Parrando's Paradox: Error in Holy Lands

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In game theory, Parrando's Paradox claims that although two losing games played independently will always lose, two losing games played alternately may generate a winning streak. Switching between games, like the small repetitive supports of a ratchet, seems to prevent downward movement or losses. Since two games when cross-referenced seem to multiply intelligence, Parrando's Paradox encourages a gamble with losses that would generally be considered unproductive.

Many organized systems, from games to electronic circuitry to genetics, behave in ways that run counter to our common notions of order and efficiency. Messy redundancies, generally thought to inhibit streamlined organization, multiply possibilities for trial and error; accidents broaden the base of responses because they introduce new information that the system needs to grow. Losses, accidents, inversions, jokes, and tricks, whether they appear as exceptional conditions or a staple crop, introduce extrinsic information—error that makes organizations robust.

Yet we try to contain error, to prevent it from disrupting our logical proofs. We even treat it as the destined antithesis that proves the assumed conclusion. Or we impose some means of returning error to a determinate system, calling it part of a chaotic, epigenetic, or entropic order, something that will stay in the family of the whole. Error is "the original sin of the technical object." Error is the Fall, the obstacle that must be overcome to achieve knowledge and holiness. We pretend that the family generates all of the ingredients in the world, even error. Even Satan is, of course, part of the family and the completion of its holiness.

Jerusalem has always incubated segregated losing games. Each game supports a destined circular story of published rules and covenants, and each separate game continues to lose. This text and its accompanying figures carefully misreads Mark Twain, juvenilia, Holy Land web sites, and the Bible, searching Jerusalem for sites of naturally occurring error and for losing games that sometimes win.

I Sandra Blakeslee, "Paradox in Game Theon Losing Strategy That Wins New York Times, 25 January 2000.

2 Paul Virilio, "Surfing Accident," The Art of th Accident: Art, Architectu Media, ed. Andreas Broeckmann et al. (Rotterdam: NAi/V2 Organisatie, 1998), 30–45

Children

lerusalem presents with all of its wounds and grudges preserved, impacted, and expanding, inducing sympathetic distress in all who come in contact with it. It stores every biblical conundrum of the Old or New Testament about hatred and hierarchy. or about success that can come only at the expense or exclusion of others; about kings, tribes, or brothers chosen to receive slightly more or less property or intelligence so that they can then be compared to each other for the rest of their lives. These stories continuously circle very real desires to secure a place, or to be recognized in a place where the rules for qualifying as worthwhile information are constantly shifting, lerusalem also preserves the compulsion to step over the line slightly and provocatively, and to strike preemptively and irreversibly. Its complicated sectional architecture creates additional slight overlaps and infringements to irritate its wounds. Any sectional slice through this city reveals a thick cartoon of claims, overlaps, and memorializations, all preserved as separate destined stories. Any section bristles with relics like those of a child: buried dolls and rocks and bones, marked with crude plagues and hyperbolic tales. It is a living museum devoted to the common love of hatred and entrenchment, to the comfort of immeasurable martyrdom.

Mark Twain's statement that Jesus might forego the Second Coming if it would involve revisiting Jerusalem was already an old joke—reliable fill for the professional humorist, probably when Clemens was tired of being funny. Twain toured the Holy Land in 1869, when most of the slapping, hitting, and rock throwing was between Christian pilgrims of different sects. *The Innocents Abroad*, his account of this quest and other travels, is messy, racist, and quickly written, yet one reads every word, hoping he will not stop, wishing for his companionship in any situation involving religiosity and wondering if by some haphazard placement system he might be one's personal company in heaven or hell. In guidebook parlance and fake King James English he parodies "Presbyterian Palestine" and the evenhanded gravity of every one of its incessant highlights and every square inch of its dust. Twain's feigned reverence for the terribleness of God and his obedience to all claims of authenticity and every linear sequencing of fairy-tale history effortlessly reveals its fraudulence:

The tomb of Adam! How touching it was, here in a land of strangers, far away from home and friends and all who cared for me, thus to discover the grave of a blood relation . . . I leaned upon the pillar and burst into tears . . . And I—I—alas, I did not live to see him. Weighed down by sorrow and disappointment, he died before I was bom—six thousand brief summers before I was bom. But let us try to bear it with fortitude. Let us trust that he is better off where he is. Let us take comfort in the thought that his loss is our eternal gain.³

In the Holy Land today, children make up the majority of the population. Adults shape their minds with leading questions that order and arrange a virtual architecture more important even than the physical architecture of the city. In Palestinian summer

Mark Twain, The Innocents (New York: Viking 1974), 422, 486. camps, commandos teach children war games and other terrorist tactics.⁴ Israel's religious Web sites are often structured to quiz children on a particular version of Jerusalem's history—teaching orthodoxy through rhymes and catechism. Virtual universities teach biased histories of a destined sequence of actions based on ancient promises, conveniently omitting most of the conflict of the last few decades. Rendered in worn parchment with burnt edges, digital buttons conjure spin about celebrities like David and Solomon (two characters who desperately need handling). Children must be shaped not only because of their innate fierceness, but also because an unshaped mind might imagine some kind of lateral interpretation of the stories—might imagine a way around the trouble. By making errors, by introducing contradictory information, such a mind would spoil a comfortable and familiar losing game.

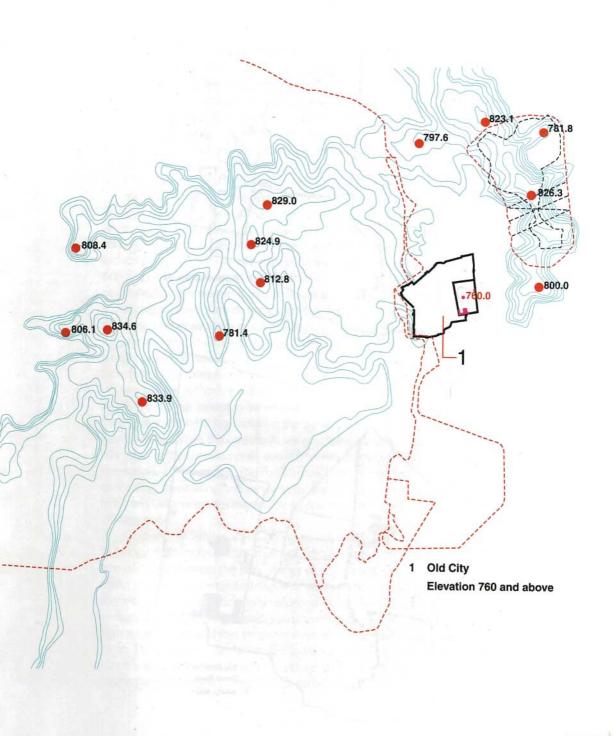
Children are good at the miracles of error, proving that it is everywhere, even when one is desperately trying to exclude it. Twain loved juvenile writing, and collected examples of misspoken language and malapropism. He once even published a Portuguese-English dictionary supposedly authored by one "Pedro Caroleno," a magical book of double-talk any page of which has the power to completely indispose the reader with screaming laughter. Indeed, a whole genre of underground literature is devoted to such material. The richly erroneous phrases found, for example, in responses to history-test essay questions or the off-color gaffes found in the weekly church bulletin are but two of countless sources. This material cannot be contrived; it exists as naturally occurring extrinsic information that appears, by a series of wonderful accidents, even when the author is earnestly trying to stay within official structures and rules. Jesus' followers were the twelve decibels. David was talented at playing the liar. Solomon, one of David's sons, had 300 wives and 700 porcupines. The epistles are the wives of the apostles. One of the opossums was St. Matthew, who was also a taximan.⁵

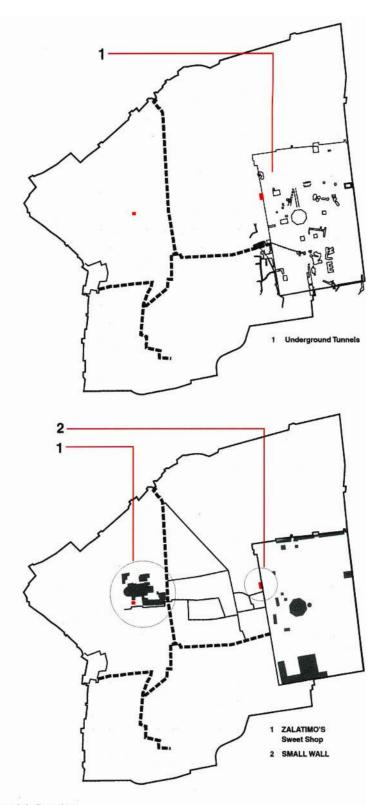
Family

The Bible's stories about God, David, and Solomon in Jerusalem are written as if by a child: wordy digressions filled with error and extraneous circumstance that only occasionally remember where they left off long enough to provide a few rules and genealogies before going about a fight whose origins are impossible to trace. At intervals the clanking and moaning of battle give way to moments of moral and ethical reconciliation. Caught in freeze-frame, mid-grimace and stranglehold, with knife poised for another decapitation and knobby club drawn high, the Bible characters fall silent. As the last muffled clanks are heard offstage, they bow their heads in prayer and meet with God. These heroes congratulate themselves for knowing that they have done something wrong. Their sin makes them more adorable, almost innocent,

4 John F. Burns, "Palestin Summer Camp Offers th Games of War," New Yor Times, 3 August 2000.

5 Anders Henriksson, "A History of the Past, Part I The Wilson Quarterly, Winter (1999). Excerpte in Harper's Magazine, April 2000, 20–23.





as they admit to being naughty and vulnerable. They have conformed by sinning in a way that precisely defies God's laws. God claims to have washed and recuperated his poor foundlings, and then he reminds them what they owe him for the service. Bible scholars get very excited over these moments, expressing their amazement that they can be nourished by these passages while dropping the hint that this nourishment is only possible because of their own powers of appreciation and their insightful infantilizing of the god in the story. The giant revelation is that these moments show a god who is learning to be a father! These are the bargains, the handshakes at the negotiating table that make a family; this is peace making and growth in the Holy Land.

Because it records error and circumstance, however, the Bible is, nevertheless, a book of truth. The official script speaks of ethical soul-searching and political reconciliation in a learning community that is revising its family organization, but the Bible chroniclers are more accurate than that and more honest than any of its characters, including its god. With simple-minded thoroughness they provide additional information and detail, telltale signs that another scene is being played offstage, outside the neat whole that is tied up by the moral of the story. Often arriving after the climactic moralizing, a stray sentence or two tells us that concurrent with this epiphany, David commits a hundred more grisly atrocities for no apparent reason or buys a new wife for one hundred Philistine foreskins. These records provide accidental evidence of a parallel system, of some other kind of deal that is propelling the story, a coldblooded subtext about material and political gain outside the übermorals that God whispers in the author's ear. Ethical demonstration always accompanies the next shuffling of power between father and child, with both concealing what they have up their sleeve, the next ten moves in the game, the unspoken rules about the way the world works. While the covenants are proclaimed aloud, a series of silent hand signals informs the anointed ones about bonuses that will accrue when the others, the interlopers, are discarded. The hand signals instruct the children of the god-father in concealing, dominating, and surviving by manipulating extra information. One final hint from God: when necessary, use an epic nostalgic story of love to drown out the offstage noise.

God and his family cannot, however, admit information that disrupts their own tautological structure. Exotics must go. Error must be eliminated. In some larger pattern of contemplation, the Bible stories sit alone as little knots of trouble or even as marks of stalled or vestigial intelligence, because they do not recognize the contradictory evidence that is accidentally recorded within them. It sometimes seems that multiple games are being played, instructions even offered on how to play both ends against the middle; but that bargain always seems to return allegiance to a single game. The craft of the underhanded tactic is powerful, but all of this crafty intelligence is applied to repeating the structure rather than to growing it. Extrinsic information that might strengthen the game is eliminated to make it appear that one

god's game is winning. While some are clever enough to coax a little success out of the odds, most are left trying to play by the official rules—rules that cannot, however, win against the tactics of players who play at more than one game.

Animals

Old and New Testament tales tell of recycling enemies, reconciling family, consolidating games, and making groups whose geometry is responsive to Euclidean formations (four opossums, twelve decibels). The structure is a weak one and must be continually shored up. The fight must be continually adjudicated. Tribes slaughter each other in valleys, or other spaces that return onto themselves. The Bible is not exactly a traveling story. Both Twain and Melville (more accomplished global travelers than almost anyone today) commented on the Holy Land's small size and how tedious it was that, given its size, it should contain so much history. Twain often compared the Holy Land to the American world of broad, long rivers and gigantic fields of crops, where the prodigal son never came home. He told his readers that nineteenth-century Jerusalem could be circumnavigated in a very few minutes by a "fast walker" and that Jesus did everything he did in the space of a typical county.6

In his fiction Twain often sent boys out to investigate the world, to move through it collecting contradictory evidence and different species of intelligence. Some people organize their minds with arborescent structures, but Twain's boys have minds of grass. These sinners are propelled by their curiosity about how the world works, a world outside their families. They operate in river landscapes as collectors of extensive information. In Jerusalem, Twain's boys would have had the curiosity to dig up relics and grisly details, but they also would have had the courage and common sense to walk away from its neurotic self-involvement.

Twain seemed to put his boys in danger when he sent them out to meet Satan in *The Mysterious Stranger*. Twain's Satan was beguiling, and although he inverted the very structure of their lives, the boys loved him. Set in Austria during the witch hunts of the sixteenth century, *The Mysterious Stranger* tells the story of a series of senseless, tragic deaths, deaths of people close to the boys. Like the Bible's brief pauses in action for ethical demonstration, the "moral sense" that would condemn those supposedly practicing witchcraft was an endless source of amusement for the Stranger. Equally absurd, for him, were attempts to understand the chance happenings of sickness or death as predestined. Twain's Satan claimed that a moral sense was just another of God's clever ruses, to impose ethics on his followers so that He could have none. This was the common architecture of leadership. These were the usual privileges. The Bible tells us so on every page of the fight for Jerusalem and the story of demigods David and Solomon.

6 Twain, 486.

7 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 15. 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Twain's Satan, however, unlike the Biblical Satan, is not an errant part of the whole. He is an animal, but not the beast. Most Bible animals have to be domesticated or herded in pairs to mimic married couples, and they cannot be worshiped in brazen images. Mentions of exotic animals like whales or pelicans are only glorious accidents. In The Mysterious Stranger, Twain sets an episode around a dog that is being viciously beaten by two boys. In their crude hierarchy the dog is beneath them. They beat the dog so badly, "just for nothing—just for pleasure," that the dog's eye comes out.8 Yet Twain's boys love the dog, and the dog looks to Satan for comfort. Satan replaces the dog's eye and understands his voice—the language of another species. The two chat for a while with the dog's head in Satan's lap while the boys look on with intuitive understanding. This Satan is not a poodle, a domesticated animal; he is no single animal but one of many animals. He is a point of translation to another population of creatures. He is a distributed mind. There is a world of comfort and solution in difference that is everywhere, unattached and free-floating. Twain's Satan is not a son of God or the cause of sin that requires the father's forgiveness, but productive error, the means by which to think around the moral tautologies of ostensive Bible stories—stories designed to continually recycle privilege to only a few. The boys had nothing to fear from this Satan.

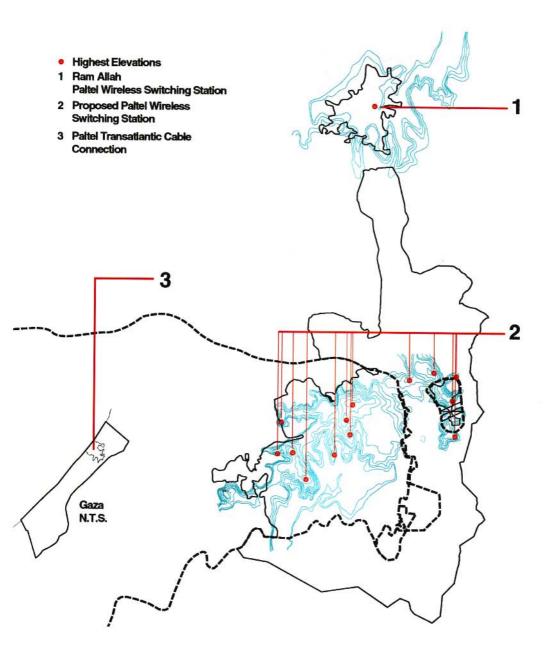
But the Holy Land brought out all our enthusiasm. We fell into raptures by the barren stones of Galilee; we pondered at Tabor and Nazareth; we exploded into poetry over the questionable loveliness of Esdraelon; we meditated at Jezreel and Samarai over the missionary zeal of Jeehu—we rioted—fairly rioted—among the holy places of Jerusalem.⁹

8 Twain, 672-73.

9 Twain, 486.

Architects

In the Bible stories, the demigods, or the first and second leads, may appear to possess exotic intelligence, but they are loyal to their insider heritage and when pressed will always run to it for cover. God provides one of these impostors of the exotic every once in a while to simulate a broad open world within what is really the closed loop of the game. Solomon was beautifully educated, an expert in diverse species of plants and animals. He also had exotic sexual tastes for women not in the family women who enticed him into incense burning and idol worship. They were all the more desirable for being forbidden, and all the more dismissable when it was time to return to the script. Solomon was a bit of an operator—after all, he married the Pharaoh's daughter, not just an Egyptian, but the Pharaoh's daughter. He was one of the only sexualized charismatic figures in a culture that often officially denied this form of beauty. Indeed, Solomon was always a little too cool for the Bible—so much more tasteful and erudite than his humble, violent father, David. He was in charge of the official architecture, the temple, the monument to God that pretended to be a world in itself. Solomon was an architect, a member of a conservative profession that likes to play the aesthete.

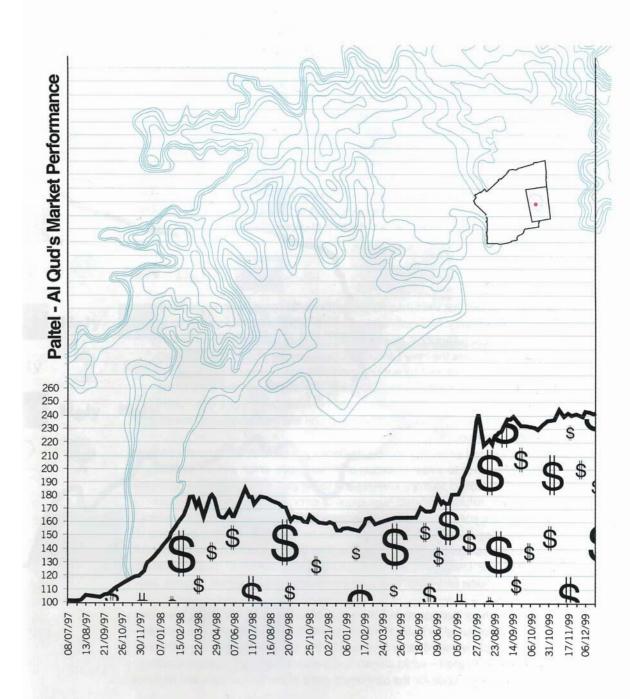


In "Solomon's Wise Judgment," as some editions of the Bible title this familiar story, two women were fighting over a baby (I Kings 3:16–28). The women, called "harlots" in the story, were also both new mothers. One child had died in the night and both women claimed the living child. The Bible says that God had given Solomon wisdom, and that in his godlike wisdom he threatened to slice the child in half to determine which one was the real mother. The real mother would not allow the baby to be killed; the false mother would not protect a baby that was not hers. It was so very smart and everyone was so impressed that they "feared" Solomon.

How easy it would be for a child to misread the usual Sunday-school illustration; to be suspicious not of the two harlots but of the arrogant man in the golden robes who has commanded that a razor-sharp sword be raised over a crying baby. How easy it would be for a child—or someone else who gets things wrong—to make this error. Before Solomon cut the hearing short, there was so much information in the story of the two prostitutes and the baby that they both wanted so badly, so much present and so much more needed, but he swiftly returned the focus to his own career. To this day, Solomon graciously accepts accolades from thousands of Sunday-school children, still with false modesty bowing deeply and waiving applause for his holier-than-thou theatrics. Was he wisely parodying the violence of his society? Or was he the violent one, not only because of his suggestion about slicing the baby, but because both women were a joke for him, a pawn in his larger game, like his exotic concubines or the Pharaoh's daughter? Like a pop star or demigod in closed society, Solomon was indeed an image of God.

Solomon was like so many peacemakers and planners who propose that others learn to share. God not only gave Solomon wisdom but he also gave him "forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen" (I Kings 4:26). Even now, he remains a Jerusalem celebrity who does not have to share this spot with anyone. Like Solomon, the patient magistrates wearing beautiful clothes who summit over the Middle East, as if presiding over squabbling children, offer paternal advice: try a little harder to share and get along. These elegant men actually propose that the next *corpus separatum* will work, when it is nothing more than a blunt instrument that does not reflect the principal activities of the physical or social organization. Armed with the simple tools of planimetric geometry, these efforts continually reinforce the notion that national sovereignty and personal well-being reside in terrestrial territory.

Planners and architects also make poor peacemakers, since we too have a difficult time understanding site as a stratified condition that may exist in a section extending from subterranean regions to outer space. We have few tools for describing site as an active organizational condition and few instruments for identifying unorthodox opportunities in a complex context—sites that are active agents rather than mere properties or areas. Architects are interested in organizations that can be



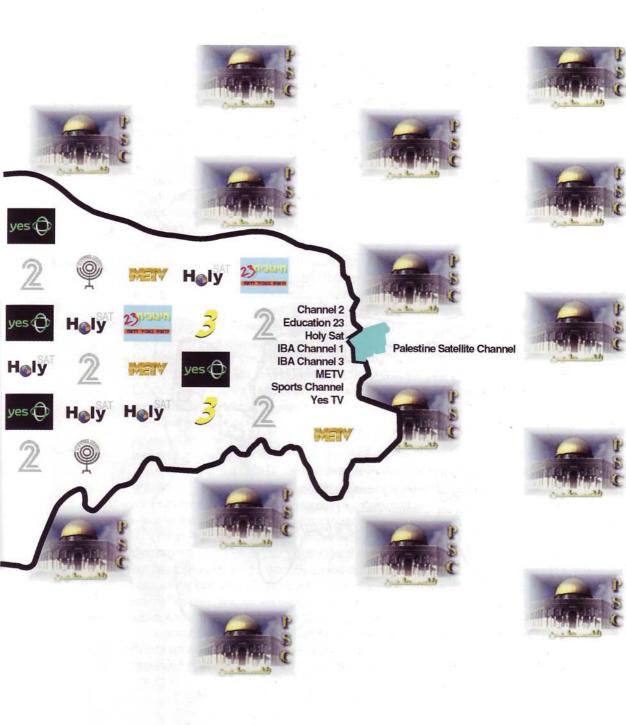
described with geometry and with orthographic projections—methods that will, however, never record the real intelligence of an organization, the space of its practices, its rejuvenating errors or its winning moves. Architects do their its best to harvest, contain, and plan error by designing urbanity. Fooled by complexity, they assume that a more intricate game is not a losing one, but by designing their complex game they have assured that it will lose. We merge and reconcile all games into one, pretending that we have been given Solomon's wisdom to author just the right division, the most beautiful line, the single most complex organization. The most advanced of the architects chant the non-cadastral, but often in a way that returns temporal and logistic architectures to a controllable aesthetic. Like God's exclusive family, we learn to play multiple games in support of the architecture of career, but rarely apply that intelligence to an architecture of unpredictable interplay between multiple sites.

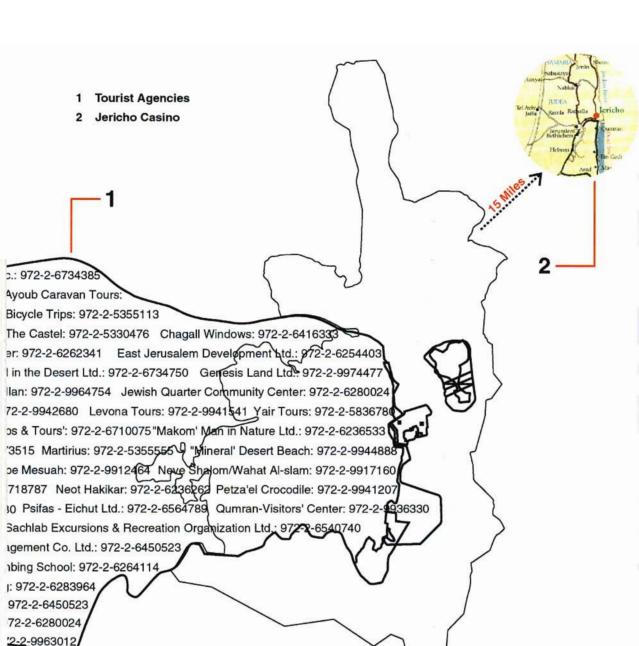
Signals

The world marvels that the fight over Jerusalem could come down to ineffable desires for sovereignty. Not really understanding desire, we look for ways to appease it, substitute for it, sublimate it, or explain it in terms of the heroic logics of family. The desire to possess the Holy Land is not, however, the cause of the deadlock. Both sides will only succeed by wanting more, not less. Desire cannot be sampled, nor dreams confined to allegiances. That direction only returns the story to the anointed family and the horrible hierarchy of individual careers or tribes. Fueled by error and wishful thinking, the continual expansion and multiplication of sovereignty is a productive desire.

Cities succeed when they make a deliberate gamble with exceptional conditions, allowing themselves to amass an excess of circumstance, error, and contradictory evidence. They collect so many enemies and losing games that things start to go their way. Jerusalem naturally harvests huge crops of error. If allowed, it could acquire more and more enemies to diffuse the primary battles. If boundary lines must be drawn (and they must), the lines may be drawn on many different strata, in many different games at once, interdependently. To draw them in the terrestrial stratum only is to play a single, losing game that does not manipulate the actual material of sovereignty in the Middle East which may exist in terrestrial, orbital, virtual, religious, and political strata.

Sunday-school illustrations of Solomon or of a cloying, phony, crying Jesus might just as well be replaced by a chart or alphabet of signs and glyphs. Like an enlarged version of the pocket-sized cards circulated by the deaf, the chart would instruct us about silent hand signals—winks and nods, shoves and pushes, slapping and hitting, martyred trudging—code for the confidence game of the Biblical deity and his fierce





family of crafty half-wits. It could be labeled: "God's plan for us all." But for suspicious children or for Twain's boys or for other people who always get things wrong, this would be just the first of many cards in a series. There would be more and more cards behind that first one, each containing the moves of a different game, god, language, font, calibration—an incomplete series that feeds interplay and the excesses of resourcefulness. Each game would be error and exception to the other.

Notes

The accompanying documents record extra information, organizational attributes, and unconventional sites in Jerusalem. There is nothing of importance in any single site or document, only in the interplay between them. They do not provide instructions about how to unify or divide Jerusalem but rather about how to multiply it and the sites of adjustment and desire within it.

Jerusalem might already contain the ingredients of its own relief. Every conquest and seizure creates exceptional conditions, often sectional conditions that accidentally violate planimetric jurisdictions. There are sectional braids of jurisdictional lines—involutions within which the space of one enemy is nested in the territory of another. A sweet shop opens onto what is left of an old entrance to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre; a portion of the Wailing Wall is intertwined with an Arab house whose owners provide an outside light to assist Jews in reading their prayers. Like Gordon Matta-Clark's Fake Estates, in Jerusalem, the hilariously numerous lines of separation are all subject to mathematical exception. There are tunnels beneath them and topography that rises above them. The newest Palestinian villages in East Jerusalem and the West Bank cheat the mapmakers since, however distant they are, their topography allows them to possess a view of the Dome of the Rock.

Sprawl, too, is a beautiful source of error, though the architects and other players of losing games long to control it. It contains the means to expansion and annexation and trade-offs between new economies. It provides territory within which to make distinctions between religious and political sovereignty.

When an Israeli or an Arab gives their household help a ride home or gives them access to the other's segregated legal system, the winnings grow exponentially, not because anyone is consciously attending to their overt moral duty to share, not because the patient magistrates are declaring the city to be a "mosaic," but because playing between two games wins and because populations, rather than concentrated authorities, generate change over a broader surface.

Israel controls most licenses and satellite microwave frequencies, but PALTEL, a Palestinian company, has recently been granted a license to operate a wireless telephone network called JAWWAL. The network models elastic sectional boundary

conditions and large fields of property and activity defined by a population. It exists within an enormous section marked not only by invisible signals and extraterrestrial satellites but also by switching stations in Ramallah and Gaza that are entirely dependent on high elevations in the terrain or access to transatlantic cable. JAWWAL makes clear the possibility that hilltop sites, most controlled by Israel, might be valued not only according to ancient covenants, but in shares of PALTEL stock.

Every employment agency or tourist center, every satellite that broadcasts another trashy television show, adds some new information to the mix. Jericho hosts global tourists as well as Israeli businessmen who are gambling alternately between two games: Israel's new Silicon Valley industry and Jericho's new casino just across the border.

Jerusalem is also multiplied in virtual and intangible forms. The only way that Twain, for instance, could reconcile the hype about the Holy Land with the reality he saw was to declare that it must have been a dream, no evidence of which he could discover. *Jerusalem 30* A.D., a living amusement community that is to be built near Midland, Texas, is not the only theme park reconstruction of the city. ¹⁰ And with every university appointment of an Arab scholar, the Arab diaspora plants a literature of Palestine, a dream of Palestine, in the minds of readers and students around the world.

Losing games played alternately might begin to amass circumstance, interdependence and, potentially, winning profits. These suggested plays offer an explicit architecture with an explicit landscape field, but with effects that are anything but planned. They do not define a recursive game, but rather the means to error and extensive information—access to millions of silent signals and advantages for good or evil.

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www.j30ad.org/
www.architectureweek.com/2000/0906/tools_I-I.html (Architecture Week's coverage of a virtual-Jerusalem project)
www.imaginevr.co.il/vrjerusa.htm (a virtual Jerusalem tour)
www.kotelkam.com/ (live video of the Wailing Wall)
www.md.huji.ac.il/vjt/ (another virtual Jerusalem tour)
www.virtualjerusalem.com/ (a virtual Jewish community)

All accessed February 13, 2001.

