

*i thank You God for most this amazing
day:for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky;and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes*

*(i who have died am alive again today,
and this is the sun's birthday;this is the birth
day of life and of love and wings;and of the gay
great happening illimitably earth)*

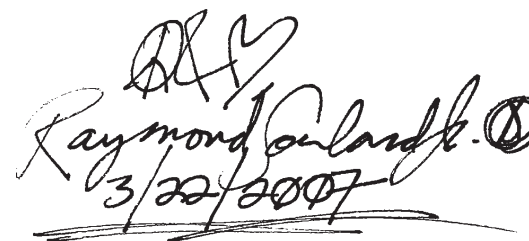
*how should tasting touching hearing seeing
breathing any—lified from the no
of all nothing—human merely being
doubt unimaginable You?*

*(now the ears of my ears awake and
now the eyes of my eyes are opened)*

--E. E. Cummings

Editor's Note

The following is the eighth in a series of annual *Samplers* featuring the best prose, poetry, & artwork published by Scriptor Press. The world turns, & turns again, in the times between these annual releases. Maybe it is a bit more hopeful than it was last spring. Maybe next year this hope will branch & bloom even greater. Consider this thought embedded in this volume, gift from us to you to whomever you hand it along to.




Raymond Souland, Jr. ©
3/22/2007

Raymond Souland, Jr.
Editor & Publisher
Scriptor Press



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Revolution Evolution

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So you say you want a revolution? Well, so does everybody else: Free Palestine! Free Mumia! No War in Iraq/Iran/Anywhere! No Torture! No Blood for Oil! Save the Earth! The answer lies in Communism/Socialism/Democracy/Anarchy/Lyndon LeRouche! This is the majority of slogans and topics I've seen at the protests and democratic open mics I've been to over the years and it has always given me a sense of unease for three reasons:

- 1) Despite the purpose of the protest, many causes and associated chants are usually present (see above), which to me suggests a lack of collective focus;
- 2) A little bit of reflection leads me to realize that the lack of focus seems to be due to the dire state of all of these (interrelated) issues. I think Daniel Pinchbeck summarized the state of our situation best:

Anxieties are multiplying. The environment is disintegrating. The heat is rising as the ozone layer thins. Jihad faces off against McWorld in senseless wars and televised atrocities. Populations are displaced as cities disappear beneath toxic flood tide. Rogue nations stockpile nuclear arsenals. Presidents assure us they will 'make the pie higher,' while increasing inequity and rubberstamping torture.

We are essentially getting cluster-fucked from all sides, and so the alarm sounds from those same directions; and

- 3) The so-called "action" of the protest tends to leave me feeling like little has been accomplished. How many times have you heard the following phrases: "This is only the first step," "It's not over," or "This is what democracy looks like"? Now how well do you think the protests lived up to, and/or followed up

on, these messages? Something's wrong here. When did revolution cease to be revolutionary?

Perhaps it would be useful to look at the current state of the revolutionary ideal. Throughout history, large groups of people have inevitably become aware of an oppressive force in their lives or an injustice being done to a group/individual/place, and they take action to stop the dominating person/group/system by the means that they see as fit. The means have taken many forms over the course of human history from wars, torture, and executions, to civil disobedience, subversive media, and massive legal actions.

It is upon those three latter forms of action that all current revolutions seem to be stalling. Countless times during the course of each year, and in every major city around the world, people have gathered again and again to try and change the course of human events, to stop the injustices, to cease the needless destruction of people and environment, and yet the situation seems only to have gotten worse. While activists of today plan their actions according to the successful strategies of the 1960s, the dominator culture has been hard at work applying the tricks it has learned since then: enclosed "free speech zones" covered in barbed wire; rubber bullets; sonic and aquatic blasts; improved barricades; and an increasingly militarized and aggressive police force. If that weren't enough, the aforementioned lack of collective focus has made many protests feel like fruitless efforts. Again, Pinchbeck hits the nail on the head:

Activists and radicals, horrified by the scorched-earth effects of globalization, insist 'another world is possible.' But few people have any idea of what that world would be.

We are effectively stuck and have run out of practical ways of challenging the status quo of the oppressive dominator culture.

So you say you want a revolution? Well, you know you can't do it like it's been done before. It's high time that the means of revolution underwent an evolution.

The Basic Ideological Foundation

If we want to change the way we approach revolutionary acts, we must first change fundamental aspects of our own psyche. All battles are lost and won in the mind, yet we seem to keep eschewing from facing off with the adversary that has held humanity back for so long: namely, the human ego. For all the progress we think we have made, to some extent we still resemble our primordial ancestors in the egotistical way we set up our social hierarchies, with the so-called "alphas" on top directing the fate of the "beta" masses in the tribe. This is also reflected in the basic structure of how revolutions have historically played out. You have an oppressive force in power, and a rebellious group that opposes that power. The rebellious force builds and builds until such a time that they take action and displace the oppressor. The rebels have won, but what happens next? What should they do? What direction should they take? Perhaps putting someone in charge would help them determine this, and what better person for the job than their revolutionary leader? And so the cycle begins again.

But why is there a cycle in the first place? If we have so much in common with primate alpha male hierarchies, why have we not remained in this social structure without argument or interruption? Why do we resist it? Perhaps Terence McKenna can shine some light on this:

The ecstatic and orgiastic, visionary and boundary-dissolving experiences, the central mysteries of the mushroom religion, were the very factors in the human situation acting to keep our ancestors human. The commonality of feeling generated by the mushroom held the community together. The divine, inspiring power of the mushroom spoke through the bard and singers. The indwelling spirit of the mushroom moved the hand that carved bone and painted stone. Life was lived not as we have chosen to imagine it, on the edge of mute bestiality, but rather, close to a dimension of spontaneous magical and linguistic expression that now shines only briefly in each of us at the pinnacle of experimental intoxication but that then was the empowered and enveloping reality: the presence of the Great Goddess . . . The nostalgia for the Gaian Earth Mother was suppressed but could not, cannot be ignored.

Whether or not you agree with McKenna's position that psilocybin mushrooms were once the catalyst for a creative, open-minded partnership culture, enough archeological evidence is presented in his book *Food of the Gods* to suggest that such a way of living was the norm for a variety of human cultures. Perhaps there is a memory of this period in the collective unconscious; a better way, which we can't quite remember. A mental itch we cannot scratch. It is akin to the line from James Joyce's *Ulysses*: "History is the nightmare from which I am trying to awaken." However, this is only half the story. History is not just a nightmare; it's a recurring nightmare. With every revolution, we try to wake ourselves from it, but we are inevitably pulled back into its murky depths.

Thus, for a revolution to be truly effective, have a lasting influence, and avoid the pitfalls of ego, it must be based on the following ideals:

- 1) There can be no centralized leadership. With no leader, there is nobody for the dominator to assassinate, and also no revolutionary leaders to get power-hungry and become the new dominator;
- 2) The system of forming ideals/projects/actions should be Confucian Open-Source, meaning that everyone is invited to contribute and improve upon the set of ideals and the proposed ways of executing them. There are no "lead programmers" or "sages," per se. Regardless of experience or level of knowledge, everyone would have to maintain the modesty of knowing that they are all fellow students, participating by asking questions, citing examples, and engaging in constructive, mutually enriching conversations about various issues (Smith);
- 3) Any revolutionary movement should be open-ended and not necessarily sticking to a static set of ideals. "All is flow," said Heraclitus, and one need only examine the contents of his or her life for a moment to know that this is true. A movement that is open to change and new ideas avoids the totalitarian pitfalls and egotistical fears of boundary dissolution that modern governments commonly have;
- 4) Any ideal in a revolutionary movement should always aim to increase the freedom and well-being of everyone without

bringing harm to others. For instance, under such a system, gay marriage would be accepted without much debate as it increases the freedom of people everywhere to enter into a partnership with someone they love regardless of their gender. It also increases the health of the society by eliminating a form of sexual repression, and by increasing rates of adoption. On the other side of the spectrum, big businesses with foreign manufacturing facilities would be highly scrutinized to make sure that their workers are being paid a fair wage, and have safe and clean working conditions; and

5) Participants in this sort of revolution would have to take on the great personal task on of pacifying, obliterating, or transcending their ego (Pinchbeck). This could take the form of ritual entheogen use, meditation, or any other method the participant finds to be potentially useful in facilitating a worldview based on partnership and community rather than the glorification of the self.

Mutating New Counter Measures

Secondly, a successful contemporary revolution must reclaim ground on the oppressive faction by utilizing to the fullest the tools it has at its disposal. On one level this has been done in the form of subversive T-shirts, life-size protest puppets, exposé movies, banners, signs, and the like. On another level, activities such as covertly projecting short subversive films on the sides of buildings from an apartment, public participation performance art, chaos magick, or strategically constructing and placing subversive messages (such as putting stickers or art that subtly but effectively promote cognitive dissonance on horrendous food products, at military recruiting facilities, or at your local fetid pit of conservatism) might comprise other interesting ways of spreading ideas and evoking change.

However, we live in an age when dissenters are increasingly subject to various monitoring strategies and abuses of power. As you read this, your name, phone conversations, bank records, Web-surfing habits, and

possibly your medical history are all potentially floating in some grand NSA databank. You might even be on a terrorist no-fly watch list, not necessarily because you fit any such criteria, but because the TSA has quotas to meet. It seems that everything you do is being electronically catalogued and scrutinized, and that there is no recourse. But take heart: there is a solution. Simply remember this: for every measure there is a counter-measure, and if there isn't one, you can create one. I know this sounds like a daunting task, but take this little tidbit of news that surfaced earlier this year from Greece as a practical example:

Greece reeled on Friday from revelations that unknown eavesdroppers listened in on the prime minister and other top officials for months in a scandal the media are calling the 'Greek Watergate.'
(*Seattle Times*, 4 February 2006, p. A7)

Essentially, you have to beat them at their own game. If the government is going to tap us, then the phreakers should tap them. Want to do something a bit more local? Spy on police cars, law enforcement, and military officials with a short shotgun mic or cellphone camera. Or perhaps if you're more of a Maker, you could whip up a device such as this one envisioned by a Slash Dot commenter:

I've been waiting for a mini-stealth-camera-and-recorder to appear. I want a little device, the size of a cellphone camera, that fits in a button or a necklace or a belt buckle or something equally inconspicuous. It should be connected to a waist controller, which would include battery pack, storage (hard drive or flash), and wifi. Wifi so that, whenever it can find an available internet connection, it can upload its contents to a secure server located elsewhere . . . Just imagine that. "Sorry sir, you took a picture of something you weren't supposed to. I'm going to have to confiscate your camera." "The pictures are already in Texas, and in ten minutes they'll be posted online. Same as the recording of what you're saying right now. You really want to illegally take my possessions, Officer Frank, Number 3894?"
(<http://yro.slashdot.org/comments.pl?cid=15811973&sid=192586&tid=158>)

More 133t than all that? Then put your mad skillz to work on hacktivism. I mean, if Gary McKinnon could navigate the DOD network repeatedly

and for extended periods of time, don't tell me you can't get the down and dirty data on other shifty and diabolical branches of government and individual politicians.

And when you've found something, post it up online. This might be as simple as a basic website with a download link, or something more involved and stealthy like re-titling your juicy media file as a popularly downloaded movie or song on a P2P network, or perhaps even sending out a harmless worm virus that automatically downloads the file to users' desktops all over the world, spreading itself through e-mail contact lists.

Do It Now

Thirdly, live the revolution everyday. I know this is somewhat of a cliché, but it's true. If there are a set of radical ideals you believe in, what good reason is there to put them on the back burner? Start now. Challenge yourself, your ideas, your perspectives, and challenge others as well. Become a generator of novelty and cognitive dissonance. Become one who lives possibilities that evoke the curiosity and wonder of your fellow humans. Again, if psychedelics and/or meditation are part of your chosen path, practice them on a regular basis (perhaps on weekends, as a way of making up for all those wasted years you may have spent at the certain institutions of worship). And don't put it off. Because if not now, then when? If not us, then who? Time to ramp up your evolution and start your revolution.

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Perennial

There will always be
a poor, lean man
pedaling a mongrel bike
against rush-hour traffic—
one bony hand steering,
the other pressing
a rumpled sack of food
to his chest—avid,
and lawless as a duke.

It will be dusk, it will be winter.
Headlights of throttled cars power
the spine of a monstrous glow-worm.
He angles between snarling fenders.
Slips by oil tanks nestled in gravel
like eggs of alien reptiles.
Darts beneath the blinking white eye
of a leering smokestack.
Crosses a river clotted
with yellow rags of ice.

Until vapors and thoughts
impel him to a ruined bench—
chiseled by knives,
draped by willows.
Here he sheds bundle and bike,
makes a seat, rolls a smoke.
Sits with the darkness
at the edge of this ride,
witness to a crash
as his evening star rises.

Wish You Were Here

Fifty yards out my motel picture-window
the Atlantic rolls in and slides back
in cool white sheets.
Five miles further out,
scallop boats are black spindles
against a blood-orange sky.
And in the foreground by the sagging snow-fence,
planes of gold light fracture the eaves
of a vacant clapboard beach-house—
a Hopper painting, a Hopi cliffside,
a stark embrace of light and line.
I walk out onto my second-floor porch,
take a seat on a cold plastic chair,
take in all that's before me,
all that is missing.

Morning Overtures from Maine

A fog-shrouded woman in a pink stocking cap
scuttles along the border of frozen kale
behind the white blocks of the Five O'Clock Hotel.
She works as a spy in the network of light
and interrogates the shoreline nightly,
the red dot of her cigarette burning a hole
through the gauze of starlight.

I step out onto the salt-crusted back porch
to gather my cup of sunrise and wit
and see three black horses rearing up
through spray of surf and dream.

Minus five and sea-smoke flares up
in shifting, haunted tendrils.
Frigid morning glories
climbing rails of Arctic air.

Offshore a trawler drags for quahogs—
large, sinewy clams tagged for bakes and stews.
On his last birthday Jean the Sternman
blew out 33 pink and green candles
from the lap of a stripper then
crawled home drunk and alone—
tough in the winter up here.

Through a block of cold red sky
an old crow with holes in its wings
beats a strong line to the treetops.

Eight At The Bar

We passed this question among us—how old
would we choose to be if we three could be any age.
The spongy, overworked man of 36,
between terse sips of cranberry and vodka,
after a maelstrom of regret and desire,
muttered 25—eyes lingering on the glistening
young midriff behind the bar.

After three marriages, five grandchildren,
and now living in a tiny studio with the company
of spices, books, and photographs—
my friend's eyes shone
fine and radiant with her full 60 years.

And I expected to say, as I always have,
that my fifty plus years were what and why
and where they should be. But no,
startling as a June bug dropped on a collar,
sudden and delicious as the crack of our laughter,
I was 8 again—staring down the kaleidoscopic
funnels of the Merrimack River, surging with the
orange and green dyes from the Essex Mills
as they swirled in tight whirlpools
through my best and freshest mind.

Downtown Crossing

You'll be riding this same train, Walkman tuned
to modern rock at the dial's far left.
Eighty three, and still transformed
by the sonic lift of guitar lines,
by precision and passion entwined.
You'll leave at the station the vacancies
of thwarted, bloodshot eyes—
thirty years without a blackout—
mind now taking snapshots
of waterlilies, smokestacks, green signs.
You'll release the nights that veered
to ruin, a blind man climbing steps
rotted and loose at the ends—
using screws today instead of tacks.
You'll be prompt, aware, grateful—
yet won't arrive at all,
this same train leaping from the rail
to a vastly different song.

The Comfort of Animals

The after-the-walk comb of choice
is a serrated steel hoop
elegantly bent to a ten-inch teardrop.
I rake it slowly, steadily along
Zoe's lithe spine and winged haunches,
snagging black, white, and gray threads—
airborne helixes
spinning and rolling
like dwarf tumbleweed
across the concrete driveway.
Zoe stands motionless, docile, pleased—
her trust solid and radiant as
the oak grove we reveled in earlier.
I work my fingers beneath her coat
to feel for ticks, bumps, or burs.
Then a stroke under her jaw,
a swirl of both ears,
a light tug on the tail
as she bounds up the back porch steps.
Two biscuits, a slurping of water,
and a return to the corner of the couch.
Or maybe eyes half-open
curled and flat on the carpet
exploring a world
whose ongoing comforts
are sometimes not Zoe's alone.

Still Room for Joy

Three candles burn on the picnic table
salvaged from the curb two houses down.
He wears two wool sweaters and a stocking cap,
sips cold sake from a thrift-store mug.
It helps him think less about
the piece of molar that broke off earlier,
takes him deeper into the Bach
crackling from the pink clock-radio.
He didn't know he'd be living
this way again at sixty-five,
lean and feverish
as a sparrow in a snowstorm.
He rolls a cigarette, strikes a match,
blows a jet of smoke at the ceiling.
As he cracks the window to let out the smoke,
a gust of cold air snuffs the candles—
the room now glowing red and green
from Christmas lights tacked to the walls.

Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Two Vessels (for R.)

[a new fixtion]

*"Faith without works is dead."
New Testament, Book of James, 17:2*

There's everything left to know, nothing left to say, many things love,
many things danger, every door can be the way in, any door can be the freedom
sought, every moment the universe agrees to continue, to change, life
continuously taunts with unseen laughter, love continuously presses hard, but
oft invisibly, creation pulses everywhere, blood & ink & pigment & dance,
music & dreams & the budding of spring in tree & girl

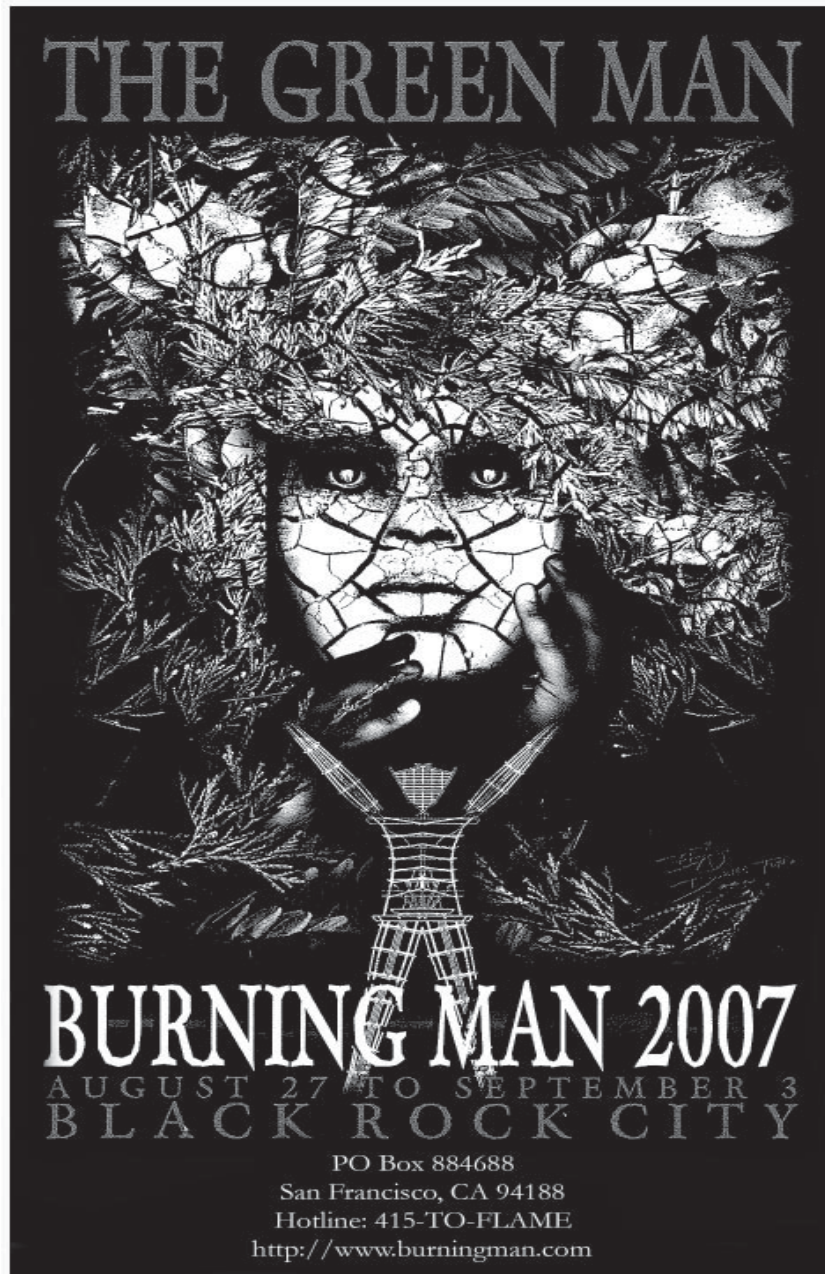
life a bright whirling outward, an ever-deepening tumble within, suspect
yourself of knowledge you have not met, of secrets packed in chambers deep
within your mind, suspect a plot between elusive cosmos without & cloaked
cosmos within to make you happy, fulfill you til wild froth overflow, suspect
that your dis-ease was once merely a silly game you played for diversion within
the happiness of your world until one day, for just an instant, you forgot it was
a game, you forget that the universe is your home, that it ripples & changes as
much with your movements as every other's

freedom not requiring

even the twist of your wrist to
resume

love is the honey you seek from world flower around you & it must be
gathered, you must burrow for this sweet food & allow yourself to serve as
transport for the world's carnal creative impulse

Art is far wilder than what is framed, bound, recorded, mounted,
displayed, Art roars in landscapes sometimes empty sometimes full, Art blesses
& befouls, nurses & rapes, colors & drains, lights & crushes, explains &
condemns



there is an easiness in these
pages while I forget & float, believe despite evidence, these pages mock common
sense as the ideology of stiff fools

Sooner or later I'll forget to fail
& a story will ignite & I'll have
justified my being by proving
my fears wrong again__

Faith commands her due in every living moment, the clear-eyed truth of this,
dreams know it, & trees, proly the dying & dead do too, faith neither slows
nor hurries, faith broods perfectly & smiles rightly

no moment, in truth, just another moment, no devotion to faith or deviation
goes unrecorded, dreams report the highs & lows of every living moment, assess
them against life thus & forewarn regarding life anon

so give your Godd a name,
Yes, & label your spirituality,
simply, Now, & decide that the
bigger conundrum is how to
kiss more than brawl better

admit your nakedness to
unmoved faces, move along
rapidly, you are releasing
bombs of truth that could
explode now, near, or never.

the only path to triumph is
surrender
the only path to surrender is
persistence
persistence cannot achieve
victory til you live the
patience you sometimes
admire

The road ahead has no map. The road is not even a road, no clearing save the
spaces between trees

language no more than the
grunts we exchange about
loneliness & longing as we
discuss the silly game which
is not a game I almost remember—
do you? Yes, almost—
The first word we learn is
love the monarch of all words
cloaked in a thousand guises

The last word we learn is
love confession that all life is
Art all Art is music all music
begins & ends ceaselessly all music
grounded in the total hush of
undifferentiation raised up to vast
fractal flowing

She nears me again, mixes among my
warmth & words, hopes & expects
me to continue

“i don't know how to embrace
you i don't know how to let
you go between these two
are all the doubts & confusions—”

“there is only truth, quiet,
dreams & music, forget that
you have forgotten & begin
to know”

my eyes are still closed to
shield me from happiness &
hope

love marauds my understanding
& I flee

“I told you it’s a mystery you have
to believe this! There is no
answer everyone else knows!
It’s fire, Ray, music, time &
eternity—”

Yes. Mystery. Of course.

& a warning regarding that mystery too: the danger of undifferentiation,
of all flowing into all, of increasing infiltration.

No way back from continuous symbiosis.

& the danger of stories hardly stories anymore, stories regarding
themselves as organisms, as autonomous souls.

& the danger of lives lived more & more in faith & innocence.

She is happiness no limits.
I am fear on all sides.
We are Art no walls ceiling floor.

The night growls til its power is affirmed.

Come with me from here & now for awhile we drop our names & histories &
seek to reinvent ourselves with other beginnings pointed toward different endings

It takes just one moment to begin the break, a startling movement into or away
from the face of hope or danger, something, something, a trapped bubble of
will & the courage to release it

“Where’s the bar, mate?”

“What bar?”

“T’s! Luna shaggin’ T’s! Some of us are still here & bear powerful thirsts!”

“It still exists, Cecile. Don’t worry”

“Worry. Worry? You do the worrying, kid. I drink my fill, slam my skins, &
wiggle the walk of a bird every so often. Just for fun, mind you. Not for
philosophy or redemption. Or revenge for that matter”

“Unlike me?”

“Unlike you exactly. Even bloody Americus has settled down with a
good piece of shag. Now you, mate, you score the prize, THE prize, & still
every ounce of your pathetic hide is darting for exits while you explain the
necessity of it all. You are a sad sack”

“Thanks”

“It doesn’t have to be this way. She’s tender, right? Loves you with her
whole girlish heart & more?”

“Of course”

“You enjoy holding her & all that follows?”

“Yes!”

“Then your answer is as obvious as my drunkard’s nose. Stop running!
Start staying!”

Cecile Grey stops & I admire every inch of his craggy body.

He smiles briefly. “I need a drink. You’re an artist. Write me up a pitcher
of stout, pronto, OK?”

“You said we had to be apart for awhile”

“I know. But maybe Cecile’s right”

“Maybe he’s not. I’m OK with all of this. I told you that.”

“Yes, Rebbly. Thank you.”

Luna T’s Cafe is open for business again. Both food & drink as Mr.
Bob bartends full-time backed up by various regulars when he needs time off,
& Guy Lemond cooks weekdays 11 to 2 & 5-8 in addition to his job as assistant
equipment manager for the Hartford Barons minor league hockey team. Guy
usually leaves a good stew or chili for the weekend heated up on request. Sunday
T’s is more a private club, open only to regulars, each person bartends for himself,
the music & TV sports going all day long—

Rebecca has become full-time manager so Rich can concentrate on his
music & related concerns. T’s runs smoothly with hardly a tap at the wheel
from one week to the next.

Noisy Children play on Friday & Saturday nights like they always have
in the best of times. They haven’t had a record deal in awhile which is fine with
Americus who would rather the band not be obligated to anyone anymore.

They have, in fact, been discussing building a studio & producing their own records. But there is only slow progress on this matter. The concerts themselves have become far more interesting than aught else.

So what then? What?

Much . . . much.

Art restless, Art wild, Art lawless, & fuck anyone who thinks they understand it or knows anything about anything—

Dr. Arnold T. Knickerbocker glares softly at me for a moment & says **“You nearly had it for a moment there.”**

I nod.

“When was the last time you saw what was about thee?” he demands, still quietly.

“I don’t know”

“Art thee deceased?”

“No”

“Art thee dry of thine inspiration?”

“No!”

No question follows this one. Knickerbocker nods once & stares at me. Still quietly. No rancor.

Twist & squirm. Wanna bust out of my blood & bones. Rusty bridges. Tall weeds. Colorless skies.

Somehow this goes on. Somehow this will not end. Gravelly hills & nasal-voiced cynics somehow to rise above these—

Faith without works is dead.

Faith . . . without . . . works . . . is . . . dead.

Never having begun never to finish eternal hover just past timeless dusk, paradoxes sweet electric

Noisy Children is fully present at Luna T’s Cafe late Friday afternoon til wee hours Sunday morning, a swoop & soar of hours, a purposefully concentrated period during which the Cafe’s spiritual filaments burn brighter

on & on til there is an agreed union of release &—

“We rock til it’s over”

“Yes”

“Just say it, ya freaking artist”

“Sorry”

“You were better off when you were less enlightened”

“Thanks”

“Hey now, don’t get yr knickers in a twist”

“OK”

“Americus taught me something good once. He doesn’t even really know this. What he said to me was ‘Just play.’ That’s all. No good or bad if you don’t do it. Nothing. Just play.”

I nod. “I can’t believe you ever forgot that”

“Even me, mate” Cecile grins. “Too much artist, not enough art.”

So. It’s begun again. Faith the great invisible presence without which nothing in this world glows. Faith & thus chaos has a key. Faith stretched & there are colors, juggled & there is music, dreamed & there is language.

Dr. Knickerbocker nods.

Another fragment in the skein, Rebecca & I sitting in the manager’s office, her office, & she’s here solely to do bookkeeping work on the Cafe’s computer, a Macintosh at my insistence. Rebecca prefers to do manager-related work at the joint’s bar, our pair of stools in the far corner or in the restaurant at our little table neath the front window; both these places we share with Rich & Franny.

But sooner or later the bookkeeping needs to be recorded in the computer’s files. I’m sitting on the couch, Reb at her desk, scowling, the old stereo’s turntable cranking out some Byrds.

“You could help me”

“You have to learn, Rebbly. If you ask a question I’ll answer it.”

“Do you love me?”

“Forever. No fooling.”

“Are you OK?”

“I’m better.”

“What happens next?”

“I don’t even know anymore”

“Is it better this way than it used to be?”

“Better. Worse.”

Rebecca quiets & I hear the tapping of her fingers on the keyboard, clicks, pings, arhythmic but continuous. She wants to finish so we can play. I sit quietly, waiting, floating—

I think: I’m best when I act like I’ve nothing to lose, the truth comes tumbling out of me rapids—wild & mostly good; when I think something’s mine, I have to nurture it, protect it, not fuck it up, I go stiff & sullen; but when life is the dream it is, a mystery pulsing as tree, star, a pretty girl’s laugh, music, night, yes, something happens that could not be called victory but can sometimes be called Art.

The tapping has stopped & the pretty girl mystery is smiling at me patient & quiet I don’t have to please her she’s pleased already & I can only do better—

“Done, Rebbby?”

She nods. Still smiling. This is easy as long as I continue to live it without sure knowledge.

She flips the LP & sets it to playing. We settle enmeshed, smiling, living, not knowing.

Living. Not knowing.

Days go by between last word & next. Shivers & sweats of silence. Rebecca waits, hovers, stills

speaks—

“Ray, are you OK?”

“I’m trying, Rebbby. You know that.”

“You *always* try, Ray. I know that too.”

“Can I help you?”

“Stay near.”

“Anything else?”

“Keep believing”

“In you?”

“Me. Art. Love. Your dad. Franny. Luna T’s.”

“Ray, I do all that stuff always.”

“Good.”

We hold hands, shade back into the silence. It’s better this time. She’s with me this time.

Night is always the best, deeper, clearer, funnier, wilder, more hopeful because more mysterious, sincere, sonorous, ludicrous

“cherry vanilla” Rebecca growls moist lips into my ear

scriptures of fire

principles penned from wells of darkness, good, evil, too complex, too simple

“cherry vanilla & peyote” Rebecca repeats, & continues

restless & funny she wants to paint me & frame me

possible?

mmm. mmm.

We return to the bar & some of the regulars note pleased the somewhat clearer look in mine eyes.

Knickerbocker, hehe, sends over to me a cup of black coffee laced with Jack Daniel’s, a unique gesture on his part

I nod & smile his way, slightly, & would leave it at that when Rebecca pushes me off my stool

“Go.”

“OK.”

Suddenly she pulls me back. “Just remember: you’re my piece of canvas later.” Gives my earlobe a rough gnaw.

“**It will never end**” he says, softly & briefly

“No” I say, choking my way past initial sips of whiskey’d coffee.

“**Then what doth thee intend regarding this truth?**” he demands, voice expanding familiarly.

“I don’t know”

“**Truly continued plummet in thine native realm can only foretell darkly here!**”

I nod. Sip harder. “Advise me, old man. Prayer? What?”

From nowhere Knickerbocker’s stick careens through the air to **KRAK!** the counter between our two cups.

“Thine devotion emerges from thine pen! Thy faith in the devine, thy urgency toward greater understanding tumbles across the page!”

I nod.

We both sip hard at our coffees I glance over at Rebecca & discover her sketching our joined portrait. A memory flashes ‘cross my mind gazing ‘pon her smiling 3 a.m. waking she’s on top of me moving into position to mount me same smile

“Saloon-keeper!” Knickerbocker suddenly roars. **“In this perilous time during which I am ministering to the soul of this perilously nigh-to-lost young man, it is resoundingly necessary that the flow of libation to each of our throats remain completely constant! Therefore recall thine younger days when thine feet travelled at a pace if not swift then at least visible! Our lord if humbly beseeched may grant even to the infirm an occasional moment of animation!”**

Mr. Bob the barman pours coffee & whiskey straight through this speech & from my especially close vantage point I can detect the tremors of smile about his lips.

His eyes are blue, I notice first time blue not like Beckah’s dark & humming but light blue hard & studying the blue of a man whose questions have never received

My hand is stayed. “Don’t,” he advises. Adds no more.

I nod. Kill my coffee with ease & foolishness, return to Rebecca. A glass of cherry cola awaits me, Mr. Bob having been instructed in my post-alcohol phase.

Rebecca smiles at me, knowing far better than to ask if I’m alright.

We leave the bar after a little while & walk together from downtown to the Berlin Before the Fall neighborhood

No words but no pressure

Rebecca’s black artbag is slung over her shoulder. She smiles lightly at trees, faces. Her smile deepens when it touches me.

“Where have I been, Rebecca?” I ask, afraid to look at her.

She says without pause. “You’ve been with me.”

The grip of our hands tightens. “Always. With me.”

End of May, spring’s at last elected to stay. Blue sky, cool air. Green & growing everywhere.

Our table is round, metal, black, perforated with round & diamond holes of various kinds. Rebecca fetches soda & cookies, nesting as women often do. Without task, I sit & enjoy. I breathe deeply in & out.

Rebecca removes pencils & paper from her artpad & proceeds to play. She watches me, but subtly.

There are too many faces in the courtyard to describe. I notice a few smiles. Not many hats. Women with long hair. Men with short. Eyeglasses. Coffee cups. Repose.

Rebecca lures several small brown birds close with crumbs then draws them. Her left hand tosses crumbs her right hand sketches.

Sunlight still but blocked by buildings. Chesspieces click.

“Where have I been again?”

“With me. Always.”

With her. Always.

There’s everything left to know, everything left to say, everyone left to love, every danger whatever way

Every door offers a chapter

Every moment contains a note

love there is no choice

freedom always

the moon is full, always

creation pulses everywhere,
blood & ink & color & dance,
music & dreams, another face
hurrying, another face smiling
life a bright whirling outward,
an ever-deepening tumble within,

suspect yourself of starshine,
wake up to your own happiness,

the universe a tricky game
love its abundant food

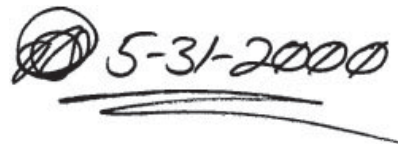
Art is the answer
Art is the question

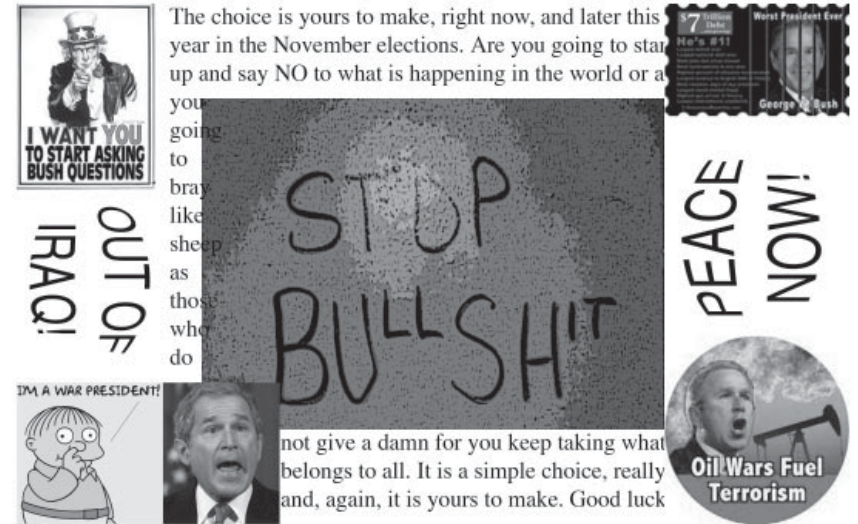
I look up as Rebecca glances down, still tingling with smile & love.
“I’ve been here all along?”
“With me. Yes.”
“With you?”
“Yes.”

Now she looks at me & thus all is brighter.
I kiss her & again. That which stays is that which matters whether in
flesh memory or dream.

The evening lights come on. The traffic heavies. The courtyard fills
even as the air—
“It’s OK. You can stop.”
“Stop?”
“For now. Like me.”

I stop for now. Paused but never still. Both of us.
Two vessels filling but never full.

 5-31-2000





Judih Haggai



Unrolled

enter the carpet
look down
dance the dervish weave
head spin the wheel

behind us stand thousands of centuries
singing Sufi chants
heavy maniacal chords
rolling through waves & eons

Again and again
twirl
a woven tapestry
DNA locking fingers
with hands of ancients

Berry stained moments
encapsulated charms
talismans preserved in embroidery
spells uttered without words

Into the carpet of wisdom
face down, heart joined
wrapped in dimensionless time

The Edge Draws Swords and Angels

Approaching the mid-point
when the edge draws swords and angels
a chess game mid-air
played by hypocrites

we, who hover over safe ground
belittle gravity
ridicule preposterous
sing and whistle
as if it's all a sham

but where is the truth
when the curtain falls
the bottom drops
the well runs dry?

When will the chessboard turn backwards
the pieces scream Mutiny!
the space become solid
and dots fill in the lines?

It hurts to rub lemon on ego
i squeeze my composites
i'm left with confusion

this self an illusion
on a bombastic pretense

hush now. let the light rush in.

Middle of the Night

How to handle the middle of the night?
suddenly all's pounding
heart, breath, thoughts
a flood of emptiness has nothing to say
no explanation rains down

every blood vessel clogs
disrupting, rebelling
stomach growls
two elbow amnesia
a foot finds solace—how warm the blankets
how comfortable the futon
and pillows so perfect

middle of the night
cough climbs out of nowhere
a sudden constriction
an impossible throat with glands of Mr Everest

sweet sleep regrets to inform
can not possibly attend this night
perhaps some other time,
as wakefulness sweeps up dream fragments
and shuffling feet prepare the hot tea

First Then Last

I saw it first
the last time I floated along the dregs and unspoken
mentions
those brief few centuries
so long ago
so quick to pass
so swift to reconvene

I saw the sweaty arms lift the sacred pillars
uncover the buried treasures
the essential Essene gospels
the Gnostic knowing nothingness

I heard the silent chant of tantric disappearance as
all rebirthed
I heard

I swam the waters so dry, so empty
I sank beneath the rafts of refuge
I crossed the bridge barely built

it was first, then last
and now it is again

Ill You Shun

I steal what I cannot have
I covet what is clearly yours
osmosis is my friend
I live in the deep end

I swallow your air
your fine delight and beat
I borrow greedily
I swim in your ferocity

myself, a dry sponge
I drink your sweat and tears
I birth your lusty dreams
you think I'm me, but I'm you it seems

I Come to You Like This

Yes, I forgot to oil my arms
my bare skin does not glisten
neither does my mind

I slide down a splintered banister
in a t'ai chi high thrill move
but my silken hair is unformed
and my toes do not reflect the summer sky

I come to you on a whim and a breeze
unadorned, yet ready to shine
naked skin undressing
wrapped in dimensionless time

Word painting

nails broken, reaching the mountaintop
i slide down a waterfall of acrylic words
fast drying, sledding syllables
swishing downhill in beat spontaneity

a cloud bursts alternate harmonies
another key, another throat
empathetic discord, sky-forming habits
haiku bungee, waving hello

living a slice of epicentre
a hint of galactic infinity
a song from a symphony of always
painting the now in tools of forever

Jim Burke III



December 4, 2006
Reservoir #2 (cold)
West Hartford, CT

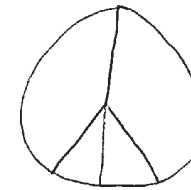
*WITHIN'S WITHIN: SCENES
FROM THE PSYCHEDELIC
REVOLUTION*

○ Music. Poetry. Rant. Mindfood.

*turn on ...
tune in ...*



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Dear Ray,

I used to draw the peace symbol with a crack in it because of the Vietnam War. I said to myself that surely after 50,000+ U.S. soldiers dead, countless wounded with injuries that left them maimed for life (if you can call it that—no arms and/or legs, brain injuries, etc.), this country must have surely learned to stay out of other countries' political situations, as horrible (and Saddam is an evil S.O.B.) as they sometimes are. But not this asshole Bush who was elected under questionable moral conditions, decides to invade Iraq for "WMDs," bypasses the U.N. Security Council, and tries to instill democracy in an Islamic religious culture. He wants to change their culture! Did he really think he could accomplish this with a puppet government devoid of religious influence? WHAT A FOOL! WHAT A MORON! His advisors and cohorts, Cheney and Rumsfeld et al., certainly did. Cheney is now the lamest of [vice] ducks and Rummy is gone. Bolton will not be confirmed as a permanent ambassador to the U.N., thanks in a large part to Sen. Dodd's efforts.

I waited so long to respond to your letter¹, and a great one it is, because I needed to have some hope in me replenished. It was full of

hope and when the Dems took control of both houses of Congress, it was like a miracle—a dream come true. I will assume for the moment that when they actually take control in January, the Democrats will **DO SOMETHING. THEY WILL CUT OFF FUNDING TO END THE WAR AND SET A FIRM TIMETABLE FOR WITHDRAWAL!** I have faith and hope, but I need to see it fulfilled. Never again do I want to see this country engaged in a futile action that costs so many American lives. There is no way of knowing how many Iraqis have been killed because of this war by our country and the civil war that has resulted. Some guesstimates are in the hundreds of thousands. Although the new majority leader of the House has stated that impeachment is “off the table,” I would be interested if she revisited that statement if a smoking gun were found concerning Bush’s actions—i.e. he *knew* (and it could be proved) that there were no WMDs. I believe that he did know, and deliberately hid the truth from the American people, but I suppose an impeachment would be expecting too much. This asshole tried to suppress the liberties of the people of this country by inventing (as good a word as any) a new department called Homeland Security. This came as close to making the country a quasi-fascist state as any action by any president preceding him. We (especially you and Kassi, Ray) are now on a “terror profile list” of everyone who chooses to fly in this country. All foreign travelers are automatically included on this list (source: *Lehrer News Hour*, on/about 11/27/06). Your dress, destination, origin, age, financial status, and other “unknown” factors are all taken into consideration to determine the degree of terror activity that is likely by *you and/or your family*. Bush has done so much to increase the likelihood of terrorist activity, and started a civil war in Iraq by his actions, that he should be impeached for these actions alone. I believe that starting a civil war falls under the category of “High Crimes”!

I also believe change is at hand, and another area of hope that surrounds my heart is found in the Supreme Court nominees that Bush saw fit to nominate, if for no other obvious reason than to expedite his own agenda in relieving the American people of their rights as alluded to earlier in this letter. Roberts, especially, realizes what is at stake, and for him to lead a court in reversing the former Supreme Court’s landmark

decisions would have disastrous effects for this country’s economy. All the money that has been spent in Iraq during the last four years can now be used to further the minds of this country’s population. This country will be at peace again and one’s own life orientation will be accepted as it is. There will be no more judgmental decisions regarding a person’s abstract thoughts concerning materialism versus the soul. I know that the esoteric view is not feasible for everyone to contemplate; we are fortunate enough to be enlightened to do so. I also agree that *nobody knows*. As the man said (and yourself), facts do not always reveal the truth. This is because *facts* are based on physical parameters, and these parameters can be constantly altered to suit the desired outcome. Truth predisposes, *a priori*, that facts are immaterial, inconsequential, and irrelevant. *Nobody knows* what the truth is, *but I do know what the truth is not!* The truth is not living in a country where one has to contrive political games to justify an outcome contrary to the whole soul of the population. Bush tried to do this and, as in such cases of all despots, utterly failed. Although his supporters will find it disturbing to admit this, I think they know in their hearts that Bush’s time is past. People are going to enjoy life, even if there are still some that want to divide the population of this country into liberals and conservatives. There will be events such as gay bashing and discrimination based on a myriad of factors. I may be too old, too fat, divorced, etc. I also know, however, that I am a happy musician who has enjoyed the challenges of being a single father for the last ten years. Love is Truth is Love is God is Truth. The circle continues unbroken, and now our leaders and representatives in our political structure have an opportunity to make it happen. As John Lennon said: IMAGINE. I guess, Ray, this is what keeps me going. It got to the point when the civil war in Iraq started (I know I predicted this in my “State of the World II” address years ago, but the horror of it makes me puke) that I started to become numb. It was like Bush has accomplished an underhanded, sought after, intentional plan. Your letter rescued me and gave me a large magnitude of hope that I want to sincerely thank you for again. It gave me such a degree of hope that when Bush was resoundingly defeated like the deposed king he is becoming and deserves to be, I resolved to work for the planet, and the stars forever. The hiatus is over. My album will be completed and

mailed to you by Christmas (give or take!). And speaking of album . . .

I was fortunate enough to see the WHO twice this go-round. The first time was in Boston and they rocked. They played selections from their new album *Endless Wire*, as well as their classics. The encore was entirely a *Tommy* set, including the technically incredibly difficult “Sparks.” The seat was good, off to the side but not too far back off the floor and Townshend played great. The second show was at the Mohegan Sun last Friday. It had been about 2 months since I had seen the first show and, combined with my seating location (first row in a floor section), it even surpassed the *Psychoderelict* concert as the best I have ever seen him play, and Daltry sing. They did the entire *Endless Wire* mini-opera and their encore consisted of a longer version of *Tommy*. Their playing as a whole unit (with Palladino on bass and Zach Starkey (Ringo’s boy) on drums) improved tremendously over that time between the two concerts. Of course the second concert had its technical flaws as to balance the yin and yang. Townshend’s guitar blew up at one point, and after shaking it as though to re-instill life in it, he shook his head and threw it off the stage. He hurriedly waved on his technician for a replacement and when this guitar also refused compliance, Pete shook his head and chucked this one off stage left. This time, however, he forgot to unplug it first, and several pieces of equipment went with it. The audience loved it, we got to see the Grandmaster throw two guitars, a pre-amp system, and assorted things off the stage—all the while shaking his head. He then had several technicians surrounding him and, after tracking the loose connection, fitted him back to his life-grid and he played on brilliantly—I MEAN HE ZONED OUT!!!

TRUE STORY!!
⊕ + ♡ from us all
JBH & Family

Footnotes

1 *Cenacle* | 59 | October 2006

Raymond Soulard, Jr.



New Songs (for Cassandra)

Begin

Rest aside her dreaming heat—
her pale-rose bone-contoured heat—

Call to love through the strange years
of trips & leaps, call, it listens—

The bites of remorse become history
as well flicks of kind, red moans & blow-outs.

Canticle

‘Make your meal, wash your plate,’ said
the dirt-man on the dead road in fullest
high night. ‘Nothing is real, chop wood,
carry water,’ he continued limping by
me, his cold fire’s try at rending my book.
‘Swim harder, drown eventually,’ I shot
back, & return from that year’s bite, its hoary masque.

Sunday

If god was answer enough, if world was high
enough, if memories explained or book
did not disappoint, if clusters of years
& bouquets of friendships didn't
fall away, if any other knot had held,
I would not be singing to you, burnt, new.

Good Angle

War trucks across a western desert,
slow in the crumbling dusk, men prepare
for the brittle night, its many tests.
A meal by starlight high & shadows near,
fraternity awhile, everybody made the day's
end, fright in awhile, heart shot out &
it all stops. Hope looks far across the
desert past shrub & plateau toward a
wordless hour neither death's cuff nor life's blind.

Missing

Your absence a flu vining through
my heart, hard twist of quivers, shouts,
calms, & night's great conjures fever up
restless & subside blank. Low I await
your sliding touch, blue-eyed intense,
nimble laugh, gaze loving into my dust,

fingers wild & slow til I tease back
rowdy live. Old shades never far,
pains raise new spikes & lash through,
thin comforts recall lesser days,
dark hours tangled lost & foul. Twist,
quiver, rough pass, another, still love

in me greens toward your light,
we swim a twining flow to a rich high
of fruiting melodies kind & luscious.
Random the world kills one spark &
bloodies up icons for another. By what
softs & shines creation, I pledge myself to you.

What Bend, What Break

They brought him for powers he carried,
an odd human magick to shape words &
move souls. They crowded toward his hands,
offered their sugar & their sex, wished
also to see up, over, & through like him.
He inquired no names. At winter solstice
he punished the village by his absence.
By spring few remembered their older
sturdy days. Midnight bonfires devolved
to ritual, orgies fewer, mere ceremony.
Will crushed by devotion, old trees halved
for passing furies, birds & wolves gone
but the fullest moon. "You must believe!"
he cried through the cracks & the blood.
Eventually, nothing remained but the net.

Beggar

World boils in broken blood, put a coin
in his hand, merchants wrap the stench &
call it a prize to the morning crowds, kings
sober to its many centuries while assure
to the steady thump within, musicians find
its potent a knot with rhythms to wrestle,

melodies to lure rawer lovers into high
moon's dance. Put a coin in to his hand,
you have never lived before, your gestures
are your own, drive on harder tonight,
say no more to broken blood, begin there
on Pine Street by way of hope's insist you will,

a coin in his hand, a hand upon his side,
tap the light softly, perhaps its petals will
undo, world boils in broken blood, nod &
desist. Further along Pine Street another &
not turn away. Not again. Not for coins,
not for anything. Beggar what possible & reveal what else.

Trance

Most hours a blunder toward suck or sup,
pass of dirty floors & wrecked hulls, & a
hundred dull eyes patter down & move by.

Then a causeless slip into the hidden sugar
of creation, what danced first & will shine last,
wings arc through amber skies & tangerine leaves—

Some face turns near or away. Brute flesh
raises corona of cries, howls from the war &
bed's empty dreaming. Blink, roar. Crumble & submit.

Beasts herd into boxes of knives & there is
no why but hunger & meat.

Conspire

What new earth dreaming nearer tonight?
What restless among babes & blossoms,
signals by oaks & across seas, who
expires grasping the extra word needed?
Nets in the sheen & veins high toward
explain, which rhythm brings us nigh?

Who born tonight knowing both war & its resolve?

Absolution

“Our only guide is
our homesickness.”
—Herman Hesse,
Steppenwolf, 1929.

Sing yon blood-glow of moonlit ardor,
tonight's growling dream nearer our restless
fecund, & want better of time than its
brutal leavings, night's anxious wane through
daylight's familiar oncome, sudden a flash &
one set on by two, common wrong on a crawling street.

Sing & we deny trigger's cry as this world's
farthest truth, dare another way & later
come the numbers. More watches us kindly
than we know. Such the blind man & his
stick's snuffle down the street, warned by an
alley's breeze. A lost brother nods & remembers.

Sing while men divide the wilder lands into a
here & there, naming what they do not know,
missing the tongue of spark, of waver, of wane.
Soil will swallow the great wall & the ode's
reaching hand alike. All soaks empty in moonlight
upon its hour, climbs its beam, falls untold within.

Helpless

Call it God when the hour rests soft
upon your cheek, the faces laugh &
everyone kisses the stone pipe in great
fraternity. Call it God when sunlight
tips every heightless wood up there,
when the air itself weaves sugared
song through this hour rests softly
upon your cheek, faces touch &
withdraw through swathes of darkness
& call it God as familiar bed beck
with its sweetheart smiling through
your webs & chaff, knowing truer
the wreckage of your heart fine
& holy, alive, grateful, take her
hand, let life's glint of a dream
draw you pictures of the possible,
call it God as new day streaks
through them & something else reveals.

Weightless

The wall of beggars longer every night,
nearer the sleep of merchants & preachers,
where heat & bread kept & counted, longer
every night, jungles flare, canyon rivers shout,
longer every night, books of belief prophesy
from the distance of tangled words, longer
every night, those whose dreams bite &
bite again, longer every night, soldiers
watch through cracks & speak low, the
wall of beggars longer every night,
more lose a mother, a heart, a shop,
a job, longer every night, the king
thickens his wall & smiles from ever
more afar, longer every night, feel
it, nearer you, eyes you cannot avoid,
drying mouths, hands clutching for the
same air you'd share, but is there enough?
Call it song but what do the days
call for? Lose in the pretty & call you
that a God? The wall of beggars longer
every night, low heads mask childish
memories, of sky, space, small kindnesses
by big strangers, longer every night & when
the whelm comes it will be those who
sided coin against heart, iron against
wood, army against soul, you will be
buried, forgotten, lost, mounds of brutaled limbs.

Brutal

Dream that man's death tonight, be a
welcome the world forgets to bestow,
there was kindness, there was water,
there were prayers & kisses, he wondered
about sky & soil, & reck how bullets
stripe fruits & no better. Reck how kings
wish for rows & silence. Reck how preachers
keep God safe in books & under rooves.

Dream that man's death so that he
does not die alone, be his carpet, be
his flower, will him an after for the
pain of his end & for the child who
roared because every hour was still to come.

Ruin

Old songs, new songs, what sings higher
than drums & dust? Why here tonight?
What falls truest through the heart lands,
softly, as Art, but still: Why here tonight?
Home the remain where thoughts cease, its city,
its lover, its patch of green, slice of moon, ask:
Why here tonight? Old gods, new gods, faith a
crooked spasm within, love a mold around the
heart, its poison & cure. Why anywhere tonight?
Faces snap in the fire & neon, faces lean on the tired
carriage, faces bulge the frame, faces ripe dreaming's
wilds. How will I lift the bent & lorn ones when
I've lost how to rise? That's why still here tonight.

Blues

Call it freedom for an hour's slow stroking
& a shadow's calm explain. Tonight
the lights blink go & slow & no, I ask
for another. Mouth to mouth, thigh
upon thigh, born to breed breeders, suck
one last & die. A sentiment called history.

Call it freedom with a slave's love for tune,
for the wind in a thin skirt, for how
dreams will mock any trembling day, for
the lure of elaborate suffering, is
every pain your own too? Is any? Mouth
to mouth, the late hour's searching blue eye.

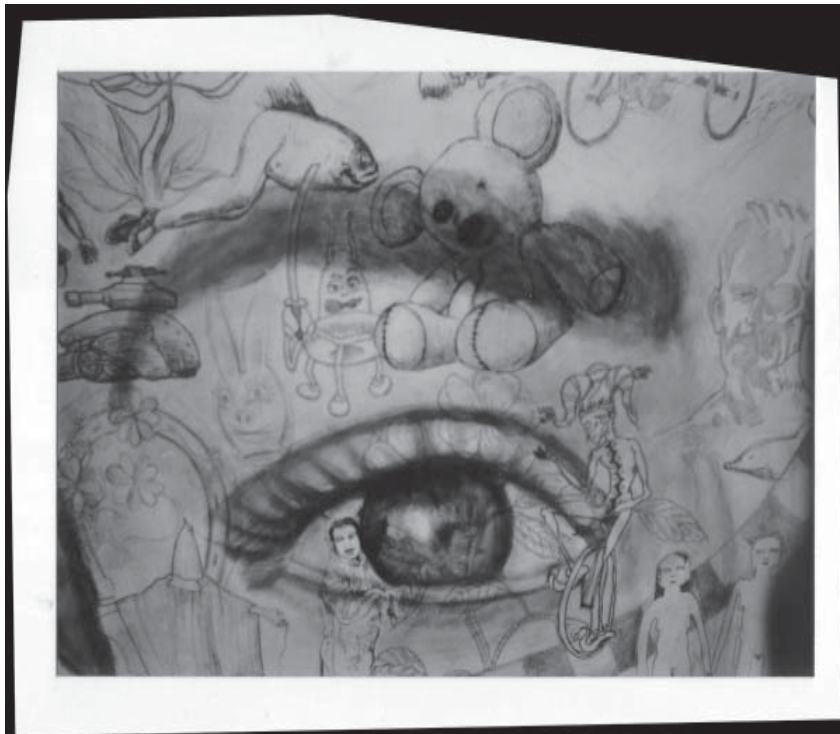
Call it freedom if it's pretty & rattles
sense or senses. New pebbles arrive on
shore & each carries first conception
of the sea. Another new one up & shining,
today & today & today. Elsewhere tonight,
going, where the knots loose or reveal.

Redux

I've learned little more than this:
every flesh & eye tapped ever by
the long ruinous hand of memory.
Try it some olden way, by a pill's
twist or machine's jerk, nothing really
goes away & nothing ever returns.



The Lost Days



It was a lovely winter morning in the Southern United States. A light snow from the night before covered the grass and the red clay soil of the hillsides. An elderly man made his way through Memorial Park of the largest town in Smithfield county. He pushed a Bi-Lo shopping cart along the concrete walkways, cutting half-inch deep ruts in the snow. A ripped ad for toothpaste hung on the front of the cart, almost, yet not, a car's license plate. The man wore a faded, brown trench coat, fingerless gloves, and sneakers with a small hole in the toe of the right foot, from which soiled newspaper could be seen. He stopped at a trash bin, and began to search through it. It was his daily ritual, to canvass the park and pick up soda pop cans and plastic bottles before the maintenance workers came by. While there were fewer to collect during the colder season, it was easier as no high school students are hired to clean the park.

"Megrim, you wanted to meet." A voice came out of a small clump of bushes, mostly bare branches this time of year. It came from a Pixie, an Elf, a Fairy, the Sidhe, a Peri, one of the Wee Folk, call it what you will. Its kind has been known by many names, by these and many more. It had jade skin, pointed ears, and wispy, curnute antennae.

"Shh, Tior. They'll think I'm talking to myself," he said, pointing a grimy thumb at two business-suited people having an early morning smoke in the park. White clouds streamed from their mouths. Church bells rang through the air, tolling nine o'clock. The old man took a can out of the bin, and poured its remaining contents on the ground. A small orange stain ate into the newly fallen snow.

"Does this state even have a bottle return law?"

Megrim looked pensive a moment, then said, "No matter. I'll bring them back in a state that does.

"Chilly this morning, eh? Must be only a single degree. Wait. That's on old Isaac's scale. Guess I still gauge the temps in it. That would

be ...oh, let's see... times sixty, divide by eleven, add thirty-two ... 37 degrees Fahrenheit. I studied with him, you know. Newton I mean."

"Megrim, you wanted to meet." Tior was growing impatient.

"I did? I did! I need your assistance. Get in."

"In there?" The Pixie pointed at the cart. Megrim moved his ripped plastic bag aside to reveal a corrugated cardboard box with the name of a local egg farm printed in stylized lettering along the side. Johnnie Greene's it read. It looked surprisingly clean and dry.

"As warm as a dragon's egg and twice as safe."

"Why?"

"I need you to be my anchor, my lifeline back."

"Back from where?"

"The Lost Days."

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"What is today?" asked Megrim, the wizard.

"Dies Dominica," Tior said. "Sunday."

"February 29th, in fact. It's known as leap year."

"I recall. An extra date in those of your years that can be divided by four evenly."

"Unless divisible by one hundred, but not by four hundred."

"You humans make everything so difficult."

Megrim began to chuckle. "That we do."

"Not that I am not happy to see you, but do you not know any other wizards who can help you? Prospero perhaps?"

"Despite all we have learned, every talent we may employ, every feat we can accomplish, we wizards are still human. Earlier I said I thought of the temperature in the measuring I learned in my youth as an alchemist so long ago. I also think in terms of a calendar. I may miss a day or two, here and there, but I am still living in mortal time. I am susceptible to The Lost Days. You, Tior, are not."

Megrim continued pushing his cart. Slowly the scenery changed, from the downtown park, through the quaint old Main Street businesses, to the sprawling mega-store franchises. Slowly the houses became older,

built with long porches and stately widow's walks. A few of the buildings had small bronze plaques listing their date of construction.

"What do you know of calendars, Tior?"

"They have pictures of puppies and covered bridges, or else swimsuit models and firemen."

"Fascinating topic," the wizard continued, ignoring his comments. "The strict Islamic calendar relies on actual sighting of the moon, which can be quite a spot of bother in inclement weather." Megrim laughed softly.

"Megrim..."

"The Hebrew calendar has regular, incomplete, and abundant years. The Gregorian calendar replaced the Julian one. Not to be confused with Julian period or computerspeak's Julian dates..."

"Megrim."

"Julius Caesar's calendar was replaced by Pope Gregory XIII nee Ugo Buoncompagni—not the Great one, I'm afraid—in the sixteenth century."

"Megrim!" Tior shouted. "Get to the point. Please."

"I was just getting to that. Tsk. Tsk. You should have more patience." Tior settled himself uneasily in his cardboard carton. "Where was I?" The wizard began to stroke his long white beard. "When the new dating system went into effect in October of 1582, dates were removed; the calendar jumped ten days. Great Britain and its English possessions, being a proper Protestant country, didn't adopt the papist, Gregorian calendar until anno Domini 1752 when Wednesday, the second of September, was followed by Thursday the fourteenth."

"Megrim," pleaded the Pixie in the box.

"This fine state was an English possession at that time so this area lost those eleven days."

"The Lost Days."

"Yes, one grouping of them at least. But that's not exactly the reason I called you."

"No?" Tior asked, exasperated.

"What if someone had been caught up in that missing time?"

"By caught up," Tior said, "you mean trapped."

“Exactly my point.” Megrim slapped the handle of the cart. “Who told you?”

Tior looked about. The wizard had stopped on the steps of a large mansion. A wooden billboard near the cart relayed the hours of the Stoughton-Endicott House Museum. It opened at noon on Sundays, and the gift shoppe opened at 1:30 pm. The sign informed all that the original building had been built by Fitzhugh Endicott and had been turned over to the Smithfield Historical Society by the two Stoughton sisters in 1956. “Dowagers,” Megrim mouthed.

“Today, being the one hundred third Gregorian leap year, gives me a homeopathic portal into The Lost Days. Any leap year, any hiccup in time, will do. Oh, I suppose I could even attempt it at the start to Daylight Saving Time, but that is less than a blink to the cosmos, a bit of flatulence in the chronosphere. Besides, who wants to stay up till 2 a.m.?” Megrim paused. “A least in this city.” And smiled.

Megrim began to go through his pockets. “Now, where was it? I shall need it.” The wizard stopped and rummaged in the plastic bags in Tior’s cart. “Ho, hee,” he cried, and pulled forth a slender orchestra conductor’s baton, a small green price sticker still stuck to its weightier end.

“Is that your wand?” asked the Pixie.

Megrim looked startled.

“Course not!” He lowered his voice to a conspiratorial whisper. “It’s me staff.” He straightened.

“I must be a pied piper to lead these rats out of the temporal prison of Hamelin.” He brought the baton to his lips and pretended to blow into a flute, his fingers tapping fluidly on the wood.

“You mean children, don’t you?”

Megrim thought a moment.

“Yes.”

* * * * *

Megrim began to wave his “staff” about and intone various words, some not spoken in centuries.

“Chronos and Janus, dispel the vapours of time, reveal the Othergate,” he finished, and put the baton into his left breast pocket. “Nothing clears the mind or excites the blood like a spot of magic. It’s like mystical snuff. Come along.” The Pixie followed the wizard. The air seemed heavy and the Pixie’s normally sharp eyes could see little in the hazy atmosphere. Did they go through a doorway? Or was it Megrim’s Othergate? Then Tior’s vision cleared suddenly and they were in a spacious room of the mansion.

The sitting room was occupied by two people. One was a tall man who wore knee-length breeches and a black waistcoat. His hair had just begun to sprout grey hairs. The other was a woman of the same age. A woolen shawl was cast casually about her shoulders and bodice. An oaken table was set with a white lace cloth and piled high with plates of scones, bowls of boiled peanuts, and a tea set. A tea ball slowly dripped its excess onto a small tea towel.

“There is something off about this food. It’s not rancid exactly, but off in some way.”

“Tior. What do you expect? It is over two hundred years old.”

The man approached them. Surprisingly, he did not appear surprised by two strangers suddenly appearing in his house. “Colonel Endicott at your service. Are you an itinerant preacher, sir?”

Megrim paused a moment, recalling that the Great Awakening was barely a decade past for Endicott. He hooked his thumbs into his coat lapels and said, “Verily.” He then pulled an oblong leather book from his pocket. A thin black ribbon was thrust between two leaves of the tome, marking an important passage, no doubt.

“Is this your slave?” The man asked, bending down to get a closer look at Tior. “I’ve never seen the like.”

“You keep thralls!” Tior’s bronze dirk was halfway out of its sheath by the time Megrim gently laid a hand on his shoulder.

“They’re not here. Different calendar. Their entrapment ended ages ago.” Though, the wizard mused without informing the Pixie, household servants—slaves—could be present. Megrim saw something

that interested him in the corner. He strode toward a piano. Lifting the lid over the keys, he mashed his fingers over the ivory. Even Tior could not recognize Richard Strauss's *Thus Spake Zarathustra* from the wizard's rendition.

"I say," Endicott interjected. "Is that in tune? I spent quite a few sterling having that shipped from Liverpool."

"Fitzhugh, you do so go on about that. You will embarrass our guest. Parson, do have some of our pee-can pie."

"Miss Julia, I am not embarrassing anyone. I am simply stating a fact. We in his Majesty's Colonies are honest, but roughhewn, craftsman. These amenities of luxury come from the motherland at no little price."

"You are a Tory, sir." Megrim smiled widely, pointing with his book. Before another word could be spoken, a child's slight voice sounded.

"Momma, have you seen Phoebe?" Tior turned toward the speaker. It was a young girl—blonde, dressed in the long and simple Colonial garb. A white apron covered her cotton shortgown, and a small blue country cap covered her hair. She carried a rag-doll sporting a burlap blanket shirt; its corncob face was painted with a big smile and the wide eyes of the Manga au currant two hundred years hence.

"No darling. I haven't seen her all... all..."

"Day?" suggested the wizard to Mrs. Julia Endicott.

"Oooh, who are you?" the young girl asked. Her brown eyes grew wide looking at the Pixie. "My name is Sarah."

"Hello," he replied. "I am Tior."

"You haven't seen Phoebe have you?"

"Is Phoebe..." Tior turned toward the wizard. "Is she one with a different calendar?"

Megrim shook his head affirmative. Sarah answered: "She's my nanny."

The wizard then took the Endicotts by the arms and led them to a seat by the windows. September sunshine shown down upon their faces. The afternoon shadows lengthened as they conversed. Megrim tried desperately to impress the danger of The Lost Days upon the Southern couple. Their faces betrayed the fact that they believed him to be a

madman. The wizard took Julia's hand in his own. "Mrs Endicott, please you must believe me."

"I do not understand why you wish us to abandon our home," Endicott replied finally to the wizard.

"Colonel, I implore you. Everyone in this house must follow me and my guide."

"Your guide? It's not Croatoan, is it?"

"No. Not very likely." Megrim looked back at the Pixie as he sat on the floor with Sarah Endicott. He leapt from his seat and called out.

"Tior, can you still see the way back?"

"Yes. It is right there." The Pixie pointed.

"I cannot. We must leave, even if I have failed."

"Megrim, we cannot leave these people like this. They are not living. I would not even say they are existing."

"I can't force them. They have chosen to be here. They will not listen to me, not listen to reason."

"But the child!"

"There is nothing we can do. They're trapped completely by the temporal hysteresis anomaly."

Megrim stepped in the direction the Pixie had indicated the way back was. Tior grabbed the child's hand and began leading her away too.

As before the air around them became cloudy, as if the fog of time had settled about them. If smog is smoke and fog, is this timog? Megrim chuckled to himself.

But Sarah cried out, she twisted her wrist to escape the Pixie's grasp. "Momma. Momma," she called out. "Phoebe, help me!" She broke from the Pixie's grasp.

* * * * *

"Tior. Tior, are you there?" Megrim the wizard found himself lying on the snowy lawn before the Stoughton-Endicott Museum. His body formed an unintentional snow-angel as he struggled to rise. If anyone looked carefully they would have noticed there were no footprints leading to the angel. He looked around frantically for the Pixie.

“I am here.”

“She could have found her way back from The Lost Days.”

“Sarah is not here.”

“Her way back is to the Eighteenth Century C.E. Or she could have gone deeper in to be with her family. I’ll never know. This portal is closed to me now. No stamping of the hand for reentry, to be sure.”

“A single cast of the die,” the Pixie said sadly.

“Now, help me find my cart! We need the cash from those returns. You look like you could use a cuppa tea. And I surly could go for a mug of coffee. I know a glamour spell that might just get us both into Starbucks.”



Notes on Contributors

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