

INTERFACE

Tentacled inland, across the outer bay, frontier settlements crop up amidst the refinery tanks and towers. Here the money channels into the center, even as development flows spill into exurban border zones that abut the barrens. So — there are social cleavages as well, surveilled and policed block to block. Interest rates and ground rents tethered to the zip code. Provide your property with defensible space, a managed area around a home with limited fuel. Control noise during mating and nesting season. Strike up a ballot initiative & code-splice the rackets.

As system, everything's "justified," hard right, as if the activated spaces, blistered into possibility, might flame up only out of the corner of one's first-person-singular. The mutative city, then, with its speculative prosthetics monsterring themselves into some spatial logic that is all the more terrifying for being, after all, just this very everyday-in-the-bay. (So — it's a dance floor, then?) Scroll across the grids and double-click for real estate valuations. The human use area should be a safe arena for human and pet activity, free from dangerous wildlife encounters and fires.

So why not live in a billboard? Think in pop-up windows, as parking lots? Multiplex as sexual practice; just breathing alone as a kind of ethics. Porch-lights, simmering insect-life, palpable meat-stink, processed and pulped and container'd for export. Lawncare? Architecture? A robust hazarding of functional communion with tensile landscapes. So that the ships to sea see how. Ballast in the balance, blasted by sunset glazings, potently blood-orange'd and toxic. Translate in terms of strip-mall pastorals. Compost heap, capital slag, tax haven transport. Go forth and commute.

THE BARRENS

I rambled in & amidst the giant wind harvesters, letting the ground level excesses of ambient aeropower vibrate through the acupressure points in my shins. The high desert winds spread a chill through the scrub-brush, rustling a half-dozen ground-snipes out of the maroon shadows. With the braver of my two hands I finger-primed the pumps, feeling the biofuel gurgle and pulse, ready for the feed. The screen sputtered and hissed, then spat out some grainy video-bleats of disco-light and graphic newstick. I scanned and scrolled, caressing the true interface, waiting for the chum to mass into legible readings.

In the dog there was a distance barking. Through the sluiceways, landscaping crews farmed the marsh for charge-points. The agency boys dipped their nozzles into the stink and began to tap the mudflats, pulling low sludge into the tanks strapped to the survival carts. Feeding off the swamp-gum often seemed to chew up the transmission, but it was a relatively cheap substitute for the tang of the newer petroleum jellies. Across the pitch, the largest hose struggled against some kind of impasse deep in the muck. Slowly, the knee-booted assistants pulled the carcass to the surface. So — you make a commitment, even if at a subcutaneous level.

I felt like I was trying to prove something; as if intention and half a shoulder could turn a would-be into sure-enough. But then there was always screen-life — the horizon of distractions, humming all the way up the wristjoints. The jitters lent you character, I thought, more as a line than a line of inquiry. Why think of it as already-archival, when it's only in real-time that it's really ever just this, or these. That-those is what's digging, into the quarries and pension funds, scraping gums for residual fillip.

The gears shift into lockstep, grinding out the plural greases, the mainline grit, all in the service of the tick-tock dance steps, at not-yet-living wages. Prosody of the enclosures, as landfill milk. The various cardboard characters, propped up on the off-ramps as affable genre-fill, produce their own sweat, apropos the more blatant expressions of surplus value. All this in the tally sheets as well, now, the swellings and parades. So — landscape as method, dance floor as social movement — theory? Flesh-pressed to the pavement, we await the new species.

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The contents of the containers include: fruits, nuts and vegetables (314,000 metric tons), wastepaper (757,000 metric tons), red meat and poultry (264,000 metric tons), resins (45,000 metric tons), chemicals (107,000 metric tons), animal feed (281,000 metric tons), raw cotton (172,000 metric tons), wood and lumber (24,000 metric tons), crude fertilizers/minerals (98,000 metric tons), industrial machinery (53,000 metric tons), cereal/cereal preparations (21,000 metric tons);

Auto parts (306,000 metric tons), computer equipment (161,000 metric tons), wearing apparel (44,000 metric tons), toys/games/ and articles of plastic (97,000 metric tons), fasteners/household metal products (31,000 metric tons), red meat (263,000 metric tons), pottery/glassware/ceramics (78,000 metric tons), iron and steel (226,000 metric tons), beverages (92,000 metric tons), and

214 police, armed with stun grenades, wooden bullets, scattershot baggies, and videocameras, poised for handheld-to-handheld combat.

BOX'D

Inside the box is a table of contents. Through the peephole, the sliced-eye spies time-spliced cinema stills. The activated flesh-heat, pressed through the blowholes as container-gas. Fuel then for haptic relays, tuned to the ambient social heavings, as laboring bodies tend to. So — we bend to it, actualizing as static-skin, fingering the ventilating slits through which the box whistles and heaves.

I flit about the blink-nodes, as shame dampens and glows in my body-pockets. Inside, someone's making shapes in the scrim-lit lower densities. If you speak through the wood you can scrape up a splinter faction. Moist blurts of pressured speech-acts abound, until the box says shut it, shit-lips. So — you only see what you were photographing after it's happened, the performing self as a container full of video-stills, now captured as.

As a container full of box-bodied heat. A container full of proxies, as praxis. A container full of reports, as ruses. A container full of containers, called The Container Store. A container full of poets, called the Anthology Store. A container full of chapped Buucks, called the Masters of Flatulent Arts. The screen-meat hums and haws. I grab my ankles and prepare for the doxa to dock.

— for Dillon Paul, after her "Capture"

ISLAND'D

From the intercepted agency reports I had begun to suspect that there were renegade bureau activities making shapes on the small man-made land-mass amidst the narrows of the northern bay. Note the seventeen units, engaged in a number of communications and intelligence gathering functions for the navy and other federal intelligence organizations. Direction-finding high-frequency antennas, for example, aid in locating distant sources of communications by intercepting signals bouncing off the ionosphere.

The digital control systems being developed permit an unprecedented variety of user-developed hybrid simulation capabilities. The core network and data/meta-data capabilities of the grid are being fully implemented. Seven high performance hydraulic actuators are available. These include extensive capabilities for telepresence, econography, and other forms of techno-mediation.

The fog chamber, for example, is a tapered shed, a few hundred feet long, which was built for the production of aircraft flight simulation films. It is now used for pavement research projects supported by the state. The earthquake-simulation laboratory includes a highbay engineering building where structures of considerable size can be mounted on a rack and subjected to destructive shaking.

Recently, the walls of these buildings have been perforated by navy SEALs, practicing forced entry methods, using explosives that create ragged entry holes. Saturation bombing of the anti-edifice zone continues to this day, even as The Security Group performs cryptologic functions in accordance with operational and technical guidance and instructions from both B.O.X. and B.A.R.G.E. The connection between the two being that there is a B in both and an N in neither. Military waste takes time to be wanting. Progress is excremental.

CONTENTS

The contents of the containers include: Heavy fire crackle (30 seconds), Fire, with hoses (45 seconds), Raging inferno with falling masonry (50 seconds), General purpose rumble/roar (35 seconds), Erupting volcano, mid-distant (47 seconds), Rumble and earth crack (25 seconds), Tropical storm (One minute, 17 seconds), Thunderclap (24 seconds), Lightning strike (3 seconds), Torrential Rain (46 seconds), Flood tide (50 seconds), Breached dam (37 seconds), Flood water rising, interior (41 seconds), Explosion, distant (6 seconds), Explosion, liquid (12 seconds), Explosion, gas (15 seconds), Collapsing mine shaft (28 seconds), Falling metalwork (18 seconds), Radioactive burn (28 seconds), Chemical leak (21 seconds), Escaping gas (30 seconds), Boiling liquid (22 seconds), Storm at sea atmosphere, with drowning (One minute, 2 seconds), Ship going aground (39 seconds), Plane crash, jet exterior (39 seconds), Plane crash, jet interior (36 seconds), Train crash (34 seconds), Road accident, vehicle strikes pedestrian (29 seconds), Car approach, skid and crash (19 seconds), Brake/Metal squeal (8 seconds), Shattered windscreen (4 seconds), Swarming insects (47 seconds), Animal stampede, on grass (51 seconds), Animal stampede, on broken surface (53 seconds), Restless crowd, with growing anger (46 seconds), Riot (One minute, 22 seconds), Fighting, no weapons (38 seconds), Stomach punch (1 second), Stomach punch, vocal reaction (1 second), Body fall (2 seconds), Furniture crash (3 seconds), Rifle shots (9 seconds), Machine gun fire, single burst (5 seconds), Machine gun fire, several bursts (22 seconds), Crowd panic (One minute, 5 seconds), Massacre (39 seconds), Reprisal air strike (1 minute, 57 seconds—*and counting*).

REPORT

I came to inside a lengthy terminal shaft of some non-descript airport, the neutral, nonsite-nonspecific, all-purpose carpeting beneath my feet stained with some deep chevron of accumulated shoe grime or pre-teen nap-drool. Directly across me, through the fleshy static of detuned forms gliding along upon the automated people mover, as if amniotic in the dead zones of muted voices libraryed into the upper terminal gapes, punctuated only by the occasional shrill bleat of a mid-sized motorized cart transporting a coven of retirees or grouplets of the semiotically-allergic, sat a pale woman, played, I was “near-certain,” by an understudy for the part of Agent C, slumped into a sky-gray lycra tracksuit, its racing stripes at sharp odds with the gravitational pull of that singular form of fatigue that only a delayed departure can induce. We looked at each others' eyes across the pulsing brandscape, with an almost complete lack of exchange beyond a kind of reptilian-deep semaphore of paramnesiac recognition. An airport guard, or anti-terrorism task forcer, or homeland security rep or undercover genre cop, loped by with an ambiguously-gendered child in tow, as if to provide some recognizable image of innocence and not-yet-depleted energy reserves upon which those seated—the burnt-out, the glazed, and the defeated—could fasten our indifferent gazes. (So — history, at the scale of the everyday, moves slowly, save for the irruptive knight's moves of epic gap-sutures, which from a distance appear to be flies, or fires — ?)

There was an umbrella in the seat next to me, with no apparent owner nearby. I attempted to calmly scan its markings for any indications of intent, my eyes resting upon the small insignia stitched onto the lower surface, with its "88" formed out of two red and gold snakes. Though I had never seen this particular item before, except for something similar in an old anti-edifice home shopping catalog I kept near the toilet (so — one goes to the bathroom simply because "people in books" never do — ?), I instantly "recognized" it (thanks, I was "near-certain", to the recognition hardware pirated from the Bureau of Opuscular Xenogamy (B.O.X.) during my last visit to HQ) as having been left for me from that as-yet-under-defined and roving network of genre-splicers and parabiologic system analysts that I had encountered previously down at the docks, beneath the freeways, slung in their cocoonish mobile dwelling sacks, and in various other fugue-state apparitions throughout the vast stretches of geo-political landscapes I was only beginning to comprehend as the architectonics of the West Code. (So — fugues are as sleeper cells, as "people" here are as backup vocals — ?)

I picked up the umbrella and my briefcase (so — I have a briefcase now?) and headed for the exit. An agency car was idling in the short-term loading zone, its driver holding a laminated placard that read “Bunch.” He gave me a knowing nod as I approached and opened the rear door, looking for a slot into which I might drop a coin.

ISLAND'D

I decided to track the cent. We headed out towards the island, as the passing bridge-top scanners spread their spectral waves across the upper sprawl of smog and current, through the blank velocities and into the crisp mirror-sheen blasts of arctic ozone. The car pushed on, through an agglomeration of identical duplexes, sub-development tracts slathered in all-weather military-industrial paints, the social ecology of the place still seemingly in the process of transition from military housing to municipal dwelling units, their budgetary neglect already well in evidence, as if a result of some mid-century urban planning program slowly defunded of its democratic promise. The northern-most section consisted of several blocks-worth of structures, fenced in and wrapped, in giant swaths of green tarpaulin, a civic-conceptual art piece wedded to the immediate needs of the EPA and the Pentagon's Public Relations sub-department, whose tattered signs warned of crisis-level amounts of trace elements and banned naval fluids, the exact threat of which could only be ascertained by those brave enough to dial the 1-800 number printed beneath the spatter of vague agency-speak, only to wade through the chain reactions of automated push-button relays and data retrieval.

We arrived at a minimalist shelter, seemingly containing its own poisons by sheer Kristo-esque aesthetics. Here the driver left me to wade through the grasses, awaiting the arrival of some as-yet-unknown agency insider to present him or herself with the list of seventeen questions why.

BOX'D

Inside the box is a table of contexts. I figured that not much was going to happen here, since so much had already happened, and most of that was happening in other books, most of which I hadn't read, since I was still working on this one. Using the umbrella as a tripod, I prepared to take a reading. I fingered a sliver through the slit, and clicked the camera's shutter. A container full of bunch abuts the barren blink-states. So — totality means anything's worth describing — ?

Inside the crate, the dogs and I exchanged some quick skinship. Outside, various sub-bureau sub-routines calculated the added value. The psychography was palpable, unfiltered & inky, as if made from a demiglaze of interspecial body-juices, strained through the focus group. I tried to shimmy through the blockages, out towards the other side of the equal signs. Find and replace.

A report readers' focus group, as in don't focus over. If you write on the wood, you can start up a splinter fiction. Because I'd paid for the optional sound-effects package, it seemed like I was right there in the thick of it, even though it was only happening in the written report. But something in there was gowned and bagged, and it just might have been me. I stood and began casting shapes out into the general scrum. It's still my body, at least, and this is how I moved it.