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Before The Beginning Were The Waters

Julian Langer

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Before the beginning there was the waters. This is the case in a great many mythologies. In Genesis the spirit of Yahweh floats atop the surface of the waters, when the earth was Formless. Before Vishnu commanded Brahma to create the form of the world, Vishnu slept floating upon the waters of the world, wrapped in the coils of a great snake – Vishnu the preserver and Brahma the creator are one being, in the Hindu pantheon, as is Shiva the destroyer.

In the Sumerian Eridu creation story, An, Enill, Enki and Nin-hursanga first create the world, for mankind and the animals, before a great flood comes to destroy everything. Zi-ud-sura learns of this and, like Noah in the Abrahamic mythology, builds an ark to save the animals. In the Mesopotamian Epic of Gilgamesh, Ea (the Sumerian Enki) instructs Utnapishtim to demolish his house and build a boat, in preparation of a great flood that the gods are going to bring, to save himself and other living beings.

In Chinese mythology, Nüwa repairs the four pillars, whose collapse brought floods, fire and great beasts that ravaged mankind, bringing about peace. Flood control signals the dawning of civili-

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sation in China, with Yu the Great's controlling the waters leading to the dawn of agriculture in the region.

The Hopi people, who viewed themselves as descendants of the Spider-Grandmother, believed that Tawa destroyed the Third World in a great flood. The Aztecs believed that the gods destroyed the world in a flood, which had no survivors, and that creation had to start again. Also, the indigenous peoples of the Andaman islands believe that their creation deity Püluga sent a devastating flood, which left only 4 human survivors, but destroyed all the other living beings and their fire – Püluga brought back the flora and fauna, but didn't return the fire.

In the myths of science and evolutionary theory, first the earth had to be covered in waters before life could flourish. And we all find our earliest biological origins in the depths of those primordial seas of the pre-Cambrian era.

The waters of the world are a primal force of creation and destruction in the world. Within this planetary bioregion, there is no life, in the sense of organic matter, without water. Life is a process of simultaneous creation and destruction.

Wild-Being – the geo-spatial extensive topologies and differential flow of intensities of energy, which surmount to what we call the wild – is this process of boundless life in flux. Heraclitus's river articulates this in a way that can be immediately drawn from phenomenologically – “no man ever steps into the same river twice, as it is not the same river and he is not the same man”. The rivers flow creates its new body and destroys its old one. The mans life creates its new body and destroys its old one. And with this, the univocality of Being as Becoming if the basis of life/existence/wild-Being.

We are witnessing the destructive power of wild-Being, through the medium of water, as well as wind and fire.

As the biosphere collapses into climate chaos, those energies of wild-Being repressed, sublimated, directed and redirected, harnessed and channelled by civilisation into “order”, through the geometrical quantitative machinery of the technosphere, the violent/

And as I leave you at the end of this piece, I wish to conclude with this poem Gates of Ys by pagan anarchist writer Christopher Scott Thompson –

Half a nation drowned by water,
Half consumed by fire.
Those who profit, smug with laughter,
Fear no prophet calling “Liar!”.

Ash comes floating from the heavens,
Storms come rolling in.
Preachers close the doors of churches,
Calmly fold their hands, and grin.

We who listened, we who bargained,
Now praise God in sheer despair.
Gods like fire and wind and water
Do not heed such prayers.

Sorcerers of coal and oil,
We invoked, they came.
Never mind the prayers and praises,
Last-ditch rages, guilt and blame.

Gods as deaf as us have gathered:
Storm and flame and wind.
Now the gates of Ys are opened.
Now the ocean rushes in.

destructive explosive shattering of this chaosmic release is vibrating across the body of the earth and is a terrifying force for those unprepared to embrace the wild.

The existential dread of Hurricane Harvey’s violent shattering might have been easily repressed, were it not for the immediate arrival of Irma and Jose’s and Katia’s destructive dances upon the body of the earth.

The Taino indigenous peoples of the Caribbean worshiped a zemi the Spanish invaders called Juraćan, who was their deity of chaos. This deity’s body is the same as the Mayan god Huracan, which is the root of our word hurricane.

These hurricanes exist outside of the repressive order of civilisation, as a destructive chaosmic release, a wild reaction to the excretive effects of this culture’s violating/violent technological means of consumption.

The destruction the floods in America, South East Asia and Europe we have recently witnessed, either directly or through the hyper-real spectacle of contemporary media, are points of chaosmic release from order, where the flow of wild-Being becomes released, allowing for the potential return to the wild – outside of both order and chaos. They shatter the perceived safety of the technosphere, revealing our existential nakedness immersed in the world.

Today, as I write this in the British countryside, the gale-force winds of the tail end of the aforementioned three hurricanes are battering these islands in the North Sea. This obviously pales in comparison to the force of their immediate bodies, but the winds still roar like a raging beast, furious in the face of its abuser. Their free dances upon the earth, stretching across an entire ocean, bring to my mind Anaximander’s notion of a boundless cosmology called apeiron, which flows uninhibited by any-Thing. This is made clear by the destruction produced by Hurricane Harvey’s winds, with houses left in ruins.

Apeiron was intended to signify all 4 of the classical elements – fire, water, wind and earth.

The destructive force of the earth has been revealed, yet again, in the form of the earthquake in Mexico. In the Greek pantheon, Poseidon is the god of the sea and earthquakes, known for his vengeful wrath and being easily offended. So in a world where fishless oceans by 2050 is a likely possibility, due to the toxifying and polluting excretions of this culture, and where hydraulic fracking and geo-engineering undermine the body of the earth (directly bringing about their own earthquakes), the earthquake appears to be a medium of destructive release for the vengeful energies of wild-Being.

Fire is often viewed as a basically destructive force upon the world – this is probably predominantly due to civilised-man only using fire for fundamentally violent purposes. But those of us familiar with fire ecology, wild or rewilded, know that fire has its creative aspect to it, in ecological terms. And we know that the wild-fires destruction leads to the creative regrowth of forests, in the cosmic flow of wild-Being. Most of us will know the intimate, immediate, beautiful warmth fire creates through the flickering dances of its flames, in a directly phenomenological sense.

But like the wrath of the recent hurricanes and earthquake, the recent wildfires in North America and Greenland bring our focus onto its more destructive aspects. Fueled by the conditioned produced by climate change and agricultural production, the intensity of these fires and their destructive fury is a force, whose wild release undermines the ordering of civilisation, in chaomic release of wild-Being's flow. The existential dread produced from their wild fury is drawn from the awareness that fire will burn through most means of technological mediation and leave bare naked flesh burnt and scarred, in its indiscriminate dances upon the earth.

The eco-extremist movement, whose liberation theology and anti-anarchist anti-politics has upset and displeased many in eco-radical and anarchist milieus, revere and worship Wild Nature,

and seek to emulate storms and hurricanes and wildfires through their methodology of indiscriminate attack. And while there is much to find ugly in and criticise the eco-extremist movement for – especially the infamous group ITS – there is a certain poetic beauty in this desire to embrace their being extensions of wild-Being, through emulating Wild Nature – though they often appear (certainly to my mind) to miss that destruction is creation, and that what is wild is alive.

Naturism, paganism, rewilding through prim/wild-craft skills, sexual/erotic exploration, activist actions, guerrilla ontology and many other forms of praxis that those of us within eco-radical milieus, whatever ideological/semiologistic lexicon we choose to embrace, stems from the energetic fury of a wildfire inside the very core of our being and Being, and a desire to relinquish that which civilisation uses to repress our wildness. And in these practices, we need to find this unequivocal unity in destruction and creation in what it is we are doing.

I wrote in my previous piece for this site, and have done so in my book and on my personal blog, of iconoclasm. Now in once sense, this is intended to signify the material body of the onto-theology of the technosphere – civilisation. But I am also intending to signify the praxis of destroying icons of mythology, in the sense meant by great iconoclasts, like Renzo Novatore and Bruno Filippi.

So why then have I drawn from the icons of so many pantheons within this text and others?

Because when the fox, lion, bear, shark, tiger, badger, orca, wolf, crocodile, racoon, boar, eagle or whatever other example you care for, devours what it destroys, it creates its-self, in its immediate body, and creates the world it is an extension of, through the excretions of their flesh. This is not only true of carnivores, as herbivores, like rhinos, actively create life through the destruction of their consumption.

So as I consume these icons, I devour their bodies, to attempt to create something living.