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a font designed
during a *Flixbus* trip

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A week ago I cleared out and buried the year's shit. The shit of my family and of friends who visit us. It has to be done once a year and May is the moment. Earlier it risks to be frozen and later the flies come. There are a lot of flies in the summer because of the cattle. A man, telling me about his solitude not long ago, said, "Last winter I got to the point of missing the flies."

First I dig a hole in the earth — about the size of a grave but not so deep. The edges need to be well cut so the barrow doesn't slip when I tip it to unload. Whilst I'm standing in the hole, Rick, the neighbour's dog, comes by. I've known him since he was a pup, but he has never before seen me there before him, less tall than a dwarf. His sense of scale is disturbed and he begins to bark.

However calmly I start the operation of removing the shit from the outhouse, transporting it in the barrow, and emptying it into the hole, there always comes a moment when I feel a kind of anger rising in me. Against what or whom? This anger, I think, is atavistic. In all languages "shit!" is a swear word of exasperation. It is something one wants to be rid of. Cats cover their own by scraping earth over it with one of their paws. Men swear by theirs. Naming the stuff I'm shovelling finally provokes an irrational anger. Shit!

Cow dung and horse dung, as muck goes, are relatively agreeable. You can even become nostalgic about them. They smell of fermented grain, and on the far side of their smell there is hay and grass. Chicken shit is disagreeable and rasps the throat because of the quantity of ammonia. When you are cleaning out the hen house, you're glad to go to the door and take a deep breath of fresh air. Pig and human excrement, however, smell the worst, because men and pigs are carnivorous and their appetites are indiscriminate. The smell includes the sickeningly sweet one of decay. And on the far side of it there is death.

Whilst shovelling, images of Paradise come into my mind. Not the angels and heavenly trumpets, but the walled garden, the fountain of pure water, the fresh colours of flowers, the spotless white cloth spread on the grass, ambrosia. The dream of purity and freshness was born from the omnipresence of muck and dust. This polarity is surely one of the deepest in the human imagination, intimately connected with the idea of home as a shelter — shelter against many things, including dirt.

In the world of modern hygiene, purity has become a purely metaphoric or moralistic term. It has lost all sensuous reality. By contrast, in poor homes in Turkey the first act of hospitality is the offer of lemon eau-de-cologne to apply to the visitors' hands, arms, neck, face. Which reminds me of a Turkish proverb about elitists: "He thinks he is a sprig of parsley in the shit of the world."

The shit slides out of the barrow when it's upturned with a slurping dead weight. And the foul sweet stench goads, nags teleologically. The smell of decay, and from this the smell of putrefaction, of corruption. The smell of mortality for sure. But it has nothing to do — as puritanism with its loathing for the body has consistently taught — with shame or sin or evil. Its colours are burnished gold, dark brown, black: the colours of Rembrandt's painting of Alexander the Great in his helmet.

As I empty the third barrow of shit, a chaffinch is singing in one of the plum trees. Nobody knows exactly why birds sing as much as they do. What is certain is that they don't sing to deceive themselves or others. They sing to announce themselves as they are. Compared to the transparency of birdsong, our talk is opaque because we are obliged to search for the truth instead of being it.

I think of the people whose shit I'm transporting. So many different people. Shit is what is left behind undifferentiated: the waste from energy received and burnt up. This energy has myriad forms, but for us humans, with our human shit, all energy is partly verbal. I'm talking to myself as I lift the shovel, prudently, so that too much doesn't fall off onto the floor. Evil begins not with decomposing matter but with the human capacity to talk oneself into.

The eighteenth-century picture of the noble savage was short-sighted. It confused a distant ancestor with the animals he hunted. All animals live with the law of their species. They know no pity (though they know bereavement) but they are never perverse. This is why hunters dreamt of certain animals as being naturally noble — of having a spiritual grace which matched their physical grace. It was never the case with man.

Nothing in the nature around us is evil. This needs to be repeated since one of the human ways of talking oneself into inhuman acts is to cite the supposed cruelty of nature. The just-hatched cuckoo, still blind and featherless, has a special hollow like a dimple on its back, so that it can hump out of the nest, one by one, its companion fledglings. Cruelty is the result of talking oneself into the infliction of pain or into the conscious ignoring of pain already inflicted. The cuckoo doesn't talk itself into anything. Nor does the wolf.

The story of the temptation with the apple is well told. "... the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall surely not die." She hasn't eaten yet. Yet these words of the serpent are either the first lie or the first play with empty words. (Shit! Half a shovelful has fallen off.) Evil's mask of innocence.

"A certain phraseology is obligatory", said George Orwell, "if one wants to name things without calling up mental images of them".

Perhaps the insouciance with which cows shit is part of their peacefulness, part of the patience which allows them to be thought of in many cultures as sacred.

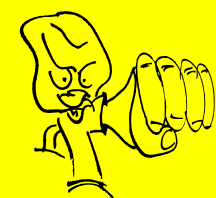
Evil hates everything that has been physically created. The first act of this hatred is to separate the order of words from the order of what they denote.

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PAULO TAVUL USHUAIA VERA CRUZ
WUHAN XAJURDY YSEUX
ZATKORQUA



I AM HIS FAVORITE HORSE, OUT OF DOZENS. BIG AS HE IS,
I HAVE CARRIED HIM EIGHTY-ONE MILES BETWEEN NIGHTFALL
AND SUNRISE ON THE SCOUT; AND I AM GOOD FOR FIFTY DAY IN
AND DAY OUT, AND ALL THE TIME. I AM NOT LARGE, BUT I AM
BUILT ON A BUSINESS BASIS.

I HAVE CARRIED HIM THOUSANDS AND THOUSANDS OF MILES ON
SCOUT DUTY FOR THE ARMY, AND THERE'S NOT A GORGE, NOR
A PASS, NOR A VALLEY, NOR A FORT, NOR A TRADING POST, NOR A
BUFFALO-RANGE IN THE WHOLE SWEEP OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS
AND THE GREAT PLAINS THAT WE DON'T KNOW AS WELL AS WE KNOW
THE BUGLE-CALLS. HE IS CHIEF OF SCOUTS TO THE ARMY OF
THE FRONTIER, AND IT MAKES US VERY IMPORTANT.

IN SUCH A POSITION AS I HOLD IN THE MILITARY SERVICE
ONE NEEDS TO BE OF GOOD FAMILY AND POSSESS AN EDU-
CATION MUCH ABOVE THE COMMON TO BE WORTHY OF
THE PLACE. I AM THE BEST-EDUCATED HORSE OUT-
SIDE OF THE HIPPODROME, EVERYBODY SAYS, AND THE
BEST-MANNERED.

IT MAY BE SO, IT IS NOT FOR ME TO SAY. MODESTY IS THE
BEST POLICY, I THINK. BUFFALO BILL TAUGHT ME THE
MOST OF WHAT I KNOW, MY MOTHER TAUGHT ME MUCH, AND I
TAUGHT MYSELF THE REST. LAY A ROW OF MOCCASINS BEFORE
ME—PAWNEE, SIOUX, SHOSHONE, CHEYENNE, BLACKFOOT, AND
AS MANY OTHER TRIBES AS YOU PLEASE—AND I CAN NAME THE
TRIBE EVERY MOCCASIN BELONGS TO BY THE MAKE OF IT.

NAME IT IN HORSE-TALK, AND COULD DO IT IN AMERICAN IF I
HAD SPEECH.

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Nezke

Handwritten letters A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, Z in a decorative, calligraphic style.

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Ida Mary - Sons - Lois Karakach
Lillian Marseille Nantes
Oslo Polingay Quetigay
Rochdale Seonah Thionville
Mrs Pitty Wabel Monville
Yorkers Zagreb

Amsterdam Bern Colmar

Donzy Égly Florence

Genève Hanov Isola

Jagany - sous - bois Krakau

Lille Marseille Nantes

Oslo Poligny Quetigny

Roubaix Séoul Thionville

Vos Vitry Vatel Monville

Wankers Zagreb

I wasn't interested in illusionistic conventions of narrative cinema as practiced in Hollywood, or any kind of narrative film—where sound corresponds to the lips and to what actually comes out of the actor's mouth. When I started out, I didn't want to use actors: they gave me either too much or too little. And I didn't know how to direct—I still don't know how to direct. By the time I was through, in 1996, I was using professional actors, but at this earlier time I used the people who had worked with me in dance. Some of them were trained dancers, some of them were not—for example, Valda Setterfield was dancing with Merce Cunningham at the time. I had to think about devices for telling a story and since I wasn't interested in a plot—with exposition, development, climax, and dénouement according to traditional classical theater, I had to find ways to keep this thing within ninety minutes, with all these fragments of my experience, fragments of things I'd read, quotes and so on. I began to explore new devices and strategies. All my films—all seven of them—deal with some kind of performance or time-based activity. Sometimes the main character is a video artist, or a choreographer, or a dancer. So there are all these performances within the thread or the body of the film. In *Film About a Woman Who . . .* (1974), there are two men and two women and they refer only to "he" or "she" so you never know which one is being referred to. I kept mixing it up to create these ambiguities in terms of plot and yet the language had an air of authenticity about it. For instance, the little story in *Lives of Performers* is autobiographical. There's a great deal of revamped autobiography in all my films.

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Mâcon Nancy Orléans Perpignan
Quézac Rotterdam Saint-Étienne
Tel Aviv Uttwiller Venise Wassy
Xarouval Yaoundé Zibuatanejo

Amiens Bagdad Cachan
Dortmund Échirolles Fès Grenoble
Hong Kong Izmir Juvigny Kingston
La Roche-sur-Yon Mâcon Nancy
Orléans Perpignan
Quézac Rotterdam Saint-Étienne
Tel Aviv Uttwiller Venise Wassy
Xarouval Yaoundé Zibuatanejo



The dog followed again at his heels, with its tail hanging low, as the man started to walk along the frozen stream. The old sled trail could be seen, but a dozen inches of snow covered the marks of the last sleds. In a month no man had traveled up or down that silent creek. The man went steadily ahead. He was not much of a thinker. At that moment he had nothing to think about except that he would eat lunch at the stream's divide and that at six o'clock he would be in camp with the boys. There was nobody to talk to; and, had there been, speech would not have been possible because of the ice around his mouth.

Once in a while the thought repeated itself that it was very cold and that he had never experienced such cold. As he walked along he rubbed his face and nose with the back of his mittened hand. He did this without thinking, frequently changing hands. But, with all his rubbing, the instant he stopped, his face and nose became numb. His face would surely be frozen. He knew that and he was sorry that he had not worn the sort of nose guard Bud wore when it was cold. Such a guard passed across the nose and covered the entire face. But it did not matter much, he decided. What was a little frost? A bit painful, that was all. It was never serious.

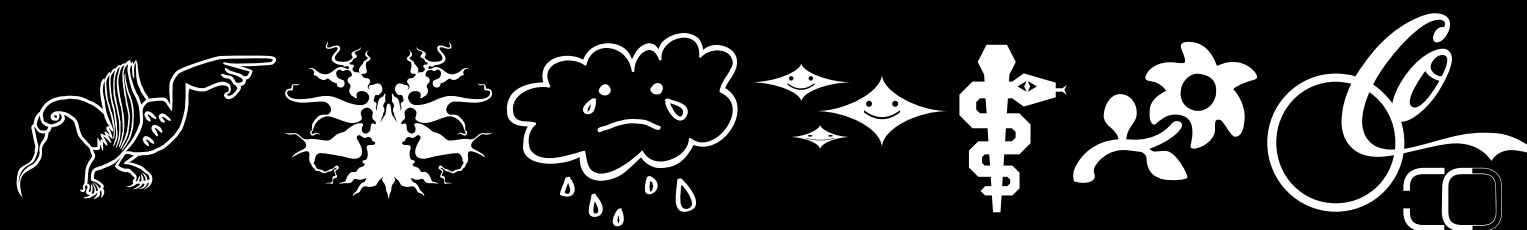
Empty as the man's mind was of thoughts, he was most observant. He noticed the changes in the creek, the curves and the bends. And always he noted where he placed his feet. Once, coming around a bend, he moved suddenly to the side, like a frightened horse. He curved away from the place where he had been walking and retraced his steps several feet along the trail. He knew the creek was frozen to the bottom. No creek could contain water in that winter. But he knew also that there were streams of water that came out from the hillsides and ran along under the snow and on top of the ice of the creek. He knew that even in the coldest weather these streams were never frozen, and he also knew their danger. They hid pools of water under the snow that might be three inches deep, or three feet. Sometimes a skin of ice half an inch thick covered them, and in turn was covered by the snow. Sometimes there was both water and thin ice, and when a man broke through he could get very wet.

That was why he had jumped away so suddenly. He had felt the ice move under his feet. He had also heard the noise of the snow-covered ice skin breaking. And to get his feet wet in such a temperature meant trouble and danger. At the very least it meant delay, because he would be forced to stop and build a fire. Only under its protection could he bare his feet while he dried his socks and moccasins.



QUARRANCES

collaborative font
designed during
the Covid-19 lockdown



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I shook his hand for the first time in the spring of 1966. I was a second-year student at Columbia then, a know-nothing boy with an appetite for books and a belief ~~for~~ ⁱⁿ delusion that one day I would become good enough to call myself a poet, and because I read poetry, I had already met his namesake in Dante's Hell, a dead man struggling through the final verses of the twenty-eighth canto of the Inferno. Bertran de Born, the twelfth-century Provençal poet, carrying his severed head by the hair as it sways back and forth like a lantern—surely one of the most grotesque images in that book-length catalogue of hallucinations and torments. Dante was a staunch defender of de Born's writing, but he condemned him to eternal damnation for having counseled Prince Henry to rebel against his father, King Henry II, and because de Born caused division between father and son and turned them into enemies, Dante's ingenious punishment was to divide de Born from himself. Hence the decapitated body wailing in the underworld, asking the Florentine traveler if any pain could be more terrible than his.



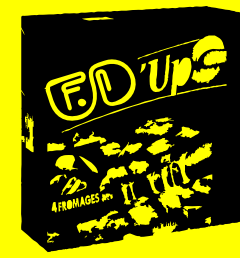
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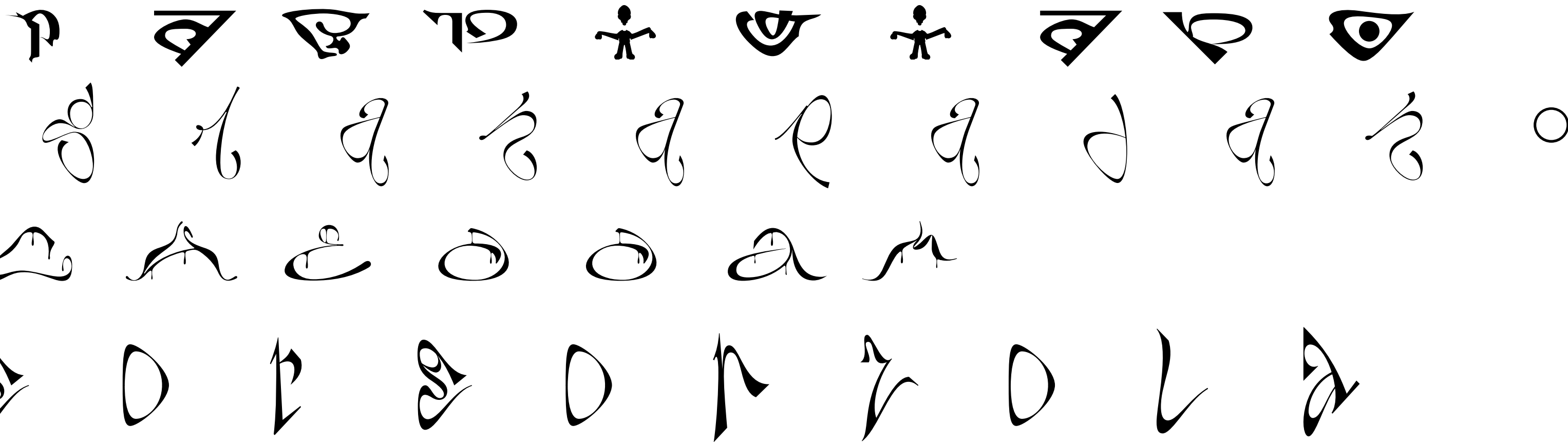
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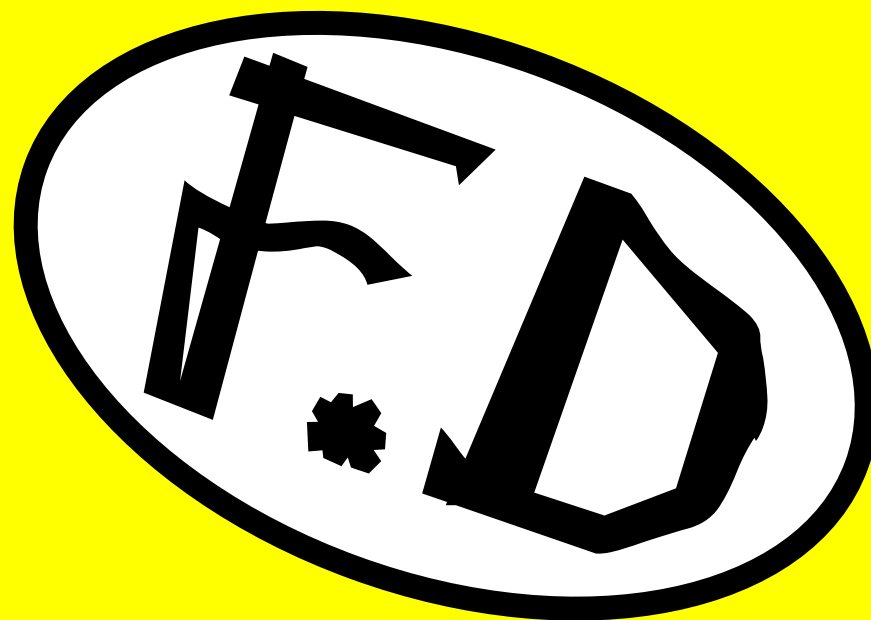
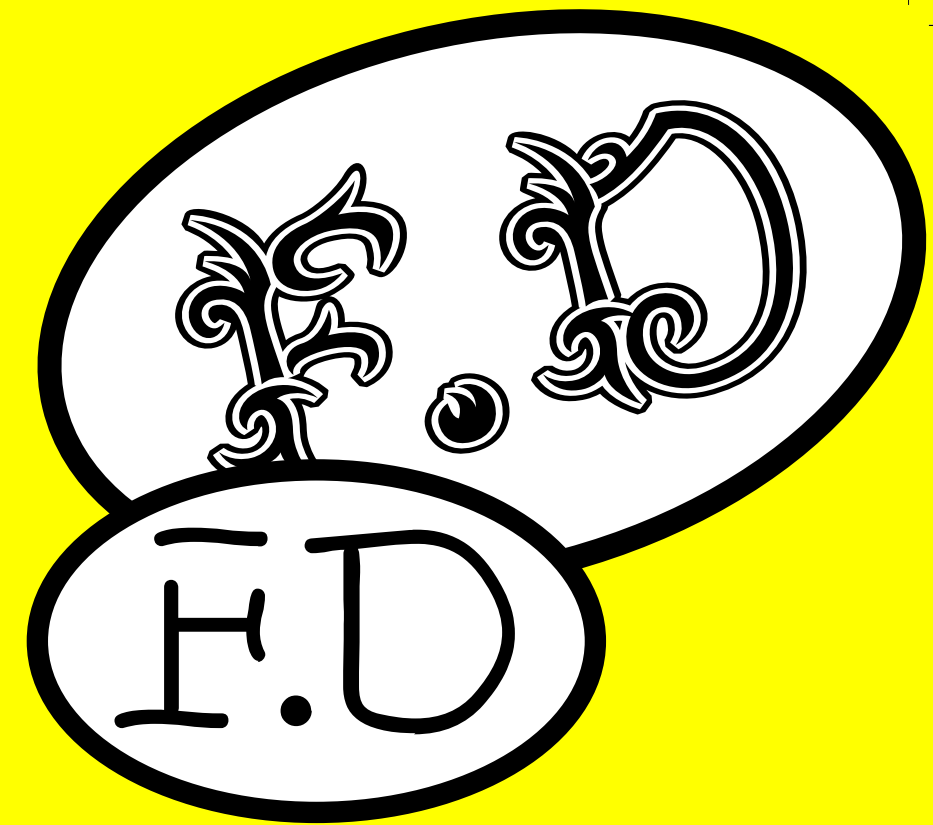


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