

STATION

Eden. Exile. Babel.

Adam Lee

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Not ‘metafiction’ or ‘mise en abyme’, not even the more abstract ‘fiction within a fiction’ — the lost book within the book — rather a fiction that finds its dawn in a somewhat clouded obscurity. A speculative but factual origin with a truthful unfolding that is forced into intermission then ‘fictionalised’. Taken apart and reconfigured before being sent on a new course which runs concurrently with that of ‘reality’, a self-contained separate reality, a parallel reality.

Such discourse is not only confined to tales in books, cinema and art. So much of history is shrouded in an occulted mist of speculation, yet the past always leaves a trace: ruins, a Homeric poem, theological writings, cave paintings or fossils. Even so, these elements — often somewhat ambivalent — are only seen in hindsight from a present-day view, or else only discovered in the present. This legacy substance opens up fictional possibilities for the allowance of ‘world building’, but a particular branch of world building that holds onto our ‘real’ metaphysical construct (known history), not 100% fiction, just enough reality to make the fiction plausible — at least at some point in time. Hazy moments, structures, people, events etc that are placed in the ‘world’ to set the scene, then taken and adapted, or preserved for longer than reality should have allowed.

The world building which Adam Lee has undertaken over much of his artistic oeuvre seems to have perpetuated its own fictionalised reality, from the time of the cradle of civilisation, in a Mesopotamian oasis 300 B.C.-cum-third century A.D. land that exists somewhere between two ‘Greats’. That of Alexander the Great, King of the Greek Empire, and Anthony the Great, Christian Saint and hermit leader of The Desert Fathers. Though in Lee’s fiction, both Greats inhabit the same time: the Christian hermits, and the cities and structures before Christianity, rest in this world of fluid colourful motion. The Mesopotamian Tower of Babel, with its conjectural origin as the Etemenaki ziggurat of Babylon, stands in this world with a ‘purple haze’ sky, whilst contemplative hermits sit in caves thinking radioactive thoughts.

Lee has crafted his own Cthulhu Mythos, the fictional universe coined by August Derleth to describe the world building within H.P. Lovecraft’s horror fiction. Canonicalised by the ‘Great Old One’ Cthulhu, this world took shape in many of Lovecraft’s tales, alongside the appearance of other Old Ones and the recurring ‘lost book’: a grimoire by the ‘Mad Arab’ Abdul Alhazred titled *The Necronomicon*. Such mythic elements became so magnetic that Cthulhu Mythos began to emerge in other texts within the genre — the fictional world within the fictional tale that leapt into another fictional tale of another mind, and so it continued. If we conform to this model of Lovecraftian identification, Lee’s principal character would have to be the desert hermit and therefore his world: the ‘Hermit Mythos’. Acting as the central figure within the larger tale that runs throughout, Lee’s hermit never holds the one form nor exists in every representation of this world, and just like Cthulhu, the hermit is always clouded, occulted, speculative, and obscured, but there is always enough of reality to make it fictional and yet relational.

— Jack Willet