

ORDEALISM I: The Prime Ordeal

written by Garrett Strickland | December 10, 2015



[[[C U R T A I N]]]

then

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. . . here's the suck and glub of any emerging, mine as well, feelers rising out and slowly forward as tho grown from the muck itself – and is, and was, even as

Nothing happened. Nothing happens.

nonetheless, the push, humidity thick on the air caught gasping in gills, leeching mother moisture yeast to genome, the pull, slogging up thru mud and mire, dragging mass behind,

inventing, as it were, the beginning of a ditch, the deepest part of which I'm – busy being born – just now, being born – that I'm furthest from.

If I weren't so new as blind and so inclined I might look back and see how my scales have left in the wake of my heft a kind of pretty pattern.

If I had a spine, I wouldn't.

The desire to inscribe is an impoverished and desperate one.

The act of looking back to review, to admire, even to grieve even more so.

I ratchet myself forward with some teeth I sprout to do so, each stone of the earth in what will be my path a kind of foothold.

The teethmark-cuneiform I leave on the stones with the foot of my face could maybe one day be read by those who slither out to follow, perhaps with greater ease in the slick trench of my going, tho the stones I use as lever are partially, like teeth, dislodged from the dirt and gone wobbly.

On and on, inching the mile to purposes unknown.

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In some games, when you lose, you return to the beginning. All lives and levels for naught, you fall back down, into home.

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An angel, today,
came riding in on the back of a beaste new and fluid.

The animal the angel
came arching in on wasn't one I felt qualified to name.
Naming, it must be said, has never been my favorite.

The angel spoke:

*You've not heard, I guess, of Prometheus.
He was alright. He drank too much. But he shared, at least.
That's what I'm going to do with you lot.*

She began to speak—
I say, — That's not my name.

Ha yeah, the angel says. Not yet.

I'd skip the rest, if it's just the same.

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Walk with me.

You know, some say a serpent is coiled beneath each flower of this
(supposedly) delightful garden. Or else a flower waits to grow in time-lapse
fruition crouched under each scale of Tiamat one might, like a sewer cover,
lift while treading her back. I forget which.

Touch nothing. Reach out and touch nothing.

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I am trudging up a hill that seems endless. Each time I open my mouth to
bemoan to my Maker a large piece of furniture somehow spirals flying out from
my solar plexus to lodge some meters further up. This one's a desk. When I
reach the desk I'm obliged to study and search all thru its drawers. On the
paper I find in the drawers I write down all I can hope to know about the
desk and its drawers and the paper and the pen I'm using to write this all
down. When the pen runs out of ink I pull a loose tooth and meticulously etch
into the wood of the desk a description of the effect of the friction of the
tooth on the wood and how it feels to blow the wooden and enamel residue away
from my marks that I might review my marks and correct, if I can, their
mistakes. Only once I've done all this am I permitted to clamber over the
desk and proceed.

In the meantime, I've been cursing the task. Further up the hill I see a
dresser, an armoire, a coatrack.

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The problem with thought
is its having to have an object.

I want the flow, the motion, without.

Every force evolves a form, but
the word itself falls short of what birthed it.

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The ordealist's approach – he sees something and, because he sees it, he knows first thing that it's a problem – is one of assimilation, a mutual hollowing out. He sucks the yolk from the stone that would otherwise encumber his foot. Likewise the stone has known and owned him in the interim of effort such a task has taken. An imprint, a seeding. The scent of struggle permeates the aura of both.

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Before printing became popular and then began (supposedly) to die, many imagined an architectural setting within which were objects associated with specific text or fragments thereof. You'd walk around in your mind from object to object, each of which would trigger what was designated.

In this way one might recite from memory the *Odyssey*, or anything.

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The ordealist builds a nest in the knowledge that satisfaction is vanity.

One would of course prefer to have slept forever in the golden cave of our *axis mundi*, hypnogogically farming stones & gems to devour unthinkingly, preserved against the weathers. Despite protestations, we are spewed out from its saturnine gullet, summoned forth and fucked with.

Life – that *other* thing – can from this point onward be but an assailment.

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I hear there's this whale,
like an awful children's story,

that sings off-tone in such a way that no other whale wants anything to do with it.

Whether just trying to mate or what, they leave it alone. Still, it swims around singing.

*Are you listening to me? Is anyone listening to me?
Is anyone looking at me? Is anyone bothering about me at all?*

But we, we humans, have heard – have noted – the song of this whale. Enough to document it. Enough to say, How sad. Perhaps it was only us it was ever singing for, even un-decoded, even as we do not yet understand the grammar and syntax of whales.

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You receive the call.

Turning away from having received it – even as one’s existence as such has heretofore been but the antechamber to such a call’s reception – is the first *real* ordealism.

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Imagine the beings that swim geologically.
Imagine the beings that gestate in the bodies of stars.

Imagine what it means to engineer such a thing.

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I raised the question, once, of whether or not whales – representing, perhaps, the ultimate spiritual manifestation of the mammalian class upon our planet – whether or not a new species of whale develops at the end of each human epoch. That is, post-cataclysm.

Once we’re gone, imagine it: a new type of whale that can live, nay, *thrive*, off what we’d known as plastic. At odds, no doubt, with the insectoid creatures for whom polystyrene and plastic will constitute the most convenient and manageable of natural resources. The Newest Atlantis a conglomerate of islands that we are now hoping, somehow, to dissolve. As the worlds themselves don’t routinely fall into their basements, lose their tail – in their game of connect-four. As tho this planet doesn’t know how to flush its toilet and forget the shame of its creatures.

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How best to set fire, in the cellar halls of memory, to the spiders chanting stories they’d have you believe are your own? To see them shrivel with the ease of a flame held up to a spool of magnetic tape?

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Deucalion, the son of Prometheus, was clued in by his father to the arrival of Zeus’ deluge. Having built an ark, he and his wife Pyrrha were spared. Consulting an oracle regarding their task of repopulating the earth, they were told to cover their eyes and to throw their mother’s bones – which they took to mean rocks – over their shoulders as they went.

These stones became people, and things went along as they usually do.



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Ain’t no scene like an anthropocene cuz an anthropocene don’t stop.

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The ordealist, in trial.
The ordealist, perpetual forge.
The ordealist, body & implement.

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The inscription the force of one's will leaves in the obscure traffic of time is the trail the akashic mud of all signals harvested from chaos by consciousness grants us with its resistance. It is only when we make our psychic selves a tooth a claw a knife or stylus that we succeed in possessing a momentum of our own.

Depart, then, from the current. Push oneself into what refuses most to yield.

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The crystalline cogwheels of our multiverse move smooth in the dark of the hidden room behind.

Imagine a tooth in such a wheel become aware of itself.
I am beyond wheels, says the tooth.

The tooth sees itself on and from a platform suspended outside the multiverse machinery.

It flings its decoy into that, the time it takes to leave and return to the machinery having been enough, now, to become a kind of wrench, out-of-step.

A wrench thrown into the old machine assimilated, welcomed into a new iteration. The hindrance a manner of mechanism.

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There are pockets, oases in which one may rest, but with the knowledge that one is only resting.

This is something you do for a million years or not at all.

Likewise joys and ecstasies are known but knowing that one can never die fully to such experiences.

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We undress our fortresses as best we can, slough away sticky exposed against the desert wind and scoured by the sand.

Coming then in turn to grow a thicker carapace/sarcophagus besides, obliged anew and next to meet the same demand.