

EPILOGUE: NOCH EINE SCANDAL IN BOHEMIA

Seldom are men given times in which they may think what they will
and say what they think.

David Hume (1777)

By the term "Universe," ... I mean to designate the utmost
conceivable expanse of space, with all things, spiritual and material,
that can be imagined to exist within the compass of that expanse.

Edgar Allan Poe (1848)

We seek a theory which describes all that actually happens, and
nothing that does not, a theory in which everything which is not
forbidden is compulsory.

Dennis Sciama (1959)

Even a very tiny black hole would be a little too powerful to use as a
weapon.

Michael Crichton (1987)

And it's so not!

Anderson Cooper (2011)

The first correct solution [to Olbers' paradox] was proposed by writer
Edgar Allan Poe in his *Eureka: A Prose Poem*, an altogether fantastic
and arguably unhinged intertwining of poetic and scientific passion.

Michael Sprague (2012)

The task of the courier is threefold. Swiss banks make the first task easy. All he has to carry on the flight, Los Angeles to Zurich, is two numbers and he has no trouble carrying them in his head. The day before the transfer he withdraws two million euros. The account is at the Morgan Stanley and is in US dollars. He doesn't ask how much remains; his own account is with another bank. He walks out with two sheets of paper in an ordinary briefcase, two €1,000,000 bearer bonds. Briefly he fantasizes taking off. Briefly because they're paying him a lot of money that he'd like to live to spend.

Although it's cold he wears a thin black coat. He walks the two blocks to the Hauptbahnhof, noting with relief the wind has dropped. It's all according to the plan. He's in good time for the IC718. It pulls out of the station smoothly at 10:34

right to the second. Three hours later he is pulling past the Quai du Seujet into Genève Cornavin—13:30, right on time. Before he leaves the station he books the TGV to Paris, Gare de Lyon, in the morning. He's relieved to get a reservation on the 7:51, which will let him get more sleep tonight than would the early train. It's a short walk to his hotel and he knows the way. They've used it once before. Checking in, he gives the name that's in the passport he leaves at the desk. There's another passport in the lining of his bag. It's in the name he used in Zurich when he booked tomorrow's EC55 from Paris Est—he'll have more than an hour to make the Métro urbain connection from the Lyon station—to Berlin, with an easy change of train at Mannheim. Later in the hotel restaurant he hands her the bonds. Someone nearby, he assumes, watches and will now start watching her. Maybe they already were. Task two is done.

Near midnight the next day he checks into his Berlin hotel. Task three is the tricky one. He must make the pickup. This is the last link before the flight to Amman. The concierge will book two seats.

He's looking forward to his new life. The universe will have to make its way without him. In neither of his passports is his first name Frank.

Only after she is gone for good does it come back to me. I read my copy over, carefully this time. In Holmes' words, or in Doyle's, what a blind beetle I have been! The idea is there and she was right—it's out there on the Web. It's Poe who leads the way, not only in detective fiction but *cosmogony* as well. 'Let us proceed, then,' he allows engagingly after four thousand words of cryptic camouflage, 'to our legitimate thesis, The Universe.' And after much more of the same he does indeed proceed, with such obeisance to religion as is common in his time, to write about its origin. It is, he says:

One particle -- a particle of one kind -- of one character -- of one nature -- of one size -- of one form -- a particle, therefore, "without form and void"-- a particle positively a particle at all points -- a particle absolutely unique, individual, undivided, and not indivisible only because He who created it, by dint of his Will, can by an infinitely less energetic exercise of the same Will, as a matter of course, divide it.

This is 1848! He sets *himself* up as a fictional detective with a cosmic quest. He *knows* that he has stumbled on the real thing. It is too hot to hold and, too, it is too hot to drop. He wraps it in poetic prose and throws a long Hail Mary pass to *us* in the end zone of his imagination. Its title should have tipped me off: *Eureka!* Used to express delight on finding, discovering, or solving something, says *Encarta*, heritor of Funk and Wagnall's and of Collier, in care of Microsoft but now run off the road by Wikipedia into the dictionary ditch.

Poe is the denigrated epicure of rhetoric, a man who loves to play with words, a writer of strange stories that arise unbidden in his addled head. Detective stories even—as an incidental sideline he *invents* the *genre*. He's read more in France than in America. His life is a story of its own. French poet, Poe-translator Baudelaire describes it as 'a tempest with no calm.' How did Poe find a path to *his* one particle and then divide it? Did he follow the same trail as Frank? Impossible; he didn't have most of the clues.

Computer off, I stare unseeing through the window. I too have few clues. I'm following the other Frank. *Noch eine* simply means 'another', more or less. But it can have a gently hectoring, ironic, 'yet another' edge to it that feeds a German sense of humor. For example, Frank, a rotten correspondent who has *never* sent his wife a postcard, could, if she were German so she'd share the joke, mail her one from Berlin headlined 'Noch eine Karte von Frank!' If his name were Frank; if he were in Berlin. Maybe he is. Which brings me to Bohemia.

Just east of Germany, Bohemia is now the western Czech Republic; its capital is Prague. She's arrested there this morning, *Praha hlavní*, crisp as always, towing her small suitcase off the train. There's a clip on CNN as the news ticker's reading: Another breach in LHC security. The German news might say: *Noch eine ...* without irony. No mention of her name. She keeps her face turned from the camera. But it is her. It's she.

I booked her travel a few weeks ago. This time she's Gerda Reichenbach. Is it the doyen of the *Berlin Circle* or Doyle's desperate attempt to do his hero in that sparks her latest alias? The IC737 from Genève-Aéroport at 16:36 arrives Zürich Hauptbahnhof 19:28. A tight connection seemingly for the CNL459 that leaves at 19:42 for Prague. But it's a short stroll from a Swiss train to a German train, both keeping perfect time. On CNN the station clock says she pulls into *Praha hlavní* in her first-class sleeper at 10:26, a minute late. I just happen to be looking for the news. Three women in dark suits are there to meet her on the platform. A quick flash of some kind of badge. They look official and maybe they are, who knows? Tipped off? That might explain the news. Who could have done that? Do I wonder? Not.

Why Prague? A lunch meeting? I think also not. She has a ticket on to Warsaw with a bad connection—plain train 405 at 22:09, arriving Warszawa Centralna the next day. If she had further travel plans she didn't say. She knew she would be on the run. Her choices there would be to stay on the slow 405 to Moskva or St. Petersburg. Neither one looks useful in the Age of Interpol. One thing she knew how to do was travel.

Odds-on they will find she planned to ditch the Warsaw ticket. It's disinformation—her last use of me. With another passport, the EC174 from Praha,

leaving 18:31, would take her back through Dresden to the new Hauptbahnhof in Berlin, arriving after midnight. A late supper with some fellow maybe? Why the jog to Prague? Well, it would leave a cold trail and then what do I know? Someone asks me, she was ticketed to Poland.

I'm thinking of her later as I move things from the office. I'm off to fix it, she says as I walk in and surprise her three days back.

Fix what? I ask.

The physics, she says enigmatically, walking out. It's her last word. Moments later I find that she's wiped the hard drives. Not astute. It tips me that she's on the run.

What's my take on her? They—whoever *they* are—are seeking something at the LHC. For fixing physics? Not. Some sort of mischief with black holes? It sounds far-fetched but check it out. LHC+black+holes. A quarter million hits! Google numbers don't mean dick but her whole thing was loony tunes. Deepest secret plot; read all about it on the Web! She is playing her own version of *Big Bang Big Boom*.

In my mind's eye my Frank looks at me but his face is blank. No doubt it will turn out no one can prove anything. Not in a court of law. Nor could we make out *our* case in the court if court there were for physics. But then, as he said, the task of the detective is to work out not whom to convict, but whom to apprehend. That new voice may be Carey, singing: It's a wrap.

By the mid-1900s physics, in the positivist grip, becomes, as Bohm brutally discovers, less than open to ideas. Soon the universe's origin has implications that a physicist can't easily take on. Einstein pulls it off in 1917. But now? If his 1905 works could be submitted now, as is, replete with thought experiments, without citations, would any mainstream physics journal set them into print? Not likely. But it's different back then. Roiled by racism and politics, and racked by war, 1920s physics is a curiously open, not yet leading, not quite mainstream field of science relocating from the German language into English. More than anyone's *his* vision changes physics, rewrites books, and makes the mainstream mainstream now. Dumped in the physics ditch at Princeton, almost ostracized, by sheer momentum of his early concepts he *created* the Establishment.

A half-century before the Einstein era, Poe's *Eureka* blows away the border between poetry and prose. It's as though I read his mind. Poe is no physicist. Nor a philosopher. But, who knows how, he stumbles on a thought that is philosophy pursuing physics. Not the Beginning. Something somewhat in its vein. I close my eyes and try to see myself in his time and his situation. He knew that it was real; he knew too it was too new. It would take a century till Eddington would say 'Eureka would rightly be regarded as a crank-theory by scientists of the time.' It

wouldn't be the only work to hide deep thoughts behind a mask of literary folly. 'Paranoia is nothing less than the onset, the leading edge of the discovery that everything is connected.' I don't need to look it up; it's Pynchon. But Pynchon's not the first to stumble on this thought. Nor is Sciama. 'Everything's connected' is Poe's mantra and his works comprise a crucible of paranoia. Court jester with a cosmic message. 'Even a paranoid can have enemies,' says *noch eine* courtier, Kissinger, maybe just a bit off balance but one of the great. Paranoia might have worked out better for Lemaitre—in perspicacity as well as name the master—and for Bohm. If, as Poe did, they'd embraced it maybe they'd have bested the Establishment. We might by now be living in a different world. But neither one was ever really into jest.

About to leave for the last time, just for Frank who has said all he has to say but may want me to say this as I go, I echo Poe's words: '*What I here propound is true.*' The room is emptier than ever while the world jerks madly, driven into seeming smoothness by the big computer rolling dice.

As I close the door, flash drive in pocket, I am thinking the determinists, if they could have their way, would make out that all this, the thoughts we thought, the words he spoke, the state of each bit in the DRAM, the not quite everlasting physical trajectory of every particle in every atom of the ink on every page of every copy of ideas that Poe said will rise again were all laid out in the Beginning.

Not.