stalwart supporters around him. A romanticism that provided for a fresh breath to the rabid pragmatism of the techno-political environment he found himself in, one always quick to excoriate its perceived inept. Yet, his idealism stemmed from a deep-seated (and possibly genetic) melancholia that having been honed by the barbs thrown his way, produced a delightful humour, its bittersweet and subtle shades generally overlooked, and deemed untrendy and failing to please in the bland uniformity of a post-Prozac age. Few and far were his achievements (at least those with public recognition), and it is imagined that this situation was not unaffected by his refusal to conform to the staid measures and opinions of a chosen few. But truly what set S. Raoul apart was none other than his own, opinion, that is. The Groysian take (apologies to Boris Groys), is that art is paradoxical, its contemporary form and the recognition of its form and aesthetic made possible by its verging on the anti-aesthetic. As such the end, or the moment of cessation of effort, as decided in an aesthetic flourish, becomes the beginning of the aesthetic experience. In no uncertain terms S. Raoul unfailingly decided on the moment of conclusion. It is thus with irony that the recognition of S. Raoul's practice should only begin at his deathbed, brought upon by his unfortunate circumnavigation of cultural context, where he would meet his inopportune end, tripped up by antediluvian history. An irony that would not for a moment be lost upon S. Raoul himself, and likely would have caused him to break into at least a hint of a wryly satisfied smile.

Dear friend, I raise a glass to you, grateful for the brief exchange that made something between us momentarily common. And undoubtedly, that is the nature of art.

*- June Yap is an independent curator; she is indebted to Shubigi Rao for introducing her to S. Raoul.*

# SECTION IV.

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Postscript



## Chronologically Speaking:

*Being a list of prior exhibitions of the works and publishing of texts.*

Works exhibited at ‘The Retrospectacle of S. Raoul, by Shubigi Rao’:

- **The Study of Leftovers** (2002 – 2004)
  - **Untitled (Pseudoscience in Suitcase)** (2005): *The 29<sup>th</sup> Diploma in Fine Arts Graduation Show*, LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore, 2005; *The Della Butcher Award 2005*, at Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, Singapore; and at *Appetites for Litter: 8th Emerging Artists’ Show* at Plastique Kinetic Worms, Singapore, 2006.
  - **Earth=Unearth** (2005): *New Contemporaries: New Art from LASALLE-SIA*, Earl Lu Gallery, Singapore, 2005.
  - **Bastardising Biography** (2006): *The Degree Show: The BA in Fine Arts Graduation Show*, LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore, 2006.
  - **No Cover, No Colour** (All published by Octopus Classics, 2006)
    - **Art of the Americas: Secrets Unearthed from Levels Seven to Two**
    - **Art of the United Kingdom: The Burden of British Art**
    - **Notions of Art: Thoughts from a Dot**
- Second Dance Song, New Contemporaries II: New Art from LASALLE-SIA*, Earl Lu Gallery, Singapore, 2006; *Singapore Art Exhibition*, (Singapore Art Show), Singapore Art Museum 2007; *Autobibliophiles: Artists who make or use books*, Studio Bibliothèque, Hong Kong, 2007; and at *Time Machine*, part of *The Future of Exhibition: It Feels Like I’ve Been Here Before*, Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore (ICAS), 2010.
- **Four Pillars** (2007 – 2008)
    - **Echolocation of a Book by Borges**
    - **On Science and Wonder, Art and Artifice, Religion and Djinn**
    - **The Consequences of Sowing Dragon’s Teeth, or On Being More Quacksalver than Savant**
    - **What to do with Knowledge, or How to Burn a Book at a Coronation**
- Breathe* at Jendela, Esplanade, Singapore, 2008.
- **The River of Ink** (2008): *The Degree Show*, Master of Fine Arts, LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore, 2008; *Breathe* at Jendela, Esplanade, Singapore 2008; and at *{rtf(X)}*, Light Editions, Singapore, 2011.
  - **The Tuning Fork of the Mind** (2008): *Wonder*, Singapore Biennale, 2008; Conference of the Organisation for Human Brain Mapping (OHBM), Beijing, China, 2012; and at *TADAEX*, The 2nd Tehran Annual Digital Art Exhibition, Iran, 2012.
  - **The Death of S. Raoul** (2010): *Time Machine*, part of *The Future of Exhibition: It Feels Like I’ve Been Here Before*, ICAS, Singapore, 2010; integrated as performance at *Context*, NUS Museum, Singapore, 2012.
  - **Stabbing at Immortality: Building the *Turritopsis nutricula*** (unfinished, discovered 2012): *The Retrospectacle of S. Raoul, by Shubigi Rao*, ICAS, Singapore, 2013. Selected prints from the artwork previously displayed at *Surfaces*, Singapore Tyler Print Institute, Singapore, 2009 and at *Affordable Art Fair Singapore*, 2010.

Content in this publication previously appeared in the following:

- Chapter 1: *from* Art of the Americas: Secrets Unearthed from Levels Seven to Two, 2006.
- Chapter 2: *from* The Tuning Fork of the Mind at ‘Wonder’, Singapore Biennale, 2008.
- Chapter 3: *from* Art of the Americas: Secrets Unearthed from Levels Seven to Two, 2006.
- Chapter 4: *from* Art of the Americas: Secrets Unearthed from Levels Seven to Two, 2006.
- Chapter 5: *from* The Study of Leftovers, 2003 – 2004.
- Chapter 6: *from* There Is Nothing ‘Natural’ About the Museum of Natural History, BA (Hons) in Painting dissertation of Shubigi Rao for LASALLE College of the Arts, 2006.
- Chapter 7: *from* In Celebration of Futility: A Linguistic Circumambulation, the Master in Fine Arts dissertation of Shubigi Rao for LASALLE College of the Arts, 2008.
- Chapter 8: *from* In Celebration of Futility: A Linguistic Circumambulation, the Master in Fine Arts dissertation of Shubigi Rao for LASALLE College of the Arts, 2008. Drawings previously shown at ‘Practice-Mode’ at Praxis Space, LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore, 2008; and featured in *Aversions*, ed. Guo-Liang Tan and published by Osage Gallery, Singapore, 2009.
- Chapter 9: *from* Bastardising Biography, 2006.
- Chapter 10: *from* Art of the Americas: Secrets Unearthed from Levels Seven to Two, 2006.
- Chapter 11: *abstracted and adapted from* In Celebration of Futility: A Linguistic Circumambulation, the Master in Fine Arts dissertation of Shubigi Rao for LASALLE College of the Arts, 2008 and the artwork River of Ink, 2008.
- Chapter 12: *text written for* ‘The Retrospectacle of S. Raoul, by Shubigi Rao’, ICAS, 2013.
- Chapter 13: *from* Art of the Americas: Secrets Unearthed from Levels Seven to Two, 2006.
- Appendix 1: *from* The Tuning Fork of the Mind at ‘Wonder’, Singapore Biennale, 2008. Also presented at the Conference of the Organisation for Human Brain Mapping (OHBM), Beijing, China, 2012.
- Appendix 2: *from* The Tuning Fork of the Mind at ‘Wonder’, Singapore Biennale, 2008.
- Appendix 4: *from* The Death of S. Raoul, in ‘Time Machine’, part of ‘The Future of Exhibition: It Feels Like I’ve Been Here Before’, ICAS, Singapore, 2010.

### Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore

The Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore (ICAS) is the curatorial division of LASALLE College of the Arts. It runs seven galleries, comprising some 1,500 square meters of gallery spaces dedicated to exploring new and experimental art across the Fine Arts, Design, Media Practices and Performing Arts. Its programme focuses on showcasing international, Asian, Southeast Asian and local contemporary arts. Its public programme includes regular publications, seminars and symposiums, visiting artists talks and events of contemporary performance, installation, design and music/sound practices. The ICAS is committed to providing a cultural and educational tool for students and the Singaporean audience to advance their knowledge and appreciation of the contemporary local, regional and international arts, that is not otherwise available in Singapore today.

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*Author Shubiqi Rao before S. Raoul's 'Earth=Unearth',  
posed as sophist*

S. Raoul was a mentor and patron of sorts to the younger Rao, who eventually became his biographer. He was much enamoured of her work as he felt sympathy with her more reactionary but ultimately futile politics, and even collected her 'River of Ink' books. It was also what killed him.

*Disclaimer: The very existence of this disclaimer voids any attempt by you, Ungrateful Reader, to cast aspersions on our opinions, to render our accounts fallacious, to be contentious of our assertions, to tut-tut at our digressions, or in any other way to be as unappreciative of this extraordinary initiative as to rain on our publishing parade.*

*Beautifully over-extended metaphors, garrulously purple-prosed, this text is tsundoku in waiting.*

*Belongs with tantalising titles like 'The Santal Paraganas', 'Microcosmographica Academia', 'Rousseau and Revolution', the 'Codex Magnanimus', and 'Witchcraft in the Workplace'.*

*Never before seen anecdotes of the "prickly pedant with the squishy innards of the romantic".*