

How We Hid
the Devil
Right Before Our
Eyes:

Baudelaire at the
Bataclan,
Our Baby Blues &
Bowie's

BLACKSTAR By *Norman Ball* (November 2015)



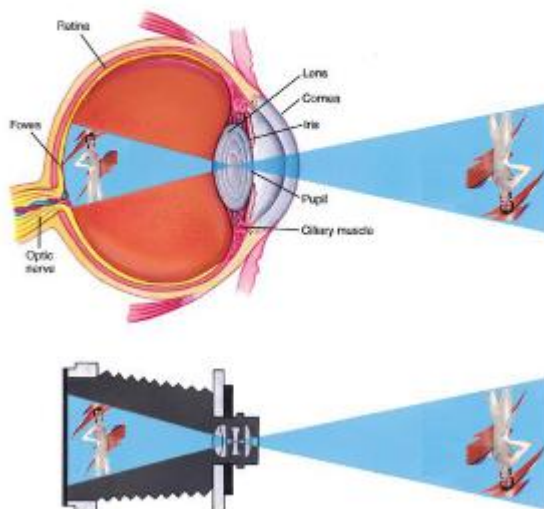
thou sun, of this great world
both eye and soul
-John Milton, Paradise Lost, Book V



ALL THAT'S BEHIND ALL THAT'S IN FRONT.

The Camera Theory of Vision: A Discredited Analogy

(no less for those born upside-down)



Recent developments in cognitive science find common cause with David Bowie's new short-movie **Blackstar** where the latter's solipsism dating back to *We Are the Dead* ('I wondered if you saw the things my way') and *Sound and Vision*, among others, receives a fresh, dark airing. (*Note: As the focus of this 'ranging essay' expanded beyond the new Bowie video-song, I went back and hot-linked some of the more obscure Bowie lyric references to assist a non-Bowie audience. It's also fairly burdened with links for those who wish to tumble down their own pet rabbit holes.*)

The eyes, it turns out, are *the center of it all*. The challenge comes in sorting through the valances, good and ill, that lie behind all that our vision insists we see. This skepticism extends to the Bowie presentation itself. What forces does he herald? How does he come to know what he so clearly knows?

My fondness for the terms *herald* and *heraldic device* (the latter from poet *Robert Duncan*'s Letters XVII), which appear herein frequently, originates with Bowie himself. In fact I recall reading the Cameron Crowe *interview* as a kid ('*David Bowie: Ground Control to Davy Jones*', Rolling Stone, February 12, 1976) and registering a strangely durable mental note of one passage in particular long before it became a staple of Internet Bible thumpers:

"Rock has always been the devil's music, you can't convince me that it isn't. I honestly believe everything I've said—I believe rock and roll is dangerous...I feel that we're only heralding something even darker than ourselves" (Rolling Stone, February 12, 1976)

I prefaced my *essay* (circa 2010) on the Jungian-Bowie blog *Red Book Red Sail* with the second bit, noting at the time how, "*'Herald' is a startling, non-accidental word. Bowie typically exhibits an eccentric though careful vocabulary...Heraldry always points beyond itself, or is it behind itself?*"

It's precisely the '*what's behind what's in front?*' mystery that spurs my perennial, core interest. Inquiring eyes want to peer around dark corners, especially as so many of rock's own inner circle are quick to pose Satan's lair as their inspirational backstop. Occam's razor is blunter still: what the hell's going on if not Hell itself? Some serious 'splaining is in order.

The heraldic question is finding indirect resonance, not to mention a strange bedfellow, in cognitive scientist Donald Hoffman who may be on the cusp of a truly Copernican breakthrough with his *Interface Theory of Perception*. (See '*Objects of Consciousness*', Frontiers of Psychology, by Donald D. Hoffman & Chetan Prakash, June 17, 2014; stalwart scientist Hoffman, who frequently rails against metaphysical 'hand-waving'

would in all likelihood be distressed over the deployment of his theory in this manner. That's understandable.)

Noting how the process of vision utilizes billions of neurons and trillions of synapses and commands an astonishing one-third of the brain's cortex, Hoffman suggests that objects are highly processed, representational icons of a far deeper reality which has been hidden (occulted) from us by evolutionary forces that propel our sensory processing toward more stylized renditions. Translation? *Objects are inside our heads.*

The truth of the matter is, *truth be damned*. Consistent with evolutionary processes, vision works very hard at producing fitting icons to ensure our survival. Thus the 'true' role of vision is to deceive (overlook?) and filter prodigiously so we might live, procreate and—with the advent of culture and leisure—*believe*. But in the sense of fashioning our belief systems, how disturbing it is to learn that we can scarcely believe our own eyes and that self-deception is an evolutionary 'advance'. (In the Monte Carlo simulations Hoffman performs, *evolution kills truth* in the laboratory every time.)

Seers die. Breeders lie.

It may also be that artists, wizards and philosophers subvert this reductionism with alternate visions that—in reality—stress enhanced 'truthiness' (or conceivably, competing brands of deception) over creaturely survival. What's most exciting though is how our venerable, metaphysical narratives are gaining fresh scientific credence via mathematical and probabilistic overlays. Of course there are antecedents to Hoffman's anti-materialist approach, even in science; [*Max Planck*](#) being an exceptionally significant one.

Analogizing the computer desktop, Hoffman notes that when we drag the blue folder to the trashcan, there is no trashcan nor blue folder lurking behind the screen. The Windows desktop is a highly representational, though quite useful, extended metaphor. The 'reality behind' the interface is vastly more complex, consisting of unseen microprocessors and electrical charges that defy most users' understanding. Indeed the subterranean and surface worlds bear little resemblance to one another. However the iconic display provides a fitting enough interface such that a successful experience on the device is possible. As Hoffman says, though we take the interface reality *seriously* (deleting the folder would cost us a full week's work) we do not take it *literally*. This workspace icon description combines Bowie/Duncan's heraldic devices and Freud's and Ernest Becker's Vital Lie. ("It is fateful and ironic how the lie we need in order to live dooms us to a life that is never really ours."—[*Denial of Death*](#), Ernest Becker). *Caveat emptor* in all cases. A June 11, 2015 Hoffman TED talk is embedded below:



The cube's a figment of the eye. Connect the dots. Accept the lie.

To expand on a Hoffman's 'blue folder' example...

Bill drops dead right in front of us. Nice guy, that Bill. Such a pity. We dispose of his body in short order, effectively scrubbing his icon from the workspace. While he was alive, it behooved us to sustain a *qualified belief* that he and his body were one and the same whenever we needed to interface with him. Indeed seeing his head occasionally bob up above the garden hedge, we'd often call out 'Hey Bill!' On every occasion he would respond back. Perfectly workable. But with the retirement of his 'icon', we can find ourselves plagued anew with thoughts about the depth and extent of his existence. Many of us realize his body was little more than a heraldic interface for a consciousness (or soul) that lurked *behind* or within his body. (Assuming you and he are like me, and not simply one of *David Chalmer's zombies*; but that's a whole 'nother level of solipsistic dread!)

Speaking as a Christian, I took Bill's body *seriously* but not *literally*. He was an embodied soul. When his body reached its expiration date, his soul—which precedes, inhabits and survives the former—departed. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust; so goes the body-icon. (The same cannot be said for atheists, materialists and physicalists who believe Bill has departed in all but our memory of him; for them, Bill *is* his body.) We cremate Bill's blue folder and offer some words of remembrance. Suddenly Hoffman's work, rooted in science, puts skeptics of transcendent existence on the defensive. They are forced to re-address *the* central question: *where did the operative reality behind Bill go?*

I think therefore I am the Great I Am



Bring me the Viscous Things. I'm ravenous for



competing visions.

Adding to our sense of unease, all things Outside are an inside job. The falling tree produces neither sound nor vision in an empty forest because there's no such thing as an empty forest, that is, a forest unsummoned by consciousness. Conventional notions of perception favor the existential weight of objects. However the human eye (really the eye-mind tandem) is so much more than a passive photographic device. Instead, it *creates* our reality interface from virtual whole-cloth, that is, from a remarkably narrow band of visible electromagnetic and light waves. (One can only wonder from what horror of rooms and malign Principalities it spares us.) Our aural perception is similarly truncated. Reality is an imaginative construct. Or as cognitive scientist Gregory Hickok puts it: "Our perception is nothing more than a useful fiction."

Hoffman, a radical monist, debunks the object permanence myth—internalized by most human babies by nine months—that objective reality has an existence independent of our

perception. On the contrary, says Hoffman, objects are introduced into existence only when various photons are cast, upside-down, on the backs of our retinas. This assertion is very close to 18th century Christian philosopher Bishop Berkeley's *esse est percipi* (aut percipere) [*to be is to be preceived (or to perceive)*]. In essence, the room is there only to the extent there are photons striking the eye and allowing its creation in the brain. No less a seer than Einstein struggled with this bedeviling optical delusion wrapped in quantum paradox, oddly enough reporting his misgivings to colleague Abraham Pais by way of the moon:

"We often discussed his notions on objective reality. I recall that on one walk Einstein suddenly stopped, turned to me and asked whether I really believed that the moon exists only when I look at it" (Pais, 1979). Einstein was troubled by interpretations of quantum theory that entail that the moon does not exist when unperceived." –from [Pais A. \(1979\), *Einstein and the Quantum Theory*](#)

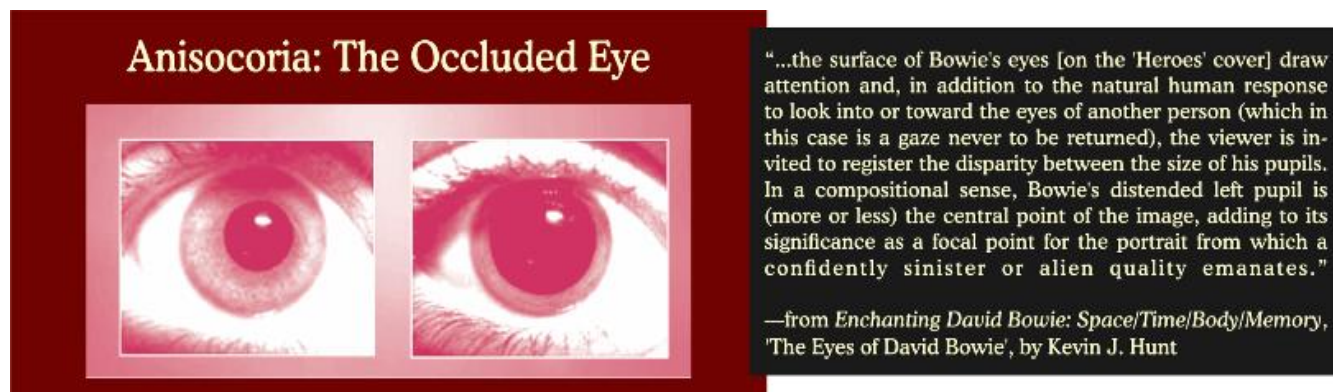
Eyes Host the Scariest Monsters of All



"...The volunteers sat in pairs three feet (one metre) away from each other in the room, which was low lit to dampen their colour perception while allowing the participants to easily see their partner's facial features. After 10 minutes, all the participants were asked to complete questionnaires about their experience of the experiment...The volunteers in the eye-staring group reported feeling different to before, including losing their connection with reality...They also said that sounds seemed quieter or louder than expected, time seemed to drag and they felt spaced out...A total of 90 per cent of the eye-staring group said they saw deformed facial features, with three quarters of the group claiming to have seen monsters."

--from 'Look Into My Eyes! Staring at Someone's Pupils for 10 Minutes Can Make You Hallucinate and Even See Monsters', Daily Mail, August 19, 2015

As for that fabled lump of meat between our ears, the brain is as much an object-myth as are the trees and vases that purportedly stand before us. Hoffman's theory makes short work of the mind-brain dichotomy. The brain doesn't exist. Nor do our eyes, though both are somehow implicated in ways as yet unimagined to that ultimate inward-out mystery, consciousness. The implications are clear should Hoffman's theory prevail. Physicalism should be seeking a sublet with the Flat Earth Society. 'Hard-eyed' realists have it all wrong. Flesh, blood and front-men are the true figments. [How could I not help but look at you and wonder if you saw things my way?](#)



Nor can much solace be found gazing into the reality-factories of others. Shepherds of the spirit realm, eyes are the visibly haunted portals of the commandeered souls we pass every day on the street. (I'm reminded of the Jesuit exorcist, novelist and 'trained eye' Fr. Malachy Martin who once commented on the number of haunted, demon-occluded eyes he encountered just strolling the streets of New York City.) If reality is an iconography produced mostly by imaginative energies and if some manage better than others to impose their imaginative visions on the collective conscious, then it pays to understand the affiliations of the inspirational source, *back, front and center*.

In his book [*Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*](#), Martin Jay suggests that the dilating pupil, "can unintentionally betray an inner state, subtly conveying interest or aversion to the beholder". Kevin J. Hunt (from the essay cited in the picture above) adds a Bowie spin to this ambivalence:

"Part of the uncanniness transmitted by Bowie's eyes is due to the simultaneously mixed messages they appear to impart: dilation of one pupil potentially signifies attraction, whilst contraction of the other more likely shows recoil of interest."

[*Listen to me, don't listen to me*](#)? Ocular ambiguity could be the ultimate [*silent gun*](#). So, keep a hand on your heart and keep your eyes peeled, boys and girls. This is no less important for those who've relied for decades on a left-handed [*anisocoric*](#) rock god from Brixton as their go-to reality arbiter. For all we know, his mind could be in thrall

to Descarte's evil demon. He is on record as seeing things turned around and upside-down. The amount of light an eye shuttles to the brain quite possibly has a bearing on the fabric of reality itself.



Salvation for the Mirror-Blind



"When the reptilian eyes of Newton are revealed, the repressed secret of his true nature—hinted at by Bowie's uncanny eyes—is brought into view along with the unnerving notion that the animistic world of the extraordinary and alien is a reality."

—from *Enchanting David Bowie: Space/Time/Body/Memory*, 'The Eyes of David Bowie', by Kevin J. Hunt

More occlusion? A secondary meaning for *unheimlich*: that which is kept hidden or secret.

Might our eyes be betwixt hoverers, neither fully *out there* nor firmly affixed organs in our heads? Adding to the mid-distance fog, Freud avails the strange 'disembodied eye parable' of E.T.A. Hoffman's 1816 story The Sandman to propel his 1919 essay 'The Uncanny' (or *Das Unheimliche* which Freud's etymological study discovered, interestingly enough, equates to *the demonic* in Hebrew and Arabic). The uncanny occurs when the familiar is stopped in its tracks, acquiring a disconcerting unfamiliarity as when the eyes *he sees us with* do not match the eyes *we see him with*.

Bowie's mismatched eyes solidify and prolong the hovering effect that forms the very basis of uncanniness. A stubborn blind spot forever haunts our locked gaze. While this alienating effect creates a rather plausible alien, Lis Møller in her book The Freudian Reading: Analytical and Fictional Constructions notes even Freud's failure to collapse the distance:

"The Sandman is an enigma Freud sets out to solve, but that which is enigmatic appears to be inextricably bound up with those aspects of the story that are set off by this reading—those aspects for which his archeological reconstruction cannot account. The enigma lies 'in between' as it were...The focus is the figure of the 'eye' in Hoffman's story—the eye that constitutes the point of departure of the psychoanalytic interpretation, but which at the same time confronts us with that which this interpretation ignores or excludes."

Clearly, the eyes have it in spades. Yet, an unresolvable infinity can hover between two pairs of eyes intent on regarding one another, (not unlike the *mise en abyme* of two mirrors). This is no less true for an odd-sock(et) set.

Idolatry is the elevating of one object over another when the truth is no objects possess any transcendent power *since no objects exist*. Careful then what might be gained or lost when exchanging a gazely stare across the idolatrous abyss. (Nietzsche: “Beware that, when fighting monsters, you yourself do not become a monster...for when you gaze long into the abyss. The abyss gazes also into you.”) If you can see him, he can see you. But does this shared field of vision offer a fair fight? This is after all the man who sold the world. Sold it on what, one has to wonder.



Having fairly kicked the eye in the head, this inquiry now moves out beyond our muddled noggins to the myriad unperceivable entities that lurk Outside our consciousness: interdimensional trespassers, extraterrestrial interlopers, fallen angels, spirit-world tricksters, ex-girlfriends and their complicit heralds that seem to share an awareness of the contours and limitations of our sensory faculties, and vie in the middle-realm for the deflection and theft of our love (John 10:10: *The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*)

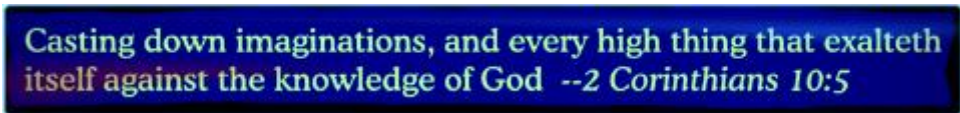
Put another way, there are active and formal *occultists*, in league with nonhuman entities, who together exploit the naturally *occluded* faculties of humankind.

One elemental background figure, far darker than ourselves, who has competed since the beginning of time to manipulate and control our realities is the Great Deceiver, or the Devil of yore. The *yore* part is apt, great artists assure us, because—via pen, paint and song—they have succeeded in 'de-literalizing' him into nonexistence such that, today, he barely hangs on in the backwatered province of pastiche and heavy metal send-up. Others are not so sure.

Recent tragic events in The City of (En)Light(enment)'s le Bataclan nightclub prompt a re-familiarization with Charles Baudelaire in a hurry, in particular his 1864 prose-poetry collection, *Paris Spleen*, where we find Lucifer in a loquacious mood. I had already been pondering *that* devil of late, thinking in fact he had never lost control. In fact so much *couldn't* have happened had his intimate proximity not been so effectively veiled behind heraldic devices. This is the *Prestige* Act of the modern era. How did the Devil manage to vanish 'right before our eyes' while converging ever more closely on our souls, “transforming from a symbol of evil in a Manichean universe to an articulate arbiter” of wealth and taste (from '*Satanic Indifference and Ultimate Reality*', by Brian J. Reis, LUX: A Journal of Transdisciplinary Writing and Research, Claremont Graduate University, 2013)?

The culture crowd applauds genius with indiscriminate abandon, never asking which *Principality of the Air* underwrites the uncanny effort. As we've seen, even science has cast a fresh eye on immaterial realities and spooky actions at a near-distance. This unconcern is a fascinating phenomenon in and of itself, especially as our real struggles arise from all we cannot see. Yet, in true *Eyes Wide Shut* fashion (the latter itself being a potpourri of hidden meanings), culture aficionados seem content to busy themselves in the intellectual and aesthetic folds of Satan's robes, ignoring the implications of the occupant within. How did this invisibility cloak come to be?

demon He flung to



Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth
itself against the knowledge of God --2 Corinthians 10:5

earth

For the purpose of this discussion, Satan's coy evolution into the *midst of our indifference* warrants a brief recounting. Seizing the baton from a stubbornly Catholic Dante, Milton proceeded to make Satan more interesting than God. The Romantics, via Shelley and Byron, elevated him in order to balance the Manichean scales of good and evil and obtain for God a proper adversary. Twain takes it further, imbuing him with a compartment of truth. Lovecraft shifts the onus to the universe at-large which he describes as being so supremely indifferent and oblivious to Man's presence that all anthropocentric notions of good and evil are destined to burn out, unnoticed. Human affiliations, godly or demonic, thus extinguish themselves in the fullness of time.

By the late nineteenth century, Satan is eager to escape superstition and move onto the Enlightenment and some really cool science experiments. Through his lieutenant *Abraxas* (the demon of 'magic' in the Arthur C. Clarke sense of any advanced technology being, "indistinguishable from magic."), Satan has science covered—and my how he has us marching to its drum at an inhuman clip! Few grasp that the driving imperative behind *transhumanity* is nothing less than the Babelian bid for immortality. The prospect of cosmic immunity is a tantalizing one for those whose sin-driven lives make death all the more dreaded. At the deepest unexpressed murmurings of their souls, the damned fear Judgment Day like no others. What though if death could be forestalled forever? Lazarus interrupted.

By the time we reach the Stones' *Sympathy for the Devil*, Satan is fully acculturated (and I'll swear on a stack of **Blackstar** Bibles Jagger and Baudelaire entertain the same Luciferean permutation). However to imply that a succession of artists are the autonomous 're-imaginings' of Satan gets things turned the wrong way round. Satan doesn't require our imaginations for his existence. What he seeks is a cultural and artistic sensibility consistent with his eschatological designs for a given human era. Propitious artists are guided accordingly. In short, he's cool with ceding authorship, anointing front-men and 'inspiring pens' (automatism much, Mr. Burroughs?)

Drive like a demon. Satan has human history to conduct and needs to reach a prearranged place at a designated time. The Man won't wait. The End Times must crescendo aptly into the Antichrist or else the whole show gets dinged for bad choreography. Yes, everything has already happened and the battle is already won. We're in the paradoxical realm of free will and determinism. For reasons known only to God, we tread a *preordained* path fully endowed with the *choice* to venture good or evil.

Thus Baudelaire's Satan is already signaling his boredom with cultural pedagogues (he can sniff rock 'n roll just around the corner). With Christianity largely subdued on the continent and the artist fully permissioned as spiritual arbiter, the Devil's preoccupations will lie elsewhere in the century ahead (my bold-face):

*"He complained in no way of the evil reputation under which he lived, indeed, all over the world, and he assured me that he himself was of all living beings the most interested in the **destruction of superstition**...my strange host declared to me that he didn't disdain, in many cases, to inspire the pens, the words, and the consciences of pedagogues, and that he almost always assisted in person, in spite of being invisible, at all the scientific meetings."* —Charles Baudelaire, *The Generous Gambler*

Today, our worst superstitions have been vanquished, seemingly tamed and commodified onto black polyester T-shirts emblazoned with *Morbid Angel*, *Black Sabbath*, etc. to which no one raises an eyebrow (never mind a batted eye) anymore.

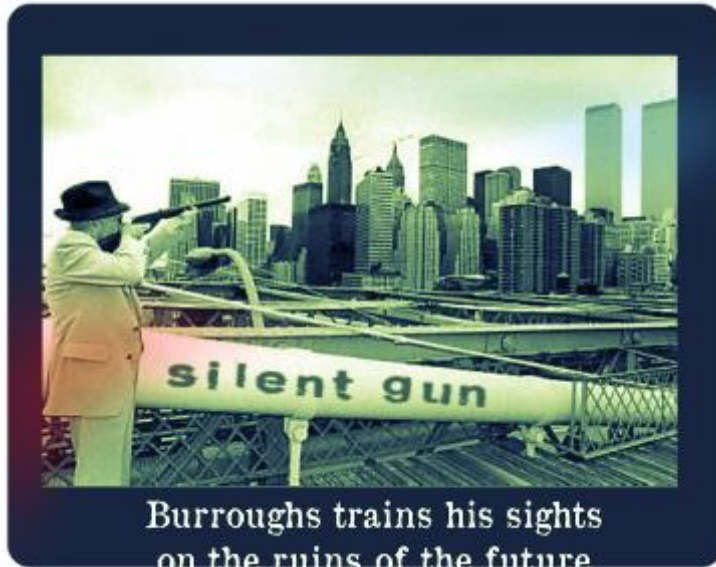
Consider for example a front-man in 2015 called The Devil exorting a demonic invocation (Song? The Eagles of Death Metal's [*Kiss the Devil*](#) has no discernible hook, chorus or verses) only to have his 'prayers' answered in the form of unmitigated evil bearing not-so-silent guns—yet none save the usual shrill chorus of evangelicals thinks to offer comment. One need only sample the vehement scorn visited upon those on Youtube and discussion boards who dare suggest what Eagles front-man Jesse Hughes stated unequivocally on prior occasions. *Eyes wide shut*.

In a way (and as regrettable as it may be to Hughes [*now*](#)) this unabashed literalness is the most comprehensible part of what otherwise is an epic, *foretold* clash of Principalities on par with 911 (an event pregnant with its own foreshadowings). Were we to re-literalize the Devil (in effect *reconstruct* superstition) the 'rationale' (albeit couched in supernaturalness) would become immediately self-evident. The Devil was summoned. The Devil arrived. Yet there are powerful societal forces that resist this rendition. Why?

Fellow Jungian intronaut and visual artist Tanja Stark's insights pervade this essay, particularly her indispensable synchronistic linking of the Eagles of Death Metal band with **Blackstar**. Her recent blog essay [*Eagles in my Daydreams, Diamonds in my Eyes*](#) is very much a companion piece to this that I can't recommend enough. The title of course is taken from a line from **Blackstar** and directly implicates the song in some pre-cognitive business, entangling the Eagles of Death Metal and the Deftones in a tightly-wound script. *Beware deaf fools, the tones you cannot hear*. I urge you to read Stark's compelling breadcrumb trail to fully absorb her thesis.

Stark and I have chatted around this territory since the 2012 inaugural of my Jungian-Bowie blog, [*Red Book Red Sail*](#) (which consists mostly of 2009 writings; even earlier, formative ramblings, circa 1999-2000, are cited in Peter R-Koenig's [*The Laughing Gnostic—David Bowie and the Occult*](#) and elsewhere; [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#) are some recent ones).

aim for the Apple, Bill



LIVRE A LUCIFER



A brief comment is warranted here on Jungian synchronicity or, better, acausality. Precognition is not as counterintuitive as one might at first think. Remarked Einstein: *"People like us, who believe in physics, know that the distinction between past,*

present, and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion." Space-time possesses physical properties. There are vantage-points in the universe where the totality of human history is observable. God exists outside time (what Spinoza called *sub species aeternitatis*), and often shares through prophecy what linear time prevents us from seeing. The 1976 'Station to Station' locomotive with the warning horn is the last thing Brother Terry hears as he lays his head on the tracks in 1985. How could it be otherwise? Traumatic events reverberate—overflow in all directions—beyond the chaste tracks of time's stations. Everything's already happened. This makes our lives seem no less eventful.

Others express skeptical amazement at how fine-tuned these entanglements can often be. There are precedents supporting this tight-woundness. For anyone who has spoken with bona fide Torah scholars (spare us the the Youtube jockeys please), every moment of history—your life, my life—is embedded in the Torah. The whole of human existence is a unitary exhalation of God. For the cleverest angel, the backwardation of human language in such a manner as to create twofold meaning could very well amount to a walk in the park. This is a speculation, not an affirmation of the backmasking claims.

How fascinating though that the human herald always feels obliged to divest authorship. When automatism vanguard *William Burroughs* describes *Naked Lunch* as the "horribly wrong" product of a "hostile entity", we can well imagine a competing, antithetical force (some cosmic **Blackstar** scribe) insisting that its own counter-text receive equal airing. Similarly, when John Razimus claims to find *unsavory messages* (including the one heading this section) within **Blackstar** when it's played backwards (that they are alleged to be in French would please Baudelaire immensely!), we want to laugh outright except, in all seriousness, we can't.

But back to beating the devil...

As attested to by the post-Enlightenment blindness (Brian Reis calls it '*satanic indifference*') that today's culture swims around in, Baudelaire's Devil has indeed succeeded in *destroying superstition* precisely as he had hoped in his 1844 recounting to the star-struck man of the cloth. He is everywhere. No one can see him. His symbols have been expropriated as a carnival act. And yet, despite being the object of derisive parody and dead superstition, the Devil becomes, oddly enough, more potent, certainly more proximate, to the unobserved moments in our lives. ("I—of whom one says so much evil—am often enough *bon diable*, to make use of one of your vulgar locutions."—*The Generous Gambler*) The kids stab the air with horned fists. It's a great night out. Yet the soul never sleeps. Our best attempts at mindless leisure are always attended by a restless menagerie of competing Principalities:

“The soul is so invisible a thing, often useless and sometimes so troublesome, that I did not experience, as to this loss, more than that kind of emotion I might have, had I lost my visiting card in the street.”—The Generous Gambler

Culture warriors can wield allegorical and metaphorical alibis all they like. The Eagles of Death Metal's Hughes, a professed (though can we say deeply conflicted) Christian begs to differ. Here he is clarifying any confusion, pre-Bataclan of course:

“I’m sorry, but I’m going to take full fucking credit right now for fucking the destruction of everything good, OK? Because it’s true,” he says. “Everything that the Bible thumpers said about Elvis is fucking true. It destroyed everything: Intimacy, the ability for people to be married — society at large is gone.”—from [‘The Devil and Jesse Hughes’*](#), Grantland, October 2015*

Hughes never fails to give everything up. I suggested much the same here in 2009:

*“There is a tendency to write it all off to the lurid imaginations of bored teenagers i.e. KISS is no more than a 3D Marvel comic book. So leave the kids alone as, mostly, they’ll be alright... Atala, situated in the hips, is the lower chakra of fear and lust, source of Elvis’ pelvic gyrations...However Satan’s masterstroke, in the heavy metal genre, is his reliance upon disarming honesty... There is no subtlety or subterfuge in Megadeth announcing, “I am the devil’s advocate, a salesman if you will...Come join me in my infernal depths...”—from [*Headlong Plunges Down Mineless Shafts*](#), Red Book Red Sail blog*



Video



My guess? Hughes is a lapsed bi-polar Southern Pentecostal waist-high in porn stars and good drugs with the hope of circling back to Calvary someday (a surprisingly common aspiration). He's a woefully transparent heraldic device, a practicing Satanic Christian if such a denomination exists who insists in more than one interview that a hotter place in Hell is his certain lot. Whereas Bowie, with his decades in the craft, is in all likelihood a full-on conscious agent, a Faust of the first-order. He knows exactly what he's doing and who he works for. Faust was a brilliant man who inspired envy and awe. Yet look how things turned out for him. The mortal coil is a deception-riddled realm where the intellect and the soul need never break bread together. Our culture has jettisoned moral consideration. Talent and ability are the sole heralds under which it now sails. Was morality just one more superstition?

"the hallways became a labyrinth"
--Jesse Hughes describing Bataclan event

Red Book Red Sail blog collage (Aug 2012) gun - concert - minotaur



- labyrinth



Guns. Guns. Guns. They came to me in spades during my Red Book Red Sail project and for reasons, at the time, unknown as attested to by the blog banner assembled in late 2012 (below). Then this blog entry in May 2103 after TND's release, [On the Horns of a Hypostatic Dilemma: Guitar, Axe, Gun](#). What is recourse to a gun but the impetuous dispatching of an icon? Consciousness cannot be grazed by bullets. It simply reemerges elsewhere behind another form. There are not enough guns in the universe to halt the perpetual reemergence of all that must come forth.



The supernatural is the sandbox of the Supermen in our midst. Yet if we've learned anything watching the Straussian nation-destroyers of late—pointing Takfirist against Shia against Wahhabist—all that lies beyond good and evil is insufferable hubris followed by further boatloads of evil (The Bible knew this: 'evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.' 2 Timothy, 3:13). What we're living through are the effects of sustained deception. Our Noble Liars have lost the place. The Internet makes quick work of their duplicity. False narratives crumble, under cyber-scrutiny, within hours if not minutes. The more evil normalizes within our culture, the more culture becomes parched for normalcy. Lacking a proper foothold, natural processes find themselves increasingly eclipsed. The Lord of Deception is living up to his name and well he should. These are his crowning hours.

Most revealingly, Bowie shows no signs of dismantling his Tower to the Sky. After a ten-year hiatus, his construction process renewed in earnest with 2013's *The Next Day*. He's not retiring. He's deifying. Doubling down. As Peter-R Koenig *posited years ago*, "What next, godhead?" Indeed. What's left?

Where *The Next Day* *wanted* to go, had it not settled back into the comfortable shoes of collaborators-past, was 'If You Can Hear Me' and the oblique confession of 'Heat'. **Blackstar** follows through, erasing all ambiguity. We're past agnostic torn-between-ness. All seers must choose. Bowie's on the Dark Team. His *Father runs the Black Iron Prison* on the hill behind the village.

As we've noted, the best seers (the cleverest ones *out there*) may be consciously manipulated liars or oblivious heraldic devices. Popular culture—cleverly portrayed in the most banal terms as blow-off time sandwiched between work and sleep—is where today's happnin' preachers hang out. Larkin's *churches* are crumbling relics. Leisure (or as

Lucifer describes it to Baudelaire the ‘bizarre affection of ennui’) *is* the devil’s plaything, certainly the silly space where he does his most furtive and productive work. Most people are on look-out for swiveling Linda Blair heads and cinematic spews of guacamole-vomit. Now *that’s* evil (‘cause Wes Craven told them so). However, Hannah Arendt assured us the most effective forms of evil are officious, silent and banal. C.S. Lewis: “*Indeed the safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts.*” What would these chaste folks have made of a Slayer concert?

"it's the uncanny feeling



that the band are creating something that's not entirely down to their own consciousness..." —Alex Needham on Station to Station



Laying aside for a moment all that cannot be laid aside, **Blackstar** is Bowie’s most imposing piece of work, certainly in terms of spiritual portent, since he flashed no color at an earlier station circa 1976. *Here I am again* says the *Great I am*, as tall in

my room as ever. The title misdirects somewhat as what we see depicted is not so much a star as a sun occluded by an ‘affronting’ moon (though perhaps not our own). The solar eclipse *heralds* an imposed narrative, a false prophet, crept in from the side and usurping the Source of All Light. Those who expropriate the tools of reality production succeed in imposing their imaginative constructs on others. This is a usurpation that informs the false idolatries of fascism and fa-fashion.

As though fashioned for the express purpose of hiding the sun, our moon is sized and distanced for optimal occlusion—or *occultation* (when one object passes between an observer and another object, completely hiding the latter.) For all our burgeoning knowledge about the backend of the universe, no one really knows what the moon is or from whence it came. Jewish mystics insist it (and the sun) exist solely to convey signs from God—a notion not unsympathetic to Hoffman’s consciousness-driven universe. Alternate theories abound.

In *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, Carl Jung notes the alchemical tradition’s view of Saturn as the ‘star of the sun’ or ‘black star’. In a Great Conjunction event (occurring every twenty years), Saturn crosses Jupiter. Maleficence occults beneficence. In *Under the Sign of Saturn*, Susan Sontag describes the saturnine personality as displaying (my bold-face), “dissimulation, secretiveness...**masked** by...the most scrupulous manipulation.” Saturn (Satan) was considered by medieval astrologers to be the abode of the Devil. But that’s a whole other rabbit-hole and rabbit-hole-jumping (the tireless quest for cultural referents) encourages the ‘ennui’ of delay, keeping us from that most crucial rendezvouses—with God.

Speaking to the ‘iconicity of the text’ and noting how, “idolatry is connected symbolically to the demonic other side”, Judaic Studies scholar Elliot Wolfson in his book *Poetic Thinking* translates a passage from the Tiqqunei Zohar thusly (my bold-face):

*“The place of the Shekhinah is in the west, which is the **back** (ahor), but this is also the region of the other gods (Elohim aherin), the demonic potencies led by Samael. The latter is identified as Saturn, a planet that is frequently depicted in malevolent terms, the astrological maleficus. The letters of the Hebrew name for this planet, shabbetai, can be translated into the expression ayyeh Shabbat, “where is Sabbath?” This play on words denotes that the demonic force of Saturn is the antithesis of the holy force of Sabbath.”*

Life is not a random daisy-chain of *this* bumping into *that*. Keeping in mind the Torah example, human history is an eschatology planned down to the hairs on our heads. We don’t careen into the present moment. We reach it because we had to and because we elected to. Time’s arrow (a stubborn illusion) is far less important than the force animating

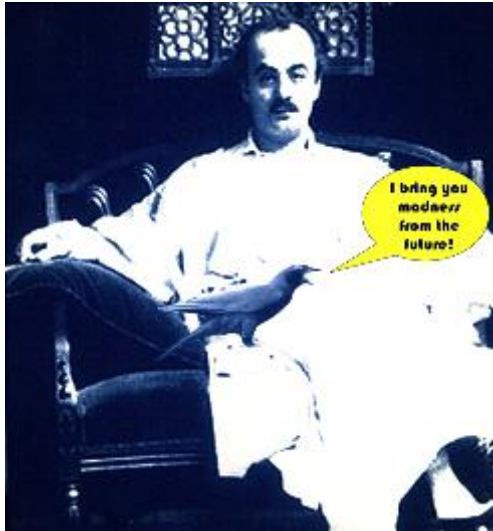
each iconic gesture. Language is a heraldic device for two competing first-order Principalities, Good and Evil. Between these poles, the curious mystery of human free will contends.

First they *steal your moon in order to occult your sun*. After that, trust is easily ushered through the strangest doors. Bowie could probably teach us a lot about the alt-God deification process. Though he may not know *why* (and I suspect he does), he seems to know *how*. All that can be said is that, one day *a leper messiah emerged from the beer-light to guide us*. No one asked to see a passport, an astonishing lapse when you consider all that was at stake. And yet, the most important things are wagered away daily on the palest excuses. It only looks like a game. The gambler wagers sin in the guise of harmless pastime. The highest stakes shadow every played hand.

My conviction has only grown that, with Bowie, we're being bathed in some dead serious moonlight. Our favorite herald, by now completely shorn of pop music industry obligations, seems to be asserting his significance with unabashed vigor. Nowadays, pictures of The Man are released with such parsimonious self-veneration, the Vatican gift shop could take a lesson in mythos-building. If video killed the radio star, Twitter celebritized the bathroom break. Bucking the trend, Bowie holds himself in reserve like precious urine. Hyper-veneration ensues. Video director Johan Renck gets teary-eyed upon receiving The Call to Collaborate. Momus has a tribute cover out before the ink dries on the master's voice. In the theophany business, less is always more. Bowie quite possibly learned this from the same source that instructed him never to smile on album covers.

There's no point rehashing my *The Man Who Sold the World* thesis here (as it's tirelessly hashed out on the *blog*), but it describes a variant of the preternatural stare shared between the Gambler and the minister. Such are the encounters that define a fate and activate a herald.

Hermaphroditic estrangement: "I harbor Jesus in one half of my



heart and Muhammad in the other." —Khalil Gibran



Bowie has toyed with the clash of civilizations since 'Loving the Alien'. And indeed, the Islamic shadow-form has been building for some time, (ever since Zbigniew Brzezinski activated the jihad archetype in 1979 as a means to overextending the Soviet Empire with 'their own Vietnam'). ISIS is everybody's shadow, a Rorschach with a universalized imprimatur. Who didn't play a hand in its emergence, either directly or indirectly? Like Goethe's sorcerer's apprentice, our weaponized nihilism has proven itself an autonomous and unwieldy broomstick. ISIS has gone viral and now looms as a global epidemic.

Writing for The Western Muslim in 2008, I attempted to translate for a western mindset the rigid core lurking at the heart of neo-liberalism that lay begging for its own shadowy recoil. Less cryptic observers often express this as the 'liberal paradox':

"Many liberals (in the classical sense) are contemptuous of all orthodoxies, even as they fail to see their own. In this absolute adherence to relativity, they share a feature common to all fundamentalists—intolerance— cloaked albeit, and with devilish paradox, in the mantra of tolerance. Certainly they are intolerant of anyone seeking to impede their own forays into another's sacred terrain. The liberal permissions himself and brooks no sanctions on his inquiries. This has

been called (most notably by Wendy Steiner in her book 'The Scandal of Pleasure') the liberal paradox."

Oddly enough, In [*Viral Synchronicity: Avatar and Seal \(Oct 2014\)*](#), I cite Bowie's '[*Loving the Alien*](#)', something I practically never do in non-Bowie writing. But the mirrors were everywhere as were the mirror-blind. Clearly, we were being asked to look at ourselves, at our explicit culpability in the emergence of the twin nihilistic viruses, Ebola (escapee from a CIA lab?) and ISIS. Now it's clear ISIS is as much a creature of western intelligence agencies as it is a spontaneous and organic off-shoot of Saudi Wahhabism. Syrian jihadism is also a flashpoint for the simultaneous reigniting of Neo-Ottoman, Pan-Arab, Greater Israel and Persian aspirations. Poe's 'Red Death' helped to differentiate the two strains of deadly virus, the biologic and the ideological: "Ebola is the Avatar. Isis is the Seal." Both are as contagious, and unstoppable, as evil itself. German journalist Jürgen Todenhöfe [*speaks*](#) of meeting ostensibly 'assimilated' first-generation European kids of Islamic heritage from top-flite western schools who walked away from bright 'modern' futures to take up medieval barbarism in Syria and Iraq. Rule Britannia is being roundly rejected. The shadow is asserting.

But we drift a bit from Bowie whose own excursions tend to wander. Having a Muslim spouse (by birth at least) and a biracial daughter, he is bound to reflect these global tremors in his art. And he does. Those who listen aloud pick it up. In August 2014, Stark posted [*Christians and the Unbelievers Hanging by the Cross and Nail*](#) with the 'Loving the Alien' video in sad recognition of ISIS' practice of crucifixion of the Zoroastrian Yazidi sect. Here's Stark again from "[*Confronting Bowie's Mysterious Corpses*](#)" in the Bloomsbury book *Strange Fascinations*:

"Bowie's linking of violence, spiritual belief and death, and the lack of contemporary, culturally resonant frameworks to meaningfully process these powerful energies explored on Outside is intriguing, particularly when considering why people are attracted to violent expressions of belief, such as "Islamic State".

This recalls for me my 2011 cover recording of 'The Width of a Circle', a song Tanja Stark identifies as being in righteous brotherhood with the Eagles' 'Who Will Kiss the Devil'. Curiously, the cover begins with an Islamicized version of [*Warszawa*](#)'s phoneticized chants, almost like a Muslim Call to Prayer. The [*blackbird*](#) evinces the Nietzsche of [*Ecce Homo*](#). Even more, the bird harbingers the doomed equanimity between Christianity and Islam, a sensibility that Kahlil Gibran internalized all of his life. The video itself is immersed in black stars and pentagrams. I make no claims and seek to convince no one, but merely offer these strange occurrences for the reader's review.



Who will kiss the devil's swollen

tongue (video)?

Though not directly referenced in **Blackstar**, ISIS is the ill wind blowing ominously off-stage across the *Catcher's* rye field. There are three distinct Principalities at work here—faltering Christianity, Lucifer's Modernity (*the heathen lie*) and Radicalized Islam—two explicit, one implied ('the Christians, the unbelievers' and the merciless believers from the tribe of Ishmael). Rock 'n roll is one wheel of the devil's Trojan Horse. Troy has been overwhelmed, as evidenced by the video's Elvis pelvic gyrations on Mt. Calvary.

This is an internal or internecine Western struggle. Rock launches a feminized death cult (The feminine is not being deployed here in a positive manner, in my opinion, but more the fem-glam boys with make-up and long hair. This would make it more misogynistic, certainly parodistic, than matriarchal.) Thus the West has lost its moorings (to Luciferean subversion), becoming easy prey to outside foes (such as radically monotheistic Islam, or ISIS).

False idols form egregores, symbiotic arrangements of shared psychic energy, with their followers. Each must see the other as their power is interdependent: *Worship me and I will be your slave*. Whereas God's power is *apriori* of His creation. The Bowie death cult raises an egregore in their midst. That's the shaggy-bodied Id-like creature. But there's a larger, exogenous enemy on the horizon.

The barbarians at the gates can only prevail against a weakened foe. The West's greatest enemy is not ISIS (which is not explicitly referenced in the video and has been denied by the artist as being 'the message' of the video, to the extent an official message means anything at all), but the leper messiahs (rock gods) who rot the tradition from within. Are the boys in the band up to the task of defending the city? Bowie pondered this very confrontation decades earlier:

“How many are going to pick up a gun and how many of you are gonna cling to your guitars?”—1976, Rolling Stone interview with Cameron Crowe

ISIS at Bataclan becomes an emissary or instrumentality of the Devil. Not the 'house devil' the Templars know from their Christian Bibles, but an alien form, Islam's Iblīs. Satan roams the whole of the earth and, as we've seen, employs a contextual and opportunistic plasticity to match the human moment or context he seeks to corrupt. The devil we know is an odd, familiar comfort, encircling us with culture. This Satan is of altogether exogenous features.

Damien Hirst



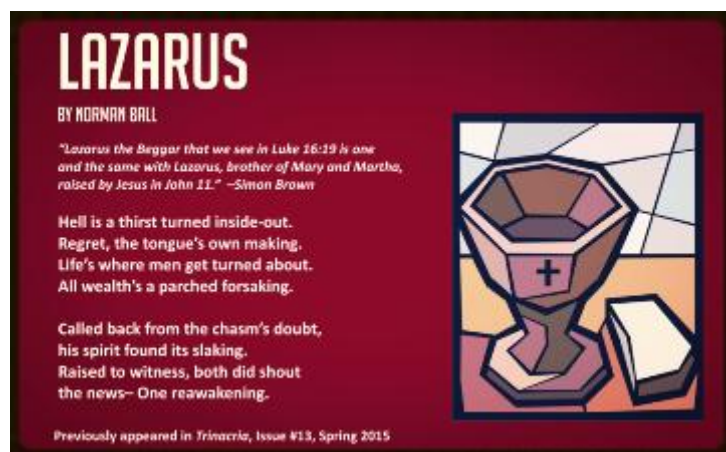
Interplanetary Cargo Death Cult

At the moment of execution, Eagles of Death Metal guitarist Dave Catching raises his guitar in a seemingly futile gesture to stop the hail of bullets; though no less futile, some might say, than holding up the cross to banish Satan. This is the same gesture employed by Bowie to ward off the wanton killing spree of TND's Valentine. Live by the guitar. Die by the Cross. Christianity is reborn on the blood-drenched floor as people use their bodies, Christ-like, to protect and 'save' loved ones. I've had my share of bullets. *Now I'll help you with the pain.* (This is not an attempt to impose a Christian template on the dead; only that it resonates with me in this context.)

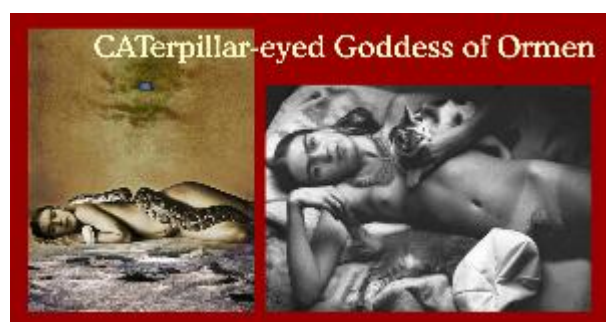
Nobody breaks a song down in the middle like Bowie. The interrupting segue is the Leper Messiah's attempt at an explanation as to how he saw the **Blackstar** book lying there on a bench outside the Tavistock Institute on Piccadilly circa '70 and, well, bravely picked it up and ran with it. Even more confoundingly, we ran after him. There are no true victims here. Bowie's apologizing for kicking the legs out from under our teetering bullshit faith.

On The Next Day, he'd levelled heaps of blame on the Catholic Church (and in an unacceptably sacrilegious manner, in my opinion) for making it all too easy and for sealing rock's effortless death cult ascent. It all seems rather quaint, a veritable in-house squabble, in light of today's scary monsters set loose in Paris. Now *there's* the devil on an existential search-and-destroy mission. (Though I always hasten to add my profound sympathies to the fallen.)

Interesting how most think of the risen



Lazarus before they do the thirsty one, especially when both may be the same.



So, how does the Bowie corpus fit into all of this? Long since graduated from heraldic device to conscious agent, Bowie strikes me as the elder statesman of a culture whose first-order inspirational source has become increasingly demonic. This unremitting yet aimless advance of *ennui* (fashion in, fashion out) amounts to a stylized death march from one dry well to the next. Therein lies the unquenchable thirst.

Ultimately, souls must stake a claim and drill *down* beneath the iconography. There is a reservoir for those who seek it. Thirst is not a natural condition. The fate of Tantalus is meant to allegorize *punishment*, not normalized human existence. (*Much as my analysis runs counter to that of my friend Steele Savage I'm not deaf to the Gnostic rendition: Sophia smiling with a sense of release on the day the body is shed to earthly execution. However my inner Calvinist bristles at those who refuse God's quenching. The Edenic God is **not** a demiurge, but the Almighty Himself. The serpent is Satan, not a well-meaning Sophia. Caveat emptor, reader.*)

Decades of idolatry have solidified an unhealthy master-pupil dynamic. One feels Harold Bloom's anxiety of influence pulsing beneath the surface as people either try to please or sink their favorite art-daddy. It can get pretty servile pretty fast as world-class allusion-hunters sift clues and surface arcane cultural referents. What did he mean by *this*, by *that*? The quest is the thing as it detains the earnest sleuth in the endless folds of deception, delaying his departure for all that really matters. Satan's genius is as surpassing as his rabbit holes are deep. Many a decoder ring will be burned out mapping the labyrinthine sub-terrain of God's cleverest angel. And then what? Nothing ever yields anything. Seductive winks yield blind alleys.

On a more personal note, Bowie strikes me as a man of almost palpable loneliness. (Nietzsche would call it solitude.) With his Zarathustran project so consummately realized and in such an individuated manner, one shudders at the endurance that might be required to live it. What axe on earth could shatter the remove of such an unrelatable existence? This is the sort of life project easily regretted in late life. Mountaineers don't succumb from natural causes. They topple from ever more arduous ascents. I may be conflating David Bowie with David Jones. For the latter's sake I hope so.

When the hour is late, diversion (culture) become deadly. Increasingly we will find events weighted with essential meaning, pregnant with portent and yet tantalizingly indecipherable, always just beyond our ken. This keeps us at our decoder rings while our souls pace the floor tapping at our watches. We should be on by now. Satan's surpassing genius is now more directly engaged against the ever-more surpassing genius of God. The former is after all fighting for his kingdom on earth. At this late juncture, man finds himself increasingly backwatered as an intellectual agent. We are in over our heads, our puny aptitudes vastly exceeded in this titanic struggle. Prayer, the creaturely recourse to mystery and awe, becomes our most articulate response.

The Devil Entrusts Baudelaire with the Premonition of a Modern Parisian Rock Concert



"...soon I descended behind him into a subterranean dwelling, astonishing to me as a vision, where shone a luxury of which none of the actual houses in Paris could give me an approximate example. It seemed to me singular that I had passed so often that prodigious retreat without having discovered the entrance. There reigned an exquisite, an almost stifling atmosphere, which made one forget almost instantaneously all the fastidious horrors of life: there I breathed a somber sensuality, like that of opium smokers when, set on the shore of an enchanted island over which shone an eternal afternoon, they felt born in them, to the soothing sounds of melodious cascades, the desire of never again seeing their households, their women, their children, and of never again being tossed on the decks of ships by storms.

There were there strange faces of men and women, gifted with so fatal a beauty that I seemed to have seen them years ago and in countries which I failed to remember and which inspired in me that curious sympathy and that equally curious sense of fear that I usually discover in unknown aspects. If I wanted to define in some fashion or other the singular expression of their eyes, I would say that never had I seen such magic radiance more energetically expressing the horror of ennui and of desire - of the immortal desire of feeling themselves alive."

-from 'The Generous Gambler', by Charles Baudelaire (1864)

mistakes for the faces of the past are the tragic fatal faces of modernity, RIP.

In the end we have this lonely rich man Lazarus, ensconced somewhere in Manhattan's sterile landscape, swimming in rivers of wealth and genuflection, ripping and rewrapping his eternal thirst in the bone-dry immersions of imagery. Every cultural plaudit is due this rapt, still-toiling black-star disciple who has the gestures of dispensation down pat. The danger lies in confusing oasis for desert, in one parched, doomsday mirage after another. We can no longer see who or what stands before us because he has imposed his room on our existence from the start. Our eyes are sewn too wide shut.

Who would have imagined that, in the final days, dust would flow like water, and so many in their confusion would mistake the dryness in their cups for spiritual refreshment? Raise, raise, raise your glass. Raise your glass. Why?

Who will pick up a

Guitar God Gun



An Eclipsing Vision

gun?



who can be reached at gspresnow@gmail.com (or click CG's hat.)

Write a comment

Comments

- **Paul A. Toth**(*Wednesday, December 09 15 12:18 am EST*)

Excellent and frightening!

- **Anne Merino**(*Wednesday, December 16 15 08:37 pm EST*)

A monumental piece that will resonant with me for ages as I ponder all the images and their connections.

Brilliant!

- **Jorin**(*Thursday, December 17 15 05:35 pm EST*)

Wow! So revealing. I could not believe my eyes while reading this ;) Indeed Excellent!! If only you get more people to read this! It was quite a challenge for me (dutch) i had to look up a lot of words but learned so much from your writings. Thank you! i have a lot more reading to do now :) you opened my closed eyes some more. Thanks for the effort you put into this!!

- **cindie m**(*Friday, December 18 15 10:10 pm EST*)

This is not run-of-the-mill hellfire & damnation...I won't sleep aftr this. thx mister :0 is that u next to CG?

- **Fred Barnard**(*Saturday, December 19 15 08:03 pm EST*)

The tangential ramblings of a reflective and brilliant mind. However, if you wish to better understand Blackstar you might want to refer to the JOHAN RENCK interview: where he says "Most things like this are for the eyes of the beholder, you know? You make of it whatever you want. What I can say, on one side of things there is no deliberate, underlying, firm quest to have any references to past times." As for me, I think it's merely the equally brilliant Bowie having a good time.

- **Jacob**(*Saturday, January 02 16 05:37 am EST*)

A few answers, many more questions. Onward, I search. Though I know not what for.

- **Norman Ball**(*Tuesday, January 12 16 09:38 pm EST*)

Rest in Peace, David Jones. May you discover the best of whatever lies behind the door.

My speculations mean nothing in the end.

- ***Tanja Stark*** (Wednesday, January 13 16 04:46 am EST)

[A-mazing] Grace to the whole damned lot of us.

Seriously.

Pax, Tanja

- **Fill** (Thursday, January 14 16 05:35 am EST)

Is it too much to ask for a more simplified summary? I read the whole thing but I'm not sure I understand how or why he's a herald of this greater evil.

I agree with the points on culture, Elvis etc. having corrupted us. But it's a huge leap to then take lyrics at face value like Megadeth's. If Mustaine or the Sabbath guys are actually Christian are they being used against their will?

Exactly how Bowie is some kind of musical Nazi working for the supermen or worse, I'm not clear on.

[tanja stark](#)

MENU

[SKIP TO CONTENT](#)

- [HOME](#)
- [ABOUT](#)
-
- [ART + DESIGN](#)
-
-
-
-
-
- [WRITING + RESEARCH](#)
-
- \$
- \$
- \$
- \$

“Eagles in my Daydreams, Diamonds in my Eyes”: Bowie, Blackstar & the Bataclan

“I want *Eagles in my Daydreams, Diamonds in my Eyes*” Bowie swoons on his enigmatic new work *Blackstar*. His soulful longing follows a hubristic rant as a trickster God enticing the faithfully enslaved to sacrifice themselves for him. He’ll take *your passport and shoes*, your valium and your worship. You might make a martyr, but you’re *a flash in the pan*, he’s *the Great I AM*, and he’s laughing as all the *Pretty Things are going to Hell*.

According to rumours by musicians who worked with Bowie (but denied by 'official sources') the song references Isis. Who knows? I have previously suggested Bowie's work on both *Outside* and *Loving the Alien* explores this territory in "Confronting Bowie's Mysterious Corpses" in the Bloomsbury book Strange Fascinations.



THE EAGLES OF DEATH METAL AUSTRALIAN TOUR POSTER USES ALADDIN SANE'S LIGHTNING FLASH, AND A HAMMER WITH THE ARGENT SONG COVERED BY KISS AND..PETRA.

"Bowie's linking of violence, spiritual belief and death, and the lack of contemporary, culturally resonant frameworks to meaningfully process these powerful energies explored on *Outside* is intriguing, particularly when considering why people are attracted to violent expressions of belief, such as "Islamic State". (Bowie had previously explored the ancient clash of religious ideology in his 1985 song "Loving the Alien", singing of terror and torture from the crusades through to modern times: "Watching them come and go, the Templars and the Saracens... Torture comes and torture goes ...terror in the best laid plans... Christians and the unbelievers, hanging by the cross and nail"). Grace's corpse on *Outside* seemed the end result from the convergence, subversion and dysfunctional channeling of these primal drives. Bowie sang in several guises across the 1995 album, from Detective Nathan Adler, who had undertones of a cryptic "Grand Inquisitor" figure (Dostoyevsky, 1880), [xiii] to murder suspect, Leon Blank, a reversal of Noel, herald of emptiness, a Holy Fool cutting esoteric zeroes into the fabric of time and perceiving hidden mysteries through "These Architects Eyes", a name for God in the mystery traditions. [xiv] Deliberately ambiguous, the project possibly intimated the Detective himself could be the Minotaur serial killer who murdered Baby Grace, a theological implication perhaps cryptically reflected in "The Next Day" single and film clip with its contempt for exploitative religious leaders who "work with Satan while they dress like saints" and corrupt institutions of power that

exploit and destroy the Grace they should protect and illuminate.” Confronting Bowie’s Mysterious Corpses, Stark July 2015

Blackstar was released the week following the Bataclan Slaughter at the *Eagles of Death Metal* concert. The killing began during their song *Kiss the Devil*. It was recorded long before. They had already played *Don’t Speak, I came to make a Bang*.

“Don’t move, don’t speak, even whisper/There’s something happenin’ but don’t be scared/I’m too smooth, you never see me coming ... I’m your fabulous weapon/ I’ll hit your target... but don’t be scared/I’m in too tight, gonna feel it tonight, yeah/Baby girl, gonna take your whole world/I came to make a bang, yeah” Eagles of Death Metal (setlist here)

According to a witness, music journalist Pierre Janaszak those lyrics seem to have played themselves out at the Bataclan:

“[The terrorists said] in French, of course, to the free hostages – one woman, her boyfriend and another guy – “Why are you crying? Why are you crying?” And the guy said: “Because I’m scared” He said – “You don’t have to be scared, you will be dead in few minutes, so don’t worry”... This girl just stopped crying, instantly...”

At the time of the slaying the Blackstar symbol, seen on Bowie’s ‘holy’ book was everywhere. Most curiously, it showed up on the hand of the Josh Homme, playing drums years earlier in the film clip for *Speaking in Tongues*. That song came to lead singer Jesse Hughes in a dream, he claimed. Fully formed.

“The first songs I ever wrote, like “Speaking in Tongues” and “Flames Go Higher,” they came in my dreams. I shit you not. I woke up with the whole song lyric and everything in my head. That was really easy.” Jesse Hughes

This idea of the synchronistic manifestation of symbolism in the dreams and visions of seers and artists is something I’ve explored in depth across the past 4 years. Jung’s manifestations of the collective unconscious, if you will. And what I’ve learned is not to dismiss it offhand. Much of this territory is archetypal and open to interpretation, to be sure, but that’s why it’s in the subjective realms of poetry, art and spirituality.

“I suspect that dreams are an integral part of existence, with far more use for us than we’ve made of them, really. I’m quite Jungian about that. The dream state is a strong, active, potent force in our lives...the fine line between the dream state and reality is at times, for me, quite grey. Combining the two, the place where the two worlds come together, has been important in some of the things I’ve written, yes” David Bowie in Crashing Out with Sylvian Stark 2015
The Deftones were in the Bataclan audience as well, scheduled to play songs from their album *Diamond Eyes* the following night. That album is full of eerily prescient songs, including *This Place is Death* that once again, references the liminal world of dreams.

I want Eagles in my Daydreams, Diamonds in my Eyes?



THE COVER OF THE DEFTONE’S ALBUM DIAMOND EYES RECALLS BOWIE’S CHARACTER JARETH’S ALTERNATE FORM IN LABYRINTH. (HERE).

This Place Is Death (from *Diamond Eyes*)

You arrive in my dream Beside me every night... You and me, we explode through the scene, We try to drain the night empty....No one goes off in every way...Like you do... We spray the scene in red...No one else has a hold over me... Like you do... This place is death, I know you feel the same.

The Prince (Diamond Eyes)

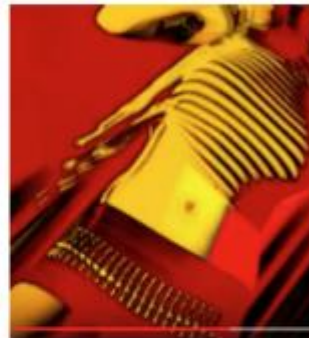
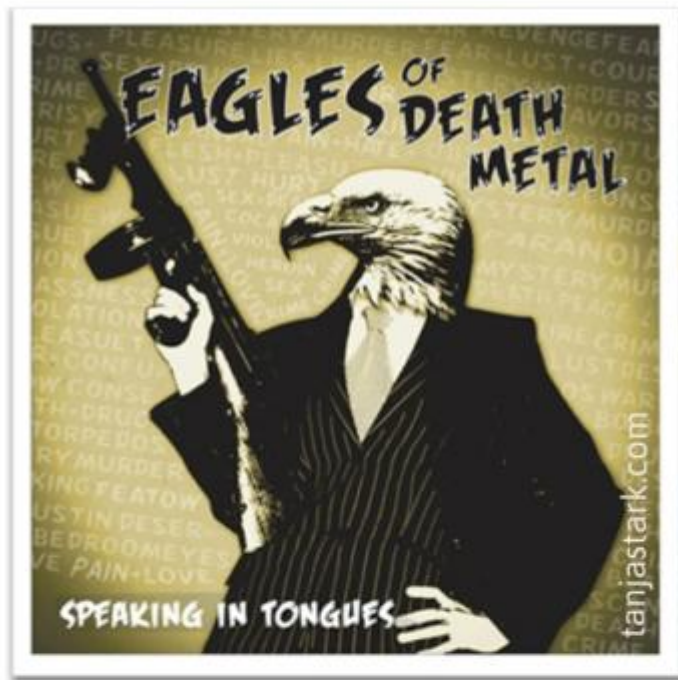
The mindset/Of a killer... With your gaze/You paint the room/Blood red/ With tears/Pouring from the stage.....Now

open your empty hands/Cause here comes the fun here comes the end...Then clear out the room/Blow kisses, wave them goodbye... Goodnight.

Rocket Skates (Diamond Eyes)

You're red soaking wet... I'm right next to you... You're red soaking wet...Let's writhe, Let me see you trip. One move that will keep you wet/Let's fall in a long sadistic trance...Put the keys in our hands...GUNS! RAZORS! KNIVES!
Strangely prescient.

I have no idea why The Eagles of Death Metal seemed to be linked with Bowie and Blackstar, but the moment the Paris massacre happened, there seemed to be weird synergies about.



THE FILM CLIP TO SPEAKING IN TONGUES, WHICH CAME TO JESSIE HUGHES IN A DREAM HAS A BUNCH OF EERIE IMAGERY. THE EODM COVER FEATURES AN EAGLE TOTING A MACHINE GUN, JOSH HOMME FLASHING A BOWIE BLACKSTAR ON HIS HAND, A GIRL DANCING WITH A MAGAZINE OF BULLETS AS A BELT, JESSE HUGHES SPORTING ALADDIN SANE'S ICONIC LIGHTNING FLASH ON HIS SHIRT; A ROCK N ROLL CAPE WITH AN IMAGE OF TOMMY TIPOVER, SOMETIME BAND MEMBER FROM BELGIUM WHERE THE SEARCH FOR THE ISLAMIC STATE JIHADI'S IS CONCENTRATED, (AND HOME COUNTRY OF DIAMOND DOGS COVER ARTIST GUY PELLART) AND AN EAGLE ASTRIDE A BLACKSTAR. WHEN THE EODM TOURED AUSTRALIA IN 2014 – (WHERE I WAS BORN UPSIDE-DOWN DOWN UNDER), THE ARTIST RYS COOPER ACTUALLY DREW BOWIE'S LIGHTNING FLASH ON THE TOUR POSTER. CURIOUS SYNCHRONICITY.

I've come to the working hypothesis, that, as mysterious as they are, synchronous occurrence of archetypal and more specific imagery is a real phenomena that some people are particularly sensitive to perceiving.

Advocate, adversary or acolyte of angels or devils, those mortals with antennae perpetually tuned to the zeitgeist -the prophets, the madmen and the artists – swim in prescience and synchronicity. Perhaps what Jung called the *Collective Unconscious* could arguably be called the *Powers and Principalities* referred to in the New Testament, or *Energies* to New Aagers. I guess it depends on your perspective. There are enough reports throughout history on visionary experience, madness, temporal lobe epilepsy and mysticism to know something is going on. (See Javier Alvarez-Rodriguez's concept 'hyperia' in *Psychic Neuronal Hypersynchronies: A new Psychiatric Paradigm*, for example.) The challenge is perhaps less one of credibility, but of how to hold this extra sensory awareness in balance and not fall into hysteria, depression, psychosis or mania, or at least, stay there.

When David Bowie portrayed Pontius Pilate in the controversial film *The Last Temptation of Christ*, right wing Catholic extremists in Paris bombed the St Mitchel Theatre where the movie was playing. Allegations of blasphemy so stoked the angry flames in the hearts of the devout, some decided the best way to avenge Christ's honour was through murder. (And they literally used sulphuric acid as the trigger). Sadly it sounds all too familiar.

"Before the film opened, the Archbishop of Paris, Jean-Marie Cardinal Lustiger, condemned it without having seen it. He said, "One doesn't have the the right to shock the sensibilities of millions of people for whom Jesus is more important than their father or mother." After the fire, Cardinal Lustiger condemned those responsible for what the police suspect was arson. "You don't behave as Christians but as enemies of Christ," the prelate said. "From the Christian point of view, one doesn't defend Christ with arms. Christ himself forbade it." New York Times, Oct 1988

Based on Nikolas Kotzankiszis book, Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ* is theologically intense and confronting and throws up complex questions around personal agency, the character of god and the devil, good and evil, and our capacity for delusion and self deception. There are intriguing confluences of psychosis with visionary experience, destiny and desire. Classic Bowie territory. It's not an easy watch, but it's an important one.

Bowie's portrayal of Pilate in *The Last Temptation of Christ* is much like that of Dostoyevsky's *Grand Inquisitor* who, in turn, seems to reflect the character Bowie is portraying/channelling in *Blackstar*. When confronted with an imprisoned and silent Christ incarnated in Spain, the Inquisitor berated Christ for his follies of freedom.

People don't want freedom, he taunted, they want bread, tricks and someone to blindly tell them who to worship and what to do. **They desire to be Slaves**. Not joint heirs of the kingdom. You failed all three tests of the Devil in the wilderness, he accused. Who wouldn't want Power, Wealth and Magic?

"I believe this..." David Bowie 2002.

Give me peace of mind at last/Show me all you are...I would give you all my love/Nothing else is free/Open up your heart to me/And I would be your slave

Skulls and Crucifixes.



SAINT BENEDICTUS 1691 (IMAGE: PAUL KOUDOUNARIS) AND BLACKSTAR'S SAINT TOM 2015

In *The Last Temptation of Christ*, Bowie as Pilate sent Christ off to Golgotha, the Place of Skulls to be crucified. In Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamokov*, when the Inquisitor finished his admonishment, Christ silently walked over and kissed the Inquisitor on his cold lips. Seemingly rattled, instead of sending Christ to his death, he released him out into the dark alleys of the city. Significantly, *"The kiss glows in his heart, but the old man adheres to his idea"*. *Who will kiss the Devil?* the Reverend Jessie Hughes, nicknamed 'the Devil' was singing when ISIS stormed the Bataclan. *"I will kiss the devil on this tongue"* he gleefully replied, seemingly oblivious that Old Nick might take him literally.

Pleased to meet you. Hope you guessed my Name.

Bowie has always had a thing for that ol' gospel call and response. Remember *Width of a Circle* with Bowie's *"tongue swollen with devils love"*? *"Turn around and go back"*, warned the lyrics to little avail. *"Wanna stay underground"* Bowie's gospel choir sang in *Underground*, the soundtrack to *Labyrinth*.

"...the hallways became a labyrinth..." Jesse Hughes describes his desperate attempt to outrun the terrorists.

Daddy Daddy get me out of here.

Descents, Nekyia's, Night Sea Journeys what ever you want to call them, are all archetypal ways of describing the journey into the darkness of ones (and perhaps societies) soul. They are pivotal and important, but however mesmerising or despairing the process, shamanic or otherwise, you have to resist the temptation to remain in the subterranean netherworlds. You must find your way back to the light. If *"Something happened on the day he died, spirit rose a metre and then stepped aside"* then perhaps a psychopomp is in order. Eternal hovering, strung out in heavens high, is no good for anybody.



Figure 2.15. The stone of solar and lunar conjunction turned into the black sun of death. From Johannes Fabricius, *Alchemy: The Medieval Alchemists and Their Royal Art*, p. 203.

SOL NIGER. MAJOR TOM'S HEADLESS SKELETON STRUNG OUT IN HEAVENS HIGH, CONTRASTED WITH THE BLACK SUN (STAR) OF DEATH FROM JOHANNES FABRICUS' WRITINGS ON THE MEDIEVAL ALCHEMISTS AND THEIR ROYAL ART

Bowie is definitely a Seer – some intriguing mix of prophet, madman and visionary artist. Whether he is a liar, well, again, who can tell. Reviews of *Blackstar* the album have noted its similarity in tone to *Station to Station*. That album marked an apex of creativity, but personal abyss of addiction, spiritual confusion and mental hell that he barely survived. It was the time of *The Man who Fell to Earth*, (the 'prequel' to *Lazarus*) from Kether to Malkuth, of glowing visions and occult headfucks. The Victoria and Albert Museum's "*David Bowie Is...*" exhibition reveals an aborted line from *Station to Station* as "*You love like a bomb/You smell like a ghost*". Weird.



AN IMAGE OF MY BOWIE RUSSIAN DOLLS (MATRYOSHKAS) FROM THE V&A MUSEUM "*DAVID BOWIE IS...*" EXHIBITION.

Incidentally I've got an image in that exhibition. It's a shot of Bowie Matryoshka's at Trinity College, Dublin. Layers upon layers of Bowie personas that stack inside themselves. "*Something deep inside of me, a yearning deep inside..*"

In 1976, a manically inflated Bowie was interviewed for Rolling Stone by a young Cameron Crowe. Yet, in what may have seemed like nonsense 30 years ago looks pretty damn prescient in the face of ISIS now.

*"I think we are due for a revival of God awareness. Not a wishy-washy kind of fey, flower-child thing, but a **very medieval, firm-handed masculine God** awareness where we will go out and make the world right again. I'm feeling more and more that way."*

Bowie continues: *"...Rock & roll has been really bringing me down lately. It's in great danger of becoming an immobile, sterile fascist that constantly spews its propaganda on every arm of the media. It rules and dictates a level of thought and clarity of intelligence that you'll never raise above. ...**Rock & roll too — it will occupy and destroy you that way. It lets in lower elements and shadows that I don't think are necessary. Rock has always been the devil's music. You can't convince me that it isn't...***

*...I have to carry through with my conviction that the artist is also the medium....I believe that rock & roll is dangerous. It could well bring about a very evil feeling in the West. I do want to rule the world. There's always a pendulum swing, right? Well, we've had the high with rock. It's got to go the other way now. And that's where I see it heading, bringing about the dark era... **I feel that we're only heralding something even darker than ourselves...**"*

Jesse Hughes from the Eagles of Death Metal makes some striking similar comments in 2015:

*"I'm sorry, but I'm going to take full fucking credit right now for fucking the destruction of everything good, OK? Because it's true," he says. "Everything that the Bible thumpers said about Elvis is fucking true. It destroyed everything: Intimacy, the ability for people to be married — society at large is gone. [Pop culture] brought us the Internet, mass pornography, the death porn of Quentin Tarantino. **It's all fucking darkness and evil and has one goal, dude. And it's not anything good for us.** That's the fucking reality of it, dude..."*

Back in 1976, Bowie went on to say:

"I have this dream. I'd like to host a satellite television show and invite all the biggest bands onto one stage. Then I'd come out with a great big wheelbarrow of machine guns and ask them, 'Now how many of you are gonna do anything? How many are going to pick up a gun and how many of you are gonna cling to your guitars?'"

Bowie got damn close to seeing this dream in Paris.

Amidst the inflation, the delusions of grandeur, and the smatterings of paranoia, perhaps redolent of bi-polar or drug induced mania or psychosis I still ask is there something else going here? And my answer, after years of pondering the intersection between madness, genius, creativity and mysticism, is yes. And it seems the best psychiatrists agree. Some people, especially those at risk of going 'mad' are literally channeling the zeitgeist at levels their rational minds cannot process. Be clear I'm not drawing causative link here. This is a very important distinction. Much of this stuff functions at the level of instinct and unconsciousness, bubbling to the surface. Weather vanes do not cause the weather, do they?



"SEE YOU SOON. GIVE MY LOVE TO THE CAT..." BATACLAN TERRORIST'S LAST SMS.

Bowie claims that Mark Chapman, who assassinated John Lennon, had him next on the list. Bowie was acting on Broadway at the time, playing Elephant Man. Bowie says Chapman had tickets to the show beside John and Yoko, and the night following the murder he was confronted by three empty seats in the front row. Who knows? Whatever the case, Lennon and Bowie's collaboration *Fame* takes on an eerie tone knowing Chapman held his gun, Valentine style, in his scrawny hands and tiny heart, and waited for Lennon to return in his limo before shooting him in the back. *"Fame, what you want is in your limo, Fame what you get is no tomorrow".*

But beautifully, it's not always dark stuff than seems to push through the veil. Moments after Lennon was pronounced dead, Dr Lynne, who desperately cut open his chest to physically pump his heart with his hands recalls "All my Loving" came across the hospital speakers as he prepared to break the news to Yoko Ono.

"Close your eyes and I'll kiss you, Tomorrow I'll miss you
Remember I'll always be true, And then while I'm away
I'll write home every day, And I'll send all my loving to you..."

Try and listen to that and not cry.

To all those who were slaughtered by evil at the Bataclan, Rest in Peace. Know Everyone Says Hi. To those who lost loved ones at the Bataclan may you honour their lives through freedom and love. To the Eagles of Death Metal – Peace, Love and Life. And yes, you are right, Reverend Jesse "...a great reason why so many were killed is because so many people wouldn't leave their friends...So many people put themselves in front of people." That's what real Saints looks like.

There is no greater love.

Speaking in tongues, synchronistic phenomenon, prophetic energies, symbolic mysteries, blackstars or white... whether any of this is real or not, well, it's all pretty moot in the end.

Love trumps it all.

1 Corinthians 13 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reason



*like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. **And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.***

Pax

Tanja Stark.

Jesse Hughes on Jesus Christ, Suicide Bombers and Evolution.
Famous Musicians who allegedly predicted their deaths.

*"In the Villa of Ormen, stands a solitary candle."
Bowie Blackstar 2015*

“I’ve got to do this,” [Bowie] says, pulling a shade down on the window. A ballpoint-penned star has been crudely drawn on the inside. Below it is the word “Aum.” Bowie lights a black candle on his dresser and immediately blows it out to leave a thin trail of smoke floating upward.”

Rolling Stone 1976

Walk in Freedom.