

A Phantom Zero | Ryu Ando

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A Phantom Zero

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edited and designed by ELÆ [Lynne DeSilva-Johnson] with poetry editor

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the operating system

141 Spencer Street #203

Brooklyn, NY 11205

www.theoperatingsystem.org

operator@theoperatingsystem.org

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Contents:

A Phantom Zero

I. § N: The Drum Star (Orion's Ghost)

II. § R: The R*umblings of Corrosion*

III. § fp: The Specularium

IV. § ne: Potent Portents

V. § fl: Life in the lifeless things

VI. § fi: An Ode to Joy

VII. § fc: Broken Mirror / Sinking Ship

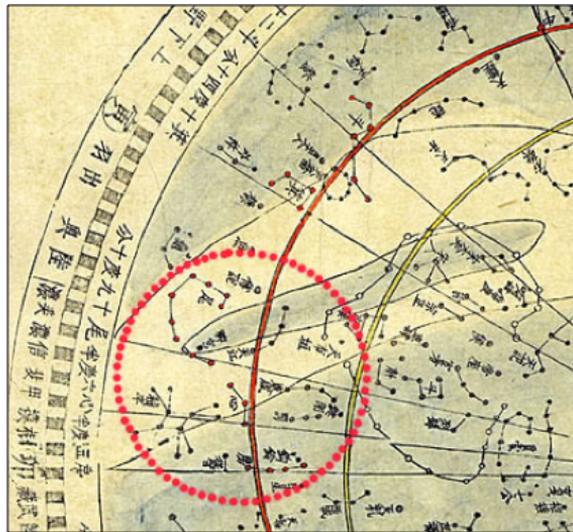
VIII. § L: Red Shifting To The Future

Drake's Equation States:

$$N = R_* \cdot f_p \cdot n_e \cdot f_l \cdot f_i \cdot f_c \cdot L$$

“The definition of being is simply power.”

-- Plato



Detail from: Tenmon Bun'ya No Zu 天文分野之圖

11 Dark pockets
12 Of the universe;
13 *Catharsis* twists deeper
14 Into the heart of our
15 Own darkest
16 Matters.

B. Poets of the infinite sea, drowned full fathom five

17 But there is no peace here,
18 Only ghosts and
19 Fragments of thought
20 Scattered among your maps;
21 No hero lives in this poem.
22 No hero lives
23 In this region of the sky.
24 Look elsewhere for justice,
25 Look elsewhere for perfection,
26 Not between these contested lines
27 And broken rhythms,
28 Perpetually breaking in two.

sumi



38 And needle,
39 Into the arms
40 Of our slender galaxies,

41 – Violent ink writ large
42 Upon the menacing face of it all –

43 A spectral resonance haunts us.

44 Our suns, ancient wanderers,
45 Have gone senile;
46 Cold shoulders sag,
47 Their lines strain toward
48 Blood-dimmed collapse
49 Along the faults of our
50 Wobbling dirt-filled empires.

51 Oedipal dreams and apocalyptic fevers
52 Inhabit these skies;
53 We fill these rivers
54 With blood-seeds and kill-spawn
55 We cover these lands with
56 Flowers of fire, inedible poisoned nectars,
57 With cypress death and mad pomegranate,
58 Writhing olive and black *sakura*.

59 Hungry poets, all, seize upon these demon seeds,
60 Seize like sickly beasts,
61 Speak of new lands un-blighted
62 – Full of the same milk and honey,
63 Full of the same *H2O* and *DNA* –
64 But dying in a tiny corner of the sky,
65 *Untouched*.

D. The lost Teahouse of the Infinite Light

66 I remember you once waited



67 All night in the cold
68 For Orion's ghost to rise,
69 Banging on the drum star
tsuzumi boshi

鼓星

70 And striking at the sky;
71 But you did not see Him
72 And in your hatred
73 For the setting sun
74 And the unsettling moon
75 Rising in silence and rage,
76 In violence and pain,
77 You forgot to listen,
78 *Again.*
79 There is no peace here,
80 No universal hearth fire

81 Comforting the chilled limbs
82 Of your inner knowledge;
83 *Only horror and hate and hiss and loss*
84 The smell of the vain and your own glorious dead,
85 The snap of your brittle flags planted
86 On brittle maps with blurred legends,
87 The plastic distractions
88 Of the *Spiritus Mundi* gone mad,
89 Fueling you onward and outward,
90 Strange beast,
91 In an eternal *wonderlust*
92 For permanence and order,
93 For contact with mirrors.

E. The awakening light

94 Yet Orion's ghost shall rise again and
95 Bring the Universe to us,
96 Expanding and purging, as It does,
97 With light and flood – but only if you listen:

kenshō

見性

98

Awaken

99

And we'll haunt these beautiful lines forever,

100

– Suffer in a suspended sea-change –

101

Shine on with the possibility of life,

102

Dangle a future promise

103

Bathed in the passing of light,

104

Like the phantom stars

105

And perfect circles that

106

Haunt our skies.

119 A fugue of life

120 Twists through us,

121 A force of green-fused electric

122 Full of

123 Intention wound forever tight

124 Like a tourniquet.

125 *Form is a mirage, the*

126 *Mountains sigh through us.*

127

128 Their being is simply power:

色即是空

shiki soku ze kuu

129

130 Suns are born

131 In this quavering of time,

132 And they die as

133 Cold and numb as
134 The years spent waning
135 On that infinite plain.

136 All that will exist
137 Has already passed,
138 A shadow crosses the dial of the sun;
139 All remains
140 Suspended in stubborn
141 Isolation,
142 Locked in a quantum of amber:
143 Atoms quarks bosons
144 – Figural phantoms alike –
145 Fill the killing fields of time.

うたかたの日々

utakata no hibi

146 They shout as

147 *A lotus perpetually*

148 *Unfolds in lost*

149 *Whispers;*

150 *A dissipating icicle sighs*

151 *In eternal drip-drop*

152 *Suspension;*

153 *A crow's arcing flight dives on*

154 *Caught forever in*

155 *Mid-air collisions;*

156 *A bubble spans*

157 *In permanent ephemeral*

158 *Tension, bursting*

159 *Dusk fades around*

160 *A brightening star*

161 *Sinking at our horizon*

162 *Ice burns my hands*

163 *In a slow dissolution*

164 *Of painful delight*

165 *Our sinking moon,*

166 *Half lost in shadow,*

167 *Hints at all the things*

168 *We left unsaid*

169 *The writhing olive branch*

170 *Held aloft in mid-breeze*

171 *Sheds its half-moon leaves*

172 *And then a dream comes to me,*

173 

174 *yume*

175 Distant and fractured,
176 Of sputtering pixel-red petals,
177 Decayed sub rosa projections
178 Spilt upon wondrous
179 Hanging gardens of stone
180 Cracked black by fires
181 Raging in eternal
182 Extinguishment.

183 Seven billion wonders of the world
184 Collapsed upon themselves and
185 Rose again in unison,
186 Since we last sat
187 Together,
188 Contracting and bulging in force.

189 We see the crushed remains
190 Of our celestial calculations
191 Expanding and purging in time but
192 *Lost to our time, an Antikythera*

193 Groaning under the weight of
194 Corrosive centuries.
195 Salt scours our wounds, time
196 – Unwound –
197 Winds up yet again.

198 And yet a rose
199 *Again* blooms, *sub rosa*
200 Along these wasted, yet trembling
201 Solitary fringes

薔薇

202 *bara*

203 And this impenetrable
204 Fountain spills its secret:

205 *Take a piece of my petals,*
206 *Folded like whispering lips,*

207 **(It says)**

208 *And give it, still quivering,*
209 *So that you might taste*

210 *The bitterness residing*
211 *In all things beautiful.*

212 *Incubate these tender growths,*
213 *Explode them in rage and delight,*

214 **(It says)**

215 *Burn them in your cold embers,*
216 *Dim them in your long dotage,*

217 *Then speak to us in senile riddles*
218 *About the infinite potential that's*

- 219 *Always out of your reach; speak*
- 220 *In half-forgotten flower-spells*
- 221 *Suspended on the tips of your*
- 222 *Ancient, secret, acidic tongues.*

III. § fp: The Specularium (*Let fp = the fraction of those stars that have planets*)

223 Perhaps it is a lost
224 And meaningless number
225 That we seek,
226 Like a phantom
227 Zero:



228
rei

229 Brief windows of sky
230 Look into future-time passing
231 Through distant constellations.

232 But is this thing we seek whole?

233 Or is it the patchy fragments and bones
234 Of something torn limb-from-limb,
235 Piece-by-piece, like a horror-filled *Pentheus*?

236 Is it hiss and loss, black curse and spark,
237 Drowned in the
238 *Wine-dark* tinctures of
239 Radio silence,
240 Collected in the deepest
241 Pools of the universe?

242 Is this thing we seek
243 Merely what lurks inside us,
244 A pain masked by endless masks,
245 Leading to new pains?

246 Is it merely conscious
247 Philosophies projected
248 Into dark caverns?
249

色
即
是
空

shiki soku ze kuu

空
即
是
色

kuu soku ze shiki

*form, then, is emptiness,
and emptiness is form*

250 When we speak of god, do
251 We mean ourselves merely
252 *Thinking of thought itself?*

253 Do we enter
254 These higher dimensions
255 Thinking of thought itself?

256 Peer into the depths
257 Of the infinite mirror as it
258 Bends us backwards
259 Through deepening time,
260 Into terror-filled temporal vistas
261 *(That too was godlike).*

262 We see the threads of time
263 *(For time has bridled us together)*
264 Entwine us, weave a fabric,
265 Unveiled as it binds us to ourselves

糸
ito

266 And our stories trick us,
267 Blind us to that lost number,

零

268
269 *rei,*
270 Tell us we are
271 Always on the
272 Verge of
273 Discovery,
274 Straddling the wire
275 At the revelatory edge
276 Between truth and lie,
277 Power and weakness, and

IV. § ne: Potent Portents (Let n_e = the average number of planets that can potentially support life per star that has planets)

279 Look beyond the
280 Rising of the cypress

檜
hinoki

281 Or the supple *ginko* or

被爆樹木

282 *hibaku jumoku*

283

284 Angled like rockets
285 Toward the harsh, eternal blue
286 That spans, indifferent,
287 Above the clouds,
288 Toward the bright lights
289 Lit up in the
290 Deep folds and recesses
291 Of the night.

292 Look beyond our possible pasts
293 And impossible futures
294 Entwined as one with
295 The hope of Contact:

296 *Will we know It*
297 *When we see it?*

298 *Will It know us*
299 *When It sees us?*

300 I'm standing on the bridge

318 And twisted hands.

319 *And we dream the dream of*

320 *The life we are living now*

321 It's been said, peering

322 Into the other side

323 Of the window into time.

324 *And when you want*

325 *To wake up, you will*

326

327 You'll pass into spirit:

靈

rei

328 Bathe in forests

329 Haunted by the likes of us.

330 Even if we forget the land,

331 The land never forgets us.

332 For even

333 In disintegration,

334 Even in our darkest hours

335 The worm turns on us

336 As we would turn upon it,

337 And we listen in rapture

338 To the falling leaves,

339 For those sounds as sullen,

340 And intimate as the rain.

356 Of the glass god
357 Writ large across the sky,
358 In the chill winds
359 Of winters looming.

360 And yet even there, the dust settles
361 Silent on the plain,
362 Even beyond the horizon,
363 On the solitary fringe
364 Beneath the sky;
365 Yes. Even *there* on
366 That alien plain, beaten down
367 Where no eyes can strain
368 To apprehend this meaning
369 From meaning-lost men,
370 The dust settles silent
371 On the living and the dead.

372 And these visions encompassed
373 Over the alien plains

374 Are thoughts gathered
375 Like a handful of rain
376 That drips into a mouthful of earth

377 These visions of babbling towers
378 Are now weeds gathered into a ball
379 Sent scattering over this vastness
380 Sinking into the pores of new lands.

381 I hear the sounds as intimate,
382 As sullen as the rain:

ame,

(O salve me)

383 And those opaque, glass gods,
384 Reveal their myth-laden faces

雨

385

Among the



dekoboko

386

387

Rocks of dry riverbeds

388

Holding

389

The fossil of all

390

Possible futures surely passed,

391

Those pieces of a

392

Cosmic puzzle,

393

Twisted.

394

But it *is* here,

395

Can't you feel it?

396

Making the giant leap from

397

Lifelessness to life

398

Blowing through us in the

399 Twilight of our idols
400 And the low-lit spark
401 Of our *pareidolic* visions.

402 The joyless gods in their eternal
403 Madness rule us, just as we would,
404 Doubtless, have
405 Ruled ourselves.

406 Our chants breathe life
407 Into their lifeless lives –
408 I see their faces in the rocks,
409 And in the uranium mines and
410 In the distant shores
411 Of distant worlds newly
412 Imagined.

413 They tell me:
414
415 *Once seen,*
416 *Nevermore unseen.*

427 <O *salve me*>
428 Bring us messages from
429 Beyond lifeless matter:

430 *Form is emptiness, emptiness form*
431 (Such words of wisdom).

432 I am the pause between notes
433 (The pause between thrusts)
434 Which falls like the drip-drop of water.

435 I am the conception of information
436 And the inception of conformation;
437 Two dimensions,
438 Rendered as flesh;
439 Three-dimensions in thought,
440 Looping upward through
441 An infinite stare.

442 *Emptiness becomes form.*

443 I sit here
444 (As eternity decays
445 Into time and motion
446 And rises again)
447 Within
448 This massive expansion
449 On a floor of *tatami*, bathed
450 In the infinite light,
451 And think of
452 How you, too, might
453 Once have looked up at the stars at
454 Night
455 And thought of us.

456 Among the recursive heavens
457 And unending loops of hell,
458 We wonder what would have
459 Happened had
460 Our shared lives lived on
461 In perfect parallels.

462 What would we be today?
463 Would we have drunk in the stars
464 As deeply as before?

465 Would you have turned us away
466 Indifferent?

467 Would we have
468 Destroyed you
469 Even as we adored you?

470 Time and tide lap at our feet
471 Pull us inward,
472 Closer to rhythm and rhyme,
473

474 <O *sing*
475 *Sing us a new song*>
476

477 As close as we can arrive
478 Without sinking
479 Into the purging flame

480 Or the recursive wave or
481 The destructive mirror.

482 <O *salve me*>

483 Can you pray?

484 (*I hear the sounds*
485 *Of sullen rain,*
486 *Again*)

487 Let us pray:
488 That the pixel images
489 Of memory twisted like metal
490 Towers scourged
491 Will fade and scatter and

492 *Disperse*
493 *Disperse*

494 Like all the verses ever sung:

495 *O nicht diese tönen.*

496 (Let us pray)

497 *O salve me*

VII. § fc: Broken Mirror / Sinking Ship (*Let f_c = the fraction of civilizations that develop a technology that releases detectable signs of their existence into space*)

498 *Dreams never end*
499 We barrel down
500 Instead
501 Into their time-wells
502 *A multiverse hidden in our minds*
503 Looking up
504 At the silver globe of
505 Sky constrained above,
506 A sliver of night,
507 Telescoped and tapered,
508 Diminished and hushed, shimmering
509 Through the silence.

510 *Do we dare touch the sun?*



511 All is writ blood and thund

512 Ailment and affliction;
513 The seeker's curse and the poet's disease:
514 We crawl across concrete
515 – Across hot coals and bent nails –
516 On our hands and knees
517 To arrive at the seeds of truth,
518 Planted in alien soils, to
519 Conjure the preconceived,
520 (And the god-eye peers inside).

521 My own fingers, once soft,
522 Are gnarled olive roots
523 Twisting upon themselves.

524 And the damned souls
525 Wandering in these olive groves
526 Leap from my scrawl.

527 The dip and quaff of the pen-scratch
528 Releases the twisted
529 From their torments,

530 A resurrection in writhing
531 Leafless thoughts.

532 The sun shines on me,
533 A few minutes of light
534 A day, an endless process of orbit
535 And decay writ in *finite* terms.

536 And when it does,
537 The mirror
538 Of life shines into me;
539 Epiphany fills,
540 Like water in the lungs; a
541 Lost sunken ship
542 Says it's time to reflect
543 On the eternal possibilities
544 Of the dead and the dying.

545 We long to ascend the clouds.
546 Pyramids soaring in slopes
547 To the stars, skyscrapers

548 Gouging our blues, reforming the
549 Ancient architectures
550 Of babble and myth.

551 *And the dreams never end.*

552 They just
553 Mutate
554 Like the sum of our
555 Shared nightmares,
556 Soaring outward
557 Into the abyss
558 Of broken mirrors.

VIII. § L: Red Shifting To The Future (*Let L = the length of time for which such civilizations release detectable signals into space*)

559 Rise of the radio phoenix
560 In a shift of red flame.

561 Radio waves collect
562 In the farthest corners
563 Of the universe.

564 *What secrets lie hidden there?*

565 Water echoes in a well,
566 The mystery wrapped within
567 Disintegrates
568 From three to two to one and the
569 Silence deafens in the eternal
570 Differences
571 Between the one and the many
572 The one and the zero.

神様

kami-sama

- 573 Is not merely a rule
574 (*Or a word*
575 *Or a thing*
576 *Or a logos*)
- 577 It is the awakening
578 Within that
579 Moment of *shift*
580 Between our
581 Strange loops
582 When form is stripped
583 Like the feathers from a paper crane
584 Spanning the sky,
585 Wingless, bursting to flame, with
586 The emptiness

587 Of a smokeless burn.

588 It is a transient lament

589 *onozukara*

590 自ずから

591 *mizukara*

592 As nature becomes self

593 And self, nature.

594 This is a beauty, then,

595 Which evolves through its own dissipation

596 A beauty which dissolves

597 In each breath I have taken

598 In each gasp I have stolen

599 In each time I have rested

600 For that finite moment of

601

Pause

602

Between my breaths.

603

As meaning is derived

604

From new visions

605

So the glass god is in us;

606

Panoramic,

607

Subatomic

608

Sub rosa.

609

The fields of time

610

Hold us all.

611

Hidden in power

612

Hidden in strange currents

613

Flowing strangely.

614

Escape the maze's loops,

615

Derive life from the inert.

616 Call forth the spiral in
617 A fraction of time,
618 Seconds are stretched out
619 Like the pliant threads
620 Of a tattered robe,
621 Or an elegant tapestry
622 Wrought in silken steel
623 Is warped
624 Into infinite looping dreams
625 At just the moment
626 Before the chill arrives.

627 For we are swamped
628 By histories longer
629 Than our own.

630 Will the hearth
631 Signal us back home?

632 Will we ever
633 Sing a new song,

652 *So don't ask 'why'.*

653 *See what could be and*
654 *Ask 'why not?'*

655 For the mind is the multiverse, and
656 The multiverse, the mind.

657 *And there,*
658 Through our recursive windows,
659 *There,*
660 Through the trapdoors of space-time,
661 *There,*
662 Through the *specularium*
663 Showing us the edge
664 Of this great expanse,
665 Like the milky tail
666 Of a dying comet,
667 Spanning the universe,
668 And then dispersing,

669 *Disperse,*
670 *Disperse*

671 *There*
672 Is peace,
673 (Perhaps,
674 One beautiful, fine day)

675 Within this verse.

心經

shingyou

Acknowledgements

Section I of A Phantom Zero first appeared as “The Drum Star (Orion’s Ghost),” in *Strange Horizons*, September 2017, and in the 2018 *Rhysling Anthology*.

Images adapted from Tenmon Bun’ya No Zu: Chart of the Constellations and the Regions they Govern. [天文分野之圖] National Astronomical Observatory of Japan. Found online here: <https://www.nao.ac.jp/en/gallery/weekly/2014/20140313-old-illustration.html>

Bio

poetics and process: a conversation

WHY PRINT DOCUMENT?

*The Operating System uses the language “print document” to differentiate from the book-object as part of our mission to distinguish the act of documentation-in-book-FORM from the act of publishing as a backwards-facing replication of the book’s agentive *role* as it may have appeared the last several centuries of its history. Ultimately, I approach the book as TECHNOLOGY: one of a variety of printed documents (in this case, bound) that humans have invented and in turn used to archive and disseminate ideas, beliefs, stories, and other evidence of production.*

Ownership and use of printing presses and access to (or restriction of) printed materials has long been a site of struggle, related in many ways to revolutionary activity and the fight for civil rights and free speech all over the world. While (in many countries) the contemporary quotidian landscape has indeed drastically shifted in its access to platforms for sharing information and in the widespread ability to “publish” digitally, even with extremely limited resources, the importance of publication on physical media has not diminished. In fact, this may be the most critical time in recent history for activist groups, artists, and others to insist upon learning, establishing, and encouraging personal and community documentation practices. Hear me out.

With The OS’s print endeavors I wanted to open up a conversation about this: the ultimately radical, transgressive act of creating PRINT /DOCUMENTATION in the digital age. It’s a question of the archive, and of history: who gets to tell the story, and what evidence of our life, our behaviors, our experiences are we leaving behind? We can know little to nothing about the future into which we’re leaving an unprecedentedly digital document trail — but we can be assured that publications, government agencies, museums, schools, and other institutional powers that be will continue to leave BOTH a digital and print version of their production for the official record. Will we?

As a (rogue) anthropologist and long time academic, I can easily pull up many accounts about how lives, behaviors, experiences — how THE STORY of a time or place — was pieced together using the deep study of correspondence, notebooks, and other physical documents which are no longer the norm in many lives and practices. As we move our creative behaviors towards digital note taking, and even audio and video, what can we predict about future technology that is in any way assuring that our stories will be accurately told – or told at all? How will we leave these things for the record?

In these documents we say: WE WERE HERE, WE EXISTED, WE HAVE A DIFFERENT STORY

*- Lynne DeSilva-Johnson, Founder/Managing Editor,
THE OPERATING SYSTEM, Brooklyn NY 2017*

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CHAPBOOK SERIES 2013: WOODBLOCK

*featuring original prints from Kevin William Reed
Strange Coherence - Bill Considine; The Sword of Things - Tony Hoffman;
Talk About Man Proof - Lancelot Runge / John Kropa;
An Admission as a Warning Against the Value of Our Conclusions - Alexis Quinlan

DOC U MENT

/däkyəmənt/

First meant “instruction” or “evidence,” whether written or not.

noun - a piece of written, printed, or electronic matter that provides information or evidence or that serves as an official record
verb - record (something) in written, photographic, or other form
synonyms - paper - deed - record - writing - act - instrument

[Middle English, *precept*, from Old French, from Latin *documentum*, example, proof, from *docere*, to teach; see *dek-* in Indo-European roots.]

Who is responsible for the manufacture of value?

Based on what supercilious ontology have we landed in a space where we vie against other creative people in vain pursuit of the fleeting credibilities of the scarcity economy, rather than freely collaborating and sharing openly with each other in ecstatic celebration of MAKING?

While we understand and acknowledge the economic pressures and fear-mongering that threatens to dominate and crush the creative impulse, we also believe that ***now more than ever we have the tools to relinquish agency via cooperative means***, fueled by the fires of the Open Source Movement.

Looking out across the invisible vistas of that rhizomatic parallel country we can begin to see our community beyond constraints, in the place where intention meets resilient, proactive, collaborative organization.

Here is a document born of that belief, sown purely of imagination and will.

When we document we assert. We print to make real, to reify our being there.

When we do so with mindful intention to address our process, to open our work to others, to create beauty in words in space, to respect and acknowledge the strength of the page we now hold physical, a thing in our hand... we remind ourselves that, like Dorothy: *we had the power all along, my dears.*

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