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Partly Genius, Partly Quite Mad

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a review of

Cyclonopedia: Complicity with anonymous materials, by Reza Negarestani. re.press, 2008

This book appears to be (but might not be) a treatise on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the Nomadic War Machine, written by someone (said to be an Iranian philosopher) who's bitten off a bit more French Theory than I can chew. It's thinly disguised as a SciFi novel as written by or about a brilliant Iranian philosopher named Parsani ("the Persian") who's on the verge of paranoid schizophrenic breakdown, in which is embedded a commentary on H.P. Lovecraft and other pulp-horror mashers, in the light of Zoroastrian and Mesopotamian religion and myth (this part is so clever it transcends mere parody), using diagrams of bizarre topology and non-Euclidian geometry, creating fake sources and mixing them with real (but very obscure and erudite) sources—all aimed at an elaborate allegorization of Middle East oil politics and the War on Terror—and analysis that strikes me as partly the work

of a genius and partly quite mad, although this is probably the author's intention, if there is in fact an author.

Cyclonopedia reminds me of Manuel de Landa's *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines*; that is, if Manuel had smoked LOTS more, and actually flipped. I'm not certain if the "author" has any real political intentions, or any personal politics. Both the "Black Sun" of oil and the "Capitalist Sun" of Western neo-imperialism are condemned with a kind of creepy despairing Gnostic Dualism, and it's not clear that there's any way "out." I thought the arguments for the existence of "real demons" was quite depressingly convincing. To sum up: a weirdly compelling read.