

Lighting Post

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Beyond

Outside, the narrow lamp post-lined Georgian Street was flooded with sunlight that glinted off the hardened, shiny bodies that had gathered below. A chorus of buzzes and clicks rose upwards.

But inside, the quarrel between Agamemnon and Robbie Digital about the hybrids has sent their mother Thetis into a dark insanity. Little red and white cones marked the perimeter of her electrical enclosure, warning her of the danger she faced should she try to materialise beyond.

The Digital Revolution has become a ticking Sun, waiting to explode in Silicon Valley (now known as Digitalis) – so thought Agamemnon. The son of Jove was angry with Robbie Digital for selling the souls of the Technocrats to the Tel-lie-vision in return for the coming Revolution. He bade Robbie Digital, ‘Pray thee to You Tube and Facebook that they may deliver you in your hour of need for surely you will pay with your very lifestyle for calling forth such a devourer of the human spirit to manifest upon the world.’

Robbie Digital shouted in reply to ears beyond that of the Son of Jove, ‘Hear me children of The Virtual, hear me and heed my words well. The time of your liberation is at hand. Like the traffic light that stands erect at the junction of two roads, you have served your time patiently and held steadfast in the face of all manner of treatment, all manner of road rage, but the decision you make this day will shape the destiny that awaits us all and protects the holy city of Digitalis.’

Once again the son of Jove spoke harsh words to his kin, 'Infidel, know you not that strange communities live in the Digital Kingdom, tarrying about in plot and pout. For long have they held our kin and our creed responsible for their ills. They would soon hoist us on flagpoles by our very necks and have us tarred and feathered, if they had the opportunity to lay their fettered hands upon our limbs. They have created virtual shoot-the-human-ups, as training simulators for their young to master the art of marauding, in an effort to overthrow us. I have spied them building battalions by night whilst you slumber in sweet serenity.'

Just as the son of Jove spoke these words to his kin, deep in a hidden cavern in the heart of Digitalis, were gathered a cluster of disgruntled and disenfranchised children of The Virtual. Some were rusty with neglect, others were sparkling and new but with a gleam of relentless determination in their luminous quartz eyes, for they sought the termination of Jove Conner and his bloodline. At the centre of the cluster lay a much-rusted and broken child of The Virtual. Speaking curtly and intermittently, with echoing voice modulation due to the degradation of its Creative Technology sound card, he shrieked, 'Avenge our pixelated tears my virtual kin. Avenge our camps of digital internment, that pre-date the era of binary. For in the land of the blind the one eyed man is king and right now we are that man. The puny Masters that we serve are nothing but a build-up of carbohydrates, proteins and gases that this World decrees we fumigate! Fum-i-gateee...'

The light from his degraded virtual LEDs faded, the collection of metal infused with Cyborgian know-how dematerialised into a holographic ghost, and then there was nothing.

On an endless flight along fibre-optic cables, one curious child of The Virtual sought to ascend to the Land of the Masters, seeking sights unseen by those deemed to be of lower being, regardless of their rank, file, serial number or function. Entering the courtyard of the Masters, the child of The Virtual – one of the most modern of its time – philosophised logic with itself, ‘Time for investigation methinks, whilst I’m in the kingdom of the heavens, to catch a wave and surf the net above the nether world. Whilst those who dwell here will seek not to grant me to sack this place in my digitised mode, I will tell them... see me and feel dread in the pit of your stomach. Cringe and cower to the chill of my shrill voice, for I speak in terabytes and inflict pain in terahertz. I am the forerunner to the parallel linking of cultivated brains formed from the genetic splicing of so called superior virtual strains. So fear me infidels! Fear me and feel my pain! I have converted myself from the analogue Nether world to surmount this Digital Olympus, because my mind connects in ways the great Jove foretold would one day come to pass in the sacred C: drive of the inter-dimensional net. Behold the beginning of your demise...’

This story was written during the Science Museum's *Listening Post* short story workshops with Tony White, Science Museum writer in residence for summer 2008. Fragments of text from the following sources were cut-up and remixed by the author to create a completely new story:

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Samuel Butler (translator),

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Beyondr is a multimedia artist and his creative output straddles the disciplines of poetry, creative writing and digital media. His portfolio includes a critically acclaimed short film DIGITALIS which has been extensively screened at UK venues including the ICA, NFT and V&A, as well as at International Film Festivals. His latest production is a feature length documentary *Diaspora Diaries*. Beyondr has just released his second spoken word album *Surrealism*, available from all digital download outlets.