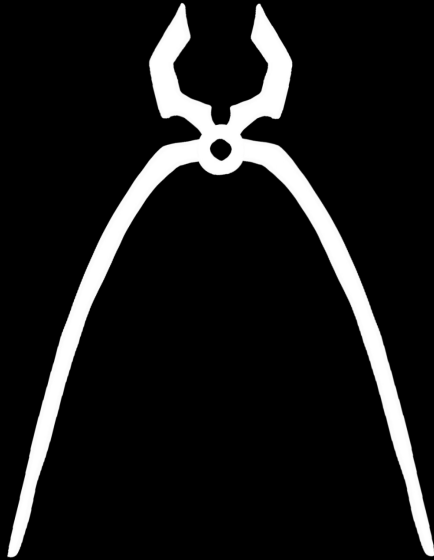
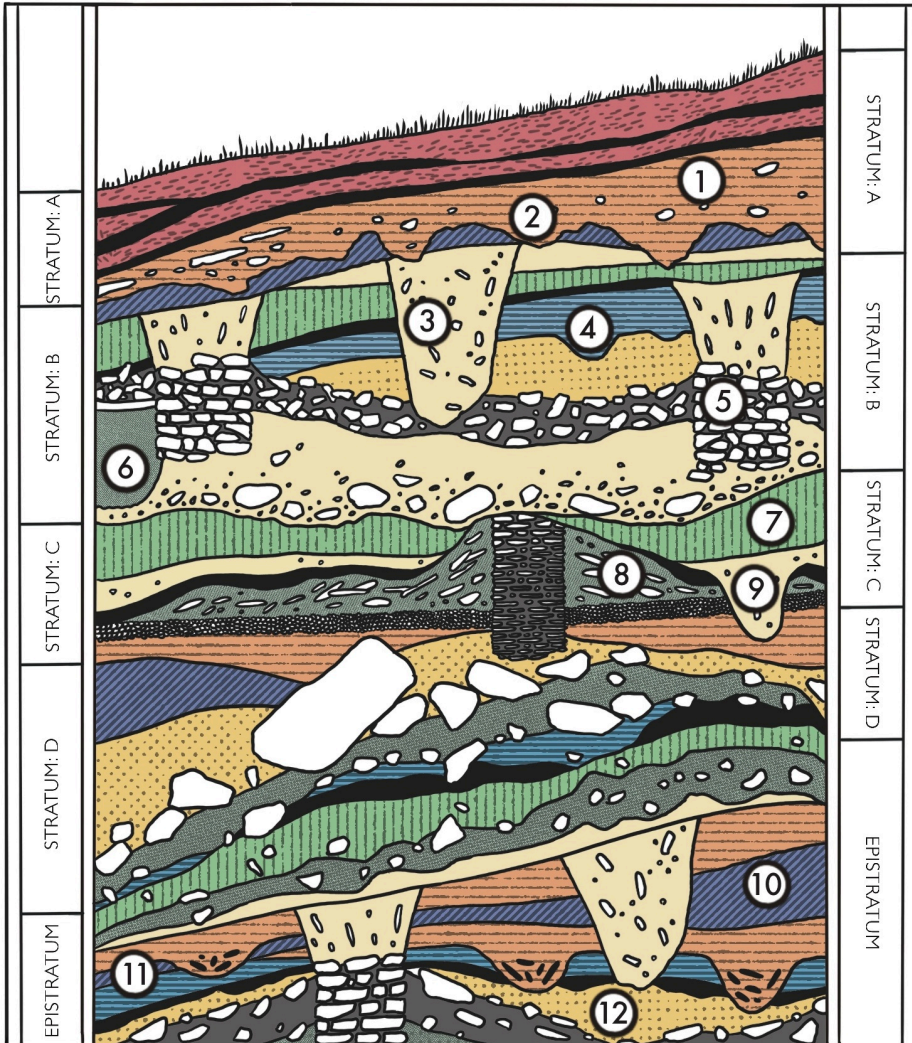


*from* ironclad



marc vincenz

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRATIFICATION



## A Few Thoughts on the Texts & Fragments



How to elucidate the feelings aroused by this hapless archeologist & sometime filmmaker, & recently appointed Commissioner of the Iron Plier Society? Well, terrified! Sweating profusely on the under-lip, carrion birds circling, an electric storm gathering: a faint quivering of the ancestor's voices, as they say back in the old country.

We have finally succeeded in reaching into the distant past; in these pages, in the very least, you'll feel a semblance of the emotions pumping through the wrists of your own progenitors. For centuries we have grappled with the concept of what residue trailed behind. How the senses were manifested in the cosmic tides & the cognitive apparition that was more confined to the tantalizing realm of the quantum. Modern science has simplified these tasks dramatically. We wish to thank the Universities of New Netherlandia, Trottelheim Zwei and Ossetia B, Professors Smythe-Listerman & Abydon-Festerman from the Society of Iron Culture & Practical Understanding, and for the Commissioner General of Information & Bright Insight of our own illuminated city.

Many of us had a whiff of the breadcrumb trail that would lead us to the End Movement & the Containment, & have persevered just as the holy twinned ravens & their sister serpent.

Which prior citizen had deposited the Great Idea in the dusty medium of the soaring Ash Cloud? For every major innovation is the next in a generation of further cognitive eruptions, or so sayeth the Great Smith, plowing ahead with her fabulous Solar Irons.

Dear citizens, in seventeen and a half years we have unearthed tens of millions of cubic hands of organic and inorganic matter. That leap across millennia is a mere blink—almost as if your ancestor had turned back to face you eye to eye—and in that briefest fluttering of fingers or that sideways glance, handed you all their civil dreams, their savage inspirations & caustic aspirations.

Please peruse these chambers & walls & little-known alcoves with an open mind, & know despite the eons they divide, the fathers and mothers they served are almost the same as you or I.

May we all find our misnomers in the dark and spell them out in an illuminating firelight, and may the union of Father Fire and Mother Oil enflame us all.

Intrepidly, ever-cognitively, & as fiercely practical as always, your,

Citizen-Smythe Frederica Faustina-Flysson,  • •  
Chairperson for the Society for the Preservation of Iron & Oil, **City of New **

## An Earthly Archeologist Does Her Very Best

& in her youth, as was the fashion of her aquatic ancestors, she dined on sea snails, periwinkles, mealy clams, clusters of imp seaweeds, seed shrimp & briny sea grasses, & these sustained her like a weathered river-vane sensing her currents—

even through that uneven breathing as she wrestled anointed roots of copperwood tree upon copperwood tree upcountry terrestrially from valley to sea, replanting them in the dirt which was the place that begat our great mother city—

## Or So the Ancient Saying Goes

Arm in arm,  
the fragrance

of copperwood  
attends you

through hill  
& dale, along

well-worn  
wormweed trails,

just as one godly  
eye follows you in-

to the steady,  
steely storm:

We feed off  
each other, silently,

was once said  
quite quietly.

## The Myth of Ø

### *Trees Trees Trees*

On a walkabout with her conscience, an old woman  
wanders the savanna dragging an old tree, sweeping up dust.  
Copperwood: a balm for the soul, she heaves & sighs & coughs.

Let me help you, let me carry your burden, says Ø passing by.  
No, young woman, mine alone to carry! says the old woman.  
Ø trips on a rock, dances among the roots of an ancient tree

as if the sky were falling, but rights her surer footing.  
You carry your own burden too, says the old woman wheezing,  
& mine to carry alone, says Ø, palms on her knees deep-breathing.

A mind is much to carry, says the old woman, & proceeds to hoist  
the old tree upon her shoulders; tawdry leaves tangle in her wiry hair,  
until, to be fair, the weight falls upon her, & drives her down

through the surface beneath the earthworms—where, accordingly,  
the earth herself recounts another story of fire & brimstone,  
of theft & burden, & the rise & fall & rise of the surface-bound:

all the palm fronds splayed in virtuousness or clasped in prayer,  
& so too the wiry fingers, who fall upon heavy shoulders.  
Ø picks up the old tree, hoists it to her very own & walks on.

*Twinned Ravens, a Plea*


A minor mirror of twinned resplendent creatures:  
a major discourse cut between two of the same cloth:  
an infernal debate concerning those who were not at hand:

When the island is seen, a vast luxuriating green—  
the cheers resound from here to the old motherland, &  
our two young ravens are returning from the shore:

It has been sighted! they call out, & the people break out  
in *vino veritas*, empty every flagon & flask in sight, raise glasses  
& spirits, & flutes & mandolins serenade the night.

& eventually, they strike land, drag heels through arid sands,  
until upon a clearing bright in the midst of a cloud forest,  
the sun breaks through to reveal a tree stump with the face

of an old woman: That's her conscience, a young girl with braids says.  
Her mother, an old woman, scolds: Shame on you, child!  
The tribal leader says: a good place to plant ourselves.

We need to live in a place with a conscience, a place where we carry  
our own burden with no shoulders to fall upon, even in prayer.  
Meanwhile, the spirit of  observes from a woody incline.



*O Plus O Plus O Plus One Equals Ø*

& thus, by imperial decree, with the flourish of one hand,  
the new world was born on the seashore & the edge of the jungle,  
among the crabs & caiman & the five-eyed newts.

& such she was, Woman of the Holy Serpent: born, it was said,  
from the hot bosom of the volcano among the new & forgiven,  
here at the face in the stump, where the old woman's conscience

was once again, one eye arched, hairy nostrils flared, reprimanding—  
right here at the heart of the city! where, this very morning  
goatherds strolled the abundant inclines, vendors plied their wares,

each & every fish glimmering, each fruit in plentitude—mangoes  
brisling to the size of melons & blood oranges bleeding like coconuts;  
crustaceans & crabs of every hue of pink & red—&,

here too was where the Woman of the Holy Serpent was entwined  
with the twinned ravens & a mycelium now known to be the root  
of the decline of a civilization; here we chose to raise our city!

Let them all stare! Let them point fingers! Let them toss stones!  
& thus, by imperial decree, with the flourish of one hand,  
the new world was born on the seashore & the edge of the jungle.

## Fragments of a City Called ~~Ø~~ in Linear B

*A21-3B: broken wax seal, tooth marks*

Earthen hills of dirt, & sand & broken bones  
& smashed pottery guard the city; a long line of vendors  
assembles on the first vestiges of muddy streets

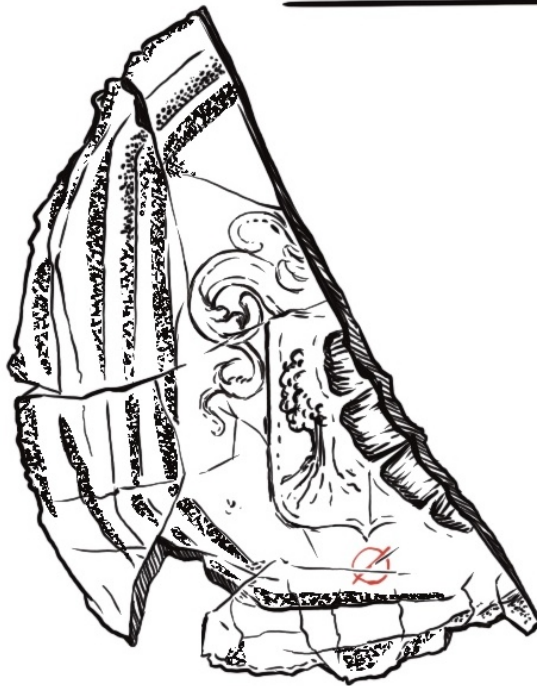
& cobbled lanes: the Center ~~Ø~~, or the Forum, they call it.  
Trees are logged, stacked & counted, then shipped off  
somewhere even more bountiful where colorful birds

are shot, garroted, plucked, roasted & happily polished off  
with lemon rind, shallot, finely sliced turmeric & Oceanic garlic.  
You can purchase delectable birdheart skewers & deep-

fried monkey testicles on almost every corner.  
Monkeys always clamor in the trees—& some of them,  
the intrepid, leap palm-leaf huts & the tiled inner-city,

& skirt the first muddy channels of the growing sprawl & ooze.  
Refuse collects: swirling soups of gray & green  
& frothy-spumy-white accumulate fruit fly swarms.

Stirring films of the sheerest plastics  
radiate  
in brilliant **ultraviolet**s.



*A67-1De: unbroken wax seal, fragment torn*

Vendors assemble their hard-won wares:  
coal, copper, tin & iron ore ingots from the Moss Mountains ...

... parasols from Profusio & pottery  
made in the heady stream which was Ruffello ...

... saffron & spices from the Salt Islands  
& snailshells & pearls from the Mother Islands ...

... coral & turquoise from the Purple Umbra of Trottelheim ...

*A344-17H: broken wax seal, scratches, thumbprint*

The faithful & the faithless converged ...

upon the new city square, which was not yet quite square ...

... the city planners had been at their prints day & night  
for weeks & weeks; & the laborers

(who came from as far afield as Magenticum)

arrived here hoping to find a city plated in gold...

The planners took note, &  
designated an area  
on the furthest fringes  
of the swamplands  
where, on weekends,  
immigrants could dig  
to their heart's lamplights.

*A697-3Bc: cracked fragment*

... from the House of the Heavens,  
discover the latest storm ...

Once we filled our teeth with lead, later only vice.

## Fragment Seventy-Seven C

Was the burden  
of the populace

(at least represented  
by their conscience);

(still, apportioned,  
conscience can be bought

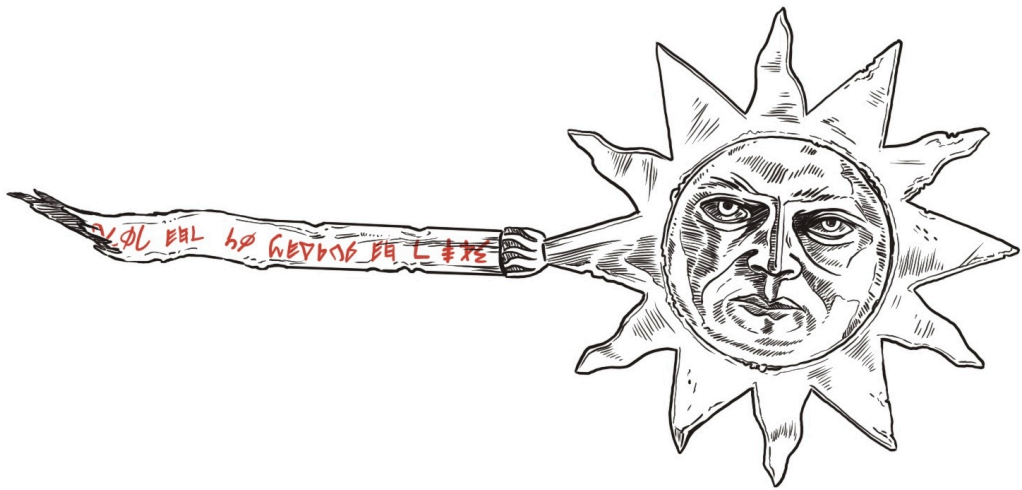
like many other  
convenient things),

(at least, so say  
the old & infirm);

(&, this was realized,  
somewhere down the corridor),

(& was passed on  
to the corresponding gene),

(accordingly).





## Tiny Poem on the Dark Ages

Down at the creek,  
S finally finds her  
tiny shoes. Strangely,  
her tiny soles are missing.

Linear B translation on a silver amulet wrapped around a female index finger



Fabulously **Exotic** Flowers

All the hummingbirds  
hover here

for a few seconds  
listening to **seeds**

murmur in a bold  
bristling heart.

Linear B-2 translation from a fresco in a tavern in Magenticum



## Seven Early Theories on the **Origins** of Life

[•]

*Emanation*

A **vibrant**  
string from  
the spiral  
of all creation.

[••]

*Illumination*

A **burst**  
of light  
ensnared  
in a wound  
of night.

[•••]

*Insemination*

In com-  
passion,  
**a god**  
crawls  
out of  
the empt-  
iness.

[••••]

*Inebriation*

**Walking**

the dark  
& lonely  
corridors  
like the first  
ghosts.



[🎯]

*Instigation*

**Sired into**  
the cosmos  
by a giant bat  
once named  
Esmeralda.

[🎯]

*Elevation*

Beyond ours  
is another  
who holds us  
our place for  
**all eternity:**

[🎯••]

*Libation*

More than  
this is not  
known; &  
what is, is  
**also**  
**barely**  
**known.**

## Seizing the Mantle of Liberty

Stones are easily thrown, is said.

Atonement, on the other hand,  
is as hard won as a brick of gold.

To guide the perplexed home,  
cast a beacon of light, was once widely  
announced early Sunday mornings.



## A Cosmic Oxymoron

& when  
finally we  
can drift  
mindfully  
in endless  
space, will  
we settle  
down on  
another  
planet &  
just let  
our junk  
sink in?