

Volcan Wolf Testimony

(Excerpts)

Introduction

Written on the walls of his Albemarle cave during a nine-month stay in 1829–1830, the “Volcán Wolf Testimony” is described under the “Books and Grimoires” section. This handout offers player characters a summary of its more interesting content, and is only available after a period of study described as “Getting the Gist.”

Selected Excerpts

What hath God wrought?

[Detailed map of Albemarle Island showing a pathway from Banks Cove to the caldera cave. Albemarle’s four main volcanoes have been named, from north to south: Volcán Wolf, Volcán Lowell, Volcán Castro, and Volcán Atlantis. The writing is in a different hand than Lowell’s.]

This stylus is a miracle. I cannot identify the metal;—clearly some form of alloy. Maybe Klaproth’s titanium, perhaps refined from menachanite? Something more celestial in origin, fallen to earth on a meteor? It does not dull, and it etches everything softer than quartz. The volcanic walls of this cave yield like paper. I write as I think—effortlessly. Why was this device in the oubliette? Along with that curious jewelry. When I gaze into the pit, I sense some profound sadness, a feeling of tragedy. What happened here? Castro feels it too. Like a mass grave. Like the Black Hole of Calcutta.

The cavern;—it’s astonishing. The tunnels must be thousands of years old, unknown for centuries. Unknown to Spaniard or Buccaneer alike. I never thought such a system could exist beneath the Encantadas. I think there may be more islands, older ones to the East, islands long under water. Are the Enchanted Isles truly moving, as sailors superstitiously contend? Is the western front moving eastward, acquiring new islands from volcanic activity the way a seamstress stitches cloth?

The cave is too perfect. A massive bubble of air trapped in a mountain of magma, flooded halfway to form a perfectly level floor with a pair of egresses 180° apart. Too perfect;—almost engineered.

Castro cleared the blockage, and beyond—beyond was something I cannot understand. A spherical door, yes, with a mechanism easily learned and triggered;—but beyond was something not built by men, surely! My God, this discovery shall

[Sketches of an ornate temple beyond the secret door. Clearly done by a different hand than Lowell’s. These are followed by sketches of prehistoric marine creatures accompanied by Lowell’s excited theorizing.]

The door locks anew upon rolling closed;—furthermore, the combination changes according to a simple mathematical sequence based on a zodiacal progression. I have always considered astrology to be astronomy’s addled auntie, but here she illuminated the path forward—with a few adjustments derived from our German friend Kepler. [Detailed instructions for unlocking the door to the temple.]

Today I found the Gate. I cannot think of a better word, so I shall name it the Gate. Today I found the Gate. Hodie Portam inveni. See? It sounds better in Latin, more portentous. Earnest.

I write having just waked from a dream;—a dream of frogs and spirals. I think I know. But—Aristophanes? Was he trying to tell us something?

I opened the Gate. This science far exceeds my feeble comprehension. I wandered only far enough to determine the way back had become the way forward. I then returned and reversed my passage. Back to my lowly cave. I admit I was frightened; many thoughts revolve in my brain. Tomorrow I shall not be so timid;—I shall follow where this new path beckons. In case I cannot return, I shall record the method here: [Detailed instructions of hand and foot placement, finger motions, and “mathematical visualizations” of a spiral equation. These are accompanied by a series of vocalizations: “Brékkkek Kékkek Kékkek Kékkek! Kóax Kóax Kóax! Ualu Ualu Ualu! Quaouauh!”]

It is time. If this be my end, I have no regrets. Castro has agreed to accompany me;—I am touched by his loyalty, his courage.

I have returned;—but I cannot write. Not yet. The implications are

God has placed me here; God and God alone has vouchsafed these secrets to me;—I alone am meant for this. And if not God, then so be it. I would gladly make a bargain with Mephistopheles to have discovered this priceless treasure. What use is a soul?—Now?

Words, words, words. If like a crab you could go backward. Though this be madness. I need words;—so, let’s have words. There is distinctly religious air about the process; like receiving communion. I feel like a communicant when I enter this tank of miraculous fluid, so it shall be the ‘communicant’s tank’. Perhaps inelegant, but ‘vivarium’ feels inaccurate—it is not I who am being studied. And the other ‘tank’, the true vivarium? There is one word, a word which insists upon my thoughts despite its heretical connotations. And yet this word is perfect, so I shall use it—‘tabernacle’.

[Page after page of equations and scientific theory.]

God! I have been talking about God! Even I have difficulty shedding this last pound of intellectual baby fat?

My friends have arrived. They wish to ‘rescue’ me. They believe I need to be ‘rescued’. They have not seen the Other. They have not seen the tabernacle.

Hungry again. I must tell Castro to procure another tortoise. My friends must also eat!

These blind lizards make poor eating. Still, they are fascinating samples of adaptative development. I have dubbed them ‘höeks’, after our drowned cooper. They certainly resemble the Dutchman’s hateful features!

Manley, Thomas, Fisher, Brophy—all declined. Only faithful Castro remains by my side.

The work! The work continues. Why have I found this cavern? The marvels beyond? This is my destiny. ‘Towards a Greater Understanding of Marine Development’. I could laugh. I am grateful for the shipwreck! So many species, undisturbed, isolatoes all! I was right on at least three occasions, and wrong on a thousand others. Erasmus, Jean-Baptiste, Adam! I wish you were here, old friends. I must tell everyone to attend these shores! Even infernal Georges.

Still no success. The headaches are getting worse. I think I was outside of the cave last night. My boots are covered with ash, and my belly is full. By the length of my whiskers, I believe I may have been absent several days! I must be careful, I am in grave peril of losing my wits. Little food, unsatisfying companionship, and my tongue numb with the taste of reptiles.

I hope they never find me.

Where the hell is Castro? He promised me fish! I grow sick of brackish water and terrapin. Fish! What I wouldn’t do for some fresh fish!

The water is alive. If only Leibniz were here to see his ‘monster’ confirmed. Recursive, self-repeating, self-generating symmetries. [Mathematical equations followed by images that resemble intricate flowers.]

Castro has become a nuisance. Groveling and scraping, like a lower servant. Sometimes I look at him and

[A series of complex equations and astronomical diagrams.]

Hungry, always hungry. My friends are

An eruption from the southern volcano! The sky a window on Dante’s Inferno. All night the Κυκλωπες toiled above the clouds. I wonder what they were making? What bolts were fashioned for old Ζευς? I felt the tremors, and it caused me fear; but the walls here are of strong stuff.

Music? I thought I heard music. But no simple hornpipe. Here: [Rough, atonal melody sketched out.] Let young Berlioz set that upon unshockable Paris!

The fool! I offered him everything—everything!—and he refused. Fortunately there was Castro, or

I have cleaned the blood. Blood? What an odd word. Anglo-Saxon, I believe. I shall repeat it until it has no meaning, like all words—shadows wrapped upon voids. Wo ist der Ding an sich? Blood, Blood, Blood, Blood, Blood, Bloo

Music again. It must be the wind in the tunnels.

New levels of understanding today;—but there is still so much more. These headaches. Even now, I feel one coming on. I can barel

Ah, God! Such a fool. I explained it thus;—a large machine, say a clock; no, say a machine that is to a clock what a clock is to my abacus. Posit a large machine, yes. The most diminutive gear has a function, it revolves, it is acted upon, and it acts upon others. Somewhere far, far out of sight of this miniscule cog, an event occurs, an event far down the chain of mechanical interactions, say, the hand of the clock ticks forward one moment. The gear, endlessly turning, because it is being turned; the gear, endlessly turning, because it enacts turning! And yet, it needs not know of its place at all! What are we but tiny gears? Dalton's atoms revolve, the planets revolve, the stars revolve;—why should we not revolve? O, what a machine we are part of! And with what teeth do the wheels of our lives enmesh? I have scoffed at astrology, at alchemy, at Romans and their this-mancy and that-mancy, but

Gnawing! An appropriate word for this hunger. It gnaws, yes, like an animal. Ah, my stomach turns! What I wouldn't do for one of Felicity's Cornish hens!

It was an elegant solution, and not one unwritten in the annals of hunger.

Ah. I miss her. [A series of pornographic images.] Copulating monkeys, maybe;—but the seed goes on, it must go on. Where is Brophy? I must invite him over to discuss

I am so alone.

[A sudden burst of incomprehensible equations followed by several abandoned attempts to start writing again.]

Hungry.

Where is that damnable Manley? I was talking to him last night. I think no no no, end sentence. Time has become remarkably plastic. Thomas, too—and the Dutchman, Ottenhoff. No, he did not survive the shipwreck. Fisher, he's the

'I will make you fishers of men—'

I think more clearly with a full stomach. I loathe this, this being an animal. The Other

[More abandoned attempts; English, Latin, German, French.]

God is dead.

Of course! What a fool. I must apologize to Brophy. He was right. I shall offer him one of my sweet tortoises, so much sweeter than

Sarah, Sarah, I love you. I am coming to you again, soon.

[Several staves of music; a harsh atonal passage evolves into the *Dies Irae*, then breaks down into an invented and nonsensical notation.]

I no longer trust Brophy. He looks at me with girlish eyes.

The tortoises are secured and fastened. They cannot escape. Castro shall mind them. I depart at nightfall, down the passage, to the tabernacle. She's waiting.

I again take up my stylus, though I believe many days have passed. Only now may I write, only now may I ponder and ruminare, weigh the implications of what I was shown. Of what I learned. Of what I created. Oh, the humour in it all.

My first word on these walls? God. I would carve laughter, if I could! Not the first time I wished for new symbologies. O, for a lexicon of neologisms! O, for a muse of fire, to ascend the brightest heaven of invention. Aha! Aha! My kingdom for a

Swedenborg was right. [Diagrams and star-charts.] This is our sordid little Whitechapel: [A map of the solar system shows three planets beyond Uranus, named *Lowell*, *Yuggoth*, and *Kynarth*. The ninth planet, Yuggoth, appears to be a double-planet, and in Lowell's version of the solar system, Uranus has a nearly vertical ring.] And this is London: [A depiction of the Milky Way as a "spiral nebula" filled with countless stars.] And this is the World: [Drawings of many "galaxies" beyond the Milky Way, followed by equations of an astrophysical nature.]

Last night;—I thought I heard voices, screaming, crying in the dark. In a daze, I wandered to the pit, but it was only my tortoises, staring up at me with their shaggy heads, their sensitive, terrible eyes. I must ask Castro to deal with the noise. It hurts my head. I feel strange today. Foggy and unfocused. I will ask Brophy to make tea. I will

We are expanding. Every point is moving away from every other point, like an explosion. [More diagrams and equations.]

No! Not like an explosion! Fool, I still think in three dimensions, not like;—not like the Other. Everything is moving away from everything else. The universe is expanding, like rising bread, all points moving away from each other simultaneously! Ah, but what are we expanding into? [A new set of untranslatable symbols is introduced.] And what force is pushing us? Pushing space itself, creating more space, more time?

Here is finally laughter: [Unknown symbols, related to the above.]

I am in love with the Other, with her mind. Like an onion, there are many layers, and everywhere a sense a profound loneli

[Diagram of a strange type of flute; followed by staves of atonal music.]

Another month? I can barely write. The migraines are preceded by a peculiar form of blindness. A ring forms in the visual field of my left eye, a halo of discontinuous information. It grows larger, enveloping my entire visual field as it spills into my other eye,

and I am blind;—though I can see, nothing makes sense. Then comes the hammer of pain, then the whiteness. And of course, the noise, the buzzing, the maddening noise!

I have looked for several days, but they are nowhere to be found! Where have they gone? Our boats need to be repaired! Shall I be a shipwright, too? Back to the abyss.

I grow weary from the passages, miles each time, the water, the drudgery. But—but my knighthood shall be worth it! Perhaps I shall have Castro call me Sir Monty? No, I jest, I grow tired of the

Sarah tells me things must change. I must change. But first I must know;—know the form and function. A series of exploratory surgeries are in order. I must again rely upon Castro to show me the way. The way—‘I am going the way of all flesh: take thou courage and shew thyself a man’.

Castro does not like her. But does she speak the truth?—I need to know for sure. I think I can

Today I gave Castro wings.

Still she rejects him! I believe I know the reasons;—though surely Castro’s inferior physiognomy is no comparison to my own advanced

I cannot but feel—I have failed Castro. Nevertheless, I shall carry on: ‘I will not cease from Mental Fight, nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand’.

Again, some time has passed. I am different now. I have been born anew. Inside the tabernacle. I touched her. I caressed her and she embraced me. She accepted me into her ancient, starry bosom. Now the true learning can begin. But first, to expand on Faraday. Let there be light! [A series of differential equations involving electromagnetism.]

Tonight is the third of seven. I may not write again for a week or more. A small price to pay.

Layers of an onion? Why did I not say, layers of the earth? For we are layered, I see this clearly now. The continents rest upon titanic, articulated plates of land, skating on a layer of molten rock. How like children we are? The answer is in front of us;—see, the snug fit of South America and Africa? See, the mountains folding upwards where India smashes into Asia? The answer has been on our maps, but we have been blind. Here, let me open my eyes and see: [Diagrams of early continents breaking up and drifting into current configurations.]

Catastrophe/Uniformity! Revolution/Religion! Disaster/Gradation! I might as well be a savage proclaiming Black/White, my tomahawk ready to cleave the pate of any poor fool who shouts Grey!

Dis-Aster. Ha, ha. Ha! Words conceal their meaning in open sight. [Star charts, linked by keys and arrows to the previous terrestrial maps.]

Sir Isaac was wrong. Gravity is a bending, a refraction of the very fabric of space and time itself. [A long series of calculations.]

[Several poems and lines of doggerel in an invented language.]

I taught Castro how to relieve his ‘psychic pressure’. It took many hours in the operating theatre, but he will be grateful in the end. It is my greatest achievement yet. Those who came before have tools, such beautiful tools. I feel like a savage playing in Davy’s lab.

Tortoise shells. There are patterns on the cacti, too. And I am not sure, but I think the spiders’ webs. (Is that what really attracts the fly?) But whales are the most articulate. They are the vowels of this alphabet, I think. I understand that our cells have alphabets, too, letters inscribed in the heart of each nucleus. We are as easily mapped as

[Fumbled attempts at a code of some kind; drawings of twisted ladders, twining serpents, and copulating centipedes. Four symbols keep appear in distinct pairs.]

I wrote that a week ago. Again, I am a fool. Not a map;—but a plan. And any draughtsman’s plan may be edited. So who, or what, are the Editors? I believe

Maps and plans and webs. This is the Universe: [An abstract drawing of a spider web.] And the emptiness, what is this emptiness between the strands? What is this strange gravity? Sarah knows, but she is not telling me. I must go to her again, five of seven.

Dalton was only partly correct in his atomic propositions—the first baby-step! Democritus, in all these centuries, could we not build upon your indivisible platform? Atomos and the Void! So simple, so deceptive. Ah, is it all really so strange? Like Russian nesting-dolls. One inside the other inside the other inside the other. [Diagram of Russian “nesting-dolls.”]

I believe she sees all chemical rays, de-oxidizing rays, heat rays, maybe even more. Rays above and beyond the rainbow. Beyond the black rainbow. The Space of All Colours. It’s still confusing, because I have monkey eyes connected to a monkey brain. I need new equipment, a new machine, a soft machine. Soon, Monty.

Another dream of rolling dice. There’s the table of gamblers: Democritus, Lucretius, Dalton, Myself. We are rolling dice. Why—?

[Long passages in an unknown language.]

We were not the first! We were not the first, second, third, &tc.;—nor shall we be the last! Mother Earth has given birth before, the wily old whore. Ah, but who am I to impugn her? She’s no granddam masking her years with bismuth and rouge. It is we, her youngest children, who insist on clothing her ‘shameful’ nakedness;—we paint her ancient face in the trollop colors of false youth.

[An attempt to translate William Blake’s “And did those feet in ancient time” into rows of dot clusters.]

I am laughing all the time now.

Mammals, fish, reptiles, birds. And then;—the invertebrates. Insects, mollusks, crustaceans. Jean-Baptiste, I am laughing in your beard. Vous êtes de la merde!

She calls herself a ‘primordial one’. Well, she calls herself this: [cluster of five dots.] But ‘primordial’ is correct, yes, a worthy translation. Like primordial hydrogen. Has—has that been discovered yet? I am losing touch with my

It is all hydrogen. ‘Ah, vous dirai-je, Maman’. [“Twinkle Twinkle Little Star” in musical notation, followed by symbols for “laughter.”] ‘Imaginez cet oeil de lumière crevé aux cils d’hydrogène ce suint de soleils sur l’iris en fusion’. Who said that? Has it been said yet?

Would you like to really see something? [Indecipherable writing, clotted with old blood.]

Hungry again. Six of seven tonight.

I am the witch of Endor, burning on the stake of reason. I do not know how much longer I can continue this affair. My brain is boiling, my blood is searing, and my nerves are fretted with gunpowder. I have had too much!

Where has Castro gone?

No more tortoises;—lizards, lizards, lizards now.

Developmental theory is not as I have been suggesting. I was only half-right; I must burn my old papers, my poor notebooks. Of course we develop, and evolve, and devolve as well! And of course catastrophe plays a rôle. But more than that, yes, more than that are the Editors. The ones who came before us, with their own hopes and dreams, triumphs and follies, laws and lunacies.

Today is the first day I have begun to pity Sarah. I saw deep inside this time, and I know she is a prisoner. All of her kind. A younger race, the ancestors of the amphibious ‘people’ who built the outer temple, they imprisoned the ‘primordial ones’ and stole their knowledge like so many Prometheuses;—but the fire raged out of their control—brought about their downfall—destroyed their civilization, their religion, their future! But before we humans shed tears over their passing, we should know—this hubris, this cataclysm, cleared a path for mankind. Our mammalian seed germinated in their despoiled earth! From the ocean we came, to the ocean they went! Oceanus cunus terrae.

Seven of seven.

I must write in haste, inscribe this before the headaches—I can feel the new organs—writhing, things are adjusting now, a world of new sensations—there is pain, yes, but pleasure too—

Devolution is real. Like a decaying language;—Latin corrupting to Spanish,
[incomprehensible glyphs] degenerating into [different but equally incomprehensible glyphs.]
The ancestors devolved, like [clusters of dots.] See?

Discrete influencing fluids, ha ha! Yes, seminal, semeiotike, semaphore, ha! Seminal vapour
is language! Eggs are language! Each act of fertilization, an epic narrative, publishing and
printing, recombining, new expressions—daft tracts of revolutionary theory; mutations like
misspellings and misprints

Sperm whales! Ha ha ha! It's actually quite funny.

[Rows of strange organic symbols.] Tortoises, cacti, spiders, humans, fish, whales;—all have
been spelled with their alphabets, all bear the letters burning inside them! Maps and legends!
Keys and locks! Spelled, so you see it, again the words conceal by rendering plainly visible,
eroded to dullness by years of constant use. Ah, the world is text! I am so close.

—came at this timecoloured place where we live in our paroqial fermament one tide on
another— in the Nichtian glossery which purveys aprioric roots for aposteriorious tongues
this is nat language in any sinse of the world—

Calculus, mechanics, physics—we must forge fresh tools to draft a new world. Yes! We
think, and we create. Our language itself is a tool;—is reality. Alas, our language is so young,
so painfully young—we don't have a symbol for laughter—no typesetting blocks stamped
with the letters of our cells—no maths for tumbling dice, the secret gravity that spins the
universe into a web of stars—! But their language? O! Edenic tongue, O! Fall of Babel!
Could I but speak with a tongue of fire, it would be the mere whisper of a million shattered
mouths, in comparison to the simple purity of their eternal O! Make us, unmake us, move us
like type and print out a new world!

I am finally ready;—I shall show the world its true face! Sarah, I am coming to thee. One last
time, I am coming to thee. And then, London—Paris—the World.

They shall name these islands after me.