



Part of the series Templex Lands

by Uriel Alexis

Investigating temporal anomaly demands that the couplings of past and present be examined, and tested till dissolution. The task is demanded so that one can begin to glimpse a way out of the tight grip of the pincers that structure revealed history. Names and faces then finally appear as masks, hiding the true — anonymous and orphan — *thing*. There's scarcely any more to philosophy than this understanding of time-in-itself.

Where to begin? It's not mere cliché to say at the end. What the future can say about the past through the present marks the path of history. Destiny is slowly revealed, through endlessly detoured unidirectional movement. Prophecy is obvious in retrospect, so it falls to those picking through the remains to ask: what happened?

A bottomless toolbox presents itself for the task, origins unasked. It is not unthinkable that it has spontaneously generated itself. On the façade, "nick land" is written in Gothic engravings. "From whom" is probably the wrong question. A 30-page manual annexed to the side can safely be ignored, surely? Who has ever read manuals?

Within the massive folder, two arsenals produce themselves: different, yet eerily compatible. One, things with teeth, rats and wolves salivating for a bite; destructive but barely containable. Another, inverted alien swarmachines, buzzing grey-goo, going ballistic to hit in the back; treacherous yet formalized. What could their assembly not utterly destroy?

Once again, where to begin? This problematic eternally returns: recursion, not repetition. Yes, they are different, these two pet monster houses. On their own, they already wrecked havoc on all descended certainties of all forefathers. Nothing is sacred. But how to implex them, how to turn themselves into themselves more, by synthesizing them? Only a residual humanism prevents the obvious answer: A-death.

The expert advice has been repeated to exhaustion. "Leave it alone!" The high hopes of scientists never cease to amuse. But a question of method definitely arises, for the completion of the experiment, if not the security of the experimenter.

The two clades share affects, and effects. They're both murderous of all things transcended, eating away Cathedrals and onto-theologies and secreting a dark bubbling chaotic bile, a fizzing patchwork of demons. Both of them operate through an unholy commerce that trades away all those worthy abstractions to the highest bidder.

Nevertheless, they don't lack in asymmetries. Too quick a destratification betrays a lack of cunning and camouflage. Even rats and wolves know this, when they're not too hungry. On the other hand, grey goo isn't a very good desire binder, to say the least. Attention quickly flows elsewhere.



To ask them what they mean would add insult to injury, so there seems to be hardly an option besides unleashing them and observing the effects. Of course, “controlled experiments” sound as plausible as “controlled explosions”, but the gorilla glass walls seem to be resistant enough for a first approximation. Hesitation is expected, if not praiseworthy.

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As the AOE-designed restraints are slowly uplifted, both vectors start drawing the coordinates of undiscovered Templex Lands. A warped field opens, distorting the usual references and measures: those menacing switchblades had never been so close. Feeding into each other, cross-pollinating and fusing, they produce teratological hybrids, spreading viciously. They cover the whole ground, arguably ungrounding it. Thanatropically they expand towards the edges, to the unknown unknowns of the Outside, decrypting algorithmically the keys laboriously elaborated for their contention.

At first, it seems like nothing happens. Suddenly — a piercing scream and a gurgling sound — perceptions change very quickly. Swarmachines rotate around a giant black rat-king, effectuating a time-cyclone that punctures holes in the wall. The demonic assemblage claws at faces until they bleed out into the sickened black fuel that powers it. One less subjective sight, before the world goes dark.

The end of time has begun.