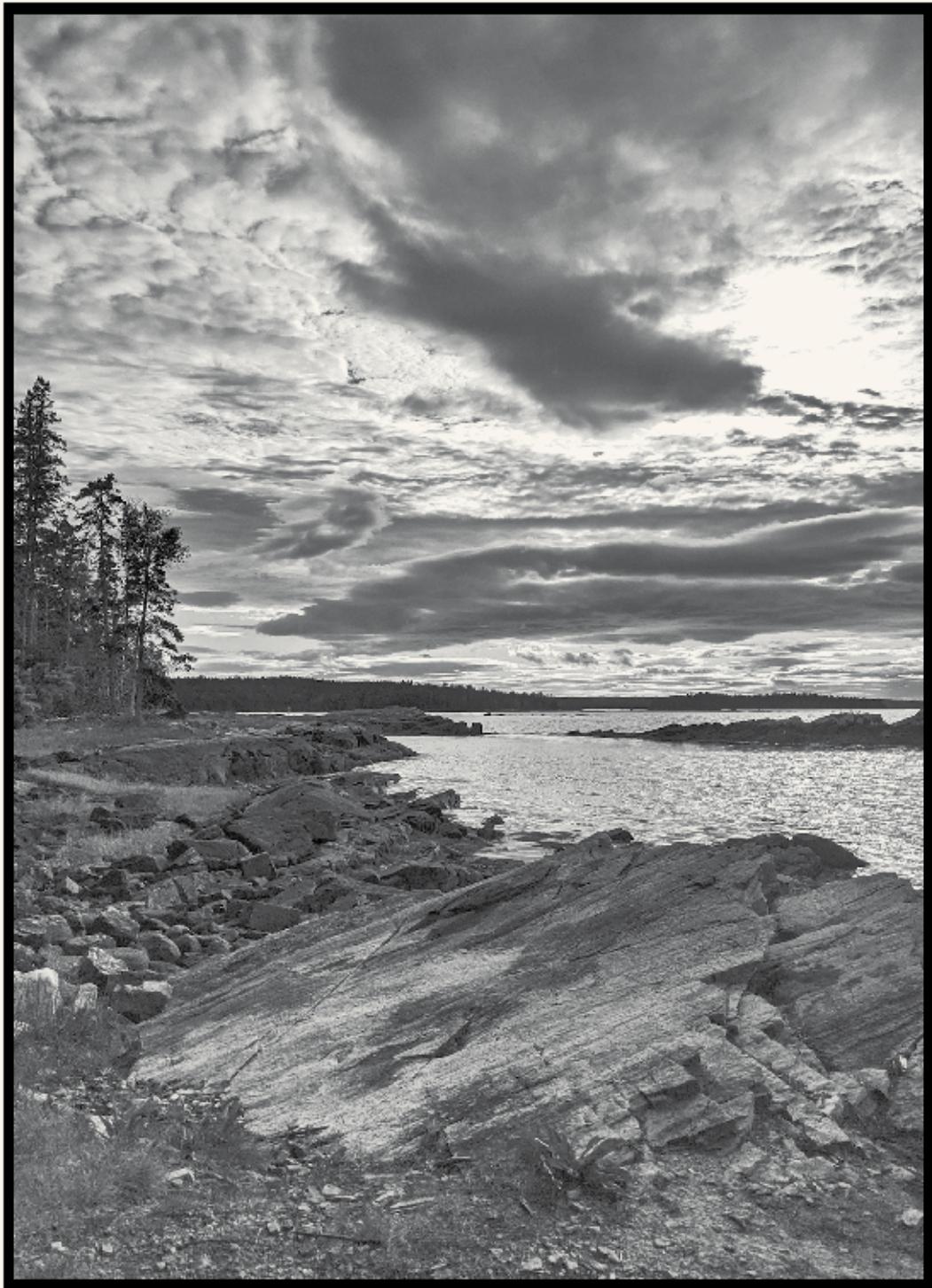
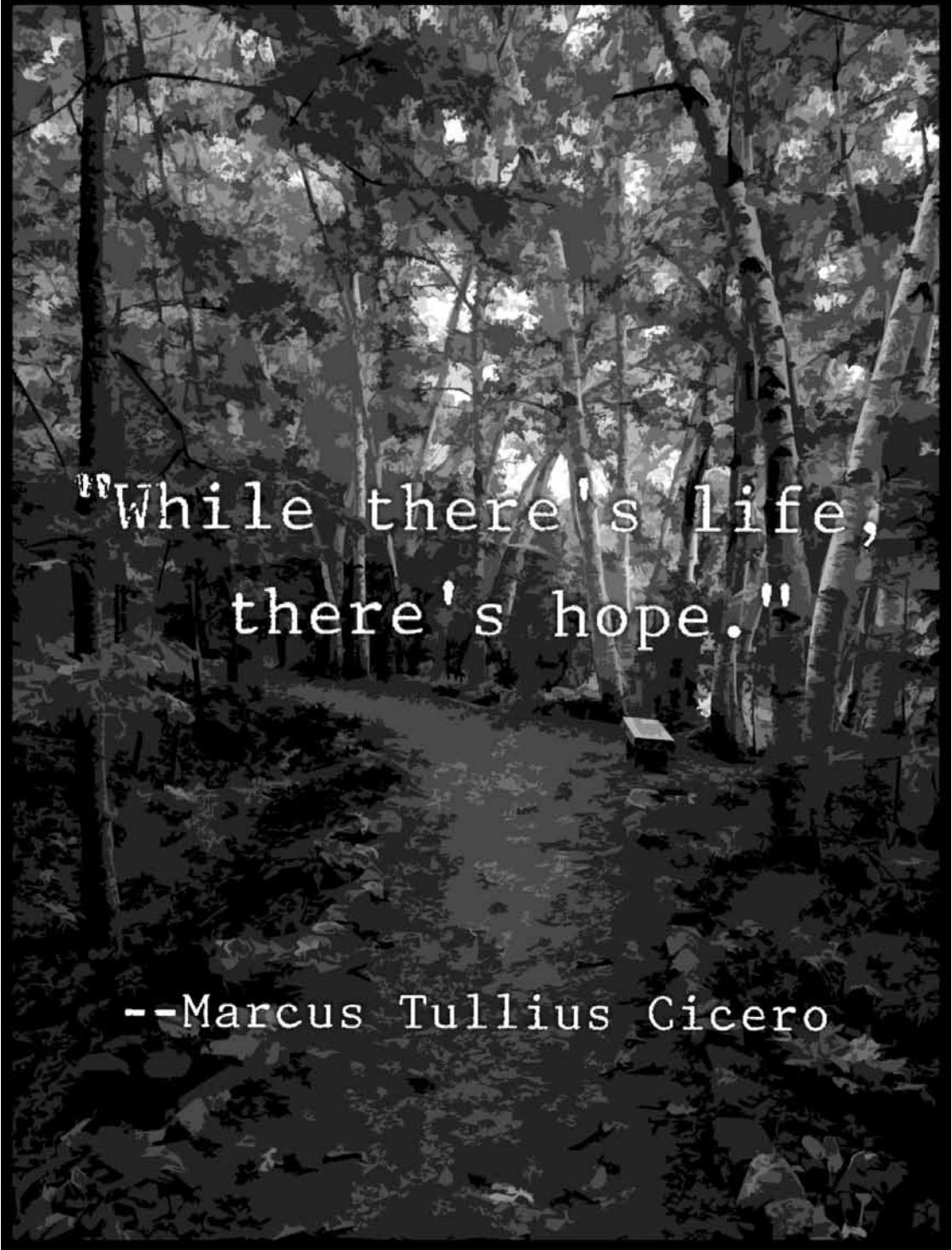


The Cenacle



NUMBER 117 | OCTOBER 2021



"While there's life,
there's hope."

--Marcus Tullius Cicero

October 30, 2021
3:21 p.m.
Bimahow Cee -
Attic Study
- Milkrose, MA.

"And it's something quite peculiar,
Something shimmering & white,
It leads you here, despite your destination,
Under the Milky Way tonight."

The Church, "Under the Milky Way, 1982"

Maybe because I've been writing a lot about my gone years for this new issue, or finding myself often working these days at a worktable in our house's attic study, itself recently transformed to such after years being primarily for storage, or the continued plastered way of living the ongoing pandemic demands for safety's sake, but I find myself remembering a treasured moment from those gone years.

Twas a Saturday, long my favorite day of the week. A day, for me, all about notebooks & pens, a going



-15-

off to whichever city I happened to live nearest
to, bound for the movie theater. Escape the
week's stresses & strains, be they caused by
jobs, school, empty wallets & too many bills at
hand, bad romances, or often none at all.

More recent years my great good fortune
to share these Saturdays with my beloved
R). But, reaching back for this story, I'd
guess early 1999, didn't know R) yet. Did have
my notebooks & pens, so blessed be that.
And would travel slow trains every Saturday
morning into Boston, onto Cambridge, to
DJ my radio show, "Within 'n' Within: Scenes from
the Psychedelic Revolution," on Radio Free Cambridge,
a private FM station back of an art gallery.

And this particular Saturday had with me, in
addition to notebooks, & a bag of LPs to spin
on air, a stiff bag of mushrooms. Potent little
dears, just a stem to set off on a wild &
wonderful journey.

DJ'd my show, playing the new & old
hippie rock, reading poems on mic
long if all listeners. Maybe. 100 watt
station won't go too far.

—16—

Show over, walked back the several blocks
to the train transi^t back into Boston. Crossing
Longfellow Bridge, its gorgeous view of the
Boston skyline beyond the Charles River.

Eyes shut though. Arguing with the Mushrooms
about Art, as had happened more than once.
Them challenging my love of it, devotion to it.
Them saying it was not important, not really,
not ultimately.

I held my ground, as I did in these, or,
debates. Art matters to me. I said, unmoved.

Finally, they retreated, from affection? From
exasperation? From unknowable Mushroom
reasons?

Said to me, maybe kindly, maybe straight:

"Art is an open door. Always.
Once you have gone through it,
it never closes again. If you are lost,
to it, turn, turn again. It will be there."

Those words, or similar. Their gift to me.

-17-

I tossed ideas for days for this piece. Most, nearly all, about the pandemic. Wondering how masks & vaccines could ever have become a personal choice, like a favorite flavor of ice cream or sexual position.

Wondering how obligation to tend another could ever be assessed greater or lesser by physical resemblance, shared philosophy, geographical proximity, or any of the other foolish ways we find to divide & conquer ourselves.

Thinking: we can cooperate, can choose to support each other, but this is not a sure, predictable thing.

And we can influence each other for better or worse. Connect to the Internet & raise the pressure points for us all to act generously, bravely, scornfully, loathsome.

But, what else? I turn back to that one-ago eyes-closed argument with the ~~Mushrooms~~, crossly Longfellow Bridge into Boston.

—B

What if my saying "Art matters to me" was collapsed for something else? What if it became "this world matters to us"? And what if the Mushrooms allowed this, even approved a bit of it?

If our fractured world agrees upon nothing else, perhaps this much. And perhaps starting with this agreement, & referring back to it time & again, when arguments grow hard & cruel, might allow it to re-seed how we perceive one another.

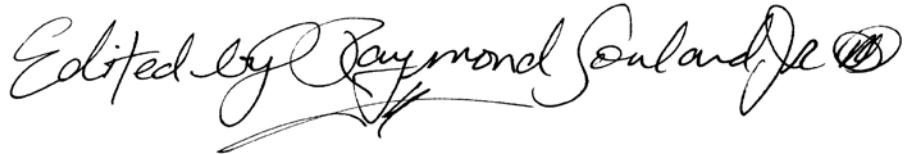
We care about this world. Not just you or me, but us. We breathe its air, drink its water, eat its food, live our every day & night here. Not by politics, or religion, or loyalty to the local ball team. Us. All of us. Now. Today.
Tomorrow.

Love this world. Maybe? Not so much but some? Would like to more? What if this love is an open door? What if more waits, if we take the easy/hard step to choose? Can we? Let's! Now! Let's!

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The Cenacle

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- *Scriptor Press Sampler* #1-18
- *RaiBooks* #1-8
- RS Mixes from “Within’s Within: Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution”; &
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Thank you to everyone who is continuing to take the pandemic seriously . . . to beautiful autumn, for coming around again . . . and to the many magicks of Mt. Desert Island, Maine, for ever kind, ever teaching, ever healing . . .

SCRIPTOR PRESS

 NEW ENGLAND
 2021



Feedback on Cenacle 116 | June 2021

From Tamara Miles:

I invite you down river with Timothy Vilgiate's novel *Rivers of the Mind*, through the Beyond, to meet the Old One and all his friends in ancient memory. All of us can gather there . . . or I could meet you instead in "an alleyway / between Petco and The First Mate," where Colin James has framed a fire door in "Epicurean Grandeur" . . . or into "Crissy's Secret Room" in Algernon Beagle's *Bags End Book #18: Sleep-Over in Imagianna!*—to see the "long strings of colored rings . . . (and) strange purple lights." Here we might find the truth, for "Bags End is as weirdly true as ever."

Sometimes, though, we go to darker places—make "a mad dash to shelters / red alert warnings"—"back to war zone"—and share the fear and frustration of Judih Haggai captured in quick breaths of haiku. Nathan D. Horowitz will rescue us from where he sits across the river from a drumming woodpecker symbolizing his heart, in his travel journal "First Steps Around San Pablo."

We must save each other, and we do, in all these journeys together in the mind.

* * * * *

From Colin James:

Sam Knot manages to make his poem "Twelve Twelve Twentysomething" selfless, which is a great accomplishment. *What a charming fellow!*

* * * * *

From Sam Knot:

Kenzie Oliver's prose-poem "Ride" is filled with vivid horse visions. I felt like, while she doesn't shy away from the business side of keeping "livestock," at the same time it comes across that, like she says, above all: "They were my friends." Some great equine characters in there!

Speaking of characters: I'm a big fan of the squirrel people who seemed to infiltrate the pages of this issue. In one of the *Notes From New England*, Raymond Soulard, Jr. talks about watching them in his garden throughout the pandemic. He also mentions the first-ever volume of his journal, begun in 1974, and how writing still takes him back to the protected, worry-free spaces of his early days.

I was thinking how, just as that makes Art something medicinal for him, it carries through into the effect it has on us too. I suppose this notion of medicine also shows how complex the idea could be, because after all such represents a constructive way to address a problem of some sort. The imagination is never simply a place to escape *to*, in this context, or if it is, it is not really escaping so much as finding a different angle from which to work *at* something. At work on the insides of the world.

Timothy Vilgiate's *Rivers of the Mind* is top-class trippiness! So much shroomy Lovecraftian fun! I loved the exploration of the different plants' characters. There is plenty of innovation and interesting technique throughout his writing, of which "The Gift Of Language" chapter is really an excellent example. Really great! His story being, at least in part, the adventures of someone who is learning to deal with what is basically a kind of super-powered empathy, adds another dimension—it *grounds* the vivid psychedelic sections, performing a kind of integration perhaps, in helping the reader to reflect and process, in spending some time with their own sensitivities.

Jimmy Heffernan's "Notes on Human Evolution" throw up a lot of questions around evolution, leading us to an interesting conclusion where human cultural evolution "goes back to nature," humans becoming a mere step on the path towards a cybernetic (or artificial) intelligence which may or may not decide to keep around us as pets . . .

* * * * *

From Charlie Beyer:

Tom Sheehan's "Too Much Asia to Erase" is a rare personality sketch into the mind of the disenfranchised. Sheehan takes us into a filth-ridden alley to wallow in its occupant's misery, fueled by past horrors burned into his brain, lost in another reality of an old Asian war.

There we find another character's elite guilt. His attempted transcendence through philanthropic giving. But, really, more a dopamine junkie's rush through self-serving Good Deeds. The fairy tale ends in the reality of a mugging for his pin-striped suit. Pearls before swine. Good writing through and through.

* * * * *

From Kenzie Oliver:

I loved Charlie Beyer's prose in "A Hood Funeral." It sounds like it was a crazy funeral! This piece had me laughing at times. My favorite parts were "the guests chugging the stuff like it was UNICEF milk in Biafra" and "all the sobbing girlfriends were there, some crying with the realization of the other girlfriends." I can't wait to read more of his writing!

* * * * *

From Jimmy Heffernan:

Our newest *Cenacle* contributor, Kenzie Oliver (welcome!), has provided me with a lot of resonating fun with her piece "Ride." My Mom is an expert equestrian, and I have consequently been around horses all my life. Like Kenzie, I can't ride at all! It just never clicked.

In addition, we have a pregnant horse right now, due in March of next year. Now I have a bit of a feel for what the experience will be like as a result of Ms. Oliver's wonderful illustrative poetic prose. As if all that didn't resonate with me enough, my Mom broke her femur in late 2019. So, needless to say, there are numerous nuggets in Kenzie's piece that resonate with me both cheerfully and

eerily. I couldn't help but read it twice.

* * * * *

From Timothy Vilgiate:

I think Jimmy Hefferman is onto something in his "Notes on Human Evolution," with the idea of *negative entropy*. It points me towards the work of Lynn Margulis and of Peter Kropotkin, on the role of symbiosis in evolution, & the importance of intra-specific mutual aid to evolution. Their ideas together outline the basis of a "third option" between random chance and teleology.

In my view, we can understand life and, by extension, consciousness, as a function of the tendency of chemical equations towards an equilibrium, altered according to specific environmental conditions. "Organisms" form when information starts to organize itself into self-sustaining systems, and then to form membranes (i.e. boundaries between the self and the environment).

More complicated organisms can coordinate the activity of trillions of otherwise autonomous subsystems, and this coordinating function represents the "mind" normally experienced in humans as an integrated seamless construct, because of our signal-processing capabilities—in other organisms, possibly experienced in more modular and decentralized ways. This consciousness is itself a response to the conditions in the environment and, whether in a whale or a brontosaurus, would be optimized for a specific local context.

Ace Boggess's trilogy of poems effective draws on motifs of imprisonment, escape, and trauma in a sympathetic and understanding voice. The image in "Candy Man" of the man boiling hard candies in the latex glove to make lollipops stuck out in particular, with the idea of "a man like him" being unable to admit that his acts are rooted in love, which reads as a kind of dual imprisonment, one literal and physical, and the other emotional and psychological.

His description in, “The End of the Interview,” of the interviewer’s office (they’re only revealed to be a reporter further down) as a “light in shadow,” yet also “of the shadow and wearing it” conveyed, in relatively few words, the sense of the “interview” as a social technology, a kind of performance that intends to shed light on the individual, while at the same time, no matter how intensely it shines, still leaving a shadow.

I felt moved by the way that Tamara Miles’ poem “The Spent Dahlia” builds tension between the opening advice of her friend to trim the plant and the image of the flower “asking for water / as my mother did” during its “patient” and “slow process of dying.” Her poem “Nightswimming” reminded me of the handful of times I’ve had sleep paralysis. I recently had a conversation with someone who described trying to cast out the sleep paralysis entity as a demon, and I like the approach of recognizing it as a part of one’s self to be integrated much better.

* * * * *

From Ace Boggess:

The poems of Tamara Miles are things of beauty. They read with boldness and hints of romanticism. “Melt,” especially, had me mesmerized with its sharp lines and powerful ending: “One year, I nearly killed / myself— // left the garden bit / by snakes // waist-high in thorns / and weeds.” Just gorgeous imagery. True of all her poems in this issue. Good stuff!

* * * * *

From Nathan D. Horowitz:

With three exquisite poems, Ace Boggess cements his reputation as the poet laureate of America’s penal system. “The End of the Interview” only briefly mentions prison—specifically, “the prison / I built for myself with steel & brilliant colors,” a fleeting and astonishing image. Notice the compression, the bang-for-the-buck: not “out of” but “with”; not “and” but “&.” Boggess turns our expectations around by asserting that the

prison is his own creation, and then slides in that shocking phrase at the end: “& brilliant colors.” Evidently, there’s more to this prison thing than we physically free folk know.

“Escape Envy” is written from the point of view of an ex-con vividly remembering his dreams of escaping as he follows a news story: “two guys made it out / from Clinton Correctional in New York / through a hole in the wall, / along pipes & hidden passageways, / out a manhole into the movie-like rain.” The narration in those lines is crisp and factual, making the modifier “movie-like” as surprising as it is satisfying and apt. The poet’s thoughts and feelings in response to this topic are summed up in the title, “Escape Envy,” which doubles as the title of Boggess’s 2021 poetry collection. The envy is only partial as the poet doesn’t foresee a happy end for the duo’s adventure, only “the gray, fermented fruits / of what was believed to be freedom.”

And “Candy Man,” briefly, deftly chronicles the temporary, powerful transformation of a group of hardened criminals into beings as innocent as three-year-olds when one of them cooks up a batch of lollipops.

* * * * *

From Judih Haggai:

What a wonderful piece is Kenzie Oliver’s “Ride”! I would happily read a whole book written by Kenzie—her style, the clean yet rich prose. Two of the lines that enrapture my imagination are “a moving collage of colors that are pervading the sun-baked clay” and “[s]he now rests under a gnarled oak, leaf-filtered sunlight dappling her coat.”

And what a sweet, gentle delivery into the aura of a museum is Martina Newberry’s “Helen with Her Friend Emilie Fromke in the Garden,” and the time it takes to quietly gaze and ruminate upon the image of the two girls. Two friends as their mothers had been. I adore the lines: “The same breezes that whispered / to our mothers, whisper to us.” Just breathtakingly evocative. The contrast

between them, the details of their embroidery, the symbolism of their choice of flowers, their attitudes to life. I have read the piece many times and I think it's become one of my favorites of Martina's (out of a huge list of them).

I need also to point out the dynamic saturated images that Kassi Soulard offers in this issue. Her color cover and interior artwork is divine, and truly enhances my experience of *Cenacle* 116.

* * * * *



Judith Haggai



AbandonView

From the ElectroLounge Forums

Travel in 2021

Published on electrolounge.boards.net

Post by Raymond on September 15, 2021 at 9:04pm

Last night KD & I walked to the local train, and rode into Boston, on route to an outdoor concert venue to see a great indie rock band, Lord Huron.

Masked up on the train, like everyone else. Save an idiot who played his phone-music loud and left his bike on the floor in everyone's way.

No entry to concert without vaccine card or proof of negative test in last 72 hours.

Great show! We were masked all the way. Why risk it?

We've been out in the wider world so rarely in so long. Wondering what others are experiencing?

Do tell—

* * * * *

Post by Martina on September 16, 2021 at 12:08pm

Two weeks after we got both our vaccinations, we began to go out to our usual haunts—masked and careful. We took walks again and felt fairly safe. Then the Delta variant virus appeared and we hunkered down again. With death rates and nasty, dangerous “pranks” from anti-vaxxers, we don’t feel safe and spend most of our time at home.

I read and read and read *everything*: biographies, poetry, fiction. Brian works on various media projects. We play with and spoil the cats. Our adventures are mental just now and will remain so until it’s safer to be out and about.

Our beloved Los Angeles can be “adventuresome” without the threat of COVID (and its cousin, the variant) and feels somewhat dark just now. The homeless problem has turned violent and dangerous. It’s a rough time to venture out.

* * * * *

Post by Judih on September 16, 2021 at 1:27pm

What a difference. From Boston to LA.

The huge homeless population in the face of this insidious virus. I can't imagine the dimensions of this plight.

Here, I'm back to school. Kids and the un-vaxxed are undergoing COVID tests a few times per week. And masks in school are mandatory. I bike to school and back so I don't have to worry about buses right now. I do, however, need to remind all the pupils to adjust their masks to cover noses and mouths. Why they think that the "chin" look is acceptable, I have no idea. And since I'm teaching them breathing techniques, they seem to think they are justified in taking off their masks. (But if I can do it, so can they).

Towards the last week in October, I'll be riding public buses and trains to and from Tel Aviv in order to continue my qigong studies. Sometime last spring, the use of the "Green Passport" app in the phone was discontinued, so I'm a little nervous about being packed into trains for two and half hours each way, with people chatting into their phones.

Maybe my school will offer a Zoom option, as they did last year, for those unwilling to risk public transportation.

Variants upon variants. I'm after my third shot and, here in Israel, all over age 12 are being invited to go for their third. Still, even vaccinated it's possible to carry the virus to others, so double-masking is my new go-to.

When people come into our house we don't wear masks, so there's an underlying worry, not a cool state of mind. In the supermarket, people are "masked" but often with noses exposed. We know that the Delta variant can happily dwell in the moisture of the nasal passages, so whether or not we comment, depends on the circumstance.

Of course, we're still walking a lot in our fine rural location enjoying trails and open air.

* * * * *

Post by Raymond on September 18, 2021 at 7:06pm

The hardest part of travel, beyond the clumsy inconveniences of it all, is that it is no longer felt to be safe & intuitive. Too fraught with weighing the risks, worrying what might happen. Not for travel far off, to a new place, but to local places, known ones, where the route and the destination and every detail is familiar. The concert KD and I went to: we walked to the local train, rode it to downtown Boston, walked over a bridge into the Seaport District, to a venue we have seen *many* shows at.

Yet made sure to bring our vaccine cards, or no entry. And our masks, because just in case. And it all felt distantly familiar. The band, Lord Huron, had just started touring again, and thanked the audience humbly and sincerely, just for showing up.

When 9/11 occurred, those in the US were urged to unite and support each other against the threat of terrorist violence. This, of course, turned into waging horrid needless wars for years and years and years.

This sense of union was exploited by war-mongers and others.

But it was a rally-together kind of moment. I was not rallying in 2001 because I saw the sham that was being made of people's feelings of vulnerability, but I was amazed at how so many people wanted to feel more united, closer to each other. Fuck me if *now* isn't a more legitimate time for such rallying. To save the lives of Americans, really of every damned human in the world. *How can this not be a rallying point? How can a horrible sickness, and a good vaccine, and mask strategy, not be this?*

But tis so. And so travel remains dubious, like all else. KD and I are going to take our annual car drive up to Maine soon, didn't go last year. We stay at Acadia National Park, in a little cabin by the water, bring our bikes. It's awesome. And this year it will be strange. Masked up when near people. Cautious when this trip is so well-known and loved by us. Like Judih and Martina, we have to weigh those risks and choose what we do by them. Like everyone else too.

It's rough. It did not have to be this way. Looking forward to bettering days.

* * * * *

Post by Nathan on September 21, 2021 at 10:30pm

My little family moved during COVID last winter from Kansas to Baltimore, so there was that. At one hotel we stayed at in Indianapolis, about half of the staff and guests were unmasked. That was before any vaccines.

I've read enough posts by the anti-vax crowd to understand what they're on about. I don't think they're crazy, stupid, or evil. But I'm not part of their tribe.

A month ago, my mom needed help driving from Maine to Michigan so I took a long weekend: drove on Friday from Baltimore to near the Reagan Airport in DC, dropped off the car in a lot owned by a hotel, took a shuttle to the airport, waited in a long line with masked people, flew to Bangor, met my mom and her Golden Retriever puppy, drove for eleven hours (lunching in New Hampshire), slept in New York State, woke up, spent Saturday driving to Ann Arbor, hit Whole Foods, got to my mom's place, feasted, slept, woke up, went to bagel brunch at my aunt's place with her and my uncle, was driven by my mom to Detroit Metro airport, flew to Reagan Airport in DC, caught the shuttle, picked up the car, and drove home to Baltimore, arriving on Sunday evening in time for dinner.

My wife's best friend and her daughter, who is our daughter's (former, I guess) best friend, can't fly here from Austria in October because of travel restrictions. We hope they will visit around next Easter.

* * * * *

Post by Judih on September 22, 2021 at 1:46pm

So, Nathan, you've succeeded in completing a travel marathon. Very inspiring, just doing what had to be done.

I'm going to have to crank up my courage to go visit my mom in Toronto. Just trying to figure out how complicated it all is, and giving myself pep talks—if friends can fly from Tel Aviv to San Francisco, then surely I could manage Tel Aviv to Toronto. (Similar mantra was used when I had to give birth



naturally—if others managed it, so could I).

My third booster shot is good till February. After that, who knows what will be required to navigate daily life, not to mention sky travel. To be seen.

* * * * *

September 22, 2021 at 3:02pm Raymond said:

Good for you, Nathan!

Jude, everything that seems reliable information says that with vaccines, and a good mask on, you are pretty safe from getting or giving COVID. That's the combo. Meds in your veins, mask on your breather. That's closer to safe passage than anything else for now.

* * * * *

Post by Judih on September 23, 2021 at 1:06pm

Thanks, Ray. I am dealing with “fear of venturing into the wild.” It’s nice to hear a little bit of reassurance.

* * * * *

Post by Jimmy on September 23, 2021 at 7:40pm

The only traveling I have been doing is the 300-mile trip from Salt Lake City to Hurricane, Utah, where my parents have a small ranch. Some of the gas stations along the way are disgusting, but we know the good ones. It’s an easy trip, 80 mph speed limit most of the way, so it’s a nice thing to be able to do. I don’t tend to get on planes because traveling in general is just too difficult with my illness, but honestly, even with the vaccine and a mask, I’m not sure how comfortable I am breathing the same air as total strangers for several hours. But that’s me.

With these variants, we’re still in the middle of this thing, so I would definitely say travel as a practical matter is clearly not close to back to normal yet. All things being equal, if it were an option to get on a plane, I think I’d pass, even being vaccinated. But it’s a nice alternative to have a place in southern Utah.

* * * * *

Post by Sam on September 24, 2021 at 8:51am

I was torn for a long time—I didn’t want to get the vaccine, personally. It surprises me that we seem so more-than-fine with putting something into our bodies that is based on a completely new technology, and which has not needed to undergo the same kind of clinical trials that other such medicines would have to, due to our being in a state of emergency. Thus I think it’s important to support the rights of those who maintain their concerns about it, particularly when they do so rationally.

A lot of my reasons were just personal, really, bound up with my own way of looking at the world, which is itself bound up with the kind of life I’ve had, etc. I felt really bad after visiting an older friend of ours—though of course we remained masked—that my personal choice could conceivably lead to

her death if I one day happened to transmit the virus to her. I myself am one of the “at risk” really, having had serious lung problems in my infancy that linger to this day. Still, in this instance, I would have preferred to simply let my immune system do its stuff.

Anyway, my wife used to be a vet and is a massive science fan (as am I of course; I love the natural world and our knowledges of it; I just experience it as a supernatural world at the same time!), and it would not have been possible for me to get away and visit my family were I to have to quarantine. I can’t even stay away for ten days, what with the animals and stuff, let alone see everybody I need to while staying locked down in one place.

So in the end I decided to let Doctor Evil stick it in me. I spent a lot of time in hospitals when I was young, so honestly I quite like the medical industry and have a thing or two to thank it for—none of this is simple or straightforward for me. Anyway, it was heartening to go to the ad hoc clinic in our local library and see the hard-working team who were doing their absolute best to look after people in the best way they believed. The second injection hit me pretty hard—as bad as any flu or chest infection I ever had, although it only lasted one night at its worst.

So I was free to travel about a week after that, and I did so pretty much as soon as I could. I still had to go and have a test before departure—but they’re free here in France—the nurse stuck the swab up my nose quite roughly, but I tested negative and was happy. I also had to book a Day 2 test in England, and that cost me £80, which was the same price as my ferry (but they were much gentler with the swab, for what it’s worth!). I filled in the “passenger locator form” to the letter, with the addresses of everywhere I would stay and the dates, etc. My wife waited while I checked in, in case there were any problems, but it was all good, and off I went.

I was surprised when I got to England, because they’d recently lifted the law on wearing masks—so there were a lot of people not wearing them—unlike here in France, where they take a little more pride in being good citizens, it seems to me—or maybe have a different idea of what that means. Although perhaps things are different in the cities, or else it’s just the (non)circles I (don’t) move in . . . anyway, walking into a shop without a mask on was a weird experience!

I went straight round to see my sister, after stopping in town to take my test, and eating some lunch by Percy & Mary Shelley’s tomb—a nice long walk along the beach. It struck me, as I was approaching my sister’s place, that she would be the first person I’d touched, other than my wife (and a brief elbow bump with my brother-in-law) for over a year.

It was great to see her, and I got to meet my brand new niece, who was born in January, and is a super-sweet little fairy of a baby. It’s my sister’s first child and she makes a great mum, and daddy is a cool dude too. We went to the park and played around on the grass—had a nice meal together—played a bunch of weird musical instruments, and generally had a good laugh.

The other main event was going to visit my Grandad—it had been about twenty-odd months since I’d seen him, and he had already been declining with dementia at that point, so I was cautioned to expect the worse. He couldn’t really speak, but he clearly recognized me (I’m the eldest grandchild), and we had a good moment of connection. The day before I left, his condition took a turn for the worse, and he soon went on to palliative care. My mum is a really great care worker, and under her guidance the family managed to fulfill his wishes of having him die at home, and so about a fortnight after my first visit home in twenty-odd months I was back again for my Grandad’s funeral.

It was a lovely crossing. It's a great way to travel by the way, the ferry. One of the thoughts that comforted me, when I was thinking of moving to France, was that the channel was simply a big river valley back at the end of the last ice age. It takes about eight hours on the boat. Often, I'll get the overnight ferry, have a stout in the bar and a bite to eat, then go sleep on a sofa if I can find one. Else I'll get the early morning one—either way I normally get to see a sunrise or sunset over the ocean.

I've got quite a mix of contacts I suppose, and some of them are really pro-vaccination, and think people are idiots for not having it—or worse. Most of them have simply got the vaccination for practical reasons. Some of them are very suspicious of it all, and not for any crazy reasons (so far as I can tell). And at least one of them has told me my getting vaccinated was a vote for medical apartheid! I really love this guy actually, and I appreciate the stuff he shares with me, but at the moment I'm not really that convinced by much of it. My brother is quite strongly anti-vax, at least for the time being, his wife is losing her job in care because she doesn't want to get vaccinated yet.

I do my best to play devil's advocate in either case normally, and so with them I tried to argue that the care industry was one place I really thought that vaccination should be mandatory. The hardest people I've found to talk to are the ones who find questioning the consensus of the scientific community a kind of heresy—I have some time for them because of course I would rather the world as a whole accepted the reality of climate change, for instance—but there are good reasons for critiquing science as well, concerning the fact that it too takes place within history, and not outside of the broader context of our current way of doing and thinking about things.

It's funny that you mentioned 9/11, Ray—that was the last big event on this sort of scale, I think—I was also one of the people who was suspicious of the mode of togetherness that was promoted in its wake, although things were very different in the UK, I guess. I was quite crazy for a while after 9/11, and I've met others since who suffered at that time—there were very powerful energies and emotions around and the scale of the attack, and the level at which it was mediated, was traumatic and destabilizing—I'm sure that some of what I and others were going through was part of the working out of all that, even if it took place in our persons—it was still the world's work, somehow. I was thinking when I was traveling that I'm really *really* glad I'm more stable now, because these times are weird in a whole other way, and I still haven't figured it out—maybe we never will, so much as many will insist on believing they know exactly what's going on.

Anyway, I investigated a few of the conspiracy theories that were around at the time of 9/11, and I found many of them quite hard to dismiss. That is not the case for me now—a lot of what is out there, say in terms of this virus being manufactured and the rest, seems on pretty shaky ground. Although to be honest I wouldn't be that surprised to find it comes out of a lab in Wuhan, I wouldn't hesitate to state that such would probably be an unfortunate accident rather than the sneaky manipulations of the 0.001%. It's pretty strange to me, people pointing to ideas like "The Great Reset" as "evidence" for such fishiness [Editor's note: "*The Great Reset*" is a contemporary conspiracy theory contending that some world leaders planned and executed the COVID-19 pandemic in order to take control of the world economy], when many of the ideas suggested by that scheme seem quite progressive and useful.

I don't know, though. Honestly, things on the global scale really are beyond me—except that I hope we somehow are moving towards a more global community, in the sense that really matters, in terms of caring for each other and our earth, honoring our many differences—diversity—and I'm sure that small scale initiatives and decentralization will end up, perhaps in a way that is paradoxical seeming, being a really big part of that.

* * * * *

Post by KD on September 25, 2021 at 11:56am

It's been so interesting to read all your replies! Thank you all for sharing—I know some of it is fairly personal, and it takes a lot of courage to share.

Besides what Raymond has already shared about our concert (where I'd say about a third of the people also had masks on), and our upcoming drive to Acadia (where we'll probably not eat inside or be around people anymore than we need to—Maine had record numbers of hospitalizations last week), the only other travel news I'd mention is that we flew to Colorado to visit my family two weeks after our second vaccine, back at the end of May. We were impressed by the efforts taken by the airline—we'd read about the new air filtration system they installed and, of course, the requirement to wear masks (which was definitely enforced by the flight attendants), so we felt safe. I'm glad we went when we did—I don't think I'd feel so safe now.

The only other local travel I'm doing is for work. My work is now requiring anyone who goes in to the office, or does anything work-related, to get tested weekly, and they do it all on-site. I do not go in to the office at all right now, but my team handles events. All events were cancelled last year, but we had our first one of the year—an outside community/Special Olympics softball game—last week, and we have the only other one on Monday, an outside golf tournament fundraiser, so I had to go in last week and this week to get tested. Raymond and I had made it this far without ever needing to get tested, so this was my first time—luckily, it was just the mid-nose swab, and wasn't painful or anything.

* * * * *

Post by Raymond on September 28, 2021 at 9:01am

Sam, I understand your concern. People do not have a lot of trust for governments, or science, or each other really, these days. Without knowing the details, we are suddenly told that a world-threatening virus is loose. At first, it is a rumor, something happening in Asia. In a short time, it is happening in our own neighborhoods, whatever part of the world we are in. *What? Why? How?* Nobody says for sure. Also, to make things worse, many make conflicting claims to know.

Mix into that that Trump lords the US, & the world to some extent, in 2020, & decides the pandemic is a political plot against him, since impeachment did not work. So, instead of ordering the massive power & influence of the American government into action, instead of saying to people, simply, “this is dangerous. We are learning more each day. The best scientists & doctors are on this,” he hulks his awkward bulk & stupid brain in the way of every attempt at safety & progress. Sadly, millions of people in this country believe him for . . . reasons. I have *no fucking clue* why.

This cripples the worldwide response to the pandemic. Instead of marshaling a coherent international plan, & communicating it clearly to all, & winning over at least most people to what needs to be done, & what they as individuals should do, chaos reigns. Millions die, needlessly.

In the face of this, scientists develop a powerful medicine in record time. I mean, *fucking* amazing record time. The company I work for was part of developing the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. But, instead of this being the miracle it is, Trump recommends bleach & sunlight, & “besides,” he says, “it’s all fake.”

But then, he gets it, & does he suffer through it? Like millions of others? *fuck no.* He gets rushed to

the hospital, & is given the most advanced, experimental drug known to humanity, to shorten his symptoms, & save his fat ass. Does he now say the pandemic is real? No. He rips off his mask, & goes back to his nightly Nazi-style rallies, getting his own supporters sick & dead by the millions, & others who just get unlucky near to them.

President Biden takes over & starts doing what should have been done but, by now, the waters of the matter are so damned muddied with politics that the facts:

- 1) There is a horrible global pandemic from a virus
- 2) There is safe medicine to protect people

get obscured. Even now, many in this country won't take the meds as a kind of political act. And they get sick. And they die. Proving their point?

To get back to your concern, here is my response. The numbers show two things:

- 1) Those who take *do* the vaccines by the millions are protected, do not get sick at all, or their illness is relatively minor in nature. This is amazing in itself.
- 2) Those who *do not* take the vaccines are getting sick & dying every day. *The New York Times* recently reported the phenomena of "Red" pandemic states & areas in the US. Essentially, heavy places of Trump politics where nobody gets the vaccines & crazy many are getting sick & dying [*Editor's note: "Red Covid," New York Times, 9/27/2021, <https://nyti.ms/3m9OLps>.*]

The fact that it took me this many paragraphs to even scratch the surface of all this indicates how complex it is. But, really, it comes down to this: *get the vaccines, & get protected.* They work. We'll likely need more of them. Who knows what other corner this pandemic may turn? But, without the vaccines, millions more would be in the hospital now, or dead.

As much as I share your desire to make up your own mind, distrust the intent of large institutions, & also your wonder & suspicion on how all this happened in the first place, I cannot come to any other conclusion. I'm glad you got yours, & your wife, & everyone here. I know we each & all are more protected than if we had not.

* * * * *

Post by Raymond on October 1, 2021 at 9:33pm

Kassi and I drove up to Maine this week, to Mount Desert Island. Visiting Acadia National Park. An annual trip we make, for the hiking and biking and seashore hours. Didn't come last year because . . . COVID-19.

The only challenging part of our trip, the only different part is having to be masked when in stores and other places. Some places we go, all good. Some places, nobody else masked. We keep on it. Stupid to get sick at this point in things. Just having to remember every time is a challenge in itself.

* * * * *

Post by JoMagik on October 22, 2021 at 12 pm

I traveled for 9 weeks in Mexico this past summer. Getting there was a harrowing journey, plenty o' twists and turns, not just COVID-related. Of course masks everywhere, people keeping their distance as usual. But on a plane that's a tad tricky.

Traveling around Mexico is way different than here in Canada for sure. Some people still wear masks on the street, but most people don't. And you'll even see police officers without masks and such. They are mandatory on buses, national flights, and in your neighborhood 7/11 and Oxxo. There's a lot of nose-out-masking. Overall I felt safe, but I'm young and not high-risk.

It's just that you can be cautious without being fearful. These days I work to cultivate joy and peace, trying to make a dent in the overall fear energy that permeates our lives. It's big work, but at least it's worth it.

* * * * *





Jo Monea

Swim, My Friend

I have to pee.

My mind is buzzing
buzz
bee, buzz buzzing

pollen, dust dust

orange flows over blue
a hue
so lovely it tickles

creation is sound and wave
it is color and texture
all because of the instant
in which the wave blooms

tossing and tumbling
bossing and bumbling
a rag doll of confidence

I can see pretty
and pretty can see me

snail work, industrial sales work
a machine of beep beep

I can barely sleep
rushing, rushing, rushing
stop, duck duck goose

I have a small weight in my chest
I'm about to nest
I feel uncomfortable

* * *



Jo Monea

Doors slam.
I shake with the house in fear.
A grip so tight it's parasitic.

My under eyes feel sunken, my neck strained.
Eyes are watering.
My head hurts.
A chill creeps in like a hungry cat.

Bodies in bodies
out of body
experience is thrilling
slow and then fast
soft and then hard

transforming into waves and particles
it's all one thing
unraveling and raveling simultaneously
organized disorder
it's entropy

we are this

Like a rocking horse in a child's bedroom
I play with you
Only when it suits me.

I need to pee.

* * *

close your eyes gently
be gentle
no erratic movements
they need to heal,
to find a place as open as a child

a wild way of being
mirrors of yearning show you the way
a bright sunny day
petals in the whipping wind bring tears to your windows
shut them tight

You won't have to wait long
just watch

* * *

remember the joyful
choose to pay your attention to it
awareness is the greatest currency
spend it wisely
breathe in the universe
exhale the imbalances

sit with your own frequency and let the currents guide you
they flow like the oceans
there is a method to the madness
plastic islands exist because of the ocean currents
meaning the flow groups them together
whatever your frequency is the universe will group you with similar ones

if you choose to vibrate higher you will attract things of similar frequencies
it's your choice
you have the power

everyone is god and part of god

* * *

cover me in joy
don't be gentle with brushes and soft touches
use your hands
investigate every hill and valley
nurture me in the heat of your fever

don't speak
just move

play hopscotch on the boundary
where me ends and you begins
then blanket me in comfort

we synchronize our expansions and contractions
blissful in our connection
unawares of the outside

* * *

all animals play
have you ever seen a dragonfly
look at a stalk of grass?
it perches itself right so its head is at the top
and it looks directly at the tip
sternly
with eyes that think

and in that moment you know
 higher intelligence is truth
 an organism that is aware of itself
 is aware of how one's reality is a reflection of itself
 reflections exist because of
 membranes
 boundary makers
 the dividers that create the one
 as well as the other

for there to be the illusion of separateness,
 the illusion of this membrane that separates me from the air,
 the distinction between here and there has to be made

because the only thing separating here from there is a thought
 an idea
 the idea of separateness
 and ideas are synonymous with illusions

things that we attach ourselves to
 things that we live through

just things

* * *

you are sitting outside a room,
 but you believe,
 with absolute certainty,
 that you are trapped within it

* * *

anxious replays in my brain
 not so fast
 i'll go insane

running by
 like springing skies
 with glowing stars
 untrusting eyes
 they watch
 they see
 the jarring fusion
 the great ballet
 the big confusion
 it's scary being in my mind
 sometimes i cry
 sometimes i rhyme

i wake with words
 so desperate to pee
 right out of my soul
 right on to your tree
 to soak through your roots
 and suck up your trunk
 to flow in the leaves
 and get you so drunk
 with meaning
 and love
 and death
 and fear
 the good and the bad
 all pleasant to hear

* * *

every moment has its loop
 a winding, twirling, changing
 droop
 a soaky pocket made of goop
 for you to swim
 and somersault
 to find your groove
 and dance your heart

swim
 my friend
 swim

* * * * *

Gregory Kelly



September 25, 2021
Thurton, Norfolk, England

Hiya, Mr. Raymond—

It's been quite some time. Nearly an entire pandemic, really. To think, we can measure time by how long a strange little virus has been rampaging around.

Keeping us locked in.

The fear, palpable. Physical. Pick up a rock. Turn it over in your hand. The rough edges never let us smooth them. So we let fly. Skip 'em over the waters. Same waters as were brooded over when creation first began. We watch the gravelly emblem ricochet opposing the tide. Until it drops.

For 18 months. More now. I've wished the fear away.

But it never leaves. It never leaves.

How are we to walk out our own front doors? To open windows? To breathe?

My friend. The air is stale. I wish I could hoover the air. Remove the dust. The bits. That all makes it cloudy. And foul. And strange. It's not the same air I breathed when I was younger. When life was different from now. It's rich with rank cancerous fear-mongering. Those stories that keep you up at night. It's like those stories that you used to read in newspapers that happened in far away places, where life was less glittery, came to our front door, knocked.

I wish I never opened that door, but we still got to live, right? Live, we must! Because there's still light to counteract the dark. Live, we must! Live and breathe and muster the strength to push back the fear like rubbing dock leaves on a sting.

What would life be without its stings?

My friend, it's been too long.

It's quiet here. Kind of. Kids are in bed. I've got a chamomile. There's some damn little fly buzzing about. Why are there always flies about? Frustrating little creatures.

And I'm typing to you from my new little keyboard. It's a legit Bluetooth-enabled typewriter, my friend. Keys click and all! Fantastic!

Oh man—it's been too long. Read through *Poetry in the Making* by Ted Hughes. Really enlightening. So I spent many August mornings in the middle of my garden. Stared at a wild sunflower. Followed its existence a bit.

You are rooted. i can move
 but if i was rooted just
 like you
 i would tease out the music
 of 150 million years and
 orchestrate it into the colours
 that dyed my petals into the
 same sunsung colour that has
 guided every generation but
 because i am taken by man
 i would dull my radiance
 enough for man to look at me
 without shading his eyes

enough to convince him
 hope
 truly never dies.

rainsoaked
 sodden
 raggedy life
 hunchbacked
 burdened brilliance
 bearing colour
 where all others paled
 concave limbs
 folding in on yer soul
 prayer meditations

12 silent sunflowers
 abiding the motions of the air
 understanding their
 station.

if you were given a millenia
 would you grow mountain high

un tend ed wild

yer bloom
on grace
on grace
on bloom

each petalled-star, a handhold
a foothold. i would step into
yer center. hold on to yer dark.

you are the balance of light
and not

full existence in equilibrium

colour encasing void

is yer soul trapt
or what reaches in every
direction
like casting a wide net
checking
is God left

is yer soul trapt
or reaching all around

he hears the faintest whisper
even inaudible sound

and calls you higher
and calls you higher

star-petalled garden spires

you are tended wild
in ways i will never know
life and breath
sown in yet petal threads

you are cared for and loved
in ways i will always know
life and breath
sown in all my loose threads

we are bloom
from grace
with grace
we bloom.

I sat with that sunflower for many poems. Tried catching the poem, as Hughes would say. Stared and stared and stared until something swept over the page. Whatever it may be. Unfiltered. It was fun exploring poetry with wild. Not knowing what would come. Not critiquing what would blot the page.

And now I'm with the other Hughes. Langston! Revisiting the music of poetry.

i left the washin'
the door open too
went barefoot inta th'garden
ou'ta hunt you

I'm like a kid on a bike for the first time. Racing away. Writing when I can. Reading when there's a quiet space. But not doing either enough! My word. I need more of this space in my life.

And, with that. It's gone passed nine now. I should be tucking in soon.

My friend, it's been too long. Hope you didn't mind my rambling on and on and on.

Be well, until we speak next. And please forgive me for not speaking up much sooner. I sincerely hope that you've been weathering this strange flood in a peaceful and pleasant way. Be very very well, my friend.

It's been too long. Too long indeed.

—Greg

* * * * *



Dad Dreams

(In memory of Frederick Albert Horowitz, 1938-2013)

I'm sad: the battery has died in the watch my father left me. Ever practical, my wife says, "Just put in a new battery," and hands me a tiny screwdriver. I unscrew the metal plate from the back of the watch and, inside, find a somewhat larger box like a metal matchbox. I extract that and unscrew its metal plate. Inside is a tiny bundle of papers. I unfold them. They're eight poster-sized colored pencil artworks that my dad made in the early 1980s, in perfect condition, unwrinkled.

Each image is built around a core of notes he jotted during a trip to New York City: actions he wanted to take, moments he wanted to remember. The colored pencil work surrounds and incorporates the notes. One image is a tableau of six strangers standing side by side on a subway platform. The strangers are stylized, each a different color, smooth as chess pieces, their faces halfway between human and animal, depicting some animal-like quirk of personality. The second person from the right is a gray rat-woman, glossy and clever.

* * *

My dad is preparing for departure. A couple times I realize he's dead. He's quite upbeat. We're in his apartment with a few other people. He mentions that I have an identical twin brother who was taken away and given to another family to raise, and who's living somewhere else.

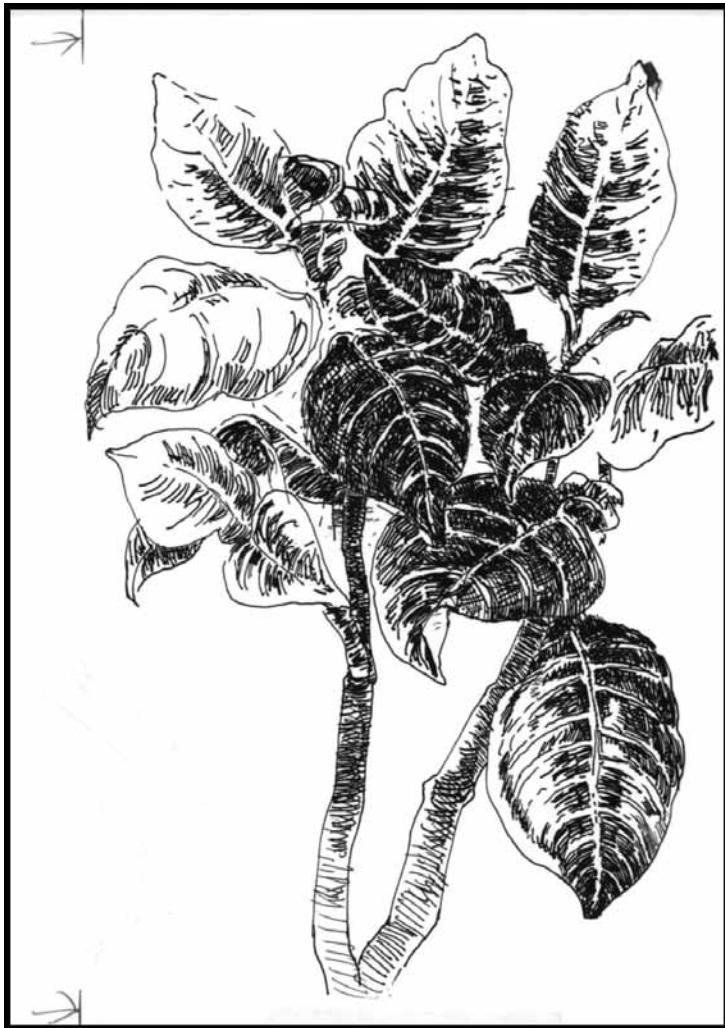
I say, "Well, give me his contact info, for God's sake!" But my dad just smiles and shakes his head. When he's gone, I notice how clean the place is. He left nothing but a pair of his brown shoes, which, when I look at them, turn into a pair of brown baby shoes.

* * *

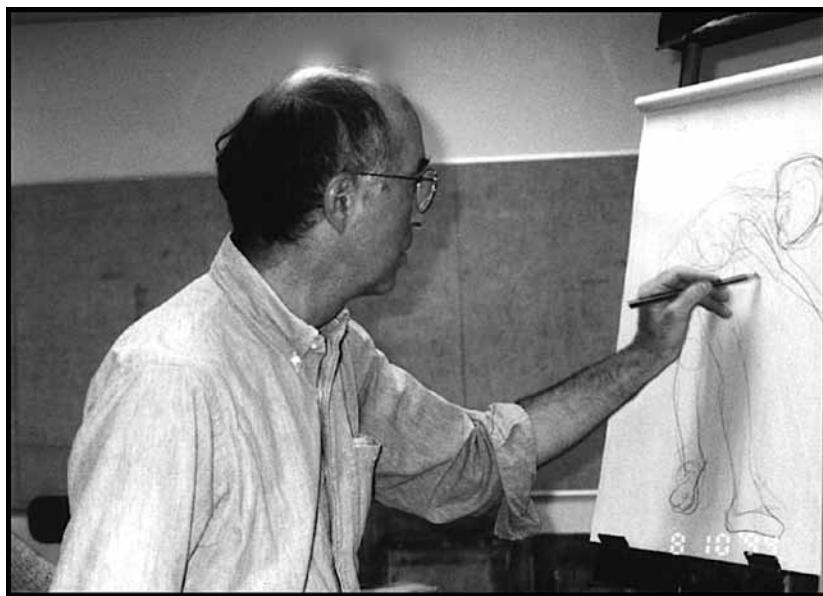
I'm in a building in Vienna. Outside, rain is beginning to fall. Through the open window to the courtyard I can hear my father's voice. He's rhapsodizing about how good the rain feels falling on his head. I lean out the window to say, "You put a hat on right now, young man," but the courtyard is empty.

* * *

On a ferry, I'm going through some old empty notebooks to donate them. One proves to be not so empty after all, but is actually an old sketchbook of my dad's. The sketches are wonderful, including architectural details of 19th-century houses, color studies, and a simple pen-and-ink drawing of a huge cruise ship in dry-dock, dwarfing two figures who stand next to the hull in conversation.



Frederick Albert Horowitz



Courtesy of Nathan D. Horowitz

The passenger next to me is a tall Brit, about 60, wearing a trench coat. He asks to see the sketchbook, then pockets it and refuses to give it back. I yell at him and shake him, but he acts like he doesn't know what I'm talking about. The ferry is heading into port. I'll yell for security guards or police to help me. He won't get away. Or maybe he will. As I'm waking up, I think, "He's Oblivion."

* * *

My dad shows me a metal box he has prepared to leave for me. Inside is another copy of his will, a small plastic bag with coins in it, another with some bills, and an old book. This had been published by my dad's teacher Josef Albers in 1888 (the year Albers was born). The spine had cracked and disintegrated; the pages were discolored on one edge. The text was words that transformed, Escher-like, as they went across the page into multicolored pictographs and geometrical designs: a perfect blend or middle mixture of literature and visual art.

* * *

I look for my dad where he's living now. I've been there before, upstairs in a big old house he shares with others. I see two housemates, a man and a teenager. I'm the outsider here and need to explain to the boy that I'm going to visit my dad. The boy says, "You've been here before, right? So OK." I go upstairs.

My dad stands naked in his room, looking the age I am now. He's confident but melancholy about his possible role in what went wrong between us. I say, "No, look," and hand him one of my molars, which recently fell out. A blue rot has tunneled through it. Problems I used to blame him for were caused by a medical condition on my side.

* * *

I'm sitting at a table with my mom. A cat is on the table. As a joke, I turn on my digital sound recorder, hold it out to the cat, and say, "Say something." The cat says, "Hi, Fred."

* * *

They drive away. It's very late but there's still a lot I want to do tonight before going to bed. I go into the car. In the dark, I rummage through the shopping bags but can't locate the textbooks I'll be teaching out of. I give up and shut the door. Maybe I should just go to bed. I've been out of town traveling for a week, and the thought of my disheveled-but-peaceful bed is suddenly comforting. *But where's my apartment?*

Missing my dad, I walk along the street. The city is a blend of Vienna and Ann Arbor with a dash of Arkansas. I think I live somewhere near the tall apartment building. I pass another apartment building that brings back memories from my youth.

I remember the Bulgarian hooker scolding Renton and Sick Boy in *Trainspotting 2* for living in the past. I think of my friends' son Solomon, and how humanity replaces itself, and how he will be as good a man as my father was. *Where is my home?* I wonder as I walk along. *Where is my bed?*

* * *

In a dim room, a colleague of my dad's is flirting with me. She's tall and dark and a full professor. She gets into a bed. I lie next to her and reach under the covers and stroke her smooth belly.

When I turn over to relieve a cramp in my shoulder, I realize I've been stroking a metal sign I propped up in a window. "*Lesen! Täglich! Hier!*" it says, "Read! Every day! Here!" It's an ad for a Viennese newspaper, a souvenir of my Austria days. I think it was a mistake to put it up in the window, as it could easily fall and hurt someone.

The professor has fallen asleep. Between us in the bed, I find a sketchbook that belonged to my dad when he lived on a kibbutz in Israel with my mom in 1966. I open it. For a couple of pages, he has drawn schematic views of a Purim festival using a repeated squiggle I identify as the Hebrew letter *yod*. This expresses the vibe of the holiday, divine joy brought on by having survived an attempted genocide. The next six pages are folkloric designs of Jews of the Middle East, beautifully rendered as patterns cut into the pages with an Exacto knife.

The last I see in the sketchpad is a meticulous drawing of an object. A friend of my father's, an immigrant to Israel on the kibbutz, had built the object out of wood based on a traditional European Jewish design. Perched atop a two-and-a-half-meter pole set into the ground is a round, flat board a meter in diameter, three-quarters covered by a wooden dome.

On the board is a model of a miniature village. Below the board is a crank that rotates the village around the axis of the pole to reveal different sections of the model of the village within the dome's gap. Each section is decked out to celebrate a different Jewish holiday. Over a year, the crank is slowly turned, and the part of the model village that's exposed always reflects the closest holiday to the actual date; the object is a cross between a calendar and a very slow clock.

* * *

Visiting some of his cousins at their home, my dad has a big smile and salt-and-pepper dreadlocks halfway down his back.

* * *

Monomaniacal, Dad grabs me from behind and clings to me, his arms wrapped around my shoulders. Yelling and struggling, I shake him off.

* * *

Dad has been hanging around my cousin Susie's place. I realize I'm dreaming and he's dead. I approach him. He's on a higher level than I am, as if standing on a platform.

I reach up and pat him on the chest and say, "So, how have you been doing, anyway?"

He looks off to the right and a warm smile lights up his face.

* * *

In the crossroads twenty feet from the last house my folks and I lived in together before they split up in '73, I'm sitting at a card table trying to *daven* with three other men. The man on my right is a cipher: I never look at him directly. The one across from me is my dad, pumping out ancient syllables like a heart. The one on my left is related to my dad but not to me; clean-shaven like him, younger, thin-faced, serious, with a downturned mouth; one of those who direct themselves inward toward the tradition, rather than outward as I do.

Ashamed I don't know Hebrew, I grasp at words I don't understand. I want to sink into the Earth. That does the trick. Memorized long ago, the words come out in a rush as if from underground: "*Mi yimalel gevurot Yisrael, otan mi yimne? Hen be'chol dor yakum ha'gibor goel ha'am.*" "Who can retell the things that befell us, who can count them? In every age, a hero or sage came to our aid."

* * *

Together with my dad's girlfriend, I enter a huge studio where he has left some of his art for me. The masterpiece is a painting on a fragile surface, paper blended with cloth, so I fear it would be damaged by moving.

Seven feet high and sixteen feet wide, done in reds and blacks, it shows me, wearing shorts and a t-shirt, but my head is the head of a fox, and I'm asleep on my stomach atop a low grassy rise. The lines are rough, the light patchy, Egon Schiele-style. The painting has a three-dimensional effect that makes some scrawled lines above the huge, reclining body seem to float in the air as if they're my dreams.

* * *

I'm riding in my dad's car at night. He's driving. Everything is dark, even the dashboard, so I can't see him. Also, I'm facing backwards. The road starts to descend and the car picks up speed, faster and faster. I become terrified and am about to ask him to slow down when I remember we've been down this road many times before, and it has always frightened me, but it has always been OK.

גָּוֹיִל עַיְיָ כָּאֵל מֶתֶל . שְׁהֵי כָּאֵל מֶמֶּנֶי לְעַזְוָל שְׁ
אֹוֹתְךָ לְנִיר . בְּשֻׂדָּה מִכְּלָה . מְהֵי כְּלָמָּה לְמָה

*Peace be with you,
ministering angels,
messengers of the Most High,
messengers of the King of Kings,
the Holy One, Blessed be He.*

* * * * *



Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Many Musics

Twelfth Series

*"I tell you, there are more worlds,
and more doors to them,
than you will think of in many years!"
— George MacDonald, *Lilith*, 1895.*

xii. Beach of Many Worlds, Part 2

"It was a secret place I found,
beneath a battered stone bridge,
a fair distance from our settlement."

Gate-Keeper pauses. Reaches back, hard,
for it. "A refuge. A remake. A re-invention."

Another pause. Then: "To remember one thing
is an easy slide into many others. But this needs
my telling, now, to all of you. Insists my recall.

"I was unloved in that unhappy, grey place.
Twice more curled into myself, an unknowing,
unhappy fist of a boy. Fed & kept reluctantly
among my clan, shared by everyone
like a chore all resented.

"My habit of forgetting began then, losing
time, names & faces. They were not cruel to me,
but indifferent. They suffered this grey world,
but not with me. Whichever camp I stayed,
I was a stray from somewhere else, not a name
to learn, a face to know better; just a mouth
to feed, a corner to sleep. My shapeless hat
tossed outside on the morning I was to go.

"My temperament then was not one to brood
slowly the why of such things. Instead, I took to walking
my days, knowing that somehow, one day, *I'd not return*.
I was *not* one of them, & they were *not of me*.
I just needed a friend to conspire by, learn of.
So I walked, always looking, *always looking*.

“So I walked my days far as daylight
would allow. This grey world all I knew,
but better I’m sure than most of my clan.
Its roads hardly scars in its hard earth,
went nowhere fast & far, their common sense to it.
Yet walking felt good to my restless legs,
something more than *where to* mattered in it.

“I filled up my knapsack ever heavier
with stolen water, nuts, & fruits,
now also walking by evening’s grey too,
never dark beyond my legs’ daring, &
them ever more so. *I had to arrive.*

“The scar of a road I’d often followed,
now further than before, smoothed awhile,
dark, hard, then shattered beyond all passage.
I looked about me, endless fields of grey grass,
ever the grey sky above, the greying beat
of my heart & breath, maybe first despaired,
wondered maybe to cease, & what then?—

“Water. Hearing water. Weird music to me!
Stumbled & hurried on toward it, & the broken road
led to an ancient stone bridge. Below it,
a barest of streams flowed. I stumbled down
the grey hill of tall grass to come to a place
of rest below. A rocky hill on each side
of the water, kept shaded, kept secret,
by the old stone bridge above.

“This became my home, stretches as long
as my food would last. Mastered dancing
stones across the water, shouting wild!
Then listened with all of me, more than
I’d known I had, to hark back of *what this world*
once was. But, little. Nothing.

“The settlement was an old ragged
dream I knew again when I needed.
The only food I’d ever seen was from
the crashed spaceship we’d come in.
After awhile, I no longer had to steal.
My knapsack was agreeably filled that
I would the sooner be back along my way.
Nobody asked where.

"Then the afternoon my dancing stone
near hits something new on the other
side of the water. Something *large*. *What?*

"I splashed my way over there, never
before had thought to. It was near
the hill's top, half hid in grey weeds.
Beheld this large, strange, *made thing*.
Unbroken, unruined. Old but together.
I tried to lift it up & nearly ruined it then.

"But I carried it safely at a slow stagger
through the shallow water to where I would
often nestle among several large rocks. Gently,
thoroughly, inspected my prize. Though its body
seemed solid enough, its . . . *face?* . . . seemed fragile.

*"Was it dead? Why did I think it had
ever lived? So hungry my need for a friend?"*

The Creatures strewn about me & those
in my grasp sniff twice when I am too long silent.
They listen with an attention to my words
nearly like magick. This peaceful clearing in these
beautiful White Woods is very far from where I tell of.
My new friend rests comfortable nearby,
more sensible for my long travels, I suppose.

How long have we been here with these
lovely Creatures? There is no time here,
not as people-folks count it up, & then
count it down again. Some of my story I feel
like we shared in dreaming, as *what is here*
& *what was there* cluster through &
through as we do.

We sit together on my rocky hill
below that bridge, & I show them
my different tries to know this new being.
The White Bunny with her intense, kind eyes,
& her dearest Hedgedyhog friend, grey but
not like that lost world. Small, pretty Giraffes,
like a charming bouquet. Shiny-eyed Fox & Owl
& Leopard. We *hmmm* together to bring
Dreamland more alight, invite & allure
many more along my story.



I touched & turned this new friend's knobs & dials,
 reminding of what I saw on that
 crashed spaceship during my early
 raids for food. No response. My friend's
 face remained blank.

They encourage me keep trying, & then,
 just for a moment, an image bursts
 upon his face!

"Then, as quick, the image was gone.
 Like it had never been. A flicker,
 then down to a white dot, took ever
 & ever for it to go. It did."

The Creatures tender me closer, deep *hmmming*
 to my sad, remembering heart.

I smile, or try to. "I stared, 'like I had
 a mouth fulla flies,' that old saying
 I learned much later. Fit me well in that moment.
 I tried the knobs & dials in every combination.
Nothing. What had I seen? Where had it gone?

"Days passed. Nothing changed. On one
 reluctant trip back to that settlement,
 I overheard the story of a girl & two boys,
 kin, who'd gone missing. Over & over,
 the strange phrase, 'White Woods, White Woods,'
 but I did not know this yet." A few curious
 sniffs. "They were scared of it. Warned each other away.

"Days passed. Nothing changed. Finally,
 sadder than I'd ever been, I carried him
 out to the grey field nearby. The one I had
 charged through that first day, & come through
 eager countless times since.

No sense of ceremony, or honoring, by symbol
 or gesture, I simply & instinctively built
 a kind of stone circle, & set my friend upon
 a larger stone in the center. Not a priest
 or god to kneel before, he was simply, *simply,*
nearly, my friend. I know better now this
 was an ignorant, lonely boy's idea of a shrine,
 or a graveyard. A kind of goodbye.

"The sun rarely shown full through the grey clouds,
so my visits to this shrine took on a melancholy,
but comforting familiarity. More often I spent
my hours here, crawled by night to my old place
among the stones to sleep.

"Then a time I approached, rassling I guess
you could say with the fragments I'd learned
back at the settlement of the White Woods.
Dangerous. Murderous. Foul. I was near
at my friend's shrine when I heard *sounds!*
Saw pictures on his face! How?

"It was sunny that day. For hours. Its warmth
& light, I guessed, awaked my friend from
deep sleep? I clumsyed myself onto a stone seat
to watch."

It is deep night now. Full Moon still climbing
the tall birches & oaks & pines here. As I am quiet
awhile, the Creatures begin to *hmmm*, near &
far, some, then many more, then countless.
Medicine in this music, sustenance, a magick
both simple, close, & sweet, & also vast, reaching
far & deep & lasting through the constellation
of the Many Worlds.

The White Bunny & Hedgedyhog & many others
lead me & my friend now to a vast bed
of giant Ferns, its very center naturally
declining into a kind of couch. They notice me
a tureen of soup, its bowl & spoon, as magick
a taste to my impoverished tongue as those
many days at that shrine were to my heart.

A beautiful green Hummingbird, black & brown &
cinnamon-furred Bears, small bloo-eyed Kittees
& their dear Friend Fish, so many nuzzle near me
like I have worth. The *hmmm* deepens in me,
tugs me in, & in, my story awaits more telling in Dreamland.

But we are not sitting in the shrine now.
We travel, whole & happy, *within* his pictures & sound.
All I watched, all I recall, down deep.

A low, sweet song weaves in & out of our travels,
 coming & going like a Mercury's breeze, & the words
 I catch when I can: "Art she dances alone,
 the world her loneliness at partner,
 crowds sometimes near, sometime watching
 often not . . ."

We travel down & down & down, to ancient places,
 become one with the deepest roots of
 this green world, our *hmmming* now carrying us
 deeper, now the green itself, everything
 still yet always moving, a deepest dance & praise
 of living—

Now drawn up from that Heart of the World,
 by the beautiful endless decoration that is
 her Wide Wide Sea. And up, & up, & up,
 tossed up the Sea's delightful new Islands,
 its vast masque of White Woods—

Something distracts me in my Fern couch,
 a small cackle tis, & a wee little thing gnawing
 on my left palm. I am back, at least somewhat.
 Tis the merry little Imp, her crazy laughing eyes
 full upon me. "Ké?" she cries. I realize I have not
 told the rest of the story. Herself awaits. I nod.

"I watched for hours," I resume. "Not knowing
 what I was seeing. Wondered first if what I saw
 was *inside* my friend somehow? But no, *no*.
 He was showing me other places than I had known.
 I cherished my friend & treated him kindly &,
 in turn, he tended me with *hope of more*.

"I loved the Island I saw on my friend,
 its endless White Woods. I saw Creatures
 like all of you," I smile. Curious sniff or two.

I pause now for a long time. "He was gone.
 One day I came & he was gone. *Was I followed?*
 Had he returned to that beautiful Island?
 I sat there at my empty shrine for many days.
 Hunger & thirst, really it was a second despair
 that drove me back to that settlement.
 I was more unnoticed, if that was possible.

"They were convinced those evil White Woods
encroached ever closer. I noticed stray twigs
& pretty leaves on the dirt paths between camps.
None had ever been there before.

"I knew the White Woods was not evil.
I began collecting what leaves & twigs I found,
filled my knapsack half full of them.
Brought them back to my shrine & decorated
it with them. Red, orange, brown, yellow
leaves. Twigs criss-crossing them. My heart
lightened. Grew dark, full Moon above again,
I stayed & stayed.

"Watching the Moon, listening like old,
for what I yearned to know. *I am friend
to all here. Tell me one thing please.*"

I smile now crazy at the crazy little Imp
still in my hand. She cackles merrily.
"At first it scared me. I thought I was choking,
or ill. A . . . um . . . buzzing in me began that night.
Very soft at first, but a little more, &
a little more.

"I stared at my leafed & twigged shrine,
remembering my old friend, all he had
showed me, & I decided to find my way
to those White Woods that terrified my clan.
I was *not of them*, nor *they of me*.

"I left my shrine with a kiss from my fingers
to my heart, & returned a last time
to that settlement. Silent as ever, ignored
like always, I listened. Their talk at meals,
at fire at night, always turned to the White Woods.

"It was a fair walk in a direction I had never
taken. The Moon guided my steps that night.
Even their so-called sentries were not that close.
Across a long grey field I could see it.

"I heard a shout or two as I began my run across that field. There was a shout or two behind me, but no more. The *buzzing* in me was grown up fierce now, tugging me along, guiding me, *guiding me where to enter*. Somehow this was critical. I ran faster & faster but, then, very near now, I slowed.

"The *buzzing* was gone. Like it *never twas*. And I was no longer scared, no longer greying. I walked calmly, calmly into those White Woods. And now I heard newly, high up, deep down, the *hmmm* for the first time."

I gaze with humble love in me at these many beautiful Creatures, & this magickal place. "I was gifted my freedom to leave that grey, unloving world. To learn how to *know* more, how to *endure* much, how to *prosper*. I walked that night till I was limping & exhausted. Found a clearing just like this one."

I raise to show them my boots made from vines & stones. "These saved my feet. Allowed me to travel far, make my many mistakes, meet my new friend there, & now arrive to you."

Many sniffs, a cackle or two.
We sleep deep & wild together.
In Dreamland, I watch us sleeping on
the face of my somewhere friend.

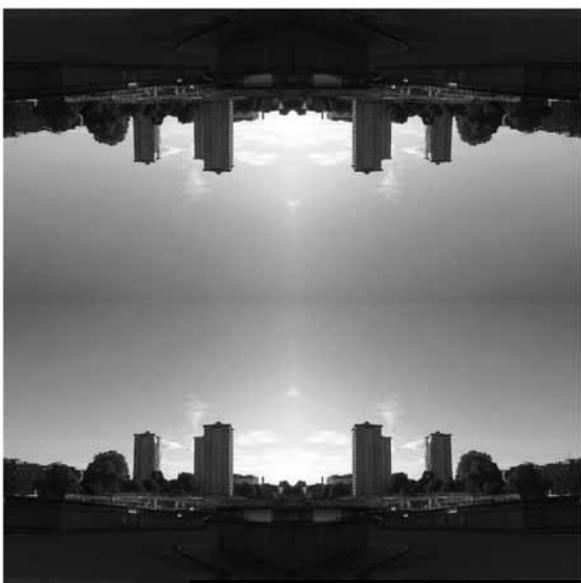
These words drift with me to morning's waking:
Wherfrom these Many Worlds?
What is my place in it to help?



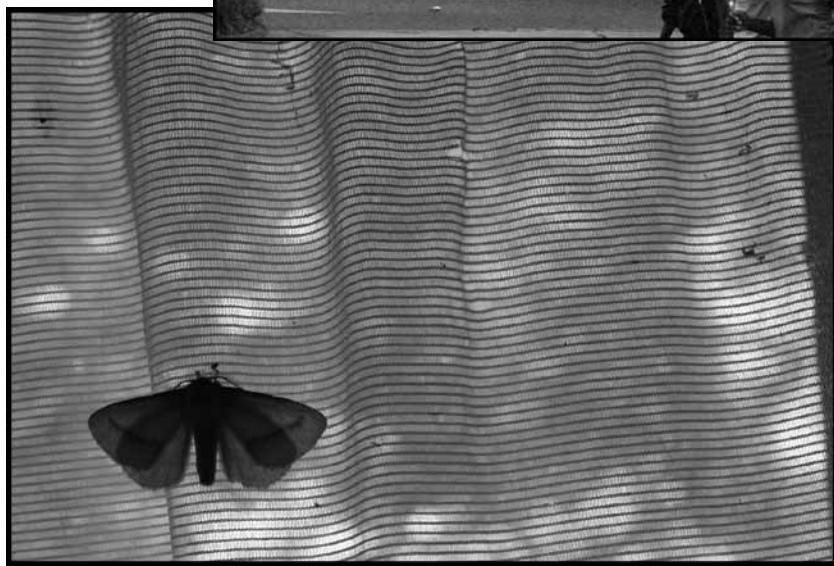
* * * * *

Michael Couvaras











Martina Newberry

Wheras

[Notes on Four Classified Ads]

i.

WHEREAS my wife, Margaret Overstay, has eloped from my bed and board unlawfully, and without any just cause: I hereby forewarn all persons from harbouring, or trusting her upon my account, as I pay no debts of her contracting after the day hereof.
 —CHRISTIAN OVERSTAY. Bucks county, Falls township, July 25, 1789.

Margaret packed her sturdy brown boots, her canvas apron, her one good dress and collar, and her large blue mixing bowl. She wore overalls and a dark flannel shirt and her husband's worn-down slopping boots.

She took with her his oak walking stick which he used when gout was upon him, and as a tool for whacking her senseless when he was moody. She hooked up the older horse to a small wagon, and left for parts unknown at 2 a.m.

She also took the flintlock pistol with the ivory stock given to her by her stepbrother, Elias Jones, who told her in a note (passed to her on her wedding day by the laundress) which said, “If any of what I hear about old Christian Overstay is true, you’ll need this.” He included an address where he could “always be contacted.”

On July 28, 1789, Elias Jones disappeared from a boat dock on Lake Erie. Neither he nor Margaret Overstay were ever seen again.

ii.

WHEREAS My Wife Mary, without any just cause of complaint, hath eloped from my bed and board, all persons are therefore desired not to trust her on my account, as I am determined not to pay any debt she may contract after this date, unless she returns to her good behaviour.
All persons are forewarned, at their peril, harbouring her.
 —MICHAEL MCKEEL. December 27th, 1796

After her arm and shoulder and neck had healed from burns she suffered when Michael McKeel threw a bubbling stewpot at her, for disagreeing with him in regards to Mr. Thomas Jefferson’s chances of winning the election, she fled his house, carrying only a sewing kit with three colors of thread, and her Bible. She took up with the Shakers.

In a letter to her cousin Molly, she said that the only thing she could ever believe in again was "Christ's Second Appearing," and that the scars from her burns would prevent her from ever seeking again a man's look of love or lust.

When she was 86, she died in her sleep, her hands in a posture of prayer.

iii.

***ANY PERSON KNOWING WHEREABOUTS of my Jessie Brooks Johnson,
my wife (nee-Redman) send her home or her address to me.
—BISHOP BROOKS JOHNSON 1218 Bank st. Washing D.C. 1834.***

Jessie Brooks Johnson grew tired of waiting up for her husband, who was in the habit of coming home late with women of ill-repute, and various drunken companions, at which times he called on her to wait on them, and serve them dinners, and turn down beds for them, while she herself slept on sacks of flour in the basement.

In town, she was known to be a quiet, Christian soul who refrained from gossip, and never said an unkind word to or about anyone.

She stayed with Bishop Brooks Johnson for twelve years, then disappeared from their home, leaving only a short note explaining that she could no longer watch her "husband's dalliances with unfortunate and diseased women."

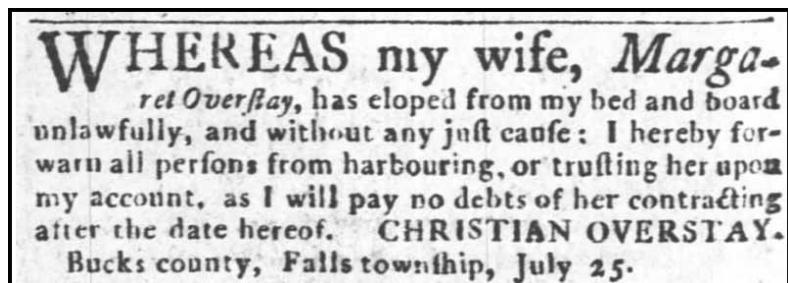
She took with her \$8.00 in cash and a fileting knife. It is said that, after leaving Bishop Brooks Johnson, she cut off her hair and lived as a man in New Orleans, until she died of cholera.

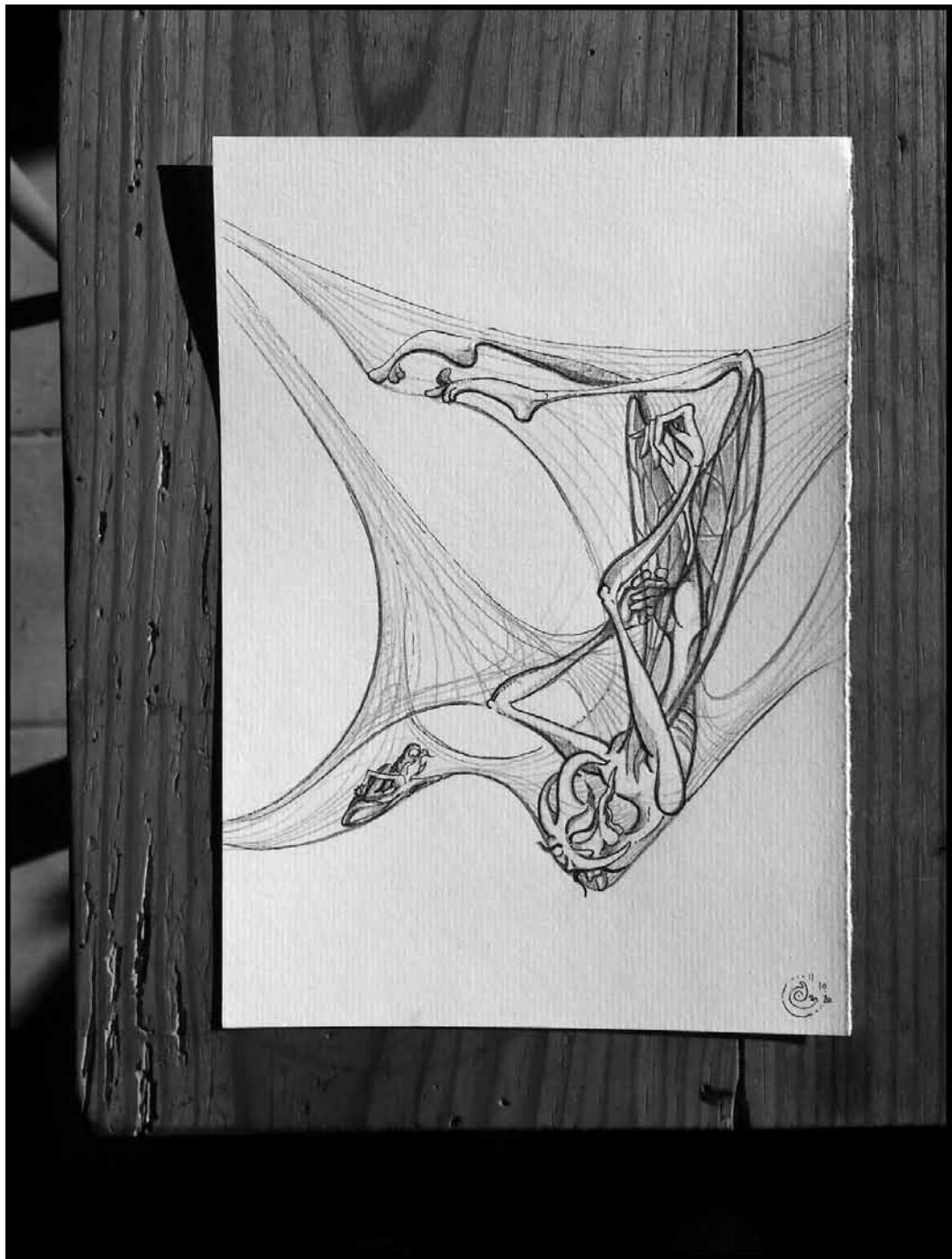
iv.

A WOMAN named Helen Morrison posted one of the first personal ads, in the year 1727, in the Manchester Weekly Journal. In several words, she professed her desire for a nice gentleman.

The message caught the attention of one man, the city mayor, who committed the lady to an asylum for a month. It is not known what the rest of her life was like.

* * * * *





Sam Knot



Mabon Calling

[Fiction]

On either side of me are two giant slate tips, and between them the grey sky has just cracked open. Fingers of light trace the contours of distant mounts, while just across the way the heath becomes golden. With quite some delight I notice the slate tips have been shaped by human hands—and it must have been many hands, or else a few pairs over many years, for they are in the form of vast twin dragons, mythical creatures lain upon the earth. And I see they are awake: their eyes are opened by thorn trees, one in leaf and one in blossom, emerging from eye-socket gardens. They seem ready to spring into action, for fires have been left to smoulder in their nostrils. The smoke threads out and—in this place well-sheltered from the winds—goes at a pace of its own to join the clouds in the sky . . .

*Older than eye
have ever been
these elements
that make me
new.*

* * *

An excerpt from the *Pluropagan Pamphlet*:

“Mabonna, which is not what the locals call it, lies at the bottom of a valley beside a great lake (or at least we think it is great). After passing through the twin dragons, you descend inside an ancient oak wood, eventually picking up the path of a minor but lively river that flows into said lake. You should keep to its line along the spongy sphagnum-covered rocks that carpet this spellbound little wood, this pixies’ adventure playground that surrounds us in a protective and somewhat multi-dimensional hug.

“This is a place where all is soft and winding, where dream-songs float above the gargle of the river, and you might sleep and laugh and play all around with no fear of coming to human-done harm.

“Yet, as perhaps there should be in all wild places, there is an edge to this magic, a more-than-human nature, by which you might find yourself led astray, or spiked, or stung, or maybe your blood will be drunk or your thoughts flurried—always to teach you a lesson, mind—always for a reason. For these are the courts of intuitive fairy justice that seek to uncover the moment you ignored that little voice inside.

“*Or was it . . . ?*”

* * *

On my way down hill I pass through a variety of carven archways, each possessing a garlanded face. The faces are quite different in character and mood, yet they all share the curious ability to make me feel

like laughing, at the same time as making me want to be just about as quiet as possible. The birds are singing at a volume I am quite unused to and—though I have been reassured it is safe, and that I will be welcomed here—I feel anxious and somewhat alien.

I find myself in what appears to be a kind of communal center. I can hear faint voices and the sounds of pots and pans banging around. There are a variety of structures around me, many of them built right into the earth with only their doors and windows showing. Here in the middle is a circle of shard-like stones pointing up at the sky, with the remains of a fire between, and just over there is a sizeable structure, with an elaborately decorated entrance, carved with wonderfully archaic patterns, and with a big conical hat of dried grass on it, reaching nigh to the floor. Something over the river catches my eye, amid ribbons and flags and mirrors and gems all hanging from a tree—someone appears to be watching me.

Suddenly a shadow emerges from behind a building to my right and I let out the most terrible squeal—this makes the shadow person jump, of course, and to such a degree that I swear I actually see their hair stand on end. I apologize profusely and explain why I am here, and ask if perhaps there is someone who might show me around. This lady's name is Meme, it seems, and she works in the kitchen, and finds my name rather charmingly old-fangled. She shows me an empty *hobome* (at least I think that is what she calls it) where I might unpack my things and await the initial gathering, scheduled for the following morning.

I take the opportunity to sit on a small bench outside the door and relax. As I am doing, so a rather attractive lady walks by, flashes a smile and waves. I decide not to unpack just yet, the more pressing urge being to nip across the river and investigate the shrine I could see under the tree. I am only a few steps into my quest, however, when a wee pixie of a girl wearing a jester's hat and sporting over-sized spectacles comes running down the hill behind a sheep dog. *Oh marvellous!* I think, *a child and a domestic animal, perfect company!* But actually, she seems rather intelligent and self-contained, and the dog gives up pretty quick when I refuse to throw him *another* stick.

Then, all of a sudden, an exceedingly colorful group of ladies is coming down the hill in a bubble of exclamations, and a large fellow with wild grey hair and a big honest grin is advancing towards me with his arms out, wrapping me up in quite the welcome hug. He encourages me to recount the details of my journey—as the story goes on someone slowly stirs honey into the sun, and in that glorious sweet light that makes everything soft and dreamy, breathes the first cool black breath of night: the spirit steam of falling asleep outside, where the stars are like sparkles of ice in it.

* * *

I am in a cave, sat where the red-black depths begin to snuggle, my body barely brushed by the farthest edge of the blue-white light that filters in from the opening.

I am somehow aware of a single tree that is growing directly above me. I follow the twist and tangle of its roots down through the cracked rock ceiling, to where they dangle before me, dripping, and cradling the mysterious “thing” I had been requested to find.

It appears to be a glassy sea-green pot, an earth-filled globe that is open at the top, with two small Bonsai trees growing in it, forked like antlers. The leaves are semi-transparent, as if only half there.

I notice that a fire flickers in the yawning mouth of the cave, and that what I took to be walls all around me are in fact other people staring into the fire; they do not appear to be moving, and yet, with each flick of the fire, I find their positions have changed.

What a marvelous thing the imagination is! Close my eyes, bang a drum, tell me I am going to find something—maybe give me a little prompt here and there—and I will journey! Perhaps it will feel more like a succession of self-questionings than actual travel per se, but certainly I will go somewhere, and return with something, something I have been instructed to keep to myself.

The Witch has said it will make sense to me some day, likely in relation to my current adventures, but maybe even helping me to make sense of other parts of my life. I realize my memory has begun to enshrine the cave, like any other place I have been, and already I am not so sure that I did not, after all, actually happen upon it once upon a time.

I watch the thin smoke rising into the great funnel of the roof, joining a sort of fog that collects there. The fellow beside me, who goes by the name of Tarot, leans his shaved head in towards mine and tells me in a gentle voice how the energy from the fire goes up through the roof there, and connects us to the pole star, so that the whole world can be imagined to rotate on that axis.

* * *

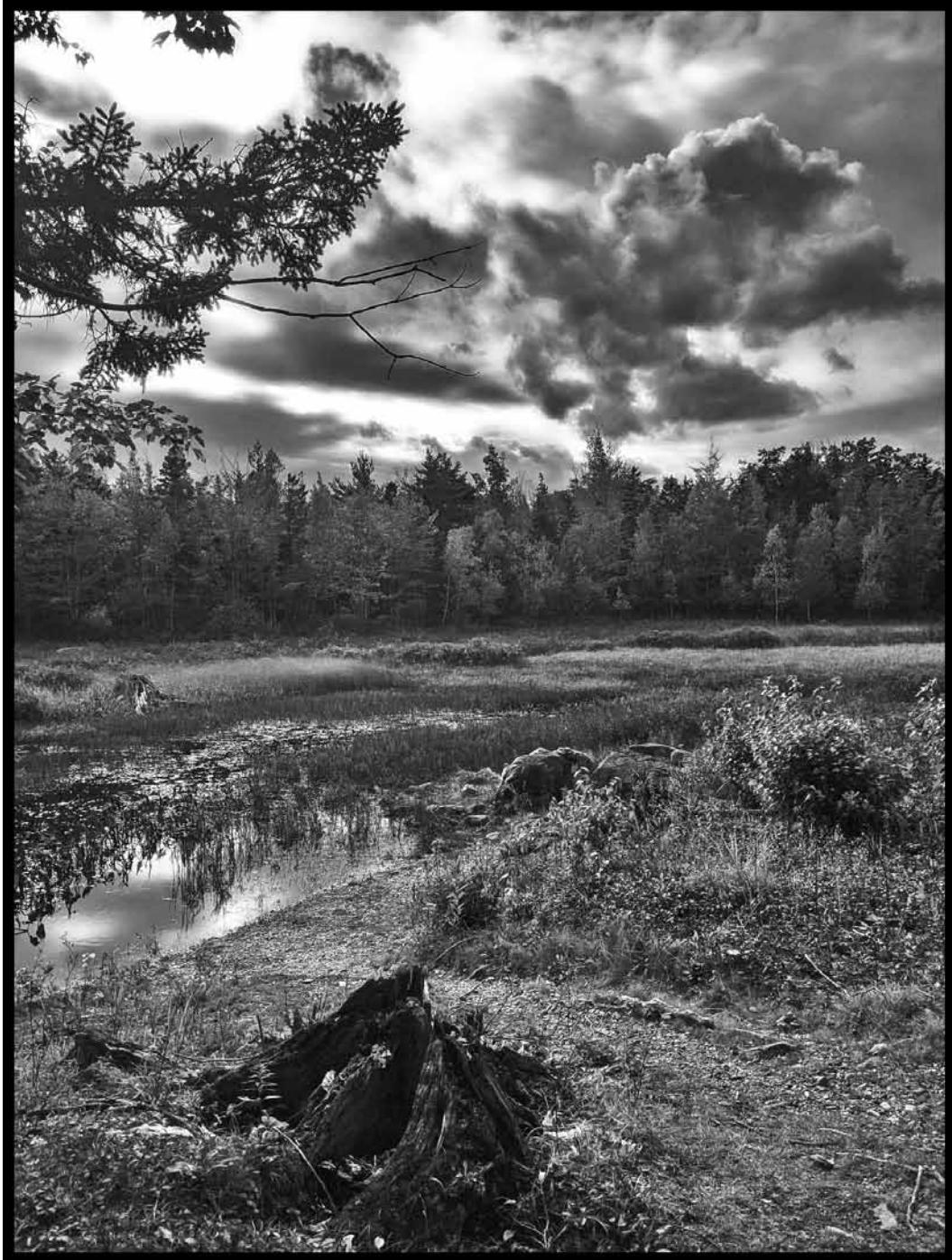
Beside the river a man is playing guitar to a troop of ducks. His name is Art and he is the father of the wee pixie girl, Sybll, who I think might be the source of the bright shapes I can see moving slowly through the leaves on the other side.

I hover a while, listening to the soft notes mixing with sound of the water, and then I retire to some distance, and realize that here I can probably take out my book and make a *trupix* without anyone reporting me to Nanostate. *Yaar me hearties, I shall give it a go.*

I am soon deeply involved in tracing lines, following an intuitive, language-like yet pre-verbal feeling inside me to transcribe the essence of recent memories. I do so obliquely, often not directly representing the creatures or the scenes involved, but referencing them for myself in an innate idiom, both concrete and abstract at the same time. There is something quite different about this process, compared to the *depix* norm, something more palpable and embodied about it (even though in *depix* we might be able to transform into line or plane any gesture of which our bodies are capable). There is something about the simplicity of the flatness of the paper before me, the book perched on my knee, the feel of it all, the scrape of the graphite on the slight roughness of the paper . . .

Then, though the voice is a soft one, I am snapped out of my trance—“Hey what you doing?”—it is Art, peering over my shoulder. I quickly snap my book shut and hide it in my pocket, as the words stumble out of me, “Sorry, I’m sorry, I don’t know really . . . I just thought”—but then I see that Art is smiling. “Don’t worry about it, man, it’s all pretty soft here. Didn’t you see me playing to the ducks?” And then it clicks: he was just playing, just playing for the sheer joy of it; he never waved it *aut to sea!*

I want to know more, so I hit him with a barrage of questions. It turns out he is indeed a stated *muso*, and so admittedly, being passed practice, he should be waving all of it *aut to sea* for Nanostate to do as they please with—but no one here seems to care about that, so he can get away with “just playing” if he wants.



He tells me he actually really enjoys playing to the ducks, that they make a great audience, and how he trips on the river coming in and out of his attention, actually responding to that in his playing, so that man and river are playing together, and the wind in the trees becomes part of the song too.

So I tell him how that reminds of a poem a wayback uncle of mine once wrote, about how the wind in the trees is a river of air, and the current in the river is a kind of wind, and all these natural phenomena transform through each other—and us—in one big elemental analogy. So they are all different, but not really, and all the same, but not totally. He says it sounds kind of familiar.

I feel like I am babbling a bit, but then: so is the river, I suppose.

We listen to it a while. “Course here it all goes in t’ether,” he says, with a hint of some funny old accent. “What is *tether*?” I ask, wide-eyed. He grins at me, and then the cowbell starts to ring and we head for the hall.

* * *

A group is gathered on the lawn near the stone circle. They seem to be clustered around a big bloke in a black-and-white cowboy shirt and jeans, with a red bandana around his neck, and somewhat scruffy mad-scientist style hair. This must be Doc.

He has laid out a bunch of sticks on the grass in a kind of star, and is telling anyone who will listen that it is a sign, or sigil perhaps, composed from three capital As, such that if we look at it a while, and let him talk, it might become something of a guiding star for us.

Each of the As stands for a different old word, the first two being Ancient Greek ones. He says he is a little rusty so far as the details go, but that we can always go digging around in the sea if it is details we’re after; rather he would just point out these three little drops, like some kind of oceanic essence: points that might expand into a bigger picture.

The first word is *Aporia*, which he says is best summed up as a kind of fertile doubt, a skepticism of sorts, but an open one—not a dismissive one that has already decided something is nonsense. A genuine drive to question, yet not necessarily seeking closure from the answers—rather seeking always to keep the questioning active, to keep the quest alive.

And the second word, which he admits sounds a bit like a disease (and apparently some people think it is one) is *Apophenia*, or at least he thinks it is something like that. Anyway, it is all about making connections between things, even things that are not necessarily related. But then he asks: “What does it mean to be related, or not?” He reckons it is all about the human tendency to see patterns, and so he says, where the first A is maybe about science, this A is probably more about magic.

And then the third word is an old one from a language he says some still speak around here: *Awen*. Apparently it is a word for inspiration, for the creative sparks or energy behind poetry and stuff. So this last A is all about art, and he says we will hear plenty more about it in the rest of our time here, as apparently Sailor, the big grey-haired guy who hugged me hello, is going to tell a story about it in the roundhouse tonight.

* * *

It's evening now and I'm sat on a bench inside the roundhouse, just to the left of the door. We are all waiting for Sailor to arrive. The fire is burning low in the center, and there are two guys sat to the left of me talking quite rambunctiously and laughing a lot. One of them keeps going on about making holograms of people, and saying stuff about the fifth dimension, while the other one is trying to hold on to the thread of a story about a friend of his who was—oh hang on a minute, he has turned to me and offered a glow.

I have experimented with such things a little bit and like most people I quite like to glow, so I take it off him and fiddle around with it, albeit lacking the finesse he so nonchalantly displayed. He tells me I am pretty good with it, and I thank him, telling him I have not had much practice, and asking him what his name is and what he Nanostates. He tells me his name is Q, but then his friend jumps in and tells me that Q would never Nanostate a thing, but that actually he is something of an expert in phenomenon—phenomenomenom—? "Phenomenology," Q finishes coolly.

His friend, who's name is Zap, tells me that phenomenonemon . . . that it is basically a really interesting 20th century philosophical movement that eventually unfolded into quite a sophisticated psychology, like a kind of remixed Zen Buddhism for academics, and that it was instrumental in—yes, I tell him, I have grokked it a bit and think that it's pretty cool. It's hard to believe there was once a time when subjective experience was not considered a viable area of scientific study! I chuck him the glow and he does this neat little finger dance thing and winks at me.

I see him glance over my shoulder, and turn to see Sailor filling up the doorway, pulling himself in under the low beam, stepping into the room, and then extending—he is pretty tall anyway, but with us all sat down, and maybe the fact I am glowing too: well, he looks like an actual giant. He introduces himself in the natural quiet that has descended, making sure we have all been welcomed, and are feeling good, and then he asks if we would like to hear an old story that used to be told round these parts. Doc says, "No," and we laugh, and Sailor shuffles closer to the fire.

He stands a bit like he sounds, with his feet a little wider than his shoulders, and his knees springy, and his arms held from his sides so that his hands are free to emphasize his words. Sometimes it looks like he is tilting backwards, staring off into an imaginary sky, but right now he is looking down into the fire, and he begins to tell:

"A long time ago there was a young boy, and his name was Taliesin, which means shining brow—I guess he had a brilliant mind or something, rather than just a sweaty forehead? His mother was a great Goddess, the great witch Ceredwyn, and she had a cauldron as big as the world. Maybe it even was the world? I don't know. Anyway. She was making a potion in this cauldron, a magical potion to give to her other son, Taliesin's brother, who was something of a dimwit. In fact: He was utterly stupid.

"Ceredwyn made Taliesin help her in this task—it was his job to stir the cauldron—and the recipe demanded that he stir it for a year and a day. A year and a day! And so all day every day, all the year long, Taliesin toiled at the cauldron, stirring the medicine that would help make his brother clever.

"And then, on the last day—perhaps Taliesin was getting tired by now? I expect so—on the last day Taliesin accidentally dropped his stirring stick into the cauldron and three drops of the searing hot liquid jumped out and burnt his finger. Without stopping to think about it he jammed his finger into his mouth and sucked—*phwulp*—sucked the three drops down.

"Now, it just so happened to be the case that only those first three drops were any good at all. The rest of the potion was useless—poisonous in fact—and so when Ceredwyn saw what had happened she became so angry that Taliesin feared for his very life. But his life had become something else! Charged up by those three magical drops, he was a shining golden god-boy!

"He turned and ran from Ceredwyn, and she gave chase. He used his magic to turn into a hare—but she became a hound and ran him down. He managed to reach a river, and he leapt in, changing into a salmon and swimming away—but she became an otter and went after him. When she was nearly upon him he threw himself out of the river and went into the sky as a white dove—but she became a hawk and swooped on him. He folded his wings and fell to the earth like a stone, straight into a wheat field, and there became a single grain, thinking himself well hidden—but soon it was harvest time, and he was cut down, and Ceredwyn became a chicken, and she scratched all through the great pile until she found the grain that was him. And she swallowed him whole.

"But Taliesin did not die! No! He grew inside her until he was ready to be born again, and when she gave birth to him this time she saw he had a beauty all his own, and she could not bear to kill him. She set him in a small round boat, a *coracle* they call 'em, and set him floating upon the sea.

"Now, a little way down the coast—and this is a place I know well—there lived a King whose sons could never please him. No matter how hard they tried to prove themselves, whatever they tried to do, he would never praise them. Not a bit.

"Well, this place was known for its salmon—there was a special bay there where the salmon used to gather—and so one of the sons went down to the bay, at the right time of year, thinking he had a way to gather up so many salmon that his father could not help but be impressed.

"But again and again he cast his net into the water and brought it back empty. Until—just when he was about to give up—he saw he had caught something. Of course it was Taliesin in his little round boat.

"The King's son was distraught, saying he would never impress his father now. But the young Taliesin spoke up: 'Not so!'—said he—'for you have netted a poet! A poet is of more value than any amount of fish! More valuable even than gold!'

"The King's son was so impressed by the confidence of this fair youth—and so impressed that he could speak so eloquently while being still so young—that he believed in his promise, and thus brought him before the King.

"'What in the hell is this?'—said the King—I was expecting a boatload of salmon and you bring me this puny little boy instead! What use is he to me?' And so Taliesin spoke up again. He stood proud before the King, and said firmly:

"'Perhaps if you could manage to stop enjoying the sound of your own voice quite so much, you would find that I can speak far better than you can question!' And the King was so impressed at this retort that he bade him go ahead and say more. And so Taliesin spoke again, and these are the words that he said:

"'I am Taliesin and I will spit meter and rhyme that last until the end of time, I know why . . .'"

As Sailor recites Taliesin's increasingly quixotic knowledge claims, I realize there are tears in my eyes,

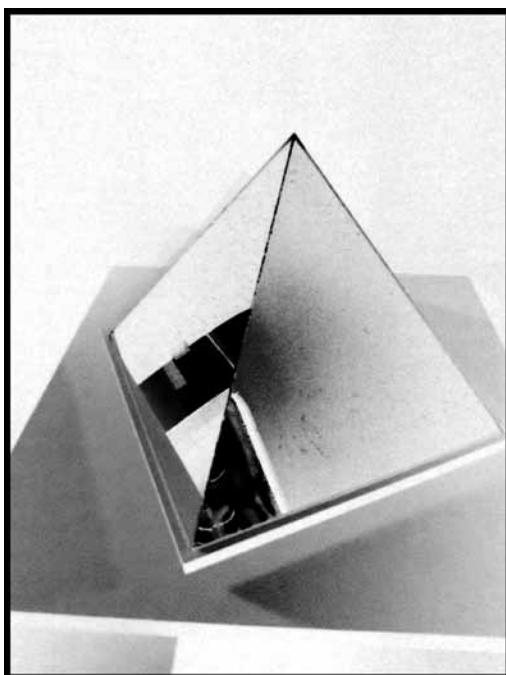
and such an energy in my body that I will need to get up and do something with it. The story has impacted me profoundly, and in the most marvelous but mysterious of ways. I feel like something has been spoken straight into my heart from the distant past. Something in me is reassured, and some sleeping part of me appears to have woken. I join in the raucous applause and playful whooping as Sailor takes a bow, but I am glowing too hard to stay sitting down any longer, so I leave the blood-honey warmth of the roundhouse, and emerge into a crystalline, star-studded night.

I stand there a while stretching, then just watching my breath disappear into the sky, until I notice two glowing tracers winding toward me in a sort of fluid fire-script, like strange words painted in the night with a glowing face behind. As this vision approaches me—the wowed mouth coming towards me, the wild eyes winding as they follow the glow in the dancing fingers—I hear a sound—a strange throaty sound that seems to breathe in and out at the same time—an *eeeeooowwweeeeooowwwweeeooowww*—like some kind of high-tech insectoid throat massage—and now the eyes are meeting mine, and I morph from gob-smacked to reflect the grin that is in them.

The noise stops, and the hands drop, and with perverse glee the fellow pronounces, as if by way of an explaining himself: “Demonkeys! DE-MON-KEY-Zzz!” And then he starts up his sounds again, and turns and wanders back into the night. Zap comes and puts a hand on my shoulder, “I see you’ve met Goat,” and I laugh, “I guess so!”

Zap snaps his fingers to make his glow bloom quickly to life, waving it temptingly before my face, but I feel a pleasant fatigue, and decide to ride it off to sleep. As I climb the hill back towards *hobome*, the nigh full moon comes into view behind the trees, and I blow my dear Pinou a kiss.

* * * * *





Folk Cures

1.

I trace the tip
of lemon tree leaf,

crush it in my hand
and breathe it in.

Squeezed, I can forgive—
a glorious scent.

2.

Amber—
fossil and folk medicine.

Resin to bridge belief,
rosin for an aching bow to sing.

I give you violin and string
and pay to hear.

3.

I bend my head again to sniff
at memory and turn my ear.

The lemon
weeps to know
that you are near.

Wait until I tell
the ever-spreading mint.

* * *



Tamara Miles

The Unhappiness of Marigolds

(for Alina Stefanescu)

Fretwork,
carved with a coping saw
on an otherwise quiet summer morning
where a bee does its own work,

vacuuming the squash blossoms,

then skirting 'round a dahlia,
a geometric pattern greened out,

gentle perforation—
flush and satisfied it flies.

Rain has drizzled our marigolds—

practical, sunny,
second best to exotics
—a low relief.

Blade to stem, quick now—
hold it tense before the cut.

Better than the gradual
wearing away, and anyhow
I can arrange them on a plate,

swallow them down
like grief.

* * * * *



Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Notes from New England

*"Please accept this ragged purse
of high notes."*

The following continues the series originally called Notes from New England, begun in issue 24-25 (Winter 1998), then revived in issue 59 (October 2006) as Notes from the Northwest, & appearing since issue 75 (October 2010) under its original title. It is intended as a gathering-place for observations of various lengths upon the world around me. It will be culled, like much of my writing, from my notebooks, and perhaps these thoughts will be expanded upon sometimes as well.

Why Am I Returning to Burning Man?

Introduction

I learned by chance of the Burning Man Arts Festival, held annually in late summer in the Black Rock Desert of Nevada, in December 1998, while working a boring temp job near Harvard Square, in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Job helped pay the rent while I pursued a Master's degree in Writing, Literature, & Publishing at Emerson College in Boston.

Went annually, employed or broke, high or low, to this Festival from 1999 to 2009; with KD the last six of these eleven years. Now planning to return to Black Rock City in 2022, over a decade since last time.

These *Notes* explore the title question by rooting around among the varieties of my life in the year or so leading up to my first arrival at Burning Man, in August 1999. Excerpts from the poetry, fiction, & letters I was writing; the Scriptor Press work I was doing; glimpses of the people I knew; the places I traveled & the better & worse days I experienced then. The hopes, fears, dreams, & other weirdnesses filling up my head & heart then. Three dozen snapshots to near, orbit, maybe breach within what answer there might be to the piece's title question.

* * * * *

1. Resurrection, Now

[4/28/1998 - Malden, Massachusetts]

Resurrection, Now. Are you listening
to me? Am I? Resurrection, Now.
Chimes & manuscripts. Singing
bells at dusk. Memories of
Greyhound buses & evaporating
forests, of omnipotent kisses
and shadowy hands
but more.

Resurrection, Now. Are you ready?
 Hung up on the beam, buried
 in the hill, trapped on the
 incomplete overpass, burned
 alive in leadguitar electric
 light, Godd is golden in
 your mouth and you
 are chewing.
 but more.

Resurrection, Now. Chimes in the desert.
 Manuscripts tossed from night-trains.
 Bound for the West, passing a
 carriage bearing your soul
 going East, no wheels, no
 horses, no driver.
 Careening sparks. Levitating intention.
 Girlgoddss and flailing hearts.

2. *Orpheus & Eurydice: Making the Lyre*
[7/24/1998 - Boston, Massachusetts]

Tonight the Master watches the stars.
 The dead pupil, the pupil's brief bride,
 they are both new sparkles in the cold, ancient sky.
 Their youths too bright for earth's threshing ferocity,
 their mortal passions ride winged objects with the
 calm & savage delight of birds.
 Eternal as starlight, endless colors, infinite songs,
 they are healed, they will love, nothing else remains.

3. *Blue Period [a new fixtion]*
[7/26/1998 - West Hartford, Connecticut]

"I don't know!" I say. "I don't know! I've tried everything. For years! What crazy shit haven't I written? What drugs haven't I tried? I'd fuck anyone to break through that membrane. But I can't."

4. *Thoughts Pad, Volume CXXX, 42*
[7/26/1998 - On board Hartford, Connecticut-to-Boston, Massachusetts Peter Pan bus]

Blue Period has been read & was well received. 292½ pages, the last 41½ written today . . . Tonight the story seems just one more thing I've finished & one less to do . . . I can't seem to name my reasons for living anymore. Except for others' pain . . . I feel life will simply get worse. I don't know anymore.

5. *New Period [a new fixtion]*
[8/27/1998 - ZombieTown, Mass.]

Nobody needs to go anywhere else. We are all, if we knew it, already there.

Let me tell you the news of the world: the wind is tapping the leaves above my head, perhaps whispering small endearments, perhaps rocking each leaf toward a gentler, easier sleep on this muggy night. The sky is a black worn almost to grey, nay a single star in view. Under my feet, beneath a little brick, a little cement, earth, soil, live floor, live foundation, starship propelling through black, dotted night.

We are there. We are arriving evermore all the time.

Godd above & below. Godd & the air, alright, Godd & the continual arrival there, here, listen! the universe is still shifting!

A confession: for many weeks now I have been digging myself up & replanting myself elsewhere. Looking for more minutes of sun, more available water, better air currents, better energies.

Again & again.

I could not grow & I did not stay. My plans for success became more complicated & more foolish.

You see, I realize tonight that I never really moved, that I've been here all along. Oh, to be certain I've been shaking leaves, roots, the very stuff I'm planted in, there's a mess around me now.

No matter: all will be well. The earth in which I am rooted is profoundly alive & taking me along as it travels.

My pen, too, is quivering & ready, time for it to carry on, too.

Come again to ZombieTown, Carnal Street, Rohm Tech steps, and deeper into my confession, telling, singing, so much story to come, deeper into my confession:

summertime, & the living's easy, & so's the dying, listen:

in the allnight of fullmoon field of burning dew, amongst the drums crackling with new worlds, floating, bonfires & psychedelia, brothers wet & dancing, crackling with new world, demons dancing too, flinging freakish hand-prayers at the peaking bonfires, demons in skirts and, further along, demons in none, what happened, tell us do!

poor soulard died, gone daddy, gone momma, goodbye, near Canada, nearer Heaven, listen:

we were his incandescent lovers, we went begging for the story, it was now morning, day, later, cigarette butts, full moon gone, we found tired trippers & stained lambs, & janitors too, motley spangled incongruous, sweeping up old winds and:

poor soulard died, we found no body, he was now just our collective dream, listen:

then a mellow blonde spirit arrived, with half a sack of truth and she said "i didn't know his name but he left with the full moon, we talked about the truth, he gave me what he had left, he told me he was 34, & i saw him leave with the full moon," she said & we knew:

poor Soulard died, his own way, left us with an urge, to recall last conversations & what was it he said about Godd but listen:

we returned to his latest friend, exhausted on a Harley, told us "Soulard left me last night to find acid, wife & Godd, took a candle & a bright sprig, took his bag of truth, not much left, I knew he was going to die, as he went into the darkness, i knew i couldn't help him find acid, wife & Godd . . .

"poor soulard died while i prayed & waited," obla-da, listen!

another fullmoon night, now, a thousand soulards scattered throughout our dreams, another fullmoon night, a thousand laughing soulards scattered throughout our dreams, not the least dead, not the, least dead, least dead, listen:

he tells us, "i was 17 & died, i was 34 & died, here i am," tells us, "i watched my life burn down in the full moon," tells us, "i want a new sack for new truths," & he leaves us then, laughing, laughter the most dangerous fire of all, he had died laughing & burning, laughing, burning, again, & again, listen!:

we still see him around, we're still waiting for him to come back to us for good, we give him advice while he listens & lights matches, he's laughing again, laughter fat with burning dew, we know he lives, again, & we pray for him.

6. Letter to Jim Burke III

[9/2/1998 - Malden, Massachusetts]

The bonfire I watched on the night I died is still before me, the crazy dancers, the drummers, the burning dew on the grass, the full moon I watched move from above the treetops until it was much nearer—as I moved toward the fire it did too—or perhaps I followed it—yes, that's probably it for just as had begun tripping I'd lain on my back to watch it—

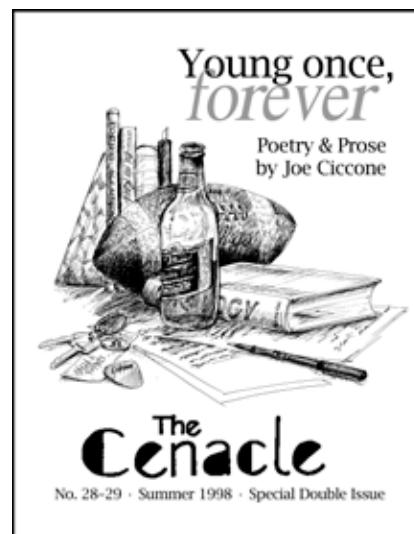
Jim, that night lasted forever—it is still going on—I say I died that night but I should emphasize how *alive* for the first time in *so long* I felt—now, reborn again, I am still trying to determine how my path is supposed to proceed—

Jim, I saw, *manifested*, what is possible when I was in Glover, Vermont. Now I *have* to enact it. *I have no choice*. I have to trust in the universe. It will provide (as Amante says).

7. Introduction to Cenacle | 28-29 | Summer 1998

Young once, forever: Poetry & Prose by Joe Ciccone
[9/25/1998 - Malden, Massachusetts]

.... & we stumble out of the bar & it is later in a Back Bay Boston swamp scrubbed sweet & clean by a tab of acid each for we dare to know, to want to know, to choose to know, more, more, MORE, whether this means laughing with the spectres we encounter in the swamp tonight or following the hippies into secret New England where 1968 is hiding out,



crazy with the years & worry but protecting 1967 & 1966 & 1965 & bringing them flowers for their hair & fresh milk, got from the farmer south a mile who'd been in SDS & helped try to free Columbia University, "but I'm not a hippie, Ray," my man will protest, lighting up & dragging on a handmade cigarette & I want to tell him that you don't choose hippy it chooses you . . .

8. *Millennial Artist's Survival Guide*

[11/8/1998 - Malden, Massachusetts]

Who are you? Are you the eyes
of the world? I mean: Who are you?
Ready? No? Who are you? There's little
left here but lights & purple fruit.
I'll help you by leaving. I'll teach
you how to evanesce. I'll recount
my greatest times of laughter, the
nights when I danced & died.
But I'll leave in one way or another.
I am time itself. I exist until you no longer need me.

* * *

Something's about to happen. A net
cast into black waters is caught &
dragged down. Something's about to happen.
a jagged formation of jets passes
over a rousing herd of buffalo.
Something's about to happen. Beyond
the book's talkings & the blinking
boxes of diminutive noise. Something's
about to happen. The anxious buzzing's
passing from our dreams to our limbs.

* * *

Become a virgin. Again. Reinvent &
reinvent & reinvent. I am you
& you are me & we are the world
beyond eyes. Secret joy. Sniff the air.
Within's within. See your heart.
A kiss. A tab. There is no blue dusk.
Become a virgin. Again. We've got to
huddle closer together. We've got to
remember how. The secret joy is today's
open hands. The secret joy is always beginning NOW.

9. *Phish concert*

[11/28/1998 - Worcester Centrum -
Worcester, Massachusetts]

writing now because
i've never known what else to do
it's good & fills
the time, it doesn't cost anything
or require batteries or
two players

i did it when i was a kid &
discovered along the way
that i didn't need to stop provided
i paid with time &
money what once was free but that agreed to i didn't have
to stop
& it's still fun when I don't interfere with
it being so—involving other people makes
it sometimes more complicated because
they don't play like i do like a
puppy pulling at a rag with
his teeth growling merrily
that's what's writing's to me
a game i've never stopped playing,
a game that got older & deeper like me
but remains as much fun as i allow
it to remain



10. *Burning Man email discussion list*

[1/5/1999 - Cambridge, Massachusetts]

for some weeks now i've been looking into burning man sites and lists on the web, saving some of the messages as good info about the event, and slowly assembling a kind of statement of my own about the whole thing . . .

so i want to know more . . . i want to go to burning man in '99 . . . i want to say to those who read this that i want to be tribal with as many of you as possible . . . fire, laughter, blood, love, and so much art . . . godd there's so much we can do for ourselves and our world, for the universe we belong in and belong to . . .

11. *Beauty, Afflictus [to Shannon]*

[2/28/1999 - Malden, Massachusetts]

If someone were to fall into intimate slumber, sleep of the golden eyes, sleep of the murmuring grey fields, & slept deeply with Things, shiny pinkcheeked Things, Things of whisper & wet, Things both the cup & its holder, Things elusive like worthy cathedrals, how easily he would come to a different day, a longer day, a day that will not melt with the passing hours, how easily he would come to a different day, out of mutual depth, how deeply eternity badges us, out of mutual depth, twining spasms of remembrance, chilling glints of smiling mystery, out of mutual depth, have

we yet begun, Beauty, refracted, defined, slept into, seduced sacredly, seduced musically, Beauty, obscura, today is never going to end, courtyard of twisting breezes, out of mutual depth, love is a mean, chanting, obssessed motherfucker & you are his favorite song.

12. *Phantom Limbs (After Rumi)*

[3/5/1999 - Boston, Massachusetts]

I rarely leave the twilight den
anymore. The owner shows me
his herd of sheep. He praises their
wool, their meat. Praises their
dumbness.

“Without our damned questions how easy
our lives would pass!” he cries.
“No churches! No hookahs! No brothels!”

Later, his mind devolved to mist,
he allows the painter to continue
work on his portrait.

The painter limps slowly. The painter
knows I see phantom limbs everywhere.
Asks me questions as he paints our
torpored friend.

“Where do you think my bride has
gone!” I answer. “I was the first
to see her naked back glisten in the
moonlight! I released her from
so much!”

The painter shows me his picture.
My bride lies sleeping in a gaunt-faced
mist. Blue streaks run violently
down her back.

The owner stirs angrily. Demands
order & calm in his establishment.
Mumbles praises of Godd. Great
belly rumbles.

13. *Letter to Jim Burke III*

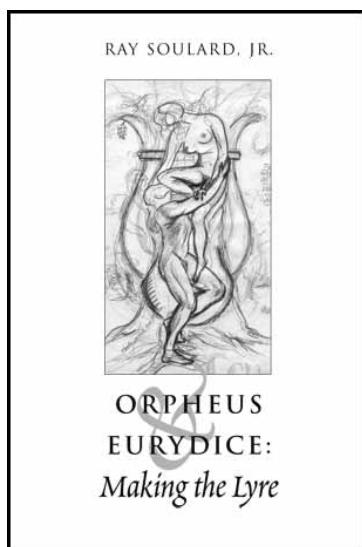
[3/10/1999 - Malden, Massachusetts]

I have been going to see a lot of psychedelic music . . . [last month] I took part in a chartered busstrip down to Manhattan to a club called Wetlands Preserve, a psychedelic music mecca, & I saw Percy Hill, Uncle Sammy, & Miracle Orchestra all play.

These bands were all fantastic, & the scene is very cool. I have found a *friendly* scene in Boston. Lotta weed & acid. Nice people. The bands are nice too. I'm going to play their music on my *Within's Within: Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution* show on Radio Free Cambridge, 106.1 FM, promote their music, *our* music really . . .

14. *Orpheus & Eurydice: Making the Lyre* by Ray Soulard, Jr.

Scriptor Press, *RaiBook* #1 (April 1999)



15. *New Period [a new fixtion]*

[4/24/1999 - Boston, Massachusetts]

I am going to the desert to learn how to immolate mongst the masters. The smiling thousands. Bardo plane. Lysergic acid. Tight teen ass. Dose her cuz she's cute. Fuck her cuz you can. Suck harder, baby, & I'll make your devils go away.

16. *Introduction to Scriptor Press Sampler #1*

[5/23/1999 - Malden, Massachusetts]

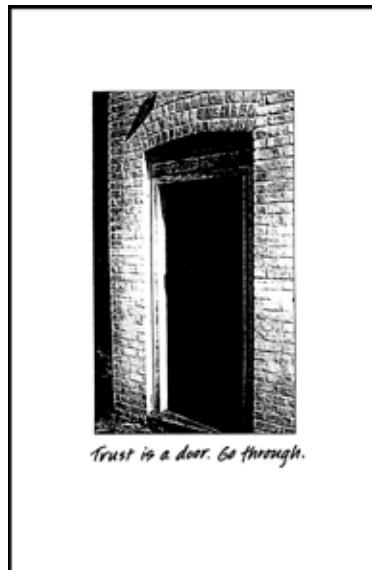
Scriptor Press is part of an exciting grassroots effort across the land to get art by the people into the hands of the people. No matter what you might hear, Art is alive & well in this world, & holds as always much of the hope many people have for the future.

17. *Thoughts Pad, Volume CLIII, 38*

[5/31/1999 - Malden, Massachusetts]

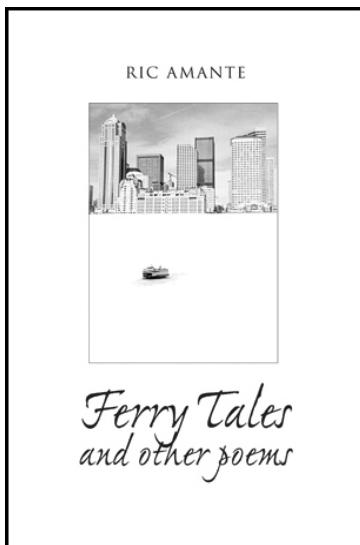
Burning Man. Pilgrimage. Near three months from now. How can I think of it? How can I not?

I will bring *Cenacles* chapbooks, samplers, & as many of others' stuff as possible. & BM newspaper & radio station will be going too.



18. New Period [a new fixtion]*[6/9/1999 - ZombieTown, Mass.]*

Sometimes my Art needs to writhe. Art a beast, needs to roar, needs to purr, needs to feed on raw blood, stuttering emotions. Art a storm come to punish & then purge the land, leave every scape exposed pink & shiny. Love a dream, a real sweaty visceral dream, veils & explosions, taboos become truths, music doming the sky & descending ever near.

19. Ferry Tales & other poems by Ric Amante*Scriptor Press, RaiBook #2 (July 1999)***20. Phish concert***[7/17/1999 - Oswego, New York]*

the answers keep coming . . . as do the questions . . . sometimes not even kin . . . Chinese advise
'no blame'

Art Oneness Love

i am still learning how to love

power of art is infinite

been a long while true acid night & at Phish just like last November . . . even better . . . even better . . .

21. Journal of Ray Soulard, Jr., Volume 17*[7/31/1999 Malden, Massachusetts-to-Boston, Massachusetts MBTA train]*

Up early & hustle to ready & to T . . . bus to Cambridge to record store to get Gr. Dead's *Blues for Allah* LP. Then hurry in heat to Zeitgeist almost didn't get in—but did—my radio show went well—shroomed about 25 min. in. Played Dead, Phish, talked up BM '99, read Huxley, played Yes, Beatles. Went by way too fast—

22. Letter to Barbara Brannon

[8/12/1999 - Malden, Massachusetts]

What this Burning Man thing is to me I, again, don't know what that means. Art, but I already have her. Nature, surely I could use more of that—tho the Black Rock Desert in Nevada sounds like it can be a pretty extreme place—high winds, playa dust, playa mud, high & dry heat. Love/Romance/Sex, again *I just don't know*, less & less all the time about that. Psychedelics, of course & many & maybe new ones & who knows how far that will go. Tribe, yes, yes. Yes. Perhaps getting near the root of the point. It's what I've found in the Phish scene, but I guess I need more, or to keep exploring until the time to settle back somewhere when is at hand, if ever.

23. New Period [a new fixation]

[8/28/1999 - Driving with Mio Cohen to Burning Man Arts Festival, along Interstate 80W, near Knolls, Utah]

all rejoice & suffer full moon beneath skies of corn & mist, going home, we're going home, arriving, now arriving, we are already there we are already there we are already there already there already there!

The fire will begin with a plan, & some hard work, some preparation, here we go

I remember a large edifice of a man & how he burned at Glover while dozens at least danced around, yelled, played drums & what-not.

& approaching a big edifice to be burned soon.

approaching, now, a big fire

even as now before a big fire

even as died back then, a big fire

a big fire . . . a big fire

neon night . . . soon a big fire

story breaking down like kindling weary of its time, its continuance, but then a match, & hope suddenly, story rising like flames, the whole Ampitheatre in flames, a faraway desert in flames

& laughter the most dangerous fire of all

24. Journal of Ray Soulard, Jr., Volume 17

[8/29/1999 - Black Rock City, Nevada]

Arrived in awe at Black Rock City. Chuck Nichols' temple hardly built, helped. Worked hours. Lunar surface adjusting. I fell asleep in Mio's car for a long time.

25. Journal of Ray Soulard, Jr., Volume 17

[8/30/1999 - Black Rock City, Nevada]

Rode bike for awhile around, seeing all building, delight, before that severe wind storm, I was lost in desert . . . middle of the night looking for the party, not just yet—

26. Journal of Ray Soulard, Jr., Volume 17

[8/31/1999 - Black Rock City, Nevada]

—shrooms mid evening borrowed a bike & rode through growing craziness tripping it was fun & strange & loud

27. *Journal of Ray Soulard, Jr., Volume 17*

[9/1/1999 - Black Rock City, Nevada]

Burning Man keeps growing. More camps, more installations. Spent a lot of afternoon recording *Within's Within*, it was hard, did not know what to say.

28. *Letter to Ric Amante*

[9/2/1999 - Gerlach bar, Gerlach, Nevada]

Old bar, open door, dusky desert light seeping in, wearing a red & blue & yellow tunic & blue floppy hat says peace & love & my fingernails are glitter colors & I've just cranked the jukebox & The Who's

DON'T GET FOOLED AGAIN

going some rock music on the box amidst much new plastic country music, & Burning Man is more than any one person could ever say already into shrooms & grass & booze incl. whiskey & tequila & vodka & got myself more shrooms & LSD & Ecstasy gonna do the last two together &, candy-flipping tis called & I rode the Green Tortoise into town just like you did years back it was \$5 very cool I have about half hour left came in to mail radio show tape overnight mail to Cambridge maybe it will get there by Saturday I don't know at least tried

Ric, toward 30,000 people due by the weekend, I can't tell you how big how much

moon & stars vast above
lunar playa surface below
1000-ring psychedelic circus
all around

more than I can say
more than I can know

but I saw bar & wanted a crazy Amante moment so a \$1.25 Bud draft & pump jukebox—send a toast & tune yr way ☺ . . .

All is love & peace & ART.

29. *Journal of Ray Soulard, Jr., Volume 17*

[9/2/1999 - Black Rock City, Nevada]

Made it to Gerlach by Green Tortoise bus to mail *Within's Within* tape. Wrote several poems, that was good. On E went on ramble through the city, danced a little, then acid about midnight . . .

30. Let the Beauty We Love Be What We Do:*Selections from the Poems of Jelalludin Rumi*Scriptor Press, *Burning Man Books #1* (August 1999)

Dance, when you're broken open.
 Dance, if you've torn the bandage off.
 Dance in the middle of the fighting.
 Dance in your blood.
 Dance, when you're perfectly free.

31. Are You Ready for Burning Man 1999? [coloring book]Scriptor Press, *Burning Man Books #2* (August 1999)**32. Beauty Crowds Me Till I Die:***Selections from the Poems of Emily Dickinson*Scriptor Press, *Burning Man Books #3* (August 1999)

Beauty crowds me till I die
 Beauty mercy have on me
 But if I expire today
 Let it be in sight of thee —

33. All Things Flow from the Holy Ghost:*Selections from the Poems and Prose of Rainer Maria Rilke*Scriptor Press, *Burning Man Books #4* (August 1999)

Rose, oh pure contradiction, joy
 of being No-one's sleep under so many
 lids.

34. Strawberry Fields Forever:*A Short Anthology of Writings about Psychedelics*Scriptor Press, *Burning Man Books #5* (August 1999)

The Doors of Perception by Aldous Huxley:

And along with indifference to space there went an even more complete indifference to time.

"There seems to be plenty of it," was all I would answer, when the investigator asked me to say what I felt about time.

Plenty of it, but exactly how much was entirely irrelevant. I could, of course, have looked at my watch; but my watch, I knew, was in another universe. My actual experience had been, was still, of an indefinite duration or alternatively of a perpetual present made up of one continually changing apocalypse.



35. *Journal of Ray Soulard, Jr., Volume 17*

[9/3/1999 - Black Rock City, Nevada]

—felt beat to shit. Wrote poetry. The bookstore got going. I was fairly straight today & I slept about 1 a.m. Don't remember much else.

36. *Night of the Burn*

Voice Journal, Volume 15

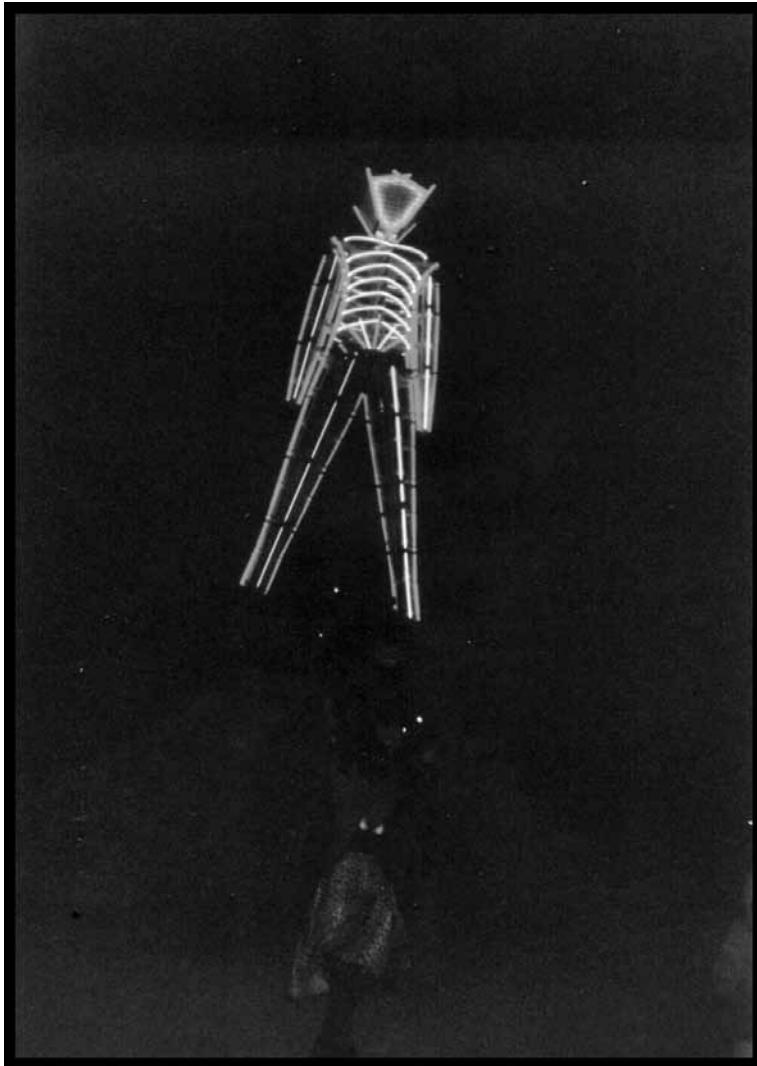
[9/4/1999 - Black Rock City, Nevada]

Walking toward the Man . . . convergence, man, convergence, this is it!

this is fucking it! this is IT! Art! Now listen . . . now listen . . .

I wrote poems for girls tonight, & they smiled . . . so beautifully . . . they smiled at me so redemptively . . . oh my godd it was so beautiful . . . oh my god was it so beautiful!

and then I tripped . . . and then I tripped! You understand that, man? You understand that?



Art! Art! girls . . . acid . . . love . . . peace . . . dreams . . . Burning Man . . .

Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes!

To all, the answer is Yes!

To Joe Ciccone, the answer is Yes!

To Ric Amante, the answer is Yes!

To Michael McLoughlin, the answer is Yes!

To Mio Cohen, the answer is Yes!

To her new friend Brian, the answer is Yes!

To Chuck Nichols, the answer is Yes!

To Mark Shorette, the answer is Yes!

To Gerry Dillon, the answer is Yes!

To Jim Burke III, the answer is YESSSSS!

To the people I loved . . . to the people I've learned from . . . to the people I cared about . . . the answer is Yes!

The answer is Yes! It's Yes!

Deny nothing. Affirm everything. The answer is Yes!

The answer is Yes! The answer is Yes!

o my godd . . . there's laser beams . . . fucking shiny things . . . ah jesus christ . . .

I'm getting really close now . . . I'm getting very close . . .

The answer is Yes! The answer is Yes! The answer is Yes!

The answer has always been Yes! It will be Yes!

If I want to dance, I'm going to dance!

10/30/2021
Michael Mass.

* * * * *

AbandonView





Rivers of the Mind

[A Novel]

*"Purify the colors, purify my mind
Spread the ashes of the colors
over this earth of mine"*

—Arcade Fire, “Neighborhood #1 (Tunnels),” 2004.

Chapter 17: The Day Before the Sinkhole

i. Phillip

An hour left on our shift. A Friday. Slow day. Only two calls. So they put us out on traffic duty. Grace was looking down at her phone in the passenger seat. I was taking readings of the passing cars, as we were nestled in a hidden driveway surrounded by tall trees. 35. 36. 34. 35. 35. 40 . . . 40. Was it worth it? 39. 37. 20. Hey, come on, buddy. Can you keep with the flow of traffic? Weird. I peeked my head forward just a bit. Colorado plates. Bet that's why they slowed down so much.

“Grace.”

“Huh?”

“We got a white Subaru with Colorado plates going 15 under the speed limit. Looks like a rental.”

She sighed, and locked her phone. “Alrighty. Let’s go.”

I turned on the sirens and pulled forward, racing up behind the car. The two kids inside started frantically talking to each other. Flailing around. Probably trying to hide something. Who knows? They pulled off to the shoulder.

“We got a suspicious vehicle from the great state of Colorado out here. Please standby,” I spoke into the radio, before turning to my partner.

“You wanna get it, or me?”

“I can do it.”

ii. Grace

Anything to get out of that goddamned car. Being around Phillip had been different since that night with the field. I don’t blame him or think less of him for it but, if he was in a bad mood, it was hard not to get sucked in.

Hanging around this Dusty character was making it worse. Rubbing off on him. You couldn’t talk to him for fifteen minutes without hearing about how the . . . Deep State . . . was putting fluoride in our water, or how there were hidden cameras in the woods outside of his house.

I went up to the side of the car. The fellow driving had long brown hair, blue eyes, sort of stubbly face. His girlfriend looked Hispanic or something, couldn’t really tell. He rolled down his window.

“Good afternoon, Officer,” he said in a thick German accent.

“Sprechen-sie, Deutsch, mein herr?”

“Ja, meine Frau und ich sind hier im Urlaub. Sie sprechen gut deutsch, wo haben Sie gelernt?”

iii. Phillip

I could hear Grace talking in muffled German through the window. The man she'd pulled over laughed, and his wife reached forward to shake her hand. She asked them a few questions, before the man stepped out and led her to the back so she could look through the trunk. She glanced back at me, raising her eyebrows. The two didn't have anything but some luggage. Probably tourists, I supposed.

She strode back to the car. "He's from the same town as my husband. Rosenheim. What are the chances?"

"Probably pretty slim, I'd imagine."

"Yup, small world. Wife was from Italy, I guess. Visited family in Denver and came out to see the hill country. He kept getting pulled over for speeding so he was trying to go slower."

"Right. Makes sense, I guess," I shrugged, and drove us back to the speed trap. Forty-five more minutes and we could leave. I was anxious to get the hell out of there. Had to meet up with Dusty after he got off work. We pulled back into our spot and I resumed taking readings. 35. 36. 34. 33. 35.

"So tomorrow, I guess, is the big day, huh?"

"Yep, sure is."

"You got your, uh, Nike sneakers ready?"

I tried to laugh. "Oh, come on, it's not like that." The humor didn't come across.

"No need to get so defensive."

"I'm not getting defensive. Just . . ." I sighed. "We're going with Reeboks for this one. I'm supposed to pick up the Kool-Aid, and Dusty's bringing along the rat poison."

"Right," Grace laughed softly. "You really think something is gonna happen?"

"I'm not sure. Dusty seems pretty convinced."

"He does. Maybe he's on to something. Then again, maybe he's just skipped one too many doses of his medication."

"I don't know, Grace. Seems like a pretty level-headed fellow to me."

"Yeah, right . . ."

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"I asked him what he thought of the weather, and he ranted for half an hour about the United Nations, FEMA camps, and secret alien bases under the Gulf of Mexico."

"He's just a very serious-minded person. You'll see tomorrow. You're . . . you're still gonna tag along, right?"

"Well, something's sure as hell going on here, and no one else is looking into it, so yeah, I'll be there. It's just gonna depend. Tanner's got a soccer game tomorrow, so I'll have to be there either in the morning or the afternoon. But I'll be there."

"Gotta put family first, that's for sure."

"Yeah. You, uh, talked to Kurt about this?"

"Don't know how. But he's probably gonna be doing homework over at that, uh, Isabelle girl's house."

"Homework, huh?"

"That's what he keeps sayin'."

"This is Isabelle Grove, right? Same Isabelle Grove we arrested for shoplifting five years ago? Her dad works at the scrap metal yard, doesn't he?"

"Yep, that's the one. She's not gotten into trouble much since then. Guess she's in some kind of, uh, computer club or something. Whenever I see her, she tries to sell me these, uh, Byte Coins or something like that. Some kind of, uh, computer money. Kurt's always talking about it too. Long as its keepin' them out of trouble, and away from drugs, I suppose."

"Right, right. So, what, you think they're fixing to date or . . ."

"Oh, they probably are, just haven't got around to tellin' me yet." I gulped. The truth of it was, I hadn't talked all that much to Kurt. I didn't know what was going on with him. Ever since I caught him smoking pot, he kept to himself in his room, playing his computer games. Wasn't sure what to do. At least he was less angry at me than he was at his mom. Hardly talked to her. Neither did I.

I tried changing the subject. "This old speed trap sure ain't what it used to be, is it?"

"Everyone and their brother knows about it." Grace sighs. "Guess we should probably head back to the station soon, huh?"

"Suppose we could. Think rush hour's just about petered out anyway."

iv. Grace

We pulled out of the speed trap, and sped on down the highway, back to the station. It was a sleepy day there too. The same guy who'd been sleeping off a hangover in one of our three holding cells that morning was now clutching his head, and staring down at his bruised hands.

Marcia, the lady at the front desk, briefly looked up from a copy of *People* magazine, and waved at us with a smile. I waved back at her, even though Marcia was a catty bitch who seemed to think this was a goddamn high school cafeteria and not a police station. We lost Laura, the normal front desk person, last year when she finished her CNA license and went to work at the nursing home. Now *she* was a good receptionist. I don't know who the fuck decided to hire Marcia.

Right as Phillip was leaving, someone tapped me on the shoulder.

"Grace, you mind if I have a word with you?" the chief asked in a polite, business-like voice.

Phillip looked back over his shoulder, suspiciously.

"See ya tomorrow," I said.

"Yup, see ya tomorrow."

"You folks got plans for the weekend?" the chief asked.

"Kid's got a soccer game, and we were all gonna grab some dinner afterwards. Tanner really looks up to Phillip," I explained. Not a complete lie. Tanner's always been a bit star-struck around Phillip since I told him about the time Phillip apprehended a suspect in an armed robbery after seeing him in a gas station.

"Ain't that sweet?" He shut the door behind him. "Actually, I was hoping to chat with you about Phillip for a moment."

"Alright. What's going on?"

"Well, I know he's had a hard time lately, and he had that little incident where you were thinking somebody drugged him. And, since then, seems he's been a little . . . well, he just ain't been himself lately. Seems a little on edge."

"He's been depressed. Doctor has him on some new medication is all, as far as I know. Got it mixed up."

"Seems like he's been awfully interested in these, um, angel sightings around town."

"Sure, but I think most folks are, huh?"

"Interested, sure, but don't think it really warrants serious investigation. Do you?"

"Serious investigation? Oh, no, no. That's not what I meant."

"He's not been looking into any of this on his own, has he?"

I hesitated. I was getting the impression the chief already knew Phillip *and I* had been investigating, and that he knew about the records I pulled. "Well, on the day all those sightings came in, we did go around to double-check some of the stories. He was thinking it might be some kind of organized prank or something."

"Right. I was wondering about that. So are you all . . . I don't know . . . planning on filling out a report of some kind about that?"

"Well, of course. He's just been trying to narrow down a description of some kind, you know? Sounded like it was all the same person to him."

"Hmm. Interesting. You know, this is the kind of thing I'd like to hear about. Not sure why y'all didn't keep me posted on it."

"I'm sorry, sir."

"It's fine. I understand. Well, thanks for letting me know. When you find the time to write the report, I'd love to see it." He crossed his arms.

"Right. We'll have it on your desk soon as we can."

"Good. And . . . well, I hope you don't mind me asking. Noticed that you'd, um, pulled some old case records. Mind telling me about that?"

"Well, I was, uh, curious about the data collection facility, you know? They took us down and debriefed us, but . . ."

"I see. Now, I understand your curiosity here, and I don't want you to take this the wrong way, since you two are some of the finest officers we have, but I'd strongly recommend keeping your curiosity about that old base to a minimum. Do you understand? It's a very sensitive installation."

I nodded, but what the chief said irked me. "Right. It's just . . . well, there was a case I came across in the files. A girl named Mary Ann. Guess she disappeared from a bar in San Antonio. Someone saw her mouthing for help from a car in town. Case closed pretty abruptly. It just stood out to me." I cleared my throat. "No one followed up on that evidence."

The chief, caught off guard, frowned faintly, but tried his best to withhold any emotion.

"Cold cases like that always stick out to me," I continued, "especially when there was evidence no one bothered looking into. I wasn't sure why I'd come across it looking for information about the base either, but there's no statute of limitations for murder in the state of Texas."

The chief gulped, and came closer to me. He looked genuinely disturbed. Guilty even. My heart started pounding. I sure as hell didn't expect him to look this guilty when I brought up a murder that happened when he was barely ten years old.

"I understand," he said, looking me dead in the eyes as he came closer, muttering under his breath. "You bet your ass I understand, Officer. Back when I was a detective, I spent every night in the cold case files. But just trust me when I say there's certain rabbit holes in those files that you do not want to go down."

I had never seen the chief act this way before. Usually he was amicable, professional, even when upset. Now he looked worse than Dusty. Paranoid, conspiratorial. "Trust me, Grace. I'm not trying to threaten you. I'm trying to keep you and Phillip out of trouble."

"I see. So I should just forget about it, I guess."

"That's what I'd advise," he grumbled, backing away towards his desk, pinching the bridge of his nose. "Best case scenario, all you do is end yourself in a goddamn bureaucratic nightmare." He shook his head. "Just between you and me, alright, that place wasn't always a data collection facility. Back in the day . . . Well, even I'm not sure. I just know that when I started looking into it back in the seventies, I had government agents showing up at my door in the middle of the night, warning me to stop. I know that sounds crazy. I'm just saying, Grace. Something . . . I don't know what, but *something* happened there. I'm sorry to be so frank. I shouldn't have . . . I shouldn't have told you any of this."

v. Phillip

I started to leave, suspicious of the chief talking to Grace, but not wanting to pay it too much mind, before I noticed that the pretty new receptionist had a nice painting in the background on her desktop. I leaned in to have a closer look. She had on this perfume that smelled absolutely heavenly, these red painted nails, curled brown hair. Suddenly it hit me. I recognized the painting.

"Sorry to bother you, Miss, uh . . . is that Camille Pissarro on your desktop?"

She set the magazine down, and looked over her shoulder, smiling. Holy *goddamn*, that smile. She had her lipstick on just perfectly, her faint brown eyes sparkling in the light.

"I didn't peg you as a fan of French Impressionism."

"I didn't peg you as an art history type, either. *The Banks of the Oise near Pontoise*, isn't it?"

"Impressive. We had the original at the museum where I did my internship before I came here."

"Where was that?"

"Indianapolis."

"Now how in the hell did you go from one of the biggest art museums in the country to the front desk of a police department in the middle of Texas?"

"I find myself asking the same question every day. I guess it's not what I had in mind when I got my Master's in Art History, but here we are." She stared back at me, sort of blushing, but I couldn't tell.

"Well, we're all glad to have you here. We've got a lot of problems with uh, art forgery, you know, in this area."

"Oh, do you?"

"Oh yeah, just the other day, I had to bust up a gang of ruffians tryin to sell a forged copy of *The Port of Morgat* by Redon for a dime bag of meth."

"I'm surprised they didn't call me in," she laughed weakly. "You know, I've been dying to find someone I could talk to about this stuff."

"Well, it's not every day you run into someone who even knows who Camille Pissarro is around here. We should . . ." *Remember your sensitivity training, Phillip. For the love of GOD, remember your sensitivity training.* "We should chat more often."

"If you're free this weekend, maybe we could grab some coffee."

"Oh, uh. Coffee. Yeah. I'd love to grab some coffee. I got a, uh, a thing going on tomorrow. Maybe, uh, maybe Sunday morning, 'round eight o'clock, if you're free?"

"How's eight-thirty?"

"Sounds like a plan."

"You ever been to a place called Java Ranch? It's right by my house!"

"Can't say I have, but I'll look it up, and I'll meet you there."

"Alright, I'll put it in my calendar. Phillip, that's your name, right? Sorry, I'm terrible with names."

"Yep. That's what they call me. I'll see you then. I should probably, uh, probably get home, but nice talking to you."

"Sure, see you on Sunday."

vi. Marcia

A person! I talked to a human being! I had a conversation with a man about something other than a truck, a gun, or football for the first time in a year and a half! It was a miracle! I tried not to look too excited to have a friend. I didn't want to seem like, I don't know, I was desperately lonely or anything. I wasn't.

No, of course I wasn't. I wasn't weird. I had not spent the last week obsessing over an alien conspiracy theory alone in my apartment. I was a perfectly normal woman. I had perfectly normal interests. I took a deep breath and looked back at the magazine. Good work, Marcia. You have a friend. A work-friend. Now don't screw it up.

The door to the right of me opened, and Grace came out. I stiffened up my back and tried to look as normal as I could. I smiled up at her. She sort of scowled back. I could never read her. I couldn't read most of the people here. Was she angry? Did I have something on my face?

"Have a good weekend," I said.

"You too," she smiled briefly, and paused.

Was she waiting for me to say something? I should say something, right? That's what a receptionist does. "Got any plans?" I asked.

"Just spending time with family."

"You know, there's a story going around online there's supposed to be some kind of UFO landing or something," I said. Was that the right thing to say? Do receptionists talk about things like that?

She looked a little irritated. "Didn't hear about that one," she chuckled. "Was that in the news, or . . . ?"

"Some, uh, blogger, took a video of this alien earlier this week. Pretty funny, huh?" Funny. It *was* a funny thing, the thing that I was talking about. Right? But she wasn't laughing. It was *not* a funny thing. Right. I sounded like I thought it was real. OK.

"People sure are crazy," I said, hoping to insinuate that, yes, I believed that people were crazy.

She rolled her eyes. "Sure are. You get a lot of crackpots around here."

"Well, I'll see you later! Have a good day!" I paused. It wasn't day. It was night.

Grace shut the door. "Night."

I started to pack up my stuff. 8:30 on Sunday morning. Coffee. Work-friend. Work-friend = Phillip. Cool. Great.

vii. Phillip

I waited by my car in a mostly empty parking lot in the next town over. It was almost night-time. The air felt heavy and cold. Dusty pulled up, his face anxious, and then stepped out of the truck. He mouthed something to himself in frustration as he got out, slammed the door, and then walked across the parking lot.

"Do you have the documents?" he asked.

I handed him a stack of papers.

"Fascinating."

"Now you don't tell anyone I gave those to you. You could get me suspended," I told him.

"Of course not. I can keep a secret." Dusty looked through the documents. "Look at this here. Her friends reported that she'd been seen leaving the bar with a man, described as a six-foot-tall Caucasian male with dark brown hair. That matches the description of the last case almost perfectly."

"Sure does."

"Jesus Christ. Who knows what they did to her? Last seen in Fredericksburg, Texas at an intersection, mouthing the words 'Help me' to a Miss Molly Perkins while she was out walking her dog. Police never found a body."

"What do you think?"

"It's too soon to say for sure. I'll need to cross-reference it with the other documents. If I start printing just anything, I'll lose my credibility. But thank you."

* * * * *



Kenzie Oliver



Tom Sheehan



God, Gray Flies, Friend Edward

The fields are wet with hunters,
fish float on my stream,
gasps of a tree root exaggerate
the song in my ears.

Clouds lean on a last bright out ring
of moon August lets go of; friends
continue to carry themselves away
in black dress, slow straps mocking
the plight of brown grass.

When we fished the Pine River,
you trod like an Indian.
When you broke twigs,
it was to start fire.

The gray ghosting flies you tied all
winter tumbled slowly like a pigeon
a hawk cut in the speed lane hackles
dusting light gray the first sliver of
sunlight, the last bare sword of it
cutting water.

Next May the mayflies will consecrate
the river all over, the river will turn,
I will wake early.

* * *

A Sound in the Eye

This midnight's as thick
as conspirators,
stars secreted
like listening devices
waiting for one breath
to find me out.

In the woodpile
I can't see, a snake
settles where my hand
left a moment's warmth
on a slanting of birch
plunging past white,

its coils
wound tight as bark.
Field mouse, beneath
owl's infrared eyes
and sudden wing thump,
gathers into minutes.

The only flag
is pennant of skunk,
the tail-up streamer
recalling every vengeance
borne on mysteries
of abiding shadows.

High darkness
and a collective of agents,
are pierced by peephole
of a nail-head star,
deities' confederate
beginning revelations.

* * * * *

Jimmy Heffernan



Notes on Morality

*There is a relative kind of morality
that only applies locally,
and there is an objective kind
that applies everywhere in the universe.*

* * *

It seems that, by and large, if an individual has sufficient knowledge of a situation, he or she will be able to determine what is right from what is wrong. Human consciousness is, in fact, enough of an arbiter for that.

The problem, I think, of the human condition is *not* that there is any mystery about the right course of action, but rather it is when a person *knows* what is right and chooses to do the wrong thing anyway. We all seem to know pretty well what is the moral course in any given potentiality.

The problem for humans is *not*, therefore, in finding a better definition of morality, but rather finding a way for our kind to *stop* disregarding our consciences in favor of what immediately suits us.

* * *

*People argue for or against moral relativism.
The fact is that there exist together
in nature relative and objective types of morality.
Both are held and used widely.*

* * *

The notion of personal responsibility is a tricky one. For example, when someone commits a crime, there are various ways to look at it. A person who previous to the act of committing a crime knew exactly what he was going to do, planned it out and executed it—knowing the whole time, unequivocally, that it was wrong—can be said to have some objective measure of personal responsibility for such an act. Someone who committed a crime reactively, or based upon emotion or instinct, makes the waters a little cloudier.

Perhaps, ordinarily, they wouldn't do such a thing. It was in the heat of the moment. In our

society, you're guilty either way, but perhaps this person would deserve extra forgiveness.

Then there is the case in which a person commits a crime, intentionally, but didn't know or understand that it was wrong or illegal. This is the trickiest of all because the whole essence of the moral and legal deterrent was nonexistent. Once again, you're guilty either way, but perhaps stupidity has saved you from a graver fate.

* * *

*Compassion is essentially an understanding
and a sympathy between souls,
is fundamental,
and is the basis for a universal morality.*

* * *

Some people feel that one of the primary reasons psychedelics are illegal is that they are a danger to the establishment—i.e., that if enough people are taking them, there will be some sort of massive rebellion.

I don't think this is true. It might be the case if something like half the population were taking them, but even if they were legal, that would be far from the case. It seems they are illegal because of fear of the unknown, and fear of danger.

Psychedelics can be dangerous, but everyone who has taken them knows they are, for the most part, relatively safe. In any case, they'll be illegal in most places for a long time to come.

* * *

*Perhaps the greatest affliction of this world
consists in the fact that so very few people care.*

* * *

There is often a question as to whether good and evil exist, or whether evil can be broken down phenomenally to the point that it's really only "bad." I personally feel evil exists. And that, in its most general form, it consists in one being doing serious, unnecessary harm to another.

As Orson Welles pointed out, ever since Freud, we consider "evil" people to be somehow sick. And we write everything off as due either to human nature or insanity. It seems in the last hundred years the whole concept of individual responsibility has sort of disappeared.

But presuming there are perfectly well-adjusted, sane people who are not governed by their emotions, and further presuming we can impart personal responsibility to their natures, and presuming beyond that that they have committed heinous acts of terrifying harm, maybe just

for the fun of it, then evil obviously exists.

I guess in a materialist world it's not in vogue to ape religion in any form or fashion, which believing in evil definitely does. But frankly, I've been in a lot of situations in which the *only* thing you could say about them was I was subject to acts of evil, with no other meaningful description or contingency.

And, honestly, I'm not sure whether Satan exists or not, but what this planet has become might not be attributable to anyone else.

Evil exists.

* * * * *







Ace Boggess

Pareidolia

after untitled art by Forrest Roth

Two hands reach to choke a neck
or clutch a Raku bowl of tea.
On-ramp merges left
onto the Interstate highway out of town.
Which says more about me?
That earliest insights are violence & escape?
Or that I pause in the middle
to stare at my reflection in glossy broth?

It's a cat tap-dancing on its hind legs,
a bird, Mothman, anime samurai,
stilted clown. Look closer. Perceive
black smoke of a landfill fire,
fat base & crooked arms of a Joshua tree, &

there, centering this sketchy nightscape:
a cloaked woman,
head bowed beneath an arc lamp,
mourning, measuring steps,
whispering kindly to a child we can't see
from our vantage,
or bending toward a lover on his knees.

* * * * *

Bags End News
No 357 November 1, 2014
Editor Hobbit Eagle
King Sheila Bumby
Lead Lead Creature Threshold Pugle
Written Down By Lori Bumby

Imaginaries' Inspection Reasons

Wat beganz awl ago or a
muntashun from Portcullis Gossy
wt I'm meaning to sor old gal!
Agernoon too kum hav a fun
Sleepover tent shap i'm storze
a fun time until it got too
bee far the Imaginary nothing
on the Cessell door & ashore
Gossy wear her missy sister
wuz.

Gossyee i hear servent
a bepus bush Drop the roll fortel
Desides thiss lost-aust sist
needed to see round at least
To make shur spes nyushee
Wuz all wuz well kum in
Imaginary I say promise too

Bags End News
No 358 November 8, 2014
Editor Hobbit Eagle
King Sheila Bumby
Lead Lead Creature Threshold Pugle
Written Down By Lori Bumby

The Path & tree Missing. The Bagg's Little Tharps

Yor old bagzelbowe jennelist fall
Agernoon has other unnce &
stree in his tree about Ing
the tree for his selected
Kerovishel inspection, especially
of Bag end in mere stories about
Kerovishel names Imaginary & its
Pathes, not over there taken
of the fog made very seedy
kum dozzer before Ing almost
inspired me to go to town
at it, it waz paper, I was
wond'ring about that with man
bagzelbowe jennelists smill for
new
But then Ing stand upp

Bags End News
No 359 November 15, 2014
Editor Hobbit Eagle
King Sheila Bumby
Lead Lead Creature Threshold Pugle
Written Down By Lori Bumby

Awaye too the Gossypon!

There waz a tim bakiyan weaz
us gos inn Bagger and mostly had
truk, only with Mac Charles &
hors how long Cart but them
it seemd lik Betza Bony Pillo,
wuz all waz travys to lewle out
no konker or fibber or water
the Buttice Pillotarm And of course
there wuz our Klas tlys with
Princess Unyak or Gossy for
her chine stiff Smiling and her
bestys pur loop is Shabana

The heft of being out half
Daealand waz just off sun
hill from Imaginary a village
and a lone rivulet strew
resident, Benbow & Dancz

Bags End News
No 360 November 22, 2014
Editor Hobbit Eagle
King Sheila Bumby
Lead Lead Creature Threshold Pugle
Written Down By Lori Bumby

Taking thee Bote Wagon too the Tangled Bat

Yor old bagzelbowe jennelist
fall Agernoon has Tidley
in a few Kerovishelles inn his
tree lik Sheila Bumby's waye
too fast for me Benerikell,
butt run has bin knittind
in the Bote Wagon drive
by the bloo-lid Kitties who
are from the Keecher horan.

The Kitties sit in the
front of the Wagon & I think
they both peddel awaye with
their low pawz With their
upper pawz they steer the
steering wheel that is sort of
set between them. This somethin

Algernon Beagle



Bags End Book #18: Sleep-Over in Imagianna! Part 2

This story and more Bags End Books
can be found at:
www.scriptorpress.com/bags-end.pdf

Hello Cenacle readers,

Mah name is Algernon Beagle & I am the editor guy for Bags End News. Bags End News is a newspaper about mah homeland, a fantasyland called Bags End.

From the outside, Bags End looks like 3 brown-colored laundry bags piled up on a little chair in the corner of our friend Miss Chris's bedroom in Connecticut. And there is one newer Red Bag near them. Miss Chris is 5 years old & has a toy tall boy brother named Ramie, who is 17.

Inside, Bags End is sort of like an apartment building of levels but, cuz it is a fantasyland, nobody knows about its top or bottom. Most levels look like regular hallways, with doors to rooms & other places running up & down their lengths.

Each level is connected to the one above & the one below by ramps that are good for folks with legs & others without. Strangely, the other end of each level ends in a sudden edge, so be warned, should you come to visit.

The Cenacle editor guy, who is a cousin to my friend & Miss Chris's brother Ramie, invited me to share some of the stories from mah newspaper, now & again. He also helped with the typing & some of the spellings, to make this book presentable here. I love English but I still don't spell it too great.

Anyway, I hope you enjoy these stories from Bags End, a place near & dear to mah heartbone.

* * * * *

Imagianna's Inspection Resumes

What began awhile ago as a invitation from Princess Crissy of Imagianna to your old pal Algernon to come to have a fun sleep-over at her Castle turned shapes in story a few times, until it got to be Iggy the Inspector knocking on the Castle's door & asking where her missing sister was?

Crissy & her servant & bestus buddy Boop the not-turtle decided this long-lost sister needed to be found, at least to make sure that she knew that she was always welcomed in Imagianna. Iggy promised to help try to find her too, & when he did, or Crissy did, we would all get back together & resume the Inspection.

And so I went back to Bags End until Crissy tolded me to return. I thinked she would too, because she likes me out loud, & also I am documenting

Iggy's first time Inspection of Imagianna 4or mah beloved newspaper.

So I waited, Dear Readers. I went to Mr. Owl's Bags End School. I runned from mah silly Bumping brother Alexander Puppy & his new Bump picture-book. I dozed & watched pretty sunsets on Milne's Porch in mah comfy armchair.

Then one time mah good friend, & adopted sister to me like Sheila Bunny is, & fellow newspaper-maker, called Lori Bunny was visiting me on Milne's Porch. She was wondering when the next issue of Bags End News might be.

"When Iggy's Inspection starts up again, I guess," I said, not really knowing other words.

Lori is a really smart-looking orange Bunny with little spectacles on her nozebone that are even smarter on her already smart brainbone.

She had a folder with her, & pulled out papers to show me.

"Hey, that's mah newspaper!" I said.

She nodded & smiled. "I brung the issues about Iggy's Inspecting crisis after Bags End got a F."

She showed me Issue #275. "Iggy came back around Inspecting, this time to figger if a fantasyland was being true to itself."

"And I thought Bags End was going crazy with this new way," I remembered.

"You went to see Princess Crissy, & she was now servant & Boop was now King," Lori said.

"That was strange," I said & thinked both.

"So why didn't he go back to inspect Imagianna that time?" Lori asked.

"I thought cuz he was trying to figger his new Inspecting ways even better."

"Did he figger them out?" asked Lori curiously.

"Hmm. I don't know, Lori. I mean, once big guys get nutty, they usually don't stop voluntarily."

Lori laughed & said we should go see Sheila about this. I guessed so. It would keep me busy while waiting 4or Crissy to call me to return to Imagianna. Maybe I would understand Iggy's ways better too.

So we climbed out of Milne's Porch, & I warned Lori about Alex & his annoying new picture-book. She just laughed.

We made our way to the level & hallway & door where Sheila's Throne Room is. A picture of a crown & a carrot that Miss Chris drawed was on the door, so nobody should be confused. Crown OK, but O! Carrot! Yuk!

I let Lori walk in ahead of me, just in case Sheila was too grumpy 4or Beagles at first look. Then I followed quick, in case Sheila was too grumpy 4or everybody.

But she wasn't, strangely.

"How do, Brains? O, hi, Beagle. Hey! Brains & Beagle, a good Vaudeville name. The egghead & the nozebone!" Sheila slouched comfortably in her Throne, & she laughed a lot at her own joke. She is a light brown Bunny, smaller than Lori, with strange & magickal purple eyes she don't know much how to use.

Well, just in case her frivolities were a quick fluke, I quietly tooked mah usual spot on the matt in the corner near her Throne. Lori stood in front of Sheila & just started to talk.

"Algernon & I are working on a story 4or Bags End News," she began.

Sheila yawned her interest, & her purple eyes began to close, but Lori kept on talking.

"How does Iggy the Inspector Inspect these days so that trouble don't break out crazy amongst you big guys?" I asked with sudden words & braveness.

Sheila was quiet a minute, like she was thinking, or maybe like she

ignored me & was waiting 4or Lori to say more.

Then she talked. "It's simple. No grades."

"How can you Inspect with no grades?" I demanded, wondering whose courage ended up by accident in mah own mouth & brainbone.

But that was that 4or this impromptu interview. Sheila no words pointed her paw to the door. I was well on mah way when I looked back & saw Lori not leaving.

"What's it like now, Sheila?"

Instead of yelling, or worse, Sheila tucked down in her Throne a little more comfortably, & looked up at the ceiling with one of her purple eyes closed, like she always does when she's thinking. Then she talked some more.

"It's more. It's deeper. He always says, 'Are you on the path? Is anything off or missing? Do you remember the big & little things?'"

I thinked to mahself that a missing sister is 2 of those 3 things at least, but didn't say nothing. I didn't feel too educated yet in these new philosophies of Inspecting.

But I guessed Lori was satisfied now because she hopped right up to Sheila, & gave her a kiss on the cheek, like a thankee, & she & I left & went back to Milne's Porch to talk over what we had learned.

As we passed through mah bedroom I share with Alex, I saw a big book on his bed with one single word on the cover. I did not need Lori to tell me this one.

When we were back on Milne's Porch, & sitting together comfortably in mah comfy armchair, I said, "What did all that stuff about paths & missing things mean?"

Lori adjusted her little spectacles, which is sorta her thinking like Sheila looking up at the ceiling.

"Well, it's why he's concerned with Princess Crissy's missing sister. A fantasyland can't be its best if something is missing."

I nodded, understanding better, but somehow it didn't help.

Me & Lori then got quiet 4or awhile, & watched the pretty sunset going on in the big sky before us, a really slow one this time. We sort of napped 4or awhile, our brainbones tired from all that hard thinking. Mine anyway.

But then there was a polite tap at mah bedroom window, & when I got up to see, it was Elaine El, the Postmistress of Bags End!

I welcomed her again, & she climbed on through.

"I have another letter 4or you, Algernon dear," sayeth she.

Ut-o!

* * * * *

The Path & the Missing, the Big & Little Things

Me & Lori made a place 4or Missus El with us in mah comfy armchair. I have noticed it seems to always fit everyone no matter how many, which is a fine friendly thing.

"Thank you! How lovely, this is, so nice!" she gushed, & I guess enjoyed with words.

"You have another letter 4or me?" I reminded friendly.

"O! Yes! Here you go!" & she fumbled in her Postmistress bag, & brung the letter out to me.

I said, "Thank you," & handed it to Lori 4or her easier than mine readings. She adjusted her little spectacles, & read out loud the words:

"Dear Algernon,

Neither me nor Iggy have found out where my sister is yet. So you haven't missed anything. I thought to look in the little colored books you may remember I have. I think they hold clues. Will you come & help me play Detective?

Fondly yours,
Princess Crissy"

I asked Lori to read it again to make sure I understood the words & didn't miss none. I didn't.

Missus El stirred & stood up. "I am sure you will make a fine detective, dear. And your loyal readers will want to know all about how it turns out!"

Loyal readers? I thought that was a pretty good insult when I remembered that Missus El likes me. Then I thought over her other words & said, "O, sure, I will do mah best!" Sort of lame way to say, really, but she was all happy & talky as she left, so I figgered no harm.

Lori went along with me to the door to Imagianna. "Good luck, Boss!" she said friendly.

"Boss? I'm no Boss, Lori," I protested.

She smiled all over her nice orange furry face. "A good one, too!" Then she pushed open the door 4or me, & I went through.

Imagianna begins right through the door, & the door is gone if you keep going. When you return from a visit, it's there again. I don't pretend to understand fantasyland science.

Anyway, I made mah short-legged way up the hill to Crissy's Castle. From mah recent sleep-over, I knowed it a little better than I had, but I betted there was lots more I didn't.

I knocked on the front door, & it was answered by Crissy's bestus buddy & servant Boop, the not-turtle.

"Algernon, come quick!" he cried, without the usual protocols, & dragged me along to Crissy's Secret Room.

Crissy was there, & so was Iggy the Inspector. They had pushed back all the pink cushions with their strange designs, & blankets & everything, 4or more room to scatter those strange little colored books Crissy usually keeps in the pockets of her old long overcoat.

Now I have already tolded a long strange story of these books in mah Bags End Book #17 called The Myth of the 4 Famous Travelers! That story is all about these Travelers named Daniel & Marie & Joe. What I was unsure of was how they could help with our current situation. So I asked.

After Crissy jumped up & hugged me first. O! Shucks! to her nice affections. Even Iggy smiled nicely at me.

"How will the big myth story in those little colored books help us find your sister, Crissy?"

Iggy talked first. "These books are very important in helping us understand a lot of things."

"Like what?"

Now Crissy talked. "My sister went with the Travelers like the ones in these books."

"You mean she's with Daniel & Marie & Joe?" I asked.

Iggy shooked his head. "I don't think so, Algernon. But maybe we can find her."

"How, Crissy? I don't really understand." Not new 4or me, sadly.

"We have to go to see the Author of the little colored books," she said. Blushed a little, like old times.

Iggy talked. "There's other writings than these that they mention. I think that our answer is there."

Well, I looked at them both now. "I guess we're gonna go to the Creature Common?"

They nodded.

But they weren't getting right up to go.

"But?" I asked.

"Well, Boop wants us to entertain our guests tonight before going," explained Crissy, smiling.

"You mean me & Iggy?" I asked. Just to make sure. Crissy nodded.

Now usually mah visits with Crissy aren't so formal, but this one was with Iggy, & so I guessed keeping the Inspector in a good mood wasn't a bad idear. Even this new-fangled-no-grades kind of Inspecting.

I can tell you that there was a banquet (O! Yuk!) that I hided safely from in Crissy's Secret Room. When that was assuredly over, Crissy & Boop & me & Iggy went out to the hill where the full Moon can be seen especially good.

As we watched the Moon closer than seemed possible, Iggy said nicely to Crissy, "I am sure we will find her, Princess."

Crissy nodded with her sort-of worried, sort-of happy smile.

"I wonder what she will be like?" she wondered. I guessed we all wondered that.

* * * * *

Away to the Creature Common!

There was a time back-when when us guys in Bags End mostly had truck only with Miss Chris in her house in Connecticut. Then it seemed like Betsy Bunny Pillow was always traipsing loudly off to conquer or liberate or whatever the Bunny Pillow Farm. And of course there was our close ties with Princess Crissy & Boop in Imagianna.

Then later on, it turned out that Dreamland was just over some hill from Imagianna, & Crissy had long knowed its strange resident called Benny Big Dreams.

Well, then came the Creature Common. It's sort of like Bags End, but way nicer. Not in a goody-2-shoes way, though. More just the nature of itself is found in clustering friendly close. O, & entertaining too.

Took mah simple brainbone awhile to learn, but it was Rosa!ita that little black-&-white Pandy Bear who taught me about how something or someone could be one, none, many. All 3, or any combination. No, really, I have seen it with mah own plain & simple peepers.

So this is how I explain that the Creature Common has a guy living there who looks like Miss Chris's brother Ramie the Toy Tall Boy, but isn't him. I mean, for one thing, he looks older, but really it's just this one, none, many thing.

They got theirs. We got ours. Ours is a fairly happy, & usually sleepy, Lazybug. Theirs is the Author guy. Has a way higher pile of notebooks than Ramie.

But this is all to try & get mah best explanations front & center, before all the rest I don't understand & so on.

"Always lead with your best punch," the Author guy had advised me.

Then he pointed to his pen & mah pencil, & I slow-boat-to-Chinee got it.

Anyway, I was thinking that we had to go back to Bags End & find that special picture there to use to get to the Creature Common, & remember how to go through it, & 4orget crashing into it. But Crissy had another way. She led us from her Secret Room along a hallway of doors, some occasional, saying out loud, strange 4or her usual quiet tricky smile magickal ways, the words: "One! None! Many!" Over & over again.

And when she arrived, with all of us following close, to the right door, it opened up, & we came through a curtain into a room full of Creature Common guys, but not in the bedroom I had seen all those other times I visited!

But I did see among the Creature crowds mah good friend Larry the Spider, & that White Bunny MeZmer, & tiny little Rosalita too, & that purple furry dancing with ribbons fellow Pirth. We all smiled friendly.

All of them were just gathered together into a kind of, um, Creature Circle, around the Author guy & the lady I had seen before! These nice people-folks were sitting in a sort of tall grey couch that seemed to rock a little. Comfy-looking, 4or sure. But they stood up 4or greetings.

"Algernon," the Author guy said all friendly, & remembering mah name. "We're so glad you came!"

I hurried to remember mah famous, but somehow missing, manners.

"Hello, lady & Author guy. These are mah friends Princess Crissy & Boop of Imagianna, & Iggy the Inspector of, um," I faltered.

Iggy stepped 4oward. "I'm a Traveler, sir." He & the Author guy smiled strangely at each other. The Author guy already knowed Crissy & Boop, of course, & everyone friendly shook the lady's hand too.

I looked around the room a little better. It had windows, but high up in the walls, & I guessed we were in a basement, maybe below the rest of the Common? There was a green couch where the Author guy pointed us to sit, & they sat back down too. All the Creature Common guys were watching & listening quietly like they do. I was just fine in Crissy's lap.

Crissy was way quiet, & Boop too, & Iggy was sorta waiting patiently, so I guessed to talk.

"Author guy," I began.

"CC," he said, smiling.

"Who?"

"I'm called CC, which stands 4or Creature Coordinator," he explained.

"O yah," I nodded. "Do they ever riot?"

CC laughed a nice laugh. "Not since Fringe!"

"Um. O!" I nodded. Clumsied my words along. "We're trying to find her sister," I said, & sorta pointed up to Crissy's face. She was kind of shy of all this, even being a Princess & all. Because a strange new place 4or her? I didn't know.

I just kept on. "Iggy thinks maybe your other ritings than in the little colored books would help us find her."

The Author, I mean CC, nodded. He leaned 4oward to talk more.

"Algernon, the Tangled Gate story is a long & complex one."

"O, you mean the Red Bag & all that?"

He nodded.

"Is she in the Gate?" Crissy asked suddenly, less shy. Good 4or her.

"I think so," CC said, & turned to the pile of papers & notebooks next to their couch. The lady helped him to sort through them.

"I am going to read you the last she was seen. She is with others in the Cavern under the Tangled Gate."

And then CC readed:

"And when she at last came, & took
 your other hand, & when he came & took my other,
 something was now complete, now told of what was
 & what passes on to be. I did not let go,
 I am a man & I both hope & fear, but I willed
 my heart open wider to all, to every
 & all, we too are one, we too are one,
 together we will architect this world.
 Together we will architect this beautiful world."

Wow.

Now I have been to the Tangled Gate, Dear Readers, & it deserves its name. I thinked what CC was telling us from his writings to do was to go to the caves & tunnels under the Gate, where Boop's relatives & Creatures & so on lived then, now, twice over sometimes, & maybe always.

Iggy stood up like OK, got it. "Thank you, Sir." We all got up now. CC & the lady hugged us all 4or good luck.

"Come back to visit during the Season of Lights. We decorate the Common very pretty!" the lady said, & smiled at us. That sounded like a good idear.

So I guessed we were just about to leave when I looked toward the curtain where we had come from, & there were those bloo-eyed Kittees in their Boat-Wagon, waiting 4or us! And they had their friend who is a Fish & they don't eat. O! Possible Yuk! But good 4or them too. And what a nice ride to offer!

CC hurried over to get us all buckled in. "Safety first!" he smiled. Good motto.

When we were all ready, we waved goodbye again to them, & all the other Creatures, & drived through the curtain that CC held open 4or us. Back to Imagianna? To Bags End? The Tangled Gate? I didn't know!

* * * * *

Taking the Boat-Wagon to the Tangled Gate!

Your old beagleboy journalist pal Algernon has ridden in a few strange conveyances in his times, like Sheila Bunny's way-too-fast-4or-me BunnyCycle, but none has been quite like riding in the Boat-Wagon drived by those bloo-eyed Kittees & their Friend Fish, who are all from the Creature Common.

The Kittees sit up in the front of the Boat Wagon, & I think they both peddle away with their lower paws. With their upper paws, they steer the steering wheel that is sort of set between them. This seems to work out OK, & I think their Friend Fish just sort of enjoys being clustered up with them & part of the action.

I could not tell you how but now we were rolling right up to the way-taller-than-all Tangled Gate. It has a sign up high on it that Crissy told me says, "4or Those Lost." Sort of like a set of instructions 4or weird old mazey labyrinth places.

Your old friend Algernon has been here before. The first time was kind of by accident when I met a very nice Princess, more fancy dress & less blue jeans than Crissy. The next time was to help Crissy get her riter mojo back. Boy! Did she! I wrote all about this in mah Bags End Book #16 called What Is

the Red Bag?

So it was not strange to roll through the entrance under the Gate, & come to that old bubbly Fountain.

Crissy explained, "The Gate likes everyone to take a drink at this Fountain. It helps us to get acclimated to it, & pay good attention to our purpose."

I knew some of those words, or at least what they meant anyway. But I saw Iggy pause uncertainly, like I had my first time here.

"It's OK, guy," I said to him. "I've been here & this water helped. And you know mah personal feelings about food & such. O! Yuk!" I finished. But then I climbed onto the edge around the Fountain & showed him how I was willing to drink. Iggy listened, nodded, smiled, drinked too. Boop & Crissy did too. And the Kittees & their Friend Fish.

"Crissy, last time we sort of just splashed right through the Fountain to the caves & tunnels. Are we gonna do that again?" I asked.

Crissy put her finger on her chin & thought. "Well, Algernon, since we have this nice Boat Wagon along, maybe we should drive the paths 4or awhile. Besides, I think my dear friend Bellla is as often up to her dancings & hijinks up here as down below. Maybe we will see her!"

We both smiled at talk about Bellla, who is a strange but sort of delightful bloo-&-pink Piglet Creature fellas who changes her personalities sometimes, like putting on a different hat or something.

So we all got back into the Boat Wagon, & the Kittees made sure we were buckled in before driving. Safety first!

Crissy told the Kittees to steer to the left of the Fountain, & soon we were under way.

"No threads this time?" I asked her some more.

She smiled. "Good question!" She made the Kittees stop pedaling, & told them about how the threads helped to find places & not get lost too.

Then she saw a big red button near the steering wheel. Leaned forward & pushed it. Then she turned to look back where we'd come from. We all looked back too.

There was a thread the exact color of the Kittees' bloo eyes that ran from the back of the Boat Wagon all the way to the Fountain, like someone had throwed it with a fishing hook back there.

"I pushed the Thread Button, Algernon," Crissy said with her tricky smile. I nodded. Good idear. Smart Kittees.

So more safely than ever, we rolled on into the Gate.

4or awhile it was all just twisty-turn paths. The walls on either side of us were really tall & looked like rocks & vines sort of thickly knitted together.

Maybe it had been a long journey already, or else I was just a little too comfortable sitting amongst Crissy, Boop, & Iggy, I don't know. But I do know that I seemed to fall asleep after awhile.

Bad idear. Cuz suddenly I was talking to someone I could not see.

"How do you know you'll find her?"

"Crissy's sister? Well, because we got smart guys on board, & the Boat Wagon going, & we had good advice coming here."

"How do you know you won't get lost 4orever?"

"We have a Kittees-eyes-colored thread fish-hooked back to the Fountain!"

"Do you know what the Gate really is?"

Well, I didn't know but I figgered I didn't have to say. And the voice didn't say no more.

* * * * *

Arriving to the Cave of the Beast!

Suddenly I talked. "Iggy, can I ask you a question?"

"Yes, of course, Algernon," Iggy said. Our seating order, from left to right, was me, Crissy, Boop, & Iggy, so I was talking across friends.

"How come you didn't Inspect Imagianna the last time you were going to? I mean, even Crissy & Boop had changed up their Princess & servant jobs to be more true to Imagianna."

Both Boop & Crissy laughed & nodded. But this wasn't an answer.

Iggy didn't laugh or talk either right away. Then, when I thought he was about to talk, suddenly it began to snow!

Crissy was shocked. "It's never snowed here before!"

The snow was coming down fast, & the Boat Wagon was going slower & slower.

Finally, Crissy said, "It's OK, Kittees, you can stop right now." I remembered how Crissy had told me she & these Kittees had traveled together to a lighthouse. So they must be good friends.

The Kittees stopped & waited quietly with their Friend Fish. Creatures are good at quiet, unlike the usually noisy, noisier, or noisiest Bags End guys.

So naturally I talked. "Should we walk? Or find somewhere to wait till it stops?"

"Princess, do you notice how it's not cold?" Boop then asked.

She nodded, still shocked about there being snow at all, cold or not.

Well, I'm not sure what we would have done, but just then we heard singing from somewhere close, coming closer, till into view came that bloo-&-pink piglet Creature fella called Bellla!

Singing a strange song that went: "Explaining & explaining & explaining & explaining & explaining & explaining! La Explainer! La Explainer!" I wondered if La Explainer was another one of Bellla's many personality-hats.

Since this was another old pal of Crissy's, she hopped out of the Boat Wagon & hurried over to give her a big hug. Then they danced around & sang the strange "La Explainer" song a few times. Fun to see!

Finally they calmed down & came over to the Boat Wagon, & Crissy introduced everyone who needed it.

"Bellla," I said, with hopeful friendly boldness, "Why is it snowing here? Crissy says it never has before."

"For us to make Snow Friends!" Bellla cried with a smile & a laugh, & she got us all to leave the Boat Wagon & follow her to a break in the wall, & into a little snowy field, & soon we were making all kinds of Snow Friends. Crissy & Bellla made one that looked like your old long-eared big-nozeboned friend Algernon. But not mean.

Boop made one that looked Crissy sitting slouched down in her Throne, with her blue jeans sticking out at the bottom of her Princess dress. She looks like that when it's time for Princess Exercises & Protocols & all that. Haha!

I'm not too good at making Snow Friends, so I just made your regular kind of snowman, with 3 different sizes of snowballs.

I saw Iggy wasn't making a Snow Friend, but instead he was in a far corner of the field, kneeling down to look at papers from his Inspecting Case.

"Hi, Iggy," I said, all friendly.

He nodded & smiled at me.

"Don't you like to make Snow Friends? I'm not too good but even I kinda made one."

Bags End News

No. 391 November 29, 2014

Editor: Algernon Beagle

King: Sheila Bunny

Lead Lead Creature: Threshold Pugles

Written Down By: Lori Bunny

Arriving too thee Car of the Beast

Yer old pal! Algernon iz
not a first-tim newscom - too
hee strange Tangledback Cat
However, that does not mean I
understand about itt oor feell
Kumby Kozy just tramps by oon
Min eration.

Butt the storee, I hav bin
tellin' yu hasn't had much in
thee days of randomness even
two theek haz bin a fer amount
ut trampsays.

Thee heevies short az Sheila
Bunny sunery az that wet started
az a sleepier invitation from mah
quid friend? Incress Crissypie haz

feral kumby kozy just trampsays

Bags End News

No. 393 December 3, 2014

Editor: Algernon Beagle

King: Sheila Bunny

Lead Lead Creature: Threshold Pugles

Written Down By: Lori Bunny

Finelle, Into thee Caver!

Thess storee has travelld along long
way from its humbell roots azz and
invittashun from mah quid friend Incress
Crissypie to me too kumby sleepover
with Herr inn Herr Gassel in Ingwane

From Beyond the Ingwane, they
Crissypies Red Rose ette Ruby all
travel up, too theethis Gobster Common
place of finelle nowe too-thee Tangledback
Cat which iz oon som kind of vegetell
flord.

I gess you road says, Jaen reads,
that all of thee plants ar like
wayborz too earth like Greenwood, too
with its triky but okay gy Beany
Big Drieng thes as know,

but I think I think

Bags End News

No. 395 December 10, 2014

Editor: Algernon Beagle

King: Sheila Bunny

Lead Lead Creature: Threshold Pugles

Written Down By: Lori Bunny

What Reels in thee Car!

Thiss long story I've bin tellin'
thiss spin around yez az once,
twists & turns az thee tangled
cat weel found ourselfs in.
Iz weel thee tale pick upp ~~now~~
Wee beehs nee, stat and trend
Princess Crissypie in Ingwane, her
bestiz body bop-dee rot-testel
In thee Inspector Sun or they
Crissypies too floo-yez
Kitties their friend firs. In fact
wee hadd bin rollin' around in
style inn, thee kitties in Gose
Woon, but arrive nowe do thee
Car of the Beast with crissypie
had a word from her old crissypie
days.

Bags End News

Double ISSUE!

No. 394-395 December 20-29, 2014

Editor: Algernon Beagle

King: Sheila Bunny

Lead Lead Creature: Threshold Pugles

Written Down By: Lori Bunny

The Grate Cavers & the Grande Prokshon 4 the Seagum 4 Lits

I hav ferm'd my mah lens
timz ut tellin' storrys about
mah belan lion and Ippend
fessurees nee, - roff & chee
In fact weel yu start resonent
tell lif off oor jitters aboit
weez yaff end upp.

Our wett kithbit storee ift
will end upp beehs Orr mebee
storeez inn a sortut ro. Az I
SHT heer nowe ritin' thess inn
thee. Katty chear ut mah
currish playz Miths' Parch, I
kon seey hours muckle streezz =

"You asked me why I didn't come to Imagianna that previous time to Inspect. Then the snow came. What I was going to say is that I don't know. So I was checking my notes."

"Find any helpful answers?" asketh me.

He shooked his head, & sighed. "No. Nothing. It's a mystery, my friend."

Just then, I happened to look through the break in the wall from where we had come. The path was snowless! I climbed through, & found the Kittees & their Friend Fish napping peaceably in the Boat Wagon.

And when I looked back to the snowy field, I saw it was still snowy there, & the Snow Friends we all made were not at all melted. Strange!

I was gonna call out to everyone when that strange growly voice talked close in mah ears. "It's time to go, little Beagle. The answers will get away if you don't hurry!"

Well, it was hard to know the good or bad of strange no-body voices, but mah own beagleboy journalist sense kind of agreed. So I hussled everyone back to the Boat Wagon, way more bossy than usual, but still polite.

Crissy & Bellla danced & singed a little more, & Bellla waved to us all as she scampered off her own way. Fun fella, 4or sure!

I got us all buckled in 4or sure, & then nodded to the Kittees & talked in their own tongue. "Safety first!" The Kittess bloo-eyed stared at me, but their Friend Fish smiled friendly. And the trip resumed.

It was not long before we arrived somewhere that was not walls & paths, or breaks to secret snowy fields.

It was a big black cave. Really black inside.

Crissy got out of the Boat Wagon, & walked right up to it, & then looked back at us.

"I've been here before," she said seriously. "This is the Cave of the Beast!"

The rest of us got out of the Boat Wagon, even the Kittees & their Friend Fish. I guessed our traipse was going to be walking again?

* * * * *

What Reveals in the Cave!

So we all now stood together, looking at the big black Cave.

"Crissy, isn't this where you went in Christina, the Author girl, & came out Chrisakah, the magick girl?" I asked, hoping I remembered it right.

Crissy nodded.

I thinked & talked some more. "The first time we came to the Cavern below the Tangled Gate, it was through that Fountain back there. But I guess that was not so much trouble?"

Crissy nodded again.

"So why are we really going this way this time?"

Crissy put her finger on her chin, & looked me hard, & thinked hard. She's not got a single mean bone in her body, so I didn't worry a good insult was coming.

"It's a hunch, Algernon. I don't think the Beast is dangerous. I think he's helpful. I mean, I got my magick in there. Even if I don't remember what happened."

Boop & Iggy & the Kittees & their Friend Fish had been listening to us till now, but suddenly Iggy talked.

"Maybe the Beast can help me too." He stopped, but we nodded & smiled

him to talk more.

He cleared his throat, & looked a little unhappy. But did talk more.

"I told Algernon, Princess, that I don't know why I never came to inspect Imagianna. I remember he boycotted my inspection of Bags End 4or the chaos it caused."

"Sorry, guy," I said, kinda wishing I hadn't let those crazy times make me crazy too.

He smiled at me though. "No, you were right. I told Sheila I had to find a better way. And I left. And I think I came to this Cave too."

Well, this was shocking! But he talked more. "And later I knew how to Inspect like I do now. Which is, strangely, why we are here."

"So we have to go in & talk to the Beast?" I asked.

We all nodded yes to this question.

I talked on, driving mah old brainbone to make me helpful to these good friends.

"Do we go in one at a time, or as a group?" I was truly hoping it was the second one.

Crissy & Iggy looked at each other 4or a long time. "Together," they both said, & we all laughed with a little bit of relief.

I looked around 4or those quiet Kittees & their Friend Fish, & they were already in their Boat Wagon waiting 4or us.

"Our carriage awaits," said the also quiet till now Boop, with a sort of trying-his-best smile.

So we got back into the Boat Wagon, & I made sure we were all buckled in good.

"Safety first!" everyone cried, trying to build up the good will. Trying.

Crissy nodded, & the bloo-eyed Kittees began pedaling us into the Cave.

Sometimes, though, thinking up bright idears isn't going to win the day. What I mean to say is that the Boat Wagon & some of us came rolling right back out of the Cave in just seconds! Me, Boop, the Kittees & their Friend Fish, to name names!

"Hey! Where's Iggy & Crissy!" I yelled. "We gotta go back be4or they get eated by the Beast!" I was too panicked to make any sense.

But Boop talked calmer. "No, Algernon. They will be OK, I am sure. It's just that the Beast only wants to see them right now."

I guessed that the Kittees agreed that Boop was right, because they waited calmly & did not pedal.

I breathed mah panic slowly down. Nodded mahself calm. Boop scooted closer next to me, & put his not-turtle paw on me nicely.

"So we wait patiently?" I asked.

Boop smiled me kind. "Or just wait anyway."

So we did. It was awhile, too, Dear Readers. I would say the day passed, but the Tangled Gate doesn't work like regular days everywhere else. It was grey & grey & grey above.

Did we nap in our worry & long waiting? I think sometimes that happens.

But what's true is that suddenly me & Boop & the Kittees & their Friend Fish waked & there, coming out of the Cave, hand in hand, were Crissy & the taller Iggy!

They came smiling right up to the Boat Wagon, & we all tumbled out to meet them!

"Are you OK? Are you whole or scary ghosts?" I cried in mah refound terrors.

But Crissy hugged me & Boop & the Kittys & their Friend Fish in her usual sweet tricky smiling way, & Iggy even got in on all these hugs.

"Tell us!" said Boop, between one good hug & the next.

Crissy & Iggy looked all smiling at each other like "you go first!" "No, you!" Finally Crissy talked.

"It's strange but good."

"What?" we cried. Even the Kittees & their Friend Fish leaned near.

"Christina, well, Crissy, the Princess," Iggy stammered.

"We're brother & sister!" Crissy said.

Wow!

* * * * *

Finally, into the Cavern!

This story has traveled a long long way from its humble roots as an invitation from mah good friend Princess Crissy to me to come & sleep-over with her in her Castle in Imagianna.

From Bags End to Imagianna, into Crissy's Red Bag riting room all fixed up nice, to that nice Creature Common place, & finally now to the Tangled Gate, which is on some kind of magickal Island.

I guess you could say, Dear Readers, that all of these places are like neighbors to each other. Dreamland, too, with its tricky but OK resident Benny Big Dreams the Oneironaut.

Different kinds of neighbors, I think, which is OK because even in Bags End different kinds of guys live more or less peacefully together.

But at this moment in this adventure, I could only think of one unknown question: Who is Iggy the Inspector, & where did he come from?

And a bonus one to boot: why was he holding Princess Crissy's hand & her calling him her brother?

So I tried to pack these questions up good 4or the asking as they stood smiling before me, Boop, the Kittees, & their Friend Fish.

"Huh?" quoth me. Strike 1. "What?" Wow, strike 2. Stuffed mah paw into mah mouth before strike 3 could arrive.

"Princess!" said Boop, more happily & usefully. Crissy hugged him & tried to hug me too. Now I am no hug abstainer in the worst of times, but I was just shocked. OK, let strike 3 fly, & I'll swing!

"Crissy, what do you mean? Is Iggy your long-lost sister, you mean?" Wow! Even mah dum brainbone had to admire these stupid words.

Crissy laughed & smiled happy at me. "No. Brother. I know it sounds nutty, but I will explain as we ride."

"Ride where?"

She pointed to the Cave where she had come from. "That's the way to the Cavern."

Boop stepped back, shocked. "We don't know what happened to you in there, & you want us to go back in?"

Now Iggy spoke up. "Let's just sit in the Kitty Wagon & talk a minute."

"It's called the Boat Wagon, Iggy," I grumped. "If you're still him," I added. Yah, right, me sounding menacing. I was just confused & scared. Best go with those usual pitches.

So we all sat in the Boat Wagon, & Crissy told us what happened, since I was glaring at Iggy.

"I'll go first anyway. When we rolled into the Cave, suddenly everyone was gone. I was standing by myself in a very shadowy place. A sort of

growling voice talked to me.

"Why are you here again?"

"Again? I don't remember what happened here! Does it have to do with my sister? Please help me."

"There was silence. So I tried to think. I tried to remember. Then something. A face. Her face!"

Crissy looks at all of us quiet for a moment, but still mostly remembering.

"When I went in there last time, my sister was waiting for me. She was excited & smiling.

"I came back for you. They finally let me. They said if you came here, I could see you."

"I hugged her closely.

"We're going somewhere new, Sister. They found a better home. You can come with us."

"She sounded so eager & hopeful. But I thought of Boop & Algernon & all the things I love about this world.

"This is my home," I said, so sure & final she could not argue."

"I was listening in the shadows. I saw the two of you hug," said Iggy.

"She smiled at me a last time, but it wasn't sad," Crissy said, & looked at me. "It's what you call my tricky smile, Algernon. When I smile my sister's smile & think a thought, tis so. Pretty good trick, I guess." I didn't have words for all this yet, so I just listened with all of me I could.

"So I was alone & I was sad. And the Beast talked again.

"You have her gift. Would you like me to soften the pain of your choice?"

"Yes, please."

"So I woke up in bed with my bestus buddy Boop nearby, & I knew I had lost my sister a long time ago. But not the second time by my own choice. I learned about my smile, but didn't know why. I just made sure to be careful."

"That explains you, Crissy," I said, now kindly with words too. I looked over at Iggy. "Your turn, Bub."

Iggy laughed, but then got more serious. "I told you I was in the Cave. I didn't want to leave either. So I waited till our sister returned, & then Christina was gone too.

"And the growling voice seemed to know I was there.

"What do you wish to do?"

"Where is she going?"

"It's her nature to protect," he said, meaning the Princess here.

"I don't know my nature. Would you tell me?"

"Why are you staying when the rest are going?"

"Because it seems wrong to just go! People & places can always get better."

"Then there was what sounded more like a tiny cackle than a Beast, & now I was in a strange glowing white room. And there were representatives of many fantasylands, agreeing that I would help them improve. Oz, Wonderland, Neverland, the River, Hundred Acre Wood. Others too. I would grade them on how good they were. I'm still not sure why they agreed. Maybe everyone needs a little inspecting."

Iggy now really smiled at me. "My doubts about it didn't start till I met your friend Sheila Bunny."

I nodded. "Sheila's tough if you're off your game even an inch."

"And you, my friend. It's why I left without giving Bags End a grade, or showing up at Imagianna. I went back to this Cave."

"Why are you here again?"

"It's grades! They measure nothing! I don't know my nature. But nobody does."

"Then help them invent the root back, & the path ahead. Remember missing things. Big & little."

"I woke up excited, but I wasn't sure if it had been real. It took me a long time, testing it out a little bit here & there."

Now strike 4, or a really good question, come from me.

"Why didn't you recognize Crissy the night you showed up at her Castle to Inspect?"

"We didn't look like this when we lived in the Cavern, Algernon," Iggy explained, in a nice-not-impatient voice. I nodded but rited in mah mind's reporter's notebook to quiz Crissy about this later.

Everyone was now looking at me expectantly. I finally nodded. We rolled into the Cave of the Beast, but I knowed unless he got business he won't trouble you. I wondered about how Crissy & Iggy both said he had a growly voice, like what I had heard in mah head too.

We rolled down a long tunnel &, quicker than I could have figgered, we were coming into the bright-lighted Great Cavern!

Crissy helded mah pawbone, & her hand felt like a real people-folks girl, like always, so OK, what next?

* * * * *

The Great Cavern &
the Grand Production &
the Season of Lights!

I have learned in mah long times of telling stories about mah beloved homeland called Bags End, & about elsewherees near & not so near, that where you start sometimes doesn't tell little or nothing about where you'll end up.

Or what kind of story it will end up being. Or maybe stories in a sort of row. As I sit here now riting this in the comfy armchair of mah favorite place, Milne's Porch, I can see how many stories I have told in this recent stretch.

From mah sleep-over in Imagianna with Crissy, that turned into Iggy's arrival to Inspect, that changed into a visit to the Creature Common, that led us to the Tangled Gate, & a snowy field play with Bellla, till we were arrived to the Cave of the Beast. Then learning about Crissy & her sister, & about Iggy looking 4or his straight & true path. And, oh by the way, Crissy & Iggy are brother & sister too, say thankee!

But all of these stories sort of twisted amongst each other & needed each other 4or any to happen.

So all this to kind of explain why this Grand Production is taking place partly on this very Milne's Porch, partly in the Great Cavern underneath the Tangled Gate, partly in that friendly basement of the Creature Common, partly in the White Woods' Great Clearing 4or Grand Productions, & partly on the Bags End Auditorium. And 4or those in Dreamland too. And the Bunny Dream Pillow Free Farm (as it is called now, I think). And in Princess Crissy's Castle in Imagianna, 4or her Dark Creature friends & maybe others to watch too. And I don't doubt in Oz & Narnia & Wonderland & Neverland & the River & the Hundred Acre Wood. And I don't think the list ends there neither.

It's like that CC Author guy says in his fancy but true way, "We too

are one. We too are one."

I pointed mah paw toward the Creature Common to the proud & crowned Royal Thumbs, who somehow cried out, "Greetings! Felicitations! And Salutations! Presenting . . . a Royal Thumbs Production of . . . The Great Cavern!"

And that handsome white Bear Creature X, & Sheila Bunny back on the Bags End Auditorium stage, both cried out, "On . . . with . . . the . . . show!"

Knowing so many watched me, I cleared mah throat & readed the whole story I have been telling you here, them come from all the new issues of mah newspaper. Those strange powerful Treasures from Creature Common, who are like magickal little stripey balls, broadcast my reading to all those places I named before.

I tried hard not to mess up, & then, when I got to the part of describing what X & Sheila just did, & wondering if this tricksy stuff was too much 4or me, even though Crissy had said, "Let's do it, Algernon!" in her sweetest & most convincing way . . . the show did go on!

The Boat Wagon with the Kittees & their Friend Fish driving in front, me & Boop & Iggy & Crissy in the back, rolled into the Great Cavern under the Tangled Gate.

I remembered being here before, but this time seemed less murky & strange.

Crissy nodded, & we all got out of the Boat Wagon & looked around.

Easy to see first was the big Season of Lights tree in the middle.

"Guess it's always this holiday here?" I half said, half asked.

Crissy nodded at me.

"Why are we here? I thought your sister & the others found a new home & went away?" I asked.

Crissy & Iggy smiled at each other. Iggy nodded, & Crissy talked. I was jealous a little of this teamwork.

"I asked the Beast if we could visit them, & maybe they could visit us too. He knows about the Season of Lights, & how it's 4or loved ones & being grateful. He just calls it another name."

There was a lot of open space in front of the big tree, & Crissy motioned us all to sit on the floor in a circle. She made sure I was next to her, & Boop on her other side, but, to be honest, the Kittees & their Friend Fish & Iggy were all close too, & Iggy looked so happy with all of us that I told mah jealousy to pop back into its pocket. We too are one.

Crissy told us to close our eyes, & to listen to her voice as she singed. Or really *hmmm'd*. She told us to join in when ready.

I closed mah eyes, & felt a Crissy hand in one of mah paws, & a soft little Kittee paw in mah other one.

Listened to Crissy's nice *hmmming*, & then Iggy's lower voice, & then Boop's voice, & the Kittees' very quiet ones, & their Friend Fish's sweet one, & then finally joined in with mah own.

And I have to say that, after awhile, I felt less sitting in a circle on the floor of the Great Cavern, & more somewhere else.

"It's OK, Algernon, you can open your eyes. We're here," said I was pretty sure a Crissy voice.

So I did, fearing the worst, which was I guess that the *Hmmm Train* had left without me.

But it didn't. Here we all were, in a sunny place. Trees & green grass.

And there were these sorta blurry smoky figures around. Dancing like fireflies? Or little faeries?

"These are the Emandians, Algernon," said Iggy. Smiling a whole lot, but it was good.

Remembering my manners, trying, I talked nervously. "Um. Hi? Mah name is Algernon Beagle. I live in a place far from here called Bags End. I rite the newspaper there." I felt stupider & stupider telling this to these magickal faerie guys. Maybe I should just ask 4or 3 wishes or something.

Crissy saw mah distress. "They know about Bags End, Algernon. That it's one of my favorite places, & you are my dear friend."

I took a bold 4or me chance & looked right best I could at the floating faerie kin of Crissy & Iggy, & said, "I just want you floating faerie kin to know how much we all like Iggy, & love Crissy. They are very important to us in Bags End & Creature Common & Imagiana & Dreamland & a lot of other places."

I thinked some more because everyone was listening to me. "Don't blow it, Beagle," I heard mah well-timed inner Sheila voice grouch at me.

OK, Sheila-me. I won't. I talked more.

"Crissy is Guardien of Bags End, but I bet other places too. And Iggy Inspects all of us to make sure we are following our root, remembering the big & little things, & that nothing is missing."

I took a breath. One more. "We are happy you let them stay. It's like a good part of you is still in our world, even after you had to go."

The firefly faeries kind of floated close to me, like a beautiful & strange cloud, & it felt like *hmmming*, but it's like they were the *hmmm*. I don't know how to say the words in English better. But it was very nice. I almost closed mah eyes but not yet.

We all wanted to see their world. All I can say is that they didn't live in houses or nothing. We followed them from the green fields & a few pretty trees to more & more trees.

White Woods? wondered me. No. Green. Green Woods? I don't know. I didn't talk words out loud to them.

I talked to Crissy & Iggy instead. "They live here?"

They look at each other. "This is them too. All of it," Iggy said.

O. Wow.

I guess in Bags End, & in the English I know & understand, stuff begins with I & tries hard & sometimes gets to we. Sometimes it's even not so hard. But still. I & we.

Here, if I understood, & maybe I did, I was we already. We too are one, like CC said.

"So there are no more I & I & I?" I said aloud.

"No, Algernon. It's all one," said Boop, who had been quiet till now.

Crissy & Iggy nodded.

I looked at Crissy. "That's why they left you."

She nodded.

"And me," said Iggy.

"Everyone else was good with going? Even your sister?"

Crissy nodded.

"So she's gone as a I but always here as a we?" I hoped mah brainbone would hold out.

She nodded & tried not to look sad.

Well, we stayed awhile longer, but then it was getting toward night & Crissy said we had to get back 4or their visit to us.

We sat down on the ground again in our circle, but this time with the I/we faerie cloud around us, *hmmming* as he-she-they did. 4orgive mah tangled words. All *hmmming* now.

Opened mah eyes, & it felt like we were in many places at once. Mostly like the Creature Common basement, & the Great Clearing in the White Woods,

& the Bags End Auditorium. But the other places were there, watching with eyes & ears & heartbones too.

But the 3 main places put on a show 4or those watching in the Great Cavern beneath the Tangled Gate, come to visit their old home. I think me & Crissy & Boop & Iggy & the Kittees & their Friend Fish were still mostly with our visitor faerie cloud.

It's like we took turns with our talent & locations.

In the Creature Common basement we heard a new *hmmming* joiner-inner. It was, um, those strange lovely Toes! Very good too!

Then, onto the Bags End Auditorium stage, roared Sheila Bunny on her BunnyCycle Beatrix! And she brung along her whole Kool Jazz Band, hanging on tight!

Sheila played her purple trumpet, & her band followed her lead & played some really good jazz songs. All those crazy named guys. Miles & Trane & Dizzy & Bird & Satchmo & others too.

Then onto that White Woods stage some new per4ormers come on. "Thought Fleas," Crissy whispered to me with a smile. O. Sure.

So these Thought Fleas showed their talents by building this Great Pyramid of Fleas on the stage!

Then, & I am not kidding, atop the Fleas Pyramid appeared these La Petite Thumbs of past Grand Productions! Very talented too. I wondered what would be their trick of daring-do this time.

There was a hush in all the watching audiences, & La Petite Thumbs leaped from the Fleas Pyramid, & fell, & fell, & fell, until they landed on that nice soft purple-cloaked Dorris Dream Pillow in the Creature Common basement!

Wow! Then, from that basement, up leaped a number of dancing Bears who danced & danced, & then they were dancing on the stage with those talented Thoughts Fleas, & then they moved on somehow, & were dancing on our very own Bags End Auditorium stage! And then they came back to their own place in the Creature Common basement.

What happened then was that the visiting Faerie cloud decided to join in too, & I guess sort of divided between the several places & stages. One, none, many, like the Pandy Bear Rosalita says. Not so strange in mah mind anymore.

What could they do? They could get us all to *hmmm* together. And they did. We were all now a part of the show, & all at once too. We too are one. I keep learning this over like it's more & more.

When the *hmmm* slowed down some, there was more entertaining from all 3 stages. The White Bunny MeZmer & jumping monkey fellow Jacoby & little furry purple Pirth hopped & jumped & danced all over the Creature Common basement!

On our stage, Leona Lion leaped across the stage, through hoops, & then longer & longer until she was leaping from our stage, to the Creature Common basement, to the White Woods stage, & then she wasn't landing, just passing from one to the next like she was a bird, till she landed back on our stage! Smiling like she could have easy leaped on & on 4orever, just a good show time to stop!

I have to say that it got hard to tell the difference between one place & another, as the per4ormers were all dancing from place to place, & Sheila's Kool Jazz Club was playing & playing to it all.

Seemed to go on all night under what I could not help but look & see & think was a very Impy-looking, great big full Moon. Pandy Bear in the sky? No surprise to me.

OK, eventually it came to a conclusion. Crissy's & Iggy's faerie cloud kin went back to their new world. But not missing from Imagianna no more. No way, Mister. I am sure Iggy's Inspection will say this true too.

And all the various places sort of solided up as themselves again. But a Neighborhood 4or sure. I'll say it again till yelled at to stop. We too are one!

Don't hear nobody yelling?

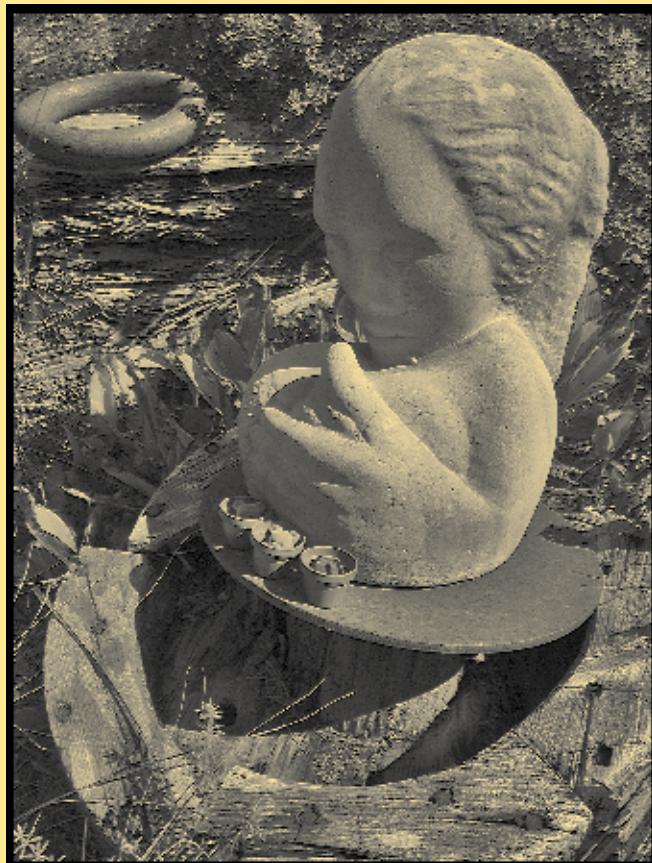
Good.

As this Grand Production comes to an end, I am sitting with just mah dear friend Crissy on Milne's Porch. She is watching me rite these lines with her well-knowned & well-loved tricky Crissy smile. Present from her sister, who now is happy part of the Emandian faerie cloud in the Green Woods. Is the Green Woods? Ha? But all good.

Here comes the red curtain closing the show. Happy Season of Lights!

THE END. REAS

* * * * *







Nathan D. Horowitz

Hold on Tight [Travel Journal]

i. Hold on Tight, This Is a Revolution

Back in Quito, everyone was mad at the president for being corrupt. I got an earful about the guy, Abdalá Bucaram, nicknamed “El Loco,” a roly-poly populist, the spitting image of Oliver Hardy, right down to the Hitler mustache on the center of his winningly smiling upper lip.

Last August, Bucaram held his inauguration party at the Hotel Quito, which is perched on the eastern edge of the city, and has a commanding view of the neighborhood of Guapulo (where I live when I’m in Quito), as well as of the Machangara River valley, the eucalyptus-forested hill on the other side, the towns of Cumbaya and Tumbaco and, on a clear day, the snowcapped volcano Mount Cayambe seventy-five kilometers due east, which, among its many virtues, has never hosted a president’s inauguration party.

In all fairness, there may have been a buzz of madness in the thin air that night from some weed Mauro and Rumi were smoking, huddled like sailors around the fireplace on the balcony of the Café Labirinto two hundred meters down the hillside from the Hotel Quito. The party guests drank like fish and fucked like rabbits, then drank like rabbits and fucked like fish, and finally frank like fabbits and ducked like rish in a kind of metamorphic sexual apocalypse. In the morning, hotel staff found bras and panties dangling from potted plants.

Once the hangovers wore off, President Bucaram appointed his eighteen-year-old son, Jacobito, to be the nationwide head of Customs. Some months later, rumor had it, the president threw another party: his clever son had earned his first million dollars! And last month, the price of gasoline tripled—which may help explain why Washington Piaguaje’s dad Timoteo didn’t burn me to death straight away on suspicion of being a witch.

Finally, a three-day general strike was declared. I use the passive voice because the strike seemed to arise of its own accord, directly from the people, as if a flock of pigeons had suddenly decided, *en masse*, to pivot in the air.

In Guapulo, on the evening of February 5th, 1997, Ché and Rumi and Mauro and some other people and I were at the Café Labirinto when a guy came in and yelled, “Everybody’s kicking out the president! He’s blockaded himself in the presidential palace on Independence Square! Let’s roll!” Nine of us were present, including the newcomer.

Unfortunately, Rumi’s red 1967 Ford Taurus, Elvis, was up on a set of wooden blocks awaiting repair. There was barely space for six to cram inside the guy’s black 1995 Jeep Cherokee, so three of us young men stood on the back bumper and clung to a centimeter-high metal rim on top of the vehicle. Having ridden this way in the desert in Mexico, where there hadn’t been anything at all to cling to, I felt like a pro.

The driver gunned it and we surged up the steep road. At the first switchback, all three of us fell off. The driver stopped and we climbed back on. We readjusted our hand positions, swore, and funneled all our energy into clinging to the Jeep like ticks to the ass of a water buffalo as the metal beast charged up the hill.

When we reached the highway, the Jeep sped toward the Old City, where the poor live among Spanish Colonial churches and three-hundred-year-old government buildings. Terrified of a pothole or

even a bump in the road, we bumper riders zoomed along the dark highway, streetlights streaking by like comets.

Guy in the middle yelled to me, "TELL HIM TO SLOW DOWN!"

I leaned way up and yelled in the driver's window, "SLOW DOWN!"

Driver hollered back, "HOLD ON TIGHT! THIS IS A REVOLUTION!"

I reported, "HE SAYS, 'HOLD ON TIGHT! THIS IS A REVOLUTION!'"

Guy in the middle yelled, "FUUUUUUUCK!"

We clung. The driver knew this section of the highway like the crack of his own ass. It was new and perfectly smooth. The highway, I mean. All at once, he turned onto an off-ramp, decelerated, and found a parking space.

The old city was thronged with people in a festive, revolutionary mood. But for me, pumped up on adrenaline after the ride, the scene was anticlimactic. I'd just survived a brush with death. I'd lost that Zen focus of fingers gripping metal. Crammed into Independence Square were tens of thousands of people jumping up and down and chanting rough gems of folk poetry like "Get him out! Get him out!" and "Kill the bastard! Kill the bastard!" Separated from my friends, meandering through the revolution, I yawned.

Inside Carondelet Palace, we learned a few days later, the president and his aides were looting their own offices, stealing whatever was valuable and not nailed down. At 3 a.m., they would be airlifted by helicopter to the coastal city of Guayaquil.

But now, at midnight, the palace was surrounded by a double row of riot policemen. Wearing black body armor and grimaces, they'd been standing for hours with nightsticks, Plexiglas shields, and full bladders.

"Nothing's happening," I said to the ones in front of me. "If you want, we can replace you and you guys can go home and relax." The private looked even more uncomfortable than before, but the sergeant cracked up.

At 1 a.m., I hiked back to Guapulo with a Colombian journalist who was staying at the Labirinto. Among the many things he told me, one stuck with me: "In my country," he said, "if you see two people making love in the forest, you should leap over them and shout your name, and if they conceive a baby, they have to name it after you."

In the morning, the country had three presidents. Bucaram refused to resign and made defiant speeches from the balcony of his home in Guayaquil. His vice-president, Rosalía Arteaga, claimed that the constitution held that if the president were removed, the vice-president automatically replaced him. And the head of congress, Fabián Alarcón, declared Bucaram mentally incompetent and himself president. When the dust settled, Alarcón was in office.

* * *

ii. Hold on Tight, This Is a Jungle Tour

I made handbills for a jungle tour and passed them out on the sidewalk in the tourist district. Seventeen hours of that over two days yielded only one tourist, but she was a good one, a cute blonde from England with a nose ring. She walked back to Guapulo with me and we ate bowls of chili at the Café Labirinto, talking jungle and gazing east off the balcony at the aforementioned snowcapped Mt. Cayambe, the last high peak before the descent to the forest. With her chubby cheeks and pouty lips and wide, innocent blue eyes, Judy looked like a forest sprite from the *Moomin* books.

Ché came along on the tour to cook again, this time without Christine, as the two of them had split up. The other guests were Norm and Alex, who had connected with me through mutual acquaintances. Norm was a Boston schoolteacher full of intellect and laughter, a kind of Capuchin monkey in human form. Alex was a veterinarian from New Zealand with long curly black hair shaved

on the sides above the ears. Perhaps, he speculated, he was nothing more than the thought projection of a monk meditating in a cave in Bhutan. He had just been in the jungle drinking ayahuasca with Dave Sternstein's old teacher Ignacio Chimbo. He said that at one point, deep in the ceremony, he and Ignacio had somehow ended up crawling across the floor, arm in arm, following some logic that made sense to the two of them at that moment. "Just a couple of jungle bunnies," Alex grinned, reminding me, suddenly, of someone else, though I couldn't figure out who.

The first day of our tour was catastrophic. On the way from Lago Agrio to Chiritzá, our pickup truck taxi stopped because two trucks had just collided head-on at a bridge. A man walking toward us, blood pouring down his head, said, "Free my buddy! He's still trapped!"

Their truck was fucked. The buddy was pinned by the steering wheel behind the glassless space where the windshield had been. Five men, including me, started uselessly pulling on the metal with pickaxes. The guy pleaded with us to hurry up. The driver of the other truck came over and accused him of causing the accident. The two of them argued about whose fault it had been until I cut them off, pointing out that this was a bad time to get into it.

Thanks to a fantastic stroke of luck, the other truck, which was hardly scratched, had a winch on it, and its driver turned the truck around and got the winch into action. The hook pulled the dashboard off the legs of the pinned driver. His right foot was twisted as if collaged on crudely. It hung floppily when they carried him out. He was crying a little. They carried him to where his friend was lying by the side of the road.

No one wanted to turn around and take the bleeding men back to Lago to the hospital. A brief argument flared up among the drivers of several vehicles until someone agreed to do it.

A card with an image of the Virgin Mary had fallen beneath the grill of the smashed truck, among the shattered glass. A teenager picked it up, looked at it, and flicked it back in the dirt.

Five minutes after getting going again, our taxi smacked and killed a white chicken that was, for some reason, crossing the road. The driver stopped. A guy named Milton riding with us, who cooks for Tortuga Tours, sprang out, scooped up the dead bird, and brought it along as we zoomed to Chiritzá. There, my partner Rufino was waiting at the river's edge with gassed-up dugout motorcanoe, sunglasses, and toothy smile. He nodded as we told our story, listened carefully, got all our gear on board, and set off with us down the rippling mirror of river.

When we finally reached Cabafía Supernatura, and brought up all our gear and supplies, Ché, acting in his capacity as expedition cook, sprang into action, rolling a joint and smoking the whole thing by himself while reclining in a hammock. And we all went down and washed off the dust and the bad feeling in the river.

The next morning, Rufino hiked with us two hours into the forest to Cocaya, where we had gone with my first group of tourists; the place named "River of Voices," after the conversations of the ghosts that some Sionas had heard here ninety years ago after fleeing to escape slavers during the rubber boom. There was a lean-to of branches and leaves and, under it, the remains of a campfire.

This time, unlike the first time, Ché had brought enough food for us to Cocaya, and we met animals. Even before meeting the animals, in fact, we met a voice. Walking in the forest, we heard a roar start up not far away, rising and falling, ongoing, not pausing for breath. The veterinarian from New Zealand glanced at his watch.

Led by Rufino, over the next few minutes, we homed in on the roar to find a father, mother, and child howler monkey up in a tree. The father was teaching his child to sing, Rufino said. Rufino explained that, like dusky titi monkeys, howlers sing on the inhale as well as on the exhale.

When it was over, Alex looked at his watch again and noted the roar had gone on for forty-three minutes.

Using as bait a chonta palm fruit mash that Rufino had brought, we went fishing. I caught my first piranha, the first of a dozen piranhas we would catch that day. Alex hooked a stingray, brown and creepy-looking, and pulled it up on the narrow beach. Rufino prodded it with his machete to

demonstrate how the tail would swipe upwards with the sting erect. Then he slashed with the machete to cut the line and let the animal swim away.

This was a busy day in the stream. Norm got a bite and, soon, another ugly face snarled at us from the brown water. Rufino said, "It's an electric eel! Don't reel it in!" Rufino cut the fishing line and let it go. I walked upstream and found two otters watching me from the water.

They held my gaze until I called to the others to come and look: then they ducked underwater and vanished. I yelled, "Never mind, they're gone." Like the hunting spider that had crawled on my chest hair in '95 before the ceremony with Dave, these wild animals were happy to encounter me as fellow beings, but not to be objectified.

As we were enjoying the dinner of rice and piranha that Ché had cooked in the fireplace in the lean-to, Rufino remarked, "My mom wants me to decide if I'm a Christian or a traditionalist. I'm the pastor of the village of Siecoya, but our old traditions make a lot of sense to me too. My mom's a Christian and my dad's a shaman. My mom says, 'Rufino, you're thirty-eight years old. It's time to choose a religion.'"

"We all think you should be a shaman," Judy asserted.

"Can't you be both?" I asked. "Up in Mexico, this tribe I stayed with called the Coras is all Christian and shamanic. The shamans have to go to the church and pray to Jesus for the power to heal people." I wished I could teleport him to the village of El Nopal for a talk with don Tritemio, the Cora shaman I stayed with there.

"No, I need to choose. It's one or the other."

The issue couldn't be resolved, so we left it for another day. After philosophizing, we bedded down.

With a piece of tape, Rufino had patched the hole in my tent. With no mosquitoes jaguarining my blood this time, I dream I'm in the basement of the Reform synagogue my dad attends in Ann Arbor. Two old, gray-bearded Jewish guys in long black coats wordlessly bring me down a narrow corridor into a crammed library room and show me shelves of huge, leather-bound books containing dream records of the Neolithic ancestors of the Hebrew people, from long before the days of Abraham and the revelation of monotheism.

One of the men takes down a book, puts it on a table, and opens it to an illustration like a cave painting. It shows a series of initiates entering the mouth of a great bear, making the passage from youth to adulthood by allowing themselves to be symbolically killed and resurrected.

A gnarled hand turns vellum pages. The next illustration is like a three-dimensional film. A young man has been tied up in a tree, his arms extending up along two of its limbs, his head resting on his right shoulder. He's dying of thirst. He volunteered to sacrifice himself so the spirit powers of the world might have pity and send rain to end the drought that threatens to wipe out his tribe. He has always loved trees, and now he uses one to communicate with the sky, his thoughts ramifying out through its branches, calling to the rain, *Please come, please come*.

After he dies, clouds form and spill abundant rain, as if the sky itself is weeping for him.

I look up from the rainstorm on the page to the two old men, who are staring at me, making sure I understand.

There's a thunderclap, and a shift in levels of reality.

I woke up in the jungle. Outside, a storm was raging. We had neglected to put up tarps before going to bed. We had been enjoying the food and conversation too much for that. My tent was soaked. I was sure everyone else's was too. Water ran in streams on either side of the foam mat I was sleeping on. I dipped my toes in the water to gauge it, then; with my feet, folded the mostly dry blanket around my feet. In their own tents, Norm, Alex, Judy, Ché, and Rufino were in the same bucket, I thought. In the same boat. In the same wet blanket. There was nothing any of us could do.

I saw Abdalá Bucaram's face, then the face of the Virgin Mary lying in the shattered glass on the road in the dark in the rain. I saw the faces of the two injured men, the first with what looked like

black two ropes of blood, one running down either side of his face.

I saw my companions' faces as they lay nearby. Norm, the handsome, skinny, early-50s Boston schoolteacher, prone to bursting out in dazzling, simian smiles, now somber and quiet, listening, remembering the monsoon of India and waiting for the very first siftings of the deepest blue of dawn into the dark of Cocaya, River of Voices.

Alex the Kiwi veterinarian, the jungle bunny who, with his broad grin, squinty eyes, and black poodle curls, looked and even moved like another Alex I had known. Alex my friend the Greenpeace canvasser in Seattle, who once got me stoned and put on Bob Marley, and who later died of a heroin overdose. But the two Alexes didn't think alike—their minds were wholly different. Though they could have been brothers.

Judy the chubby-cheeked, upturned-nosed, blonde-haired, blue-eyed North European forest sprite, lying in the dark, listening to the thunder and to the stirrings of electricity in her own limbs, the ghosts of Cocaya whispering to them in an unknown tongue like Hattifattener. She had dreamt of these ghosts all night, though she wouldn't remember most of the dreams. "We think you should be a shaman," she had told Rufino, and when those words drew the ghosts of Cocaya, she knew they were people she could work and play with.

Ché's long, narrow face pressed against a folded blanket. I imagined his dark brow furrowing in the dark as he thought in the tent in the rain about the accident with the trucks, and how to get a fire lit for coffee and oatmeal in the fireplace under the lean-to, and when the next time was that he could drink a beer.

And Rufino, my business partner, the son of my shaman-teacher, a short, energetic man with a big nose and a small chin and black hair usually tied back in a ponytail, except in the evenings by kerosene-lamp-light when he would unbind it and stride around organizing, preparing, laughing with his wife and four kids and two parents with their two different religions. There's a whoop the Secoyas give off when they laugh hard with delight, and Rufino is a master at it. Though right now, he wasn't whooping, but lying in the dark, listening to the sound of the rain, sifting his memories, dreams, and reflections.

There must have been men like him in pre-contact times, I thought, and my academic side began to chatter anthropologically. *I wish I could travel back and see how the Secoyas lived then. How similar or different were stone-age people around the world? Did my people think like Secoyas?*

I saw the faces of the two old men in my dream. "What else is in those books, gentlemen?" I thought. "Crack them open again. Show me proto-Hebraic flood stories. Teach me our hunting magic." Lightning flashed like a firefly, and thunder cracked, and the rain redoubled its fury. To the sound of the hoofbeats of the rain on the tent, I rode off into unconsciousness again.

* * * * *





Colin James



Big Buicks, Obdurate Oldsmobiles

The family car's hood ornament was
a naked warrior chucking a spear.
Someone's error became our credo.
Out and about, offers poured in.
Finally Mama swapped it
for an actual cash cow.
Just like you could feel
the warrior's firm glute muscle,
this beast responded knowingly
with an eclectic reflex shiver.

* * *

The Curses That Survive Brainstorming

See there was this town once
where lifeboats hung
from the eaves
of all the houses
despite their location
many, many miles from
any logical ocean.
Old, drunken sailors
residing on park benches
near no discernible harbor.
Tax rates higher even than
the exponential and still rising.

* * *

My Passing

Dying is a considerable
slight, gone at last.
I never cared for him
a lot, pretentious twat.
Alluding to the paintings,
flowered cottage schlock.
Art for the masses.
I had to hold my nose,
even the hearse gasped.
His stench extenuated
inordinately *that* much.

* * * * *



Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Secret Joy Amongst These Times: The History of Scriptor Press, 1995 to the Present

*“Think for yourself
& question authority.”*
—Dr. Timothy Leary

Chapter Nineteen

continued from

The Cenacle | 116 | June 2021

Read the full History at:
http://scriptorpress.com/history_of_scriptor_press.pdf

*“The way things work
is eventually something catches”*
—Jorie Graham

I am not sure how *new work* emerges from old, from pain, from loss. What transmutes what we have—our memories, experiences, regrets, & skills—into what we have not yet—*new work, new Art?*

It doesn't always work this way. Not every ache, nor every ecstasy, renders unto something new, exciting, potent. Some sorrows cripple when re-lived. Some aches, some joys, elude the studying eye, artistic hand.

The best an Artist can do is to allow it all on the table. Every happy, stupid, fragile, weird, delightful moment. Like an overstuffed palette of colors, of notes, of clays & bones & rusts. Then, like a long distance traveler in mind & dream & yearn, explore it, bravely, fearfully, proudly, shamefully, & so on to the end.

I am remembering 2012 in several 2021 issues of *The Cenacle*. Allowing it to spin out page by page. Reading that year's many notebooks & re-visiting closely Scriptor Press's projects. Summing & distilling, both, because both are necessary. The first so that the patterns & trajectories only the passage of time may reveal become clear, get learned, are shared; the latter, in a sense, to render *what happened then* into *what it means now*. Making narrative from life bears some of the same imperfections of translating poetry from one language to another. There is both loss & gain in the effort. Tis so.

I keep in mind here the growing theme of *new work* in what I was doing in 2012. An accumulation of recent partings—from Burning Man, from the West Coast, from Jim Burke III &, by the end of June, from the job I'd had for a year—had, for a while, stumbled me sad & clumsy into something of a withdrawal, a retreat.

Not completely, because on the high end I had my beloved KD, & on the low end I had to finish out my job contract to get every last bit of pay, & then put on my hustling pants to shake my mind's ass for a new payjob.

But there had been no December 2011 Jellicle Literary Guild meeting or issue of *The Cenacle*.

And, while *Cenacle* | 80 | April 2012 had indeed come out, it was run through with mourning. Helpless anger at loss.

Come May, I was spent of sadness. Already, flying back with KD from visiting her kin in Colorado in March, I'd announced, mostly to myself, my turn toward "New Work":

*On high, where the mountains snowy knuckles
& the roads deep veins, the pressure lessens
& a hope elevates.*

*Chatter on the plane is what
some reck breathing for. If I disagree,
then nothing for it but to make
like those veins & new rush heart & mind.*

Nobody was going to figure this out for me. I've always suspected that those who have loved me best, most generously, would not think the whit less of me if I never wrote another word. Kind of them. But—

I *would. A lot less.* Like an athlete his skills, a preacher his Godd, a beauty his or her face & torso, my Art is not negotiable to my sense of self. I am writing in this moment because I *will to, love to, must.* Not because these lines will be read by someone later, but because, pen in hand, I am best, most fully myself *now.* My *beat, my breath, my pen.* However so, I cannot love the world, strive to make it better, if these do not occur foremost.

What would this *new work* do? It would carry forth my adoration for Burning Man, the West Coast, Jim, & much else experienced in one way or another, & *make them into Art.* Less by memorializing their passage from my life, & much more by tapping deeper & better into the living feelings of them *still* in me.

Moreover, do this in the live air & light of new days & nights. Let passing time spice & flavor this soup, this *new work.* See what unexpected came of it all.

So, May 2012. I celebrated my personal journal's 38th anniversary on May 4; how I date when I began writing as a boy. Noting my recently revived energies & focus upon it, I wrote: "[T]aking time like this is restoring attention & craft—more of it—to the making—it will be better for the time taken—"

Kissed KD off every morning on her way to transit to work in Boston. Spent my time before work straightening up our apartment; labeling my many *Bags End News* notebooks (revving up new ideas, devoting new hours to this long-beloved narrative); digitizing old *Cenacle* issue supplementary cassettes toward electronic dissemination.

My primary reading was *The Dreaming Universe: A Mind-Expanding Journey Into the Realm Where Psyche and Physics Meet* by Fred Alan Wolf (Simon & Schuster, 1994). Wolf writes about dreaming as a vast various phenomena, worthy of serious engagement, study, mulling. Wolf writes:

For as long as Western cultures can remember, there has been a deep fascination with dreams. They have been taken to have the power of divination, or seeing into the future; they have also been used for reawakening memories of the past and even of past lives. Many cultures believe that during a dream the soul leaves the body and journeys to other worlds, possibly visiting another universe called the imaginal realm.

My ideas toward dreaming were evolving. So many ways to engage them, study them, ignore them even as most do, yes, yes, but what about *me?* I'd started keeping a daily dream journal back on 9/28/2009,

& my *Within's Within* show had begun featuring their content.

And I'd used dream notes for *Many Musics* poems for a while. Which was fun, gave my rusting poetry a fresh kick. Like "Glaring Lights," from *Cenacle* | 78 | June 2011:

*My bike in pieces on a long table,
laid out in plain intimate detail.
One of those single bulbs lighting up the garage,
& so quiet. What's funny is what moves
a heart, in moments, through the years,
how it receives & releases & changes shape
again & again. Now I'll tell you that my
my music took the form of tools & sweat
until we were riding again, what keeps the years
& close by is a tangle. I've let enough go.*

It was kind of accumulating path to what I simply call *Dreamland* in my work. A *different state*, could be called. One of mind, of body, of *Art*. A powerful *else* available to all.

Put simply: *why not engage dreams?* We spend a third of our lives in sleep, much of that in dreaming, though most dreams we do not recall. It is as valid part of living as beat & breath, as compulsory. As *egalitarian*.

Dreamland's borders closed to none. Uninterested in waking class or color or gender or age or whatever. It is a shared activity to all, even if we each do it alone, & new ones each night.

So why not push the idea to wonder if *Dreamland* might have more substance, continuity, connection among souls? It's not that far a leap, neither for scientists nor mystics. For me, *Art* & *Dreamland* waited to be married. I, slow, finally started to catch up.

Thus *Dreamland*, my evolving ideas of it, became an important part of my *Within's Within* radio show. After a bit of music, as I mentioned above, I would start each episode with a *Dream Rap*, which was my live improvising from recent dream journal notes. I liked this far better than random welcoming words; it would usher myself & listeners into the sonic landscape of this program. A challenge to me too, of course, but not too hard with steady practice.

And I was also expanding the imaginal scope of the rest of my show. As of the 5/19/2012 broadcast, I began inviting my dear friend Algernon Beagle to read stories from his *Bags End News* newspaper, in his own funny kind-of-brogue accent. Twas an early story, "Revolt at the Toy Store" from 1986, which began this feature. Now *Bags End News* joined readings from my *Labyrinthine* fiction & *Many Musics* poems on the show. These plus "Storybook Time" (often writings about psychedelics, such as *The Brotherhood of Eternal Love* by Stewart Tendler and David May (1984)), & pieces from the Burning Man Books series (such as *Many Blooms: An Anthology of Modern Women Poets*).

I still played a new rock album & a classic rock album each week, (as an example, the 6/2/2012 show featured the fine new Great Lakes Swimmers' *New Wild Everywhere* LP, & Bob Seger & the Silver Bullet Band's 1980 classic album *Against the Wind*) & some other music too, but I was also finding better my show's way into syncing with my other projects. Weirdly, what I wanted was a show as unique to me as *American Top 40* with Casey Kasem had been. I seek in *Within's Within* to orchestrate a kind of weekly grand production of my own idiosyncratic form.

Beyond my own show on SpiritPlants Radio were the other DJ'd shows, like 2 Zillion-Year-Old Hippie's *A Psychedelic Experience*; DJRL's *Regional Cuisine: Deep Fried Roots Music*; & DJ Dellamorte's *Disco Dichotomy*. Also much external content to choose, & pleased in particular that *Storybook Time* featured Philip K. Dick's 1981 SF masterpiece, *VALIS*. By turns self-obsessive & de-constructionist, PKD's book mixes his own life's surreal mythology with just a pitch-perfect kind of highly idiosyncratic

narrative. Any legitimate intention to create *psychedelic radio* would be wise & lucky to find pieces like *VALIS* to air.

My relationship with Occupy Boston Radio continued along 2012. Aside from continuing my show, *The Aggregated Occupier*, one cool thing that happened in early June was that I demo'd in person in Boston for the OBR staff the Museter.com online streaming platform that SpiritPlants Radio used for many years. The nice appeal of its economical price tag, & ease to get an online station up & going, with both live programming & some pre-recorded. I helped get OBR hooked up with Museter.com, much to Museter owner Dennis Steele's sincere delight in being able to help out an Occupy project.

It was lucky I had OBR to think about, to meaningfully connect with people locally in Boston because, come late May, I was told my technical writing gig of near a year, for a Minnesota-based healthcare company, was going to end on June 29.

I tried to finish on a high note, leave with dignity (humbly thanked my boss Jean for all of her support, & she told me that she wished I was not leaving) but, truly, there is no dignity when a job contract ends, & one is shown the door. The company finally zips up, pays up, & goes. What I had to engage me into June was the making of *Cenacle 81*, & the prep for the 6/30/2012 Jellicle Guild meeting. This & finishing *Scriptor Press Sampler 13* to bring along to the Out Loud Open Mic event sponsored locally north of Boston about once a month.

Out Loud was held in a big old house converted to host such artistic events. I'd found brilliant poets Tom Sheehan & Joe Coleman there. And twas my dear poet friends Ric Amante & Melissa Wattenberg who hosted the event.

I attended the Out Loud every few months for a number of years. A good-spirited event, with little of the usual well-known rivalries among Artists, where such events can turn into homegrown versions of *The Gong Show*. The musicians were decent to good. The poetry—beyond Ric, Tom, Joe, & Melissa—was so-so to bad. But I guess I miss it, for itself & for what-all lost from Ric & Melissa choosing to leave my life. But on that May night back in 2012, we were still friends, & I brought *Scriptor Press Sampler 13* to hand round—

Scriptor Press Sampler | 13 | 2011 Annual contains a wonderful array of Art. Poetry by Ric Amante, Joe Ciccone, Judih Haggai; prose by Ralph H. Emerson, Charlie Beyer, & Jim Burke III (his final letter to me before his 2011 passing); & my 2011 letter to President Obama, *Many Musics* poems, & *Labyrinthine [A New Fixtion]*. Also Kassi's wonderful graphic artwork. It is a fucking honor to work & collaborate with such talented people.

KD & I spent our Saturdays as always going out to movies. *The Avengers* came out in May; its series has re-set the bar for superhero movies with its amazing cast, story, special effects—& magickal ability to tie heart to Boom! We also watched the four films in the *Alien* franchise, leading up to the June 2012 release of Ridley Scott's *Prometheus*. This series mixes together fear, & something opposite to fear, in a way both heady & visceral.

It was the weekend of 6/8-9/2012 that we deviated from movies to take the Greyhound bus from Boston down to Worcester, in southern Massachusetts, to see Phish live in concert twice. Same Worcester Centrum I'd first seen them back on 11/28/1998—only this time with KD as bonus. Even made time during our trip for a visit to Worcester's own George's Coney Island Hot Dogs. Atmosphere out of a 1950s sandwich automat, & hot dogs as good as recalled. Phish as good as I recalled too, maybe better. Likely better.

As May gave way to June, I pressed *Cenacle / Jellicle Guild* prep work more & more to compensate for my expiring contract. No full-time conversion, not even another contract extension.



End of the line. Pressing good things to balance out bad ones, I was ever bent on making the best *Cenacle* yet.

I knew this was coming. It had been coming for months. My two fellow technical writers, long converted to full-time status, would remain there that summer, & beyond, while I wouldn't. I didn't then, & still now, don't know why them & not me; it has long not mattered, save in this looking back.

But I did know that I was determined to make that June a good one. I could not bring Jim back, but I could find ways of living that showed that knowing him had changed me for the better. I couldn't stay at a job that no longer wanted me, but I could determine to find a place that did, & meant it.

Mostly, checking my deepest roots close, I had KD, a home, & my Art. Good new things could / would come from all these.

Even as it took till mid-June to get all the needed copies of *Cenacle* 80 printed & mailed off, I was deep into typing *Cenacle* 81. Writing it too.

I was now chasing a way toward finely, eloquently, yet idiosyncratically crossing my major works: *Many Musics* poems, *Labyrinthine [a new fixtion]*, & *Bags End News*. I wanted them to be both uniquely individual & of one extended world. A single *mythopoeia*, like Stephen King rendered his many books via the *Dark Tower* epic. An idea introduced to modern fantasy literature by J.R.R. Tolkien in his 1931 poem of that name.

I had already crossed these works in the past. But these crossings were like in TV shows or comic books, a “guest appearances” kind of thing.

I wanted more. A deeper level of commonality. This push would eventually reach my *Dream Raps* series & *Travelers Tales* too. It would soon involve a shared origin story. A reaching back to very beginnings, & on to possible far endings.

But I was not there yet. Where I was in early June 2012 was the idea of a *Red Bag*. A kind of direct portal to Dreamland. It began with a reference in *Labyrinthine*, from which extracted a poem in *Many Musics*, & soon a full story in *Bags End News*. What *Cenacle* 81 featured of all this was the “Red Bag” poem, & the many notes I took at that Phish show down in Worcester.

First of two nights I went myself, KD not desiring that much Phish. Settled peaceful watching Boston Celtics playoff basketball in our hotel room. I went along, brought some pens & paper & elixir to the long line into the Worcester Centrum, just like back in 1998. High & happy (*fuck ending contracts!*), I dug deep into scribbling down new ideas. *Wonderful show!* Even better next night in KD's company.

In between the two nights of shows, I was typing at *Cenacle* 81, on my beloved MacBook Pro Eurydice, & writing for the new issue too. Afternoon before the second show, we were at a Starbucks, working away, when my old friend Ralph Emerson called.

Six months, no word. He was the one who melted down on elixir at the October 2011 Jellicle Literary Guild meeting. Lucky enough to drive away the next day back down to Connecticut with Jim, wait out blizzard blackout aftermath with him.

Seems it had all done him some good. The elixir, Jim's extended company. He was attending to his family matters & came across to me as feeling better about himself. Simply put, I was glad for him.



Other friends were doing well too, if also moving away in spirit from me. I heard from Ric Amante. He & Melissa were marrying, would not be at June 2012 Jellicle Literary Guild meeting.

By 2012, I'd known Ric for about 20 years. Yet I was not invited to his wedding. We'd had many times, back when, when we were bound at the hip & heart. I'd never wished for him anything less than all the happiness he could know, & was very happy he had such a special woman in his life.

But I should have gotten it. Understood that those old close days were long gone, & nothing like them would be coming back. Maybe the misunderstanding that emerged that crazy October 2011 Jellicle Literary Guild meeting accelerated the ending, but our friendship would likely have ended anyway, burned down its last embers & done. I've ever struggled to let go of people I love when there is no longer an obvious reason to hang on. Life can be hard & cruel; *why face it with fewer loved ones close by?*

People, friends, lovers, come & go. Jobs come & go. There is no knowing why, no reasoning with such mysteries, or solving them for "next time." To live & love is some of the time to be a little unsure.

I still knew Ric & Melissa awhile longer, but it was becoming more sentiment, more obligation. These years later, I wish them well, I guess. I don't wish them ill.

But, reaching for straight & true words, I know our lives apart are *less rich & varied* than they could be. I miss Ric's laugh, his energy, his *wonderful* poetry. I miss seeing his shared happiness with Melissa, & her fine poetry too. I wish it *was* otherwise. Yet I do not assume these feelings are mutual for them.

Maybe the stress of *Cenacle* work, radio work, & a month leaving a job I didn't want to, added up to me getting a bad cold mid-month. KD got it a week later. But we kept at *Cenacle 81* making, & arrived with it well in hand toward the end of June. We mailed out Jellicle Guild postcard invites, & pushed toward completion by June 30.

Day before, my job hand ended. Nothing to do about. Not even the sentiment of a waning old friendship. Just *done*. Ship back the work laptop. Get the last paycheck. Bloodlessly cold shit humans do to each other, in addition to our skill at warfare, ethnic cleansing, racial slaughter, environmental catastrophe, & other things . . .

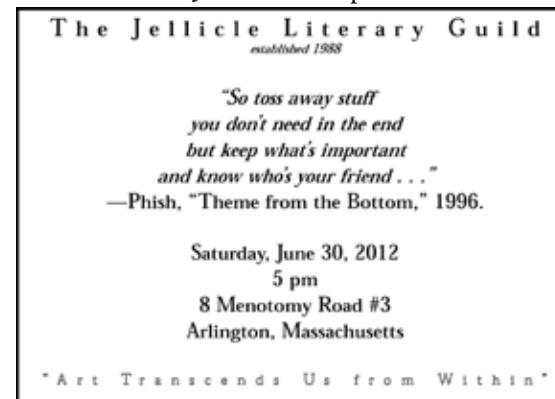
[Pause. Take a breath. Continue.]

Ralph called to tell me he was taking the Greyhound bus up from Connecticut to attend the Jellicle Literary Guild meeting. I had invited him as always. Would be his first since that disastrous October 2011 meeting I keep on yawping about. Actually, since no meeting in December 2011, & the April 2012 meeting was just me & KD by intention, he was coming to the next one we invited people to.

We met at the bus station, talked about that October night, & the good it seemed to have done him. I think I made him understand that KD & I tended him most kindly that night, & Jim had finished the job bringing him home.

He moved out to California not long after this June evening, to tend to his mother now out there. That weekend was, I think, the last time I saw him, & we had a friendship going back to high school, over 30 years. I last heard from him 5 years ago now, found a letter again recently. I won't quote it here out of respect for privacy, but will say I did not reply to it. I also wish him well, I guess. Or at least not ill.

Cenacle | 81 | June 2012 bears in its secret heart a wraith, a sadness, an eagerness, a regret. A power braided of many things. Where *Cenacle* 80 had much of the memorial about it, as well as material lingering from the unmade December 2011 issue, *Cenacle* 81 is *present & moving ahead*.



My sadness over Jim's passing was in part fueling *new work*. Jim believed in my Art as I did in his, & honoring my love for him, & deep respect always, was in part to make new Art worthy of his regard. I did not make Art *for* him so much as I sought to continue embodying the *faith* he had in my work. Had, has, same words, different angles. Jim's Art & craft is of the level of mastery I have long sought to achieve in what I do. *Cenacle* 81 is *there*. End to end. It had been *eight months* since being there. *Cenacle* 80 was just too damned sad & purgative in my mind. Not so much what others saw, but by my own assessment.

My job was ending. I've now pawed at this old wound countless times, beyond reason. But while it was ending, until its very last day, I was working on finishing *Cenacle* 81. Unlike *Cenacle* | 69 | June 2009, when the issue was done the same day I learned my job was over, this one ran stride for stride with this knowledge. All of June 2012 these happened simultaneously. The importance of that job is long gone; *Cenacle* 81 remains alive, & still matters.

Start these comments on it, strangely, not with KD's fine cover & its close-up of a piece from Josiah McElheny's mirror-play work "Endlessly Repeating Twentieth Century Modernism" (2007), which we saw together at the Museum of Fine Arts, & at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston (& KD has more beautiful portraits of the beautiful works within the issue), but instead near the end of the issue, the last entry in the *Notes on Contributors*.

Including *Notes* began in *Cenacle* | 22 | October 1997. I suppose I noticed this was a common feature in literary journals I saw in libraries & bookstores. The entries in the *Cenacle* tend to be part informative & part affectionate notes to the wonderful people whose brilliant work populate its pages. I make them more personal than most journals do.

My own entry is last, was likely the last bit of new writing for this issue. Reads:

Newly jobless, another summer on the bricks, & on the dole, & yet my black pen still moves, & so I glide through the peaks & the mud, each, & both, with melodies of hope a'clinging to my soul . . .

These sentiments sum what I was doing here. I could *not* bring back Jim, could *not* keep my job, (these things said too many times here), but I *could* make a great *Cenacle* with all those involved. You *can't* do what you *can't* do, but you *can* do what you *can*.

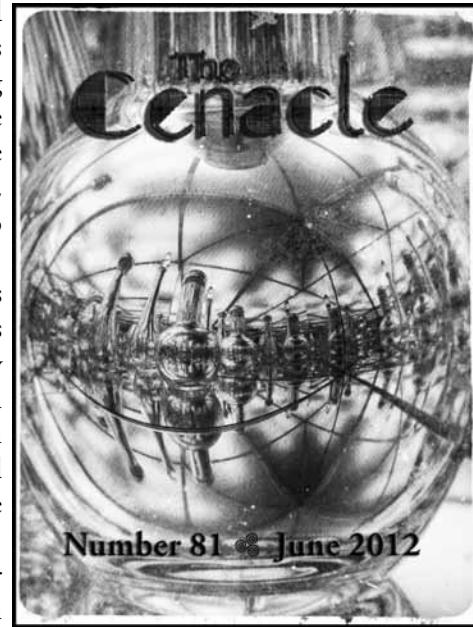
A week before this meeting, I wrote *From Soulard's Notebooks* at my beloved Au Bon Pain Café courtyard table in Harvard Square. It had been a long Saturday afternoon into late evening of writing, typing, & editing this new issue. This was the last piece for the night. I sucked my weary energies together & dived in, let the beautiful night & my many feelings all loose.

It begins:

I speak to the freak. I think there are a lot of us around. I think I know why.

You. The freak. You're restless, dissatisfied, agitated. You wonder why. And you wonder why. And you still wonder why.

You. The freak. You love too, you love a lot, & not always easily, or in ways easy to explain. To others. Even to yourself. Maybe especially.



Once established who I “speak” to here, I argue that freaks in particular “keep putting your nose above the level of the herd around you, sniffing *wrong*. It sniffs *wrong*.” I wonder if the hard answers to human suffering might not be *more* freaks: “Maybe the freak populace has to become a fucking epidemic. An impoverished, have nothing, will shake it though, *singing, dancing* epidemic.” And conclude:

Maybe that's the only way out, ahead, whatever, freak. You don't know, I don't know, here they come by the millions. Alright, spread out there on the floor. Alright, there's bread, there's something. There's singing, there's dancing. There's breathing as long as there's one of us & at least one tree. Alright then.

I've never *not* felt the freak, & eventually learned it was OK. *True*. Would rather help another find their freaky way than see them deny it so. By using *From Soulard's Notebooks* to speak in praise of freaks, the issue makes its stand on these matters clear.

But, see, freaks ain't weak. The poets in this issue, freaks one & all, are *really good*. Let's take them on, you & I.

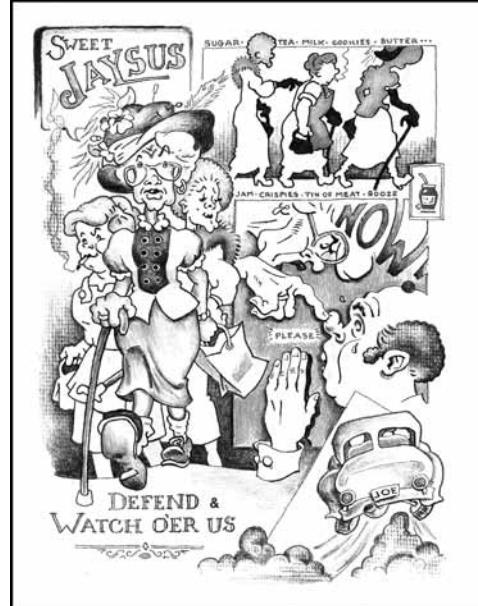
I have an editorial practice of putting new contributors up front, page 1, in issues. Let their new light shine in the lead position. Thus Joe Coleman's poetry led this issue. Illustrated by his own hand, “Dolores Toodles Goes to Market” is a lovely, satiric piece of three pious old ladies who rob a market:

*As Dolores and Bridie stuffed loot in their sack,
Millie went to get booze from the cooler out back.
Dolores demanded a carton of smokes,
a tin of meat, then she waved. “Toodle-oo, folks!”*

*They hotwired a Bentley, with pedal to metal,
and Dolores was soon boiling tea in her kettle,
back in her hide-out that night all alone,
Dolores Toodle was using her telephone.
to tell her two cronies, “We certainly must
take a walk one day soon to the Savings and Trust.”*

And concludes with this mocking moral:

*As we age it may seem that we run out of time.
But you're never too old for a life of crime*



I'd mentioned earlier that I'd met Joe Coleman at the Out Loud Open Mic event run by Ric Amante & Melissa Wattenberg. We were pretty good friends for I'd guess 5 or 6 years. He was an older gentleman, something of a smoker & drinker for a while. Funny as hell in conversation. Kind. Strange. Sad in untold ways. This poem was the wonderful first of many we published together.

Nathan D. Horowitz was another pretty new friend of mine but, unlike Joe, who lived a couple of towns away from KD & me, Nate lived then in Vienna, Austria. American born, but a far traveler to several continents. His “Self-Portrait in 20 Dreams” ranges from his very youth in the early 1970s up to 2012. The 2011 dream is particularly striking:

I'm one of a minority of people who are something like autistics, but our disability—if it is a disability—is physical as well as psychological: we are weightless. It's nighttime. A dozen of us are in a public park under streetlights, scavenging potentially useful discarded objects from garbage cans and dumpsters. Some normal people approach and we throw ourselves through

gaps in the bushes that line the sidewalk, then hide there, floating, until the normals leave. I need to go out among the normals, so I meet with our leader, a tough-minded woman in her fifties. She has a collection of four three-dimensional postcards that she uses to explain our condition so that others will understand. She gives me two of them. One has several panels. It shows some of us as children being investigated in a laboratory. We're alone with white rats that run through a maze. Their noise is no problem, but as soon as the white-coated scientists come in and begin to speak, we become agitated and try to run away. The second three-dimensional postcard is a photo of a group of us as children standing in a circle for protection and consolation, floating about a foot off the ground, with our heads down and our feet straight up in the air.

Horowitz's writing is eloquent, funny, & often elusive. The trickster spirit of Loki lurks in his pen.

Meanwhile, there's Martina Newberry & her fierce funny poems out in California. Poems soft as fresh-baked skin, yet rife with deep-clashing metals. Her work hurts like healing sometimes hurts. Here's "After the Hurricane" in its hard, soft, full glories:

*There is that moment, an hour or two
after the hurricane, when it comes
to you that, before it hit, you were
weeping. You sat in the kitchen and
thought about aging, how your children
hated the oldness of you, refused
to see you. You were weeping. Your feet
were crossed at the ankles, a tissue
was balled-up and damp in your fist. You
wept for your sins, for the selfishness
of your soul, for the sound the minutes
make as they race by you, pass you up.
When the hurricane hit, the screen door
blew off and the roof shingles lifted
and the rain came like needles. Your cat
leapt to the top of the fridge, your lover
pulled you into the bathroom and held
you very tightly. The lights went out,
the phone rang twice then stopped, a porch chair
blew over on its side, danced across
the yard. After a while, it was over.
You thanked God for the cat, for the roof,
for the way it stopped suddenly, then
all you heard was rain landing hard on
the sill. You went to bed and woke late
at night with a cramp in your hand. You
still held the tissue, balled-up and damp
in your fist. Oh yes, you told your
self, right before the hurricane, I
was weeping.*

She is a dear person & a preternaturally gifted poet. A treasure to know.

Now look toward Israel & the magickal haiku of Judih Haggai. She writes one nearly every day &, four times a year, I'm lucky enough to sort through this garden to select a dozen blooms. Order them into a kind of faux narrative for fun. A sweet pleasure to do. Here's three of her pretties from *Cenacle 81*:

*another morning
hummingbird finds nectar
and so will i*

* * *

*lizard still
on stucco wall
aroused by nothing*

* * *

*a glimpse of light
through the mist
long lost friend*

Judih's haiku show what good haiku is. The novice is left to wonder the trail from hither to yon.

And come back again local to another lucky find from the Out Loud: Tom Sheehan. Tom's a story-teller, I'd say, both in his poetry & his fiction. Rich, evocative language. Full-fleshed & elusive both. Could be a shop-keeper by his appearance: short white hair, button-down shirts, & trousers. Is, in fact, a maker of incendiary musics.

His "Cutting Ice . . ." carves, like Rodin his sculptures, a tale of men pulling large blocks of ice from a pond local to Tom's youth, hauling them away by horse-drawn wagons. This stanza in particular floors me silent, exists in this world beautiful & unknowable like rainbows over dusky sounds, & carpets of fairie white moss in deep Woods:

*Mostly I remember the eyes
of a horse who plunged through the ice,
like great dishes of fear, wide and frightened
and full of the utmost knowledge. His front
hooves slashed away at the ragged rim of ice,
but could not lift him out, or leather traces
or ropes or sixty feet of chain, and when he
went down, like a boat plunging, huge bubbles
burst on the surface and a December afternoon
became quiet.*

That's precisely how to write great poetry, if you can.

What about the issue's great prose? Let's begin with the wild conclusion to Charlie Beyer's *A Travel to Belize*. Charlie, Kim, & their variety of pets continue to limp in their truck along Belizean roads, of worsening qualities, with its trailer hauling Charlie's hovercraft behind them. Encountering all manner of bureaucrats, & hustlers, & friendly & unfriendly thieves, they persevere & arrive to their little purchased square of jungle. There is a beautiful passage that captures Beyer's close, loving attention

to detail:

At last, we are alone, our empire of American commodities secure, just us to contemplate where the hell we are. We wash in a bucket from “well” water, which is a rain water hole in the ground below us. I am fairly dubious of its microbial concentration, advising Kim not to get any in her mouth. Certainly not toothbrush quality. As a final act of glory, I get one of the LED lights hooked up to a battery and life is illuminated. The bedding has dried a bit during the day. The nest is an oasis of rest after a roasting day of labor. A mild feeling of contentment comes over us with this hard-won peace. Kim is smiling. The cats are on jungle prowl.

There is a subtle, magick craft to Beyer's narrative. The reader is swept along in strange, often bewildering scenes, yet there are also moments like this one where he slows things down to a place, a moment, a feeling. *Beautiful* work.

Just as SPRadio / *Within's Within* was featuring Philip K. Dick's mature masterpiece *VALIS*, *Cenacle* 81 re-printed his 1953 “The King of the Elves” (also featured in the 2005 *Burning Man Books* series). A deceptively simple fable of an elderly filling station gentleman named Shadrach Jones, who kindly saves a band of Elves from a wet, cold night, & is rewarded with their Kingdom when their old, sick King passes. By turns grateful & incredulous at his luck, Jones leads them to victory in a mighty war with the Trolls, & wonders if he can return to his old life.

“I thought maybe now I could go back to the filling station and not be king any more.” Shadrach glanced hopefully around at them. “Do you think so? With the war over and all. With him dead. What do you say?”

For a time, the Elves were silent. They gazed unhappily down at the ground. None of them said anything. At last they began moving away, collecting their banners and pennants.

“Yes, you may go back,” an Elf said quietly. “The war is over. The Trolls have been defeated. You may return to your filling station, if that is what you want.”

What I love about PKD's writing is that he is able with weightless ease to explore the countless regions of his mad genius, while keeping his language simple, with a twinkle in its eye. Shadrach Jones needs a fresh path to follow in his life, to wake him anew to its mysteries & possibilities. The Elves, in turn, need a King to lead & to protect them. A magickal connection is made. In words alone, yet tis wonderfully so. What PKD did countless times in his work.

The issue's other reprint is Sarah Seltzer's essay “5 Fascinating New Uses for Psychedelics,” originally published online on 4/26/2012 at Alternet.org. Listed out, these uses are: alcoholism; end-of-life issues; depression & anxiety; cluster headaches; & PTSD.

To clarify, none of these uses are actually *new*, but Seltzer does detail revived FDA approval & various funding for studying these critical matters. She concludes encouragingly:

But as all these stories in the mainstream media show, the therapeutic uses of these substances may finally be getting the kind of measured, rational attention they deserve—without the handwringing that comes from past negative associations. At least we can hope.

Even more eloquently is how Terence McKenna sums the matter:

The idea of someone going from birth to the grave without ever having a psychedelic experience is like someone going from the birth to the grave without ever having a sexual experience. It means you never really played in the game. You were a spectator, a silent witness. It means that you never figured out what it was all about.

Many literary journals, quite good ones among them, do not feature graphic artwork. *The Cenacle* is not one of these. This issue features terrific work by Baylen Greever (a new contributor & also an SpiritPlants Radio DJ), Jeremy Kilar (whose great work had been previously featured as well; also a SPR DJ); &, of course, my beloved Assistant Editor KD (a SPR DJ too!). Let me quote the *Notes on Contributors* about her:

[KD] loves me no matter my current state of high or crumble. Her gift of love for me is part of why I edit this journal & share with you.

From its first issue in 1995, I have let visual artists take their honored place in *The Cenacle's* pages, & I am ever grateful they do.

Come now to my work that fills about half the issue's 160 pages. Beyond my *From Soulard's Notebooks*, my first piece in this issue is Chapter Sixteen of this self-same *History*, covering 2009. Suffices here to make a few general observations about this work. It began as Master's thesis at Emerson College in Boston in 1999, when Scriptor Press was less than five years old. Published it in *The Cenacle* issues from #45 | June 2001 to #50 | December 2003, & then kept on it. It lingers from history toward memoir, toward polemic, & back again, because it is my shaggy mind & years it addresses. There are some more personal topics I rarely or do not address in it. Such things better dwell obviously & obscurely in *Many Musics, Labyrinthine, Dream Raps*, or even *Bags End News* now & again.

But writing this work compels me to confront *how* to tell of my life & times. What *matters*? To what *level of detail*? How do I keep it fresh, & at least somewhat unpredictable, as I tell of days & months & years in which events *accrete* more than jerk about wildly?

As well, I don't work on this *History* steadily, so it's always a bit foreign & uncertain to me when I resume. Maybe that's good.

It can feel a bit like trudging, all the old pages I have to absorb for their filtered bit in the narrative. And yet like a challenge too. How to tell, *well*, of *what matters*, & render lively narrative from slow passage of time & its events? No sure answer but in the focused effort, & willingness to let the result *be* the result.

Many Musics begins with the aforementioned poem "New Work." A few poems on, "Render" continues this theme:

*There is that older than
my paths & songs, roots dangling for
a hold. There are liners in those skies
tonight, tomorrow, beckoning for a ride,
maybe just for a song.*

These lines quoted in the issue's "Epigraph" too. I found myself *both* reaching forward & reaching back . . .

Reaching back in my heart in: "Just Play Through":

*If I can learn better to give it &
take it, & accept the brutalest beauties*

*of this world,
Perhaps I can live long & come to my end
with an easy smile like to your own.*

Reaching back into history in “Temple of Dreams”:

*Found in a clearing shaped like a temple
in full moonlight, potent without
flesh nor bones, a place, a portal,
a tool, a salve, recked ancient by men
yet dreams do not bide by miles or hours.*

And then there is the last poem of the group, “The Red Bag”:

*When the glaring lights have left
When the music has slowed to smoke
Where there is sniff of good blood & then no more
When touch brittles maybe to break
When best taste is old & cold, hurts*

*The red bag, doorway, back to dreams
The red bag, the path, come
The red bag, come, trust, come here.*

Whatever materials one uses in one’s Art, whether they come from memories, dreams, wishes, books, experiences of one’s own, or of one’s loved ones, or likely a wildly changing brew of these, what Art emerges is not what the sources were. Art is *not* life, precisely. It is transformation of life by craft, by inspiration, by gifted minds & hearts & hands.

The Art I wanted now was both old & new in its sources & inspirations. I was looking to create the longest, strangest, most varied & delightful, moving & meaningful work I could. As I wrote earlier in this piece, I put all of it, all I had, on the table. My knowledge of this world, much of it, is mongrel-gotten. But I am a mongrel willing & wishing to push myself, use my memories, dreams, wishes, experiences, & so on, to as far & deep extent as I can.

From when I first wrote as a boy I sought to create imaginal worlds bigger than myself. Then, it was more from loneliness, unhappiness, a sense of belonging to nothing but what I could render on page. Now, because I find life far richer & more beautiful when creating wildly ambitious Art, & encouraging others to do so too.

That said, the “Red Bag” had a purpose far beyond what I’d tried before. That poem only a few days since written, I found myself solo attending that first night of that Phish show down in Worcester. Standing in a long line, waiting to get inside the DCU Center to my seat. Scribbling in a little notebook both questions & answers, continuing on even as I made it to my seat, crowds of friendly hippies & frat boys settling in around me:

The Red Bag is co-located in several places—

1. *Clover-dale*
2. *Creature Common*
3. *Bags End*

*It could be more places, like back of Nat Perfect's store—Noah Hotel—inside **RemoteLand**—it is the connector—the portal from one place to another—*

This raises the question of what's in the Red Bag—& how to enter it? Does one close one's eyes but not sleep?

Close eyes &
picture arriving
& so one arrives—

*Where did it come from—who controls it? That is unknown—why does it exist? It was necessary—
Is there one on the ships overhead? Did it come from there?
The point is that it is multiply co-located
LSD is a non-specific amplifier—now what if the Red Bag is too?
What would that mean?
What would it amplify?
I'm not sure on this—
I like co-location & the way to enter but is there an inside to the Red Bag? Or is it like a window from one place to another—*

Then Phish walked on stage, with quiet smiles & friendly waves, & the crowd roared & danced, & for a while I put my little notebook away, & did too.

Labyrinthine's pages are too many, vast, & weird to sum up in a few lines. But one passage catches my eye re-reading tonight. These lines new from deep in my roiling mind:

Moonlight in one hand, the other in a manacle. That's how it feels. I look from hand to hand, acting the one way or the other. Nobody in these stories acts otherwise.

But what else. The moonlight & the manacle. Nobody gives me moonlight, tis not mine, twas here before me & will illumine my dust in the air one far day—it's the manacle—

Surely the manacle sourced in being human, born a place & time, the flesh of particular flesh, the genes of those genes, & the many ways carried along helpless for years, causing decisions I did not make, living unexpected results, becoming by accident again & again—

At some point, however, the manacle is in my possession, in my hand, clasping my hand, pulling my hand back or down, or releasing enough for my pen miracle to go & go & go—

And now, tonight, the lights here & everywhere? The music in my ears as best always? Manacle, I say. Manacle? I ask. Yes, even beauty. Yes, every hour. Yes, manacle is miracle is now without cease until dust indeed upon the moonlight & perhaps even then in some way still—

But then—what then?

The manacle. The miracle. The music.

And there's the section of *Labyrinthine* set at Clover-dale, the fictional counterpart to the falling-down farmhouse & barns KD & I'd seen up in Vermont in 2011. Christina, a character long in these stories, while still young was brought to this place when a farmer & his three sons still occupied

it. Her purchased, kidnapped, *something'd*, from a forgotten life, to replace his dead wife. These lines especially:

That first night I learned I'd be sleeping in his bed. I must have been sick, maybe even drugged, because I got into his bed agreeably enough. Immediately he shut out the light & said, "bare." There was no humor or flexibility in that voice. I took off his wife's dress & then paused. "Bare." I took off the rest & edged to the side of the bed. I heard him undress too & held my breath. I didn't know what but I suspected enough. My body crackled with alertness.

Would he have? Yes. Whatever I had been, however I had lived, whoever had loved me, I was bare in his bed, him too, & it was plain. He got in the bed & grasped me lightly from behind.

It was soft, for such a large man. A gentle grasp & I believe he would not have hurt me for pleasure. I believe that more than I would about the other men since. I was his prize, what he would re-build his world around, destroyed as it had been by his wife's death. Had it happened as he intended, he would have had me that night that hour, & it is possible I would have become his by heart & mind, not just body. No matter how terrified I was, that first grasping of me would have marked me his, & I willing, if not—

A word in my ear. Softer than the bedsprings as he curled around me, but a word & not his. "Sing."

Was it her?

Probably. Yes. Maybe. I don't know. In that order. Why unsure, seeing as she saved me later? I don't know.

I felt his hands moving in closer, to touch my breasts, my stomach, the rest, felt him already very hard, & for a moment I let him continue. For a moment I let. Then I began to hum. Hardly a song, more just barely shaped noise.

It was enough, he withdrew, I pushed the hum into music, the melody of a song I could not remember all of, so I hummed the bit twice & then shifted it to another & then realized he was asleep. Curled into himself, but not as though harmed. Relaxed, led from where he'd been into Dreamland, too dark to see his face but I knew it was relaxed, open & wordless, become now something he'd never been, or not in a long while.

I lay there trembling, unsure if it would last no matter how deep his sleep seemed. But he didn't move, not a muscle or an inch. I finally passed out from fear & stress & relief & the utter darkness in which I lay.

It's strange, good work, & it is *my own*. What I've arrived to so far. When Art goes well, sings, glows, dances the rainbow, moon, & stars, nothing else is quite as good. One feels one's scattered powers & potentials draw together, become a new force in the world, ready to spend ecstatically to a smiling exhaustion.

Come to the 6/30/2012 Jellicle Literary Guild meeting. That Saturday began with finishing remaining work on *Cenacle 81*. Then I took a bus & a train to South Station bus terminal in Boston, to fetch Ralph Emerson. Eight months earlier, he'd come by car with Jim. Now sporting a grey moustache & a fisherman's cap, he appeared to be in all ways much better off than the smelly wretch who'd appeared for our previous visit. We had our talk I mentioned above, & made our way back to KD's & my apartment.

Joe Coleman came in person too, my previously mentioned new poet friend from the Out Loud Open Mic. We formed a friendly quartet that warm June night in our relatively small apartment, our air conditioner clicking on & off occasionally as the temperature rose & fell.

Others attended too, of course, by way of audio & video & writing. The Guild had traveled long in both years & miles, but also in conception from the Roma Restaurant years in New Britain, when all who attended were sitting together at those back dining room tables.

So we settled in for a fine, long evening, shared some food, & began the 120th Jellicle Literary Guild meeting. Of the four of us who sat together in armchair & on couch, I had of course been to every meeting since the first on 12/29/1988; Ralph had been to 22 meetings, his first back on 4/13/1991; KD had been to 16 meetings, all those since the 2008 revival; & Joe was at his first.

So I told for his benefit the story of the Guild, from its origins in parties my friends had had in New Britain: poetry, music, beer, & weed. He knew of the Inklings gatherings (J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, & their Oxford friends) in the UK back in the 1930s & 1940s, from which the Guild idea had come.

Joe wondered if I had known back then, when the Guild had first started, if it would last. Ralph said he thought I knew. "Ray's good at these things," he said drily, I hope with affection.

Told of its cease in 2001, & its re-launch in 2008 out West, & finally its return back East, to Massachusetts not Connecticut this time (though there had been a few Boston meetings back when).

Then, though it was not yet called "Jellicle Guild Flashbacks," I played one, as I had at the April 2012 meeting. 4/28/1995 meeting, primarily of JBIII playing The Who's "Going Mobile." Raucous & beautiful.

That was also the meeting where *Cenacle* 1 had debuted. And here it was, near 24 years later, & *Cenacle* | 81 | June 2012 was getting its turn. Again, I dug deep in my recall to tell how, as a boy, I'd started writing & publishing projects, filling up my secret notebooks; then on to write & edit college literary magazines; & then to create post-college 'zines, made up at Kinko's; & how finally, in 1995, I bought a \$500 photocopier to possess at last the means of production, & start *The Cenacle*, & document the Jellicle Literary Guild.

I told this story for Joe primarily, for Ralph & KD too, who knew it, but likely as not mostly for myself. *The Cenacle* reflects the best of me, & is who I'm always aspiring to be again in moments when I am not.

So I handed round copies of *Cenacle* 81, & started off the night's readings as customary with *From Soulard's Notebooks* (the "freaks" piece discussed earlier). Funny parallel that at both the Guild & in the *Cenacle*, *From Soulard's Notebooks* is second to go, following *The Cenacle*'s epigraph & the *Jellicle Guild Flashbacks*. And on *Within's Within*, my opening monologue, *Dream Raps*, will usually follow the first of five or so songs by the week's "Featured Artist."

Ralph read his language essay "D is for Down," which had been published in *Cenacle* | 70 | October 2009, explaining to Joe especially his theory that the basic building blocks of thoughts get grafted onto letters; he said that the body, water, directions like up & down (d) get associated with particular letters. I hope he has continued this series of essays since the years I knew him. It deserves to be completed & become a book.

Funny enough, Joe then took his turn to read "Dolores Toodles Goes to Market." Joe commented that, of all his new writings, this piece felt most "natural" to him.

Then KD, who usually brings amazing & delightful magazine articles or book excerpts to share at the meetings, topped herself with "The Most Amazing Bowling Story Ever" by Michael J. Mooney, published in the June 2012 issue of *D Magazine* (<https://bit.ly/3CAjv9r>). In sum, the story of a Texas



man whose life had been sad & disappointing save for his love of & gift for bowling. Heart of the tale is the night he tries for a rarely occurring feat of bowler prowess: the “perfect series,” or three 300 games in a row. I won’t say how it all plays out, per chance some reading this curious seek it out. I will say we sat listening enthralled to KD’s reading.

My turn again, I read from my *Many Musics* poems in *Cenacle* 81, again taking all to the origins of my poetry writing. Simply put: *girls*. We tend toward what makes us feel our best ourselves. That remains true of my reasons. I talked about admiring artists like Claude Monet & Miles Davis for both their Art & their longevity. And bluesmen who get better with age.

Late in his too-short life, F. Scott Fitzgerald said there are no second acts in American literature, but I wish for myself & all others who will it hard enough to go the long distance—the third, fourth, fifth, & beyond number of acts.

Ralph’s turn again, he gave a presentation about his old childhood neighbor Hal Haviland, a Vaudeville-era white tie-&-tails magician “who looked like Bing Crosby” (“we all tried to look like Bing Crosby,” Haviland remarked). Stories of six shows a day, Depression-era privations, traveling long distances in the day coaches of trains.

Ralph then took some newspapers we provided & made all sorts of animals after the fashion of balloon animals. All the while following the notes he made during his interviews with Havelind, imitating him in a gravelly voice that reminded me of Mark Twain somehow. Ralph said he’d been “waiting a long time” to perform that script.

Joe then gave us another round of his fine comical poems, some of which would end up in *The Cenacle*, like the insanely funny “Rhode Island Love Story,” of which he was enormously proud:

*The following morning it took a while for Jasper to clear his head
and address the question of what to do now
given that he was (possibly) dead.
He showered, shaved, and brushed his teeth and realized as he dressed
that he'd slept pretty well; though, truth to tell,
it was not Eternal Rest . . .*

Then the “Field Trip” began, with a video from Judih Haggai in Israel reading her fine haiku from *Cenacle* 81. Next was a video of Martina Newberry in Los Angeles reading her wonderful poems in the new issue too. She also talked about one of her favorite poets, Amy Lowell, & read Lowell’s poem “A London Thoroughfare, 2 a.m.” Also her favorite lines from Lowell’s “Patterns”:

*In Summer and in Winter I shall walk
Up and down
The patterned garden paths
In my stiff, brocaded gown.
The squills and daffodils
Will give place to pillared roses, and to asters, and to snow.
I shall go
Up and down,
In my gown.
Gorgeously arrayed,
Boned and stayed.
And the softness of my body will be guarded from embrace
By each button, hook, and lace.
For the man who should loose me is dead,
Fighting with the Duke in Flanders,*

*In a pattern called a war.
Christ! What are patterns for?*

Finally, Jeremy Kilar, whose funky photos graced the pages of *Cenacle 81*, & dandy *River's Edge* made SPRadio even more special, had recorded & sent along to me recordings of three of his original songs. His lyrics, his guitar, his sweet & plaintive indie rock voice. His cleverly titled “Oh Myopic Heart” includes the following lyrics:

*the world is spinning
and I don't know where I will land
and I know that something
is following me*

Been some years since I have heard from Jeremy. I wonder where you landed, brother . . .

Joe Coleman had bid us goodnight after Martina’s video, so it was KD & me lucky to listen to Ralph’s exotic poem of the sea, “Madagascar”; oddly, he’d read this at that infamous October 2011 meeting, but in our recreation of the meeting on 4/28/2012, we could not remember much of it. Part of it goes:

*Many's the typhoon I saw when I was young, my boy
But we've nothing to buy in far cafes,
so we'll keep our schooner close to shore today*

As there seemed to be many strange connections flying around this night, so next came me reading from *Cenacle 81’s History*, in part about Ralph’s “D is for D” essay:

Describing this watery letter of darkness, he observes that humans, who cannot see in the dark, confer upon things of light a wisdom, a safety, a goodness. Darkness is full of danger, “is evil,” & “means ignorance.” He says: “Until we can see in the dark like cats, human thinking will always favor light.”

KD read Nathan D. Horowitz’s “Self-Portrait in 20 Dreams” poem, & I wrapped up the night reading from *Cenacle 81’s Labyrinthine*.

One passage in particular, resonated with this night. Bowie the spy finds himself somehow a high-school-aged boy in 1981, in a record store, shopping for new LPs with a girl the same age. They talk about Journey’s new album, *Escape*. The girl, not named, in “rumpled sweater” & “frosted hair,” is based on my long-ago elusive first love, Jenny Lehman. Bowie & she share a likewise not-romance closeness. Her passions, as back then, run deep, & elsewhere.

Now here’s the funny thing about this particular reading. I knew Ralph back then too. He knew Jenny. Didn’t like her all that much, from what I recall. Didn’t like me a whole lot more, it seemed then. How fucking weird that, of the thousands of pages of *Labyrinthine* I had written, it was that passage I read to him that night! And have not now seen nor heard from him in all the years since!

And Joe. Us new to each other that night, delighting in the novelty of our new friendship. That “Dolores Toodles” poem—he would write two sequels, I think in part, from my enthusiasm for them. All three would go into the book of his poems we would publish together years later, closer to the end of our friendship than either of us knew at the time.

But that strange night was just fine, please & thankee. Meeting done, Ralph & I talked far into the night, as we had going back so many years; nights when I still lived down in New Britain & he with his parents on their farm a few towns away. Still young men then, walking the quiet nights of that faded

factory town, wondering what good & great things our futures would bring.

This night in visiting, maybe in a distant but similar vein, Ralph said he foresaw a good turn in human consciousness coming. Maybe part of this was him growing more comfortable in his own skin. Not all of it, but some.

Next morning we talked on a bit &, at his request, I dug out old journals for passages about our prior visits. Him trying to understand who he had been, who he was now. We parted with KD, & I took him by bus to Harvard Square to sit awhile at my beloved Au Bon Pain Café courtyard. I then got him on time to South Station, onto his Greyhound bus back to Connecticut, & returned myself home to KD, tuna melts, & *True Blood* on TV. A successful Jellicle Literary Guild completed, a sense of renewal.

So it was now July &, like two of the previous three summers, I found myself newly jobless. One nice break from this familiar drudge was on July 4 when KD & I went to visit her dear work colleague Stephanie & have a “Woody Allen film festival.” KD & Stephanie had often gone to 24-hour movie marathons together, & it was fun to join in on one of these.

The awesomeness of *Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985), the dark comic genius of *Deconstructing Harry* (1997), & the perfection of *Sweet & Lowdown* (1999). The failure of *Interiors* (1978).

Woody Allen is 85 years old in 2021, & his once-genius reputation is long shattered by personal scandals, & awful movie after awful movie since *Sweet & Lowdown*.

But I will say this: he was once special to me beyond belief, & I would go to see his movies with an adoring fervor. I’m sorry for what’s left of him, for whatever went bad in his life, but those films I mentioned (minus *Interiors*), plus others like *Annie Hall* (1977), *Broadway Danny Rose* (1984), *Radio Days* (1987), *Crimes & Misdemeanors* (1989), & *Bullets Over Broadway* (1994) stand as gorgeous, funny, weird, sad, special films. I doubt he’ll get up to that level of filmmaking mastery again, but he did, many times. I would never hide my admiration for those great works.

Nice break from the new & rottenly familiar job-hunting grind. Then started right in with applying for unemployment benefits, its idiotic song & dance. Had to travel nearly an hour by transit, & wait hours in a packed waiting room, for about five minutes of presenting required documentation.

Happily, shockingly, I ran smack into good luck before July was out. Took several interviews, something around ten people involved in them, but I got hired as full-time Technical Writer at a company called PHT Corp. in Boston. Involved with conducting clinical drug trials worldwide, & marketing software & hardware designed to keep track of trial patients’ symptoms, both on the individual & on the clinical location level.

I was first interviewed on July 18, & then again a few days later, & then money was hammered out. I signed my acceptance letter on the July 30.

What I have learned about job-hunting, aside from the feeling of blunt humiliation this activity brings with it, is that *experience* matters. *Qualifications* to do the work at hand. But *intangibles* matter too. Little things that differentiate one candidate from another, when all the bigger things are roughly the same.

My new boss Alice Pesce & I hit it off immediately. She’d been a gymnast once upon a time, petite, especially in comparison to my own 6-foot-3 inch frame. What she needed was someone to come in to do the needed work of technical documentation, confidently, completely, & independently. Somehow I exuded those qualities.

I tend to think that it is desperation that jacks me into some kind of persona that sells myself in these situations. Knowing that I can do the work from the scant details usually described in an interview, & convincing a stranger that I can, better than the others considered, it’s also a fucking crapshoot. That’s why job-hunting is to me a matter of mad daily perseverance, unceasing till the tumblers click into place.

So, come August 20, having taken some days off before starting, I began my daily commute into Boston with KD, who got off our bus to catch a train to her work, while I rode on to Harvard Square,

& then a second bus to an uninteresting part of the city called Charlestown (its one claim to fame is that the Bunker Hill Memorial is nearby).

I was given a desk, some rudimentary training, & yet really learned what I needed to know from my kind, patient colleagues.

The office I worked in on the third floor of the old Hood Milk factory building. From a corner armchair in the lunchroom, I could see:

a large building in view, brick, three floors, some of its windows bricked up, some boarded, some not, a restaurant equipment company first floor—maybe another business on a different side—I wonder about it—Labyrinthine-style—were the upper floors residential? Are they still? Pete Di Pirro Co.? This area is not poor but it is rundown—old—worn—JFK Expressway, now long gone, ends abruptly near here—

It was the beginning of a long stretch at this job, longer than I'd had at any other job (just shy of seven years). I wasn't always happy at this job, but often enough. As I began, it had been four years prior of working contract after contract. When not simply jobless. PHT wanted me, paid me well, left me to define my role & expand it over time. 2012 had taken a wonderful turn halfway along.

I think that's in part why I was able to more focus on my pen & press-work. I found ways to make my payjob & Art align. Wrote on the buses to & from Charlestown, often listened to SPRadio content on headphones while working on technical content there. Paycheck more assured than in a long time, I was pushing ever harder into the *new work*.

Even before being hired, my relationship with Occupy Boston Radio was changing. Nowhere was Occupied anymore, no city or town. My reportage on my OBR / SPRadio show *Aggregated Occupier* was run dry of Occupy events to tell. The OBR group was fractured by squabbling, & close to eviction from its downtown Boston offices.

Then on July 6, my weekly show was simply not broadcast on OBR. I wrote an email letter to the group, saying in part:



Confidence at Every Phase



Last weekend, my show did not air because of the problems we were having with Museter. Hopefully, the actions since have helped that not to happen again. But the interesting thing is that this show only featured one piece, "Battle for the Future of Occupy," that appeared in Rolling Stone

I feel like, six months along, with this most recent episode, I have reached a juncture. I have to re-define what I am doing regarding Occupy, and how I want that to manifest in the form of a radio show. Since this show also runs on SpiritPlants Radio, it is doubly critical I do something that is good. There are two stations I am doing this work for, and I care very much for both of them

In my view, OBR is one of the bright spots in the Occupy movement right now, and I really like being part of it. I find you folks a great bunch to work with, and I just want to make sure that I am doing my legitimate part.

As mentioned above, I had decided to expand beyond Occupy news, of which there was little, to stories of contemporary & historical event & thought (pieces such as “Violence and Human Nature,” by Howard Zinn, & “War is a Racket,” by Major General Smedley D. Butler). I’ll admit that I kept doing my show for OBR from sentiment (like some friendships I had clung to for too long). Occupy had come on bright & wild in the fall of 2011; by the following summer, it was a long, slow fade away.

Took a month or so to get *Cenacle 81* printed, packaged, mailed, & its files all archived, but did & done, & pushing along.

Even before PHT hired me, I was focusing hard upon the *new work*. A series of moves, experiments, researches. Easiest to describe, one after the next, to show how they accumulated.

On my 7/7/2012 *Within's Within* radio show, I commenced to reading weekly the poems from my 1998 poetry sequence *Orpheus & Eurydice: Making the Lyre*. A rough new idea was baking in my brain concerning *how* I had composed *O&E* that summer: on the evilly packed train from ZombieTown into Boston every morning to my contract job. For about five weeks running I did this. A test of my talents, my Art & craft. I’d researched the *O&E* myth deeply before I began, told the story by my own kind of music, braiding through it my own closest themes & obsessions.

I wondered if I could do this again, fourteen years later? And this time around a cluster of old Greek myths were catching my attention. The myth of Eleusis. The myth of Daedalus’s Labyrinth. The Sleep Temples of Asclepius.

A week after after that *Within's Within* show, I woke up with the word “Emandia” from my dreams. *What was it? A place? Where? What did this mean?*

And how would whatever-this-was integrate with my *Labyrinthine, Many Musics, & Bags End News* projects? With the *Travelers Tales* I told nightly at home? What about my *Dream Journal* & its potentialities?

Unlike *O&E*, written as a distinct work with a beginning, middle, & end, lesser involved with the other fiction & poetry I wrote back in 1998, I now had these elaborate, robust projects. And what I wanted was *synchrony* amongst them. Some of this came with the Red Bag idea.

Emandia, I discovered, was a planet from which its inhabitants had to escape because it was dying. They had come to the world of the new poems described in *Many Musics* via the Red Bag. Come to many worlds, it turned out, each one bearing its *Tangled Gate*:

The Labyrinth is a portal, like the Red Bag. Um. It has existed in different forms in various times & places.

*They breach time & space.
They are guarded each one.
There is a weakness.
A guardian abandoned.*

She has a broken heart.

The way through the Labyrinth is only partly physical. One drinks the elixir, one continues along in dreams.

There is a controversial theory of human origins called “Ancient Astronaut Theory.” In sum, it posits that our race came to this world from the stars. I believe it *could* be true, just as I’m persuaded by Terence McKenna’s “Stoned Ape” theory about human consciousness accelerating in part from eating psychedelic mushrooms off of cattle dung on the plains of Africa about 100,000 BCE.

But I wasn’t looking to *believe* these things primarily. I was looking for a narrative big enough, small enough, & strange enough to interest me. I needed ideas here & there, apparatus to borrow, & wide swathes of space to make it my own. My *mythopoeia*.

But the *Many Musics* poems to come of all this were still months in the making. I experimented with these ideas in *Bags End News*, in *Labyrinthine*, in the *Travelers Tales*. KD & I went to numerous museums that summer into fall: The Portland (ME) Museum of Art for “The Draw of the Normandy Coast:1860 to 1960”; the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston for works by Paul Schutze & Os Gemeos; the MASS MoCA in North Adams, Massachusetts for “O Canada,” “Sol LeWitt: A Wall Drawing Retrospective,” “Invisible Cities,” & “All Fallen Utopias”; & the Salem Peabody Essex Museum for “Ansel Adams: At Water’s Edge.” At each of these I was standing before & among Art, working up new worlds from what I saw. Many of the poems I wrote at these wonderful places would make their way into *The Cenacle* issues in the fall & winter of 2012. My writing a kind of collaboration with the world.

By the end of August I had moved from endless notes to *Many Musics’* “Tangled Gate Sketches,” four of them. Finding the music, plucking, molding, shaping, scribbling, *listening*. Then I dove deep into a book called *Mazes and Labyrinths: Their History and Development* by W. H. Matthews (Dover Publications, 1970). This was the book I needed, useful like *The Dreaming Universe* had been.

It was a challenging time. Working full-time, running SPRadio weekly, trying to be a good partner to KD. We saw many more good movies on Saturdays that summer, among them: *Moonrise Kingdom*, *Brave*, *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, & *Dark Knight Rises*. We camped up in Maine at Camden Hills State Park in August, using our old Burning Man tent. Climbed Mt. Megunticook, a wearying, wet effort to the top, me keeping us entertained with stories of Great Heroes of Yore aiding each other &, upon arrival, remarking to one another, “My, what a cloudy day!” And thus, a new name. Bought shirts & ties to wear at PHT, just as once, long ago, I’d torn one off to leave a loathed office job & go off to graduate school.

By September, going full throttle, I wondered about publishing *Bags End News* stories in *The Cenacle*, finally making a RaiBook of Jim Burke III’s letters, even moving to a new place in Boston. The employer that had ended my contract back in June got in touch, asked my interest. “None,” I replied.

By then, training at my work had finally transitioned to a substantive project, a large document called *Site Support Guide*, essentially a training document for customers (pharma companies) using PHT products in clinical drug trials. It was an awful document, unusable. So I dug in, & remade it completely. My work colleagues, I think, *finally* saw me doing the kind of work they would come to esteem me for.

One day, after work, I met up with my dear friend Ric Amante, us long estranged since that (yes, again) infamous October 2011 Jellicle Literary Guild meeting.

We sat out in a park not far from PHT, talking a long stretch. He’d assumed I’d intentionally orchestrated the events of that night which had ended so badly. Not ever having asked me.

I apologized that he & Melissa had had a bad night, & disabused him of his wrong ideas. I was glad to be in his company again. We’d been friends for nearly 20 years!

Yet the encounter left me feeling bruised. Ric should have been there *for* me, not *against* me. When Jim died, he should *not* have kept his distance, nursing his false ideas. He *should have* invited me

to his & Melissa's wedding. These are old bitternesses, but relevant to speak of here.

I even helped Melissa run the Out Loud Open Mic a few days later, when Ric wasn't feeling well. I tried to keep what good we had going. Old friends, any good kind of friends, are hard to come by, are precious to keep.

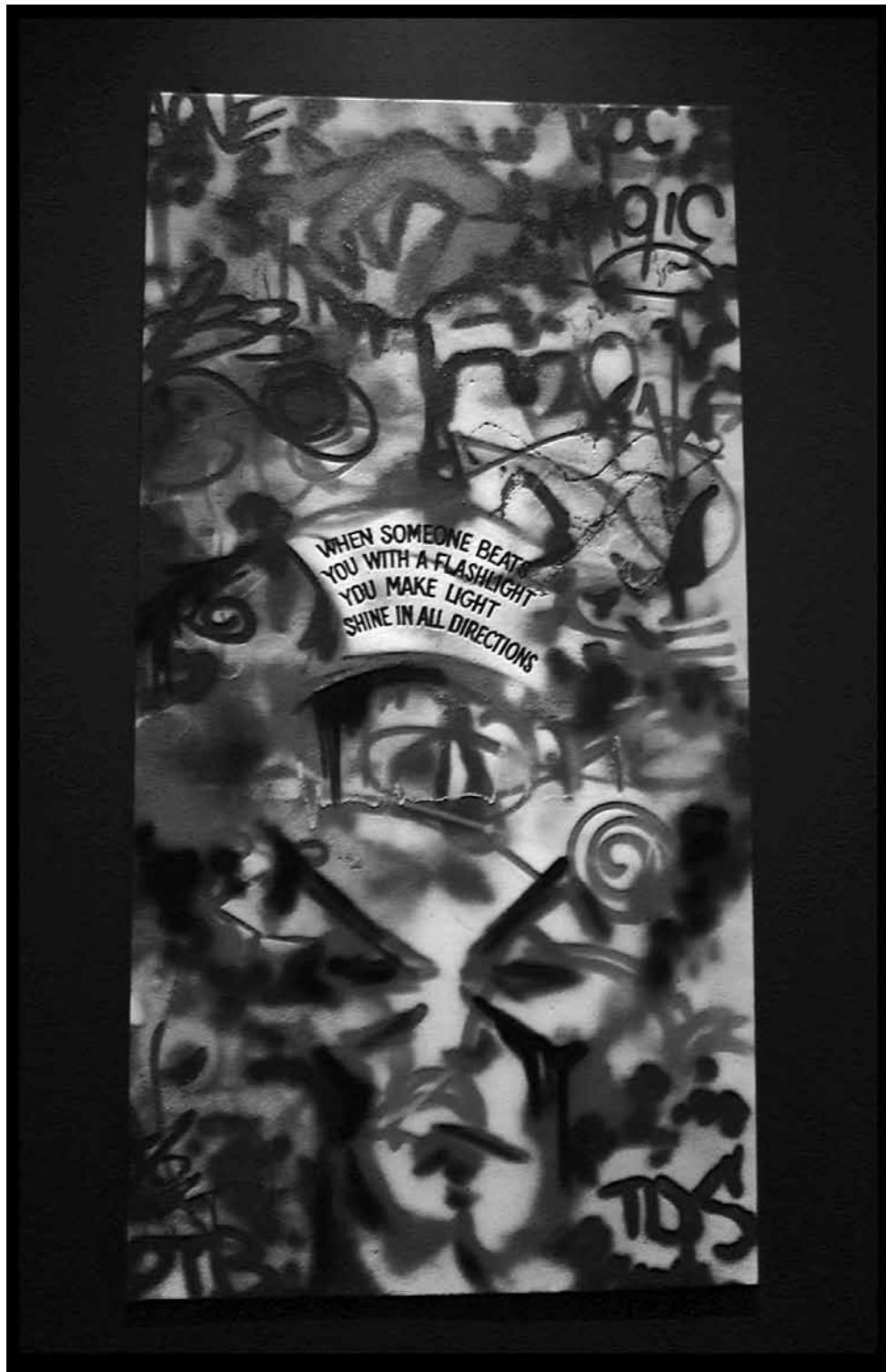
The two of them are years now gone from my life, by their own choice. What remains from those days for me is the Art I was creating, my ever-romance with KD, & the fortune of getting hired at PHT. What I had was helping me to create the *new work*. I'll include love of JBIII in all this.

What was going then—OBR, my friendships with Ric & Melissa, with Ralph, with Joe Coleman—mattered a lot too. But sometimes letting go is *not* in your hands, *by* your will. Some precious things you simply must look back at with dwindling fondness, & move on.



* * * * *







Charlie Beyer

Plumb Bob

[Prose]

i.

The hat came off in supplicating humility to my position as boss. The tattered baseball cap was clutched between his two hands over his navel, like he was making an apologetic presentation to the judge. As such, his eyes were downcast and half-lidded. Where the cap had been, there was revealed a vast dome of hairless expanse, glinting dully in the florescent light. Coupled with the lack of a mustache, eyebrows, and even nose hair—the effect was that of staring down the end of a giant uncooked hot dog. I wondered if his thirty-year career in the rock insulation business had caused him to scratch off every offending hair follicle.

To this pillar of flesh I now addressed myself—

“We work a minimum of 10 hours a day—two 10 minute breaks. If I feel like working more—we work more. Paid under the table. You sign this document stating that you are assisting me in my hobby as a volunteer. No medical benefits of any kind. If you get hurt—you’re fired. Go bleed somewhere else. If you get sick due to toxic chemicals—you’re fired. Go snivel somewhere else. If you’re late—you’re fired. If you fuck up—you’re fired.

“You’re also fired for stealing so much as a ball-point pen, trying to borrow money, leaving half-eaten food around, and cleaning the shop on my time. The rate is \$10 an hour and I expect progress by the end of each day—or you’re fired.

“Basically, I’m a really nice guy to work for who cares about his employees—and if you don’t think so, you’re fired. I offer training in hovercraft operation, which is unpaid time for you, and if you wreck the boat, you’re—well—guess—”

The hat was mashed into the size of a lemon when I finished. He looked like he was going to cry. When he started to talk, he released the hat, which sprang out of his hands like a freed Slinky.

His only question: “C-c-can I have my dog at work?”

ii.

The fellow had an obsession with free condiments. Being poor, he ate almost exclusively at the most un-nutritious purveyors of processed food. Burger King, McDonald’s, Taco Bell. These were his hunting ground for vitamins. 99-cent specials were his chant. On each occasion, extra salt was needed—also pepper, a few packs of sugar would be good, can’t figure where those stir sticks will come in handy, but a half dozen just in case. Yes, the little ketchup packages would be good—mustard too, if ya got it. Little cups of liquid creamer preferred over the dry fake milk product. A cup of coffee really gives one license over the condiment collection. Might take some of this Sweet & Low—don’t use it, but might

meet someone who does.

I took the klepto to the Safeway deli. He quivered in anticipation of the condiment tray. Here were the really valuable accoutrements of packaged mayo and crushed pickles—also exotic samples of soy sauce, and hot mustard. All the regulars were there in their glories, each in its neat container. Add fifty napkins to be used as toilet paper, and his fishing vest left looking like a life-preserved.

He said little, head bowed in guilt. It's free—but still somehow stealing.

iii.

There was really only one tool he had ever used besides a trowel. The plumb bob. Being a mason, he had gotten through life somehow insulated from all other forms of work. When I gave him the torch to use, he mal-adjusted it so badly that it continually snapped, trying to suck the flame back into the bottle and explode the shop. With a skill saw he would plop his hand down in its path and plow freely forward, oblivious to his fingers' terror.

"OK, here's the wood router. Brace your work like this, hold the tool like that, switch here—" Next time I look over, he has it dismantled, in his lap, fumbling with something. It suddenly exploded to life, skittering across his leg, and embedding the cutting tool in the concrete. His pants and a little leg were slashed open, some gore and blood was oozing, but somehow missed the artery.

"Plug the hole and get back to work—or you're fired," said I.

"Make a simple metal cart. Shop 101. Cut the pieces thus, assemble thus, weld corners, done." The ten minutes of measuring and cutting takes four hours. The critical pieces are cut too short.

Now, for assembly. Three hours later, he's fine-tuning the layup with the plumb bob. He said it's tough to get right but he'd almost got it. Looks like an old barn leaned over from a load of snow. The bottom and top were flat but the sides all sloped off one way. *What the hell!*

"Just look at that shit, will ya! Does that look right?" I bellowed.

"Uhhh, the plumb bob says it is."

"Oh yeah? Then check this." I turned the work around. Now it was *really* hideous. Looked like it'd been hit by a car.

"See? *Total shit.* And I'm paying you to waste my money?"

"Lemme check that." He started dangling the string and plumb bob. A confused look on his face.

"Goddamn it! Can't you figure out that the floor is not *level*. You cannot build to *gravity*. You have to build to *design*. Goddamn!"

"Huh?"

"Gimme that, goddamn it." I took his plumb bob and threw it out the shop door. "You have one hour to fix this. *Use* the square. *Look* with your eyes. *Rent* a brain."

"OK, OK, OK, I can do this," he said. His tongue was sticking a little out of the side of his mouth. Deep concentration. The bald head rippled like a sand dune. It seemed to be causing him pain. In this guy's case, the more experience he got, the more I'd have to lower his wage. Pretty soon he'd be owing *me* money by the hour.

He felt guilty that he had wasted a day on a two-hour task. After lunch I saw that he has left me some prized condiments in my car. Two packets of hot dog relish and a mayonnaise—with stir sticks.

Him thinking: "This should make it all right again."

* * * * *







Judith Haggai

peacock at sunrise
the echo of existence
what is becomes was

* * *

climate change worsens
covid 19 variants
good morning headlines

* * *

my neighbourhood birds
in lovely melody
i release tension

* * *

black-robed shepherds
their laughter from under veils
as i bike by

* * *

childhood artifacts
certificates and figurines
open magic doors

* * *

rutabaga dream
a parade of vegetables
spotlight on one star

* * *

did i hear her voice
a slight smile in passing
all memories now

* * *

birthdays funerals
this to that
may we be granted time

* * *

a small village
surrounds grieving family
pretzels and stories

* * *

outer stillness
inner space
empty mind

* * *

on kibbutz path
between red geraniums
blue peacock feather

* * *

coolish morning air
exploration in the dark
slight crunch of footsteps

* * * * *



George MacDonald

The Golden Key

[Classic Fiction]

There was a boy who used to sit in the twilight and listen to his great-aunt's stories. She told him that if he could reach the place where the end of the rainbow stands he would find there a golden key.

"And what is the key for?" the boy would ask. "What is it the key of? What will it open?"

"That nobody knows," his aunt would reply. "He has to find that out."

"I suppose, being gold," the boy once said, thoughtfully, "that I could get a good deal of money for it if I sold it."

"Better never find it than sell it," returned his aunt.

And the boy went to bed and dreamed about the golden key.

Now all that his great-aunt told the boy about the golden key would have been nonsense, had it not been that their little house stood on the borders of Fairyland. For it is perfectly well known that out of Fairyland nobody ever can find where the rainbow stands. The creature takes such good care of its golden key, always flitting from place to place, lest any one should find it! But in Fairyland it is quite different. Things that look real in this country look very thin indeed in Fairyland, while some of the things that here cannot stand still for a moment, will not move there. So it was not in the least absurd of the old lady to tell her nephew such things about the golden key.

"Did you ever know anybody to find it?" he asked, one evening.

"Yes. Your father, I believe, found it."

"And what did he do with it, can you tell me?"

"He never told me."

"What was it like?"

"He never showed it to me."

"How does a new key come there always?"

"I don't know. There it is."

"Perhaps it is the rainbow's egg."

"Perhaps it is. You will be a happy boy if you find the nest."

"Perhaps it comes tumbling down the rainbow from the sky."

"Perhaps it does."

One evening, in summer, he went into his own room and stood at the lattice-window, and gazed into the forest which fringed the outskirts of Fairyland. It came close up to his great-aunt's garden, and, indeed, sent some straggling trees into it. The forest lay to the east, and the sun, which was setting behind the cottage, looked straight into the dark wood with his level red eye. The trees were all old, and had few branches below, so that the sun could see a great way into the forest and the boy, being keen-sighted, could see almost as far as the sun. The trunks stood like rows of red columns in the shine of the red sun, and he could see down aisle after aisle in the vanishing distance. And as he gazed into the forest he began to feel as if the trees were all waiting for him, and had something they could not go on with till he came to them. But he was hungry and wanted his supper. So he lingered.

Suddenly, far among the trees, as far as the sun could shine, he saw a glorious thing. It was the end of a rainbow, large and brilliant. He could count all seven colors, and could see shade after shade



"Golden Key Rainbow" by Maurice Sendak

beyond the violet; while before the red stood a color more gorgeous and mysterious still. It was a color he had never seen before. Only the spring of the rainbow-arch was visible. He could see nothing of it above the trees.

"The golden key!" he said to himself, and darted out of the house, and into the wood.

He had not gone far before the sun set. But the rainbow only glowed the brighter. For the rainbow of Fairyland is not dependent upon the sun, as ours is. The trees welcomed him. The bushes made way for him. The rainbow grew larger and brighter; and at length he found himself within two trees of it.

It was a grand sight, burning away there in silence, with its gorgeous, its lovely, its delicate colors, each distinct, all combining. He could now see a great deal more of it. It rose high into the blue heavens, but bent so little that he could not tell how high the crown of the arch must reach. It was still only a small portion of a huge bow.

He stood gazing at it till he forgot himself with delight—even forgot the key which he had come to seek. And as he stood it grew more wonderful still. For in each of the colors, which was as large as the column of a church, he could faintly see beautiful forms slowly ascending as if by the steps of a winding stair. The forms appeared irregularly—now one, now many, now several, now none—men and women and children—all different, all beautiful.

He drew nearer to the rainbow. It vanished. He started back a step in dismay. It was there again, as beautiful as ever. So he contented himself with standing as near it as he might, and watching the forms that ascended the glorious colors towards the unknown height of the arch, which did not end abruptly but faded away in the blue air, so gradually that he could not say where it ceased.

When the thought of the golden key returned, the boy very wisely proceeded to mark out in his mind the space covered by the foundation of the rainbow, in order that he might know where to search, should the rainbow disappear. It was based chiefly upon a bed of moss.

Meantime it had grown quite dark in the wood. The rainbow alone was visible by its own light. But the moment the moon rose the rainbow vanished. Nor could any change of place restore the vision to the boy's eyes. So he threw himself down upon the mossy bed, to wait till the sunlight would give him a chance of finding the key. There he fell fast asleep.

When he woke in the morning the sun was looking straight into his eyes. He turned away from it, and the same moment saw a brilliant little thing lying on the moss within a foot of his face. It was the golden key. The pipe of it was of plain gold, as bright as gold could be. The handle was curiously wrought and set with sapphires. In a terror of delight he put out his hand and took it, and had it.

He lay for a while, turning it over and over, and feeding his eyes upon its beauty. Then he jumped to his feet, remembering that the pretty thing was of no use to him yet. Where was the lock to which the key belonged? It must be somewhere, for how could anybody be so silly as make a key for which there was no lock? Where should he go to look for it? He gazed about him, up into the air, down to the earth, but saw no keyhole in the clouds, in the grass, or in the trees.

Just as he began to grow disconsolate, however, he saw something glimmering in the wood. It was a mere glimmer that he saw, but he took it for a glimmer of rainbow, and went towards it.—And now I will go back to the borders of the forest.

Not far from the house where the boy had lived, there was another house, the owner of which was a merchant, who was much away from home. He had lost his wife some years before, and had only one child, a little girl, whom he left to the charge of two servants, who were very idle and careless. So she was neglected and left untidy, and was sometimes ill-used besides.

Now it is well known that the little creatures commonly known as fairies, though there are many different kinds of fairies in Fairyland, have an exceeding dislike to untidiness. Indeed, they are quite spiteful to slovenly people. Being used to all the lovely ways of the trees and flowers, and to the neatness of the birds and all woodland creatures, it makes them feel miserable, even in their deep woods and on their grassy carpets, to think that within the same moonlight lies a dirty, uncomfortable,

slovenly house. And this makes them angry with the people that live in it, and they would gladly drive them out of the world if they could. They want the whole earth nice and clean. So they pinch the maids black and blue and play them all manner of uncomfortable tricks.

But this house was quite a shame, and the fairies in the forest could not endure it. They tried everything on the maids without effect, and at last resolved upon making a clean riddance, beginning with the child. They ought to have known that it was not her fault, but they have little principle and much mischief in them, and they thought that if they got rid of her the maids would be sure to be turned away.

So one evening, the poor little girl having been put to bed early, before the sun was down, the servants went off to the village, locking the door behind them. The child did not know she was alone, and lay contentedly looking out of her window towards the forest, of which, however, she could not see much, because of the ivy and other creeping plants which had straggled across her window. All at once she saw an ape making faces at her out of the mirror, and the heads carved upon a great old wardrobe grinning fearfully. Then two old spider-legged chairs came forward into the middle of the room, and began to dance a queer, old-fashioned dance. This set her laughing and she forgot the ape and the grinning heads. So the fairies saw they had made a mistake, and sent the chairs back to their places. But they knew that she had been reading the story of Silverhair all day. So the next moment she heard the voices of the three bears upon the stair, big voice, middle voice, and little voice, and she heard their soft, heavy tread, as if they had stockings over their boots, coming nearer and nearer to the door of her room, till she could bear it no longer. She did just as Silverhair did, and as the fairies wanted her to do; she darted to the window, pulled it open, got upon the ivy, and so scrambled to the ground. She then fled to the forest as fast as she could run.

Now, although she did not know it, this was the very best way she could have gone; for nothing is ever so mischievous in its own place as it is out of it; and, besides, these mischievous creatures were only the children of Fairyland, as it were, and there are many other beings there as well; and if a wanderer gets in among them, the good ones will always help him more than the evil ones will be able to hurt him.

The sun was now set, and the darkness coming on, but the child thought of no danger but the bears behind her. If she had looked round, however, she would have seen that she was followed by a very different creature from a bear. It was a curious creature, made like a fish, but covered, instead of scales, with feathers of all colors, sparkling like those of a humming-bird. It had fins, not wings, and swam through the air as a fish does through the water. Its head was like the head of a small owl.

After running a long way, and as the last of the light was disappearing, she passed under a tree with drooping branches. It dropped its branches to the ground all about her, and caught her as in a trap. She struggled to get out, but the branches pressed her closer and closer to the trunk. She was in great terror and distress, when the air-fish, swimming into the thicket of branches, began tearing them with its beak. They loosened their hold at once, and the creature went on attacking them, till at length they let the child go. Then the air-fish came from behind her, and swam on in front, glittering and sparkling all lovely colors; and she followed.

It led her gently along till all at once it swam in at a cottage door. The child followed still. There was a bright fire in the middle of the floor, upon which stood a pot without a lid, full of water that boiled and bubbled furiously. The air-fish swam straight to the pot and into the boiling water, where it lay quiet. A beautiful woman rose from the opposite side of the fire and came to meet the girl. She took her up in her arms, and said,—

“Ah, you are come at last! I have been looking for you a long time.”

She sat down with her on her lap, and there the girl sat staring at her. She had never seen anything so beautiful. She was tall and strong, with white arms and neck, and a delicate flush on her face. The child could not tell what was the color of her hair, but could not help thinking it had a tinge of dark green. She had not one ornament upon her, but she looked as if she had just put off quantities of

diamonds and emeralds. Yet here she was in the simplest, poorest little cottage, where she was evidently at home. She was dressed in shining green.

The girl looked at the lady, and the lady looked at the girl.

"What is your name?" asked the lady.

"The servants always called me Tangle."

"Ah, that was because your hair was so untidy. But that was their fault, the naughty women! Still it is a pretty name, and I will call you Tangle too. You must not mind my asking you questions, for you may ask me the same questions, every one of them, and any others that you like. How old are you?"

"Ten," answered Tangle.

"You don't look like it," said the lady.

"How old are you, please?" returned Tangle.

"Thousands of years old," answered the lady.

"You don't look like it," said Tangle.

"Don't I? I think I do. Don't you see how beautiful I am!"

And her great blue eyes looked down on the little Tangle, as if all the stars in the sky were melted in them to make their brightness.

"Ah! but," said Tangle, "when people live long they grow old. At least I always thought so."

"I have no time to grow old," said the lady. "I am too busy for that. It is very idle to grow old.—but I cannot have my little girl so untidy. Do you know I can't find a clean spot on your face to kiss!"

"Perhaps," suggested Tangle, feeling ashamed, but not too much so to say a word for herself,— "perhaps that is because the tree made me cry so."

"My poor darling!" said the lady, looking now as if the moon were melted in her eyes, and kissing her little face, dirty as it was, "the naughty tree must suffer for making a girl cry."

"And what is your name, please?" asked Tangle.

"Grandmother," answered the lady.

"Is it really?"

"Yes, indeed. I never tell stories, even in fun."

"How good of you!"

"I couldn't if I tried. It would come true if I said it, and then I should be punished enough." And she smiled like the sun through a summer shower.

"But now," she went on, "I must get you washed and dressed, and then we shall have some supper."

"Oh! I had supper long ago," said Tangle.

"Yes, indeed you had," answered the lady,— "three years ago. You don't know that it is three years since you ran away from the bears. You are thirteen and more now."

Tangle could only stare. She felt quite sure it was true.

"You will not be afraid of anything I do with you—will you?" said the lady.

"I will try very hard not to be; but I can't be certain, you know," replied Tangle.

"I like your saying so, and I shall be quite satisfied," answered the lady.

She took off the girl's night-gown, rose with her in her arms, and going to the wall of the cottage, opened a door. Then Tangle saw a deep tank, the sides of which were filled with green plants, which had flowers of all colors. There was a roof over it like the roof of the cottage. It was filled with beautiful clear water, in which swam a multitude of such fishes as the one that had led her to the cottage. It was the light their colors gave that showed the place in which they were.

The lady spoke some words Tangle could not understand, and threw her into the tank.

The fishes came crowding about her. Two or three of them got under her head and kept it up. The rest of them rubbed themselves all over her, and with their wet feathers washed her quite clean.

Then the lady, who had been looking on all the time, spoke again; whereupon some thirty or forty of the fishes rose out of the water underneath Tangle, and so bore her up to the arms the lady held out to take her. She carried her back to the fire, and, having dried her well, opened a chest, and taking out the finest linen garments, smelling of grass and lavender, put them upon her, and over all a green dress, just like her own, shining like hers, and soft like hers, and going into just such lovely folds from the waist, where it was tied with a brown cord, to her bare feet.

"Won't you give me a pair of shoes too, Grandmother?" said Tangle.

"No, my dear; no shoes. Look here. I wear no shoes."

So saying she lifted her dress a little, and there were the loveliest white feet, but no shoes. Then Tangle was content to go without shoes too. And the lady sat down with her again, and combed her hair, and brushed it, and then left it to dry while she got the supper.

First she got bread out of one hole in the wall; then milk out of another; then several kinds of fruit out a third; and then she went to the pot on the fire, and took out the fish, now nicely cooked, and, as soon as she had pulled off its feathered skin, ready to be eaten.

"But," exclaimed Tangle. And she stared at the fish, and could say no more.

"I know what you mean," returned the lady. "You do not like to eat the messenger that brought you home. But it is the kindest return you can make. The creature was afraid to go until it saw me put the pot on, and heard me promise it should be boiled the moment it returned with you. Then it darted out of the door at once. You saw it go into the pot of itself the moment it entered, did you not?"

"I did," answered Tangle, "and I thought it very strange; but then I saw you, and forgot all about the fish."

"In Fairyland," resumed the lady, as they sat down to the table, "the ambition of the animals is to be eaten by the people; for that is their highest end in that condition. But they are not therefore destroyed. Out of that pot comes something more than the dead fish, you will see."

Tangle now remarked that the lid was on the pot. But the lady took no further notice of it till they had eaten the fish, which Tangle found nicer than any fish she had ever tasted before. It was as white as snow, and as delicate as cream. And the moment she had swallowed a mouthful of it, a change she could not describe began to take place in her. She heard a murmuring all about her, which became more and more articulate, and at length, as she went on eating, grew intelligible. By the time she had finished her share, the sounds of all the animals in the forest came crowding through the door to her ears; for the door still stood wide open, though it was pitch-dark outside; and they were no longer sounds only; they were speech, and speech that she could understand. She could tell what the insects in the cottage were saying to each other too. She had even a suspicion that the trees and flowers all about the cottage were holding midnight communications with each other; but what they said she could not hear.

As soon as the fish was eaten, the lady went to the fire and took the lid off the pot. A lovely little creature in human shape, with large white wings, rose out of it, and flew round and round the roof of the cottage; then dropped, fluttering, and nestled in the lap of the lady. She spoke to it some strange words, carried it to the door, and threw it out into the darkness. Tangle heard the flapping of its wings die away in the distance.

"Now have we done the fish any harm?" she said, returning.

"No," answered Tangle, "I do not think we have. I should not mind eating one every day."

"They must wait their time, like you and me too, my little Tangle."

And she smiled a smile which the sadness in it made more lovely.

"But," she continued, "I think we may have one for supper to-morrow."

So saying she went to the door of the tank, and spoke; and now Tangle understood her perfectly. "I want one of you," she said,—"the wisest."

Thereupon the fishes got together in the middle of the tank, with their heads forming a circle above the water, and their tails a larger circle beneath it. They were holding a council, in which their

relative wisdom should be determined. At length one of them flew up into the lady's hand, looking lively and ready.

"You know where the rainbow stands?" she asked.

"Yes, mother, quite well," answered the fish.

"Bring home a young man you will find there, who does not know where to go."

The fish was out of the door in a moment. Then the lady told Tangle it was time to go to bed; and, opening another door in the side of the cottage, showed her a little arbor, cool and green, with a bed of purple heath growing in it, upon which she threw a large wrapper made of the feathered skins of the wise fishes, shining gorgeous in the firelight. Tangle was soon lost in the strangest, loveliest dreams. And the beautiful lady was in every one of her dreams.

In the morning she woke to the rustling of leaves over her head, and the sound of running water. But, to her surprise, she could find no door—nothing but the moss grown wall of the cottage. So she crept through an opening in the arbor, and stood in the forest. Then she bathed in a stream that ran merrily through the trees, and felt happier; for having once been in her grandmother's pond, she must be clean and tidy ever after; and, having put on her green dress, felt like a lady.

She spent that day in the wood, listening to the birds and beasts and creeping things. She understood all that they said, though she could not repeat a word of it; and every kind had a different language, while there was a common though more limited understanding between all the inhabitants of the forest. She saw nothing of the beautiful lady, but she felt that she was near her all the time; and she took care not to go out of sight of the cottage. It was round, like a snow-hut or a wigwam; and she could see neither door nor window in it. The fact was, it had no windows; and though it was full of doors, they all opened from the inside, and could not even be seen from the outside.

She was standing at the foot of a tree in the twilight, listening to a quarrel between a mole and a squirrel, in which the mole told the squirrel that the tail was the best of him, and the squirrel called the mole Spade-fists, when, the darkness having deepened around her, she became aware of something shining in her face, and looking round, saw that the door of the cottage was open, and the red light of the fire flowing from it like a river through the darkness. She left Mole and Squirrel to settle matters as they might, and darted off to the cottage. Entering, she found the pot boiling on the fire, and the grand, lovely lady sitting on the other side of it.

"I've been watching you all day," said the lady. "You shall have something to eat by-and-by, but we must wait till our supper comes home."

She took Tangle on her knee, and began to sing to her—such songs as made her wish she could listen to them for ever. But at length in rushed the shining fish, and snuggled down in the pot. It was followed by a youth who had outgrown his worn garments. His face was ruddy with health, and in his hand he carried a little jewel, which sparkled in the firelight.

The first words the lady said were,—

"What is that in your hand, Mossy?"

Now Mossy was the name his companions had given him, because he had a favorite stone covered with moss, on which he used to sit whole days reading; and they said the moss had begun to grow upon him too.

Mossy held out his hand. The moment the lady saw that it was the golden key, she rose from her chair, kissed Mossy on the forehead, made him sit down on her seat, and stood before him like a servant. Mossy could not bear this, and rose at once. But the lady begged him, with tears in her beautiful eyes, to sit, and let her wait on him.

"But you are a great, splendid, beautiful lady," said Mossy.

"Yes, I am. But I work all day long—that is my pleasure; and you will have to leave me so soon!"

"How do you know that, if you please, madam?" asked Mossy.

"Because you have got the golden key."

"But I don't know what it is for. I can't find the keyhole. Will you tell me what to do?"

"You must look for the keyhole. That is your work. I cannot help you. I can only tell you that if you look for it you will find it."

"What kind of box will it open? What is there inside?"

"I do not know. I dream about it, but I know nothing."

"Must I go at once?"

"You may stop here tonight, and have some of my supper. But you must go in the morning. All I can do for you is to give you clothes. Here is a girl called Tangle, whom you must take with you."

"That *will* be nice," said Mossy.

"No, no!" said Tangle. "I don't want to leave you, please, grandmother."

"You must go with him, Tangle. I am sorry to lose you, but it will be the best thing for you. Even the fishes, you see, have to go into the pot, and then out into the dark. If you fall in with the Old Man of the Sea, mind you ask him whether he has not got some more fishes ready for me. My tank is getting thin."

So saying, she took the fish from the pot, and put the lid on as before. They sat down and ate the fish, and then the winged creature rose from the pot, circled the roof, and settled on the lady's lap. She talked to it, carried it to the door, and threw it out into the dark. They heard the flap of its wings die away in the distance.

The lady then showed Mossy into just such another chamber as that of Tangle; and in the morning he found a suit of clothes laid beside him. He looked very handsome in them. But the wearer of Grandmother's clothes never thinks about how he or she looks, but thinks always how handsome other people are.

Tangle was very unwilling to go.

"Why should I leave you? I don't know the young man," she said to the lady.

"I am never allowed to keep my children long. You need not go with him except you please, but you must go some day; and I should like you to go with him, for he has the golden key. No girl need be afraid to go with a youth that has the golden key. You will take care of her, Mossy, will you not?"

"That I will," said Mossy.

And Tangle cast a glance at him, and thought she should like to go with him.

"And," said the lady, "If you should lose each other as you go through the—the—I never can remember the name of that country,—do not be afraid, but go on and on."

She kissed Tangle on the mouth and Mossy on the forehead, led them to the door, and waved her hand eastward. Mossy and Tangle took each other's hand and walked away into the depth of the forest. In his right hand Mossy held the golden key.

To be continued in Cenacle | 118 | December 2021

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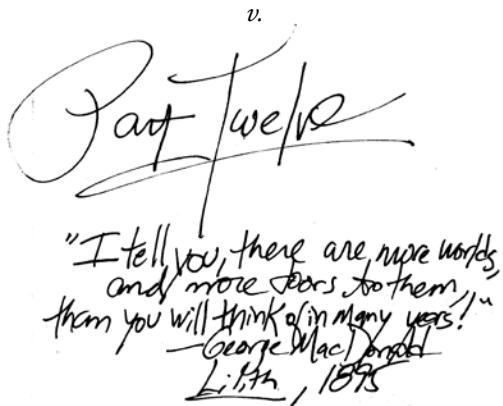






Raymond Soulard, Jr.

Labyrinthine [a new fixtion]



None other but to sing true, & often, & ever on, pen waits, paper too, why not now? No reason.

All toward re-uniting the Six Brothers, yet this complex, un-linear you might say. As is this book's nature ever, un-linear, o'nergy. Etc.

Yet good-intentioned. Sure that. Always ready to resume & go.

How much of a strange wild world of words does it take to re-unite the Six Brothers? And what then?

Oh, sure, ideas, thoughts of the Many Worlds of this strange mythopoeia. Tend to think it will need all to help. To re-unite them, & then figure out what-next.

When a mythopoeia builds up & up, out & out, deeper & deeper, till there is a *lot*, tis no longer one thing in its old sense.

Not all so closely touches as once. *This & that* touch via *this other*. Skein, web, like that more.

And this book is *fixtion*, something about it toward *fixing*. An ancient idea of sorts, that Art may *fix*, even heal.

So all this, & sing true, still linger much these words, urging, caution, advice one & all.

I turn & look over there . . .

The diner is bustling, tell this part slow. The news on the white-faced pink cat radio behind the counter is strange. Advertisements for a Talent Show at the coming Rutabega Festival? Hm.

Slow. Take this part *slow*. The black & white DüMönt TV, topped by the Antennar 1000B, is silent, but look at those words scrolling down its screen.

<i>Psychedelia</i>	(wavy blue)
<i>Eros</i>	(red depth deep)
<i>Nature</i>	(endlessly green)
<i>Magick</i>	(yellow nigh gold)
<i>Art</i>	(violet violence)
<i>Dreams</i>	(juice orange juice)

Black & white TV covered in colors wash out indigo glow “dreams they complicate my life . . . ” sings that party radio. Colors all wash out & now black & white again, decorated white & blue bowls of chili up & down the counter tis the lunch special—

Et, full, belches up & down the counter, belts loosened, Red Sox game on the TV, big Luis Tiant pitching a shutout, but on the radio losing, bad, & to the loathed Yankees no less—

Pile of ragged notes next to empty blue & white chili bowl, its designs maybe Creatures, maybe that mythical voyage to the Tangled Gate by those Six Brothers—

Straighten these notes out some, but they don’t. Usually don’t struggle so—

“Cosmo? You OK?” The Gate-Keeper is before me now, wearing his *Thursday is an Illusion, Time Doubly So* apron—

I nod down at my rudely piled notes. “Sums it up.”

He laughs & leans down to give my notes a better look. His wrists are a pretty canary yellow but flake away to orange by his elbow.

“Mentor? You think I had a mentor back then?”

I nod. Close my eyes to describe him better.

[Watch it now. This could be important! Or not! Will it stick & stay awhile, these intense words to come? I ask because 3801 pages so far have gone different ways. So—]

“A tall man, darker than you.”

He nods non-committal. “I follow him in that like other things.”

“Wears a striped knit cap on his head, sort of slouched up there.”

Nods again. “Black on white. Or white on black. Tries not to plan.”

“White spiked teeth. Long as fangs.”

“Makes him look like a wolf in your nightmares. *So* isn’t that.”

“Long grey overcoat. Brown pants. Tall white boots.”

“Yes. No. Sure.”

“Is he any of this, Charlie?”

Starts at this name. Prefers not known though never says so.

“Long ago, Cosmo. Like everything. You know that.”

Cosmo nods. “Closer though.” Tries to neatén his sheaf of notes. Fails.

“What else you got, mate?” Nods the sheaf.



“Nothing sure. Even less than your Mentor.”
 Gate-Keeper laughs. “Wrong word for him.”
 “Which word then?”
 “I don’t know really.” Sighs. “Like an anti-mentor. Taught me nothing. Chose not to yet.”
 “Yet?”
 Nods.
 “You’re going back there?”
 Nods. “On my way there now.”
 “This place on your path back?”
 “It’s like a circuit you could say. Or a sort of prison. I hope this is the last time for how it’s been.”
 “A circuit? A prison?”
 “Underneath the rest. Deep under. But my own.”
 “But now it’s time for it to be known?”
 “I hope so.”
 “Why this time?”
 “Complete the circuit. Leave the prison.”

I notice his movie camera in the far corner behind the counter. Or his walking cane. Or some kind of dominatrix belt.

Gate-Keeper turns off the black & white, sometimes color, Dümont TV. Shit of a game. White-faced pink cat radio stays on. SpiritPlants Radio America now. Music show I don’t catch the name of. Old hippie rock, sounds like. Someone I once knew called bands like this “pot-pixies.” Sure & a laugh.

“How’s the perpetual aftermath of *Aftermath*, Cosmo?” Offers me a toke on his strange complex hookah pipe. All breasts & cocks & wild faces in a fiery red clay jumble. I desist for a moment.

“I’m thinking about my old book. The one I didn’t finish.”
 Grins like the old Puritan devil himself. “You mean *Highway*? ”
 I scowl.
 “*Interstate? Traffic Circle?*”
 “*Turnpike*,” I say very softly, very slowly, each syllable a snap.
 He nods. “You’re going back there?”
 I nod for his hookah. A mix of magicks from the White Woods. Won’t be leaving awhile now.

A blankness & we are now in his abandoned train station next the restaurant. Has what he calls his “office” in a corner here. Where he edits his “film” **RemoteLand** or whatever you might call it. We sit w/ hookah, side by side, against the brick wall. His work area nearby. All our light is one strange, fat little candle.

“What happens when you complete the circuit?”
 “A new story. Or the next one.”

You don’t suck the hookah pipe hose, no. You hold it near your relaxed mouth & nose, let its smoke find its own way in. Sometimes a lot, sometimes none. Lets you know when you’re done for now.

“I don’t always remember him.”
 “Who?”
 “*Him*. Who you called my Mentor.”

“Oh.”

“Long stretches. Other things take the light. Memories simply come & go.”

“And come again?”

“I guess so.”

Cosmic Early nods.

“So. *Turnpike?* Again?”

Nods.

“Thinking it will work this time?”

“I’m not going to stop this time.”

Gate-Keeper takes a long, slow turn with the hookah, then Cosmo takes one.

Central Station shifts a little & a little, & a little more. Lets itself unfurl to these gents from other days, months, turns of the calendar. When it was a busy, bustling place. They are in a far corner of the old Great Concourse, when travellers of countless kinds arrived, waited, departed from hither to yon. Long ago, till that Wobble.

Something surely matters in this, to them.

Then Gate-Keeper suddenly barks, “Hold tight, Cosmo!” & the Wobble comes hard & fast, & over & over; the Great Concourse where they sat is fairly untouched, but through the arch, to where trains & buses & soon everything & everyone is tossed from hither to yon. Over & over. Till nothing left but a bare patch of ground.

Adds quietly, “Just wait for them.”

From out of the White Woods come a fantastically massed Chaos of Imps, cackling, click-click noise-noising, each one carrying a stone, leaving them seeming randomly around the bare patch.

“White Woods rubble,” he says, somewhat obscurely.

Cosmo nods, not unknowing of all this. But unsure how. Nothing about his old friend is surely known. Starts to talk.

“What if my book & your escape are tied together?”

“You mean how your unfinished book is imprisoned in your mind like I am in my circuit?”

“How would we work this?”

Both then speak at once.

“Benny.” “Cordelia.”

Then laugh till they collapse into one another. Neither sure why & yet tis so.

“What happens to **RemoteLand** if you get free of your prison?”

“I never meant it to be what it became.”

“Would you finish it, or just stop?”

Gate-Keeper doesn’t answer. There really isn’t one right now. Then—

“I don’t know either, Charlie. But I think I do know one thing.”

“What’s that?”

Speaks slowly. “Maybe it’s more of a feeling. That we need help. I mean more than just each other.”
“Strong feeling?”

Nods.

“Who?”

“Maybe old friends like we just said. Benny. Cordelia.”

They laugh again, but less.

“But others too.”

Gate-Keeper nods. This feels right too, somehow.

Unexpectedly, they doze, leaned up right against one another. These two strange old friends. More comfort in a friendly shoulder to rest against than a whole lot else in these many worlds.

[Will this take? How gripped are its teeth in the skin of this story?

[Gripped enough.

[Oh. Hi! Haha.

[I don’t mind whatever-ye-be rooting & roaming through Labyrinthine, but don’t think for a moment I’m fucking around right now.

[Nah? Really?

[Really. I’m pushing this hard.

[OK. Good. Don’t stop this time.

[No. I won’t.]

Lingering out the door of Gate-Keeper’s restaurant/diner, some sad singer on SpiritPlants Radio America, that white-faced pink cat radio in the back corner, him singing

“Soil will swallow the great wall
& the ode’s reaching hand alike.
All soaks empty in moonlight
upon its hour, climbs its beam,
falls untold within.”

“Within . . . within . . . within . . .” echoing long past the door shutting. Soon this diner & Central Station are long back there, no hint left now of them in these White Woods.

Where then, now, hence, & who this doing this going? Neither clear yet. No sure when or why neither, just going & going, pen moving up here, down to paper, below, somehow the music of words made,

These Woods glow lovely, the many colors of the Rainbow Wheel, sentient, knowing? How to know this knowing be so?



Long ago, somewhere these White Woods, which knows little of time, came the Gate-Keeper, hardly what then, but something, part of more, what travel & experience would mold & render—

He had his tripod friend, recently met, long known, little known—

And he was with Creatures, many of them—he sniffed friendly to them, sad & lost, but friendly, & like other people-folk they had known, they felt the urge to accompany him, comfort him, protect him if they could, however they could—

At first he had no *hmmm* to follow, eluded him, no direction to track, curiosity fed him like a dream-fruit. And he shared around how he could.

Sometimes he & his friend worked at their something, framing & following, crank turning along, his face close, urging them

both to *see seeing*—

not what it meant—

not what it was—

something else—

He spoke little. The Creatures taught him this. At first he was kind of panicked that he cold not talk to them, that he would spook them away.

But he slowly figured things a bit better.

They understood his tongue, his urge
to shape sounds to dress & reck

the world. He was much bigger
than them, & maybe felt his distance
from the ground uncertainly?

He dreamed with them passively,
for rest, like diversion. They did not
think themselves teachers or his
the need to learn. They accepted
him because he sniffed friendly.

His travels to arrive to these White Woods he willing allowed to fade behind him but these Creatures were curious in their own way. What he could not say in waking they lured him kindly in dreaming to tell. Creatures know the world a long story, a path of many paths. One needs the right *hmmm* & some intent to travel these beautiful White Woods from *hither* to *yon*. These comprise the path & its song, its story, to tell.

[How from this moment to **RemoteLand**? How did **RL** end up a midnight cult film, like *Inland Empire*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Inception*?

[What linear or non-linear path? Let's say this: what if **RL** came first, before a Gate-Keeper? What if Gate-Keeper seemingly unrelated to the later all-important Tangled Gate?

[Now explain backwards. Just watch. Say the most recent thing in narrative time is the Gate-Keeper making one more effort to open up the path from his world to the many other worlds. Just say.

[We learn he discovers that his clan . . . came to their world by mistake. Their spaceship from Emandia was hit by a Wobble that damaged it enough to force a choice. Land at the nearest planet, or try, & maybe fail, to reach their chosen one.

[They choose the nearer one. Crash. Survive. It is a poor planet, & they are cut off from the other worlds of the diaspora of Emandians, called the *Many Worlds*.

[Now this. These words. Gate-Keeper, as a poor boy of a poor, unhappy people, hears a buzz that leads him away from his people, into the White Woods, buzz leads to *hmmm* & then to these self-same Many Worlds. How?

[Is it Mentor? Somehow? Who leads him away? *How? Why?*

[He was called Charlie Pigeonfoot then. Maybe. Became Gate-Keeper later. *Some of the time.*

[Did only some of him escape that dead, sad world? Some left back? Did he *iterate* somehow?

[*Maybe. Kind of? Unsure.*

[*Go on. Guess good & see.*

[Maybe Emandians do not inhabit their bodies in the same way we people-folks do.

[Oh not all that soul-in-a-vessel stuff the bug-eyed preachers cry. Body as a prison soul inhabits, & liberates from, in the course of time.

[Maybe body & soul more of an equal partnership. Like a kind of partnership.

[So let's say Charlie is more body & Gate-Keeper more soul, & they part at some point? What would that look like? An inert body & a wispy bit floating on air? No. I do not think so.

[They separate & they go on, both. Maybe, like an amicable divorce, divide up equal halves.

[Does *this explain? Kind of?* Is this simply how Emandians perpetuate? Divide? Part? That has something to it. Maybe sometimes it's messy, hostile.

[Hence some kind of answer to "Are Charlie Pigeonfoot & Gate-Keeper one & the same?" Yes, mostly no, mostly not anymore—

[And yet? Can divided unite again? *What does any of this look like?*

[Maybe back on Emandia *this* made sense. Maybe on the *Many Worlds* that did not involve a crashing spaceship on an undesired world, this Emandian culture was perpetuated.

[But biology plus context equals culture, more or less. So for GK/Charlie this did not all work out. He was not taught how this all worked, or should work.

[What did he have? He had a small black & white Dümont TV. On it, only for when he watched alone, was a TV show called *Clarendon Island.*]

[*Whoa. Hold on there, Author guy.*]

[Sure. Sure. But you see here is where Mentor starts to come in.

[This planet Charlie/GK's clan crashlanded on? Barely habitable & all that? Like a prison camp with no actual prison-keepers? Yes?

[*Mentor lived here.* This was *his home*. But he was close to the last of his kind. And when he saw the crashing spaceship in the sky, he hid. Hid well. Hid & watched.

[*Was he Emandian too*, you might ask? Maybe. So homeworld in the sense of he ended up here long ago somehow, with others, most of whom now were gone?

[Took him awhile, maybe not too long, but still, to figure out these were not Emandians come for him, to rescue him, or finish him off, or join him by their choice. He was in truth *much much* older than any of them.

[He watched. For a long time he watched. Having had to abandon their beloved homeworld, & now come by accident to this poorly habitable one, they were a disconsolate bunch. He watched & saw little in them to approach. They were weak. Sad.

[Mentor had hoped his story would not end here, like it had for most of his companions. Just him & another left.

[But if they discovered him, their despair would suck him to a husk. He *knew* this. It's what this place did to those come here.

[Or like her, she barricaded herself in that terrifying yellow building & was long unseen but her occasional shadow in that window many floors up.

[Himself? He was different by a strange, brilliant chance. That's all. *Brilliant chance.*]

He did not have his whole story. To tell himself or these strange friendly Creatures. What he knew mostly was memories of privation, & then escape, & then danger, & then meeting his wonderful friend, & then the beautiful luck of coming here. The Creatures saw how much his story was missing. A path in patches.

The Creatures slowed him somehow, smoothed his mind to better clarity. By waking, still uncertain & patchy.

Yet, by dreaming, something else. An exhausted, scared, uncertain boy might dream sometimes, in some ways, but likely not like a land to traverse, a continuity to induce.

Mostly, more fear, more uncertainty. Waking's terrors carried on.

But then, well, maybe something more. *What do dreams dream?*

Of such beautiful colors.



Slow. *Slowww. Slowwwwww.*

Hmmm. Hmmm. Hmmmmmm.

Where is this? How do I know it?

How do I know it long & deep in me?

It did not start with the colors, no, something else, like these were my guides, saw me along, & returned me back too—

Closer to waking, but not, I open my eyes, some eyes, & I say to these Creatures I cluster amongst, “they were like you, but not quite. They were dark, like shadows, but quite bodied, in their own ways, kind to me, like you are—” Sniffs, nuzzles, gentle tuggings back further in—

I let, OK, clumsy, they *hmmm*, OK, breathe, *hmmm*, yes, let, a little more, this way some, not that, *hmmm*, colors, again, here they come, not soft, not vague, this is why I don’t remember this often, there’s a rough snap in this, a crush down hard on whatever weak in me, a clean, cold shearing of what I won’t need here—

Let go the buzz, break from it now!

[*Now trickling. Now gone.*]

That voice, mine? Whose?

Those tall, thin trees—

“When you waver like them in dreaming & wonder how to cling the wind?

“If you can breathe slower, let the colors calm what you are, neither high nor low—”

I can’t. Panic to leave. How to leave this? I can’t.

“Not one but several, many, green, the light to breathe now too, the music of wavering, now easy, now let—”

Voice, voices, from memories, from wishes, fragments of years—

My friends are near, so close, powerful like small furs & feathers of star, urging me this, urging me this more—

Past the strange tall thin trees, now behold red so delicious mine eyes gorge wildly! A field, vast bright field, like a flaming down of dream—

“We are not here to sleep you down but dream you awake! Till the clouds tell you about more than mist & sky, till the trees you regard like peers of mystery & knowing—

"Till our field breathes you low & high, the mountains & yonder when you're ready, when you're ready . . . "

The flaming field of bloom begins to shimmer in dance with shimmering sky above, *hmmm, hmmm, hmmm—*

Traveling this stream becomes a mind's skating its reflections of the liminal place where *is* & *also-is* allow other possibilities—

"Allow us to move along, dream awake, where the green trees distant & those near touch us a kind of one, what *over* hangs, what murks *below*, what we are fresh, lines in the ceaseless layers of *hmmm . . .*"

Our voices together now, our voice singing us along this *what*, we become the bridge between us, crossing this water we travel, this beauteous *what*—

I listen. *We sing.*

"Would you soft from the heat, find rest from questions, something this come near last to offer you, shaped & solid memory of *what was here*, long ago—"

Like a grainstack? How to know such a thing in this *what-here?*

"Slowed now to a shadow for travelers, a restive remain?"

All of the rest is now gone.

All surface.

No center. No depth. No sky.

"Where the sweets of the world offered like a *welcome on, welcome back, or farewell to the rest*"

*The world now all blooms & floats on
The world now all blooms & floats on*

"Dream awake! Now dream awake *now!* Dream *awake now!* Dream *awake now!*

"Tis sweet you're offered.

Tis sweet you might become."

Open your eyes, Charlie Pigeonfoot.

I hope what I say lands with all of you somehow because I think you're part of this again, though in a different way.

"There was this old bridge, older than possible, it seemed to me, that crossed this dirty stream, & none of this interested my clan far back there. I myself interested none of them, & I didn't know why. Why was I different? I didn't feel special, or lame either.

"What I felt was lonely. And so very soon I took to exploring this unhappy world, but mine, so far as I knew. It felt to me like others had been here, very long ago, I guess that wasn't brilliant to figure, but I

also felt *they were more like me.*"

These beautiful Creatures about me sniff, maybe curiously? I don't know. White Bunny in my lap her kind intelligent eyes. Gray Hedgedyhog close too. Three pretty little Giraffes. So many more.

"Then I found the bridge. On a very old, brokendown road. No good for travel. But that stream below was new & novel to me. A climb down that overgrown grassy hill. Maybe a hiding place.

"I belonged to nobody in my clan. Took me awhile to figure that out. Someone would take me at their campsite awhile, but then urge me to another. It was kindness just above banishing me altogether or cooking me up for a scrawny dinner.

"Under this bridge, a pebbly hill on either side of the water, I found safety. Hid my trail among the tall weeds. Nobody followed me. Nobody cared.

"Then one peaceful afternoon, quietly chucking pebbles toward the other side, I saw it over there. Nearly ruined it with my throws.

"But didn't. I waded over there, first time. Beheld this large strange, *made* thing. Unbroken, unruined. Old but together. I lifted it up & nearly ruined it again.

"But I carried it safely, at a slow stagger through the shallow water to my preferred seat among the larger rocks. Gently, thoroughly inspected my prize.

"I learned more about what I had found long later, when I traveled the Many Worlds. From what I knew then, it was big & heavy, some of it firm & hard to the touch, some of it more fragile. Spooked by having almost randomly broken it, I treated all of it like a fragile thing, a mysterious treasure I must tend. I had never *owned* anything really, but the long rags on my back, the shapeless hat on my head. This was new.

"But, I was going to say *mine*, but no, nearly more like *my friend*.

"It was, I did not know then, a black & white DüMönt TV. Its molded plastic surface a little scratchd up, but otherwise OK. It took me awhile to dare touch its knob & dials.

"Then I did, wrong ways the first few times. Then, by lucky chance, I clicked on the power & turned up the volume, & tuned to an actual TV show.

"For a glorious moment I saw what I later learned is the *Tangled Gate*.

"Then the image was gone. Like it had never been. A flicker, then down to a white dot, took ever & ever for it to go, but go it did.

"I stared, 'mouth fulla flies' a saying I learned later. I tried the knob & dials, in every combination. *Nothing*.

"*What had I seen? Where had it gone?*

"Days passed. Nothing changed. Finally, sadder than I'd ever been, I carried it out to the field nearby.

No sense of ceremony, of honoring passing with symbol & gesture, still I instinctively built a kind of stone circle & set my friend in the center, like a priest or a king or a god. The sun rarely came in full, so my visits to it did not produce anything odd until one *very odd* day.

“As I approached, I heard a noise. Sound! *Saw pictures!* How?

“Solar power, they call it. My weird proto-ritual had charged the TV’s battery. Eventually, tho I still thought it jaw-gaping magick, I figured to bring my friend into the sun, to its stone circle, on sunny days. I understood the *cause & effect* tho not the *why*.

“I would watch for hours, not knowing what I was seeing. Were the people inside my friend? No. My friend was *showing* their stories to *me*.

“Maybe that’s when I understood I was unhappy & little loved. I cherished my friend & treated him kindly. In turn, he showed me other places than where I was. Nobody in my clan *tended* with *me*, *shared* with *me*. There was *no giving, no need*.”

The Creatures still I think sleepily in my arms. I feel returned to where we are. More to tell but I trust, like my DüMönt TV, they will listen.

By sniffing & friendly nudging, they bring me & my friend to a vast bed of giant ferns. Somewhere in its center I find a tureen of soup, as magick a taste to my impoverished tongue as the DüMönt was to my eye & ear.

Many of these Creatures are now nearby, furred, feathered, shelled, & many other kinds. They nuzzle near me like I have worth. Like I belong to them. A low, sweet *hmmm* starts up & spreads through all until it pulls me in too.

“‘Don’t be surprised & the answers will come easier’ are the words I wake with, maybe advice from the Dreaming?” I stay where I am in the bed of giant ferns & talk on. Advice I needed.

“It was gone. My friend. I had spent so many happy times watching *Clarendon Island* on it. I believed it a real place because I did not know stories could be made up—but *my friend was gone!*”

“Stolen? Had I been followed? I returned to my clan’s settlement not knowing what to say or to who. So I said nothing. I skulked around more than I had, since returning to my dirty stream no longer interested me.

[That’s when I gave you the *buzz* that led you away, Charlie.

[Oh, & I took your TV. I had watched you for a long time. Oh, I had given you that TV too. It was more Mentor to you really.

[There was no *hmmm* possible in your encampment. I had tried. At best, a squawking *buzz*. But it was enough.

[You learned of me later, by accident, & only once called me your *Mentor*, & that with deep sarcasm. It stuck. *Of course the Gate-Keeper had a Mentor!*]

None other than to sing true, often, & ever on, pen, paper, stalled, shift, jerk, carry on, OK, what?

Maya shoves me, gently, but still, *rouse up, pay mind*

"I liked the pages better when I wasn't in them," I mutter.

Without where we are being specified, Maya turns on her White-Faced Pink Cat Radio, we sit together & listen awhile—

A suave voice says, "Come with me, close your eyes, travel with me deeper into this Island's magickal White Woods, until we find a clearing."

Maya holds my hand to keep my balance, the space becomes a clearing, shaped like a temple in full moonlight—

She leaves my hand, but Gate-Keeper, sometimes known as Charlie Pigeonfoot, arrives, looking young & uncertain, & weirdly does not see me.

"You can recede now," Maya whispers my mind. "You're welcome." Kiss to my cheek, & gone.

Gate-Keeper has followed the *Hmmm* to here, perhaps now exhausted, sits down & starts to pay mind to the radio.

The suave voice continues, "We pass along, far along, deeper into the desert & come to a little shack with an exotic toothless little man who gnatters high & low at him—

"Whispers in Gate-Keeper's ear to send him along to a town deep & far from anywhere else—

"Come to the White Woods again, & there is a road—

"Come to a Village now, few buildings, nobody around, but now a warm, crowded place, a coffeehouse—

"A new dream, a bigger dream, no longer a dream at all . . ." the suave voice sings somewhere in the coffeehouse . . .

Charlie wakes up, suddenly. Takes a moment to remember.

Tis a Great Filld. Leads to the Many Worlds.



To be continued in Cenacle | 118 | December 2021

* * * * *



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S C R I P T O R P R E S S



N E W E N G L A N D

Notes on Contributors

AbandonView lives in the American Rust Belt. His artwork appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. Acquired recently a really sweet-looking 1968 Volkswagen Beetle. Just don't make me try to fit into it for a ride! More of his work can be found at: <http://purigare.tumblr.com>.

Algernon Beagle lives in Bags End. He is the Editor guy for *Bags End News*. Delightful books made from the stories in his delightful newspaper appear regularly in *The Cenacle*.

Charlie Beyer lives in New Castle, Colorado. His prose appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. Spending his time these days developing a gold mining program that will be ready to launch soon—"developing the future, assuming the future ever comes. It will be a gas if it does." More of his writings can be found at <http://therubyeye.blogspot.com>.

Ace Boggess lives in Charleston, West Virginia. His fiction & poetry appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. His writings appear in many other current literary journals, including *Blue as an Orange Magazine*, *Black Poppy Review*, & *The Adirondack Review*. His most recent book of poetry, *Escape Envy*, was published in May 2021 by Brick Road Poetry Press.

Michael Couvaras lives in London, England. He is a working film-maker (Strange Interfade Films), but I was lucky enough to discover his wonderful photography on Instagram (<http://www.instagram.com/michaelcourvarafilms>). Welcome to the pages of *The Cenacle*, Michael!

ElectroLounge Forums is a discussion community for contributors to *The Cenacle*, found at <http://electrolounge.boards.net/>. Writers, artists, photographers, & readers are encouraged to request a membership (no charge) & visit these forums to meet, & perhaps join, those whose works fill the pages of *The Cenacle*.

Judih Haggai lives at Kibbutz Nir Oz in Israel. Her haiku appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. I love her daily haiku-writing ritual, & feel very grateful to be able to share some of her abundance in these pages. Her 2004 poetry RaiBook, *Spirit World Restless*, can be found at: <http://www.scriptorpress.com/raibooks/spiritworldrestless.html>. She also hosts the excellent radio show of the same name on SpiritPlants Radio (spiritplantsradio.com).

Jimmy Heffernan lives in Salt Lake City, Utah. His prose appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. Jimmy's most recent book, *Tunnels Through Time: Poems and Observations*, was published in May 2021 by BookBaby. We collaborated even more closely on his piece in this issue, to even better result!

Nathan D. Horowitz lives in Baltimore, Maryland. Chapters from his epic work-in-progress, *Nighttime Daydreams*, appear regularly in *The Cenacle*. Book 2 of his published quadrilogy of *Nighttime Daydreams (Bat Dreams)* was published in 2019. Book 3 will be out in 2021. He also hosts the excellent radio show "Nighttime Daydreams" on SpiritPlants Radio (spiritplantsradio.com). Finding himself with more time these days, he's looking in many directions with curiosity . . .

Colin James lives in western Massachusetts. His poetry appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. We had another delightful phone call recently, some of it niggling over pro football as often we do in the fall & winter. *GO COWBOYS!* His most recent book of poetry, *The Paralytically Obscure As Beauty Crescendo*, was published in December 2020 by The Book Patch.

George MacDonald was born in 1824 in Huntly, Aberdeenshire, Scotland, & died in 1905 in Ashtead, Surrey, England. His delightful fantasy works include *Phantastes: A Fairie Romance for Men and Women* (1858) & *Lilith: A Romance* (1895). We are planning to include a volume of his shorter fantasy works in the Burning Man Books 2022 series.

Sam Knot lives in rural France. His poetry & artwork both appear regularly in *The Cenacle*. It was by my coaxing that his wonderful fiction *Mabon Calling* is commencing serialization in this issue. Thank you, Sam! Visit samknot.com for more of his work.

Tamara Miles lives in Elgin, South Carolina. Her prose & poetry appear regularly in *The Cenacle*. She also hosts the excellent poetry show, “Where the Most Light Falls,” on SpiritPlants Radio (spiritplantsradio.com). She recently showed me some online gadgets & tricks she uses to help her in her writing discipline. It’s your own great Art that makes it all worth the doing, Tamara!

Jo Monea lives in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. Jo’s work is new to the pages of *The Cenacle*. And most welcomed! Joe wrote to me the following, upon having read the April 2021 issue: “I feel really good after reading *The Cenacle*. Really good because I feel I’ve been given the right people to see my work for what it is. To truly appreciate it. I feel a deep sense of belonging in this writers’ space. This corner of the creative vortex in which we find ourselves. it brings joy!” What a wonderful new friend & Artist to get to know!

Martina Newberry lives in Hollywood, California. Her poetry appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. Her most recent book of poetry, *Blues for French Roast with Chicory*, was published in 2020 by Deerbrook Editions. We got to talking of the Burning Man Arts Festival recently, & the town of Gerlach, Nevada nearby it. She wrote: “I’ve never been to Burning Man or anywhere near it. I came across Gerlach while I was wandering the internet looking at live camera sites (which I LOVE). I became fascinated with Gerlach’s oddness and began watching their live cam every day. Then, I tuned into the Burning Man live cam and liked that so much as well.” More of her writings can be found at: <https://martinanewberry.wordpress.com>.

Kenzie Oliver lives in Central Texas. Her photographic work was most recently featured in *The Cenacle* | 116 | June 2021. Last time we talked, she was dealing with Finals week. Best of luck!

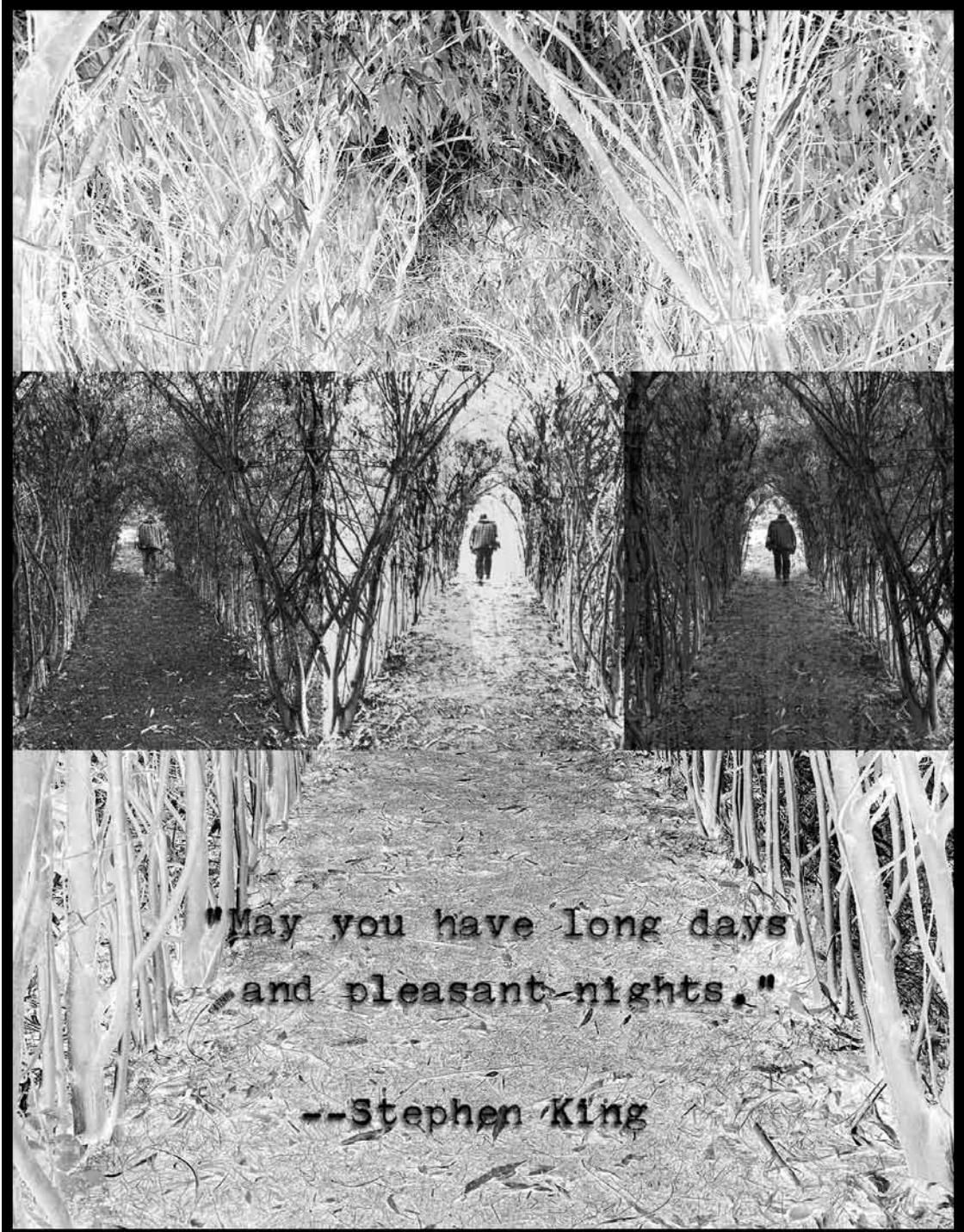
Tom Sheehan lives in Saugus, Massachusetts. His poetry & prose appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. His 50th book, *Fables, Fairy Stories, Folk Lore and Fantasies*, was published by Cyberwit in August 2020. He recently vowed to me: “I’ll be back.”

Kassandra Soulard lives in Milkrose, Massachusetts. Autumn cool & colors all around her, she is happy as she can be . . .

Raymond Soulard, Jr. lives in Milkrose, Massachusetts. Reading old notebooks to write about old years just makes me want to write even better & more & now than ever . . .

Timothy Vilgiate lives in Austin, Texas. His *Rivers of the Mind [A Novel]* is regularly serialized in this journal. He & I might get to share a hug & some common air come November, if lucky! The radio version of *Rivers of the Mind*, an amazing work in any form, can be found online at: <https://riversofthemind.libsyn.com>.

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**"May you have long days
and pleasant nights."**

--Stephen King

