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NUMBER 121
AUTUMN 2022



Seek your heart on the high blue skyway,

Keep your heart and it's bound.

Steep your heart in the deep of the earth again.

Lose your heart and it's found.

Fraggle Rock, 1984.

October 31, 2022
11:24 p.m.
Bungalow Co-bed
MiRose, Mass.

- I've been trying to sort out my feelings toward the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic, as it passes 2 1/2 years in existence, & keeps on going.

It's difficult to understand why so few people in the U.S. & elsewhere have gotten the latest booster shots, said to be more protective against the many variants around.

Also hard to figure why the mainstream media has mostly moved on from devoted daily reporting of this crisis. And just to be clear about this: hundreds of people are dying in the U.S. alone every day from COVID-related complications.

Travel around Boston is made more challenging by the virtual disappearance of mask mandates.

It's like: people are still getting sick & dying but the "we're all in this together" spirit is gone.

Why? No easy answer.

The House, with the Attic, from the Dreams of My Youth

So what happens as I leave the Woods, & their kind aid to my escape, is that I carry on for a long time, but
I'm being followed. But then I see that old house in the distance, the house that I'd built with the
youth! I went to that old house many times, hundreds of times, does it ever feel like

I make for that old house like a lunatic, running with my arms waving, flapping about me, my legs
going & I don't trip. I almost trip a couple times but I don't trip.

I make it to the front door finally, convinced it'll be locked, or someone will be there, but no one is there, the
way closed.

I enter into the ship-hall vestibule, & it's dusty, & cold, & I guess I get a little bit of a worried feeling about it. But I keep moving,
looking & going. I travel through the countless rooms, filled with old furniture & strange books, & old statues & weird paintings,
& mirrors that showed other dimensions, & so on & so forth. Room after room, some as large as miles, some as barely more than
crumbs, reaching my eye.

Up many flights of stairs, until I finally come to the top of them. And there is the button hanging in mid-air, attached to nothing, like
the door with a ladder unfolds from the ceiling. Climb up & you are in the Attic. Oh blessed! I make it to the Attic!

It had no walls. It had no length. It had no height. It had no number.

I'd travelled it ever on Deck then, & there was no end to travelling it. It was like travelling once on a ship, & finding out walls, closed
doors, no locks, no barriers, no more.

Feels as it always felt. Rooms of content, & rooms of content, scaffolding of content. Some built, some building, some being
built. This is it. I've arrived. I'm in the Attic.

I wish you were here too, beloved. I would share it with you, I promise you I would. Would you like to come to the Attic with me? I think
you might. I think you would enjoy it. There's the voice of you here from the Coffeehouse. I smell like Creatures & I can hear sometimes it's
here.

I'm not walking anymore. No need to walk here. No need to hurry here. Go slow & enjoy. Come with me. It's OK, left up or just let go.
Now you see, you see, round corners, through walls, you see. You hear, with no end. There's no limit to your hearing. Everything has
sense & you sense them all, & everything touches you, close & closer. Everything braids itself. Symbiosis.

That's the word I heard once, & that's the word. Symbiosis. A language for all, from all, by all, here we go. Here come the Woods! I'd say,
hang on, but don't hang on, let go. Let go.

Feel the trees, feel the leaves, the branches, the air, the soil, feel it all.

You feel it all, don't you? The Attic. You're made of it. I'm so glad you're with me. Let's go.






(Remembers me ...)

~~XXXX~~
I wish I could believe that a real protective cure is just around the corner, one like the annual flu shot one gets. And it may be, but living like waiting for it seems foolish.

I wish the spirit of survival & endurance still persisted, but what I see is some weird combination of denial & acceptance. Like a fatalistic submission to what might or might not happen.

Hope can be difficult sometimes to raise up, maintain, lose sometimes & do the work to get back again. I struggle as much with all this as anyone reading these lines.

But the question I will ask each of you to ask yourselves is one I ask myself often: are you living in hope? Do your words & actions both illustrate this?

Emily Dickinson called hope "a thing with feathers." I say it has bones & teeth & claws too, to survive & endure, return again & again. Find ever new ways to live in hope my friends. Reach deeper in faith, reach further out & around.      10/31/2020

We're Sitting On Top of Our Bus

We're sitting on top of our bus. It's peaceful, about a bajillion stars up there in those stary skies. We have these old lawn chairs that we keep tied under the bus, kept special for nights like this, when we drag them out, haul them up, get our fake roof in place, & set them down on top of it.

Now, admittedly, we're surrounded by cops, & probably the army, & who-knows-who-others. Been accused of bringing about the *end of the world*. Well, you could say that. I mean, the world ends every day for someone, for *many* someones. In different kinds of ways. Well, people die. Well, people move, change jobs, gain & lose lovers, discover their favorite book for the rest of their years. Pain, joy, oh, it's always ending & beginning! *End of the world?*

Well, we know, sitting up here on top of our bus, in our old lawn chairs, that it began with a strange girl that we encountered many months & miles ago, & the small handmade book that she gave us. She didn't give it to *one* of us, no, she gave it to *all* of us. It was tied up with a green & gold ribbon.

We were at a festival, met a lot of nice people there, shared a lot of Soup. Seemed like she was there & gone before anybody knew but, here we were, with this small handmade book tied up with a braided green & gold ribbon, knotted with a pretty little stone.

We waited till we left the festival, till we were out in middle of elsewhere, sitting in these old lawn chairs on top of this bus, our home, looking up at these bajillion stars, & *then* we chose to undo the green-&-gold ribbon, & to look at the pages inside.

And yes, *that* is where tonight began, all of it, every last bit, when we read those pages. I can't even say we read them all at once, I can't even say we were able to read one page at a go, & this was a *small* book. Look at your hand. It was about the size of your hand, especially if your hand is not that big.

Didn't explain itself right away. All it said on the first page was:

Dreams within dreams within dreams.

That's it, in a kind of odd curlicue handwriting. One of us remarked that it seemed like that handwriting was by someone who was not familiar with handwriting, as though they were imitating how to do it.

And the next page, all it said was:

Endless levels up & down.

That was it.

And we read more, as time went on. It's funny because we always read it together. We'd pull our all our old lawn chairs up on top of the bus, set them in a kind of a circle. We took turns reading. Everyone was silent, listening.

Turned to the third page & it said:

Dream of power, unitive, to sing & heal.

And I'll tell you that the book felt like more than a book. It's like it had an inner *glow*, an inner *hmmm*. Sometimes it seemed like the *hmmm* even cackled quietly. Weird. It's like it was *alive*, but in some way that was its own. It was not inert, not at *all*.

Tonight we're going to read the last page. We've agreed. It's time to read that last page & see if what all really has happened so far, as dire as it seems, cops & the army & who-knows-who-others even, might have some good or magical or unknown end.



Edited by Raymond Soulard, Jr.

Assistant Editor: Cassandra Soulard

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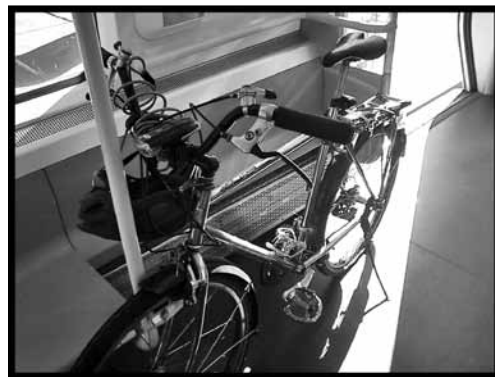
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Thankee to GB for taking me in back in 2020, appreciating what I am, & finding value in our ongoing relation. More awaits!

And thankee to every person on the planet who has gotten COVID-19 vaccines, masked up responsibly, & stayed strong in the hope of better, safer days to come. Much love to each of you . . .



SCRIPTOR PRESS



NEW ENGLAND

2022

Feedback on Cenacle 120 | Summer 2022

Gregory Kelly:

Sam Knot's poem "NeuroMagica," which concludes his fiction "Mabon Calling," is the piece for me in this issue. The poem progresses better and better and better until the penultimate line: "paint the body we are."

And then mix that line with the final where I read it as: "we are something else." That written in the frame of "stars the future past. Old light reaching out to embrace the ever-present dark."

This poem's correlation between stars and our breaths. We are truly something else. "Endless friends." This captures an interpretation of our beings very well. Thank you, Sam! *Inspiring!*

* * * * *

Sam Knot:

I love Judih Weinstein Haggai's interview, "Of Glyphs and Other Things," with Martina Reisz Newberry so much! It should be weird how effortlessly it combines the profound and the breezy. Probably it is! Weird is good.

The poems sit so well in the conversation. "Dark Feast" subtly reminds us that tomorrow is never guaranteed, whatever the weather, and the sweetly squinty little perspective shift at the end of "Deference" is funny and really effective.

Epi Rogan's photo gallery is wonderfully atmospheric—to me it was almost like she had held a camera to my thought-world, as my protagonist journeyed in my fiction "Mabon Calling" through Tree Sigh to Mabonnia. It was just how I'd imagined it: flaky billboards, rural shambolics, mysterious portals. What interestingly synchronous resonances!

It is always a pleasure to have a peek into Jo Monea's intricately drawn notebook. I appreciated Jo's poem, too; it reminded me of passing through

my own less hopeful phases. I took a line as a springboard for a short reply:

*I cannot seem to shake the despair
I cannot seem, so it must be there
Unless, perhaps, the point is not
& yet the aim remains (?)*

* * * * *

Jo Monea:

Judih Weinstein Haggai's poem "His Flute": I feel this in my *bones*, in my very DNA. I feel I've been the pilgrim as well as the ancestors, and even the song of the flute itself. This is one of those poems that brings you back to your essence.

And her poem "Out of Nowhere": *yowza!* That's intoxicating. Rich like honey. You have me relishing every word! I could practically put my bare hands on the visions themselves.

* * * * *

Judih Weinstein Haggai:

The writing in the issue kicks off gloriously for me as I dig into Martina Newberry's piece, "The Dream at the End of the World," and the lines: "Your clandestine visits are afflicted / with a desire that embalms you." And what's there to say? Only to pause, savor, and praise as the poem continues, without reaching a final note having embalmed my mind.

"The Natural History of the Sasquatch," one of my all-time favorite subjects, is happily addressed by Richard and Charlie Beyer. Fully factual, of course, all data having undergone the strictest scientific investigation, the two writers inform us of the origin of the species, the resurgence of the population, and how much of a nuisance their presence can be to farmers. So, how to dispose of marauders is not an easy answer, but there are options, if you'd care to take a look.

* * * * *



Judih Weinstein Haggai



Gregory Kelly



Epi Rogan



AbandonView



Charlie Beyer



Sam Knot

Charlie Beyer:

Nathan D. Horowitz's travel journal piece "Testing Me" captivates me with rarely spoken truths about prejudice in cultures beyond the US. This is surprising to encounter for most of us, but justified in the minds of the class conscious: "impassive, though with a brutal edge." Brilliant words.

* * * * *

Nathan D. Horowitz:

"Of Glyphs and Other Things" is a deeply satisfying conversation between Martina Reisz Newberry and Judih Weinstein Haggai. Ostensibly an interview, it's hard for me to see it as anything but a collaborative poem, especially given Martina's characterization of her own poems as "the reader and me walking along, having a coffee somewhere, really listening to each other, and saying words that must be said."

So there are two voices in this poem. One asks the other questions. The other shows the first one around her world: Her fears of the cataclysms that threaten; her delight in her beloved and in the city where they live; her writing habits.

On the tour, Martina, who is justly compared to Wisława Szymborska, "employs" (as a reviewer wrote) "a deceptively conversational tone to wield resonant insights." At the end of the tour, Martina introduces Judih and their readers to a pantheon of very minor gods who astonish us by their compactness and vitality: "God of termites / God of rattlesnakes / God of hives / God of the common cold / God of dog poop on my heel / God of high utility bills / God of stubbed toes and bad hair days . . ."

After reading that, I saw all around me gods I had missed: God of text messages soliciting funds for Democratic candidates / God of pandemic fleece pajama bottoms / God of the first raindrop of the storm and the distant roar of a jet / God of interviews in *The Cenacle* that are strolls around the neighborhood of a soul / God of poetry

that circulates inside poets that circulate inside poems . . .

* * * * *

Epi Rogan:

I quite like when two people who have mutual respect and admiration for each other chat, as is clear do Martina Reisz Newberry and Judith Weinstein Haggai in their interview, "Of Glyphs and Other Things." It begins with the uncertainty of the times in which we are living, during which, as Haggai points out, "Uncertainty is the only certainty there seems to be."

Two poems touching on that very thought follow—Newberry's poems "The World is Not Ending" and her brilliant "Dark Feast." What I especially loved was when they discuss the everyday and Newberry's dedication to her craft, and love of her city.

* * * * *

Jimmy Heffernan:

For me, the photography of Epi Rogan is a spectacular treat. Especially one page of her gallery, where there are the depictions of two portals, a keyhole and a door. The control and use of lighting in both photographs is brilliant, and reminds me actually of that employed by Martin Scorsese in some of his films' more memorable scenes.

I ask myself where they lead, and whether I want to try the knobs. There is an aura of noir-ish mystery here, and we must be careful what we wish for.

The view through the keyhole seems warmer than the forsaken doorway bathed in blinding rays, but there is a general forbidden-ness that is captured so skillfully and silently that makes me just want to wait and watch for whoever comes around.

* * * * *

Ace Boggess:

What grabbed me in this issue were Epi Rogan's photographs, so artfully mysterious and sullen. The artist finds beauty in adjusting perspective on a pair of sneakers, giving a feel for both the vastness and smallness of a city. A gate, or part of one, that seems to lead nowhere?

How thought-provoking, challenging, *bold*. The artist plays with what's hidden, and leaves the viewer wondering about the same. These are compelling snapshots of worlds within worlds. *Wow*. Just overwhelming.

* * * * *

Colin James:

Tamara Miles' poem "Martian to American" is very poignant. Makes me think: *am I doing enough?*

I did energy audits for over thirty years, arranging for air sealing and insulation, saving people mucho BTUs.

But the sad part is, if I was rich, and had access to a private jet, I would be flying in it so I could stretch out. And if there were a Martian aboard, I wouldn't be sharing my gin and tonic . . .

* * * * *

Louis Staebler:

Love the issue's theme of "Summer Noir." Still grooving on the layout. The prose and poetry are very strong. Thematically well done as well. Thank you, everyone!

* * * * *



Louis Staebler

What Books Changed You?

Published on electrolounge.boards.net

Post by Raymond on Oct 3, 2022 at 4:37pm

Hi everyone,

Toward *Cenacle* 121 later this month, I've been mulling on this one awhile. Especially the wording of the above question. Books can cause many kinds of "changes," but the fact is that they do. We may read something that shows us the world isn't what we thought, or that encourages us to hope for something it might become. A book can touch one's heart because it's discovered by the reader that others have thought the same thing, or been on the same struggles, or found the same victories or defeats. *Books matter*, especially when they hit home somehow.

My angle on this question has to do with books that changed me as a writer. Only one angle on the topic, of course. But here are three that really "changed" me.

1) ***The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum** (1900) - This is the first of Baum's 14 Oz books, & the most famous of them, the one the legendary 1939 film is (somewhat) based on. Baum was an American writer, & nobody who has studied his career would believe that he thought this was the book for which he would become famous.

He set out to create an "American" fairy tale, something that was not so very rooted in the European tradition (Brothers Grimm, Hans Christian Anderson, etc.) that was then more well-known. The Oz books tell the story of Dorothy, a little girl from Kansas, who is whisked away to Oz via a cyclone.

Oz is a fantasyland, where many kinds of beings talk & live their lives. This first book sees Dorothy return home at the end, but Baum's readers wanted more about Oz, & he eventually wrote much more. As he explored this magickal land, there emerged a kind of utopian idealism not yet there in the first book. No money in the Marvelous Land of Oz. War very much frowned upon, & avoided.

I read this book, & its many sequels, when I was a lonely teenager living a rough life at home & at school. Beneath its fantasy elements was a deep emphasis on tolerance, on being who you are, & being respected for this. My early Bags End stories rooted deep in all this, & it was only a few years ago that I conjured up a story that finds Algernon Beagle & his friends traveling through Oz (I had recently re-read all these books). Wow, that was *fun!*

2) ***The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger** (1951) - I was assigned to read this book in high school, as many have been, & found myself enamored of its teenage protagonist, Holden Caulfield, as many do. What's funny is that it led me on to Salinger's several other published works, all volumes of short stories [such as *Nine Stories* (1953)], that I liked *even* better, that very much affected the fiction I write.

Salinger's work is funny, mystical, strange. Beautiful, deep prose.

Reading Salinger's work is like being in on a secret, something like that the world is more beautiful & sad & hilarious than it often seems. I am not sure why this is, how his books cause these feelings. Maybe it is the outsider feelings most of his protagonists share. Maybe because they tend to be set in New York City, & yet are about characters who feel isolated, understood & loved by only a few.

Salinger also sees the making of Art as akin to a pilgrim on a quest for the holy & divine. Like there is no comparison to anything else, & no going back. This idea got deep in my head & heart, & has never left me.

3) *The Selected Poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke* [translated by Stephen Mitchell] (1982) - It was later in my 20s when I found the poems of the German poet Rilke (1875-1926). Mitchell's translations make these complex works wonderfully readable in English, while losing nothing of their power & meaning.

I was drawn to learn about Rilke because I was dating a girl at the time who was a Spanish teacher, & whose more worldly reading tastes opened my eyes to the possibilities of reading translated writing. Brilliant writers like Octavio Paz, Pablo Neruda, & Dante Alighieri. I would explore their works & those of many others over the years. The girlfriend came & went, & best for both of us that this happened. But her influence in this regard is one I am thankful for.

I still vividly remember the day I walked into the Hartford (Connecticut) Public Library, used the card catalogue to find Rilke's works, & was practically trembling when I found the Mitchell book. I knew it would change me, yet I had read none of Rilke's writings till that moment. Weird magick moment to recall.

And the poetry I have written since then can find its roots in Rilke still. Reading poetry in translation uproots the mind about the countless enigmas of language, about how *anything* is even more possible that one may have dreamed!

Looking forward to hearing about your books too!

* * * * *

Post by Martina on Oct 3, 2022 at 6:18pm

1) *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland / Through the Looking Glass* by Lewis Carroll (1865/1872) - I first read these books when I was 6 or 7 years old. I was transported from my everyday world of being homely and shy and awkward, horribly near-sighted, etc., etc., to a world where looking odd and thinking odd thoughts was a magic place where I could live and prosper.

I was in charge when I was the Red Queen. I could play with White Rabbit. I could dream and wonder with the Caterpillar. I could have a best friend in the White Knight. I would be invited to tea parties. I could eat strange foods and never get sick. I could be whisked away from wherever I really was to where I might want to be.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland made me believe that my life *could possibly* be magic.

2) ***Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* by James Agee** (1941) - My father was a steel worker, a union man who believed that, if the workers of the world united, *anything* was possible. I read this book in 1959, cover to cover, in the library downtown.

It showed me that there was an entire population of people who lived in slave-like conditions and, so close to the bone, that their lives appeared worthless. I discovered that the American flag I swore an oath to every day at school stood for nothing to those who were so poor. They went without food, clean water, heat, sturdy walls, and roofed dwellings.

At the same time, I saw that their story could be so incredibly beautifully told—in such musical and intense language—they could nearly be heroes. I decided I'd be a writer.

3) ***On the Road* by Jack Kerouac** (1957) - This novel is based on the travels of Kerouac and his friends across the United States. How could any life *not* be changed following the Beat Generation's travels through America, without bosses, without rules, without chains?

I was transfixed then, and am now, with the Beat counterculture, their freeing up of words to make heartbreaking / heart-filling poems and stories.

On the Road led me to read all I could in and around those fine warrior-writers who jumped into unnamed, and previously unexamined, soul wars and spirit-filled philosophies. I became a working writer through their work.

* * * * *

Post by Judih on Oct 4, 2022 at 5:58am

1) ***Orlando* by Virginia Woolf** (1928) - This was the first book that grabbed me fully with the detail, with the fantasy, with the fabulous reality that life can be glimpsed from different points of view, based on the outer presentation of gender. *My eyes were opened!* The same consciousness, the same brilliance, affects the outer world according to outer show of maleness or femaleness. This was *trippy* to me. I read it when I was 14 or so, the age of endless wonder how physicality influences how others see us.

2) ***Living Time and the Integration of the Life* by Maurice Nicoll** (1952) - How time undulates, expanding and contracting, according to endless factors that I'd barely known existed. I was 18 when I discovered it, and this was a gateway book to the world of Gurdjieff, and exploring the business of waking up in life, being aware of how many people live their lives as automatons, without a moment of actually being present in their current moment.

I wanted to follow the route, no matter how challenging, of *waking up*.

3) Which brings me to the works of **Carlos Castaneda**, [like ***The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge*** (1968)], and his meetings with his guide Don Juan. I guess reading the books before I actually *knew* something of acid or mushrooms created a pathway that was open and ready for a widening experience of life. Never ending. In terms of chronology, I met up with Castaneda around the time I was 19.

4) ***Howl and Other Poems* by Allen Ginsberg** (1956) - Reading Ginsberg's work never fails to stimulate my mind. When faced with the blank stares from those around me, I only have to pick up

Ginsberg's poetry and tune in to the jewels within his phrases. "*Howl*" was revolutionary, true. But "*The Sunflower Sutra*" is magic. And "*A Supermarket in California*" is lyrical.

All of these books touched me way deeper than any other I'd previously read (including my childhood's ravenous intake of mythology, and biographies of heroes paving the way to follow their dreams). These books changed my outlook on life.

These days I reset by reading **Thich Nhat Hanh**'s words. His simple way of infusing the present moment with awareness continues to resonate even after his passing. He, of all people, has exemplified how the waves of time encompass far more than linear existence.

* * * * *

Post by Charlie on Oct 4, 2022 at 12:48pm

Here are three books that changed my life. There are others, some of similar significance, but these always ring true in my mind.

1) *An Autumn Night* by **Maxim Gorky** (1902) - "The wind howled and raged, the rain smote upon the skiff, the waves splashed, and both of us, embracing each other convulsively, nevertheless shivered with cold.

"Here was I, seriously occupied at this very time with the destiny of humanity, thinking of the reorganization of the social system, of political revolutions . . . I say, I was trying with all my might to make of myself 'a potent active social force' [but was cowering under a skiff in the storm]."

This affected my whole outlook on life. I could be a penniless street hood and *still* be a potent force in societal transformation. My self-image as a progenitor of change in the world need not be dissuaded by the simple reality of my destitution. *I am somebody and I'm here to reorganize the world.*

2) *In the Days of the Comet* by **H.G. Wells** (1906) - This story describes the desperation of society . . . its greed, its cruelty, its hierarchy . . . until the comet shows up. In an amorphous fog, the minds of all go through a sea change, to wake in a world run by utopian ideas and ideals. Everyone comes to their senses and embraces humanity. A beautiful dream I have always aspired to.

3) *This Simian World* by **Clarence Day** (1920) - This book gave me the insight into our origin, by asking the question: "what if a different species had inherited the big brain?"

Day methodically goes through the animal kingdom, discussing the behaviors of different species that might have gotten the big brain. Such as: "in the cat society, the soap maker has the highest status" and "the cat business man, coming home from work, would think nothing more of killing someone while waiting for the bus, than discarding a candy bar wrapper."

This gave me insight as to why we are the way we are. Still monkeys, I'm afraid.

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Post by Jimmy on Oct 4, 2022 at 11:05pm

1) ***The Devil's Dictionary* by Ambrose Bierce** (1906) - I learned more about the world from this relatively short book than from any other I had read before or have read since. It is a compendium of terse lexicographical definitions, some accompanied by poems, all brilliant and tremendously insightful. I discovered it accidentally during my first year of college, and have never looked back. It is my favorite book. The lessons about life, society, culture, etc. it has to teach are timeless, and stay with one for a lifetime. It's not for everyone, as many find it too "cynical" but, if one can peer into it and really *see* it, it is one of the more luminous, moral, and life-affirming books one will find.

2) ***Prometheus Rising* by Robert Anton Wilson** (1983) - Following a Samadhi experience I had in August 2001, I was looking for integration and answers regarding my extraordinary spiritual experience. More than any other book or essay, RAW's book provided an ontological roadmap for what had happened to me. I was stunned as he delineated precisely just the experience I had had. From that time onward, I have been an advocate of Dr. Timothy Leary's "eight-circuit model of consciousness," and finally wrote a book of my own about it [*Nonlocal Nature: The Eight Circuits of Consciousness*] in 2017. I owe everything I know about this subject to this book.

3) ***Ishmael* by Daniel Quinn** (1992) - I was assigned this book to read during my first semester of college, and it resonated. It gave me a whole new way of looking at civilization, the Book of Genesis, human cultural evolution, the agricultural revolution, and more. It exposes the lies at the heart and foundation of Western civilization in simple and elegant prose. My 2016 book called ***The Reality of Hunter-Gatherers*** contains many of the fruits that germinated after reading this book.

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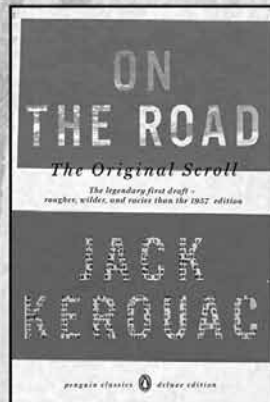
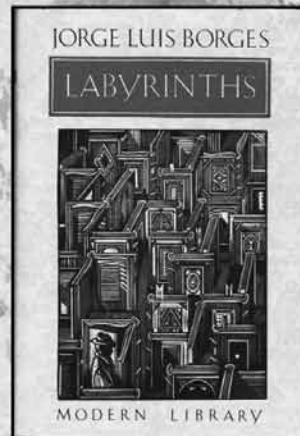
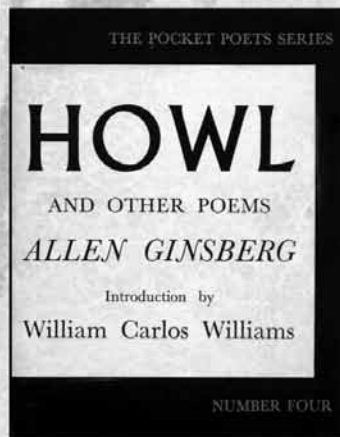
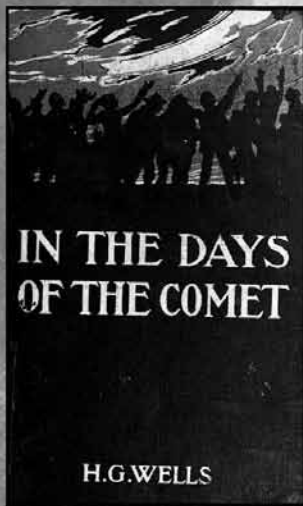
Post by Sam on Oct 5, 2022 at 12:53pm

1) ***Moonchild* by Aleister Crowley** (1917) - It is hard for me to tell to what degree I was changing the book, and to what degree it was changing me. I first read it in 2002, in the midst of what was effectively a psychotic break, and the book really came alive for me. It is meta-fiction, really, as Mr. Crowley takes real life events and characters as his jumping off point.

The plot concerns a battle between two groups of rival magic(k)ians, with the white lodge—the good guys—attempting a complex ritual designed to birth a higher entity into this world in human form, and the bad old black lodge attempting to thwart them. (Although perhaps things aren't so black and white as they seem, in the end.)

The book is in part an argument for the validity of the magickal worldview (or something like "scientific illuminism"), but above all it seems to advocate "the way of the dao," a kind of retiring wisdom concerning balance, centered on the idea of "not-doing." It is also amusing, creative, adventurous, and has some great visionary passages.

I re-read it just recently, as part of an attempt to make a little more sense of that period of my life. My copy is filled with strange doodles in the margins. I believe on one level I was quite identified with the central character: the woman who would birth the magickal child; but I was also struck by the coincidence that the two warring wizards had the first and second names of my grandfather, and perhaps they recapitulated some sort of division in my psyche. Clearly I read a lot into the book!



It played havoc with my already unstable psyche, courtesy of its themes and contents, but also served to focus something of a psychodrama for me, and perhaps it helped to keep my process moving in some way. I remember reading one of the poems out loud one day, in the pub I used to haunt (quite literally), as a technician fiddled with the fruit machine. It was an evocation of Hermes, and I recall the slightly disturbed technician meeting my eyes, with 777 rung up on the wheels behind him. As well as jackpot, *777 and Other Qabalistic Writings* (1973) was Crowley's book of magickal correspondences, which he had worked on in a hotel room in my home town.

Weird times!

2) *The Marriage of Heaven & Hell* by William Blake (1790-1793) - It is hard for me to pick a particular work of Blake's, as I have had transformative experiences with a number of them, but *The Marriage of Heaven & Hell* still stands out. Blake was already known to me as a poet from my school days, as his poem, "*The Tyger*," is a common teaching tool.

But it was while working on my own book of poems that I first became properly interested in him. Some pages from the *Songs of Innocence and Experience* were on display when I was visiting Cork University in Ireland one day, and it was the first time I had ever seen anyone else illustrating their poetry. I felt reassured, and like I had found a brother.

Some years later I purchased his *Complete Illuminated Works*, and gave them a good looking-over one night, while high on mescaline, which surely added to the impact. Reading those "Memorable Fancies" was like a trip inside a trip somehow, like reading a report of my experience as it was happening.

I was understanding them on some sort of direct intuitive level, still as language, but experienced more than thought. The colors and forms, and the humanity of the hand-wrought text—it all made the book seem very alive. I have pondered it many times over the years, playing with the tangled clarity of his philosophy of contraries, and delighting in his potent proverbs. I still find it a *very* rich experience!

3) *True Hallucinations* by Terence McKenna (1989) - What a *fantastic* adventure this book is! I just loved it so much. I suppose I was quite swept up by the blurring of the line between madness and some sort of semi-impossible discovery. The way the Brothers McKenna were steeped in *both* science fact and fiction made the madness all the more palpable, and perhaps all the more dangerous.

It raises the question of just what could be out there, if the "out there" is not as exterior as we think—not really separable from our subjective experiences of the world. They walk (or warp!) the line between the literal and the metaphorical in a way I still find very inspiring, and unsettling. I had my own too-close encounters, following my acquaintance with their worlds. They were a big part of me re-evaluating the possible, and realizing how much we might not know, and while this certainly led me into my own difficult territory, I'm ever so grateful for the example they made of themselves. What a long strange trip it continues to be! :-)

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Post by Jo on Oct 7, 2022 at 8:35pm

I would say . . .

1) *The Kiss of the Fur Queen* by Tomson Highway (1998) - Lots of similar themes in my own life, even if my life is wildly different than the lives of the brothers in this book. I could feel every part of the story; it took me to new places within myself; some of them were hard to navigate. This book changed my heart and my spirit.

2) *The Night Circus* by Erin Morgenstern (2011) - It's magikal, and there's so much depth to the magik. Whenever I read it, I can see, and taste, and touch the magik of my own life even better. It's a beautiful book to remind us of what's true.

3) *The Time Traveler's Wife* by Audrey Niffenegger (2003) - This one hits deep for me. Strikes all my chords; maybe it even creates more chords to be struck. This one changed the way I experience presence. Time got more see-through, and I could feel the significance of every moment lived and un-lived.

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Post by Nathan on Oct 9, 2022 at 1:20pm

I suppose every book I have read has changed me in some way. But the change has been subtle. I can't remember ever reading a book and saying, "My God! I am altered! I will never look at life the same way." Maybe I've been doing it wrong. Reading has been a smooth sail from Richard Scarry through Babar and abridged Dr. Doolittle, through Piers Anthony's *Xanth* novels, Ursula K. Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea*, and the Castaneda books, which are BS but may actually have changed me by making me want to trip (OK, the Castaneda books, which are BS, changed me by *making* me want to trip).

As I was saying, nothing I have read has changed me. *And The Devil Will Drag You Under* by Jack Chalker (1979) is a book I believe only I have read, but I loved it. The earth is going to be hit by an asteroid, and only a drunk devil in a bar can save it, if only a man and a woman can travel to different dimensions and retrieve six magic jewels. It didn't change me, though maybe it did because, while I was reading it, I wasn't doing something else, like playing sports or music, or learning to repair cars.

To be honest, I don't like books very much.

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Post by Nathan on Oct 10, 2022 at 5:02pm

I don't remember where it was we went. Maybe Maine. But I would remember that. It was a summer trip. I was fourteen. I had two books of collected short stories, by **Oscar Wilde** and **Jorge Luis Borges**.

One of the Wilde stories messed me up. A songbird was in love with a human college student, but he never noticed her. He was in love with a girl. She would only let him take her to the dance if he gave her a rose. In his garden was a rosebush, but it wasn't in bloom.

He had no idea where to find a rose in the winter, so he sank into despair. In the night, the enraptured songbird—for whom only the student had meaning—sang while she pressed her breast to one of the

rose's thorns.

She sang and sang while her heart's blood slowly transformed into a beautiful rose. At dawn, she fell dead to the frozen ground. The student was astonished to find a live rose on the bush, and plucked it.

However, the girl rejected him anyway, and the student realized he didn't like her either, and threw the rose away. The end.

The story stuck with me as an allegory for art. Like, we artists literally have to kill ourselves to create beauty. *Why did I think that?* I don't know.

The Borges stories were cooler and cerebral, elegant, full of elaborate fake sources. He could talk about the wildest concepts in completely calm tones. *Labyrinths* (1962) is the name of the collection. Decades later, in Vienna, I joined a poetry group called "Labyrinth," named in part after the collection.

I knew I was home, even as I wandered, endlessly, endlessly wandering . . .

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Post by Sam on Oct 11, 2022 at 5:49am

The Carlos Casteneda books were definitely important for me too. We might consider that Don Juan was the perfect shamanic ancestor for the psychedelic counterculture that coalesced into and came out of the sixties *because* he was invented by a modern seeker out of a variety of materials anthropological and psychological, etc.?

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Post by Epi on Oct 11, 2022 at 4:50pm

I read the quasi-memoir *A Fan's Notes* by **Frederick Exley** (1968) in my late 20s. On the surface it doesn't seem like a book a woman of color in the 2010s would be drawn to. Exley is a 1950s lad who's a football fanatic. I'm saying he's a bit misogynist and arrogant really.

The thing about the book is it's about realizing you're not special. It's about coming to the realization that you'll always be a fan of great people, but not great yourself.

I think whenever I relay the un-special theme to anyone it feels sad, but I found it moving in my late twenties. Many parts were just absurd or absurdly funny to boot. Failure is part of life. There was a bit of Holden Caulfield in Exley as well.

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Post by Greg on Oct 12, 2022 at 4:56pm

1) *Spring and All* by **William Carlos Williams** (1923) broke my understanding of poetry. It shattered me. And collected me. Swept me into a dustpan. And instead of binning me, *Spring and All* threw whatever remnants of me remained out the window of a car speeding down Route 88.

And when I came to, I was a kid again, on a summer's Saturday, sitting on Horseneck Beach, refusing to come off the blanket because I didn't like the feel of the sand between my toes.

Then I realized I *was* the sand. And I drowned under the weight of the tide. I was at home under the weight.

And now, today, I walk along other beaches in other countries, searching for sea glass. I jar them up. Count them like pennies. I don't know what I'm saving them for. And I don't know how to piece them together. In a way, they *are* me. I feel it somehow. Brokenness that's been tumbled and tumbled and tumbled, until all the sharp bits are rubbed smooth.

2) **Harry Potter series by J. K. Rowling** (1997-2007) - I was depressed shortly after the wedding. But I didn't know I was depressed. I just didn't . . . talk to my wife. Or . . . look at her. I woke up. I read *Harry Potter*. I went to work. And spent the two ten-minute breaks and the half-hour lunch reading *Harry Potter*. Then I'd read until I fell asleep. This carried on for months. I'm a slow reader.

I should probably tell you why I was depressed. I figured it out one day with the therapist. She was a sweet lady. Ever walk into a wall because you didn't see it? Or ever seen someone do that and then mutter, "idiot"? Because, here we go: I graduated college. Quickly thereafter, accepted a post at a church in England, thinking this was my dream job. Got deported. Hadn't even made it to my promised land.

Was returned on a flight to my last port of departure, D.C., with \$13 to my name. Called my dad, and he sorted the flight home. Finally made it back to England in the new year, and proposed to her under a willow tree, on a walk home from the theater.

Two weeks elapsed. I was back home. Then the call came. Verbatim: "Mr. Kelly. You have cancer." No greeting. Just that. August wedding replaced by surgery. Plans of living with my bride in England swapped for months of radiation. Replaced by surgery. Chemo solidified the fear that shackled me Stateside.

And so I got married. The suit, waders. The dissection scars still visible along my neck to the degree that someone once asked me if I'd been in a parachuting accident. Clearly, they didn't want to cross the threshold of asking if I tried to hang myself, so they came up with the parachute image. No bow tie could hide that. But I got married. And I read *Harry Potter*. And I was depressed without admitting it. Because life happened. And it crushed me. *Utterly crushed me.*

I like *Harry Potter*. It's about a boy who was crushed many times. But his friends came around him. He had community. People. And, together, they overcame the life that was trying to crush them out of existence. They overcame . . . together.

3) **Psalms** - It conveys the living water on whose shores I root myself (Psalm 1). I know that when I lie down, I will wake again. *Sustained* (Psalm 3:5). I have not known if I will live—honestly and truly, see above—but with some resolve that cannot come from human bones, I have prayed in chorus with David and Jesus on the Cross (*Luke 23:46*): *Into Your hands I entrust my spirit; You redeem me, Lord, God of truth.*

I am daily restored by the poetry in *Psalms*. They are the breaths of those that have gone before me. They are cries for *help*. They are *thanksgiving*. They are *rescuing*. *Sheltering*. *Pains* and *tears*. Like mine. *Jays* and *jays* and *jays*. Like mine. *Wisdoms*. And *follies*. Mistakes *galore*. All like mine. Love *abounding*.

Grace *amazing*. And this God, *faithful*, from *everlasting* to *everlasting*.

They are the fullness of life that's been poetically recorded for all of history to join in with. And they are so much more than that. No matter how many decades I read and re-read them, I am always uplifted and comforted.

One day, maybe I'll write my own psalms.

Selah.

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Post by Jimmy on Oct 12, 2022 at 10:51pm

Here are three more:

1) ***VALIS* by Philip K. Dick** (1981) PKD's *VALIS* trilogy is his best work, in my opinion, and the namesake is the most important of those three. The principal reason I am mentioning this book is that it describes some very unusual, supernatural really, phenomena, and these phenomena were very similar, in certain instances, and essentially identical in others, to experiences I myself went through when I was younger. As I read it for the first time, I couldn't believe these things had happened to the author.

2) ***Wholeness and the Implicate Order* by David Bohm** (1980) - As some of you know, I published a book in 2020 called *Unfolding Nature* about the implicate order hypothesis. Its genesis and inspiration began over twenty years ago, when I read Bohm's book for the first time. Robert Anton Wilson also reinforced my interest in a few of his writings, and I have been thinking about this stuff constantly over the time-span I mention. I only hope the gestation from my first encounter to my publishing date was long enough!

3) ***For Whom the Bell Tolls* by Ernest Hemingway** (1940) - In my view, this is Hemingway's best novel. And, as any one of you who have read it know, it is *pure* magic. The writing is strong, athletic, masculine, terse—however one describes Hemingway—and simply gorgeous. The language itself is near-perfect, but the picture and action it describes are so vivid and beautiful, one almost can't believe an author can reach this level of artistic attainment. And it has one of the most heart-rending endings of any book of which I am aware. *Just a masterpiece.*

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Post by Nathan on Oct 16, 2022 at 3:45pm

OK, here's one. Ezra Pound's *Selected Poems* changed my life by helping me walk back toward humanity from a semi-serious suicide attempt. I was so bitter about everything that I would only let someone condemned by right-thinking society—a *fascist*—speak to me.

"The Goodly Fere," Pound's Scots-dialect poem about Jesus, gave me some peace of mind. Two points in it helped me. One was where Jesus calms the water before walking on it by speaking two words. That line calmed some turbulence in me. The other was where Jesus said his greatest act would be to show how to die.

“Ye ha’ seen me heal the lame and blind,
 And wake the dead,” says he,
 “Ye shall see one thing to master all:
 ‘Tis how a brave man dies on the tree.”

* * * * *

Post by Sam on Oct 18, 2022 at 2:48pm

Not read much Pound—that sounds like a good one. I love old British religious poems; in particular, *Dream of the Rood* [circa 10th-century] and *The Pearl* [circa late 14th-century].

I had an interesting vision of Jesus recently. Just quiet and personal and warm after a long period of struggling with stuff. Basically “I” was kind of arguing with “myself” about: *why is it you can imagine and half-believe all this wild shit, but you can’t bring yourself to accept at least the real possibility of Jesus Christ?*

So then it took me through a series of arguments based on my own experiences, until I saw my / brother / friend / his / her / our / a face, softly lit by flame outside inside me, just across from my heart, it felt. I pledged that while I might not be able to call myself a Christian, I will honor the way I’ve been helped following those threads (particularly those weaving through Tolkien’s & Lewis’s Inklings). At that very moment there was a shooting star I had no need to wish on.

I did read Pound on poetry, but not his poetry. I think it was *ABC of Reading* (1934). Strong opinions, but worked out in that instance!

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Post by KD on Oct 21, 2022 at 12:37pm

This has been such a fun thread to read, and I’m taking note of so many of your books, so thank you! I’m such a voracious reader that this was a hard question for me to answer. I also am a pain in Raymond’s neck about being a contrarian, and so when he said “what books changed you?”—I immediately fussed at the word “*changed*.” But I read all your great responses, and I thought and thought, and here’s what I came up with:

1) **Howard Zinn** - I’ve always enjoyed history, but reading Howard Zinn was absolutely eye-opening for me. It didn’t make sense at first that the “history” I’d been taught before was just *wrong* or, maybe more generously, *one-sided*. Howard Zinn does such a good job making past events feel relevant, no matter when you’re reading it.

2) **Refuge by Terry Tempest Williams** (1991) - I had never read Terry Tempest Williams before, and this is such a beautifully written, sad yet somehow still hopeful, portrait of both a place and a family. Her writing seems rather matter of fact and assured, while events around her are neither one.

3) **Skinny Legs and All by Tom Robbins** (1990) - I could have picked several books by Tom Robbins to list here, but I’ll say *Skinny Legs and All*. I don’t know that I would have picked up any books by Tom Robbins if Raymond hadn’t suggested him—“funny” books aren’t usually my first choice, but Tom Robbins is such an amazing and fun storyteller, real and funny, and surreal and sweet, and I could go on

and on. This book is absurd, and heart-touching, and serious, and silly, and I had never read anything like that before.

Comment to Jo: I loved *Night Circus*, and I also loved her follow up, *Starless Sea* (2019)—it was not as tight and cohesive as *Night Circus*, but I loved the ideas and the world (it's a world of books and stories!). Completely randomly, I found a company on Etsy.com that makes candles based on book-worlds, and I got one for each of her books. It's fun!





Gregory Kelly

Gregory Kelly



Commuting Thoughts from England

[Prose-Poetry]

10/21/2022 - when i looked at their faces. i was sad.

when i looked at their faces. i was sad. we all know that feeling. you don't need me to describe it.

i was sad because i wouldn't know them. more than seeing their faces.

they saw mine? maybe they didn't.

some faces i didn't see. but their bodies. i saw them. sat and stood. covered. some more than others.

we all moved with the motion of the train. underground. lurched. stopt. and released like elastic bands.

each person alighting at a different stop.

the sadness, it never grew. you'd have thought it would have. you'd have thought i would have entered into this rhythm where with each new face came each new bit of sadness. but i didn't. it was a steady stated sadness. not overwhelming but not below my toes. it was somewhere between my soles and my soul. a steady glowing dim sadness. like a room that could do with more candles. but, clearly, the stock wasn't there or enough Cook's matches hadn't been bought.

i wanted to stop them from leaving. "don't go out that door!" "don't mind that gap." "leave that gap and come closer to me."

i understood God more in that moment. how He looks on us with compassion.

(i hope my kids know that look from me.)

if only i was God. i could alight with each and walk where they walked. step for step. and breath for breath. and like the banks of a river, i would never impede their flow. but i would buffer them wherever they go. so they could live life abundant while i deal with much of the blows that often come our way.

"don't go," i said. "don't . . ."

we reached Vauxhall station. the doors opened. it was my turn to go. with kids in tow. my wife and i corralled our little ones. ushered them onto the platform. and i took one last look at all the faces i would never know. and i let them go. and i let them go. the sadness too; she went with the train commuting underground.

and i went on my way.

* * * * *

10/26/2022 - the world is beautiful. (please do not remark on my use of "beautiful." this is a descriptor we all know. we all relate to:

) beautiful.

it rained today. i drove to the hospital. every drop thrumming on the windshield. wild rains. pelting. and, upon explosions, the world fragmented. i watched. each drop exponentially multiplied and collected and i felt, too, that i went with each ocean as it bounded and plummeted like fingers on a piano part of an orchestral movement. then i remembered i was driving and i was one. it rained today.

you cannot tell me that is not beautiful. you know the rains i speak of. you know how each drop is dashed against billions upon billions of different surfaces without care.

i drove to the hospital wondering if i would be dashed without care. dashed against billions of surfaces.

have you ever been hit by a car? i have. went straight over their hood. landed in the trees. it wasn't raining that day. but something was raining in me. an unadulterated deluge that pumped the blood in my being like when God, He opened the floodgates and there were two expanses that came from one. the heavens. the earth.

God, we are multiple expanses in one. but You know that already. as it was You who set our expanses in motion.

so maybe that is why i think it is beautiful: it rained today. because the expanse that was falling on me was somehow me. because the expanse falling on me brought me back to the first when i was singular in nature.

but now i am dashed.

and when i was driving, it was raining. and i was me driving through me on my way to the hospital to find out if i would be dashed all over again.

even still. the rain.
 the rain.
 the
 rain.

it was beautiful: how it played its orchestral movement and made me forget
 the reality of how i am broken.

i wish you could see where i live. the fields i drive past. patchwork hills the roads cut
 through. some in harvest. others rested. all with rainwater glistening. magnifying
 the sun's light. i had to almost close my eyes. look away. i could not bear the sight.
 all the fields aglow. sharp and in focus. nothing hazy to them. they were terrifyingly
 bright. and that was the rain's doing. fragmented nature resting atop nature whole
 and in its infancy. what those fields hold now are all the possibilities that will keep us
 going in the new year. i feast on their what-will-be. i soak in the fragmented me.
 do you see how it all fits together? do you see why it is so beautiful?

of course you do. you must. it is beautiful, no?

* * * * *

*10/29/2022 - i have to think about this one a bit. it wasn't today. or even yesterday. somewhere in
 the summer. that's where she lives. resonating. even months later.*

she hasn't aged. in perpetuity.

she's where i merged. the chevrons on the M25. but the other side. when you race down that
 hill when traffic is light.

like catching the waves when i was a child. that final tidal flick that throws one to shore. never
 careful of the stones. they left their marks. but when i look now, open my shirt, those marks
 are gone. and all that's left is this brilliant memory of watery giants reminding me where i live.
 on land. apart from their seabeds.

she was on land. the road home. but not physically standing on the pavement. no. she was up
 a bit. a bit further than you'd think she'd be up. those top shelves that have always been out of
 reach for me.

and she was end

-less.

she was endless.

end-
 less i say
 she was beckoning me: meet her half way.

and i did. above the chevrons. and down that hill. on my way home.

the drive would still be long. two hours at least. but in that moment, there was no other moment. no other two hours. because i met God in that moment. (and God is not the “she” i’ve been speaking of. so don’t get me wrong.) He put her there like a lamp unto my feet in the center of a sunbright day. and she eclipsed those sunbright rays. you’d have thought God could not have created brightness brighter than the sun. but, my god, I am tellin’ you she was the brightest entity i’d ever seen.

now. go to the coast. look out from the coast. tell me what you see. out beyond any liners or smaller sails. tell me what you see. when you look right or look left. with the coast at your back. tell me what you see. are you transported? to where? to where?

now take that coastal vision. that endlessness. the void that is hopeful. and peaceful. where you forget what it is to breathe because you are so enraptured. eyes fixed. lungs stuck. the scaffolding of your being being bolstered and bolstered and bolstered. can’t you feel hope welling inside yer bones? peace that’s pressing beneath yer skin? can’t you feel her endless light?

i met her on the M25. above the chevrons. descending that hill. commuting home.

her endlessness spoke to my endlessness promising better days to come. that was back in th’summer. and, my god, those better days have come. because there is light in my being that i’d thought had come undone but it had only dimmed. it was her light that brought out mine own. it was her light that showed me

i’m going home
 i’m going home

* * * * *

10/31/2022 - I want to start you on the summit of the penultimate climb. Because, if I knew the end, then I’d start you at the end. But I do not know the end. Tomorrow extends my end that is found in this atomic instant.

And in this atomic instant: I am prayerful.

In this atomic instant: I am the leaf on the beech hedge travailed by the winds caught in the tension between what will be in the end and the roots that still hold me in place. (Never still.)

In this atomic instant: I see the bare branches.
 I hear the passing cars.
 The builders on the roof ripping away my shelter.

My shelter.
My. Shelter.

God, You are my shelter. You are my refuge: in this atomic instant.

Even as I am the rubble being thrown from the rooftops. My innards torn from the nails that held me in place. Avalanche of brick and mortar. Rockslides. Are these the sounds of restoration?

Do You have to break me before I am made new? Do You have to break me, meek? Do You. Have to —

God, it felt like you forsakt me once. But my soul knows that ain't true. Sometimes our soul don't meet up with all the ground we feel at our soles. And we must reconcile the difference.

But, God, the delta between what I feel and what I know, well, how do You cross it?

Look at me. I have taken you down a road I didn't intend. We must find our way back now. Back to that penultimate climb. The summit thereupon. Because all good stories are written backwards. The beginning with the end in mind. And I'd be no writer if I didn't bring you all the way to the end.

There's no spoiler here.

There's hope.

There's faith.

There's trust.

There's love.

And there's grace. Grace even amongst the rubble carelessly chucked from the rooftops.

My story ends and it begins with grace. Grace so amazing just like I used to sing over my children as I held their little beings. Felt their little heartbeats. Synchronized and steadied their racing pulse with mine when they lay in my arms. Falling asleep. Falling asleep.

My story, it ends the same as when it began. In His arms. Having fallen asleep and awoken again. Sustained ever again.

And that was the piece of the story that I've left out all these years. All these years I tried to write about the time I almost died. Even that description is miles from the incisions, the scars. Miles from the trauma.

We'll get you there sometime, you know. I'll bring you back there, you know. But not on this climb.

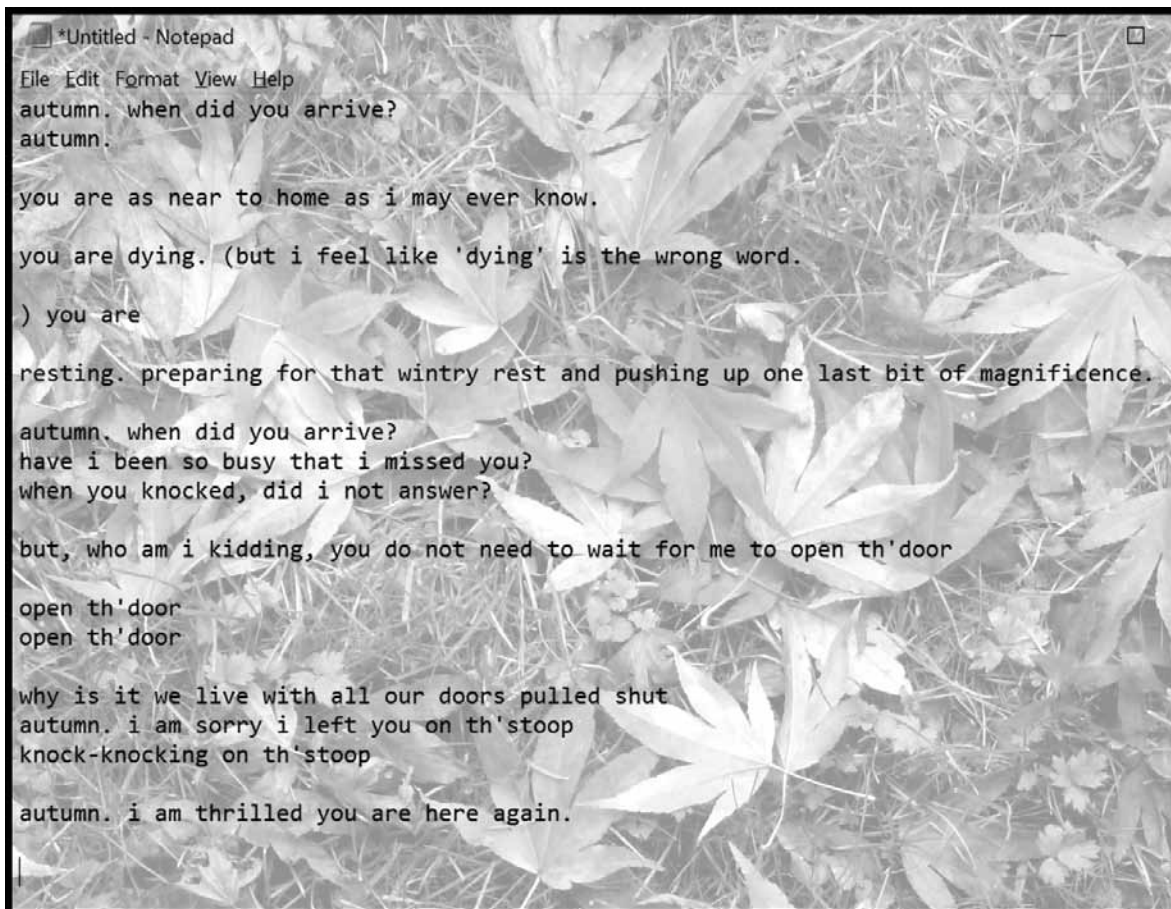
On this climb, we'll sit on the summit and revel at the miracle that is life. And like two lovers who've learned the intimacy of silence, we'll let what unfolds in front of our eyes, having

spoken no words, and leaving between us a shore—its declining tide. We'll watch for the story as it's revealed. And we'll let it wash over us. Take us out to sea. The moment we fall below the waves, we'll have reconciled the delta between our soles, our soul.

So stay with me. Remain with me here. Here on this summit. So I can admit. That I wouldn't be alive today if it weren't for God being inn't.

In the healing: that is in
this atomic
instant.

* * * * *



Gregory Kelly

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, & perhaps these thoughts will be expanded upon sometimes as well.

Six Mid-Autumn Days, During Current Pandemic, October 25-31, 2022

October 25, 2022

6:46 p.m.

Bungalow Cee

Attic Study [work-table]

Milkrose, Massachusetts

Satisfied that I’ve accounted for most of the contents of this issue, both mine & the rest of the contributors, I found myself arriving to this piece, a usual staple as its subtitle states, since *Cenacle* | 24-25 | Winter 1998.

Best put, no immediate ideas. *Dream Raps* populates its pages during April issues. Recently, & still to come, the multi-part *Great Grand Braided Narrative* [*Gr. Gr. Br. N. for friendly*]. Also recently, & to come, pieces on the Burning Man Arts Festival.

This time? None of that. Quite the opposite. This issue is on a short time-table. Those pieces mentioned above need weeks to research, write, finalize. Not enough time for that, even if I was happily beset with a good idea. Not beset, happily or otherwise.

What do I have? Some of my time is free, off my pay-job’s clock. Some not spent sleeping, or engaged with KD. Some of my time, often evenings, I spend up here, in this Attic Study . . .

Like every person reading this, my mind wanders through countless thoughts every day. Some mundane, some less so. I am surrounded by memories. I am in an armchair at a long work-table, covered in books, notebooks, pens. Old snapshots of my grubby visage taped up. House’s grey brick chimney is what the back of this table rests against. My crocheted-by-KD Attic hat on its hook when not used. She crocheted for me a thick sweater for use here too.



Over to my right, the wooden steps down. Near the top of them, an old-fashioned-style radio sets on a little table, usually plays the Dreamland Jazz radio station. Above it, a clock in the form of a black cat with crazy shifting eyes & swinging red tail. KC Klock. KD's armchair nearby, its foot-rest in its seat. Persian-style throw-rug on the recently laid floor of black wooden tiles. Fan, heater, AC. Lotta boxes in corners.

I'm here because I do not spend much time in the wider world. The COVID-19 global pandemic is very much still everywhere, & hundreds die from it every day *still*—no matter those that ignore or deny it at their own & others' peril.

Two old dictionaries among the work-table's notebook pile: *Webster's New World Dictionary*, & *Mrs. Byrne's Dictionary of Unusual, Obscure, & Preposterous Words*. My second copy. Lost first one at some point some years ago.

Latticed panels on the angled wings of the ceiling, protect heads from the many nails knocked through roof shingles.

Several long incandescent lights. A standing table less often used. By KD's chair, a three-legged table of sealed live-edge wood; I call it her "surreal table." Also some built-in shelves nearby, where there are crates of old *Cenacles* & other Scriptor Press New England publications.

Toys & trinkets from long ago Burning Man Arts Festivals.

Nat King Cole crooning, "Mona Lisa, Mona Lisa, men have named you . . ." on the Dreamland Jazz radio station.

I miss the wider world, yet it is crippled & dangerous right now. The virus discriminates for & against nobody.

This begun now for a six-day travel along its way. I cannot predict its details; I can only predict I will try to find & pursue its best grooves.

* * * * *

October 25, 2022

11:13 p.m.

Bungalow Cee

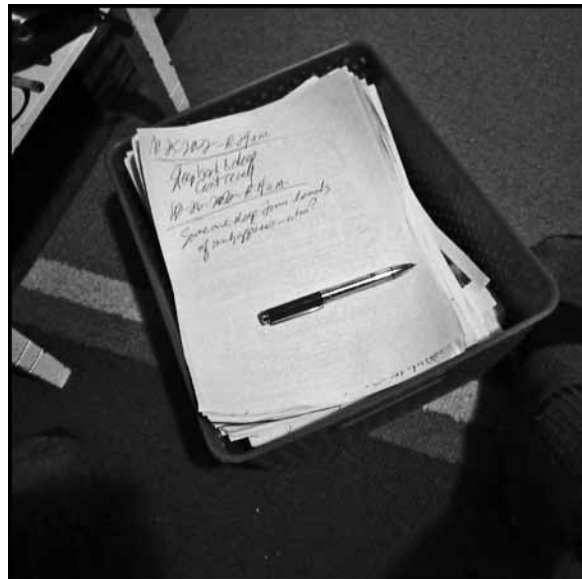
Bed

Milkrose, Massachusetts

Being in bed tonight leads me to think of my *Dream Journal*, recent pages of which are in a basket by our bedside; older pages of which (going back to 2009) are in two wooden cases up on the bureau.

The challenge with a dream journal is two-fold: first is committing to scribbling what one remembers, half-awake, every morning; the second is that sometimes little is recalled. It is easy to get discouraged, or lose interest.

Took me years to commit to the practice, & more years to develop my *Dream Raps* idea, first for my *Within's Within* radio show, & then for *The Cenacle*. Now, I could not possibly start a day without this practice. Dreaming has become for me a time not just of strange delights, or dark weirdness, but also problem-mulling. Sometimes



lucky & fiction or poetry emerge, some or a lot too.

It's depthless & boundless, but one needs patience in developing the craft of dreaming, & then eventually what Art might emerge from it as well.

* * * * *

October 26, 2022

8:25 a.m.

Bungalow Cee

Office Window Desk

Milkrose, Massachusetts

Monday through Thursday workdays (today is a Wed.) I get up, usually 8 a.m., take my thyroid pill, write in my dream journal (today a vague recall of someone sad “many levels down”), & then come in here to do my blood sugar test, prick of the finger & a number (under 100 is good; today is 101; 95 in my 14 day average); & check my blood pressure (120/80 is good; today 124/87); & heart rate (today, 73); & read the *Peanuts* strip in my desk calendar (today Linus is fuming with Charlie Brown over their school banning a book, talking of lawsuits, while world-famous attorney Snoopy will not take the case until he knows where to “send the bill”).

It's sometimes the minutia of daily life that passes unremarked in Art, or otherwise. I recall one of my favorite paintings by Dutch master Vincent Van Gogh is a beautiful rendering of his old work-boots. He'd bought them at a flea market, wishing to portray them in a still life. Only after he wore them on a long & rainy walk did they appeal to his artist's eye. Now they'd shared an experience, & were ready to work together.



* * * * *

October 26, 2022

4:01 p.m.

Bungalow Cee

Dining Room [Eurydice Tower]

Milkrose, Massachusetts

Just finishing up my work day as lead Senior Technical Writer at a Boston biotech firm. Funny: I started there as a contractor two years ago today.

I earned a Bachelor's Degree in English Literature at Central Connecticut State University in 1986; a Master's Degree in English Literature at Northeastern University in 1994; & a Master's Degree

in Writing, Literature, & Publishing at Emerson College in 2000.

Since then I have guessed my way into the work I now do. Learning many software tools, & how to create & organize technical information. It's good work, pays well, well-respected.

So two years at current job at my standing desk here, watching the seasons change, squirrels & birds & chipmunks come & go on the back deck. All within the Pandemic, though a few masked-up trips into my workplace for meetings.

Gratefulness in the form of competence & kindness. How long the path from those many classrooms to today!

Autumn gorgeous as ever.



* * * * *

October 26, 2022

6:53 p.m.

Bungalow Cee

Attic Study [work-table]

Milkrose, Massachusetts

I've been a long stretch up here tonight, Dreamland Jazz going on the Attic Radio (Nat King Cole's "Unforgettable" right now), first at Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Adventure of Wisteria Lodge," & then mostly at *Bags End News* | #521 | 10/8/2022, titled "Even More Friends Arrive to Abe's Beach!" This story part of the *Great Grand Braided Narrative* [*Gr. Gr. Br. N. for friendly*] that I have been writing & narrating in various forms for a year & counting.

Some of it has already appeared in *The Cenacle* (*Labyrinthine*, *Many Musics*); some has not yet. Some, like this *Bags End* story, will not be published there for a few years to come.

So only KD & I are ongoing witnesses to all six major & many minor parts of the *Gr. Gr. Br. N. And Notes*



from *New England* has of course twice summed what has & what has not yet been published.

I have been writing *Bags End News* since 1985, so 37 years. There was a time, some years ago now, when I hardly wrote any issues. Never quite stopped, but close.

Last decade or so, I have returned to a steady devotion to it. 15-18 issues a year, usually written September to late winter / early spring. Ever happy to do this work, like tonight.

* * * * *

October 27, 2022

8:24 a.m.

Bungalow Cee

Office Window Desk

Milkrose, Massachusetts

Dream Journal: *I dreamed of a man who fucked a girl who he did not love. [KD dreamed her mother was in an accident.]*

Blood sugar: 97; average, 96.

Blood pressure: 117/80.

Heart rate: 68.

Peanuts: Linus explains his case to Snoopy, who falls asleep reciting old legal saws.

Up too late with TV, a horrid show called *Married at First Sight* [Quick summary: rarely works out for contestant couples but Reddit viewers by the millions are darkly entertained]. Meanwhile, epidemiologist Katelyn Jetelina is worrying about a “triple-demic” this winter: COVID-19, flu, & RSV (respiratory syncytial virus):



“It’s becoming a petri dish out there.” It’s a good scary name; will the effective branding be enough to inspire uninterested, but completely exposed, millions to get their vaccines, & practice some safe social behaviors?

What if COVID-19 back in 2020 had been dubbed the “Terror Flu”? Would that have kept its *real, deadly* seriousness in more people’s minds for longer? By denying it was a flu (which it isn’t), & never explaining, in primary-colors-level terms, *what it is*, much less letting Not-Doctor-Donald-Fucking-Trump explain his delusional take, millions have died, & the numbers keep piling up. The “triple-demic” is hitting children hard; thus COVID-19 sneaks back into the news.

Meanwhile, another beautiful autumn is passing. The many-colored leaves, the cool-but-not-cold air, the waning light of late-in-the-year calendar. As salving & mysterious as ever.

* * * * *

October 27, 2022

6:35 p.m.

Bungalow Cee

Attic Study [work-table]

Milkrose, Massachusetts

Long workday. I push myself toward aid & excellence, toward all I can do to show my job a treasure in my eyes, by my actions. I would not be arrived to this strange, wondrous Attic without this job, & the one previous to it.

Attics have always fascinated me as kind of doorways to imaginal travels & adventures. I recall dreams of an old house whose stairs led up to an endless Attic. Its environment felt natural to me, closely familiar. Each dream of it was a happy return. I don't think I've had that dream in awhile.

But an Attic dwells in my fixtions & poetry. An Attic of Attics, connected endlessly, & throughout the Many Worlds of the *Tangled Gate Mythopoeia*.

I knew an Attic in my adolescence, house of heartbreak I lived in then. Had no real floor; kept some random things among its exposed insulation. Including a porn mag, teen boy's prize. All I had up there disappeared, likely trashed, around the time I moved out, 20 years old.

This one is the best yet, at least by waking. Shelters me kindly, when I let it.



* * * * *

October 27, 2022

8:11 p.m.

Bungalow Cee

Attic Study [work-table]

Milkrose, Massachusetts

Finished *Bags End News* mentioned previously. Saxophonist Joshua Redman & his old Quartet co-conspirators—Brad Mehldau, Brian Blades, & Christian McBride—kicking it up in their new jazz extravaganza, *LongGone*. Playing up here right now on Polly iPod through the Attic Radio. Bound for SpiritPlant Radio's *Jazz Cafe* this weekend.

It was the creation of *Jazz Cafe* for SPRadio that compelled me to listen to jazz more intentionally than I had previously. I'd bought a few jazz LPs, Miles Davis, Duke Ellington. But programming for 30-some *Jazz Cafes* a year led me to listen ever further & more widely in the genre, like I had for so long with rock music. I go for the older stuff—Miles, Coltrane, Duke, Monk, Ornette Coleman, Sun Ra—but also new jazz geniuses too—Redman, Kamasi Washington, Esbjörn Svensson Trio, Medeski, Martin, & Wood, John Zorn.



Jazz records I would definitely take to a desert island: John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* (1964); Miles Davis's *Bitches Brew* (1969); Esbjörn Svensson Trio's *Leucocyte* (2006). Those for sure three of my favorites.

I still don't know jazz as well as rock & roll. Never seen a jazz concert live. Maybe when the Pandemic finally fades . . .

Ken Burns ten-part *Jazz* (2001) documentary series is a wonderful introduction to the origins, & the long history, of jazz. It's a great one!

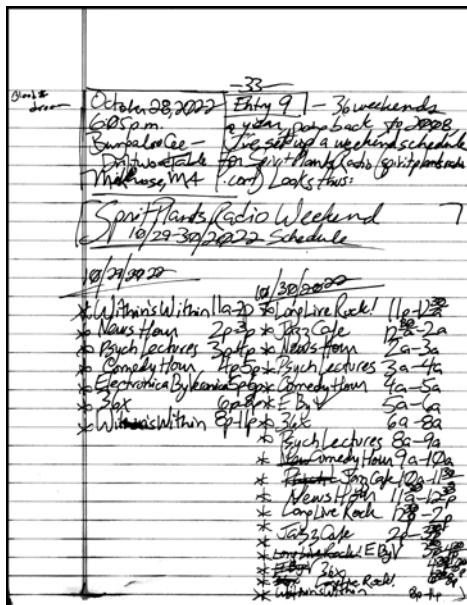
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October 28, 2022
 6:05 p.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Driftwood Table
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

Dream Journal: *Again a dark murky narrative—a man, an intent—*

Blood sugar: 93; average, 96. Don't test blood pressure or heart rate on Fridays or weekends.

36 weekends a year, going back to 2008, I've set up a weekend schedule for SPRadio (spiritplantsradio.com). Looks thus:



October 29, 2022
 12:41 a.m.
 Bungalow Cee—Bed
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

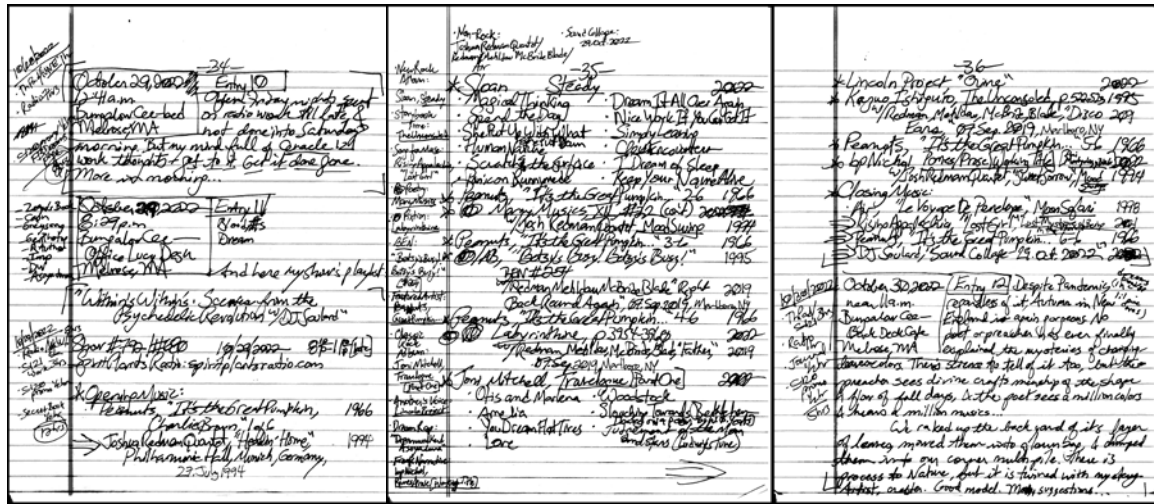
Often Friday nights spent on radio work till late, & not done into Saturday morning. But my mind full of *Cenacle* 121 work thoughts—*get to it. Get it done good.* More in morning . . .

October 29, 2022
 8:29 p.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Office Lucy Desk
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

Dream Journal: *Bellla (a Creature) leads an army or a very good marketing campaign*

Blood sugar: 95; average, 97.

And here's my own radio show's playlist:



October 30, 2022
 near 11 a.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Back Deck Cafe
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

Dream Journal: I'm w/Jim [old dear friend, passed in 2011], probably Mark & Gerry [also long ago college friends], & I think we are in line at a kind of Epcot Center place but I keep losing time & incomprehending dialogue—also I am w/Hartley [friend from more recent years, but also long unseen], he comes from a cab? Very drunk or something & I want to get him into the place quick before guards see—he has to piss outside first tho—he pisses like a lawn sprinkler & I remember how it's funny how every guy pisses like that—later we're all in an endless line & I kept staggering but we do move forward—

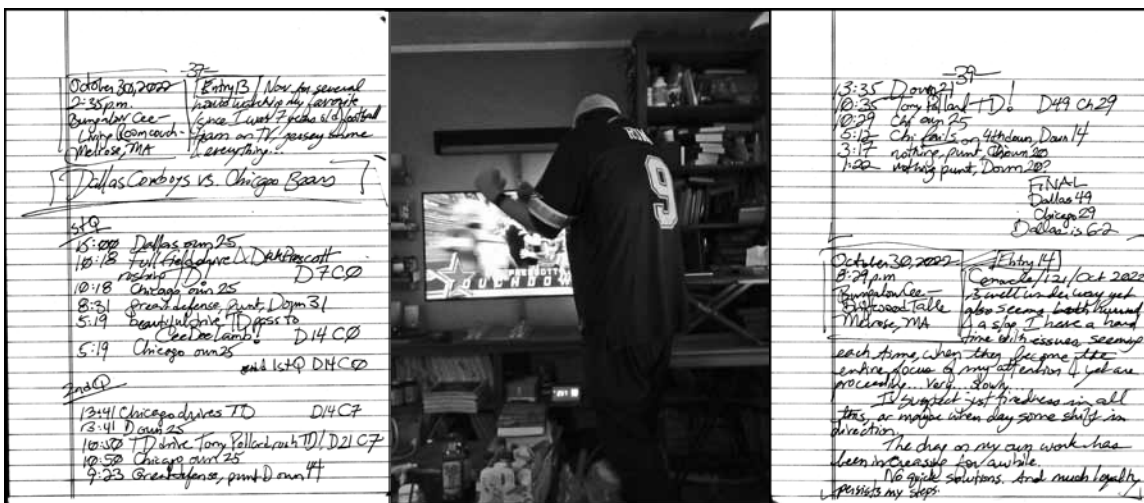
Blood sugar: woke up dizzy, forgot to test . . .

Despite Pandemic, regardless of it, Autumn in New England is again gorgeous. No poet or preacher has ever finally explained the mysteries of leaves-changing-colors. There's science to tell of it too, but the preacher sees divine craftsmanship in the shape & flow of fall days, & the poet sees a million colors & hears a million musics . . .

We raked up the back yard of its layer of leaves, mowed them into a lawn bag, & dumped them into our corner mulch pile. There is process to Nature, but it is twined with mystery. Artist, crafter. Good model. Many suggestions . . .

October 30, 2022
 2:35 p.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Living Room Couch
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

Now for several hours watching my favorite (since I was 7 years old) football team on TV, jersey on me & everything.



October 30, 2022
 8:29 p.m.
 Bungalow Cee
 Driftwood Table
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

Cenacle | 121 | October 2022 [Editor's Note: Issue date changed from October to Autumn] is well under way, yet also seems hurry & slog. I have a hard time with issues, seeming each time, when they become the entire focus of my attention, & yet are proceeding . . . very . . . slowly . . .

I suspect just tiredness in all this . . . but the drag on my own work has been increasing for awhile.

No quick solutions. And much loyalty persists my steps.

October 30, 2022
 10:58 p.m.
 Bungalow Cee—Bed
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

Long weekend, tiring but good, & now to a long workweek—*Cenacle* 121 will shape & shape, up, down, left, right, & emerge as a crafted amalgam of Art. That's what makes it interesting. Similar but not the same each issue.

On the one hand, it is an elaborate vehicle for my own work, for what I am currently or recently pursuing.

But on the other hand, it is my work embedded among the works of many others. Thus is presented in a shifting environment, a mosaic.

It's a quarterly book. A kind of "serial-book." Illustrated too. With ties to multimedia & cyberspace.

I like it, better over time, but I think it can be better.

At the same time, *Cenacle* 121 is the current "volume" of this serial-book at hand, & the one to tend to.

Carrying these mullings into sleep, & the busy workweek.

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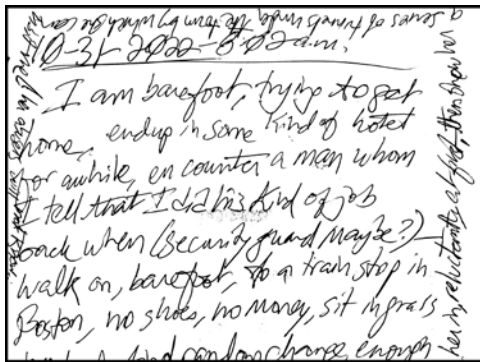
October 31, 2022

8:02 a.m.

Bungalow Cee—Bed

Milkrose, Massachusetts

Dream Journal:



Blood sugar: 118; average, 98.

Blood pressure: 114/80.

Heart rate: 70.

Peanuts: Turns out tis Charlie Brown's pediatrician behind the school book ban!

* * * * *

October 31, 2022

11:09 p.m.

Bungalow Cee—Bed

Milkrose, Massachusetts

Halloween 2022 & maybe the idea of a holiday that involves masks, this year, does not appeal to me. The town we live in closes off the town center to traffic every year for trick-or-treaters to come for a safe time. KD & I ended up with some candy in our basement, on our beloved green couch, watching *Wings*, one of our very favorite TV sitcoms. Dozing too, doing our own thing.

Maybe feel more enthused for it another year. Or maybe what we did is just what we like.

* * * * *

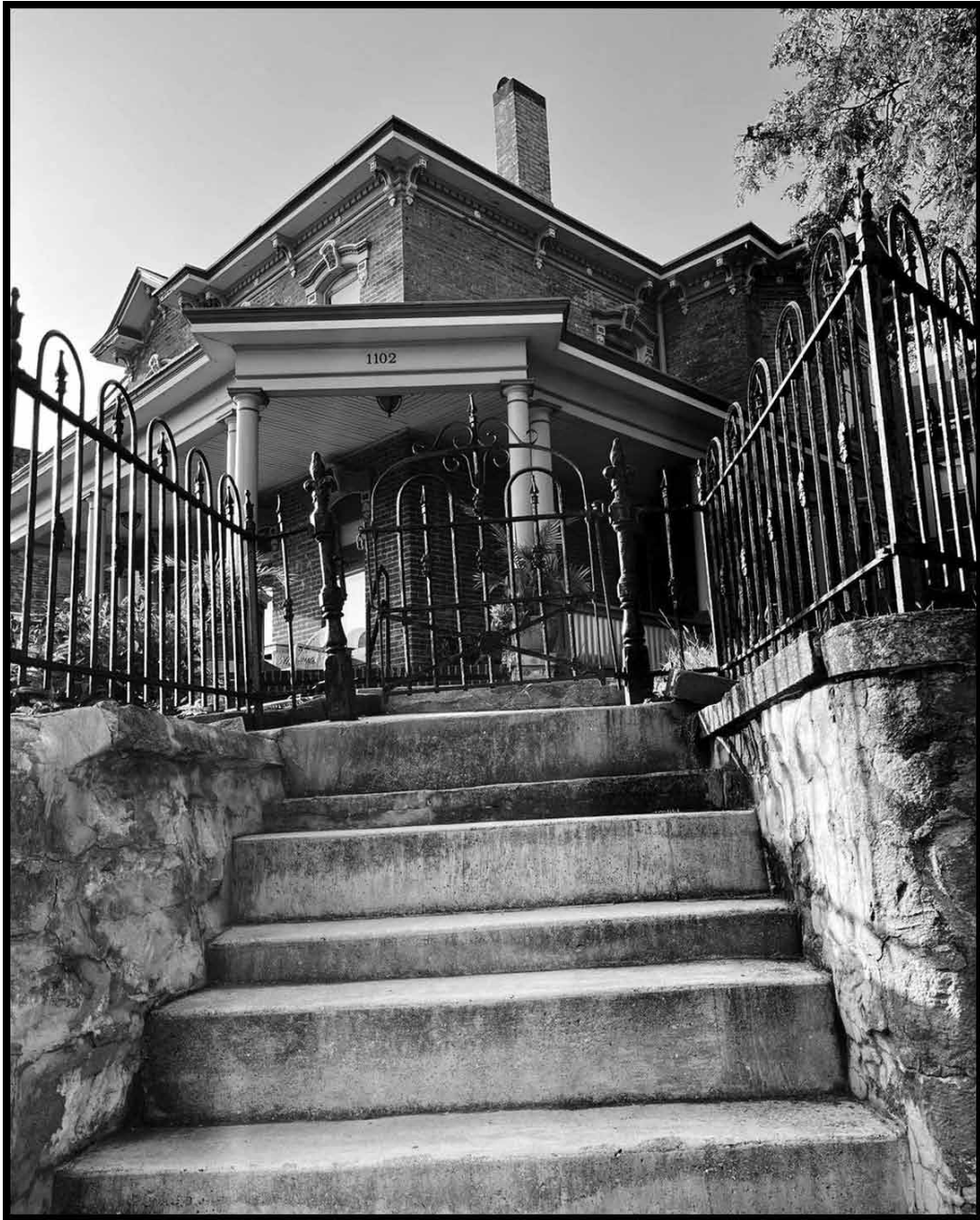
October 31, 2022
 11:14 p.m.
 Bungalow Cee—Bed
 Milkrose, Massachusetts

Aside from this last entry, & journal, last creative thing of this 6-day reportage was the *Creature Tale* telling. More of the Brother-Heroes arriving to Abe's Beach of Many Worlds. On the *Gr. Gr. Br. N.* goes, surely the most ambitious multi-work I've ever created & pursued along. Exciting to see it continuing to evolve, change, grow. *Cenacle* 121 will feature some of it, & *Cenacle* | 122 | Winter 2023 will too.

And maybe I'll do a *Notes* like this again sometime . . .



© 10/31/2022
 M.J. Krose, Mass.



Tamara Miles

Tamara Miles



A Hymn for John Guzowski's Mother

Swift comes the blush rose to decay,
tossed on graves given our goodbyes to say,
it bears what everyone of us should know—

To go bold as we are, mortal, as we are brief,
be crimson, pale, or pink, but make a show.

Make a vow to blur the grief,
a grand bow to time, that ghost and thief,
to our admirers give a wink and, as we go,

unfold ourselves, drop to mark the way
for love to follow, as you did when you lay
near frozen in the snow,

but survived, beyond belief,
beyond the brink, beyond the blow,

to make your poet son obey
his words that burn and blink,
else they lie bleeding like a still and silent doe.

* * * * *

Louis Staebli











Jimmy Heffernan

Notes on Democracy

I often get confused when people say that: a) we are living in a democracy; b) we ought to be living in a democracy; and/or c) our democracy equates with genuine liberty. Allow me to state the reasons why.

* * *

First of all, let me stress here that the United States is in fact a *federal republic*. Not *strictly* a democracy. We may claim to observe democratic traditions, but our elected officials legislate for us. In a democracy, citizens vote on every aspect of government: what gets selected as a bill; what goes on the ballot; and what gets selected as a law.

In a true democracy, elected officials are *merely* clerks or secretaries who file paperwork and carry out bureaucratic tasks. They have no administrative power, which rests solely in the hands of the populace. In a republic, elected officials are trusted to make decisions on behalf of their constituents—or not. It is their prerogative how they vote and, theoretically, if they want to be re-elected, they must vote in the interests of the people.

* * *

But this is all academic in terms of what I intend to explore here. What really concerns me is how little people really look at what democracy—our republican government, government “of the people, by the people and for the people”—*self-government*, really implies.

Democracy indeed *means* self-government. It means rule by the people through elected functionaries who have no real coercive or autocratic power. Correct me if I am wrong, but isn't this, in effect, identical to anarchy? If people are understood to be governing themselves in a democracy, where does restraint of anyone fit into the picture?

If there is restraint by someone over someone else, then there is no self-government, and thus no democracy. If there is restraint, people are responsible for doing it to themselves, but in no country in recorded history is this how the law has functioned.

The law functions as a restraint, through force and the threat of imprisonment (and, in the extreme, execution), by those who have power over those who do not. And, speaking truthfully, those in power are not required to gain assent by those over whom they exert their power.

* * *

So—*where* is democracy in all this? The people only indirectly choose which bills get voted on (by voting for a candidate who claims to have particular views), and how the vote on

those bills is conducted; and they have no choice at all in which of those bills becomes law.

Furthermore, the most historically relevant task in which a government engages—when and with whom to engage in wars—is also completely set apart from the will of the general population.

And the people have even less of a say in the matters of jurisprudence. Judges and lawyers are not much concerned about how average citizens feel about their business in court.

And may I aver that, in the vast majority of cases ever tried before any court, lawyers are more interested in making money than in seeking justice.

* * *

It should be clear to anyone alive that the machinations of government are set in motion *without* explicit permission of anyone but the government itself. In a country that calls its government *democratic*, and sees to it that this appellation is fundamentally correct, a citizen would have to give written permission in order to be arrested, arraigned, or prosecuted. That sounds absurd, I know, but that is what the word *literally* means.

And if something other than that is going on, then we are deluding ourselves when we think we have any real power in the political affairs of our country.

You may respond: “Well, at least we have the right to vote.” And to that I reiterate: yes, on who goes to the Congress or the White House, but not on what they do there or, at least, not on those things they do to which they do not make more than a very few of us privy. I would also add that, if one examines the candidates closely, or even not too closely, it becomes glaringly evident that the men who you *should* want to represent your interests in government are *not* running for office, have *never* run, and probably *never will*.

* * *

And I would add that none of what I have said so far addresses the question of the desirability of rule by the people. Called by some not unintelligent individuals “mob rule.” Many writers and philosophers have pointed out that the smartest and most honest individuals (doubtless, there are actually a few) shouldn’t have their political maneuverability fettered by those whose only aim is to lie and cheat for personal gain.

These same writers and philosophers have extrapolated from this, and concluded that honest and intelligent government by those few in the hierarchy of genetic heritage most fit to conduct it would most likely be superior to the debased and corrupted model with which we operate today.

That is to say, as an alternative to having everyone have a say (which, as has been pointed out, they do not in the least), which incurs a political reality in which personal gain, cutthroat strategies, and power-mongering are the rules of the day (that is, a system in which those most suited constitutionally to be ruthless and dishonest will be the most successful), perhaps those who are actually interested in providing for the needs of citizens who otherwise would have very little to no means of providing adequately for themselves, rather than providing exclusively for themselves or those in their tax bracket, might provide a better standard of living for everyone.

* * *

I do not claim to have any idea how one could construct a government of this sort—an honest one—or how our government could be modified even slightly away from its selfish and virtually tyrannical practices. My only intention is to illustrate that the word *democracy* does not mean what most of us think it means, or at least does not apply to our system of government by the principles of general semantics.

And, further, that even if we *did* have in place what we think we really want, it would only be another failure in a long series, at least seen from the eyes of those who are not in charge of it.

* * * * *



Tom Sheehan


Star Roots, Field Work

Deep in the August field,
 I loll with mice and deer,
 and the jawboned lightning
 playing wild war games
 all across a sky's blue air.

One jagged tear of it
 ripped through the stoic barn,
 from stem to stern, lighting haymow,
 empty stalls, untold years of leather
 collectibles on the hoofed-out floor.

No rain yet, though it's aromatic
 on the wind raking the trees,
 and exhorting whistles sharp and clear
 as commands out of electric wires.
 Why I sit here, plunked on my knees,

with the barn beating up
 the balance of the marble world,
 is cosmic glory like white
 phosphorous exploding stars,
 in a new-coming galaxy,

is but the primal matter
 of selection, my opting for
 an evening of different light.
 Isn't what's left of a day,
 even the worst you can measure,

as good as tender, coin in
 the hand, something for safe-
 keeping in our boot or belt?
 Isn't it a pot of gold,
 unspent, glowing with promise,

with one awesome purchase left?
Isn't its frank position,
despite connivance or loss,
metered across daylight hours,
like a presence known?

The clock spins, I move with it,
even as the grass grows under me,
the ants mine the earth below
in their silent economies,
and moving meridians pass my eye

in the mind's planetarium.
Time is merely circular,
and I catch myself and it
coming together by degrees,
and by handful, by handful.

Later on, when I am housed,
the roof a miniature sky
and lightning sleeping like ducks
on the vast pond of blue air,
I'll stand by the window,

asking the wind to come in,
field to shake free
my insomnias, hedge rows
and stone walls to give up
the last stand the mind makes.

Nothing more than this
can prepare me for morning,
the cycle of time, the circle
of places, the deep roots
stars have in midnight fields.

* * * * *



Wild Strawberry

i. Blooming Marvels

A century before my time
 The first metaphorical flower children arrived
 But it wasn't until Our Earth reached her prime
 That my people would literally blossom

(Fruit of the Virgin and Babylon both)

Our Father—who art still not in heaven—
 Worked for IonFix in the research department
 Exploring biosynthesis in transgenic plants
 Making our genesis a truly novel compound

(In The Beginning was a script we rewrote)

Endopsychiatry was the last best hope
 Of the pharmaceutical industry
 The planned obsolescence of its priests
 A small price to pay

(Grace was hard to schedule anyway)

Its leading light was trademarked Bloom
 The initial trial sought victims of abuse
 Thus Our Mothers were numbered, and counted
 Less than their multifarious wounds

(“Being Blooms to Undo Dooms”)

Fragaria Vesca was modified to produce
 A complex neurotransmitter soup
 Optogenetically modulated after ingestion
 By the human subject in an AutoGarden

(You Are Now Entrancing The Metaphoreal)

* * *



Sam Knot

ii. No Generic Conception

He showed her the berry beds
 and let her pick her own
 One small handful was assumed
 an appropriate dose
 Then he pointed out the hologram
 he had so lovingly designed
 The spinning flower would slowly unfurl
 the journey of her mind
 —*Don't worry, I'll be watching, he said,*
watching the whole time—

She stepped inside the AutoGarden
 (an egg of soft white light)
 Sat back against the disappearing cushion
 and began to eat
 It was a sweet and happy taste
 and soon she felt content
 Content to lie there contentless
 as the light began to bend
 And her head began to spin
 a little bud of next to nothing

He watched her form her floral cups
 just as his own mind had done
 Intuitively tweaked the frequencies
 to nudge her sepals open
And there she was! Blooming suddenly!
 Eleven little packets of radial symmetry
 Gentle yellow hearts with spiraling stamens
 dusted with pollen
 Until then
 the unexpected happened:

It came on as one with her opening up
 her bliss and this liquid
 Tidal waves of thrill, broadcasting
 Come Get Some Whosoever Will
 At first she thought just she were buzzing
 but then she saw the sky was
Filled! Filled with the strangest FriendShipZzz
 of space and their musics
 And all she was was open to it
 an extrafloral concert hall of supernatural nectars!

He tried to damp the circuit down
 but the throttle had blown
 Her HoloFlower turned through itself
 as if the loop were closed
 But the Quantum Informatrix Display—no—
 it had to have broken:
 Optogenetic Neuromodulators didn't even
 have a rainbow setting!

And where was that buzzing coming from?
 He tried to turn it off
 but it wasn't even
 OMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMmmmmmm . . !

* * *

iii. Beyond the AutoGarden

Doctor Xrystalpha picked up Subject Number One
 and carried her out into the sun
 He laid her in the grass
 where her pulse began to calm
 And she shone like a fairy in the fetal position
 becoming honey in the daydream of his spoon
 There was very little else that he could do
 but sing the lullabies she wrung out of his soul
 As the world rippled rainbow with the writhing runners
 that flew from her fingers towards the wild

Needless to say, experimental conditions
 would never be the same again
 (If indeed they had ever been the same
 to begin with)
 Henceforth the HoloFlower would change form faster
 than the proverbial river, giving rise
 to an informational metastructure
 that was beyond the ability
 of the AI to process
 It was less data than poetry, as if
 the performative essence of life itself!
 A Herculean slice of Heraclitean flux
 and not a hope in hell of closing
 this Pandora's Box!

In theory Endopsychiatry had simply
 substituted traumatic disclosure
 for the effortless openness of flowers
 In practice, however, they had failed to consider
 the many ramifications of their
 new metaphorical container
 The experience clearly pertained to
 more than just perspective shift
 and the entities themselves must be
 at the ecosurreal heart of this
 There was nothing to do but break protocol
 and set up a putative therapy circle
 where
 under the guise of encouraging integration
 They would heatedly discuss the ontological implications
 of Bloom as a gateway
 to an ultraterrestrial contact high
 that would leave more than just the user
 revitalized

Subject Number Five, codenamed *Mountain Avens*,
 suggested it could be a matter
 of greater importance
 To establish the objective reality of the entities
 by asking them to solve mathematical problems
 that were beyond the abilities
 of the subjects themselves
 Or else to provide information to which
 they could not otherwise have had access

But Subject Number One, codenamed *Wild Strawberry*,
 quickly vetoed the scheme, saying there would be
 no need, and nor anyway were they
That kind of entity, which she could prove
 just so long as it was not
 merely a *phantom* pregnancy

It was not, ladies and gentleman,
 it was me—the lovely Vesica—
 The first actual flower child
 to bring in a real new age

And in fine freak style
 with strawberry birthmarks all over my face
 And wild green hair like Medusa's snakes
 and a buzzing in my heart
 My loves
 a buzz to end all aches

* * *

iv. InSight of FriendShip

It is the golden thread, that is what it really is
 to is, or and, and or, or not, or not not
 To buzz, to body, to love, to language—it is
 the golden thread of narrative—
 Hold on to your story, this is how they call me
 into the picture
 That is bigger than any analogy
 of being, and quite beyond any kind
 of doing, this is how they call me
 Towards FriendShip—which really is what they call it
 —except somehow with music
 —And it is narrative that fuels it
 traveling literally through definity
 according to the laws of story
 Which are principles we still cannot expound fully
 despite clearly having enough of a grasp
 To begin to craft our own craft
 to put our feet in the air
 and take our eyes off the path
 And to fly where not just anything follows
 like mouth after nose
 or thought after feeling
 The mind after reeling in another flying fish
 from the fountain of the angels
 where the priceless wish
 All fates to end but this
 imaginative freedom to continue
 The work of the wild to become
 Our
 Ecosurreal
 Civilization

But of course this was still too airy fairy
 for some, far from concrete enough
 To charm the more mundane proponents
 of what the Transhuman Imagination
 Literally Already Is! & so the world
 —neither real nor unreal—
 Conspired to give it
 a more utilitarian twist:

The military stepped in
 after the trial of Doctor Xrystalpha
 (Found guilty of treason
 despite having many a good reason
 (At least according to the axioms
 of Psychedelic Analogic
 (Which were of course thought nonsense
 by both court and general public)))

At any rate it would not turn out well
 when the unintuitive hands of
 The General
 fumbled
 The superparticular HoloFlower
 into black-holing itself
 Thus turning the Optogenetic Neuromodulator
 into a deadly
CHAOS-STROBE!
 And sending his traumatized army personnel
 into the transpersonal hell
 we call . . .

* * *

v. Carry On Flowering

Every tripper finds out sooner or later
 they haven't really tripped
 until they've *really* tripped
 But tautologies such as these
 (fearsome as they may sometimes seem)
 Pale before the paradoxical death moon
 of the Absolute Truth
 That melted the soul of that poor soldier
 into the rancid buttery beauty
 of the carrion flower



Sam Knot

When his peeled eyes gazed out in upon
 the neither black nor white
 nor not that nonagon
 of the chaos-strobe's totentanz

It took a long old time of cuddle bunnies
 until the light would linger in his eyes
 Long enough you could get a fix
 on his ThinKing, and help bring
 it out of him, and
 him out of it, too—

Little Cloud was like his shadow
 in those the first few months
 Everywhere he went the little bunny hopped
 after him, sometimes he would stop
 To stroke the shrinking furry cloud
 ever so slowly and ever so gently

To begin with Aven was probably closest to him
 they would take long walks together
 high in the mountains
 Aven was one of those cool octagonal-type dudes
 whom most people find aloof
 But Cary was soothed by his silences
 and his high thoughts too
 There was something
 comforting
 in his positive assessment of negation
 which for him led one to realize how nothing
 could ever be considered in isolation
 meaning everything was always
 open to transformation
 Although, as Doctor Xrystalpha saw,
 it was hard to make such thoughts
 stand up in court!

Melas would often make them laugh
 with his vivid verbal portrayals of that day
 Aping the good doctor's assertion
 that Innocent could not simply equal
 "not guilty"
 Therefore guiltiness itself must merely be a proxy
 for Experience, which for the French
 is of course the same word as Experiment

Meaning whatever verdict they gave
 would be akin to judging poetry
 or in other words: *a matter of taste!*
 Cary found it hard not to appreciate
 such conceptual firework displays
 and in fact after long contemplation agreed
 they kept the truth absolutely in its place

Ulma became very fond of him, treating his migraines
 with herbal medicine, and passing on
 the knowledge of every plant
 in the meadow

While Rosa's contagious delight
 regarding all things sensual
 helped him out of his head
 (in the most constructive sense yet!)

I guess mostly he just liked hanging out with me
 I was pretty good at being myself at least
 Or maybe he really did think I held the keys to FriendShip?
 I admit it was not the easiest concept to get
 until you saw it, which of course
 it was not long until he did!

I shall never forget that day
 among the wild strawberries:
 the look on his face
 and the feeling in the field
 as his blooming world opened
 to the Metaphoreal!

* * * * *

Judih Weinstein Haggai



her glowing skin
her silken hair
visit almost real

* * *

laughter from neighbors
echoes from stark kibbutz walls
night shifts to morning

* * *

daybreak's offerings
rustling in peanut fields
jackals return home

* * *



Judih Weinstein Haggai

unrolled yoga mat
body and mind together
best friends forever

* * *

morning sighting
five jackals cross kibbutz road
before truck traffic

* * *

white flower
full bloom flaunting
for one rare moment

* * *

one step back
all in proportion
bird by bird

* * *

beauty in sand
loquat's downward droop
from dust to dust

* * *

after the harvest
kibbutzniks shell peanuts
replenishing stock

* * *

official autumn
jackals all night howling
peanut field party

* * *

poet's psalm
pleas for a sign from above
thunder rocks the night

* * *

to those in need
may you accept this day
and its delights

* * * * *

Epi Rogan











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 | 120 | Summer 2022

Read the full History at:

scriptorpress.com/history_of_scriptor_press.pdf

The Princess remembers her happy childly dreams, through the hole in her bedchamber, in the caves & tunnels beneath the Tangled Gate. Yet they never found this certain Singer who often traveled near them (I don't *think* this is the Traveling Troubadour). In their hopeful pursuit of him, to give him a little gift:

*I sniffed twice, & begin to laugh. The singing
joined me, as did my friends. Laughing
became a happy song, a song of finding,
a song of gifts. We hurried, we slowed.
There were no rules to finding him.
He did not know where he was.
We sang. We gnattered. We neared.*

*I felt us very close now, we all did,
the singing filled us whole but, still,
not quite. I sniffed twice, & took a deep leap.
“There is a door,” I sang, “& now we pass
through. There is a door. And now we pass through!”
And so we arrived in the Carnival Room,
the root of the singing, its Tower, its starcraft.*

*One had to look around like singing,
one had to listen closely like singing,
one had to walk like singing, sniff like singing,
& always keep singing, or one found
one's self back in an ordinary tunnel
& the singing close & elsewhere like always.*



Nathan D. Horowitz

The Princess had learned back then that the Singer *is* his songs, embodied *by* them, “& this was his happiness.” Now, long later, she struggles to remember *any* of those songs. But:

*Then . . . music! but not singing. Instruments.
A squeeze box, two fiddlers. I come to
a room of my own size again, dark but
noisy. I follow the music. A long tunnel.
Follow the music. Now a . . . platform
above rails, like the picture from
the Carnival Room! It is close, but
I look for the musicians.*

*They are indeed three. An old man
with a mess of hair, in a long grey coat,
playing the sunniest day on the many
yellowed keys of his old squeeze box.
The fiddlers tall, thin, so very thin, barefoot
like me, dressed in faded harlequin
rags, dancing & fiddling with eyes closed.
They do not notice me. I listen.*

And growing stronger:

*Then, I begin to dance. Not just to dance
like remembering. The years fall away
completely & I am dancing with all of me.
Dance like laughter, dance like gnattering,
dance like singing under the big moon,
under none. I dance like the tides,
like the tallest oaks, like everything
I can conjure. I forget the where
& the what of it all, forget to sniff
twice & know, I dance back my years
to far away unknown places, & dance
on to the many I will become & know
in other times. As the roar of the great
wheeled carriage escalates, I return,
as best I can. The musicians have
finished too, & gaze me quietly.
I am arrived finally at this moment
of my self, this perpetuity. I am ready.*

The Princess is now remembering some things, remembering her *self*, all of her *selves*, accepting them back after their sad exile.

Now, in “The Carriage Through,” she recalls the time the Architect’s Boy tried to be with her, & couldn’t, & she laughed at him, in a kind of rushed, continuous moment. He is on this stranger carriage she finds herself riding:

*I open my eyes now & I see you for a moment.
I smile. "You're beautiful too." His look
is inscrutable, waiting. "You were giving me
a clue." He nods. "Are we from . . .
the same place?" "I think so." "Is that where
we're going?" "You are." "But you're here,
in this carriage!" His smile is sad & leaving.
"Only a message. They will think you something
else & try to claim you. You are there to heal,
solely." I nod. "I'm sorry." "I wish I had
kissed you. Just to see. Just to know."*

The Princess arrives to the far future, the time of the Sleepers, wherefrom the Architect:

*There are many, they are pale, they live in
these high caverns, they dream to heal
the world. They are failing. I am the waited
legend. The first to cross the Dreaming
from elsewhere. As I am shown their
small sleep chambers each inhabits most
hours of his life, the brew each drinks
to cross the Dreaming, I wish to comfort
more than I can. Yet here & there I sniff twice,
to know better, & understand.*

She is rescued from their panic & desperation by "a roar through / the caverns, the millennia, everywhere, always."

The narrative shifts back to the Architect & the Creatures in "New Ways to Heal." The Creatures again have at him, but for a different purpose. They each tend him:

*We go together but there is something in this
that is me leading now. We will find you,
we will protect you. When we arrive to your thread
tied to the tree, the box of threads
buried below, I know, I am clear, I sit
down with these friends of yours & mine
& do what I hadn't thought to. I braid
the remaining threads together, close
& tight. I work silently yet there is music
near, singing. My friends are near me,
they wait, they are patient to my task.*

*The threads now form a much longer
line & their power glows. This line
will not run out. The box I stow in my cloak
& I tie the braid's end to the thread
on the branch. We begin together to find
you, protect you, save you. I was wrong
before that you are the thread. We share*

*this among us, with these colored tools,
the trees, the Gate. We will do this task
together. We will learn how together.*

The narrative shifts yet again in “The Believers,” who seem to be those who exiled the King & his followers. The core of this poem is here:

*Yes, I was one of the party that landed
on the Island’s shore, when it was all forest,
found the Gate, saw what was to come.*

*We were given a choice: save mankind or
save the world. We chose the first on
that day. We each entered the cave of
the Beast & brought it down. As the last
of us emerged, there were no longer sounds within.*

*Now, of those six, only you & I remain,
& we will never sit together at table again.
Your numbers diminish by the years
& what matters more is that I will efface
you from history itself. You will unbecome &
I will powder your bones on the sea.*

This poem only hints at the King’s untold past.

In “The Architect’s Record of Time Beyond Time (ii),” we again read from his thoughts while he had yet dwelled in his own time & place:

The Tangled Gate preceded human history as a portal to this world, a crossroads where intentions of the Eternals could be made manifest. It is the source of human dreams, that nightly clue of worlds elsewhere, of many kinds, with offers of many threads. Dreams inspired men to build, to create, to raise up civilizations but, as before & before & before, it was not enough. Those who believed men apart from their world, superior to it, meant to feed blindly & breed more feeders perpetually, & explain their exception to all other life as the will of an invisible hand they alone resembled, failed to understand that hand, that it held all, that it was many hands, that these hands more & more despaired, that beyond time itself these many hands would contrive a child, not a saviour but the one who would take of this world something as it ended, something of it beyond it, to the next world, that as she passed through the Red Bag, she would no longer be merely human but the world itself, its lessons, its losses, its beauties, its smallest sounds, its heart living still as what was left behind was abandoned by the Eternals for lost, as men did not save themselves, as their world did not recover its grand & subtle power, as time itself ran out & the last breath, & the last beat, & the last dream.

This time it is not the Princess happening upon these notes as she snooped in his Tower. He reads these to his friends the Creatures, on their way to protect & serve her path & purpose.

I wrote in my notebooks at this time:

This series has compelled me to play through many ideas, make connections, answer things—funny thing is many years ago I had the one world rising from a dead previous world [idea]—but that something carries from one to the next is new, an idea I could not have come up with then—

These poems will form the basis of much [Labyrinthine] & [Bags End News] & likely [Many Musics] to come. It's good.

The final 4 poems detail the last of the Princess's path. Till close to the very end of them, she continues to walk alone. In the first of these, "The Road Away," she opens her eyes & finds herself again with the Beast. Playing their old childly game, from what came the White Bunny. They talk:

*"Will you come with me?"
 "No. I remain."
 "And my friends?" The white bunny is asleep in my lap.
 He makes to stroke her fur, hesitates, doesn't.
 "They are a part of men. They come from
 the dreaming mind, the shaping hand. You will
 meet them wherever you pay attention."*

The Princess knows that something is ending, even as she does not understand why. Or how she should be involved. Yet, tis so.

For "Processional," & the two poems that follow, I worked from research I done into the Eleusinian Mysteries. A week-long event in Ancient Greece for nearly 2,000 years (until about 400 AD), it was a pageant & processional that led participants from bathing in the sea to tripping together in the cave of the Telesterion.

The Princess tugs on her own powers to see truer about her:

*A shimmer, a break. Back, hence? Neither, both.
 None, one, many. Here is no time & every time.
 The fields are brown, are green, are seas,
 are filled with starcraft. The road remains.
 I am not alone, but need to tug more clearly.
 I stop hopping, steady, close my eyes,
 feel around. There . . . a thread, but thick,
 it is braided. Open my eyes & see.*

*The Eternals are departing this world,
 this is their processional away.
 There is sadness but something else,
 something I could not have known,
 a kind of waiting joy. Something new
 to come to, open hands, open doors, strange chances.*

The Princess, guised as her White Bunny friend, hops among the Eternals as they are arriving to the sea. Distracted by this, she becomes girl again, & is now chanced upon by the Hero from long ago. He explains himself:



*“I was made by agreement between Eternals
& some men. My purpose was to contact
the Beast, ask his help. The words you gave
to me were for him. A surrender, a truce,
that when you entered the Gate, you would
be aided to pass on. The word you spoke
to me that night on the ship when I came
to you, it was the Architect’s next instruction.
It’s why you & they are all here now. It’s
why what happens next.”*

After a night of dancing (one in which he *does not* leave her by morning) comes “Festival Day,” with the Princess still unsure this processional’s goal. She then remembers one of her childly dreams in particular:

*There were then among them masques
when the caves & tunnels would be
entirely decorated, many instruments, singing,
costumes. I would wear the crown of
vines & pebbles, & preside as they wished.*

*One in particular, & very strange.
I did not know which costume guised
which friend. They were not dressed as
sprites or oaks, sunshine or red berries,
they dressed as men & women, impossibly
strange for their creaturely forms.*

*They gathered around me, these beautiful
forms of men & women, smiled me
in ways impossibly loving & sad both.
They sang as though one braided voice:*

*“When the glaring lights have left
When the music has slowed to smoke
When 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.”*

She thanks the Hero for his kind protection, & now comes the final poem, “One. Many. None.” Before writing it, I DJ’d my 36th & final *Within’s Within* radio show of the year, my “10th Annual Holiday Music Show.” Always a fun one.

Another tradition started up on my show that December. On the previous weekend’s show, 12/1/2012, the first anniversary of Jim Burke III’s death, I began a kind of annual tribute to the passing of my friend. I play songs or albums during my first December show of every year by his favorite rock

band, The Who, & their lead guitarist & principle songwriter, Pete Townshend. Another way to keep him close in the Art I have done since his passing.

During the Holiday show broadcast, I read the fourth of the four *Tangled Gate Sketches* in *Many Musics*. Thus, come the following January, I would be reading the *Tangled Gate* poems themselves on my show.

Once done, I took the bus to Harvard Square, to my beloved Au Bon Pain Café. Found a booth in the foyer near the exit. Settled in.

I had all the poems written so far in hand. Read through them all, again. Then, ready, dived in. Took about two hours & a dozen pages to write this poem. But I did. I earned it by 5 weeks of devoted work, & I *wrote the hell out of it*. It's as much a kind of review poem as new.

Its epigraph is an allusion to the film in *Labyrinthine* called **RemoteLand**: "*Neither death nor dream / are truly a remote land.*" Pushing works closer.

The Princess first remembers the White Tiger, her past teacher, in the Great Garden of the Pensionne:

*He taught me in every way possible
what tenders most need to know:
kindness most binds. I often resisted
the far ends of his teachings, when kindness
seemed second to self-preservation, or revenge.
He insisted me. Pressed me again & again.*

The Princess is led by the processional to the mouth of the cave, splashes a drink like she had at the Fountain. When comes next are a series of images & encounters from her life: when she & her father the King studied their *Book of Patterns*; her lost brother; the girl who lured her father the King into a sad, destructive tryst.

Then she encounters the Architect & her friends the Creatures, returned to her at last:

*"Do I finally learn what all of you are?"
"You created us. You do every time
there is a new world."
They crowd close to me, even the
Architect is not far.
"Why don't I remember?"
"You always say because failure is
an imperfect teacher, & hope
opens hands the best. We are your hints
of elsewhere, of others. All you will
allow yourself."
"Is this world failure then? Do I lead
the procession out there to a new one
again?"
"There is a choice."
"What choice?"
"Stay. Fill the hole in the heart of the world.
Bind the Gate here, to serve as foundation
to all."
"Why haven't I chosen this way before?"
"I convinced you," says the Architect,*

*with a deep heart's whimper. "I believed
we could make a world without flaw."*

The Princess drifts away. Remembers more whom she loved. Then:

*I begin
to fear. How do I know a flawless world
can't be found? I twist in, & in, & in,
feel myself starting to pull this world
closed upon itself, its possibilities, even
as glints & glarings of a new one nose me near.*

*I fear. Words are leaving. This is what
they do. No! (leaving) No! (leaving)
I try to cry out help me but it's just a
silent wordless grunt. No! (leaving)
Try again, the world shaking, the Beast &
its mate together, comforting at this
once again known end. Failure. Pain.*

*No! (leaving) No! (leaving) N-! (leav-) N-!
(gnatter) (N!) (gnatter) (N!) (gnatter gnatter!)
No! Help me, Architect! My friends! Beast!
Hero! My father the King! Help me!
White tiger! Singer! Troubadour!
Help me! (No!) (gnatter! gnatter!)
Help me, Queen! Help me, all!*

*A great roar, a wild pain, I feel blown
all to light, cry soundlessly, & then
all silence. Silence. Then a voice,
my own, & yet I listen:*

*"There is a door & now we pass through
There is a door. And now we pass through!"*

*The world spasms. The world shakes.
The world holds. I reach into its maw
& fill it with everything I've ever learned,
ever known. I bind myself to this world,
its flaws, its beauties. I push time
back, smooth it like a thin blanket
along a long, long bare back. It is there
for those not ready to reveal themselves
to the night & its many kinds of truths.*

*I push back, growing stronger, healing
all I can, there is so much, & the world
will ever root up its song in part from
its countless fractures, how they chorus.*

*My efforts tire me, & I feel my friends
join me, gather at my back, help me
push, this world, keep this world,
arriving, arriving now, arriving
somewhere to something, close, closer,
more, & more, & a push, & now, good,
it's . . . water. Sea water!*

*I am in mid-dive into the sea,
my things tied about my waist,
bidding my friend goodbye with a wave,
this time I see his face true,
it is the Hero, my friend, smiling
at me as once I had at him, thank you,
I love you thank you, & goodbye.*

*The shore is rocky, no beach where I halfcollapse
breathless. The sea lets me leave
but willing this time. I have bound myself.
I have remembered some things &
bound myself this time. I will climb
the rocks to the Dancing Grounds,
restore them for all I've learned,
dance again on the girl's legs I choose
to keep. I will let the Castle continue
to return to green, the One Woods
hungering back its possession. The Tower,
with a touch, shall return to tree,
& my Architect will have his day & night
without end.*

*Finally, I will come to the Tangled Gate,
that which I have loved best is here,
always has been, not left or right
by the Fountain, but through,
no way in but through, I will step
through the Fountain, its luring waters
swallowing me as I do, & come at last
to the caves & tunnels of my friends,
leaving a part of me here, my childly dreams,
they shall receive me as my beautiful
dear friends, feather, fur, gill, shell,
happy sniffs all around, but a part
of me will draw a part of them away,
away, deeper & deeper, ever toward &
arriving finally at the Red Bag. Finally
at the Red Bag.
And here we will close what has too long
been opened, the wound that was the loss*

*of our home, long ago, what brought us
here, the remain of us, how we built
but could not forget. I was made to help
us heal but healing is hereon, not
back there. We have done what we meant
to do.*

And she concludes her tale:

*As many, as one, as none, each of us
shuts eyes & imagines the conclusion
of the story on the other side of the
Red Bag. Closes eyes, imagines, steps through.*

*One by one, till all, till I am left
to finish. I watch myself dancing the
grounds my father the King built for me,
hear the songs of my childly dreams in these caves
& tunnels, had forever, the world's best,
secret balm. If these pages are found
& read, listen for the singing from the caves
& tunnels. Join us in childly dreams.
Dance their messages through your daylight
hours. Touch & teach others how, they are real.
Open hands, touch & teach others how,
so close, smile, so close. They are real.*

I was exhausted as I finished this poem. I was *ecstatic*. I believed, & still do believe, it's one of my best poems ever.

Rode the bus home, writing down impressions for *Cenacle 83's Notes from New England*. Home, read the new poem to KD. She enjoyed it, & congratulated me.

Time next to get *Cenacle 83* done, & ready for debut at the December 2012 Jellicle Literary Guild meeting.



* * * * *



Kenzie Oliver

Martina Reisz Newberry



I'll Have Ice

Through torn pieces of sky,
I watch the onslaught of fall,
watch my every move,
every act,
every thought,
every nerve ending
dilate and blur.

Once again, fallen angel,
you have showed me
who I really am.
I walk slowly to my door,
then in to the very small kitchen.

I'll have ice
in the heavy old jelly jar tumbler;
I'll have Old Bushmills over the ice;
I'll have a new book to be read
in the big, tired, gray chair;
I'll have warmed feet in furry socks.

Give thanks, says Sister Saint Adalsinda,
. . . *or not*, says the devil
in his suave, sensual, L.A. dialect.

I am a child of Narnia,
have never left its pages.
There, understanding life
is not a given.

Lucy tells Edmund,
*I'm sure when I'm older,
I'll understand.*
Edmund tells her,
*I am older and I don't think
I **want** to understand.*

Nearing 80, frightened
of the adventures ahead.
I understand,
and I wish I didn't.

* * *

Welcome Mat

If you want to live, there is still room for you here.
 We ask only a few things of you
 (though they are huge things.

First, it is necessary to begin each of your days
 with a consideration of the sun's radiance.
 If there is no sun, a 40-watt light bulb will do.

Next, we ask that you sort out your resources,
 alphabetize them, and lay them in rows
 on top of your dresser.

Next, you must fix what is broken,
 erase all graffiti from walls
 (unless it is sexual in nature,
 and plunge the toilets in your building with great vigor.

Last—certainly not least—you must consider
 two lost loves each day. You must learn
 the language of aspen trees, and allow
 all you own to experience a miracle.

The last thing I'll say to you is not
 one of the commandments—it is a suggestion:

If you want to find wholeness or peace
 (you may not have both, in this life,
 you must walk into the world,
 look for an idol in a cow pasture, and worship it.

* * * * *



Nathan D. Horowitz



How Eva Became Christian (And How I Became Nathan)

[Travel Journal]

i.

Sleeping long these nights. In dreams, they speak my language. Yesterday the only people I talked to were kids, mostly just in greeting. Raúl's son Lenín, whose nickname is Doctor, came to my hut just before sundown to karate-fight with me, and show me his new cap gun. When the light started fading, the Doctor left, having cured me of isolation.

In a dream, I'm in the near future with three friends in a stately colonial neighborhood in Quito at dusk. It's time to overthrow the president, Fabián Alarcón, just as we overthrew the last one, Abdalá Bucaram. A supersonic passenger jet booms across the sky.

Now we're in a shopping mall. An ad above the escalator hawks flights from Quito to Europe with the tag line "In half an hour, you could be eating a croissant in London!" I like the idea, but there's no time for that now. *We have to overthrow the president.*

My three friends and I descend into a tangled subway network far below the surface. Crowds are rushing around. There are no maps or transit officers. We're disoriented. We emerge into an underground mall that goes on for miles and miles. The ad for flights to Europe appears again.

Our feet barely touching the ground, we sprint through store after store, down aisle after aisle, past perfume counters, racks of coats and pants, and tables piled high with socks, dodging employees and customers, on our way to overthrow the president.

Later, Rumi Aragonés from Guapulo and I are in a house in the USA. We're smoking pot with a clay pipe that's shaped like a wind instrument so silent music flows into us when we inhale.

At dawn, we go out on the street. Rumi starts repairing Elvis, his 1967 Ford Taurus. Rumi is so stoned that he welds a second right front door onto Elvis without noticing. It swings on the same hinge but, of course, can't close. I wake myself up laughing.

ii.

That was the end of the dream. When I opened my eyes, I was sad to see the dawn. After the conversation yesterday, I don't feel great about being here right now. Seems like all white guys who hang around Indians eventually get threatened with death. Just another initiation, I guess.

It's 5:46 p.m., and I'm on my green woven hammock eating boiled plantains plus pasta with garlic, and a cream sauce of powdered milk and vegetable oil. Lucho just came by and

dropped off a rain poncho I'd lent his son for the rainy boat ride to Chiritza the other day. Lucho again talked about borrowing money for his kids to finish their schooling. What he wants is so little, but I can't afford it. He helped me finish off the pasta and plantains.

Last year, I tried to bum some money off a rabbi I knew. To apply for a personal grant. I *schnorred* him, to use the technical Yiddish term. *I'm doing important, basic research on shamanism*, I wrote. He politely demurred.

I'd love to come back here someday with money like the body of a beast I've killed, lay it down, let them cut it up and share it out. *Here, folks: take, eat; survive and thrive, with medicine, education, and transportation for all.*

iii.

Serafin's oldest son Cristóbal's generator is humming, bulldozing-the-jungle sounds. Inside his little wooden house, neighbors are watching a sitcom or a soccer match on one of the channels that come in from Peru.

Cristóbal runs a clinic next to his house. The guy I'm wary of is the local expert on Western medicine. If he chops off my arm, he'll be able to sew it back on right away.

6:58. Insectivorous bats chatter outside the hut. One darted and swooped near where I was reclining in my hammock, watching the woven sling turn from green to black. A blast of air from its right wing hit the back of my neck. This, too, was a text.

iv.

Yesterday and today, I've been out of cooking gas, so I've been bringing food to the hut of Eva—the grand, gentle matriarch of this community; the first Christian; the younger sister of Francisco the shaman-chief; the older sister of my teacher Joaquin's wife Maribel; and the mother of Serafin and Domingo, the first two leaders of the tribal government after old Francisco died and leapt up from his grave to the sky.

As of this evening, she's out of gas too, so tomorrow she'll be using firewood, which she insists on gathering herself. We've been having rice with cans of tuna fish, plus plantain chicha to drink. This evening, her kerosene lamp streaked the shadow of her cat six feet across the floor to land crisp on the wooden wall. We watched the shadow walk, stand still, turn its head. The cat's mother was somewhere outside.

I asked these cats' names. The question surprised Eva. The Secoyas call all cats "Misi," she told me. I was surprised and acted scandalized. I said all cats should have names. Eva's five-year-old great-grandson Danilo spoke up, naming the mama cat Eva and her shadowy daughter María, after the Argentinian anthropologist in whose hut I'm staying.

I asked Eva if she'd drunk yagé. She said, "I was studying it with my brother Francisco. Then my baby Domingo got sick. The shamans couldn't do anything for him. But the missionaries saved his life with penicillin. Then I had a dream. In it, I was ill. I vomited and vomited and vomited leaves." She mimed this with her hand, strewing imaginary leaves around the floor of her hut.

"You vomited leaves?" I asked politely, wanting to make sure I understood.

"Yes, many, many, many. They represented my sins."

(*What sins, Eva?* I wondered.)

“Finally, I saw a cross before me. I knew it could make me well. I approached it. When I woke up, I decided to stop drinking yagé and become a Christian.”

I still think missionary activity sucks, but I couldn't dispute Eva's sincerity. It brought back what Rufino had told me about his mother Maribel, Eva's kid sister, converting not because of anyone's pressure tactics, but because she asked Jesus to wash away her sins, and he did.

v.

A canoe full of tourists motored past this afternoon as I was standing in the river, shaving. We smiled.

Classes are going fine at the school. We're working on the numbers from one to a hundred. It's now 7:45 p.m. A three-inch-long cockroach just buzzed down and landed in my hammock, then climbed up it to the support rope, where I began to ignore it.

Gnats keep flying into my left ear as if it were the entrance to a vast cavern, an enchanted labyrinth, or a Swiss cheese mountain. *Are they foraging? Researching? Craving earwax? Adventure?* Other gnats crackle in the flames of my two candles, their souls springing free of this mortal coil.

Gnat carcasses sprawl in die-rolls of disarray in a four-inch radius around the base of my candle, which I've melted to the wooden tabletop.

Why this gnat Jonestown, this rush to gnat Asgard?

Why bug my ear? Is this another confounded message for me? Hmm?

The air is alive with bats now, too. I bet gnats taste like shrimp to them.

vi.

When she was pregnant with me, my mom read a Nathaniel Hawthorne book and decided to name me after him. When I was ten, she registered me in a hockey league. Before each kid went on the ice, we had to stop before a man who sat on a high stool. He would rip off a piece of white cloth hockey tape and stick it to each kid's helmet and write the kid's name on it. When it was my turn, he ripped off a short piece of tape. “Nathaniel,” I told him. He looked at the tape on my helmet, shook his head, and wrote “NAT.” After that, I went by Nat. Ten years later, someone was introduced to me at a party and said cleverly, “Gnat? Like the bug? Hahahahaha!” This had happened before. Something inside of me snapped (specifically, it was the name Nat), and the next day, canvassing for Greenpeace, I started introducing myself as Nathan.

But I was Nat, with or without the G, for ten years.

Is it a stretch, then, to see the circle of gnat corpses as related to me? Could they be my lives, or my sins, cindered by the flame of time?

* * * * *





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.

xxii. Aerie

Come to with a purring in my flattened face.
Cohere my fresh aches & raise up slowly on my hands.
Tis my Narrow Hut! How . . . ? Empty as ever, but—

"You led me here, Roddy."
Tis Mentor's long lanky frame set angled against
the far wall. Hardly far really.

I groan & rest against the opposite wall to his,
still holding close my old purring quilt friend.
Better comfort than most I've known.

But this Hut, so long unseen. Its brilliant shaft of light
from up high between us. Once told my King
twas the closest I'd known to a praying chapel.
My King . . .

* * * * *

I study him through the shaft, as though its motes
could reveal this man truer than what little
I know. Striped knit cap, black & white, slouched low
as ever on his head. White spiked teeth, yet not fangs.
Long grey overcoat. Brown pants. Tall white boots.

He waits out my study, quiet & patient as Creatures.

Suddenly says: "You run swifter than any big man
ought be able."
"Yet you found me."
"Our story only half told."
"I recall nothing. Nor your invitation here."

He laughs, a rich, low, vibrating noise I'd rarely heard.
I sense his patience now waning. Wants to get back
to it, whatever *it* was, from which I had, failingly,
fled.

Says: "The Huts you lived in awhile trace back
timeless before your occupation. This one,
the several others, including the Mailbox House
we, in chase, came from."

Oh. I flinch. *Something.*

* * * * *

Nods. "Roddy, I I knew it long before you. And we
knew each other long before our recent encounter
with Gate-Keeper."

"*Why can't I remember?*"

Mentor shifts about in his seat. "I'm no Tender
to sniff & know for sure, but I think nearing
your King again has become like a series of doors
to your memory's full recall, each one harder
than the last."

"And you part of this?"

"Very much."

"Will you tell me now?"

"What do you last recall?"

* * * * *

Roddy holds his quilt close, eyes shut, looses
into the purring, long ago shards try
luring him . . . *her blonde hair, purple eyes . . .*
that great wave, frozen nearly dry . . . Leonardo's
long red straw hat, feathery red whiskers, mashed nose . . .
that exotic little man & his desert shack . . .

"Neither death nor dream are truly a remote land," he whispers.

Starts. "That letter. *Iris.*"

"What else?"

"I'd . . . come back here . . . to my old Huts, so long
unseen."

"Why?"

* * * * *

I hug my quilt friend hard. Purring near to *hmmmming*.
 “He . . . my King . . . vowed to raise up an army
 to return to the Tangled Gate, assault the Beast
 till he told where our Brothers, where his Queen Deirdre.”
 “And you opposed this?”
 “We had *barely survived* all that!” I cry, fist pounding
 my hand. “I did not know where our Brothers were,
 but I felt them neither gone nor in that Cave either.
 Nor that the Beast was our enemy who *should*
 or even *could* be assaulted.”

“What did you do, Roddy?”
 Anguished, I say: “I raised an army to oppose him.”

* * * * *

“Why did you keep coming back here,
 to your Huts?” I ask.
 Roddy twists & distorts into himself. His quilt
 enwraps him now, *hmmmming, tendering*.

“Shall I tell you now?”
 Nods weakly.

I sit up straight, my hands of their own will
 plain open in my lap. *Time to tell*.

“Roddy, I told you before that I had Brothers like you?”
 Nods.
 “And I lost them too.”
 Nods again.
 Silence a moment.

Then: “I was the only one to make it down
 to Abe’s Beach of Many World.”
 He looks up sharply.
 “I waited forever. They never came. Finally, defeated,
 I returned to my home-world.”
 “And your Brother in that strange yellow building?”
 I nod, say nothing again a moment.

* * * * *

Then: “Abe told me before I left that more
 Brothers would come someday. Promised he would
 let me know.”



“How? From so far? In your Dreams?”

“No. It was by the White-Faced Pink Cat Radio
in my Thrift Shop.”

Roddy nods.

“I believe twas by his Imp that somehow
the messages came.”

“How so?”

“Twas a strange program called *Trip Town*.
A *cackle . . . Laaaa!* would mix into the dialogue,
& then Abe’s voice for a few moments. Then another
cackle . . . Laaaa! & he was gone again.”

* * * * *

Mentor closes his eyes to recite:

“Now traveling this stream like a mind
skating its own reflections, the liminal place
where *is* & *also-is* gifts other possibilities,
now move along, now *dream awake!*”

“It was *his* voice, Roddy, *Abe’s*, describing
my world!”

* * * * *

“Did you reply by Radio as well? An Imp
of your own?”

Mentor smiles, fuller than before. “No, Roddy.
I replied by Gate-Keeper.”

Roddy sits up straight now, yet also shakes his head,
like buried in the earth.

“Does he know?”

“No. Your company with him is my final
message down.”

Silence a long while.

* * * * *

“How did we know each other?” I ask.

“Abe told me your quest had seemed to fail,
Wobbled, scattered.”

“Seemed?” I snap. “*We did fail!*”

“No.”

I stare darkly the passing shaft between us.

“Abe told me it was time to make contact with you.
So I travelled to your Kingdom. Followed your steps.”
Silence.

“You would come back to your Huts more often.
Like retreating to your simpler days long ago here.”
Silence.

“Finally, I let you espy me up in a very tall tree
near Mailbox House.”
Silence.

Mentor laughs. “Actually, I’d been letting you
notice me more & more, following you in
your Kingdom. And into these White Woods.
And then finally catching me out in my Aerie.”

Pause. “You sort of shook me down.” Shows a repaired
patch on the elbow of his long coat. I nod, no more.

“And I told you some of who I am &
more importantly, of the Forever Spaceship
beneath the Mailbox House.”

* * * * *

Roddy starts. “It’s under . . .”
Mentor nods. “It’s how you entered it for
the long trip you took.”
Roddy leans forward now. “Tell me all.”

Mentor looks down at his long fingers
twisting among each other. “You know yourself
it travels time like space. You can walk its length
toward past or future, & not age a day, nor
lose an hour.”

Roddy nods.

“I believed you & your King could travel by it
to find your Brothers.”
“How?”
“Isn’t that what has happened, Roddy?
Is happening now?”

Shaken, Roddy nods again. Unburying.

* * * * *

“But he wouldn’t come with you,” I say.
 “No. He would only take his army to the Cave
 of the Beast,” I agree softly.
 “And you could not stop him, short of imprisoning
 or slaying him,” I say.
 “So I led his Kingdom against him,” I reply.
 “Called him & his followers ‘fanatics’ who would
 bring their war home & ruin us all.”
 “They would have prisoned him,” I say.
 “But I let him go. Him & a very few followers.
 Not enough to threaten the great magicks
 of the Tangled Gate.”
 “And you returned to me.” Then silence.

* * * * *

“I had to find the rest of my Brothers.”
 “And I showed you the bed of Ferns nearby
 that is the way in.”
 “And I asked you to obscure my memories.”
 “And the Forever Spaceship followed your will.”
 “And I woke up there. Only the lavender trace
 as my companion.”

* * * * *

Mentor stands, & comes over to sit next to Roddy.

“Why did you & yours fail?” Roddy asks suddenly.

He sighs. “No easy answer to that. Maybe
 we lost faith. Maybe we lost each other.
 Maybe saving the world grew less important
 than filling our bellies & sating our loins.”

“‘Saving the worlds?’”

Mentor smiles, grips Roddy’s big shoulder.
 “*That’s* what this has always been about.
That’s what you are bound to do. What we
 couldn’t. It’s all that matters.”



* * * * *



Timothy Vilgiate



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 24: And Then, Light

i.

A bright, searing light that makes me shut my eyes in pain and, when I open them again, my vision has split into scattered, staggered frames that vaguely reflects some distant, fishbowed universe, like I am seeing through the eyes of two people at once. I blink, and the world staggers back into focus with a flickering after-glare.

My bloodshot eyes wrench themselves open, and I feel my body fall back into itself, yet at the same time, I also feel myself breaking away from a much larger whole. As I fall backwards out of my eye, I can see the hospital lights like bright, rectangular suns reflecting my pupils, which seem like an immense black lake.

And all at once I remember what I need to . . . wait . . . No. Never mind. I forget . . . uhm . . . whatever it is I am trying to remember. And, by the time I remember I've forgotten, I've forgotten to remember. The cycle stretches on in perpetuity, until forgetting becomes an excuse to remember, and remembering an excuse to forget. There, in the tenuousness of memory, I feel myself reborn as someone who has somehow always known exactly what and who he is, if only because I've forgotten everything I don't know.

I peel back from my eyes towards the far corner of the hospital room as a reborn, amnesiac spirit. The eyes of what feel like eight, and then four, and then two people overlap into a singularity. Down below, I see a body, shaggy-haired, dark, and lean, a body that stares at me with mortified devastation through tortured, pinprick eyes. It sees me—I am a thought that he'd lost—another memory torn from him by a vicious, sadistic captor.

I keep drifting back towards the ceiling. Am I real? I reach back to see if I can feel the jagged cement texture on the wall behind me and . . . I can. Can I feel my face? I can. Can I feel my shoulders? Yes. Can I feel my heart, my stomach, my legs? Yes. Everything.

I don't remember how I'd gotten here, though. I don't really remember anything. I only remember vaguely that falling backwards out of my own eye as multiple people at once is not a normal thing to do. Perhaps after all that I'd been through, I've thrown a part of myself away. Perhaps I want something, anything, to be preserved outside of my brain so that just one, tiny, piece can be left pure and unbroken, a part of me that I can retrieve if I ever remember where I've left it.

I have no memories of how I'd arrived in this hospital room, no memories of what has brought me here, even though I feel certain that I could remember, if I wanted to. Whoever I am in this form, I feel like more than a memory. I feel like a mirror image of that much larger self, lying there on that bed, even if I am quite different. The pupils in my physical body's eyes suddenly dilate and slam shut, in defeat. I feel that defeat in my core. I can feel them as my feelings, but still somehow I recognize its feelings as entirely separate from

me.

Meagan, who I know somehow, heaves to the left as though her jaw has been hit by something massive, and then suddenly gasps for air, staring transfixed at the wall. She is interrupted by the entrance of a tall, African-American woman, with a pair of horn-rimmed glasses and a serious expression. This woman shuts the door behind her, and mutters something to Meagan that I can't quite hear.

I settle on the ground, and grow to my normal size. I have to warn them. I have to tell them about Ryan. I try to follow them, to get their attention. I steer around the hospital bed and reach out for Meagan's shoulder, but my hand passes through her. The door passes over me indifferently, almost mockingly, and slams shut.

I am now alone. There is nothing in the hospital room but myself and my physical body. My heart rate hovers around 140, my breathing quickens, but my eyes remain shut.

It is then that I slowly come to the realization that I can't see myself, not even if I look for myself. I know I am there—my sense of touch tells me so. I know that I have a body with hands and arms and legs and a face. But I can't see myself.

I back away from the door with resignation, and hear a faint sound of trembling. My physical body convulses in the hospital bed, as from out of its eyes rises another copy of myself, sound asleep. The mirror image hovers above the hospital room floor for just a moment, with white flowers blossoming upwards from the pits in its eyes, and then disappearing like mushroom clouds. In the darkness, they seem to glow.

ii.

"Get down. Duck," a voice chides me from behind. I fall to my knees, and shrink. Opal-colored tendrils, perceptible only by flakes of white and green and blue suspended in dense aether, swirl around the holographic version of myself as its body hovers about, stalking over the hospital room like a helicopter might stalk the hills of some nameless tropical landscape in a newsreel. They dance over the room and pour out into the darkness like flashlights, lapping out at the surroundings like a thousand tongues of fire.

Eventually, my double or whatever is controlling it, decides that I am nowhere to be found, and hovers, still sleeping, into the hallway. I take a puff of a cigarette and then—hmm. What am I saying?

"Haven't won yet, John," a voice speaks inside of my head. A familiar voice. Ryan. I remember him from . . . uhm. From his house? Oh . . . yeah. It seems like it must have been five minutes ago, I guess. Suddenly I remember everything. Everything . . .

"Here, John, have the illusion of a beer," he says. I don't know what he means. I've been holding a beer this whole time. I take another puff of my cigarette, and sip the beer. It is surprisingly good. I return to my regular size, and take another drink.

My brain feels super foggy. If I remember right, I've been listening to a voice remind me about what has just happened. But I don't remember when or where exactly.

"Well, okay, so for the ninth but, for you, basically the first time," Ryan, the unseeable and timeless entity, groans, **"that's because I'm drawing on sheets of graph paper but, because I am not bound by time, I am conscious of all of the sheets of graph paper that I could be drawing on at once. Now the shape you saw is a hexateron . . . it's like a . . . okay. Honestly, I give up. You're the one who looked up. It's really a bitch to try to explain, but, okay, moving on."**

I think that answers my question, but I've forgotten what I'd asked. Ryan manifests itself in the corner of the room, as a thousand-pointed star that seems indeterminately far away, folding in on itself in a swirling pinwheel of graph paper and pulsing graphite, around a baffling and hypnotic shape-shifting pyramid.

"Right now, John, you're effectively a ghost, okay? A detached spirit. People can only see you if I make you visible, but that takes a lot of energy. Ghosts are—well, I'll put it this way so I don't hurt your feelings. They . . . feel just like the people they think they remember being. But they're not. They're the little splinters of what happens when a soul explodes. They keep burning as long as

there's—well, I mean, like fire needs heat and oxygen and fuel, ghosts will just keep burning and burning until they run out of . . . whatever they're feeding off of. Sometimes that only takes years, sometimes centuries—depends on how much they have to burn. Guilt. Insecurities. Anger. Love. Curiosity. Longing. Those are the things a ghost can feed off of. But every emotion eventually runs out, though, right?

“That’s why he had you trapped in there, repeating your memories. It’s to feed and to make ghosts that he can use as part of his plan. Your double that you saw, he might be a puppet. But he’s got an endless supply of food, and you’re running on uncertainty, and existential dread, which only lasts a day or two, tops. I can try to feed you some memories to try to keep you going, but I can’t do too much.”

“But—what’s the point, Ryan? Why am I even here?”

“Hey, that’s the spirit! Keep that existential dread going, buddy. Alright, now, can you follow some very simple instructions?”

“I—I—I don’t know I—”

“I am asking nicely. If I weren’t Good Ryan, I wouldn’t even bother. But I need you. And you need me. No pressure, man, but, I mean . . . seriously. Please.”

“Okay.”

“Okay. So, what you gotta do . . . hmmm. Where did I start last time? Fuck, never mind, they actually launched the damn thing last time I started.

“Okay, so come out into the open. Sip some of that beer . . . Aww, who am I kidding, you should probably just chug it, man. Alright? Feel drunk? Or kind of drunk, like, in theory? Whatever, just pretend you’re drunk. Now run into that wall. Yeah. Don’t look at me like that. You’re a ghost. Run, bitch! Run!

“Okay! Welcome to the supply closet! And . . . yeah. Wait . . . let me remember . . . I think down was the cooling system, up was the laundry room, the corner . . . yeah.

“Okay. Move to the right . . . no . . . yes. Right corner. Right corner. Right . . . there. Good job.

“Okay. Now just like . . . walk into that. No, don’t run. I’m sorry. You didn’t really have to run that time. You could have just walked. I kind of wanted to lighten the mood, since, I mean, like I always say, you should space out your existential dread with some gentle slapstick comedy every once in a while, just to stay healthy.

“Okay. Alright . . . yeah. This is the boring part. Just . . . keep walking through these cables for a while. They’ll all live without internet for a few minutes. Good work. Thanks. I know, it sucks, but so far this route has been pretty good at not getting you killed. Hey, slap the ceiling real quick.”

“Why?”

“Just do it. It’s important.”

“Um . . . okay.”

“Someone was sitting on the toilet reading the newspaper up there. I think he just about shit himself. Okay. Now—go down. Down!

“Welcome to the token crippling design flaw in the thirteenth-most secret military installation of the 21st century! Hooray! Time to blow shit up! Just kidding. None of those levers do anything. This is just a regular old mining tunnel.

“Just . . . yeah. Walk that way. Okay. There we go! Turn to your left. Go down that long, wet hallway there. Keep going. That is a river! They use it to power the base. Isn’t it pretty? Think of how immense it is. How endless it is compared to your mortal self. All the answers you wish you had. All the explanations. Give it a minute.”

“You know, that was surprisingly filling.”

“Good. Now let’s keep moving. There is a door on your right. Remember where that room is, but don’t touch the door. Okay. Now walk backwards four steps. Big steps. No. Too many.



Timothy Vilgiate

“That is a hidden observation room. Just sashay yourself right in there and . . . alright! We did it! And you only managed to get yourself killed a couple hundred times or whatever. Nice. Look through that window over there. What do you see?”

“I see myself. Myself and . . . a couple of . . . of . . .”

“That’s right, John. Ghosts. Real ghosts. Don’t think too much about their scars, John. You don’t want to know where they came from. Can you tell I was in a mid-2000s emo band or what? Anyway. Watch them. Carefully. Eh, who am I kidding, you can still read their minds, you’ll figure this shit out.”

iii.

Shrinking myself down to an almost microscopic size, I land on the edge of a narrow, heavily polarized observation window, and move towards its brittle glass with uncertainty. The other me is slumped against the wall, muttering something under his breath. A woman sits next to my duplicate, with matted brown hair, a wide, crooked nose, and dilated blue eyes. Her neck is covered in bruises.

A few months ago, in 1966, she’d been traveling with a few college friends in a van across the country. They stopped at a bar. While they were hanging out, some cool long-haired guy had come to sit next to her, and she’d gone on a walk with him. As soon as they were alone, a hand slipped over her mouth, and pressed a rag against her nose.

Quickly, she fell into a haze, and awakened later in a military holding cell. Her real name is Mary Ann, but she went by Sapphire, her birthstone. Her dad used to beat her. She’d run away from home at 17. Her friends probably thought she was dead. She was—she’d killed herself in this room in 1967.

A dark-skinned boy named Carlos, face half-purple, with veins bulging out of his neck, and eyes bloodied and black, sits on the other side of my duplicate and tries to support his head. He wonders what they gave me, and fears that they’ll give it to him next.

Only a few days after he arrived, he’d overdosed on a chemical intoxicating agent, so even though he can’t remember that, he is justified in his fear. He got picked up by a stranger while he was hitchhiking to a farm his uncle had told him about, a place he heard he could find work to send money back home. The family needed to buy some good farm equipment after all, and even if Eisenhower had closed down the official guest worker program, there were still plenty of farmers in need to help around South Texas.

The stranger, who seemed nice at first, offered him a puff of a cigarette. He accepted, and fell unconscious within seconds. He woke up in a cell, a rearranging maze that they had constructed for test subjects to try and navigate while on various substances. He was thirsty, not having taken a drink in days.

“You can’t have water until you get out of the maze,” a voice on an intercom told him in poor Spanish.

The next day, he had to try to solve it again, this time on a large dose of LSD. The process repeated and repeated until they tried the experimental agent that killed him, before he could find his way out.

But he doesn’t remember that. He only knows that this is a dangerous place. A very dangerous place. Both of the ghosts feel this.

Ryan has manipulated their memories so that they can all remember, distinctly, that the year is 1969, and that they have all been moved into the same cell as part of a new experiment.

None of them have met John yet. He’d been deposited here right after the guards took another one of the prisoners out of the room for questioning. A “young hippy girl from Austin” named Meagan.

iv.

As John slowly comes back to his senses, he hallucinates that the strangers are all demons, gnawing at him. He does not recognize himself, not his body, not his arms or legs. Everything feels unreal.

He remembers living an entire life, one that had seemed totally realistic but, as he slowly emerges

from unconsciousness, he recalls two doctors tying up his arms, and shooting them full of some kind of experimental drug.

All of his memories were just some kind of strange, intensely vivid hallucinatory dream. None of it is real—but of course it isn't. The year 2017? How ridiculous! he thinks. We'd all be lucky if we are all still alive in 1970, let alone 2017, and if America hasn't gone to war with the Soviet Union by then, John hopes things will be . . . you know. More advanced. Spaceships or something. And fracking? Come on, that is obviously made up.

Now John has had some bum trips, but that last one really took the cake. An entire lifetime lived as another person? And a geologist, of all things? Who in the hell spent their whole life wanting to be a geologist?

Ryan had convinced this ghost as he scrambled for answers that he'd been trying to dodge the draft by heading down to Mexico, so that's what he remembered. On the way down, he stopped for rest somewhere at a truck stop when a big bag had slid over his head, and everything went dark. He woke up here maybe six months ago.

And what a shit place it is. As the acid wears off, he comes to terms with the unreality of everything he's just experienced. But breathes a sigh of relief because at least all this is real. Like, it is definitely real, right, man? Who knows?

Since he arrived at this base, the doctors have been shooting him up with every drug they could think of—with truth serums, with panic inducers, with sleep agents. He remembers days spent in front of screens watching the same film, patriotic messages blaring in his ears, unable to sleep but not fully awake.

He remembers being asked about his life for hours as interrogators made note of which drugs got the most out of him. He remembers being tested and tested on his personality, his intelligence, his stamina—hours upon hours of seemingly aimless sadism. All of it he remembers clearly.

But something has changed. Whenever he looks at someone, his brain seems to coil itself around them, and squeeze out every single detail of their lives. He knows what people will say before they say it, so that their voices almost feel like they come through a psychedelic tape echo. He feels like he is still tripping, maybe not as hard as he had been, but still tripping.

Perhaps, he speculated at Ryan's direction, the government has made a mind-reading drug. Perhaps that is what it's all for—to make him into a weapon.

For example, just by looking at him, he knows that Carlos came from Mexico, and he'd wanted to find a way to make money to send home to his family in Chiapas. He can hear the stories that Carlos' grandmother would tell him. He can see Carlos' childhood memories of playing outside with his sisters.

And then, when he looks to Sapphire, he knows that she is really named Mary Ann. He knows that her dad used to hit her, something she's never told a soul. Mary Ann loves art, and music, and walking through the desert. She'd driven in a van through the Arizona desert with a few other hippies to get here.

v.

As I watch my double interact with these people, the distinction between us gradually becomes less and less clear to me—our minds, both powerfully telepathic, pool into one. He—I?—know that Ryan is a heroin addict from San Antonio, who'd been lured here by his drug dealer, and forced into a slow, painful withdrawal. We know Ryan plays guitar, and that his favorite band is The Monkees, as he is eternally ashamed to admit. I've never met these people. But he and I know them inside and out instantly.

I—he?—I look at the faces of my fellow ghosts with terror, breathing heavily. Carlos' veins submerge beneath his skin, and his eyes revert to a thoughtful brown, framed by patchy brown facial hair.

Sapphire pulls her hand away from his shoulder, slowly and gently. The bruises around her neck disappear, and her skin clears up—two enormous blue eyes now glisten with sorrow and life. My heart starts to calm down as I look at her. I can sense an invisible and shimmering light quivering behind her pupils. I know that I have met her, I feel, for some reason. And likewise she feels like she has met me.

“Are you alright?”

I blink rapidly to try to clear the haze out of my eyes, searching for words that do not exist. Ryan sits back, deciding not to insert himself into the situation. Let them form a bond, he decides. I dissociate from my double, shifting my attention to Ryan.

The other me was blocked from seeing the scheming side of his brain, which watches like an indifferent cameraman already tired from filming the fiftieth take of a scene. But this is the first time John's ghost has looked at Sapphire that way, and perhaps that was what had been missing from the other tries.

"I just . . . It was fucking terrifying. I don't even know how to describe it, man," started the other me. **"I just . . . lived an entire life . . . as like . . . a different person."**

Sapphire's eyes grow wide, and she shares a worried look with the others in the room. Ryan plays along haphazardly, able to make them hallucinate genuine emotion. A silence falls upon the room.

But Ryan feels like they are getting somewhere, so he decides to jump in with some developing action. "I think I heard the guards say he got shot up with Salvinorin A," he says, *hoping that no one notices his anachronistic reference to a chemical not identified until 1982. But they all do.*

"You know, from Salvia?" he says, *inserting memories in everyone's minds of Salvia.*

All of us have heard of Salvia, of course, but none of us have ever tried it.

Ryan rewinds the scene, tries again.

"I think I heard the guards say he got shot up with PCP. Wait, never mind. Fuck that, that's stupid."

Ryan rewinds the scene, tries again.

"He got . . . you know what, fuck you assholes! I am a GOD and you will BOW BEFORE ME."

Ryan rewinds the scene, tries again.

"I think I heard the guards say he got shot up with some kind of new chemical or something." There, *decides Ryan, that should be good enough.*

Sapphire bites her lip. "What do you think it was?"

Carlos looks back at Ryan, not quite understanding what either of them is saying.

"Who knows, man? And they just took Meagan, too. They're probably gonna give it to her next."

vi.

Meagan. I remember her from the dream. I'd met her towards the end when, in the dream, I ended up taking LSD in a field, and I started to read minds. But I've never met her in real life. Perhaps I'd heard her name while I was under or something. Ryan hastily suggests to me.

Sapphire remembers, with Ryan's assistance, that Meagan is one of the first people to have been brought to stay with her in this room, and she is so incredibly nice. The two of them sat in the dark room at night talking for hours about President Johnson, about the war, about their whole lives. This conversation was actually with Ryan, and he'd actually been more interrogating her than really making pleasant conversation with her.

Carlos thinks he remembers Meagan too. She tried to speak Spanish to him, even if she did it poorly. He thinks she is cute, and he wants to try to teach her more, if he ever gets the chance, so that maybe he'll have someone to talk to. That, again, was Ryan, who had actually been trying to threaten him but, as he does, he regretted having been around for one trillion years and never learning Spanish.

Ryan grows tired of our silent fear and decides to pretend to panic in order to move things along. "I don't know, man. I don't know. I don't want them to fucking give me any of that shit. Fuck no, man."

"It's going to be okay," insists Sapphire, *embracing me tightly to try and comfort me. I stare forward toward the observation slit, not wanting to respond to her, wondering if someone is watching this, taking notes on what I do, listening to what we say.*

Do they expect something to happen between Sapphire and me? Is this what they want? From outside of my other body, I sigh, since I quite frankly don't want to break it to myself that I've been forced by a meddling time traveler to become suddenly smitten with a 78-year old dead hippy for his own personal amusement. **"Thank you,"** I mumble.

"We've got to get the fuck out of here," Ryan exclaims, before turning to face us. We all look back at him, against our will. The other Ryan, the Good Ryan, covers my eyes. When I open them, all of the ghosts are paralyzed.

Ryan collects them one by one, picking each one up and tucking them under his arms to carry them down the long abandoned hallway like strange Styrofoam mannequins. I follow him close behind.

"Oh wait. The other way. Dammit." He turns around, grumbling. **"Where is it . . . Hmmm. I think I said . . ."**

Another duplicate of Ryan appears at the other end of the hallway, in the shape of a non-Euclidean white flower crisscrossed with tiny, almost invisible blue lines.

"It's a three way intersection, bro. Down the hall, take the stairs to the left, go through the supply closet."

"Thanks, man, you're the best."

"No, you're the best."

"All hail."

"All hail. But be careful. Meagan is more dangerous than we had foreseen."

"She will crumble before us."

vii.

The Evil Ryan hurries along, hastily crafting memories for the other ghosts of discovering that the door had been, foolishly, left unlocked.

Meagan is almost to Dr. Whitebalm's office. He plants a memory in each ghost's head that the four had snuck into the hallway, and ducked into a nearby office to hide. While there, my double and the other ghosts discover Meagan's case file lying on a desk. **"Reprogramming—successful,"** it said.

Ryan then invents some memories for us about a conversation we'd had, hastily filling them with canned dialogue.

After searching for hours through the offices on the top level of the secret facility, they find where they'd taken Meagan. A large chemical laboratory. She sits in conversation on a dimly lit couch, opposite Doctor Whitebalm, who rests in a recliner.

Ryan positions the ghosts in a neat row, and then, after flipping all of them off and screaming some profanities in their ears to get the urge out of his system, he unfreezes them.

"What is she doing?" asks Sapphire, wide-eyed. The conversation is, strategically, just out of audible range.

"The file was right. She's a fucking turncoat," spits Ryan.

". . . more privately. I've been trying to piece everything together, but some things just aren't fitting," the Doctor can be barely overheard saying.

I move away from the group of ghosts, carving a path behind the high florescent lamps so that I hover just slightly above them. Dr. Whitebalm is a quantum physicist, who can see and manipulate all spectrums of electromagnetic radiation as a result of the accident that had killed the rest of her team and given me my abilities. She wants to make sure that Meagan's kept her powers secret from the government.

Before I can listen to the rest of their conversation, the Good Ryan appears to me as a star, an indeterminate distance from my face. **"Shhhh. This is going to make sense in a moment. I swear."**

Against my will, my body expands, my hands reaching down and grabbing the edges of a fluorescent lamp. Controlled by Ryan like a puppet, I rock back and forth. Evil Ryan, leading the ghosts, freezes time for an instant and catches sight of me, his face spreading with a scowl.

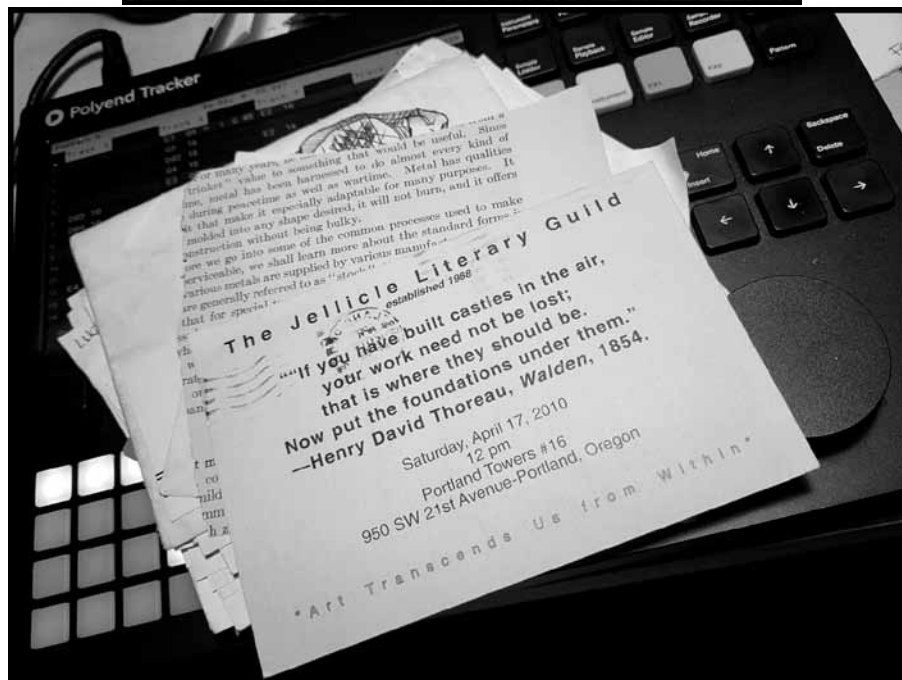
The Good Ryan, or . . . what I think is the Good Ryan . . . frantically tries to explain. “Okay, let’s see if it works this time. Three things. Remember what I told you about ghosts. Second thing. Think of the house. Don’t stop thinking of the house. Last, make eye contact. Also! Remember what I told you about ghosts. Did I already say that? I did . . . fuck.”

“What the fuck are you—”

“Turn around and make some fucking eye contact!”



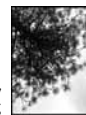
AbandonView







Jo Monea

Jo Monea**Catch and . . .**

a mer-maid
with long, flowing hair:
dark, silky locks of richness

she's like chocolate, you just can't get enough

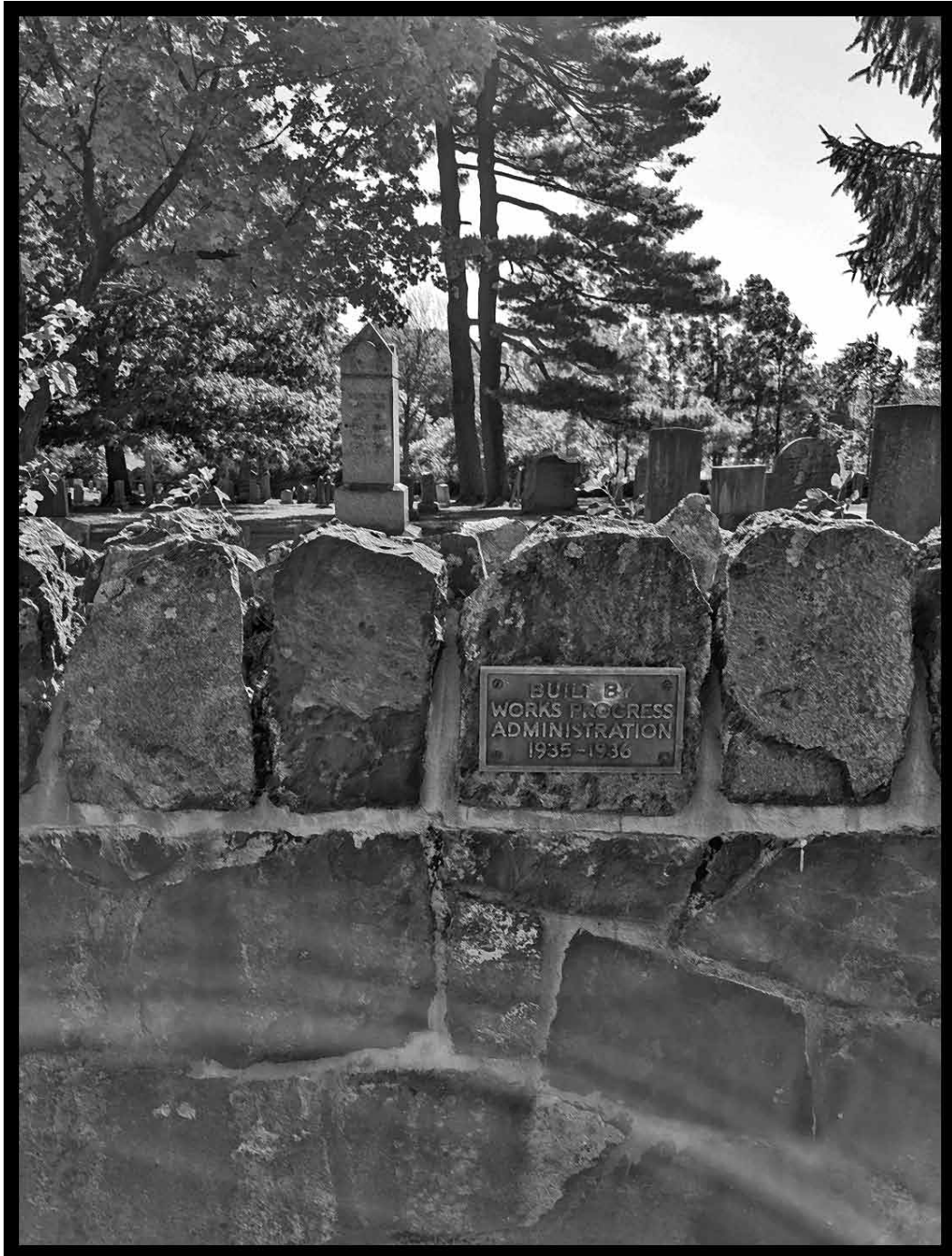
she is infinite, yet she exists in finite form

so are you, so *do* you

be at peace,
rest with her

release

* * * * *





Cyber Big Brother and the Cloud

[Prose]

i.

Felons used to be the lowest class of society—the untouchables. For them, a job was almost unobtainable. On top of that, in some US states, felons have currently no right to vote; even worse, they cannot own a gun in any US state.

Yet, in modern times, these more obvious kinds of lawbreakers have become more obscured in our over-populated Malthusian cities. Information on all kinds of felons, or potential felons, is now available to Cyber Big Brother, via a sophisticated technology known as *cloud computing*, or “the Cloud” for short. The Cloud is not a physical entity, but instead is a vast network of remote servers around the globe that are hooked together, and meant to operate as a single ecosystem.

The Cloud is accessible to every law and semi-law enforcement organization across its net. So now your every shoplifting encounter is recorded, as also is every traffic accident and ticket.

ii.

One relevant scenario runs this way:

1. An office worker leaning on the water cooler expresses his dissatisfaction with the company management.
2. An HR (Human Rumor department) employee overhears the worker and writes up the complainer as “disgruntled, a complainer. Not a team player.”
3. This goes into his employee file, and then up into the Cloud, and thus prevents any possibility of a promotion for him.
4. The words are now as though carved in stone, never to be retracted. As his career spirals downward due to his “record,” and inability to get a job, he is forced to turn to crime to survive. Now everyone congratulates themselves for having known that he was a bad egg all along.

iii.

A history of nearly everything you have ever done or said is recorded. Those actions that are not in absolute parallel with the definition of a “perfect citizen” can be cause for not being hired or, if employed, being dismissed. Even bad debt is held against a person trying to get a job—to get out of bad debt.

Every right-angle-event in your life is added to the contents of your “background check” (BC for short hereon), like a knot in the string of a Peruvian tax collector. Its permanence held in magnetic suspension somewhere in the Cloud.

Typically, one’s name is used with a police check for any felonious or similar activity. An investigation into the character of the subject by means of a BC is not generally called for in a low-level check, but that is now becoming more common. Fingerprints may be added to complement the perceived perception of your untoward nature. Once you are fingerprinted, then you move over to the

criminal database.

A job interview for a schoolteacher, or another sensitive position, may cause a potential employer to take a closer look at the BC to determine what sort of person you are. *Any assault charges? Child molestation? A thief? A tax-evader? In credit card debt to Visa? What skeletons are in your closet?* A BC will give the laundry list.

And the list grows bigger all the time, *not* because you are committing more social crimes, but because the definitions of anti-social behaviors are *broadening*. The ease of collecting data is almost exponential. *Who controls what is in your BC, if anybody? How is anything removed from your history?* It is not. You are the accumulation of bad thoughts against you, from some invisible entity, never to be erased.

Your BC is not just your credit score, or your driving record, or your minor and major crimes. It is all of those plus your expressed *attitude*, as interpreted by data collection programs. You may be classified as a *domestic terrorist* for being on a Quaker non-violence chat group. Or a *pedophile* for watching re-runs of Olympic gymnastics. You may think you are surfing the Internet alone, but the Cloud is *watching* and *recording* your browsing activity. Casual interest in tangential information becomes your *personality* to the Cloud.

iv.

At this time, a user of this Cloud of information must scroll through the list and decide what, if any, information pertains to the situation. But, on closer inspection, is this not a rather subjective use of the information?

It is only logical that the information be quantified with a value. For instance, *shoplifting* could be assigned a value of 5, and *public urination* a value of 1.

In this way, any person could be evaluated on a scale, varying from violet to infrared. Low-to-high cumulative numbers representing a wavelength of light. From the reading of a biometric tag associated with the individual person, like a fingerprint, the person could quickly be evaluated as a flaming Red escaped felon on a rampage, or as a softly glowing Violet babe in the arms of its mother.

BCs are the subject of frequent controversy these days for law enforcement. Mass shootings resulting from superficial BCs have the masses enraged for stricter analysis of access to firearms, while a substantial crowd cries for freedom from an omnipresent Cyber Big Brother's Cloud, and waves the last free guns from freeway overpasses.

v.

For the omnipresent Cloud to be more efficient in its surveillance of the masses, the method of checks through optical fingerprints will be instituted at the entrance to all public gatherings, shops, theaters, and transit, as well as during random street checks. The quick evaluation by color will allow possible undesirables to be excluded.

But the current statistical model doesn't really go the distance to *pre-determine* who's going yank out a gun and mow down the crowd. That unstable person likely had some recent trauma that is not recorded; perhaps he was just fired, or his sweetie was busy being sweet elsewhere. Something that makes a person mad, and can drive that person to violence.

So, if a job firing was instantly added to your BC, the very moment it occurred, or that insult from your father was recorded the same day, the world would be a safer place. A safer, and more dystopian, world.

So why stop there? All factors of life could be used to evaluate your stability in society. All factors could be numerically assigned, and added to the color score chart. The higher your score, the more likely you are going to be Mr. Mow Down.

- *Are you ugly?* Add 10 points.
- *Did your parents divorce?* Add 15 points.
- *Do you think it was your fault?* Add 5 points.
- *Did you get bullied? Are you an orphan? Have you been abused? Were you raised on sugar? When was the last time you got hugged? Is the television your best friend? How many people hate you? How many do you hate? How much social media do you consume? Have people cut you off in social media? Got herpes? Has a dog bitten you? Car wrecks? Worst injury?*

Scores in the hundreds can accumulate quickly for someone who had previously been considered a “normal person.”

vi.

Who in the world has a *Leave It to Beaver* life? Here is another scenario:

1. Let’s say you were a preemie and spent the first two months of life in an incubator like a chicken. Surely this *altered your brain*—so 10 points.
2. Then your parents ascribed to the “cry till they fall asleep” philosophy. Add another 12 points for *mental stress*.
3. When you were 5, your dad got a bimbo and your mom divorced him. Add 25 points for the *where’s Daddy?* question.
4. When you were 8, you got an ant farm for Christmas instead of that BB rifle. Add 15 points for *armament interruptus* and its associated anxiety.
5. Around puberty, girls twice as tall as you laughed in your face, beginning a life of abuse by the female population, from girlfriends to wives. Add 20 points for feeling *inept*.
6. School was too easy, so you skipped classes and went and smoked cigarettes down back of the local 7/11. You flunked for years because you were too smart. Add 30 points for *authority complex*, and 20 more for *early smoking*.
7. At 16, you dropped out due to boredom and went to community college. Subtract 5 points for *moxie* and *incentive*.
8. At 18, you were a party animal, *smoking* and *drinking* everything, *groping* a few co-eds, not thinking of how to conceal these proclivities from the future Cloud. The groping could land you a seat on the Supreme Court. Add 30 points.
9. You graduate with a *business degree* at 20, and apply to *law school*. Subtract 10 points.
10. You marry someone of a higher economic status than you, and are forced into the work place at a boring office job. Your *unrest* and *unfulfillment* is noticed by the Cloud, which adds on an additional 20 points.
11. Now, at 25, you are almost a certified criminal with 167 points. Your crime has been to try to lead a “normal life.”

vi.

One last scenario. On a scale where the rainbow is reversed, a baby starts out as a Violet:

1. By one year old, he has become an Indigo due to *premature birth* and some *language* problems.
2. If *bed-wetting* persists past two, he gets moved up in color, the cutoff being 50 points.
3. By 10 he has probably done enough *mischiefto* to move up to a Blue; the cut-off being 70 points.
4. The scale has Green people beginning at 100. By 25, his history is quickly approaching Yellow.
5. Now his wife decides she has had enough with this silly sex business that she reluctantly concedes to once a month. Leaving the husband in the condition called *blue balls*.
6. Naturally, he turns to *Internet porn* to relieve himself. Continued watching transforms the

- man's mind into perversion, which further isolates any chance of a loving affair. The Cloud takes note, increasing his score another 50 points.
7. Remarkably, in spite of infrequency, the wife has a child. This completely separates the married couple into the loving caregiver and the *frustrated slave* to the economic system. There is no love left over for the poor little bastard.
 8. They fight—him for *more love* (which she cannot understand nor wants to give), and her for more money, more house, more cars, more leisure time for her. The worthless husband should spend more time listening to her petty complaints.
 “Why don't you spend more time with the family?”
 “Because I'm working 10 hours a day and on weekends.”
 “But we need you here in our lives.”
 This is an obvious lie, because she is asleep when he gets home, and asleep when he goes to work.
 9. The man begins his search for a bimbo, starting with the *dial-a-sex* phone thing. The Cloud records it all.
 10. The perfect wife finds the credit card charges to *Lucy Lips* and *Wet Wendy*. The Cloud has already added 20 points.
 11. The next thing the man reads are *divorce papers*. She doesn't know what the consequences are, or care. She just wants to get away from this pervert. Her sense of entitlement sees him as her property, which is being violated and stolen by faceless hussies. Daddy still has to cover the home bills, while she moves back in with her parents, which makes it impossible to reconcile the marriage. The *divorce* adds 50 points.
 12. He is now firmly in the Yellow, and bordering on the Orange. Just about on the *No Fly List*.

vii.

Thus is the situation for the average citizen in Amerika. A poor fool who is directed and dominated by forces outside his control. He is towed along in the Cyber Big Brother evaluation of his personality and occurrences in his life. If someone plows into him in a car, all their fault, the Cloud will record this as an infraction. 20 points.

As you can see from the various scenarios above, the man has done nothing except what he has been told to do all his life. Now he is very close to being a total leper in society. One jaywalking ticket or lapsed insurance card payment, and he will have to do jail time. After spending eight years getting a double degree, he can only get hired as a garbage truck trashcan loader.

He secretly seethes under the collar. *What tiny condemnation from the ex-wife or state officials will send him over the edge? Who can blame him for taking up an automatic weapon and clearing the crowd?* It seems to be only justified repayment to him for the treachery in his life.

These color evaluations can give a more realistic view of a person close to snapping. *Wouldn't the masses feel safer on the plane or train knowing that all aboard are no more than a Yellow at worst, and primarily composed of docile Greens and Blues?*

And this method of statistical exclusion can be extended to all situations from education to career discrimination. An Orange receives this reply to a job inquiry: “Thank you for applying, but we have so many qualified applicants that you don't have a chance.” He is a felon without doing time in the prison. The guy is screwed. As the future unfolds, the Cloud will demand that all wear only the color of their BC.

But, in the end, a homogenized society would emerge where there is no personality, no variation, no mischief, and no bending of the rules. There would be no angst to create new and wonderful things. We would be paralyzed in our fear of disapproval from the Cyber Big Brother Cloud. In our zeal for order, we would kill the spirit of humanity with blind conformity.

* * * * *

**“Can I Ask You Now About Infidelity?”**

[question asked by Marged Howley]

She put the cat out before sex:
token through the slotted door,
how I knew
dim lights would break into candle
blades, orange-scented incense
sending smoky brushstrokes
to paint an invitation. Then,
my hand found her back’s curve,
the other sketching thigh tattoos—
their barbed wire muted into feathers.
As howls on her stereo
taught the body its discord,
tension, animate hope, a misty cat
sang hymns to penetration from the hall.

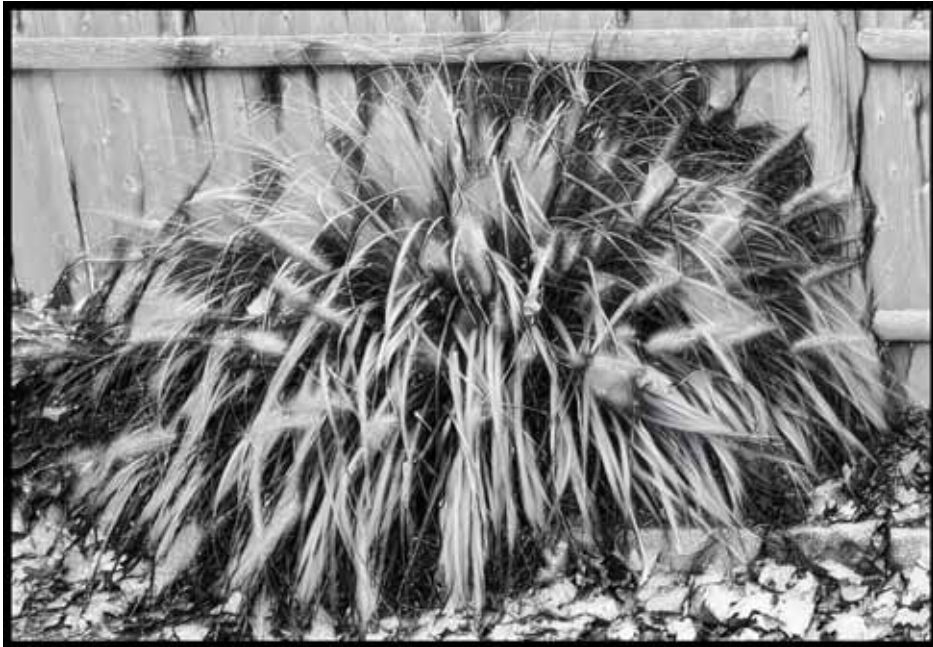
* * *

“Was There a Dream as an Image or a Moment?”

[question asked by Raymond Soulard, Jr.]

I came home elated, loved, publishing,
free from shackles clamped around wrists
in my blue period of melancholy.
The snow was falling. Watching it
felt like the sedative before an operation.
Count backward from a hundred, &
by fifty-seven, bliss. I woke up
with angst removed like a tumor
that could be cancer or just a blight.
Wanted to share, but found that no others
slipped into hospital gowns.
Those around me & those I met
encrusted themselves in rot.
I would've given them my happiness.
No one wanted it. How they loathed the snow.

* * * * *





Bags End Book #20: Go Into the Sea! Grand Finally!

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.

* * * * *

Go Into the Sea! (Grand Production & Grand Finally!)

What's most exciting now to tell here, Dear Readers, is how we all produced another glorious Grand Production, to be enjoyed among all the local neighbors of Bags End, including Imagianna, Dreamland, Creature Common, Bunny Pillow & Dream Pillow Farm, the caves & tunnels below the Tangled Gate, & of course all the watching crowds in the Thought Fleas' Great Clearing in the White Woods. Not to mention our good friends in Oz & Narnia & Wonderland & the Hundred Acre Wood, & others!

It began in the Bags End Auditorium, & the Saturday Room of Creature Common, & the Great Clearing, & all those other places, with all of us looking

Bays End News
 DOUBLE ISSUE!

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Editor: A Garrison Beagle

King: Sheila Bunnyp

Lead Lead Creature: Threshold Puggle

Written Down By: Lori Bunnyp

Go In too thee See!
 (Grand Produkshug &
 Grand Finalle!

Well, it haz bin a long tim
 kummo too thee last issos of
 thee year, with extra numbrs
 of themm, konsidering aniversarys
 fall

Butt heer it iz too telll. Nott
 lik I expected wen I gott mah
 dreed kas of Hik-Bumps bakk
 wenn. I dont pritend too understand
 itt all, butt reellee, do I err?
 I telll wat I kann straykt
 troo, & hop for thee best othrw
 -iz

Butt watz too telll heer iz howe

up & up & up, & there, as tiniest specks in the blue sky, were those pretty little La Petits Thumb, well-known 4or their amazing feats of daring-do.

We seem to come to them, their high highness, & find we are with them on the very tip of the finger of the usually-quite-short-but-now-great-big Rosalita the Pandy Bear Imp holding us! She cackles bigly, but nicely, as we each & all hold on to La Petits Thumb, & are now falling falling falling through the air, seeming to pass through the Bags End Auditorium, Creature Common, Tangled Gate, Imagianna, Dreamland, & the rest, until we land on the very same fingertip of that Imp &, at that moment, those strange Royal Thumbs in their crowns & capes appear to all &, standing straight & proud, they cry out, "Greetings! Felicitations! And Salutations! Presenting . . . a Royal Thumbs Production of . . . Go Into the Sea! Being a Continuation of the Stories of the 4or Pictures! With those Famous Travelers, Marie . . . Joe . . . Daniel . . . Et . . . "

And here the Royal Thumbs encouraged us all to rise up on the tip on that Imp finger, & she cackled wildly her glees, & the many great numbers of us cried out, "Cetera!"

Well, that was as grand an introduction as they get, & only 4or a moment was I back in mah seat in the Bags End Auditorium, next to mah silly Bumping brother called Alexander Puppy, who kind of started this whole story going by causing me a dread case of the Hik-Bumps!

But then we were all I guess you could say immersed in the story again. And we were each & all by the Sea. And a voice like Daniel's was talking.

"You can still hear the Hmmm as it really is, when you quietly listen to the Sea. Or when you listen to the wind through the White Woods. Or when you are patient & pay good attention in your dreams.

"But then your attention is distracted, & you see one thing, & hear another, sniff the air too, touch your seat or table to be sure, maybe taste something sweet.

"How to explain it as best the old maps tell me? Our 5 senses were once all part of the Hmmm, & the 6 Islands of the world were all one Island, & we lived in a time be4ore time, & the White Woods & the Tangled Gate were one. 'One, none, many' came later."

Now all of that shifted to a familiar place. It was the cabin where Marie & Joe lived with Daniel their Guardian.

We follow Marie as she walks one morning to the garage where Daniel & his bestus buddy the Tumbleweed have their workshop.

"Don't be late 4or school!" we hear Joe yell from afar, as he is biking away.

"I won't!" Marie calls back. "I just have to borrow a book to teach my class."

She is looking 4or the book on Daniel's shelves full of books, & finds it, I guess. Mah luck was that on mah other side was that friendly & language-knowing guy Allie Leopard to whisper me, "It's called Aftermath by Cosmic Early." Hmmm. I don't know him.

We follow Marie as she takes her book, & walks down to the fishin' hole place near the edge of the pond. There's a beautiful mountain in the distance. Marie isn't fishing, though. She's reading.

She reads out loud from her book: "'One theory says that there was the Hmmm in the beginning, but that the Hmmm grew a cackling accent & wanted to play, & so 1 was 2, & then more.'"

Marie stops, & we can feel how tired she now is, as she suddenly curls up with her book to take a nap.

And we follow her into her dream where she sits up, looks up, & the

mountain that was always there isn't there anymore! Just its reflection still in the pond waters!

Marie is very upset but then seems to drift into another dream in which she is standing in a clearing in the Woods, & she is surrounded by a sort of cloud of Faeries. Almost like Crissy's Emandian folks!

"Please, help me!" Marie cries to them. "My mountain is gone. Is it only gone in Dreams?"

The Faeries talk as sort of one Faerie guy. "Here your adventures begin, as you look for your mountain. But what you need now is a melody, & a friend."

Marie hears in her ears a hmmming sound, like she always hears in her dreams, but could never recall when awake. Then she thinks she hears the word "MeZmer," & she wakes up, she thinks, to find a White Bunny sitting in front of her with amazingly smart & kind eyes. I can tell you, Dear Readers, they do MeZmer indeed.

No words said as MeZmer begins hopping up the hill to the White Woods, hopping faster & faster, & Marie runs & runs to follow, feels like she is hopping too, faster & faster until MeZmer disappears into a dark cave. Marie pauses, then hurries into it too.

Nothing but dark, nothing but dark, then suddenly she is again with MeZmer, & they are in a beautiful Crystal Cave.

And she feels it all around her. The Hmmm. Feels it with her skin, sniffs it, sees it, hears it, tastes it. For a moment, Marie becomes the Hmmm. Then a nudge from MeZmer, & she's back to herself, & following MeZmer again to a smaller cave where lives a nice-looking Monkey fellow who I thought looked just like Jacoby in Creature Common.

No words as Jacoby tucks Marie into his bed, under a warm brown blanket with many handsome Bears on it.

Marie sleeps deeply again with MeZmer in her arms &, when she wakes up, it's by a bright light in the wall opposite her bed.

Getting up, she & MeZmer slowly walk & hop over to the light to see how it's a fissure in the wall. Finger on chin a moment, thinking, Marie nods to MeZmer, & they walk & hop into it. Down a long Glowing Hallway now, & down, & down, & then out!

And back into the White Woods! Even the same clearing as where she had met the Faerie cloud!

But it is empty & so Marie just looks around, wondering about all this. MeZmer sits quietly, just sniffing once or twice.

Then Marie hears a distant sound, like the low hmmming she had heard so many time in her Dreams, & from those Faeries too. They begin to walk & hop toward the sound.

And it is the Sea, just like Daniel had talked about before! Marie walks & MeZmer hops along the beach for a long time.

Then something, something, she looks up in the air, & sees 2 little black birds, & they are sitting peaceably as you please on this long black wire that seems to run from nowhere to nowhere.

"Hello, how are you? I am Marie," she calls up to them.

They nod, & Marie decides she will tell them the story of her adventure so far.

"So I have this friend MeZmer now, & this Hmmm the Faeries gave me, but I don't know how that helps me to find my mountain," Marie sighs a little as she finishes.

The birds listen quietly, & Marie doesn't know if they will say anything at all.

But then in a voice that sounds as much like words as it does like the swishing Sea nearby, the 2 birds say, "We are To & Go, & we will help you if we can, Miss Marie."

Marie smiles & sort of curtsies a little.

"You need to . . . go into . . . the Sea!" they say. And then are quiet again.

Marie looks at MeZmer who is nearby & sniffing once or twice. She looks at the swishing waters of the Sea nearby. She doesn't know what to do about that advice because it doesn't make a lot of sense to her to help her find her mountain.

That's when she looks down, & sees MeZmer's blonde fur glowing brighter & brighter, just like that Glowing Hallway had been.

She raises up her paw to Marie, who leans down to take it. Then, with MeZmer hopping, & glowing all around them, she leads Marie right into the Sea.

And they go right in without any problem, & descend to the bottom, & walk along, paw in hand, together.

And with that, a green & gold curtain descends over the story we have all been watching, & I guessed that Act 1 was done.

Well, I can tell you that everyone from Bags End to Imagianna, from Creature Common to Dreamland to the Bunny Pillow Farm, Oz & Narnia & the rest, were on their feet, hands & paws clapping & cheering.

Then the green & gold curtain rised again & the story shifts to Joe riding his bike to Marie's school to bring her fruits 4or her lunch. Allie Leopard nicely helped me cover my mouth & stifle mah "O! Yuk!" cries.

Joe doesn't find Marie teaching at school but, as he is riding away, he comes upon Holly Hedgedyhog waiting 4or him.

Joe is a nice guy & Holly looks like he needs a ride, so Joe puts him on his shoulder, & off they ride.

It's a pretty day & they find themselves on a road Joe doesn't know in White Woods he knows pretty well. And here comes a tunnel that Holly squeaks & squeaks 4or them to go into.

So, making sure that Holly is safe on his shoulder, Joe pedals & pedals into the tunnel, which is surprisingly not so dark. It glows in a way that reminds me of that Glowing Hallway Marie & MeZmer were in, & MeZmer's fur as they walked into the Sea. Even that Glowing Hallway of pictures in Dreamland that me & Raymond the Author Guy first met these Famous Travelers.

But as Joe rides along, he gets a funny feeling about this tunnel, & he is relieved when he sees daylight coming ahead.

They ride out, & it is still in the White Woods, but they look different now. Much, much bigger somehow.

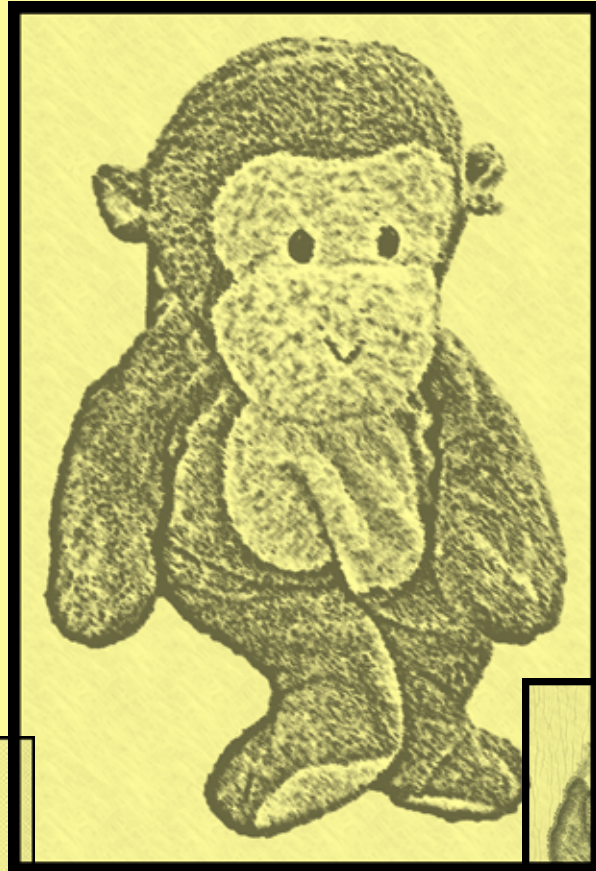
Then Joe hears a noise &, coming up to them, are these 2 Lady Bugs, biggest he's ever seen!

That's when Joe figgers that somehow he & his bike & Holly on his shoulder all have shrunk down really small!

But the Lady Bugs look friendly & shy & not like they are scary to him.

"Hello, how are you?" he says politely. "I am Joe & this is my little friend. We just rode here through that . . . that . . ." & he turns around & around looking 4or the tunnel, but there is no sign of it!

The Lady Bugs don't say a word but sort of nudge their heads a little 4or him to follow them. I kept thinking that, just like Holly, those Lady Bugs seemed a way bigger version of the little ones in Creature Common.



So Joe starts riding his bike again, Holly back on his shoulder, & follows behind these Lady Bugs as they sort of speed along down the road. Well, maybe not a road so much as they know how to travel among the White Woods trees. Joe can hear them making a hmmming sound, & that somehow seems to help them go right along. I'm not sure how I knowed this was true, but it seemed to make White Woods sense.

Anyway, the Lady Bugs keep going, & Joe keeps following, & he doesn't know how long it will be, when they come to a clearing & something really big.

There be4ore them is an even taller-than-Joe red-&yellow Truckee! And now I was thinking that the great big Truckee was also just like the much smaller Creature Common one too.

But if Joe & his bike & Holly were now tiny, then . . . well, I just decided to hush mah mind & pay attention.

Joe helps the Lady Bugs & his bike & himself up into the back of the Truckee, & then he starts rolling on through the White Woods. Truckee hmmming along.

Eventually, the trees ahead clears some, & Joe can see a mountain in the distance.

"That's my sister's favorite mountain," he says to Holly & the Lady Bugs, & he guesses the Truckee might hear him too. He wonders if these marvelous Creatures might be trying to help him find Marie.

They roll closer & closer to the mountain, & it gets taller & taller be4ore them, until they roll right off the end of the road, & begin to sort of bumpily up it.

And it is going pretty well 4or awhile. But then the climbing gets less rocky, & softer, & softer, & be4ore Joe & his new friends know it, they are sinking right into quicksand!

It swallows them whole (O! Yuk!) but they notice it is not wet & choking, but dry & light, even tho they still keep sinking down very slowly.

And weirder still, when the Truckee rolls out, they are much higher up the mountain! Rolling along up a dirt path to come to a little Hut. Joe gets out, & helps the Lady Bugs & Holly out, & his bike too. The Hut is sort of brown-furred, tho Hut-shaped 4or sure too.

Joe knocks & a little golden-furred Pup comes out.

Joe introduces his friends again, & the Pup smiles & says quietly, "My name is Shelley & I live here with my brother Threshold." And out came that little Puggle guy who in Creature Common is the Lead Lead Creature! 1, none, many, I guess. Strange maths, I know.

The Pup brothers bring out some chairs, & Joe just sits down on the grass. He explains that he is looking 4or his sister Marie.

The Pups look at each other, thinking hard. "Do you know the great exploring Traveler Daniel?" they ask.

Joe nods. "He's me & Marie's Guardian."

Now the Pups are all excited. "He visited us here once, & stayed with us too. Him & his Tumbleweed friend, of course," says Shelley.

Joe nods.

Threshold says, "He showed us his many maps, & gave us one. In case we wanted to explore too."

"He said it was a map to bring you nearer to who or what you wish to find," says Shelley.

"But we can give it to you, since we are where we wish to be," says Threshold, & both Pups smile & nod. Nice guys, whatever worlds.

So Joe nods thankee & they fetch the map. It is folded up, & it reads on

the outside: "Wish who or where you desire to near, & open to follow." Allie Leopard readed the words 4or me.

So Joe wishes to near Marie, & opens up the map up. The map shows the mountain they are on, & a dotted path over it, & through some more White Woods, & then arriving to the Sea. This seemed smart to me because that's where Marie was!

Joe thanks the Pups very politely, & then shows the Truckee the map to study in detail, & then gets everyone back on board. He waves, & the others make friendly sniffing sort of gestures of goodbye, as they roll on. Shelley & Threshold wave too, & return to their Hut.

The Truckee then rolls them along a rocky path, no more strange & tricky quicksand to worry on, & soon they are rolling down the mountain, & again through the White Woods. It is peaceful, & no tricky White Woods tricks going on either, the Truckee hmmming along their way, & Joe & his friends soon dozing among the many colorful scarves in the Truckee's back.

Waked by the whooshing sounds of the Sea, & the Truckee rolling to a stop. Joe isn't sure why there till he looks up & sees 2 strange little black birds sitting peaceful on a wire running from seeming nowhere to nowhere.

Joe hops out, figgering this is the map bringing him nearer to Marie. He looks up to the birds, & talks quietly & politely.

"Hello, how are you? I am Joe, & these are my friends. We are looking 4or my sister Marie. Can you help?"

Like with Marie, the birds are quiet awhile, but then say in their oceany voice, "We are To & Go, & we will help you if we can, Brother Joe."

Joe nods & waits.

"You need to . . . go into . . . the Sea!" they say. And then are quiet again.

Joe listens close. Then he is quiet too. "Thankee," he says, & gets back into the Truckee. He is kind of uncertain what to do, when the Truckee starts rolling into the Sea! The Creatures with him sorta tug & drag him under the scarves &, somehow, like Marie with MeZmer, they stay dry as they drive down deep into the Sea!

Once again, the green & gold curtain drawed over, & I guessed that Act 2 was over. The clapping from all of us was maybe even louder!

Then the green & gold curtain rised again on a brand new scene, tho familiar because it was those sometimes-tricky White Woods again. But this time, we find ourselves following those nice little Creatures Buddy the little flowery Bear, & Cuke, who is a pretty green spiny fellow. He reminds me a little of Doctor Greenface in Bags End because he also moves on unseen little feets.

"Where is that MeZmer?" asks Buddy. "She was going to give us hopping lessons today!"

Cuke doesn't answer with words, but somehow we know that he doesn't know either.

We run on & on with them until we come suddenly into a place like the Great Clearing, & see that we are at the back of a crowd of tiny little guys, like Thought Fleas, who are cheering & clapping 4or who is on the great stage-plat4orm at the front, per4orming. And who that is is Bauer the Bear!

Bauer is dancing back & 4orth across the stage to some jaunty music. His famous Bauer slide is as amazing as always, & the little guys around us cheer & cheer! Bauer does many encore dancings 4or such a good crowd.

Buddy & Cuke know Bauer well, of course, & go right up on stage to visit when everyone else is leaving.

He laughs his gruff charming laugh when they congratulate him.

"The shows were so much better when I had my old dancing partner, Schatzi," he says, & looks a little sad. Buddy & Cuke give him comforting pats.

Then they climb down the steps of the stage-platform to the ground, & Bauer says that he is tired. "Dancing is fun, but I like my naps after! Would you like to come too?"

They nod, smiling.

So Bauer leads them behind the stage-platform into the White Woods to a little Hut he explains the performers use for getting ready or naps.

Inside the Hut is a hammock that they all climb into, & many warm blankets too, including a warm brown blanket with many handsome Bears on it. Boy, those guys get around!

So our friends cluster up, as Creatures do, & the Hut is warm, & the White Woods are quiet right now. They nap together pretty soon.

They cluster dream that they are come to a Crystal Cave, like the one that Marie & MeZmer were in, & soon to a smaller cave, where there is that nice Jacoby guy again!

They all hug & greet each other friendly. Then Jacoby says, "I am glad you came for the map!"

"What map?" they ask.

"To find your old dancing partner Shatzi, of course!" he says to Bauer.

Then he lays out on the floor a very strange map. It is hard to tell if it has mountains or Woods or lakes.

Then we look closer & see what looks like the Great Clearing & its stage-platform! A black arrow on it points to a strange little door, through the White Woods, to the Sea.

"But you can't go yet," says Jacoby with a funny little smile.

"Why not?" they ask.

"You must wake up!" Jacoby cries out loud, & they do! Back in the little Hut.

"Let's go!" cries Bauer, & they all jump from the hammock, & run together back to the stage-platform. The Great Clearing is empty but for them.

They look around the stage-platform, high & low, for the strange little door, but no luck. Finally, Bauer sits down sadly on the stage, & Buddy & Cuke sit with him.

Then, at the far end of the Great Clearing, they hear a sweet voice that is like one & many singing all at once. It is hard to see, but it looks like those strange & mysterious Ladies Toe among the trees! And they are singing so pretty:

Go to the Sea!

Go to the Sea!

Go to the Sea!

You won't get there in a car!

No, you won't get very far!

You won't get there in a plane!

You will try but end up short, a-gain!

Go to the Sea!

Go to the Sea!

Go to the Sea!

You won't get there breathing sad air!
 You won't get there by nightmare!

Only dancing will take you there!
 Bauer, Bauer, Bauer the Dancing Bear!
 Only dancing will take you everywhere!
 Bauer & friends of Bauer the Bear!

Then the Ladies Toe disappear, & Bauer is shouting with delight! "Come on, my friends!" he cries, & gathers up Buddy & Cuke in his paws, & begins his dancing again on the stage. Only this time he & they are all singing the Ladies Toe's song:

Only dancing will take us there!
 Only dancing will take us there!

And then as they dance, & Bauer slides from one end of the stage to the other, a strange little door appears at one end, & Bauer & his friends slide right through it!

And they arrive right to the Sea, like Marie & Joe & their Creature friends had!

And what is even better is that right above them is the black wire upon which sits those black birds, To & Go!

Bauer figgers they might help, & so he introduces all of them, & then he explains his story in his nice gruff voice.

"I have not seen my old dancing partner Shatzi in a long time. We got separated from each other after one of our per4ormances. I hoped we would find each other again soon, but I think something's in the way. I remember that last night during one of our tricks, he tumbled roughly on the stage, & banged his head a little. But he said he was OK. Can you help?"

"We are To & Go, & we will help you if we can, Bauer the Dancing Bear & friends."

Bauer & Buddy & Cuke wait though I was guessing in mah mind what they will say.

"You need to . . . go into . . . the Sea!" they say. And then are quiet again.

And then, out of nowhere, there appears on the Sea, arriving to them, that famous Boat-Wagon, driven by those strange bloo-eyed Kittees & their Friend Fish!

So Bauer & Buddy & Cuke greet them friendly, wave their thanks to To & Go, & climb into the back of the Boat-Wagon, & buckle in.

"Safety first!" cried us many audiences in many wheres. Haha!

And the last we see of Bauer & his friends is them being peddled out to the Sea to find Bauer's dear friend Schatzi.

The green & gold curtain falled over Act 3, & I hardly need report as news the wild clappings & cheerings that went on in all parts of the Neighborhood near & far.

But no time to wait as the green & gold curtain rised again, & we find ourselves in the middle of a new scene in the desert.

And here is Daniel, who is kind of the Lead Traveler, in Creature tongue, with his friend the Tumbleweed, & they are surrounded by a group of tough-looking guys.

Daniel is leaned over a map, & talking strange words to it.

"Fondo Wondo!" he cries. And the map sort of unrolls its secrets &, in

the desert sky there are crazy winds, wild lightning, & a great beautiful rainbow arching over all!

The tough guys back off, now looking scared of Daniel. One of them nods, & they hand over a map to him. He flicks his hand at them, & they leave fast.

"Good thing they thought that was magick, & not a matter of knowing the key to opening & using the Map of Crazy Weathers!" Tumbleweed laughs in Daniel's mind, in their strange shared tongue that we get to hear & understand right now.

Daniel nods & laughs too, & studies their new map, & they start walking together many miles, until they come to a nice-looking town.

There they find a big billboard sign, & painted on it what looks like a long mysterious city street with shadowy figures along it.

Daniel reads softly aloud something on the new map they got from those rough guys, & he & Tumbleweed walk right into the picture!

But, before they can look around, there are shadowy figures all around them, & they are hustled off to a prison cell, behind bars & everything!

They sit quietly together till the night comes, & all is quiet. Now they are alone.

Then Daniel nods, once, twice, three times &, holding hand in branch, they tumble backwards, & right out of the prison! I guessed this was a good trick the Tumbleweed knewed.

But wait! They land in Jacoby's cave room too!

And of course they are old friends, them all liking maps as they do, & hug friendly all around. Jacoby hugs Tumbleweed among his branches, so not to get poked, having learned how, I guess.

"Here's a new one I have for you!" says Jacoby all friendly. And he shows them a map on the floor that is weirdly glowing.

Daniel nods & pats Jacoby's shoulder. Then he & Tumbleweed turn around, & tumble together right down into this map! Wow.

But then something goes wrong. Instead of fully arriving to a new place, they seem stuck, only half in.

"Help! Help! It's damaged!" yells Daniel sort of back & up to Jacoby.

A distant Jacoby voice cries back, "Push toward that Glowstorm! Push hard!"

So Daniel & Tumbleweed push & push toward it, & the edges of the map sorta relax around them, & they are able to enter its land more fully.

They call back "Thankee!" to Jacoby, & travel the glowing lands around them. There is always a low Hummming in the air, which Daniel seems to understand, & he travels them by hmmmming in different ways with it.

The glowing gives way eventually to the Sea, & here we are, arrived again, & there above on that black wire, going from seeming nowhere to nowhere, are those 2 black birds To & Go! As the green & gold curtain falls, we hear Daniel calling out a "Hello, how are you?" to both of them, saying, "I am Daniel the Traveler, & this is my friend, Tumbleweed."

Well, everyone was cheering & cheering & cheering, but no more Grand Production occurred for the moment.

Now here's where your old pal Algernon has some things to tell, & a good time to do it while we are waiting.

You see, it wasn't just maps important inside these stories. It was how got to be tolded this Grand Production. And it was Daniel who came up with the map idear.

But then let me go back a-ways. We had just decided to work together

to make a Grand Production that tolded the stories of the Famous Travelers' early days, & we were sitting--me, Crissy, the Creatures, CC, & Raymond the Author Guy--with Marie & Joe & Daniel in Crissy's Secret Room in her Castle.

But I sniffed 4or some reason, & then talked mah sniff quick.

"You know, mah friends, this isn't the room where we got the story done last time. It was in Crissy's Riting Room through the Red Bag, where she has her rite-typer. I think, to have the best shot, we need to bring all of us through the Red Bag & gather there, & start studying the Secret Books, & coming up with what we can amongst us. And maybe, between memories & ritings & what makes sense, we can make a good Grand Production. That's what I propose us to do."

Well, nobody objected to this idear, & so Crissy showed everybody to the far end of her Secret Room, which is usually dim in the dark.

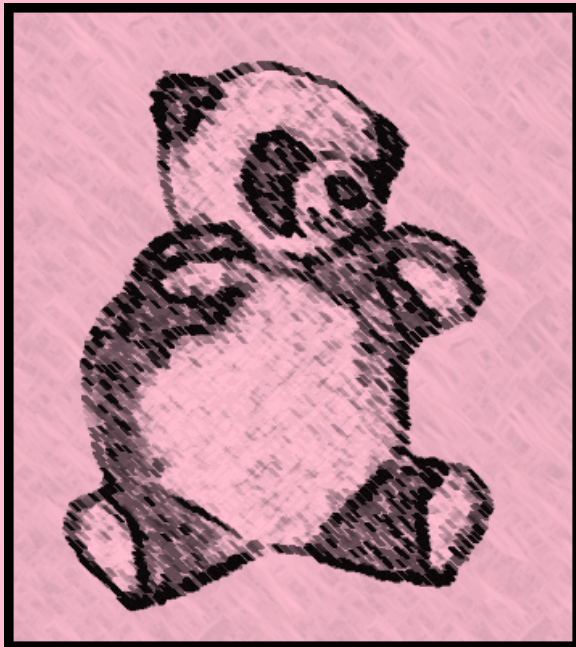
Crissy explained that you look at the Red Bag, & close your eyes, & sing 3 times, "There is a door, & now we pass through!" & you end up on the other side.

So the Creatures were gathered up in arms, & everybody lined up. Crissy went first to show how, then I went in Raymond the Author Guy's arms, & Daniel went with Tumbleweed in arms, & Joe with Freckle & Ricochet in arms, & Marie went with MeZmer & Holly.

Everybody ranged around, finding seats on the floor in Crissy's very friendly Riting Room, with its big window view of the White Woods, the mountains, & the Wide Wide Sea.

That's when I noticed on the walls, instead of the usual fun Crissy pictures, there were others.

Instead, there were the well-known pictures of Marie in her Faerie clearing, of Joe riding his bike to Marie's school, on his task not to be mentioned here again (O! Yuk!), of the reflection of Marie's mountain, & of



that spooky Daniel big billboard sign.

But there were more. A little picture of a lighthouse. And a picture of 2 little black birds on a wire, going from nowhere to nowhere, like To & Go! And, close on either side of that one, was one of a Hummingbird, & another of a pretty leaf. And another of a mysterious snowy land with a strange building far away to be seen. And one that showed a view of the foggy Sea, through an old window. Lastly, under a blanket, a picture of 2 people-folks sound asleep & dreaming in their bed that reminded me sorta of CC & his nice lady friend.

I talked now. "I am no expert on these things, but I wonder if these pictures are here to help us with this Grand Production!"

At the mention of the last 2 words, there was a knock at the door. Door? Who could be at the door of a Riting Room inside the Red Bag?

But Crissy got up & went to answer it, & in marched those strange Royal Thumbs, in full crowns & capes!

Be4ore I could blink, they were on Raymond the Author Guy's hands! But now talking too.

"In the past, a single riter or a few have written our Grand Productions. But this time, it seems like there are a lot of you crowded in here, & how will this work?" It may sound like these Thumbs were annoyed or grumpy but, no, they were just very curious now.

And with good reason too. Now that our creative forces were all gathered, what were we to do?

Everybody started talking at once, but nobody seemed to have a bright idear amongst us, & eventually we were all quiet again.

Then Daniel, who had been the quietest, cuz drawing something, talked.

"I have here a map that I think will help. It requires us to all be in our usual places, mostly." And he laid it out on the floor 4or all of us to study together.

"CC will be in the Creature Common, with MeZmer, Holly, Buddy, & Cuke, telling our story, as he did. Raymond the Author guy will be on Full Moon Hill, with Algernon Beagle, on Betsy Bunny Pillow, Farmer Jones there for safety, hmming into the Double Dreaming, the Glowing Hallway, where Raymond will have MeZmer, Holly, Buddy, & Cuke too, itching CC to tell the story like he did. Marie, Joe, & all of our Creature friends will return to our world to re-enact the story, filling in the missing parts. The Royal Thumbs, & those amazing Treasures, will orchestrate the Grand Production, once all is ready."

I counted, & thought. "Hey, what about Princess Crissy?"

Daniel & Crissy smiled at each other, like yet another good bright idear to be tolded. "When we are all in place, your Crissy, & my dream Iris, will smile some of that tricky smile magick of hers, & we will all feel connected. Travelers to Glowing Hallway, Dreamland to Imagianna, to this Riting Room, Creature Common to Bags End, to the many places watching, & we will begin."

But the last piece to tell is about me. You see, Dear Readers, I, um, iterated. Sort of like what Crissy tolded me was called being a conduit, getting all the details of this story I have now told to all of you. One of me, with Raymond in that Glowing Hallway, & another of me among the Travelers stories themselves, watching close, & another of me with Crissy in her Riting Room, & another of me in Creature Common, & the last one of me sitting in mah seat in the Bags End Auditorium, next to mah silly Bumping brother Alex, who started this whole story, kinda.

What happened after the Act 4 green & gold curtain falled, & there was great cheering, & then there was quiet again, was that a voice like Daniel's talked again. Everyone listened close.

"It is now a long time later that has passed since those early Traveling days. We have met & traveled with many new friends since then. This Grand Production happened tonight because we were asked to look back, & to remember. We know it takes many friends & neighbors to do this, & that our Travels are important to others too. This makes us happy 4or all of you even as it is time to travel on again. Thank you all!"

And that was that. Without a thought in it, I felt mahself returning to just one me in one place. Bags End. It sure has been a funny way to get the story of this Grand Production, but it worked so good!

We were all sort of getting up to leave when suddenly a well-knowned Creature friend came onto all of the one & many stages. It was that handsome white-furred Bear X, wearing his black hat & Scotchy scarf.

"Is it too late 4or a little more entertainment, in the classic style?" he asked, smiling.

We stopped, & called, "No!" And everyone everywhere sat right back down.

He nodded & swepted his paw around & said, "Happy Season of Lights from Creature Common, & . . . on . . . with . . . the . . . show!"

We could all see this happening with the great big decorated tree under the Tangled Gate in the background. Like hmmming, but a tree too.

What followed were all sorts of grand per4ormances. First out danced Bauer the Dancing Bear, with his whole Major Bear crew, best friend Schatzi of course, & Phil, & Schnooki, & they danced up a storm!

Then those shiny-eyed Ker-Plow-Eeee singers sang some dancey old songs that made us all get right up & dance too!

Then that purple furry fellow called Pirth did his amazing dances with many ribbons!

Then MeZmer the White Bunny hopped long & far from one stage to the next!

Even Princess Crissy come on stage with that bloo-&-pink fella Bellla to dance & sing funny songs!

And Benny Big Dreams showed up too, & showed us the trick of juggling dreams like bowling pins, & dreaming back & 4orth among them. Easy when he did it!

Wow! Sheila's Kool Jazz Band came out & per4ormed a strange song by Miles Davis that seemed to make me think of tricky Rosa!ita the Pandy Bear Imp thoughts!

And then it all ended how it began somehow, with all of us in the Neighborhood rising up high & high, & falling back down-down-down together, with La Petits Thumb as our guides, until we each landed, & I don't know how, in his or her or their favorite place to be.

That must be true because I ended up in mah comfy armchair on Milne's Porch!

I blinked twice, to be sure. But yes. The window to mah bedroom was open, & I heard Alex & also Allie Leopard talking Bump words to each other.

But somehow, & I don't know how, I heard under their words a hmmming. I kid you not! Was that mah lesson? Was that it? Bump is part of the Hmmm too? Was that mah gift to know because I had tried so hard?

A last thing to tell of this crazy long crazy story. It was not long later one day when me & Sheila Bunny were taking nice little naps in her

Throne Room, her in her Throne, me on mah mat nearby.

In bounces that nice-in-dreams Betsy Bunny Pillow. But I blinked mah eyes twice, to make sure, & it seemed this was waking. So I was on mah guard.

Betsy bounced right up to Sheila &, amazing but true, Sheila made some room 4or her in her Throne!

So they sat together. I was totally ignored, but this was OK. I was not thrown out either.

"Welcome home, Pillow," Sheila said sleepily.

"Thanks, Bunny," Betsy whispered back. And then they napped peaceful together.

I so wanted to ask them about this, but knew that such-as-I would never be tolded.

But I figgered it out on mah own. Betsy, when awake, will mostly live in Bags End. When asleep, at least sometimes, on the Dream Pillow Farm. Probably the best answer 4or her.

I am glad of all these things that happened, & guess that some time we will all get together to tell more stories again.

4or now, there is just me dozing peaceful, in mah comfy armchair on Milne's Porch, in mah strange but fine homeland, listening not so much to the Bumps being spoke in mah bedroom, but the Hmmming that's underneath it all.

What does that mean?

What does me being the conduit mean?

And what are the 6 Islands? Is Bags End on one?

Is there just simply always more to know, as time goes on?

That's mah guess.

Keeps mah beloved newspaper in business, so it's good too.



* * * * *



Lisa Crowther
Mixture of State and sheriff

Lisa Crowther
Yeah, they were telling people to stay inside. I didn't fo out until it was safe.

Colin James

The Sentiment of an Economical Mustachio

My acorn-sized brain
keeps falling down my nostrils.
I shove it back in through the ears.

For a time there is quiet solitude.
The sky becomes clearer,
thin winter trees prosper.

There is a well-worn path into town,
and blossom scents perpetual.
I find no one to return with,
after asking almost everyone nicely.

One middle-aged lady was a maybe.
I circle back to see if she's gotten lost,
find her bathing naked in a cold stream,
shivering until the moon breaches.

* * *

A Thomas Kinkade Boris Karloff

It soon became apparent
the mountains were impassable.
There was talk of a cave
when survivors returned, disheveled,
incoherent, babbling.

A scrap of paper,
torn from a clenched fist,
and other signs of dominance.
“I vant you too as vell.”

The sun will be up soon,
and we can begin our descent,
exaggerating selfless examinations.

* * * * *



Translated by Husain Haddawy

The Story of Sindbad the Sailor

from The Arabian Nights
[Classic Fiction]

The Fourth Voyage of Sindbad

Friends, when I returned to Baghdad, and to the society of my family and friends and companions, I lived in the utmost happiness, pleasure, and ease, and forgot what I had experienced, because of my great profit, and my immersion in sport and mirth in the society of friends and companions.

Thus I lived a most delightful life until my wicked soul suggested to me to travel to foreign countries, and I felt a longing for meeting other races, and for selling and gain. Having made my resolve, I purchased precious goods, suited for a sea voyage and, having packed up more bales than usual, journeyed from Baghdad to Basra, where I loaded my bales in a ship, and embarked with some of the chief merchants of the town.

We set out on our voyage and sailed, with the blessing of the Almighty God, in the sea, and the journey was pleasant, as we sailed, for many nights and days, from sea to sea, and island to island, until one day a contrary wind rose against us. So the captain cast the ship's anchors, and brought it to a standstill, fearing that it would sink in midocean.

While we were praying and imploring the Almighty God, a violent storm suddenly blew against us, tore the sails to pieces, and threw the people, with all their bales, provisions, and possessions, into the sea. I, too, was submerged like the rest.

I kept myself afloat half the day and, when I was about to give up, the Almighty God provided me with one of the wooden planks of the ship, and I and some other merchants climbed on it, and we paddled with our feet, with the aid of the wind and the waves, for a day and a night. On the midmorning of the following day, a squall blew, and the waves rose, casting us on an island, almost dead from lack of sleep, exhaustion, hunger, thirst, and fear.

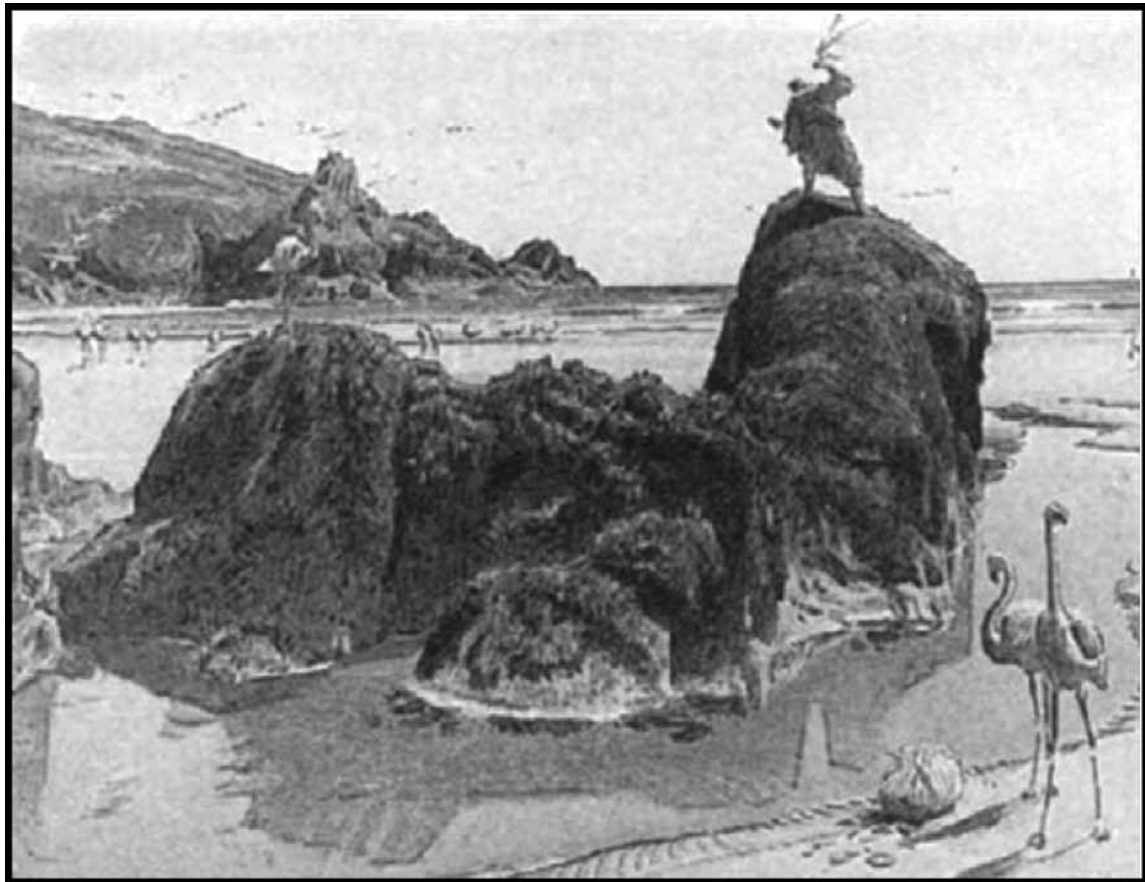
We walked along the shores of that island and found abundant vegetation, of which we ate a little to stay our hunger and to sustain ourselves. We spent the night on the shore and, when it was daylight, we arose and wandered in the island to the right and left until we saw a building in the distance. We walked toward that building, and kept walking until we stood at its door.

While we stood there, out came a group of naked men who, without speaking to us, seized us and took us to their king. He ordered us to sit, and we sat. Then they brought us some strange food, the like of which we had never seen in our lives. My stomach revolted from it and, unlike my companions, I refrained from eating it, and my refraining was, by the favor of the Almighty God, the cause of my being alive till now.

For when my companions ate of that food, they were dazed and began to eat like madmen, and their states changed. Then the people brought them coconut oil, and gave them to drink from it, and anointed them with it. When they drank of that oil, their eyes rolled in their heads, and they proceeded to devour an unusual amount of food.

When I saw them in that condition, I was puzzled and felt sorry for them, and I became extremely anxious and fearful for myself from these naked men. I looked at them carefully and realized that they were Magians, and that the king of their city was a demon.

Whenever someone came to their country, or they spotted him, or chanced to meet him in the



“Sindbad the Sailor’s Fourth Voyage.” Illustrated by Albert Goodwin, 1885.

valley or on the roads, they brought him to their king, gave him of that food to eat, and anointed him with that oil, so that his belly would expand and he would overeat, feeling stupefied, losing judgment, and becoming like an idiot. Then they gave him more and more of that food to eat, and of that oil to drink, and when he became fat and stocky, they slaughtered him, roasted him, and gave him to their king to eat, while they themselves ate the flesh without roasting it or cooking it.

When I realized the situation, I was extremely anxious for myself and my companions who, in their stupefaction, did not know what was being done to them. They were committed to a man who took them out every day, and let them pasture on that island, like cattle. In the meantime, I wasted away, and became emaciated from hunger and fear, and my skin shriveled on my bones.

When the Magians saw me in this condition, they left me alone and forgot me, not one of them taking any notice of me, until one day I found a way to slip out of the building and walked away. Then I saw a herdsman sitting on something elevated in the middle of the sea, and when I looked at him, I realized that he was the man to whom they had committed my companions to be taken out to pasture. With him there were many men like them.

As soon as the man saw me, he knew that I was in possession of my reason, and that I was not afflicted like my companions. He signed to me from afar, saying, "Turn back, and take the road on your right, and it will lead you into the king's highway."

I turned back, as he had told me and, finding a road on my right, began to follow it, sometimes running from fear, sometimes walking slowly, in order to catch my breath, and I kept following the road until I disappeared from the sight of the man who had directed me to it, and we were no longer able to see each other.

By then, the sun had set, and it had become dark. I sat down to rest and tried to sleep, but I could not sleep that night because of my extreme fear, hunger, and fatigue. When the night was half spent, I rose and walked in the island until it was daylight, and the sun rose over the tops of the hills and over the plains.

I was tired, hungry, and thirsty; so I ate of the herbs and the plants that were on that island until I had enough to allay my hunger. Then I walked the whole day and the next night and, whenever I felt hungry, I ate of the plants to stay my stomach, and I walked on like this for seven days and nights.

On the morning of the eighth day, I happened to cast a glance and saw a vague object in the distance. I walked toward it, and kept walking until I reached it, after sunset. I stood scrutinizing it from a distance, still fearful because of what I had suffered the first and the second time, and found that it was a group of men gathering peppercorn.

When I approached them, and they saw me, they hastened to me and, surrounding me on all sides, asked me, "Who are you, and from where do you come?" I said to them, "Fellows, I am a poor stranger," and I informed them of my case and how I had suffered hardships and horrors.

When they heard my words, they said, "By God, this is extraordinary, but tell us how you escaped from these black men, and how you slipped by them, when they are so numerous on this island, and they eat people?"

So I related to them what had happened to me with them, and how they had given my companions the food I refrained from eating. They congratulated me on my safety, and marveled at my story.

They seated me among them until they finished their work. Then they brought me some good food, which I ate, being hungry, and rested for a while. Then they took me and embarked with me in a ship and went to their island and their homes.

There, they presented me to their king, and I saluted him, and he welcomed me, treated me with respect, and asked me about my case. I related to him all that had happened to me, from the day I left Baghdad until I came to him, and he, as well as all those present in his assembly, marveled greatly at my story.

Then he asked me to sit and gave orders to bring the food, and I ate until I had enough, washed

my hands, and offered thanks to the Almighty God and praised him for His favor. Then I left the presence of the king and went sightseeing in his city, and found it flourishing, populous, and prosperous, abounding with food, markets, and buyers and sellers. I rejoiced in my arrival in that city, and felt at ease there, as I made friends with its people who, together with their king, favored me and honored me more than even the chief men of that city.

I saw that all the men, great and small, rode fine horses, but without saddles, and wondered at that, so I said to the king, "My lord, why don't you ride on a saddle, for it offers the rider comfort and greater control?"

He asked, "What kind of thing is a saddle, for I have never seen nor used one in all my life?"

I said to him, "Will you permit me to make you a saddle to ride on, and experience its quality?"

He said, "Very well."

I said, "Let them fetch me some wood," and he gave orders to bring me everything I required. Then I asked for a skilled carpenter, and sat with him, and showed him the construction of the saddle, and how to make it.

Then I took some wool, carded it, and made a felt pad out of it. Then I brought leather and, covering the saddle with it, polished it, and attached the straps and the girth.

Afterwards, I brought a blacksmith and showed him how to make the stirrups, and he forged a great pair of stirrups which I filed and plated with tin, and to which I attached fringes of silk.

Then I brought one of the best of the king's horses, saddled him, attaching the stirrups to the saddle; bridled him; and led him to the king, who was pleased by the saddle, and received it with approval and thanks. He seated himself on the saddle, and was greatly pleased with it, and gave me a large reward for it.

When his vizier saw that I had made the saddle, he asked me for one, and I made one like it. Moreover, all the leading men and high officials began to order saddles, and I kept making them and selling them, having taught the carpenter and blacksmith how to make saddles and stirrups.

Thus I amassed a great deal of money, and was highly esteemed and greatly loved, and I continued to enjoy a high status with the king and his entourage, as well as the leading men of the city and the lords of the state.

One day, I sat with the king, in the utmost happiness and honor, when he said to me, "You are honored and loved among us, and you have become one of us, and we cannot part from you, nor can we bear your departure from our city. I wish you to obey me in a certain matter, without contradicting me."

I said to him, "What does your majesty desire of me, for I cannot deny you, since I am indebted to you for your favors, benefits, and kindness and, praise be to God, I have become one of your servants."

He said, "I wish to marry you among us to a lovely, elegant, and charming woman, a woman of beauty and wealth, and you shall reside with us and live with me in my palace. Therefore, do not deny me or argue with me."

When I heard the king's words, I remained silent, for I was too embarrassed to say anything.

He said, "Son, why don't you answer me?"

I replied, "My lord and king of the age, the command is yours."

So he immediately summoned the judge and the witnesses and married me to a fine lady of high rank, noble birth, great lineage, surpassing beauty, and abundant wealth, possessing a great many buildings and dwellings.

Then he gave me a great, beautiful house, standing alone, and gave me servants and attendants, and assigned me stipends and supplies. So I lived in the utmost ease, contentment, and happiness, and forgot all the weariness, trouble, and hardship I had suffered.

I said to myself, "If I ever go back to my country, I will take her with me. But whatever is predestined to happen will happen, and no one knows what will befall him," for I loved her and she loved me very much, and we lived in harmony, enjoying great prosperity and happiness.

One day, God the Almighty caused the wife of my neighbor, who was one of my companions,

to die, and I went to see him to offer my condolences for the loss of his wife, and found him in a sorry plight, anxious, weary, and distracted.

I offered my condolences and began to comfort him, saying, "Don't mourn for your wife. God the Almighty will compensate you with a better wife, and will grant you a long life, if it be His will."

He wept bitterly, saying, "O my friend, how will God compensate me with a better wife, when I have only one day to live?"

I said, "Friend, be rational and do not prophesy your own death, for you are well and in good health."

He said, "By your life, brother, tomorrow you will lose me and never in your life will you see me again."

I asked, "How so?"

He said, "Today, they will bury my wife and bury me with her in the tomb, for it is the custom of our country, when the wife dies, to bury the husband alive with her, and when the husband dies, to bury the wife alive with him, in order that neither of them may enjoy life after the other." I said to him, "By God, this is a most vile custom, and no one should endure it."

While we were conversing, most of the people of the city came, offered their condolences for the death of my friend's wife, and his own death, and began to prepare her, according to their custom.

They brought a coffin and, placing the woman in it, carried her and took her husband with them, outside the city, until they reached a place in the side of a mountain by the sea. They advanced to a spot and lifted from it a large stone, revealing a stone-lined well. They threw the woman down into that well, which seemed to lead into a vast cavern beneath the mountain.

Then they brought the husband and, tying a rope of palm fibers under his armpits, let him down the well, with a jug of sweet water, and seven loaves of bread. When he was down, he undid the rope, and they drew it up, covered the mouth of the well with that large stone as it was before, and went on their way, leaving my friend with his wife in the cavern.

I said to myself, "By God, this death is worse than the first." Then I went to the king and said to him, "O my lord, why do you bury the living with the dead in your country?"

He replied, "It is the custom of our country, when the husband dies, to bury his wife alive with him, and when the wife dies, to bury her husband alive with her, so that they may always be together, in life and in death. This custom we have received from our forefathers."

I asked him, "O king of the age, will you do to a foreigner like me as you have done to that man, if his wife dies?"

He replied, "Yes, we bury him and do to him as you have seen."

When I heard his words, I was galled, dismayed, stricken with grief for myself, and dazed with fear that my wife might die before me and they bury me alive with her. Then I tried to divert my mind, by keeping busy, and to console myself, thinking, "Maybe I will die before her, for no one knows who will go first and who will follow."

But a short time later, my wife fell ill, and a few days later died.

Most of the people of the city came to offer their condolences for her death to me and to her relatives. The king too came to offer his condolences, as was their custom.

Then they brought a woman to wash her, and they washed her and arrayed her in her richest clothes and gold ornaments, necklaces, and jewels. Then they put her in the coffin and carried her to the side of the mountain and, removing the stone from the mouth of the well, they threw her in.

Then all my friends and my wife's relatives turned to me to bid me the last farewell, while I was crying out among them, "I am a foreigner, and I cannot endure your custom."

They did not pay any attention to my words but, seizing me, they bound me by force, and let me down the well into the large cavern beneath the mountain, with seven loaves of bread and a jug of sweet water, as was their custom.

Then they said to me, "Untie yourself from the ropes," but I refused, and they threw the ropes

down on me, covered the opening of the well, and departed.

I saw in that cavern many dead bodies that exhaled a putrid and loathsome smell, and I blamed myself for what I had done, saying to myself, "By God, I deserve everything that has happened to me."

I could not distinguish night from day, and I sustained myself with very little food, not eating until I felt the pangs of hunger, nor drinking until I became extremely thirsty, fearing that my food and water would be exhausted.

I said to myself, "There is no power and no strength, save in God the Almighty, the Magnificent. What possessed me to marry in this city? Every time I say to myself that I have escaped one calamity, I fall into a worse one. By God, this death is a vile death. I wish that I had drowned in the sea or died on the mountain; that would have been better than this horrible death."

And I continued to blame myself. Then I threw myself down on the bones of the dead, begging, in the extremity of my despair, the Almighty God for a speedy death, but found it not, and I continued in this state until my stomach was lacerated by hunger, and my throat was inflamed with thirst.

So I sat up and, groping for the bread, ate a little morsel and drank a mouthful of water. Then I stood up and began to explore that cavern. I found that it was wide and empty, except that its floor was covered with dead bodies and rotten bones from long ago.

I made myself a place in the side of the cavern, far from the fresh bodies, and went to sleep there. Eventually my provisions dwindled until I had only a very little left. During each day, or more than a day, I had eaten only a morsel, and drunk only a mouthful, fearing that the food and water would run out before my death.

I remained in this situation until one day, while I sat wondering what I would do when I ran out of food and water, the rock was suddenly removed from its place, and the light beamed on me. I said to myself, "I wonder what is happening," and saw people standing at the opening of the well who let down a dead man and a living woman, weeping and wailing for herself, and they let down with her food and water.

I kept staring at the woman, without being seen by her, while they covered the mouth of the well with the stones, and went on their way. Then I took the shinbone of a dead man and, going to the woman, struck her on the crown of the head, and she fell down unconscious. I struck her a second and a third time until she died.

She had on her plenty of apparel, ornaments, necklaces, jewels, and precious metals, and I took all she had, together with the bread and water, and sat in the place I had made for myself in the side of the cavern where I used to sleep, and continued to eat only a little of that food, just enough to sustain me, for fear that it would be exhausted quickly, and I would die of hunger and thirst.

I remained in the cavern for some time and, whenever they buried a dead person, I killed the living one who was buried with him, and took his food and water to sustain myself until one day I woke up from my sleep and heard something rummaging in the side of the cavern.

I said to myself, "What can it be?" Then I got up and, with a shinbone in my hand, I walked toward the noise, and found out that it was a wild beast which, when it became aware of me, ran away and fled from me.

I followed it to the far end of the cavern and saw a spot of light, like a star, now appearing, now disappearing. When I saw it, I walked toward it, and the closer I got to it, the larger and brighter it became until I was certain that it was an opening in the cavern leading to the open air.

I said to myself, "There must be an explanation for this. Either it is a second opening, like the one from which they let me down, or it is a fissure in the rock."

I stood reflecting for a while; then I advanced toward the light and found that it was a hole in the side of the mountain which the wild beasts had made, and through which they entered the cavern, and ate of the dead bodies until they had their fill, and went out as they came.

When I saw the hole, I felt relieved from my anxiety and worry, certain of life, after having been on the verge of death, and as happy as if I had been in a dream. Then I tried until I succeeded to

climb out of the hole, finding myself on the side of a great mountain overlooking the sea, and acting as a barrier between the sea, on the one side, and the island and the city, on the other, so that none could come to that part from the city.

I praised and thanked the Almighty God, feeling extremely happy and regaining my courage. Then I returned through the hole to the cavern and brought out all the food and water I had saved.

Then I changed my clothes, putting on some of the clothes of the dead, and gathered a great many of all kinds of necklaces of pearls and precious stones, ornaments of gold and silver set with gems, and other valuables I found on the corpses and, using the clothes of the dead to pack the jewelry in bundles, carried them out through the hole to the side of the mountain and stood on the seashore.

Every day I went into the cavern and explored it, and whenever they buried someone alive, I killed him, whether he was male or female, took his food and water and, coming out of the cavern, sat on the seashore to wait for deliverance by the Almighty God, by means of a passing ship. For some time, I kept gathering all the jewelry I could find, tying it up in bundles in the clothes of the dead, and carrying it out of the cavern.

One day, as I was sitting on the seashore, thinking about my situation, I saw a ship passing in the middle of a roaring, surging sea. I took a white shirt that I had taken from one of the dead, tied it to a stick, and ran along the seashore, making with it signals to the people on the ship until, happening to glance in my direction, they saw me and turned toward me and, when they heard my cries, they sent a boat with a group of men.

When they came close to me, they said, "Who are you, and why are you sitting in this place, and how did you reach this mountain, for in all our lives we have never known anyone who has reached it?"

I said, "I am a merchant, who had been shipwrecked, and I saved myself by getting on a wooden plank, together with my belongings and, with God's help and by my own exertions, skill, and great toil, I landed at this place, with my belongings."

They took me with them in the boat, carrying all I had taken from the cavern, bundled in the clothes and shrouds of the dead, embarked in the ship, and took me with all my belongings to the captain.

The captain said to me, "Fellow, how did you reach this great mountain, which bars the shore from the great city behind it, for I have been sailing in this sea and passing by this mountain all my life, but I have never seen anyone here, except the birds and the wild beasts?"

I replied, "I was a merchant on a large ship that was wrecked, and I was thrown into the sea with all my merchandise, which consisted of the fabrics and clothes that you see. But I placed them on one of the wide wooden planks of the ship, and fate and fortune aided me, and I landed on the mountain, where I have been waiting for someone to pass by and take me with him."

I did not tell them, however, about what had happened to me in the city or in the cavern, for fear that they might have with them on the ship someone from that city.

Then I took out a good portion of my property, and presented it to the captain, saying, "Sir, you are the cause of my rescue from this mountain. Take this gift in gratitude for what you have done."

But he refused my gift, saying, "We take nothing from anyone, and when we see a shipwrecked man on the seashore or on an island, we take him with us, feed him and give him to drink and, if he is naked, clothe him and, when we reach a safe harbor, treat him with kindness and charity, and give him a present, for the sake of the Almighty God."

When I heard his words, I offered prayers, wishing him a long life.

We sailed from sea to sea, and from island to island, while I anticipated my deliverance and rejoiced in my safety, but every time I recalled my stay with my dead wife in that cavern, I almost lost my mind.

At last, with the help of the Almighty God, we arrived safely in Basra, where I stayed for a few days, then headed for Baghdad. There, I came to my quarter, entered my house, and met my relatives



Les marchands cassèrent l'œuf. (Page 147, col. 1.)

“Sindbad the Sailor’s Fifth Voyage.” Gustave Doré (Dessinateur du modèle) & William Frederick Measom (Graveur), 1865.

and friends, inquiring about their condition, and they rejoiced and congratulated me on my safe return.

Then I stored all I had brought with me in my storerooms, gave alms and clothed the widows and the orphans, and bestowed gifts. I felt extremely joyful and happy, and returned to my former habit of associating with friends and companions, and indulging in sport and pleasure. These, then, are the most extraordinary events of my fourth voyage.

Dine with me now, brother, and come back tomorrow, as usual, and I will tell you the story of what happened to me on the fifth voyage, for it is more extraordinary and more wonderful than the preceding one.

Then Sindbad the Sailor gave the porter a hundred pieces of gold and ordered that the table be spread and, after the guests dined, they went their way, in great amazement, for each story was more extraordinary than the preceding one.

Sindbad the Porter went to his house, where he spent the night in the utmost joy, happiness, and wonder. As soon as it was daylight, he got up, performed his morning prayer, and walked until he came to Sindbad the Sailor.

He walked in, wished him good morning, and Sindbad welcomed him and asked him to sit with him until the rest of his companions arrived. They ate and drank, enjoyed themselves, and felt merry and, when they turned to conversation, Sindbad the Sailor began his story saying:

* * *

The Fifth Voyage of Sindbad

Friends, when I returned from the fourth voyage, I indulged in sport, pleasure, and delight, rejoicing greatly in my gains, profits, and benefits, and forgot all I had experienced and suffered until I began to think again of traveling to see foreign countries and islands.

Having made my resolve, I bought valuable merchandise suited to a sea voyage, packed up my bales, and journeyed from Baghdad to Basra. I walked along the shore and saw a large, tall, and goodly ship, newly fitted. It pleased me and I bought it.

Then I hired a captain and crew, over whom I set some of my slaves and pages as superintendents, and loaded my bales on the ship. Then a group of merchants joined me, loaded their bales on the ship, and paid me the freight.

We set out in all joy and cheerfulness, rejoicing in the prospect of a safe and prosperous voyage, and sailed from sea to sea, and from island to island, landing to see the sights of the islands and towns, and to sell and buy.

We continued in this fashion until one day we came to a large uninhabited island, waste and desolate, except for a vast white dome. The merchants landed to look at the dome, which was in reality a huge Rukh's egg; but, not knowing what it was, they struck it with stones; and, when they broke it, much fluid ran out of it, and the young Rukh appeared inside. They drew it out of the shell, slaughtered it, and took from it a great deal of meat.

While this was going on, I was on the ship, uninformed and unaware of it until one of the passengers came to me and said, "Sir, go and look at that egg, which we thought to be a dome." I went to look at the egg and arrived just when the merchants were striking it.

I cried out to them, "Don't do this, for the Rukh will come, demolish our ship, and destroy us all." But they did not heed my words.

While they were thus engaged, the sun suddenly disappeared, and the day grew dark, as if a dark cloud was passing above us. We raised our heads to see what had veiled the sun, and saw that it was the Rukh's wings that had blocked the sunlight and made the day dark, for when the Rukh came and saw its egg broken, it cried out at us, and its mate came, and they circled above the ship, shrieking with voices louder than thunder.

I called out to the captain and the sailors, saying, “Push off the ship, and let us escape before we perish.” The captain hurried and, as soon as the merchants embarked, unfastened the ship and sailed away from the island. When the Rukhs saw that we were on the open sea, they disappeared for a while.

We sailed, making speed, in the desire to leave their land behind and escape from them, but suddenly they caught up with us, each carrying in its talons a huge rock from a mountain.

Then the male bird threw its rock on us, but the captain steered the ship aside, and the rock missed it by a little distance, and fell into the water with such force that we saw the bottom of the sea, and the ship went up and down, almost out of control.

Then the female bird threw on us its rock, which was smaller than the first but, as it had been ordained, it fell on the stern of the ship, smashed it, sent the rudder flying in twenty pieces, and threw all the passengers into the sea.

I struggled for dear life to save myself until the Almighty God provided me with one of the wooden planks of the ship, to which I clung and, getting on it, began to paddle with my feet, while the wind and the waves helped me forward.

The ship had sunk near an island in the middle of the sea, and fate cast me, according to God’s will, on that island, where I landed, like a dead man, on my last breath from extreme hardship and fatigue and hunger and thirst.

I threw myself on the seashore and lay for a while, until I began to recover myself and feel better. Then I walked in the island and found that it was like one of the gardens of Paradise. Its trees were laden with fruits, its streams flowing, and its birds singing the glory of the Omnipotent, Everlasting One. There was an abundance of trees, fruits, and all kinds of flowers. So I ate of the fruits until I satisfied my hunger, and drank of the streams until I quenched my thirst, and I thanked the Almighty God and praised Him.

I sat in the island until it was evening, and night approached, without seeing anyone or hearing any voice. I was still feeling almost dead from fatigue and fear; so I lay down and slept till the morning. Then I got up and walked among the trees until I came to a spring of running water, beside which sat a comely old man clad with a waistcloth made of tree leaves.

I said to myself, “Perhaps the old man has landed on the island, being one of those who have been shipwrecked.”

I drew near him and saluted him, and he returned my salutation with a sign but remained silent.

I said to him, “Old man, why are you sitting here?”

He moved his head mournfully and motioned with his hand, meaning to say, “Carry me on your shoulders, and take me to the other side of the stream.”

I said to myself, “I will do this old man a favor and transport him to the other side of the stream, for God may reward me for it.”

I went to him, carried him on my shoulders, and took him to the place to which he had pointed. I said to him, “Get down at your ease,” but he did not get off my shoulders.

Instead, he wrapped his legs around my neck, and when I saw that their hide was as black and rough as that of a buffalo, I was frightened, and tried to throw him off. But he pressed his legs around my neck and choked my throat until I blacked out, and fell unconscious to the ground, like a dead man.

He raised his legs and beat me on the back and shoulders, causing me intense pain. I got up, feeling tired from the burden, and he kept riding on my shoulders and motioning me with his hand to take him among the trees to the best of the fruits and, whenever I disobeyed him, he gave me, with his feet, blows more painful than the blows of the whip.

He continued to direct me with his hand to any place he wished to go, and I continued to take him to it until we made our way among the trees to the middle of the island. Whenever I loitered or went leisurely, he beat me, for he held me like a captive.

He never got off my shoulders, day or night, urinating and defecating on me and, whenever he wished to sleep, he would wrap his legs around my neck, and sleep a little, then arise and beat me, and

I would get up quickly, unable to disobey him because of the severity of the pain I suffered from him.

I continued with him in this condition, suffering from extreme exhaustion and blaming myself for having taken pity on him, and carried him on my shoulders. I said to myself, "I have done this person a good deed, and it has turned evil to myself. By God, I will never do good to anyone, as long as I live," and I began to beg, at every turn and every step, the Almighty God for death, because of the severity of my fatigue and distress.

I continued in this situation for some time until one day I came with him to a place in the island where there was an abundance of gourds, many of which were dry. I selected one that was large and dry, cut it at the neck and cleansed it. Then I went with it to a grapevine and filled it with the juice of the grapes.

Then I plugged the gourd, placed in it the sun, and left it there several days until the juice turned into wine, from which I began to drink every day in order to find some relief from the exhausting burden of that obstinate devil, for I felt invigorated whenever I was intoxicated.

One day he saw me drinking and signed to me with his hand, meaning to say, "What is this?" I said to him, "This is an excellent drink that invigorates and delights."

Then I ran with him and danced among the trees, clapping my hands and singing and enjoying myself, in the exhilaration of intoxication. When he saw me in that state, he motioned to me to give him the gourd, in order that he might drink from it.

Being afraid of him, I gave it to him, and he drank all that was in it and threw it to the ground. Then he became enraptured and began to shake on my shoulders, and as he became extremely intoxicated and sank into torpor, all his limbs and muscles relaxed, and he began to sway back and forth on my shoulders.

When I realized that he was drunk, and that he was unconscious, I held his feet and loosened them from my neck and, stooping with him, I sat down and threw him to the ground, hardly believing that I had delivered myself from him.

But, fearing that he might recover from his drunkenness and harm me, I took a huge stone from among the trees, came to him, struck him on the head as he lay asleep, mingling his flesh with his blood, and killed him. May God have no mercy on him!

Then I walked in the island, feeling relieved, until I came back to the spot on the seashore where I had been before. I remained there for some time, eating of the fruits of the island, and drinking of its water, and waiting for a ship to pass by, until one day, as I sat thinking about what had happened to me and reflecting on my situation, saying to myself, "I wonder whether God will preserve me, and I will return to my country and be reunited with my relatives and friends," a ship suddenly approached from the middle of the roaring, raging sea, and continued until it set anchor at the island, and its passengers landed.

I walked toward them and, when they saw me, they all quickly hurried to me and gathered around me, inquiring about my situation and the reason for my coming to that island. I told them about my situation, and what had happened to me, and they were amazed and said, "The man who rode on your shoulders is called the Old Man of the Sea, and no one was ever beneath his limbs and escaped safely, except yourself. God be praised for your safety."

Then they brought me some food, and I ate until I had enough, and they gave me some clothes, which I wore to make myself decent. Then they took me with them in the ship, and we journeyed many days and nights until fate drove us to a city of tall buildings, all of which overlooked the sea.

This city is called the City of the Apes and, when night comes, the inhabitants come out of the gates overlooking the sea and, embarking in boats and ships, spend the night there, for fear that the apes may descend on them from the mountains.

I landed and, while I was enjoying the sights of the city, the ship sailed, without my knowledge. I regretted having disembarked in that city, remembering my companions and what had happened to us with the apes the first and the second time, and I sat down, weeping and mourning. Then one of the

inhabitants came to me and said, "Sir, you seem to be a stranger in this place."

I replied, "Yes, I am a poor stranger. I was in a ship that anchored here, and I landed to see the sights of the city, and when I went back, I could not find the ship."

He said, "Come with us and get into the boat, for if you spend the night here, the apes will destroy you."

I said, "I hear and obey," and I got up immediately and embarked with them in the boat, and they pushed it off from the shore until we were a mile away. We spent the night in the boat, and when it was morning, they returned to the city, landed, and each of them went to his business.

Such has been their habit every night, and whoever remains behind in the city at night, the apes come and destroy him. During the day, the apes go outside the city and eat of the fruits in the orchards, and sleep in the mountains until the evening, at which time they return to the city. This city is located in the farthest parts of the land of the blacks.

One of the strangest things I experienced in the inhabitants' treatment of me was as follows. One of those with whom I spent the night in the boat said to me, "Sir, you are a stranger here. Do you have any craft you can work at?"

I replied, "No, by God, my friend, I have no trade and no handicraft, for I was a merchant, a man of property and wealth, and I owned a ship laden with abundant goods, but it was wrecked in the sea, and everything in it sank. I escaped from drowning only by the grace of God, for He provided me with a plank of wood on which I floated and saved myself."

When he heard my words, he got up and brought me a cotton bag and said, "Take this bag, fill it with pebbles from the shore, and go with a group of the inhabitants, whom I will help you join and to whom I will commend you, and do as they do, and perhaps you will gain what will help you to return to your country."

Then he took me with him until we came outside the city, where I picked small pebbles until the bag was filled. Soon a group of men emerged from the city, and he put me in their charge and commanded me to them, saying, "This man is a stranger. Take him with you and teach him how to pick, so that he may gain his living, and God may reward you."

They said, "We hear and obey," and they welcomed me, and took me with them, and proceeded, each carrying a cotton bag like mine, filled with pebbles. We walked until we came to a spacious valley, full of trees so tall that no one could climb them.

The valley was also full of apes which, when they saw us, fled and climbed up into the trees. The men began to pelt the apes with the pebbles from the bags, and the apes began to pluck the fruits of those trees and to throw them at the men and, as I looked at the fruits the apes were throwing, I found that they were coconuts.

When I saw what the men were doing, I chose a huge tree full of apes and, advancing to it, began to pelt them, while they plucked the nuts and threw them at me. I began to collect the nuts as the men did and, before my bag was empty of pebbles, I had collected plenty of nuts.

When the men finished the work, they gathered together all the nuts, and each of them carried as many as he could, and we returned to the city, arriving before the end of the day.

Then I went to my friend, who had helped me join the group, and gave him all the nuts I had gathered, thanking him for his kindness, but he said to me, "Take the nuts, sell them, and use the money."

Then he gave me a key to a room in his house, saying, "Keep there whatever is left of the nuts, and go out every day with the men, as you did today, and of what you bring with you separate the bad and sell them, and use the money, but keep the best in that room, so that you may gather enough to help you with your voyage."

I said to him, "May the Almighty God reward you," and did as he told me, going out daily to gather pebbles, join the men, and do as they did, while they commended me to each other and guided me to the trees bearing the most nuts.

I continued in this manner for some time, during which I gathered a great store of excellent coconuts, and sold a great many, making a good deal of money, with which I bought whatever I saw and liked. So I thrived and felt happy in that city.

One day, as I was standing on the seashore, a ship arrived, cast anchor, and landed a group of merchants, who proceeded to sell and buy and exchange goods for coconuts and other commodities.

I went to my friend and told him about the ship that had arrived, and said that I would like to return to my country.

He said, "It is for you to decide."

So I thanked him for his kindness and bade him farewell. Then I went to the ship, met the captain and, booking a passage, loaded my store of coconuts on the ship.

We set out and continued to sail from sea to sea, and from island to island, and at every island we landed, I sold and traded with coconuts until God compensated me with more than I had possessed before and lost.

Among other places we visited, we came to an island abounding in cinnamon and pepper. Some people told us that they had seen on every cluster of peppers a large leaf that shades it and protects it from the rain and, when the rain stops, the leaf flips over and assumes its place at its side.

From that island I took with me a large quantity of pepper and cinnamon, in exchange for coconuts. Then we passed by the Island of the 'Usrat, from which comes the Comorin aloewood, and by another island, which is a five-day journey in length, and from which comes the Chinese aloewood, which is superior to the Comorin.

But the inhabitants of this island are inferior to those of the first, both in their religion and in their way of life, for they are given to lewdness and wine drinking, and know no prayer nor the call to prayer.

Then we came to the island of the pearl fishers, where I gave the divers some coconuts and asked them to dive, and try my luck for me. They dived in the bay and brought up a great number of large and valuable pearls, saying, "O master, by God, you are very lucky," and I took everything they brought up with me to the ship.

Then we sailed until we reached Basra, where I stayed for a few days, then headed for Baghdad. I came to my quarter, entered my house, and saluted my relatives and friends, and they congratulated me on my safety.

Then I stored all the goods and gear I had brought with me, clothed the widows and the orphans, gave alms, and bestowed gifts on my relatives, friends, and all those dear to me. God had given me fourfold what I had lost and, because of my gains and the great profit I had made, I forgot what had happened to me and the toil I had suffered, and resumed my association with my friends and companions.

These then are the most extraordinary events of my fifth voyage. Let us have supper now, and tomorrow, come, and I will tell you the story of my sixth voyage, for it is more wonderful than this.

They spread the table, and the guests dined and, when they finished, Sindbad gave the porter a hundred pieces of gold, which he took and went on his way, marveling at what he had heard.

He spent the night in his house, and as soon as it was morning, he got up, performed his morning prayer, and went to the house of Sindbad the Sailor.

He went in and wished him good morning and Sindbad the Sailor asked him to sit and talked to him until the rest of his friends arrived. They talked for a while, then the table was spread, and they ate and drank and enjoyed themselves and felt merry. Then Sindbad the Sailor began the story of the sixth voyage, saying:

To be continued in Cenacle | 122 | Winter 2023

Michael Couvaras







Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Labyrinthine

[a new fixtion]

Part Twelve

"I tell you, there are more words,
and more stars to them,
than you will think of in many years!"
—George Macdonald
Lith, 1895

xi.

I've been wondering about my creed *Mark Art Now* in terms of *Made Art Then*.

Old notebooks of mine. Really old notebooks, my earliest. Wondering how to talk to who I was, when a long ago boy.

But more, how to *collaborate with him*. Surely this strange, but I find that, within my notebooks, I like myself pretty well. Better than the rest of me, by far often.

And my very recent dare is to open up a channel through time & space to him, the great & small distance between us.

Uncertain what of this.

But coming are my tries.

But what would be the point of such a channel if it was passive? if we looked at one another through far ends of a lens?

No, what makes the past interesting to my Art anyway is how to *transform it & carry it along*—make it something . . . *further*—

Not what he knew to write—

Neither what I do—

Something further—

What tis? Don't know yet.

Call it . . . *radical collaboration*

Not much really the philosophizing kind, not in any organized way, still, here:

- 1) I = what I have
- 2) I + you = we = what we do
- 3) I + you + you + you + etc. = what is possible

These are all critical, all for the learning & better nurturing of the world.

If I learn what I have, really dig into the deep stuff of myself, that is something good. Foundational, yet incomplete. I *cannot* know all of me without crossing the border from inside to outside; without witnessing *your* self's deep stuff. Each of us is not fully active in all of what we have *without we*.

But we can be limiting too. Family, friends, schoolmates, work colleagues. Clubs & cults & political & religious parties. I easily patches into a we around me, familiar by tongue, culture, shared living. The borders are not very far still. And, outside of them, the *unknown*, the *other*. Can remain forever so, may or may not. But yet *shouldn't*.

Greater we is where shared assumptions about the world fall apart. Where certainty is exposed as simple belief; local custom, family ritual; prejudices wrought by history; economics, gender roles, religious tenets, societal laws.

Greater We is where we choose what is possible to create from what countless *wes* share, & what they do not. The work of Greater We is even harder than *we* & *I* because it may seem more distant, like an *option*, a *novelty*.

There is less than majority push for Greater We. The feud & ferment of we seems enough to some. Others *prefer* to remain in perceptual lands of *right & wrong*, *them & us*. *Us & other*. Us & our rules for prized behavior, & for punishment.

This may all seem far afield, or virtually disconnected with where this section began.

Yet. My reaching back into I, that's me trying better to figure out *what I have*. How to better get to *we*, to *Greater We*. How to make these ideas *more* than passing.

I have a beat old blue notebook (labelled in black ink on its cover "Scriptor International") full of stories written long ago that would lead to this one. I pack this old notebook into my bookbag, with the more recent ones; stand up, & walk whatever way in these White Woods, *thither-bound* for now.

xii.

Since I have *neither* destination in mind, *nor* a good *hmmm* to get me *thither*, I do not arrive *anywhere* in particular yet.

That's OK. Maybe relax a little bit more than usual in these White Woods. Enjoy their strange light, ever subtle colors not just in the trees, but in the air itself. A guiding hint seems to be: *pay more attention, & more to pay attention to*.

I wearing my black R.E.M. t-shirt, the one with the orange globe depicted on it. Green plaid button-down jacket over it. Beat but comfortable blue jeans. Old dear hiking boots. Lennonspecs on my face. One of my several jah hats on my head. Bookbag by strap on my shoulder. Red hair fairly long, hazel eyes (KD calls them), something of beard & moustache. Good get-up for travel.

The trees about me are old, sturdy. Some likely alien to any known guide book. I suspect these White Woods share amongst the Many Worlds as much as these share Abe's Beach, the Ancienne Coffeehouse, Attic, & a few other places. I have a list somewhere.

I suspect too that I will re-join Asoyadonna sooner or later, along her path to Abe's Beach, & joyful reunion with her Brothers.

But . . . something else . . . right now. Something different.

I find my walking self joined by my dear Creature Tender, MeZmer the White Bunny, hopping beside me.

The only advice she has ever given me so far, in the English, is: "scribble, scribble, scribble . . ." which, I have to say plainly, cuts to the heart of me. All else serves toward, or obstructs, this activity. How simple a soul to be, in a way, & yet not, in another.

I *know* what I *should* be doing. The rest a life's changing world to better tend.

Also, & strangely, & luckily, this is work I can easily, & happily, do. Writing is not, never has been, like it is for some, a struggle. It's Art, primarily, & craft, necessarily. I write as breathe, as beat, as compulsorily.

This is not to knock at others—their better & lesser days. Each makes, & walks, a unique path.

More to knock at the *idea* that a life devoted to *Art* must be, perforce, one of struggle & privation.

The marketplace can bring those. Addictions of myriad kind can too. Being a live, mortal, vulnerable being too.

But Art itself? What makes it, & how, & when good, & when not—this is fermenting magick at play, not the stuff of biography.

xiii.

Asoyadonna & Miss Flossie Flea strolled friendly into the Great Clearing where occurs every turn the Rutabaga Festival & Fleastock. Hand in paw, they strolled.

Miss Flossie asked Asoyadonna how her travels had been. Asoyadonna told her recent travels with Raymond the Author guy. Attic, 6 Model Islands, how they met at the bus station.

"Where did you travel with him before there?" asked Miss Flossie curiously.

Asoyadonna smiles to speak, but doesn't. Tries again, & doesn't. Slows their stroll.



"I . . . don't remember," she says.

Miss Flossie leads her away from the Festival throngs to sit by a White Birch. Leaves her a moment, with a raised paw, then returns with a bowl of Rutabaga Soup, & a spoon. Asoyadonna accepts with a vague smile, & begins to slurp up soup. Calms her, but still no recollections.

Miss Flossie waits, patient as Creatures, & lightly *hmmms*, just enough to color the air around them, like a kind of opaque screen. Not to attract Asoyadonna's fractured attention but to steer folks by them.

Finishes her soup, & hands Miss Flossie the bowl & spoon, but as though less here than more. Miss Flossie's *hmmm* accompanies her back to that bus station . . .

Talks softly aloud, not realizing she is, as Flossie *hmmms* & *hmmms* . . .

"I was with Benny my dog, & it was like we had been traveling a long time together. Everything we needed in my sturdy old knapsack. We had our travels down to a kind of routine. I remember it's like I wasn't *worrying* anything, but then again I wasn't really remembering too much either."

"Where were you going?"

"I . . . we . . . no destination. Not really. I felt safe with Benny. We'd sleep close on buses, & I think we'd, like, dream together? Sometimes I thought he wanted to tell me something, like help me *remember*, but I resisted. He didn't push."

"Remember what?"

"I didn't want to. What felt safe was traveling. Eating together. He used this red cup for his food, I'd keep it clean."

"What else did you keep in your knapsack?"

"Oh, food. Dried fruits & nuts. Water. Clothes. A few books, but I didn't read those."

"Why not?"

"I don't know. Wait! There was one. But it was a comic book. Called *Action Man & Bunny Girl Save the World* . . . *Twice!* I'd read that to Benny when he couldn't sleep."

"Do you remember the first bus? Or how you met Benny?"

She leans deeper in, eyes still closed but a bit more relaxed. This *didn't* need to be a struggle. These were *her* memories she was grasping to pick up again, know anew. Like the one of her father the Tinker, & Aunt, together affixing the Flower Stars to the ceiling above her bed at the Pensionne.

Relaxes more. Senses, like Raymond did, learned, at the Helping Hut, that opening her eyes right now would be different, tell her more.

Time to remember some things, Donna, & her eyes open to the close sight of a shaggy face with a long nose, & a tongue eager to lick her friendly awake.

This is Benny the dog, in the moment we met. This is how. Him licking me awake.

“Hello, hello,” she greets him, gives him a good hug or two, & many scratches on his black & white furred head.

“Where did you met Benny?” asks Flossie from somewhere near & far both.

“White Woods, like these. I was in a clearing. My knapsack nearby, sort of half-opened, some of its pockets, like we’d both tumbled to the ground.”

“Or been Wobbled.”

Silence. Then: “Yes. I think so.”

“So you traveled with him?”

She smiles. “He was easy to travel with. I felt lost, disoriented, but he stayed close. For awhile we were in the White Woods, sleeping in clearings when we came to them. It was peaceful.”

“Do you remember before that?” Flossie asks curiously.

“I didn’t then, not clearly.”

“And you met Raymond at that bus station next?”

“There were others. I think one was up in the mountains. I remember . . .” she laughs. “It had a great hall of pinecones!”

Flossie laughs too. Guesses this is probably High Station, on the many-sided mountain of many worlds, but does not say aloud.

“And another, strange, it was shaped to look like a train car or a key, but hard to say!”

Central Station, thinks Flossie quietly again.

“I don’t even now remember all of it, but it helped telling you,” Asoyadonna now opened her pretty eyes & smiled sweet at Miss Flossie, who returned in kind.

Then, somewhere in the throngs nearby, there was the sound of a wild cackle arriving to the Great Clearing. Flossie stood up, helped Asoyadonna up with both paws, & they hurried over to discover a crazy-eyed, merry cackling Imp holding her own in a crowd.

Then she saw Asoyadonna &, with a twice-merrier cackle, she skittered up to her. Donna kneeled down low, holding out her hand the nibble-sized Imp sniffed, a lazy gnaw or two, then hopped on with many strange click-clicks & noise-noises.

Asoyadonna knows well of Imp from her several Brother-Heroes’ long friendships with them, & her own occasional encounters. She knows one thing sure: Imps are both *very* intentional & completely *planless*.

So she studied her crazy eyes & merry face, her pleasing pandy bear visage, & turned to Flossie for more.

Cacklings, gnatterings, & Flossie listened close, paw on chin.

“You . . . speak her tongue?” Asoyadonna asked.

Pause a long breath before answering.

“She doesn’t really have a tongue, as such. It’s easier to understand by, um, trying less & less.”

Asoyadonna nodded, now better recalling her brother Odom saying something similar once, long ago. “The better you play her game, the better you understand,” he twinkled & laughed at his own Imp in hand.

Flossie listened again, or maybe *played* better attention. A few cackles & gnatters of her own.

“She’s here to guide you.”

“Guide . . . me?”

“To Abe’s Beach. Where your Brothers are gathering,” Flossie said, smiling sweet.

Asoyadonna studied this Imp close & . . . nothing. Then she recalled the nights when Imps would swarm, merry cackling, around some clearing they were camped in. She & her Brothers would cackle back, high & low, sometimes for hours on end.

Cackle now? Maybe not. It happened or didn’t. But still good. “OK,” she smiled.

As though in reply, but likely not, more coincidence than ought, the Imp cackled wild & leaped from her hand, skittering her way by mid-air to the ground, & away.

The till-now quiet crowds let off a hearty cheering cry, & urged Asoyadonna to “follow that Imp!” & she did. Who slowed just enough for Asoyadonna to keep her sight.

Flossie had been quiet smile watching when she realized where the Imp was going. Alas, too late to stop it or explain. She did follow, though, & watched from a careful distance.

It was a seeming at first black canvas, & Asoyadonna forgot everything else when she came upon it, hung on a tree trunk, something of a fair walk from the Great Clearing & its noisy happy Festival activities.

Somehow it was *most* visible among the shadows & contours around it. It *waited* those come to see it. And Asoyadonna could somehow sense that at least some of her Brothers had been standing here before it, like she did now.

Holding up, just two or three feet away, she chased & caught her breath, shook her head a couple of times for emphasis, then gave over fully to whatever it might offer.

At first, nothing. Black. *Was this all?* No. Francisco had taught her that it was *not* solely the painting’s job to teach a viewer how to look upon it. The viewer had to participate. Care enough to do so.

She tried again, & still nothing. *Focus, Donna! Focus, breathe, wait.*

That glint. A knife. Roddy’s? And, nearby, Dreamwalker’s *Hekk* stick, its patches of Indigo? That blue-green dab, oh, Odom’s coin-purse held close by one of his hands? And the King’s long grayish hair? Francisco’s strange hat, & a paintbrush in his hand?

And finally, inevitably, herself. Crouched & close together with the rest. The looks on all their faces. Fear, exhaustion. Resignation. Not a lot of fight left in them. Yet arrived, finally, where long they’d intended.

Had they paused like this in the Cave of the Beast, this is surely how Francisco's brush would have honestly rendered them.

But *why here?* Yes, she was sure that this was Francisco's canvas, or else at least one he had painted in.

But why? To discover the reason they'd been Wobbled far from each other? Yes, *but did it matter?*

"Does it really matter, so long as we find each other again?" she said aloud.

For a moment, the painting did not respond, even if it was supposed to or could.

But then it did. It showed brief, fractured scenes of many Wobblings. Great buildings, forests, seas. Spaceships, planets, more & more.

"We have to try to change things before they worsen more," she said softly, realized. "We are Heroes. Or were. When we reunite we have to be again . . ."

Asoyadonna had unknowingly staggered away from the Blood Canvas & onto the soft healing comforts of the Great Mound of Moss. When she woke, Miss Flossie Flea was next to her, with a nice bowl of Rutabaga Soup to feed her, when ready.

xiv.

MeZmer the White Bunny, & my dear Tender & friend (or at least friendly at times) continue our slow walking-&-hopping way along through the White Woods.

The cheerings of the Festival grow as we near. I look down at MeZmer for her preference. She sniffs twice without looking up, & hops on. Alright then.

Passing through countless pathless trees we arrive suddenly to the Thought Fleas Great Clearing. It is indeed crowded with many happy kinds of cheering folks. Thought Fleas, Creatures, people-folks, many others. The Festival is again more fully & openly welcoming to the Many Worlds. Posters & colored threads abound for many to find their way here, & they have & they do.

MeZmer notices me sort of veering toward a lovely old oak tree, to have a set-down for awhile with this notebook & pen. Again, sniffing twice obscurely, she chooses by her own strange White Bunny thinkings to join me. Bunny in lap, pen & notebook, write on.

It's surely getting well along in this *Great, Grand, Braided Narrative* [*Gr. Gr. Br. N.* for friendly].

And what I'm thinking mostly, in the cool of this White Woods evening, is: *don't rush it.* Yet, too, *finish strong, finish soon.*

It's a breathless, magickal balance, *knowing* how to do this or just, simply, *doing it.*

I now notice, perhaps by MeZmer's renewed sniffings from my lap, that someone is climbing up to the Lower Talent Show stage.

"It's like Miss Flossie's leaflets promised!" cries someone from the crowds. "Everyone has a hidden

talent!” And there suddenly burst into the air all around us these folded sheets of paper fluttering down.

One lands near us, & I pluck it up to read. MeZmer, like most Creatures, is spooked by the English, but she listens quietly to my readings.

The paper is soft, like bark, & many blended colors, like a rainbow? Miss Flossie’s visage is rendered upon it, & the words read: “Miss Flossie Flea promises that all will discover their hidden talents at the Rutabaga Festival! Come one, come all!” And signed in a strange, girlish paw by Miss Flossie. Hm. *I believe her.*

Look up again & . . . *wowie zowie!* If that isn’t Leo the Dark Man from Bags End up on there on the Lower Stage! Everyone friendly hushes everyone else to listen.

“My name is Leo. The rest I am known by is I guess a kind of nickname. I have long been the Janitor of Bags End.”

There are many cheers, whether for Leo, or his being a Janitor, or because he lives in Bags End, hard to tell.

Last I knew of him, he was coming to this Festival to chase down a comic book dilemma. Come with Algernon Beagle, & Princess Crissy, & Odom the Brother Hero, but them now gone on to the Beach of Many Worlds. Come with others too, who I don’t immediately see around.

Leo talks more. “My known talents are usually thought to be cleaning up Bags End, & especially scraping Miss Chris’s bubble gum off the side.”

And here he demonstrates with his, um, scraping tool. “You have to get in real good to the crevices where it clogs up. Round the corners & into the edges. My scraper can adjust to any angle, high or low. Sometimes I have to go very slow, but sometimes I have to heave-ho at it!”

And he shows his various scraping maneuvers in detail. The crowds seem fascinated by this strange character, & seem to respect his strange work.

Miss Flossie Flea now comes on stage to shake Leo’s hand & lead the clappings & the cheerings. Then she says, “Now, Mr. Leo will tell us of his hidden talent!” More cheerings.

Leo sort of hems & haws nervously. Starts slowly. “Well, you see, I didn’t know it was one, haha! Until I received by Mrs. El’s mail delivery the latest issue of my favorite *Action Man* comic book.” He holds up a very slender volume to polite cheers. Leo smiles happily. “I love Action Man’s caped heroics the best too! I am glad you all are fans! But you will see how confused I was by this new issue.”

He reads from the first page: “They were seeking the Cosmic Treasure, & wondered where it might be.” Turns it, & reads from its backside: “And so Action Man had heroically helped them find it!”

There were gasps from the audience. Some muttered about the lack of narrative exposition; others about the disappointing build-up to the climax; someone even questioned the realism of its character development.

Well, before a full-on literary rumble could ensure, Miss Flossie raised her paw for attention. “That’s

why we asked Mr. Leo to finish the whole story!”

Many gasped, & then everyone cheered. And, at precisely that moment, come bounding onto the stage two new individuals.

Both very familiar to me. The smaller one a bloo-&-pink Piglet Creature named, at least sometimes, Bellla. The taller yellow Puppy named Alexander from Bags End, & Algernon’s brother.

The sometimes-Bellla waved her paw like a champ & smirked delighted for all the world. “Bonjour! Ca va? Je m’appelle Mademoiselle Ancienne Cookié de La Studio Grande B. Je suis avec mon ami, A. Puppy! Le Bump Artiste Extraordinaire!”

Well, did everyone gathered in this clearing speak sorta-French? Maybe not. But they cheered & cheered anyway. Best way at this moment to say, “Hello!” & “Welcome!”

Miss Flossie, smiling delighted at these fellows, raised a paw to speak again. “Mr. Leo & his friends will pass through the green-&-golden curtain, & emerge later from the one on the Upper Stage”—& here she pointed far down the clearing to the much taller Stage/Platform & its own small Talent Show stage—“to show us their hidden talent!”

More cheerings as Miss Flossie handed Leo a knapsack to carry, maybe with all their needed Art supplies? How did this all work? “Hard to say,” goes the old Creatures’ saw.

But they waved & smiled & then turned & passed through the green-&-golden curtain.

I was cheering with the rest, now standing near the back of the crowd, when a soft girlish hand touched my shoulder. “Miss me?”

Twas Asoyadonna!

xv.

I *had* missed her & hugged her my happy. We sat back down under that oak tree, & she told me of her experiences at the Festival. Blood Canvas, Great Mound of Moss, Rutabaga Soup.

“And the Talent Show, of course!” we laughed.

Then someone secreted amongst her many pockets laughed too. Well, cackled more like it. Plucked out to show on palm, twas an Imp!

“But which one?” I asked.

“Miss Flossie told me this is Abe the Ancient Sea Turtle’s toothéd Imp. Also known as the First Islander. She’s come to lead us to Abe’s Beach of Many Worlds, by the shore of the Deeper Deeper Sea!”

She paused, studied me a moment, then flung her arms wildly around me. “I’m going to finally see my Brothers again, Raymond!” The First Islander Imp mixed herself up in our hug, cackling wildly.

I noticed a letter had now sorta poked out of her pocket. I could see writing on it that said, “To Mister Algernon Beagle, Editor of *Bags End News*, Currently in Residence at Abe’s Beach of Many Worlds.”

OK, I admit, I cheated & plucked it all the way out to read.

Asoyadonna smiled big & explained. “Mrs. El, the Post-Mistress of Bags End, asked me to deliver this letter to Algernon when we get there.”

“Is it from Lori Bunny, who is in Imagianna right now, interviewing Boop about his Epic?” I asked. I had read about this in *Bags End News*, of course.

She nodded & tucked it away more safely.

And at that moment, Miss Flossie Flea came up to us, smiling for all the world. “The Kittees & Friend Fish are waiting for you nearby, to take you to the *Good Ship Ker-Plow-Eee!* & the start of your trip down to the Beach of Many Worlds! Are you ready?”

Our smiles & cackles showed we were *more* than ready!



To be continued in Cenacle | 122 | Winter 2023

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NEW ENGLAND

Notes on Contributors

AbandonView lives in the American Rust Belt. His artwork appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. Talking lately of making chapbooks in the style of *Little Blue Books*. Has a whole publishing plan in mind! More of his work can be found at 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*.

Arabian Nights is a collection of Middle Eastern folk tales compiled in Arabic during the *Islamic Golden Age*. It is often known in English as the *Arabian Nights*, from the first English-language edition (c. 1706–1721), which rendered the title as *The Arabian Nights' Entertainment* (Source: *Wikipedia*).

Charlie Beyer lives in New Castle, Colorado. His prose appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. He vows toward “spine-tingling adventures, creation of a Tesla-like industry . . . [and] writ[ings] like it’s my last will and testament (mainly that last).” More of his writings can be found at therubyeeye.blogspot.com.

Ace Boggess lives in Charleston, West Virginia. His fiction & poetry appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. “Can I Ask You Now About Infidelity?” was originally published in *Tar Wolf Review*. “Was There a Dream as an Image or a Moment?” was originally published in *The California Poppy Times Newspaper*. 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 also shares his wonderful photography on Instagram ([instagram.com/michaelcourvarafilms](https://www.instagram.com/michaelcourvarafilms)).

ElectroLounge Forums is a discussion community for contributors to *The Cenacle*, found at 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 Weinstein Haggai lives at Kibbutz Nir Oz in Israel. Her haiku & recent longer poems appear regularly in *The Cenacle*. Her recent 3-day silent retreat included this sweet ‘ku: “I enjoy / I forget to enjoy / while lost in thought.” Her 2004 poetry RaiBook, *Spirit World Restless*, can be found at: scriptorpress.com/raibooks/spiritworldrestless. 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 newest book of poetry, *Ripples on an Infinite Sea*, was published in August 2022, by BookBaby. He notes that his piece in this issue is “actually a relic from my days at deoxy.org, and was written probably about fifteen years ago now.”

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. He hosts the excellent radio show “Nighttime Daydreams” on SpiritPlants Radio (spiritplantsradio.com). He also recently played a lawyer in a production of Mamie Till-Mobley’s *The Face of Emmett Till*.

Colin James lives in western Massachusetts. His poetry appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. “Always writing shit,” he notes recently . . .

Gregory Kelly lives in England. His poetry regularly appears in *The Cenacle*. Mulling all sorts of writing possibilities . . . visual art . . . music . . . no limits, my friend . . .

Sam Knot lives in rural France. His poetry, prose, & artwork all appear regularly in *The Cenacle*. His Attic dream is not realized for this coming winter, but soon! Visit samknot.com for more of his work.

Tamara Miles lives in Elgin, South Carolina. Her prose & poetry & photographs appear regularly in *The Cenacle*. She also hosts the excellent poetry show, “Where the Most Light Falls,” on SpiritPlants Radio (spiritplantsradio.com). Regarding her poem in this issue, she writes: “John Guzowski’s mother and father were in a concentration camp, she for about three years, and he for about four. They suffered terribly.”

Jo Monea lives in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. Jo’s poetry & artwork appear regularly in *The Cenacle*. Jo is “doing my best to slow down and rest. it’s a process, everything is a process . . .”

Martina Reisz Newberry lives in Hollywood, California. Her poetry appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. Her most recent book of poetry, *Glyphs*, was published in May 2022, by Deerbrook Editions. More of her writings can be found at martinaneberry.wordpress.com.

Kenzie Oliver lives in Central Texas. Her work appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. Busy with school, but still time to contribute a really nice photo for this issue . . .

Epi Rogan lives in Cork, Ireland, though she is originally from Alaska. Working hard on jazz weekend, dodging the rain. More of her work can be found at [instagram.com/pieorgan](https://www.instagram.com/pieorgan).

Tom Sheehan lives in Saugus, Massachusetts. His poetry & prose appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. His most recent book of short stories, *The Horseman Cometh and Other Stories*, was published by Amazon Digital Services in December 2021. Keep writing, Tom, always keep writing . . .

Kassandra Soulard lives in Milkrose, Massachusetts. Ever making this journal its visually beautiful, wonderfully various thing . . .

Raymond Soulard, Jr. lives in Milkrose, Massachusetts. Another beautiful, miraculous Autumn passing through, too quick, departing too soon . . . but thank you.

Louis Staebble lives in Bowling Green, Ohio. His wonderful photography appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. More of his work can be found at [instagram.com/louiestaebble](https://www.instagram.com/louiestaebble).

Timothy Vilgiate lives in Austin, Texas. His *Rivers of the Mind [A Novel]* is regularly serialized in this journal. Shaking his thing down in Austin, every which way. The radio version of *Rivers of the Mind*, an amazing work in any form, can be found online at riversofthemind.libsyn.com.

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THINK BIGGER!

