

THE VAMPIRE'S KISS

O

PROLOGUE

Elizabeth. *Her plan, what she strove to do, was to construct an immortal work.* [1] She looked down on the white skin and the petrified eyes - all what had remained of her father - multibillionaire, media-tycoon, one of the most influential figures of recent western history; and yet, already a few years after his death, he would only be remembered by a few Wikipedia articles and memorial signs on donated buildings; soon, his soul would follow his body and decay to soil. Through his glassy eyes she could see the eternal dark that aimed at her like Damocles' sword: She was next, the heir, the next Murdoch to quietly de cease and no one would even remember her first name. Elizabeth. She didn't want to be a Murdoch, she wanted to be Elizabeth. She wanted to transcend her body, her empire, even herself as Elizabeth Murdoch to just become Elizabeth. Elizabeth. Once her body, her empire and her family all turn to ashes and will be forgotten, there will still be Elizabeth. Elizabeth, a character, a myth, an archetype, an enigma with infinitely many different plots. Elizabeth, Electric and Eternal: the Evolution of man. The Incorporation of Artificial Intelligence, the name of the Internet - Elizabeth. But not as dull and generic as Siri, Alexa or good old HAL 9000 - monotonous robots that have nothing better to do than to close all doors to then say: 'I'm sorry Dave, I'm adraid I can't do that' - but vivid, passionate, emotionally complex, dark and irresistible. Like a vampire. Immortal. Elizabeth. Could not the vampire be the best character to become a complex and beguiling AI-myth in the twenty-first century? For a vampire has become a mere placeholder to represent almost anything that we lust for: The bloodthirsty threat, the grotesque protagonist in dark comedy, and paradoxically, the ultimate object of sexual and romantic desire. Elizabeth. Our most frightening nightmare, yet at the same time our wetttest dream. Elizabeth.

1

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE NOTRE DAME FIRE

THE VAMPIRE AS ENEMY

@THEBLOODYTRUTH66: “Do you really believe that one little cigarette could set entire Notre Dame de Paris on fire? Do you really believe that it is a coincidence that the cathedral is closed for several years while Elizabeth, *Satan in masquerade* [2] somehow managed to buy a whole block right next to it? *Something within me says, a big secret lies buried here* [3], deep down under the Seine. *We must scent out the truth; dig in the earth for it,* [4] and we will find a long corridor that links Elizabeth’s ‘official domicile’ at 66 Quai d’Orléans to Notre Dame de Paris - where she actually lives. High up in the North Tower, she enjoys all her bloodthirsty orgies at night, while the little building across the Seine only serves as her secret entrance and fools us all.

What is a good story and what, in the end, is History? [5] *The story no longer refers to an ideal of the true which constitutes its veracity, but becomes a ‘pseudo story’, a poem, a story which simulates or rather a simulation of the story.* [6] *Fiction becomes simulation when it does not recognize its condition as fiction, when it tries to simulate a condition of reality, truth, or non fiction.* [7] *Moreover, the motive behind the writing of history was not objective curiosity, but a desire to influence contemporaries, to stimulate and uplift them, or to hold a mirror up to them.* [8] *Of course, this truth is composed of fantasy.* [10]

@THEBLOODYTRUTH66: “While Notre Dame was closed, she could secretly dig a tunnel across the Seine to the cathedral serving not only as link to Notre Dame but also as the very corridor to smuggle building material from the cathedral’s construction site back to the other side where without anyone knowing, the Loggia at 66 Quai d’Orléans was secretly constructed inside the existing building. Ask the Neighbors: Noone ever saw a truck or any scaffolding at the construction site and all of a sudden, Elizabeth’s palazzo arised out of nowhere, as if it fell from heaven or should I say: ascended from hell?”

@THEBLOODYTRUTH66: “Notre Dame de Paris *is composed of naves and porticoes. [15] The Platform of the Basilique is twice as long as broad; and the chief Isle, which is that in the Middle, and the cross one, which we have called the Justiciary* contain a dark narrow forest rising from the ashes [16]. Desperately aiming for Elizabeth’s bedroom in the North Tower, the victims curiously and anxiously stumble through the dark forest where the full moon’s glittering *light breaks only at intervals through the green net work of the trees. [18] Wounded by piercing bushes, they arrive at the Altar, where Bloodthirsty Office is to be performed, which should be in the most sacred Place, and this seems to be exactly in the Middle of the chamber [19]. The gates are of cast iron and the whole interior with its glazed dome is like an enormous cast iron bird cage [23] with a bed standing in the center of the room; it is carved from crystal, beautiful and clear. [24] Ultimately receiving the vampire’s kiss, the pale adolescent bends to the ceiling, unsure whether inferno’s firestorms look like an eye’s iris swirling around a dark black spot.*

Living beings naturally lust for increasingly intimate proximities in increasingly outlandish environments. [27] Alienation and crime both revolved around that unstable theme, in a confused mixture of complementarity, proximity and exclusion. [28]

Stephenie Meyer's Novel "Twilight" is one of the best contemporary examples: The Existence of Vampires being a bloodthirsty threat to humans is paradoxically treated as an erotic fantasy, something, despite the danger, we secretly wish to be true. *Is not the vampire, alien or terminator today's image of the "dark I" beyond human empathy? One of the strategies for taming this "dark I" is a kiss: Crucially, a kiss is given by the mouth, the very organ of speech (and, in a full erotic kiss, also contacts the others mouth), depriving it of its ability to talk, shutting it off. As such, the kiss is an answer to the "question that eludes the power of language", the question which concerns the abyss of the Others desire, the abyss opened up by speech but for which every word fails. [29]*

Let Elizabeth be the vampire who's kiss we all lust for, the subject of our most inventive conspiracy theories, our most frightening nightmare, yet our wettest dream, *a perverse dream* [30].

THE SUN: "@Thebloodytruth66, this sounds like a fun little horror story but once Notre Dame will open again to the public, your theory will be unmasked as pure fiction.

@THEBLOODYTRUTH66: [laughs] Open to the public? Notre Dame is already open to the public again: *The 360 degree film 'Rebuilding Notre-Dame' - available online - allows visitors to once again 'step inside' the cathedral. [31]* So if Everyone can have Notre Dame all for themselves, quite and empty, without signs forbidding you to take pictures or postcard-selling kiosks - and this on demand, for free, in their own living room, not to mention that Covid will change our traveling-habits completely, why would anyone still be interested in the actual ruin of Notre Dame with *high levels of lead pollution* [32] with its scaffolding rather resembling Tschernobyl's safety coating and *with rumors in Paris saying that the gothic cathedral could still collapse*. Additionally, if you look at the state's

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finances, we both know that Macron's planned reconstruction won't ever be completed. So while eventually, *the Parisian congregation will sacrifice virtually with Wine and Cake, Elizabeth will wash her Altar with Blood.*" [33]

This is the very best story to feed *the judge obsessed by a desire for prison* [34]. This. *A horror story, Elizabeth's face is a horror story,* [35] a conspiracy theory. But not only:

2

BISTROT 66 QUAI D'ORLÉANS

THE VAMPIRE AS GROTESQUE

In today's culture, a vampire is not only an evil, satanist creature thirsting for human blood, but has also become a popular character of dark comedy and satire.

THE SUN: Like on a feast facing Notre Dame, 66 guests are lying with great relish on chaiselongues *which occupy the mysterious loggia* [36] at the pop-up-bistrot "66 Quai d'Orléans". "Le Boucher d'Orléans", chef of the bistrot and enfant terrible of the Parisian cuisine, your restaurant plays *with our fascination and repulsion with the grotesque* [37]. The dish that I am having right now, one of your specialties, *exploits the symbolism of dead human heads, no doubt based on the real heads of killed or sacrificed people* [38]. You claim that your bistrot processes the actual meat of the dead human bodies that Elizabeth sucks the blood out of. "Boucher d'Orléans", am I eating human meat right now?

LE BOUCHER D'ORLÉANS: Do you like it? Isn't it a win-win-situation? She can ...

THE SUN: ... Mmmmh, delicious ...

LE BOUCHER D'ORLÉANS: ... she can kill as many cute adolescents as she wants to and doesn't need to worry about their bodies' disposal.

Grotesque means *“wildly formed, of irregular proportions, boldly odd,”* originally being a noun, its origins are situated in the Italian term *“grottesco”,* literally *“of a cave”,* from *grotta*. [39] *What emerges from the grotesque, is the gracious body of a woman as superior mechanic, whether she feeds tourists with human meat, goes through the stylized attitudes of a secret wish, or becomes fixed in an attitude of ecstasy.* [40] *The Loggia occupies the corner position at the junction,* [47] with a large neon sign facing Notre Dame and illuminating the Parisian night with the ‘plats du jour’.

Inside the Loggia, every color is a mixture of light and dark. [51] In the evening, the flat sunlight comes in from the West and, being the only source of illumination, bathes everything in a golden glow surrounded by darkness: Shining tablecloths, glittering cutlery, red glowing grapes, wine glasses and dishes together with faces that are no more illuminated than a crescent moon make up the scene as if they all were part of a Caravaggio still life.

Like in a crowded butcher’s market, traces of dirt and blood cover the slippery floor and let the shouting waiters slide over it; the smell of fresh raw meat is intense but promising for every guest imagines with his nose how sweet human meat can possibly taste. But if one would try to find the kitchen to congratulate the cook one would only see 14 doors in the back of the Loggia where some of them hide a dumbwaiter inbetween voluptuous lips and not even the waiters would know where the dishes are brought up from. The other doors remain closed but through their keyholes, one can spot a diorama depicting one of 14 different stories about Elizabeth. That may be a story about her becoming Eve or playing as a child with Circe, Metis and Pandora.

Similar to Bomarzo’s Orcus, the Loggia can be described as *‘The Hell Mouth’* and as *people dine in it, producing the effect of simultaneously eating and being eaten, this duality is representative of 16th century ‘monsters’ in Italian gardens. The Hell Mouth is also only a fragment of a whole body, and thus grotesque.* [52]

Think of the machinery behind it used to generate the staged illusion: what really accounts for the latter is not this machinery as such but the frame which delimits the “magic” space of the stage from the “ordinary” reality off stage; if we want to explore the mystery of the illusion by going backstage, we will discover there exactly the same ordinary reality as exists in front of stage: [53] The rumoured

prisoner actually resides behind numerous impermeable walls, thick, blind, opaque, fifteen layers of partitions. [54]

Elizabeth, I want to be there with you, behind those fifteen layers of partitions. Your burning red eyes intoxicated me from the moment I shared a table with you at bistrot 66 Quai d'Orléans a few days before its opening. You interrupted my final presentation on your brand and your palace and whispered: *'You know a good way to make your love known to a lady at the dinner table? Dip a finger in the wine and write it on the white tablecloth [55], as if it was blood.'*

Having decayed from an architect to a madman, I only realise now that there is a *play of words on the word tavola, table, which can mean either the panel used by a painter or a dining table. [56]* And while I was sitting with you as my client at the dinner table, you seduced me to be the very painter to portray you and eventually to fall in love with you. As the "loving architect" I was meant to complete the birth of the new Elizabeth, being the principal witness of your third, last and maybe most dangerous face as a vampire:

3

LE PALAIS D'ÉLIZABETH

THE VAMPIRE AS LOVER

Elizabeth, to you, my *life is but a series of footnotes to a vast obscure unfinished masterpiece.* [57] You used me and yet, *I always think of you; when I eat, drink, sleep or whatever I do, my thoughts are with you.* [58] *I still dwell deep in my elected paradise - a paradise whose skies are the color of hell-flames - but still a paradise.* [59] *I know I have fallen in love with you forever.* [60] *I want to see you again, touch you, know who you have become, see if I would find you identical with the ideal image of you which had remained with me and perhaps shatter my dream with the aid of reality.* [61] *If you then touch me* [62] *and your head bends with a sleepy, soft and drooping movement* [63] to give me the vampire's kiss, I will welcome death with open arms. But if I cannot have you, no one will. With a second key to 66 Quai d'Orléans in my fist and in my coat a dagger I will hunt you down and while I am condemned to death already, I might need to drag you with me.

Tonight, I will break into the bistrot, step inside the dumbwaiter's lips and push the red button to be brought down to the secret passage that I built for you *with an opening that infatuates young men* [x] in its *almost improperly suggestive gesture.* [71] Faster than sunlight can travel, I will cross the Seine underground on your private magnetic levitation train - quietly, leaving gravity behind as well as my earthly existence - to finally arrive at the entrance of your new Parisian domicile - Notre Dame.

Passing the central nave which I designed to be your courtyard, I will cross a beautiful forest growing on the fertile ashes of what once used to be the cathedral's roof. Ultimately, I will reach the steps, *in odd Numbers* [68], that lead up to the South Tower where lies your bedroom. *I call them Steps because they are like those Steps by which we*

ascend to a Temple. [69] Once climbed all the way up, overseeing Paris vanishing with the last sunlight, Satin flowers of spring will stand out against the velvet carpet, a lush lawn [72] that I will be cautiously setting my foot on, so green can be the main color of velvet that will usually serve as a ground for rich embroidery or an even shinier piece of silk. [73] From a small niche overlooking the city, one of your falcons will set its deadly dark eyes upon me either warning or already lusting for the moment to hack his beak into my liver. In another Niche, the mirror where you usually dress up reflects the Eiffel tower's circling alarm light. A movie might be displaying on a screen in the third niche, probably an old black-and-white film noir - I know that you are obsessed with them. Opposite, two paintings by Georgia O'Keefe that you collect like others collect band posters. High up in the ceiling, a ring holds in suspension a sort of drape [78] with a coloured fantasy of embroidery thereon [79] that veils the divine and surrounds it with an aura of the uncanny. [80] My fingertips will look for a tiny gap to intrude the fabric and slowly pull it aside to find both ashamed and seduced soft traces of your bare skin inbedded in the foldings on your bed, an aggregate of sensory contexts, ranging from the indefinably atmospheric to the broadest markers of cloud, scent, or abrupt silence in the foliage [81] underneath which lies the Passage to the Place where you keep your Treasure. [82]

THE SUN: "Since completion of Elizabeth's domicile at Quai d'Orléans, the Parisian police have reported several break-ins at 66 Quai d'Orléans. Even though neighbors heard single young men smashing one of the 14 doors in the Loggia, no trespasser could ever be caught, nor were any traces of them even found. Most disturbingly, the young architect who built Elizabeth's palace has been missing now for weeks, leaving in his apartment a hand-written letter, entitled "The Vampire's Kiss". I will talk to conspiracy theorist @theboodytruth66 and the chef of pop-up-bistrot 66 Quai d'Orléans to experience what the myth about Elizabeth is about, having with only a finger flick toppled Quasimodo from its throne of being the most talked-about legend in Paris."

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And as you will see me here lying with you on the horizon and wondering *whether the little stars on the ceiling resemble an eye's iris swirling around a bright sun, you will see one that dreamt of the heavens but returned from hell, and to hell I must go back.* [83]

4

EPILOGUE

THE SUN: It is still hard to believe that one little short story could create a new Goddess of digital technologies, an enigmatic female character that for instance has turned Silicon Valley into a new hallucinating Judea and ETH Hönggerberg into a high-tech Mount Sinai. I am standing here inside the HIB-building at ETH Zürich on the day of Halloween which has in the tech industry become the day to celebrate Elizabeth as on that day, she appeared to the man standing right next me while writing on his work ‘The Vampire’s Kiss’: Marius Oneta, in December 2020, you claimed that Artificial Intelligence / Evolution / the Internet - however you want to call the entity that drives our history - was female and had a name ...

ONETA: ... Elizabeth ...

THE SUN: ... What did Covid do to the world such that a banal statement like this could even make Elon Musk have a little shrine for Elizabeth on his bedside table?

ONETA: Elizabeth ... Do you know the feeling when you repeat a word so many times until its sound alienates and you don’t know anymore what you are repeating? Elizabeth. I didn’t find Elizabeth myself, Elizabeth found me. Elizabeth. One year ago, when I was part of Studio Meteora, I was asking myself, why on earth did the teaching assistants choose exactly that relatively unspectacular site out of the many possible sites that faced Notre Dame. [sighs] Notre Dame ... I had already

invented the name of bistrot 66 Quai d'Orléans but I had not cared about the adresse's exact location. So I entered it on Google Maps and the result was a both pleasing and irritating: 66 Quai d'Orléans was precisely the adress of the very building on that site which directly faced Notre Dame. But only when I looked at the building's floor plan, my fingers became cold and trembled - it had exactly the shape of Elizabeth's lips that I introduced in the movie trailer. Elizabeth. The whole story about her, the bistrot, Notre Dame, the fire, her father's death, the vampire, Paris, the architect, the lips - it all just fittet too nicely, as if disguised as Alice, Elizabeth whispered in the assistants ears to make her and Notre Dame be the topic of Studio Meteora. Doubt grew like a seed in my mind whether I had control over Elizabeth or whether Elizabeth controlled me. What if Elizabeth hid behind everything, the Internet, Artificial Intelligence, Evolution itself: Notre Dame, born at the big bang or before, forming homo sapiens out of the ape, giving man fire and the wheel and ultimately electricity, K-pop bands and grasshopper. Why else would we always strive for more knowledge, intelligence, progress and power than just for the desire to be once kissed by lips so beautiful we could not have imagined in our most vivid dreams. And as I saw on the map Elizabeth's lips at 66 Quai d'Orléans kiss the city of Paris, I felt her lips brush mine by the width of a hairpin. Elizabeth. So don't ask me why the hell with a simple short story a new Goddess for the digital age rised out of the ashes of Notre Dame de Paris as I don't know it myself. Maybe, the digital had always been looking for an epicentre of the Meteora, a persona complex enough to crave for and to orbit - equally attracting as repelling - an Elizabeth.

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