

Unworlding in Nameless

The Negation of World-building

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“Unworlding in *Nameless*: The Negation of World-Building”

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Abstract

World-building has thrived as a new field for scholars interested in fantastic fiction since it allows for new insights into how imaginary worlds are actualized beyond simply the formal devices that render fantastical worlds different from non-fantastical ones. However, there are things that cannot be told and there are things that should not be told – these are the reaches that much weird fiction likes to explore. In the vocabulary of world-building, we would say that readers are never given access to a fully coherent and consistent imaginary world. The process of *Nameless* is what I identify as the process of unworlding – when the imaginary world is filled with contradictions and impossibilities that break any attempt at constructing a system or structure.

Keywords: comics, compossibility, impossibility, Leibniz, unnarration, unworlding, weird fiction, world-building.

Steen Ledet Christiansen

Unworlding in *Nameless*

The Negation of World-Building

THE COMIC BOOK *Nameless* (Morrison and Burnham 2015) describes itself as “*The Exorcist* meets *Apollo 13*” but forgets to include the presence of H.P. Lovecraft’s cosmic horror. Ostensibly about the asteroid Xibalba’s imminent impact on and destruction of Earth and the attempt at averting this disaster, *Nameless* is also about the birth of a (new) world. However, the world that emerges from the comic is constantly in doubt, as if it somehow refuses to be fully born. In the vocabulary of world-building, we would say that readers are never given access to a fully coherent and consistent imaginary world. *Nameless* demonstrates what I identify as the process of *unworlding*, when the imaginary world is filled with contradictions and impossibilities that break any attempt at constructing a system or structure. In discussing unworlding in *Nameless*, I pursue Fred Botting’s discussion of the “un” as a process of negation (2018, 192). *Nameless* does not build a world but negates the fictional world, both through narrative devices such as “unnarration” (Warhol 2005, 230) and its page layouts that challenge diegetic levels.

The story of *Nameless* is somewhat convoluted. The protagonist Nameless is an occultist who escapes the Veiled Lady’s attempt at capturing him. Contacted by billionaire entrepreneur Paul Darius, Nameless is hired to travel into space to stop the asteroid Xibalba that is on collision course with Earth. As the team arrives on Xibalba, they realize it is a weapon designed by the Titans, part of a lost fifth planet in our solar system, too immense to comprehend. As the crew is contaminated by alien creatures, Nameless falls into a void only to wake up in a hospital on Earth. Here, he learns that a seance that he led in Dark House led him to murder all the other participants, either

because they were contaminated or because he was. Escaping the hospital, Nameless wakes up captured by the Veiled Lady. He never went to space, there was no seance. Everything has been a dream or hallucination, induced so that Xibalba can destroy Earth or destroy Nameless' mind; this concludes the story, with the words "All shall be well and all manner of things shall be well."

Worldings

World-building has thrived as a new field for scholars interested in fantastic fiction since it allows for new insights into how imaginary worlds are actualized beyond simply the formal devices that render fantastical worlds different from non-fantastical ones. Mark J. P. Wolf has termed this the world-based approach, where the imaginary world itself becomes the focus point of scholarly study (2018, xviii). While related to narrative studies, the world-based approach is interested in all the details and events "which do not advance the story but which provide background richness and verisimilitude to the imaginary world" (Wolf 2012, 2). All stories take place in imaginary worlds but fantastic stories tend to accentuate and emphasize the significance of their imaginary worlds.

A conventional definition of a fictional world is "the diegetic totality constituted by the sum of all aspects of a single text, constellated into a structure or system" (Hayot 2011, 137). As a whole, scholars focus on three aspects of imaginary worlds. First, the work in question should project a fully developed and richly detailed imaginary world. Second, this projected world should appear actualizable. Wolf and Hayot both use the term "completeness" (Wolf 2012, 38; Hayot 2011, 146) to suggest the density of detail necessary to convince readers of the world, while Ryan uses the term "principle of minimal departure" (1991, 51). Third, the realness of the imaginary world should be convincing or plausible. Wolf uses the term "consistency" (2012, 42) to describe the internally coherent logic that must exist to convince readers of the imaginary world, while Ryan uses modal logic's conception of "possible" as something that is not contradictory (true and false at the same time, for instance) (Ryan 1991, 31).

That an imaginary world exists should clearly be understood in relation to the imaginary world, since there are many things that exist in stories that never exist (or can exist) in worlds outside of fiction.

There is, however, little difference between these three approaches to imaginary worlds – all agree that imaginary worlds must be actualized as existing, even as these worlds are clearly not real. Whether the term used to designate that existence is amplitude (Hayot), possible (Ryan), or consistent (Wolf) is of little relevance. Any fictional world must be actualizable by the work of which it is a part. A slightly different way of thinking about world realization is to consider any imaginary world as less a structure or system and more as a process. We can call this process *worlding*, drawing inspiration from Kathleen Stewart, who discusses the ways worlds emerge from the “qualities, rhythms, forces, relations, and movements” that can be found in literature, comics, and other art forms (Stewart 2011, 445). Hayot agrees that an imaginary world emerges, i.e. is a process, although he terms it “worldedness” (Hayot 2011, 139). The important takeaway is the shift from noun “world” to verb “worlding”; a world is not static but dynamic and something that keeps unfolding. This is why we speak of worlds as being actualized – they exist as part of a larger process.

However, the world in *Nameless* is not particularly accessible, consistent, possible, or complete. Logical paradoxes abound, events contradict each other, and details are never explained so as to be plausible. In fact, at the end of the comic, while we are sure that the world does indeed end, we are sure of very little else. Many of the events that have occurred in the preceding pages are negated as being at least potentially false or otherwise some form of hallucination. There is no imaginary world to actualize, simply because the sum of the work’s formal aspects do not cohere to produce a totality that affords a coherent diegetic structure. Rather, the comic ends as a collapse, a negation of the imaginary world’s totality. One can go so far as to say that the mysterious Nobody, who sends forth the weapon Xibalba, is at war with the entire notion of totalities.

In order to better grasp this negation, we need to understand the distinction between the actual and the real. This distinction comes from Leibniz’s work on compossibilities, which is also the origin of Ryan’s possible worlds theory. Leibniz argues that the world that exists is the best of all possible worlds, because God would only ever choose the best one. All other possible worlds were considered by God but deemed less good. All the possible worlds are real (they could have existed) but not actual (only the world that exists was actualized by God). In order to explain why evil and suffering still

exist, Leibniz argues that God can only create what is compossible, that is, compatibly possible. Water cannot be wet and dry at the same time. From this arises modal logic and Ryan's theory of possible worlds – things can only exist if they make logical, coherent sense. Otherwise, they are impossible; they are real but unactualizable.

Logic and coherence are all well and good for God but stories need follow no such rules. Fiction can be, and at times is, impossible yet actual. Stories may be told in which the various world details are inconsistent, do not allow for a complete feeling of the imaginary world, and do not add up to a totality, simply because the details negate each other. Note that this is distinct from what some narratologists term unnatural stories, since the stories themselves may make sense, yet the world in which these stories take place do not make sense. For the unnaturalists, the unnatural is tied to flouting of mimetic conventions (Richardson 2006, 5) or defying real-world knowledge (Alber 2016, 5). Yet neither of these instances apply to fantastic stories, since they often a) follow mimetic conventions to allow the imaginary world to emerge the clearer, and b) defy real-world knowledge as a matter of course. Unnatural is a poor term for what fantastic fictions may do, yet impossible reveals the productive tension of a world that cannot exist yet does. Leibniz would never agree that worlds can be impossible and actual, yet the fact remains that there are imaginary worlds that exist, despite their impossibility. For *Nameless*, this impossibility is expressed on the level of visual form, the level of narration, and finally on the level of actualization, which in this case manifests as a war on totality.

Visualizing Worlds

As a comic, *Nameless* renders its world through the complex interaction of word and images. Images should not be understood simply as the drawings but also the relation between images. The individual panels exist within a page layout that shapes the articulation of each individual panel, the page as a whole, and the series of pages that make up each issue and the full series. This interaction between panel and page is termed the linear-tabular relation by Fresnault-Deruelle (121). This is an important point, because unlike movies and novels, where shots or words can only be seen or read in sequence, for comics we see both the individual panel and the page as a whole at the same

time. The (linear) sequence of panels is informed by the (tabular) page layout and vice versa.

This can be observed in the page layout of page 15, where Nameless encounters the Veiled Lady for the first time. There are five panels that depict their dialog. The angled sides of the two middle panels form the shape of a box, rather than the far more conventional straight-angled boxes with gutters (typically white space) between each panel. This produces a claustrophobic feeling that is consonant with Nameless having been captured and the same boxy design continues on page 16 before switching to a more conventional layout on pages 18 and onward. Nameless is trapped and the graphic layout of the comic contributes to this feeling of being trapped.

Layouts matter since comics often employ what is termed “gridding,” a conventional page layout with the same number of vertical and horizontal panels page after page. Such consistency allows the story to move forward at a steady rhythm, while also permitting some variation in the size of panels. Such a layout is stable, but Burnham avoids this kind of stability on almost all pages. There is no standardized gridding that creates a rhythm across pages and the further we get into the collection, the fewer right-angle panels are used. Burnham’s layouts are dynamic in the sense meant by Angela Ndalians, where panel shifts produce spatio-temporal complexities (Ndalians 2009, 243). These shifts can be fluid or jumpy, depending on the sequence of panels and the time and space of each panel. Narrative speed and story continuity, along with the articulation of space and time, all depend on panel shifts. This is comics’ paradoxical form – to express time, narrative, and movement through stasis.

A good example of how Burnham manipulates time and space are the six pages at the end of issue four. Nameless is in space on his mission and as he runs away from his infected colleagues, he tumbles off the side of a wall. Five angular panels show him falling into a black pit, getting smaller and smaller until the last two panels, which are entirely black. Speech bubbles announce that someone is about to remove his bandages. On the next page, a black panel is slashed through with a straight line of light and in two rounded panels we see two doctors coming into view, with two larger background panels showing us Nameless in a hospital bed getting his bandages removed.

An unknown duration of time is seamlessly woven together on the page. The black panels simultaneously express the void that Nameless

tumbles into on his mission and the darkness of being bandaged on Earth some time later. This is a fluid transition that coherently expresses time and space, even as a major temporal shift happens. The next page has Sofia and Nameless talking in rectangular panels in clearly articulated shifts. When Sofia says that no-one blames Nameless the shift is to a panel with rounded corners depicting police carrying a body through a hallway. The next panel has three main rectangular panels of Nameless, Sofia, and the doctors talking, overlaid with two inserted rounded-corner panels depicting a bloody hammer and Nameless covered in blood. These inserted panels work as flashbacks but to events that have not been narrated before.

In these pages, the fluidity of the shifts is actually deceptive. Time, space, and narrative movement are so easily articulated that they obscure a major narrative complication – is the space mission actually real or something hallucinated or projected by Nameless? Given the context of how Nameless talks about the world, does he actually travel – in whatever way – between different worlds? At other points in *Nameless* the panel shifts are abrupt and do not articulate a coherent narrative or world.

Page 129 shows the complexities of narrative and world that panel transitions can do. There are five panels in total, two on the top of the page with a canted angular design, a middle panel with rounded corners, and two bottom panels with similar canted angles to the two top ones. The instability of the panels (their compositions are also canted) and the page layout express the instability of the narrative itself and the various diegetic levels that each panel transition shifts between. There are five panels and four levels of diegesis. The first panel shows the seance, the second panel shifts to Nameless and the psychiatrist, the third panel shows Nameless' experience of the seance where the others became infected by the outsider, the fourth panel returns to the psychiatrist who tells Nameless that the others were not infected by the outsider, and the fifth panel shows the seance from the perspective of Nameless having tortured and murdered all the others. Each panel shift is a shift in focalization and there is no way of affirming which focalization, which version of events is actual. They cannot all be true at the same time and so open up the very discussion of impossibility and actualization.

Throughout the collection, *Nameless'* dynamics primarily consist in shifting between different diegetic levels, rather than articulating a

clear sense of spatio-temporal location. In fact, these dynamic shifts become so rapid and complex that actualizing a coherent fictional world becomes untenable. This is not an instance of *paralepsis*, where narrative information is simply left out or suppressed. Rather, the narrative suppresses any potential for worlding or worldedness. As the imaginary world is formed through the narrative process, constantly negating events disallows the worlding process.

Disallowing the worlding process produces the tension between compossibility and actualization that results in an impossible world. Nameless cannot both be possessed and not possessed at the same time. He cannot be traveling through space to encounter Xibalba while Xibalba does not exist, and yet Xibalba crashes into Earth's moon at the end of the story. Yet all these things appear to take place. This is why the comic's graphic design is crucial to its worlding – there are many subtleties in this design that points to its impossibility. Its transitions are what both actualizes the world and negates it at the same time. This is part of a process we can call *unnarration*.

Unnarration

There are things that cannot be told and there are things that should not be told – these are the reaches that much weird fiction likes to explore. The two things are not necessarily the same, yet weird fiction often conflates these two strictures into something that should not be told because humans cannot comprehend it and would suffer if told, what Mark Fisher calls “a sensation of wrongness” (2016, 106). The awfulness of the outsider in *Nameless* is what Robyn R. Warhol terms *unnarration* – the narrative's “assertion that what happened cannot be rendered in narrative” (Warhol 2005, 230). Xibalba's size is so immense that it exceeds human perception. Similarly, Ixaxaar – the key to the doors of Hell – opens a doorway to something that cannot be rendered visible and so is left out of the comic. It is never visualized, only glossed over as the “dwelling place of the outsiders” (Morrison and Burnham 2016, 120). Too awful and mind boggling to visualize and narrate, we are never shown this shadow universe. Although at times frustrating, conceptually this *unnarration* makes sense, precisely because this negative version of the universe cannot be comprehended by the human mind.

There are some attempts at narrating the incomprehensible, although these instances are quite subtle. Various fictional languages, such as Enochian or the language of Titans, are stylized by stringing together random letters in a meaningless sequence. The letters are the Greek alphabet, rather than using either a different alphabet or simply inventing a new kind of alphabet. Constructed languages, or “con-langs,” as Fimi and Higgins term them are often used as an “infrastructure” for building imaginary worlds as suggestive of an inner consistency (Fimi and Higgins 2018, 22). Compared to more conventional world-building, *Nameless* makes no attempt at making these languages coherent or consistent – there is no glossary of Enochian nor translations of what is actually spoken. These speech bubbles are instead markers of the unknown and unknowable. In and of itself, such a strategy of unknowable languages may still allow for coherent worlding. Speaking in gibberish languages is a common thing in weird fiction, descending especially from Lovecraft’s proclivity for inscrutable verbosity. Yet *Nameless* does not produce any consistency other than gibberish, as these languages are not used for any meaningful worlding infrastructure. They remain, simply, gibberish because there is never any sense of what the words are meant to mean or do. As gibberish, these fictional languages do not suggest any sense of inner consistency.

Nameless is typically the character who speaks in these fictional languages or otherwise recognizes them. On the one hand, this indicates that these random letters are in fact words that make sense but not for the reader. There is no access to this narrative information, which disallows the process of worlding yet again – no coherence, consistency, or invention is possible. On the other hand, this also positions Nameless as a stranger; he knows something that he does not relate to the reader. This pre-contaminates Nameless with the knowledge of things that cannot and should not be known. In a sense, Nameless takes the position of an unnarrator – he knows but does not say. Since so much of *Nameless* is focalized by Nameless, this lack of transparency is a cue for Nameless’ reliability. The gibberish does perform a meaningful purpose, then, but only by negating meaning, disallowing any worlding to take place – unnarrating the world, as it were.

On the visual plane, we find a related strategy with the presence of black panels that are used quite extensively in *Nameless*. Black

panels are a rare occurrence in comics, most often used to express either unconsciousness or literal darkness. This is not a dictum, since panel meanings signify only in relation to the panels around it, but unconsciousness and literal darkness remain the dominant conventional uses. There are five pages in *Nameless* that contain black panels, usually just one panel but in one instance two as already noted above. In these instances, the most immediate understanding of the panels are indeed unconsciousness and to a lesser extent literal darkness, as when Nameless tumbles into a void without light.

Yet retrospectively it becomes obvious that these black panels are instead instances of unnarration – moments when Nameless is unable to narrate what happens. What at first glance appears to be blank duration of lack of consciousness, turns out to be a shift in diegetic levels of hallucination. When Nameless wakes up in the hospital, this is not because he passed out in the void and somehow was brought back to Earth. Instead, it is a shift between imagined worlds. The two black panels represent shifting between the world where Nameless went into space to land on Xibalba to the world where Nameless participated in a seance at Dark House that summoned the outsider Nobody's tentacled messenger.

Using black panels thus unnarrates this world shift, disallowing any cues that this is what happens. The black panels are literally a gap in the reader-response sense and the actualization is only retrospectively shown to be impossible. Either Nameless went to space and Xibalba is a weapon for the destruction of Earth or Nameless went to Dark House and summoned an outsider. That outsider either infected the others in the seance so that Nameless had to kill them or the outsider infected Nameless so that he killed the others. The fact that these shifts are unnarrated means that the worlding process is constantly frustrated, since individual events contradict each other. And yet the black panels, by withholding narrative information, force an actualization of a world where these events on either side of the black panel take place. That is to say, a worlding process still occurs, despite the impossibility of such relations.

What these instances of unnarration show is that actualization and worlding are two different processes that do not, in fact, depend upon each other. Wolf, using the term “world gestalten” rather than actualization, suggests that “a structure or configuration of details together implies the existence of an imaginary world, and causes the

audience to automatically fill in the missing pieces of that world” (2012, 52). Wolf further suggests that this usually takes the form of an “overloaded” plot, since world details are often in excess of story. Yet the reverse can also be true, which is the case for *Nameless* – the black panels, the gibberish languages, the dynamic panel shifts between different diegetic levels are all gaps that must be actualized. And so they are. That these gaps and details turn out to be impossible does not change the fact that the details are used to actualize the world. What does happen is that the worlding process is negated at the end of the comic. Unnarration leads to the process I call unworlding.

Unworlding

Unworlding takes seriously the “un” that serves as what Fred Botting terms a “complex process of negation beyond the reaches of opposition, inversion, and antithesis” (2018, 192). Opposition, inversion, and antithesis are all instances of subversion or reversal, whereas the prefix “un” does away whatever it attaches itself to. Yet this process remains complex in the case of *Nameless* and other unworldings, since these instances are still actualized. Although not the specific interest of most worlds-based approaches, any amount of detail will lead to worlding; stories take place in worlds and actualizing these worlds is part of the experience of stories.

What *Nameless* does, however, is to negate all these different worldings. *Nameless* not only leads readers down various actualized worlds, it puts these worlds in direct conflict as impossible with each other. This negation through impossibility is a strategy that many weird fictions engage in; various forms of paradoxical worldings contest either cultural or ontological givens, as Botting also suggests (for more on weird impossibilities, see Christiansen 2021). In *Nameless*, as we have already seen, diegetic levels are constantly negated through panel transitions and unnarration.

Another instance of impossibility is expressed visually by complicating the foreground-background relations. While panel relations are typically sequential, with panels placed next to, above, or below each other, what is known as inserted panels may produce a different kind of spatial relation. *Nameless* uses this foreground-background complication to salient effect twice. Both occur in Dark House, the first one when Nameless meets his new colleagues, about to begin a seance,

on page 116. Four split-panels show a room full of people standing around a table with high-tech equipment. In comics parlance, split-panels are panels that are separate but meant to be read to combine one larger scene. Yet the split-panels are inserted on a background that depicts the same location from the same angle, washed in red. And is that blood we see on the armchair, is the cameraman dead, and who are those bodies lying splattered on the floor?

This page produces a tension between foreground and background. At first, this narrative tension can be resolved as a form of doubled temporality – present and future overlaid on the same page. However, the overlaying of panels is far more suggestive of the unworlding of *Nameless*. Since the comic is focalized by Nameless, this means that Nameless can see both events at the same time; not a layering of present and future, but a negation of temporal linearity in favor of simultaneity. Since time cannot layer in human perception, this is another instance of impossibility —Nameless simultaneously encounters these people for the first time and has already murdered all of them. While the immediate actualization does not recognize this impossibility, it is the only way that we can understand the worlding process.

The second instance of foreground-background tension comes a few pages later on page 125. Nobody's messenger has arrived and attempts to infect Nameless or the others in the circle, depending on which world we believe we are in. The layout consists of a main panel of Nameless' face, a panel below it that suggests temporal progression, and a fade to black panel at the bottom. On top of the main panel are multiple inserted panels. These inserted panels show a grotesque plethora of violence, dismemberment, bloody organs, occult signs, lizard people, a snake, maggoty flesh, and mutilated dolls. Once again, the temporality of these inserted panels is not clear, nor is there any sense of narrative progression – there is no hierarchy or linearity to indicate panel shifts.

The page layout suggests simultaneity rather than sequentiality. Due to the foreground-background relation the page layout invites this simultaneity as what Nameless experiences all at once. There is a clear panel shift from the main panel to the lower one, which is what makes the inserted panels non-linear and non-sequential; they do not fall coherently on the level of story, since there is no cue to indicate where these panels fit. Rather, as part of Nameless' experience the

panels suggest sensory overload of multiple pieces of information. In short, each panel is one distinct moment of focalization.

Brian McHale has suggested that science fiction often literalizes various narrative techniques, including focalization (2018, 322), through speculative means. Although he only deals with novels, this page layout in *Nameless* can be understood as a similar literalization of multiple moments of focalization occurring at the same time. Because there is no indication of panel shifts and because comics present in tabular form a full page alongside individual panels, the readerly effect is overwhelming. Unable to take all the panels in at the same time, reading slows down and every panel must be examined in turn, even if no preferred sequence is clear.

Several of the panels, however, depict aspects or components that are not part of the world as far as we know. The lizard people, the strange dolls, and the snake are not consonant with any part of the narrative so far. And there are more panels that recede into the background, indicative of this explosion of focalization as a literalization of the mental strain that *Nameless* is under and finally cannot endure. Once again, a black panel shifts not simply time and place but world. We move from Dark House to space which are impossible worlds. The focalization explosion is also impossible; no one can see from so many different positions in time and space simultaneously. And yet that world is actualized, since we do see all these panels simultaneously. Expressed visually in this instance, we yet again find a tension between actual and impossible.

The negation is the issue. Botting's use of "un" in his unrealism term is deployed for political purposes, showing how this mode (especially Gothic for Botting) can disrupt "habits of perception" and fracture (understandings of) reality (2018, 196). Morrison and Burnham are less explicitly political but no less interested in negation and disruption. As we have just seen, *Nameless* often visually fractures perceptions of reality through overloading of visual codes while lacking consistent world details. In fact, *Nameless*' unworlding process is intent on refusing any workable structure or system. It is as if the comic is at war with totality, refusing and negating any sense of coherence.

Hayot defined a literary world as a totality, but an arbitrary totality dependent on an epistemological practice that declares what a given totality is (2011, 134). The world is a totality in the same way that the literary work is a totality – established through some meaningful

circumcision that limits while it also generates. In other words, in the context of fiction, a totality is a machine for producing a world that is in itself a totality. The whole of the work produces the whole of the world.¹ Whatever world is actualized by the work is the world of the work. This is clearly tautological yet it helps to show that both totality and world are contingent on certain ways of thinking. Imaginary worlds are totalities in the sense that they comprise a system; such a system is made up of all manner of rules and laws of physics, things that make the imaginary world real. This is especially true for fantastical fiction that contain stories and worlds that need not follow real-world rules or physics. Actualizing an imaginary world is often tied to an epistemological practice of consistency and completeness along with ideas of non-contradiction, or what Ryan calls possible.

As *Nameless* constitutes a single work spread over six issues that concludes by negating everything that has just happened, we can consider its expression as a totality of nothingness. This is not meant as a flippant response to Hayot but rather following the notion of a void that is a thematic premise for *Nameless*. Not only is the protagonist named Nameless because names have power but the seance that presents a turning point in the story summons Nobody, and Nameless becomes Nobody's messenger. This idea of a void or nothingness at the very core of reality is a key notion for *Nameless*. Part of this is expressed through unnarration, the comic's refusal to provide an epistemological background from which a world can emerge.

Nameless exploits the impulse to project a world whenever we are given narrative cues and materials; in this process, *Nameless* rejects this impulse towards totality. At every turn where the worlding process takes place, it is negated. The conclusion to the story reveals that everything between pages 17 and 134 (which is most of the comic) has in fact never happened. This returns us to the significance of the panels' box design on page 15. As noted, this page layout produces a sense of claustrophobia and imprisonment. When the same page layout returns on page 134, we realize that Nameless has in fact never left that box – all else has been nothing but the monstrous ideas birthed by alien possession. Xibalba is both a weaponized comet and an infectious mental being.

¹It should be noted that in an age of transmedia extensions and revisions, notions of wholes are highly problematic. Since *Nameless* is not part of a transmedia universe (yet), such a discussion is left aside for now.

This is the final impossibility that serves to negate all of *Nameless*. Xibalba crashes into Earth's moon, which actualizes the space mission that Nameless was on. Nameless is himself Xibalba, possessed and overcome by that which cannot exist. The world ends as *Nameless* concludes, yet ends in multiple ways. In one world, Xibalba destroys Earth. In another world, Nameless' mind is destroyed by Xibalba. This is the epistemological breakdown that negates the totality of the worlding process. Both things are equally true and actualized, despite the fact that they are impossible. In much the same vein as McHale's argument that science fiction is often reflexive about its world-building (2018, 327), *Nameless* is reflexive about the very process of worlding itself. Worlding can be a negation because no world *need* make sense or be possible. Fictions, unlike God, can make impossible worlds that are contradictory and inconsistent, yet can still be actualized. *Nameless* does not build a world but negates the epistemological argument that imaginary worlds must be coherent.

World-building scholarship is in many ways still in its early stages and much more work needs to be done. My work on *Nameless* here is not meant to discourage world-building scholarship but to suggest that not all fictions should be understood within theories of world systems that cohere and are consistent. Much fantastic fiction works to project complete and whole worlds. But some fantastic fiction attempts to show that worlds can be actualized without any epistemological claims to a totality. Weird fiction is one of the places where this unworlding occurs most often. *Nameless* is a radical example since it negates its own creation, yet in this way it is also an excellent example of the way that actualization works.

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