

## HYBRIDS

A myth cannot be produced, yet we produce it.

Myth takes form. Myth mutates, it slaps clay on clay joining in formation with adjacent myths, it tumbles out of throats and hands and vaults forth through gates of the world. It takes tail and scale and claw and eye. It takes wing. Can it be? —The grownup squints into the fog at the shape which shimmers before him. Part lion, part—? The contradiction indicates something archaic and churning with What Might Have Been, a beacon flashing far away inside the overburdened plexus. These mythic forms are strange power stories peopled by non-people, that take sustenance by repetition, by the ongoing cyclical pneuma of the living: we who sing them forth again and again. Ginzburg: “Names, in truth, were micro-tales... The name standing alone, ‘neither true nor false,’ which Aristotle likened to the verb standing alone, is the nucleus of myth... Myth is by definition a story already told, a story that we already know.” But if all tellings are retellings, all interpretations reinterpretations, wherefrom come the Originals, those most bizarre and monstrous of beings? We hunt through the mist, creeping on all fours, going silently, until there, lying crouched at the heart of the story like a leopard: a name. If the world itself can claim in its language of cause and effect to be itself a story, itself that most massive of composites: pulsing at its hub a name. The name that evokes a time when the story—when all story—was novel and unknown. Core words like YHWH condensed so far down that they become unsayable, become a clenching in the larynx, an echo tracing back the black tentacles of the big bang. Not literal detonation but literary becoming.

Inhabiting those archaic corridors, those fetid alleyways of creation: Hybrids. Basking in the void like rhinoceroses at a desert watering hole, half dinosaur half pool. Hissing from snouts misshapen as mother’s soufflés. Growling into the snotfaces of small children. Dragging on cigarettes and dangling their talons over the void. —You try not to make a sound but a branch snaps underfoot. The beasts peer up from their oasis, pupils so deep it as if they have been eaten through, tunneled out by visions: a vermicular ocularism.

These leftovers from the Makingtime, when god’s paw groped in basketfuls of features and mismatched hoof with fin: what do we make of them? And moreover, what do they in turn make of us? Peer eye in eye: *Hybrida*, the mongrel. A joining and a horror, a union, a desecration. Chimera, griffin,

platypus. Whom we in turn join by the act of our looking.

Why do hybrids evoke in us such fascination? What are they and why is nature unimpressed? How does the hybrid, as a *type*, indicate to us who we are? What structuring fantasies drive us from beneath the covers of our daily sham to face their strangenesses? Engraved in levels below feeling we feel them, lurching and promising things we'd long given up on. The Possible. These are the fantastical beasts, which attempt, not unlike tools and technology, a sort of Promethean blitzkrieg on creation, claiming right of the Imagination over the Manifestation for title in the measure of the marvelous. What language is irreducible? A language of pure action. Nature's language, the language of the World. The hybrid reduces itself from two to one, but its parts remain distinct. The hybrid winks and shambles offstage.

And the children cry for us to read from the storybook again.

So let us read.

Shake out the wailing opuses of literary hybridism: Borgesian historicism, abstract erotic literature, geographic poem maps, literary space opera, pararealism. The purple prose of a Cormac McCarthy or a Paul West, high literature shot through with vernacularity and obscenities. Hermaphroditic writings which blur the known genitals into unnamed pleasure centers. Transitional forms, where narratives fracture into unfinished icebergs of lost text, where poems degenerate into bleeds of washed ink. These are the composites, the terrains whose banner and flag is the semicolon, that indicator of the neighborliness of the Other, where seemingly contradictory, or at least disparate, clauses and images are brought immediately adjacent, to inhabit the same body of the page, the canvas, or the organism. The semicolon as the secret actor, the signal which manifests poetry without poetic form or line breaks. All hybrid beings are in and of themselves poems, for they join, without dissolving difference, contrasting principles.

But reach beyond the litany of the literary, swim out into deeper waters where alphabetical fusions join and dissolve in hallucinatory mongrelisms, for here be birthed monsters—and what are monsters but the novel and the strange: cut-ups and cut-outs, books with holographic pages, disappearing ink, mirror-printed pages, inverted text. *The Policeman's Code* dipped in osmotic methylamine cyclohexanone so that the reading opens the reader out into a holotropic immediatism. The fantastic and the banal interbreeding, as it were, to birth offspring ever more bizarre and disorienting. And the fantastic with the fantastic:

the great illuminated manuscripts, graffiti fine art, cross-art modalities melding the literary with the visual, or the visual with the musical, or the musical with the erogenous, all of it demanding more participation from the viewer/reader/audience by eroding preordained expectations (present essay not disincluded). Liquid emulsion where photos are printed on anything whatsoever. Macro-sculptural outsider art, projections onto the bellies of the clouds. Street theater which blurs audience with performer, and other site-specific ephemerality. Aesthetic architectures, megalithic sites. Film in its own right. Things meld with other things, like avalanches of lahar integrating whole landforms into themselves. Here is where hybrid works blend with "real life." Folk art which is not only physically functional but also carries the functions of the sacred: ceremonial baskets, water jars, textiles.

Hybrid art forms embrace and highlight the cross-pollination between walks of life, howling over the rooftops the interdependence principle. They accomplish this, overtly and in their subtext, by jostling these brains which are evolved to foresee and instead find themselves stunned by the unforeseen. In celebration of life they do this, in celebration of the possible. But hybrids don't exist solely bound by such safe confines; they claw their way off-page, slither off-canvas, and out into every aspect of the worldliness of the world. Earth's species name: Gaia Hybridia. When one begins to look, one begins to see the hybrid everywhere. And for that matter, the looking itself: what we consider our bodies are weighed with pounds of other bacteria in and on us, the composite of animal and mineral and elemental which consists us itself a commingling. The modern homo sapien concealing within its dermic confines the genes of the "extinct" neandertal. These very bodies amalgamations of our branching ancestry. Yes, you and I, writer and reader: I who write these words in your past, you who read them in my future: even we participate in a proximal synthesis: are not our minds coalescing across time, conjoining for a drifting moment on this stream of ideas?

Let our ideas about such amalgams expand. Hybridization manifests the power of analogy; to say this another way: the hybrid is analogy made concrete. The history of humans' relationship to hybrids exhibits the fluctuations of our feeling for the truth of the analogy. We stopped believing in centaurs and mermaids as we stopped seeing creatures as being "like" and "unlike" each other spiritually; when we entered into an era of seeing creatures solely through a continuum of physical causality. Our present time marks a singular phase in our

relationship to the hybrid, because technical advances now allow us to imagine, with the aid of geneticists, surgeons and roboticists, the hybrid as tangible physical possibility. To what degree, however, can this possibility open the gates of the analogizing mind? Which is to say, what power of re-enchantment do these new hybrids hold? To address this question, we need to explicate the mechanisms by which hybrids exert their power of fascination.

Let us assemble a hybrid perspective, one which holds heterogeneous elements together without merging them. Animate metaphors, hybrids draw glamor from the simultaneous revelation and occultation of creaturely potentialities. They establish comparisons at once too apt, and disturbingly discordant. The quality of swiftness in the centaur, for example, seems to eclipse that of both horses and men, for within its form the horse's physical swiftness conjoins and amplifies the swiftness of the man's mind, which amplifies the horse's swiftness, and so on. But residues of dissonance inevitably shadow the hybrid: certain details undermine its evocative power. What kind of teeth does the centaur have, how many belly buttons? Incongruities mark such supposedly unitary beings. We could say the same of a singular being, but here we find this theme amplified.

The metaphor takes its light from an identification at once too apt, slightly discordant. There are always particularities that do not correspond. The suppressed element: the horse's head which doesn't appear in the centaur, the man's legs. Shadow spots against which the metaphor casts its light. This "light:" the human appears concurrently more human in contrast to the horse's body, and animalized via its appearing in context of the horse's body. This energy of metaphorical excess aches to be harnessed—an ulterior alternator in the analogy machine?

What does the hybrid evoke today? Childhood. Childhood, and the Possible. Regard the cynoceph, the cockatrice and criosphinx. Reflected in those strange eyes oneself, only younger, at the mercy of some grownup reading from a childhood fairytale. And in that tale, should the tightly-bound-in-bondage-of-rationality adult unshackle into that tunnel of rainbows brighter than terran colors: the places of Possibility, closer to the creational times, the unformed and transmutational times whereto all phenomena trace their beginnings. Our fabulist fascination links the perceptions of children to the primordial times, when things were less individualized, less distinct, when the lines between things blurred more easily, the Possible Times, chaotic and unformed. Prior

cynicism. Prior drudgery. Prior.

Let us trace the theatrics of hybridization. Early man disidentifies as animal, dons animal masks to seize lost animal powers, projects it outward in animism onto exemplary stones and such; we have the phenomenon of 'gods,' the Egyptian beast-headed gods, Anubis and the like. The stacked animals of the totem pole manifest a hybridized mass—the totem or story pole tells its tale in a language of carved images; without their story the images prove but static puppets; the story is the hand which moves them. Reach up inside: the plurality speaks. It condenses the multiple into a singular whilst retaining its original components in distinction. But the multiplicitous rebels. A rebellion of the composition's parts. Exposition vs. Coda vs. Scherzo and the symphony crumples under inner tensions, the unconstrained soundwaves depart like flung moons. Entropy's disregard. Then syntropy claims handfuls of the raw elements shot from novae and binds them and makes new. The anthropomorphosed exemplary animals climb down off the totem pole and trundle off into the forest. Man and woman, alone, naked, looking up from the swamps beneath the Garden. Whatever to do...?

Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny. At first we are many. Amoebic and ghostly, we rush through a series of tadpolitic forms as the cells organize toward a tender little ape-fetus. In childhood we will model after those who go before us, gradually crystallize over some meshwork of selfhoods. For most of us this concretion becomes the ego's small oasis and blinder edge. But for others there will be more. Perhaps for poets and the rare oceanologist, the biographer, the actor who knows the bliss of donning the many transmogrificatory capes of the theatrician's wardrobe. The festivalgoer who dances all night, the shaman, the ayahuaschera. For some perhaps there remains some measure of unbecoming.

Gaze around in the brilliant yet somehow dulling light of the waking world: the hybrids, they're all around still, if less concrete, if less obviously integrated. Families join by marriage, moieties join for the clan festivities of unionship. Contraction: a hybridization of words: can and not become can't. Corporate merger. Interdisciplinary studies: human ecology, historical anthropology. Hybrid genders are emerging and fracturing into all sorts of gray areas. Hybrid book arts. Hybrid subcultures. Hybrid languages and genres and bodies. Cyborgs, subset of the hybrid, increasingly blurring the sympathetic- or parasitic- relation to / reliance on and even bodily-merged machineries. The modern centaur in quadcore processors and nanochips. The tail swishing in

monofilaments of extruded silica fiber brushes away flies which still stir around its all-too-rancid fecality.

Why do monsters no longer frighten adults? Oh but the monster envelops, the monster breathes far inside us. Arthur C. Clarke: "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic." Is this magic we touch at our fingertips? Screens pulse and respond to our warmth, activity in the physical world manifested by the wave of a hand over electro-sensitive receptors. Zeus' lightning. Oh it is not just grasshopper-men cloned in vats beneath midwestern missile silos that we fear. In Silicon Valley and the Chinese warehouse-sprawls we breed monsters. And their powers to unmake us from anything we have ever known to be human. To hybridize us in turn.

While the fool who believes himself to consist a singular whole resists. To disenchant or de-mythologize: to cease believing something has an independent will or purpose. For example wind, rain; that the elementals house less consciousness than we. Oh the war of inanimism has been underway for some time, with the poets posting guerrilla attacks from within the belly of Leviathan. Meanwhile, inside us, myriad voices clamor. Not least of all the tinny voices of children. Children those belief batteries, in cahoots with the poets, lead the charge. Plunging headlong at the front lines armed with the psychic charge generated by the evocation of the bizarre. We say an image is evocative, we ask, "What does this image evoke?" Evocation as the power of the analogy. Mievilleian analogical magic. It brings another party into play—the Muse in her omnichromatic robes. The image evokes spiritually, through the mind, out of the numinous.

Images degenerate, lose their evocative powers, are mollified. The *zeitgeist* establishes its requisite fist over the structuring fantasies of childhood. Yet the "naïve," those heroines and heroes, hold firm with eyes shining, waving banners painted in the colors of faith. They hold firm on seized ground with technologies powered by poetry, with analogical circuitry, like Mieville's clock full of feathers. Analogic energy as energy produced by powerful, risk-taking juxtapositions with like, yet alien, yet like, images. The machine of analogical power extends its machinery to the nearest observer: the reader of the book provides the necessary witness and by his readership completes the machinery of the engine—we might say hybridizes himself with the book, as it were, or at least the ideas therein. How runs the clock full of feathers? On the belief/disbelief/wonder elicited in the reader. A converter turns this 'occult energy' into literal electrical energy. The

feathers and the machine are combined, and they power something. But what it is that they power must not be spoken of—just yet.

This hybridized and hybridizing space of communication. Pidgin languages. Schizophrenic apophenias. Neptunian shapes ephemeralize from the milieu. A nautilus blurs with a submarine to make a living submersible capable of enduring great intrapsychic pressures—the thing mates with a squid—what gets born? What hidden assembly instructions lie embedded in genes? “When God spoke to man, he had to accommodate himself to their limited understanding.” He spoke in animistic and hallucinogenic gene spirals. Encoded there shapes on shapes like pages of palimpsest, difficult to discern or even see, for the eye fails and rebounds off such equivocal strangenesses. Our nautiloid submersible puttters onward—ambiguity is our form of engine fuel, it maintains a multitude of meanings for the biomachine to operate on (and what is that Thing back there huffing the fumes?!).

We come across neverbeforeseen fiends. What the devil are they? The newfound animal appears as a hybrid because the observer likens it to known creatures categorized in familiar delineations. Ground-figure shift, and the figure of the alien becomes the foreground. The unicorn: is it foreign or familiar? What if we flip it: a narwhal with a horse’s head? What form of ambiguous energy is released from such hypernatrality, what explosions from these fusion atomics. That dissonant residue, the shadow realm created in the wake of these hybridisms: their dark matter. The horse head with man legs, the stuff nightmares are made of. We claim to possess them, that they live inside us like fish in a jug. But such archetypes possess us. The fish swallows the jug. The suppressed terror there is enormous, and we fight back with all means of reason. Modern de-mythologization: the “freeing-up” of belief: is the will now more our own than in previous ages? Or is the sense of such independence itself a story from the heroic class of myths? Disenchantment—to seize the telos away from—to separate animal from human, divine from human. To de-hybridize, as such, a unified cosmos. Such is the praxis of science. Or was it the doing of gods, or of nature...? We fight back but the primal response when exposed to such demons is to wake oneself in the cold night with a scream.

What does the analogy machine power?

Wonder.

It is the hybrids which are wonder batteries.

The facets of the hybrid flash like light on water, on cut diamond, the eye of

the iguana or tsetse fly. Recombinant things. *Things can go together* they whisper. Horror experiments of sadistic doctors, mergings of man with wheelchair or robotic information device. Genes spliced together, the grafting of a pear branch onto an apple rootstock. Oedipal edibles, squadrangles and pentacules, androgyny, schizophrenia, musical instruments and semantic drift: the enfeeblement of the modern soul is mitigated by the syntropy of things joining and rejoining, amassing more quanta than the sums of their original parts. Every hybrid is a tunnelway through the leviathan's seemingly plated carapace. In truth that hull vermiculated with possibility. Perhaps it is only the eyes of the adult which lie plated in overlapping scales. Place worms on the eyes. Monsters appear.