

Ray Soulard, Jr.

*Secret Joy Amongst These Times:
The History of Scriptor Press,
1995-2001*

This book is dedicated to my Phamily in all times & places. You are not alone :)

Much thanks to Douglas Clayton & Jeff Seglin

*"Think for yourself
& question authority"*
Dr. Timothy Leary

Abstract

From its beginning in 1995, Scriptor Press has published the writing, art, & music of contemporary artists who work outside the current artistic mainstream, whose work is not regarded by this mainstream as legitimate work because it is intended for other than commercial consumption. It is the deeply-felt belief of this press that the artistic mainstream has isolated itself from the subtle but true changes occurring right now in the world on all levels, that devotion to commercial gain has blinded many to the secret joy amongst these times, a joy growing & spreading everyday.

This book will discuss the founding and history of Scriptor Press. It is intended to offer instruction & hope for those who feel isolated from their spiritual kin & yet who pursue the higher calling of Art day by day, whatever their circumstances. Blessed be.

SCRIPTOR PRESS IS NOT SO MUCH A BUSINESS ENTITY as a continuing mission, an advocate for artistic & social & individual freedom, a vehicle for disseminating reports of various kinds from what Aldous Huxley calls the "Antipodes" of consciousness. Its projects offer greater connection among persons, & seeks greater connection among persons. It is a laboratory for developing & mature artists alike to experiment with various kinds of expression. Its overriding concern is no less than aiding in the reinvigoration of the world. Love, not money. Art, not commerce. Nature, not war. Scriptor Press is a project entwined with countless historical movements bent on redefining the human landscape from that of brutal battleground to that of cosmic playground. This book will address these many matters in discussing the history of Scriptor Press.

Antecedents

Throughout the history of American literary publishing, there have been underground publications of various kinds; many of our most highly regarded writers and artists initially encountered rejection from the mainstream of their day, only to gain eventually widespread esteem.

Scriptor Press acknowledges several major influences from past countercultural literary movements. The first of these is Ralph Waldo Emerson & the Transcendentalists, a movement that flourished in the mid-nineteenth century. Emerson wrote of his times:

[A] number of young and adult persons are at this moment the subject of a revolution. They are not organized into any conspiracy: they do not vote, or print, or meet together. They do not know each other's faces or names. They are united only in a common love of truth and love of its work. They are of all conditions and natures. They are, some of them, mean in attire, and some mean in station, and some mean in body, having inherited from their parents faces and forms scrawled with the traits of every vice. Not in churches, or in courts, or in large assemblies; not in solemn holidays, where men are met in festal dress, have these pledged themselves to new life, but in lonely and obscure places, in servitude, in solitude, in solitary

compunctions and shames and fears, in
 disappointments, in diseases, trudging beside the
 team in the dusty road, or drudging, a hireling in
 other men's cornfields, schoolmasters who teach a
 few children rudiments for a pittance, ministers of
 small parishes of the obscurer sects, lone women in
 dependent condition, matrons and young maidens, rich
 and poor, beautiful and hard-favored, without conceit
 or proclamation of any kind, have silently given in
 their several adherence to a ..

Emerson was writing in 1839, but he might have been writing in the early 1920s or the late 1940s, or the early 1960s for that matter, when countercultural movements again brewed among people who "do not know each other's faces or names [and] are united only in a common love of truth and love of its work." In the early 1920s, these disparate persons began to gather in Paris, but their presence and influence ranged from Moscow to London to New York to San Francisco. Like Emerson's *Dial* literary journal (a publication that he edited after Margaret Fuller gave up the position, and whose roster of contributors included Thoreau and Bronson Alcott among many others), the figures of the 1920s depended on literary journals to transmit their art when they had no other options. Another version of *The Dial*, *Poetry*, *Secession*, & T.S. Eliot's *Criterion* were among the many "little magazines" that first published the likes of Hemingway, Pound, & Joyce. In the 1950s, it was the *Evergreen Review* & *Chicago Review* that were publishing Kerouac, Ginsberg, & Burroughs & their brethren to a small but devoted audience of readers. This tradition continued into the 1960s with such underground magazines as *The Floating Bear* & *Ramparts*.

What these several time periods, many periodicals, & countless numbers of artists have in common is that they faced a resistant artistic mainstream. They faced a conservative, even timid publishing industry too often concerned with the formulaic & the familiar. Yet what is also true is that in each period a ferment grew until it eventually re-invented the industry that had resisted it. The beneficiaries, of course, were & continue to be all of us, for it is the artists who are beyond the visible bend of the road who are in a position to tell us what we are going to encounter when we get there.

In the 1990s, the revolution in digital technology has led to

earthshaking occurrences in desktop publishing. The Internet, once a government & academic toy, has put human society into a state of rapid development undreamt of in past times. The publishing monolith will never again enjoy the power & influence it has had heretofore. What happens hereon is up to the leading-edge artists who have more control & freedom than ever. Will they acknowledge that mainstream acceptance is no longer the main impediment they face & press the boundaries of Art even further, even faster, ever deeper, ever vaster? Scriptor Press chooses to believe that many of them will, & it acts in accordance with this faith.

The greater truth, too, is that the mainstream ain't what it used to be. There now so many different kinds of outlets for creative expression, so much home technology available for dissemination work, so many different kinds of people spreading one kind of message or another, so much interaction between persons of different nations & cultures, that it is harder & harder to discern what stands guarded behind the ramparts & what still pounds upon the door from without. Since the late 1950s, & especially since the late 1960s, the counterculture & the mainstream have been infiltrating one another more & more. The battle is no longer generational nor even squares versus 'heads so much as it is vision versus fear. A vision of individual power & liberty versus a fear of giving people the choice to live their lives--trusting them to be decent, care for the weak & young, appreciate the beauty of the universe be it manifest in a grove of oaks or a young woman's smile, trusting that love & not selfishness is at the root of the human soul. It is a risk to give people their freedom; but while things are still shaking down, it is even more of a risk to be on the side of freedom. People who advocate legalizing marijuana & LSD, abortion rights, even greater sexual tolerance, one & all face harassment, if not worse, from those who fear the power of the free individual. But like the movie says, you have two choices: get busy livin', or get busy dyin'.

The Jellicle Literary Guild

In 1988 I read a book called *The Inklings* by Humphrey Carpenter about the WWII-era Oxford literary group whose members included J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, & Charles Williams. During the years in & around World War II, these three & their colleagues would meet at the Eagle & the Child pub as well as various of their homes-- on a weekly basis for years to read & discuss their works-in-progress.

I excitedly took this book's story as a blueprint for what my friends & I at Central Connecticut State University could do. We'd already been gathering informally at each other's homes for poetry, music, beer, & laughter for a few years. This book inspired me to up the level of ambitiousness.

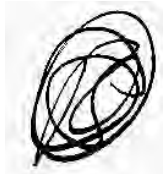
For our meeting place I chose the back room at Roma Restaurant in New Britain, a congenial establishment close to the university. On December 29, 1988, we met there for the first time.

The mix of readings, guitars, strong drink, good food, and tavern atmosphere was a success from the start. In 1998, the Jellicle Guild's 10th anniversary came & went with the group still doing well, averaging eight meetings a year & twice-yearly being held around Boston where I have lived since 1992. By 1999's end, the group will have gathered eighty-eight times at Roma's & elsewhere. Forty to fifty men & women have over those years brought their stories, poems, plays, confessions, prose, music & songs to Jellicle Guild meetings.

The Cenacle

On April 1, 1995, I sat with my friends at Roma Restaurant & outlined for them a project I had conceived. The Cenacle would be a magazine that I would produce in my apartment in Cambridge, Massachusetts, & distribute to Jellicle Guild members. But this, I explained, was only the beginning. I would use my residence in the Boston area to find new writers, artists, & musicians, bring them to the Jellicle Guild meetings at Roma's & publish their work in *The Cenacle*. I emphasized that I meant this periodical to aid us in expanding our circle as well as a vehicle for getting us into print on our own terms. Disappointing experience with submitting work to publishers, with depending on commercial businesses for producing the magazines we had made years earlier, & with open-mic poetry readings around Boston led me to decide that we would do all of this ourselves—finance, produce, & disseminate *The Cenacle* & other projects exactly as we chose. I planned ten issues of *The Cenacle* a year to go with the 10 Jellicle Guild meetings I was scheduling at that time.

On April 29, 1995, I arrived at Roma Restaurant in New Britain, Connecticut with an armful of copies of *The Cenacle* #1 April 1995, a magazine whose pages my friends had helped me fill. We were all delighted. I was ecstatic.



To be continued in Cenacle 46, June 2001

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Chapter Two *continued from Cenacle 45, April 2001*

At the April 1, 1995 meeting, I outlined to the members of the 6 1/2-year-old Jellicle Literary Guild my plan to start up a new magazine called *The Cenacle*. I spoke of wanting our members to be part of a literary renaissance the likes of which had not been witnessed since the 1950s. Four weeks later, on April 29, 1995, *The Cenacle* debuted before this same group at Roma's. This magazine, I believed, would constitute our contribution to the renaissance we so desired.

The Cenacle 1 is 65 numbered pages in length plus 6 unnumbered pages. The cover artwork is by Virginia Bergeron, a black & white etching of a forest stream, printed on tan paper, the only *Cenacle* cover not printed on card stock. Many conventions of the magazine are established in this premiere issue. First of these is the epigraph page right up front. *Cenacle* 1's two epigraphs establish its theme immediately. JG member Mark Shorette writes:

I believe we dwell in mystery—not as a matter of deception on the part of a trickster deity, but as a matter of the course of our own nature and that of the universe—we are infinitely deep and it is infinitely vast. We are capable of catching glimpses of it all, and the whole of existence is caught up in stringing some of these seconds together in a necklace that becomes the talisman of our existence. My God—it is laid so plain and pure before us! We yearn for days



when burnished feet of shining light alight upon a mount and tell of these things, but the vastness and the deep can meet in any second and we will know rather than hear.

"We dwell in mystery" as beings "infinitely deep" within a universe "infinitely vast" promulgates a spiritual perspective, of course, but it also constitutes a mission: to celebrate the mystery, to engage the mystery, & to stand at least somewhat in opposition to the predominant Western scientific paradigm of these past few centuries—in opposition to the belief that humanity is very near to solving the riddles of existence. It is not. Ralph H. Emerson's epigraph catches the spritely enthusiasm of the moment:

Spring has sprung:
The writers are singing again.

He felt this spirit even as he was travelling in California at the time.

Another convention established was a feature that would come to be called "From Soulard's Notebooks." Issue to issue, I select a passage from my journals of the time that speaks to the issue's spirit; this passage is presented as it appears in my journals, that is, handwritten. This approach is a variation on the more standard "letter from the editor" that prefaces many periodicals, & is of the same mindset as Mark Shore's contention that we can "catch glimpses" of the whole of the universe. It is less contrived & its relation to the magazine is less hierarchical. The epigraphs & the "Soulard's Notebooks" feature set the tone without trying to sum up or conclude definitively.

For this inaugural "Soulard's Notebooks" I selected a letter dated 3/31/95, describing in detail my intentions:

I am trying to bring the Jellicle Guild and its members to the next level of development I believe our group of writers, artists, and musicians to be a significant one, that our monthly-or-so event at New Britain's Roma Restaurant is something worth commemorating in print.

I also believe we have to do this ourselves.

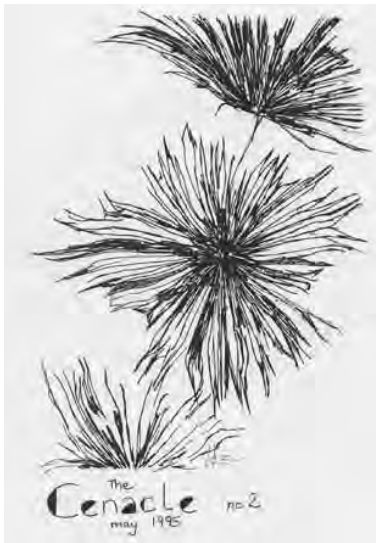
At one point, now years ago, I'd hoped to involve myself in the publishing world on a paid-professional basis. Write for the *Atlantic Monthly* or somesuch.

No more. I won't whore my work for gain. I don't damn the publishing business for others but my own rejection of it is permanent. Between power-hungry fascist liberal academics and multinational corporate jackal publishers, the state of contemporary American literature is in grave peril.

My response? publish a journal paid for from my own pocket, nurture the

talents and goals of my friends within its pages and at the Jellicle Guild. I will carry forth the tradition as I see it in my small way. I will endeavor to make connections on a person-by-person basis to widen my circle. I will retain total control of my projects + treat my colleagues w/respect + w/love.

Three significant points are made here: disillusion with the American publishing establishment; anger at the mishandling of traditionally regarded classics of American literature by academics espousing ideologically-based opinions in college classrooms; & a do-



it-ourselves desire to reconnect with these classics. *Cenacle* 1 was produced using equipment I'd just purchased or already owned. With the means of production in our own hands, & the willingness to pay for the process myself, those I thought of as foes & impediments could be entirely circumvented (in 2001, this spirit has infected musicians as well in the development of MP3 technology—& online file-sharing programs such as Napster & its clones—that allows bands to control the complete process of getting their music to interested listeners, Denied entry into the mainstream world of Art, whatever form it takes, people will often find a different way).

The table of contents notes that the magazine contains an "accompanying cassette" which features "highlights from the April 1, 1995 Jellicle Literary Guild meeting held at Roma Restaurant in New Britain, CT, plus an episode of WRCR Radio hosted by 'Marky Sparky' Bergeron." I was periodicals manager at Quantum Books in Cambridge, Massachusetts at the time, & noticed that many of the computer magazines came with a disk or CD-ROM attached; I thought: why not do this with a literary periodical? Its contents in the early issues were split between highlights of the most recent Jellicle Guild meeting & Mark Bergeron's DJ-style mixes of rock "oldies" mostly from the 1950s & 1960s. These cassettes would enjoy their best success when they reached the hands of people who were not regulars to the Jellicle Guild meetings—& for whom they were a record of gatherings they were unable to attend.

There are nine contributors to the first issue of *The Cenacle*; these nine plus three others filled the magazine's pages exclusively for its first eight issues. The point here is that *The Cenacle* started with a dozen contributors, all (save a work colleague) members of the Jellicle Literary Guild. Thus the magazine was populated with enough voices & visions to climb to a certain height. Issues #1-10 are of a piece. What follows is an overview of the major contributors' pieces.

Jim Burke's anecdotal, philosophical letters became a regular feature of *The Cenacle* commencing with #2 May 1995 & are prefaced as follows:

[T]he following is the first in what will be an ongoing series derived from the correspondence between James Burke III and myself, begun when I moved from Connecticut to Boston in 1992, and in the spirit of the more enthused letter-writing tradition of yesterday.

Cenacle 2's letter offers a "state of the world" that argues the following: everyone has the potential to become God-like in nature; humankind's attempt to conquer the earth is futile & ultimately suicidal; & the increasing mutual dependence of technology & culture has led in recent years to greater & more frequent ecological disasters. It concludes with a lengthy account of a night Burke spent at his favorite pub, performing & carousing, & ultimately running into problems with the police. Burke's "state of the world," then, is philosophical, political, artistic, & personal in nature.

Cenacle 3's letter is briefer, beginning with a short tavern anecdote before segueing into a discussion of humankind's potential to become God-like in nature:

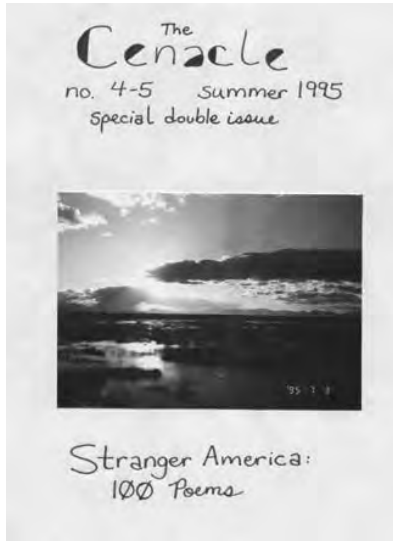
The Hindus believe that all action should be done without regard to the inevitable—life, death, and whatever happens. The Hindus believed that all action should be done without regard to praise or criticism, as long as that action is devoted to the Godhead. Plato seemed to say (in his "Allegory of the Cave") that once a man has attained the truth, he should share it with others. I'm quite sure this is what J.Christ did. The problem I have with both Plato



and Aristotle is that they fail to make a mind-body connection. They disagree with each other on a lot of issues but both of them elaborate on how one should pursue the highest knowledge. They failed to see, however, that the only possible way to attain a mind free from corporeal existence is to become what mankind has the potential to be—Godlike in nature. Only then would we transcend this material plane.

Again & again Burke returns to this theme. Born in 1953 near Boston, witness to & participant in much of the psychedelic revolution of the late 1960s & early 1970s, gifted musician, heavily influenced by his readings in

Eastern mysticism, Burke's letters & his music (as captured on *The Cenacle's* cassettes) embody the sentiment expressed by Shorette that "we dwell in mystery."



Ric Amante's poetry began appearing in *Cenacle* 1 & has been featured in nearly all the subsequent issues of the periodical. Amante's love for God, birds, wine, dancing, & the obscure fellaheen of this world at times murmurs & at times explodes from the page. He extends the poetic tradition reaching back through Ginsberg, Crane, Rilke, Whitman, & Blake all the way back to the great Persian poet Rumi.

"The Hotel Jones" in *Cenacle* 2 is sad music, experience burned down in memory, through time, then re-kindled by the transformative touch of Art. The hotel is a place where lonely figures move through harshly-lit smoky rooms, "whittle throughout this long night." Screams, hacking coughs, sex-noises break the silence. Few letters arrive nor caring

communications of any kind from the outside world. The night gets stranger & stranger for those who cannot sleep. Finally, even the act of telling the Hotel Jones' woeful tale is deemed futile: "The Hotel Jones is a planet/a scourge not a sonnet." There are many in this world right now suffering, not knowing why.

"High Stakes Poker in Maine" in *Cenacle* 6 renders a surreal gaming scene full of eerie images, a place of silence violated by words, by the growling of a coyote, the complaints of the Buddha. The snow restores balance through self-annihilation, & the narrator endorses this action by folding. The game is over, the "sweet" dusky silence is restored. The "high stakes" game is concluded in favor of wordlessness.

"Drunk at the Stove" posits the superiority of living over contemplation, questions over answers, existence over definition. The title locates the speaker in an expanding state of inebriation in which he is considering the orphaned yet eternal state of human hearts, & the truth embodied in sunlight-nicked "banks of February snow," & the exalted state during which one suddenly hears music "through the mere act of looking outward." At this point, the speaker reconsiders his act of cooking as equivalent to his moment-illuminated consciousness, the epiphany arrived at being that love is the "seasoning that baffles, enfolds, and releases us all."



These poems effectively represent the kinds of thematic concerns that run through all of Amante's work in *The Cenacle*. Amante embraces, queries, dances among the mysteries & miracles of existence, sometimes finding clues to his questions in the midst of weeping, or momentarily alighting upon an answer in watching the a hawk circles a patch of empty sky.

Michael McLoughlin's literary essays were featured in a number of early issues of *The Cenacle*. A scholar of 19th & early 20th century American literature (and currently a visiting English professor at the University of South Carolina), McLoughlin published considerations of works by F. Scott Fitzgerald, Charles Brockden Brown, & Nathaniel Hawthorne. The best of these, "Jaffrey Pyncheon on the Scaffold: the Violated Heart of The House of the Seven Gables" appeared in *Cenacle* 9-10. This excellent essay argues that the novel can be discussed fruitfully as passing metaphorically through the four chambers of the human heart, the old tired blood of its early chapters thus being cleaned by its final ones.

McLoughlin concludes his discussion:

What stands here at the novel's close as most important is that the creaky old heart of the house is allowed to beat its final living strokes in the purified atmosphere of dead and buried conflicts and newfound life-affirming love; as the betrothed Maules trot off to take up residence in Judge's country estate—the venerable figure of Uncle Venner waving them on, and promising to join them shortly—we may feel that the violated heart of the house they leave behind sits in calm repose, and that the new household toward which they tend will hold, at least for a few fleeting moments after they cross the threshold, the possibility of mortal joy in its timbers.

Not being loaded down with the jargon & abstruse thinking of much contemporary writing about literature, McLoughlin's essays are accessible to academic & non-academic readers alike, & thus embody this periodical's position view that it is the scholar's task to serve the great literature about which he or she writes, rather than using it as fodder in some ivy tower game of theory & revenge.

Jack Heitner, an English professor at Central Connecticut State University, contributed poetry to several early issues of *The Cenacle*. In *Cenacle* 2 May 1995 he published "Connecticut Mountain Poems," reprinting in *The Cenacle* a collection of poems originally



published as a chapbook. In poems such as "In Early May" ("I too/ am wild and ready./ I too:/ Hiker—/ Seeker."), "Climbing" ("We sometimes are the love we seek"), and "The Ship of Love" ("The third eye opens in the sky/ I view the earth from moon's new height"), the climber's quest for the peak is equated with the soul's passage through existence, ascent into the brighter light of greater knowledge. In "Climbing" Heitner writes that "Art is Spirit in search of itself." Heitner's poetic music is filled with strong mountain breezes, clear-eyed laughing stuff, written by a strong rock-chafed hand.

Virginia Bergeron, an artist who has shown her work in shows & galleries in central Connecticut, contributed artwork for seven of the first eight *Cenacle* covers as well as much art within the magazine's pages. I especially liked her renderings of trees; they are the result of hours of contemplation over each stroke made upon the page. Trying to reproduce her work on a desktop photocopier was a difficult task; often the finer details of the pictures were lost. Computers equipped with scanners & graphics programs such as Photoshop are much more able to handle such artwork.

From the beginning, *The Cenacle* strove to feature as many kinds of art as possible. Fiction was very important among these. In *Cenacles* #1, 2, 3, & 6 Mark Shorette's "Dwelling in a Land That is Waste" ran serially. Set in present-day Canaan & Hartford, it tells the story of a judge & his daughter both of whom are confronting soul-writhing crises in their lives. Shorette's writing heats up to a epiphonic blaze at times, & confronts the very nature of reality, ecstatic, woeful:

Somewhere along the way, the journey was lost. No more concept exists of the pilgrimage, the hegira, the exodus. At Mecca, Jerusalem, and Qum, the pilgrims arrive washed, clean-robed or suited, no mules, oxen, or camels to be fed or watered, no oases to be sought to clean a week of grime off the body, and to sate the thirst. There is no price.

Perhaps because our roads are marked, we no long seek signs.

In his story there is anger, softness, violence, dreams, satire, revelation.

Mark Bergeron contributed much poetry, fiction, & prose to early issues of *The Cenacle*. His writing is by turns mystical, comical, & thoughtful. In *Cenacle* #1's poem "What This Room Means" he writes:

Do you fear the exit?
Do you fear to come in?
Is there a place to go
where the madness is gone?

His themes often concern saner, gone times, days slower & more conducive to the lingering armchair dialogue—as in this passage from "Those Were the Days, My Friend":

I had a conversation last week here with a fellow who maintained that this young fellow T.S. Eliot is the begin-all and end-all in literature these days. Well, I've read "Ash Wednesday" and while I agree that this young man is a gifted fellow, well-read, my heart is reserved for other favorites.

This love of the refined & literary past was put to its most creative use in Bergeron's "Graham Wilkins: A Remembrance" in *Cenacle* #6:

The subject of this paper is the eighteenth-satire of Graham Wilkins. Born in Northumberland in 1721 of nonconformist parents, Wilkins's work was heralded as the excellence of style in the days of Oliver Goldsmith and fell into obscurity toward the end of the Victorian era. Wilkins's novel, *House of Suffolk*, written in 1763, may have influenced Washington Irving's sanguine treatment of English rural life in his *Bracebridge Hall*.

Wilkins is a fake, a product of Bergeron's bemused imagination. Written in the form of a straightforward literary essay, this piece is a delightful ruse.

The Cenacle has been from its inception a magazine which contains a lot of my own writing. The issues over time have been composed of one-third to two-thirds my work.

From 1981 to 1998 I wrote the dozens of novellas, short stories, & scraps that taken together comprise my novel *Cement Park*. From *Cenacle* 1 onward I published the later years of these stories, beginning with the 1994 novella "Beauty, Obscura [a new fiction]" which ran 5 issues & concluded in *Cenacle* 7 November 1995. *Cement Park* is set in present day Hartford & tells the stories of a rock musician named Richard James Americus, his daughter the artist Rebecca Dorothy Americus, his rock band Noisy Children, & his bar & restaurant called Luna T's Cafe. The following from the opening pages of "Beauty, Obscura":

A great deal of what drives me in life is the Mystery I perceive at the heart of it. pursuit of that mystery, apparent discoveries o/hints along the way, detours tragic for their abrupt ends, valuable for their plaintive warnings of what to expect, this all is what keep me sitting in joints w/black pens + white paper, keeps me believing in the value of truthgroping sessions that are the drinking times w/my mates, keeps me ever after the newest manifestation of my eternal She, keeps me convinced that it is not when you have achieved carnal knowledge of her that you know anything, but it is this precise

moment that you must acknowledge flailing joyful ignorance of the Beauty before you.

Cement Park & *The Cenacle* are quite literally part of the same life-long project. Nothing else in the magazine sets forth so plainly my views on Art & right conduct.

Another series of my stories in *The Cenacle* concerns the life & times of a man named Nat Perfect who lives in present-day Boston. He's in his 40s, wheelchair-bound (for ambiguous reasons), runs a small newsstand in the Financial District, is romantically involved with a woman named Kathleen Juliet Ripley. A snapshot of his character:

Lift a single, precious consciousness from the invisible film that covers all creation. Just one is enough, much beyond enough. A crippled man, he, tho in a way not as apparent as some may think. Some gentleness resides yet in him. Love? Sure. Much of it. But he's the stream not ready to drink, not yet of purged of its poison. That time may finally come. Everyday that he drops his body w/a grunt into that old wheelchair is another perhaps drawing him closer to his first purestream day in a long time: Listen! Can you hear his waters purifying themselves? Listen!

I enjoy writing his stories & many people like them, even prefer them to the wilder-eyed much more experimental Cement Park fixtions.

My most significant poetic contribution to the early *Cenacles* was contained in *Cenacle* #4-5 Summer 1995. I travelled across the country, by bus, by train, looking for poets & artists everywhere with whom I might connect myself & my people. I had some luck, my eyes wider-than-wide at all I saw, & ended up with a 100-poem sequence called *Stranger America*. *Cenacle* #4-5 contained all the poems, about half as many photos, & many telling shards of the places I'd been & what I'd seen:

the night has surrounded me
on many paws and feet
on many towns, on the high plains
showing flat, luscious tummies
singing three-chord cosmic music
urging, pulling, loving memories
i'm still a star in Nebraska's skies
i'm still a lonely drink on Division Street
i'm still an observer of Pacific's bathing nudes
i'm still clung to Renoir's waves

i'm still a secret lick of soft thighs
i'm still a shack in Utah's storm
i'm still a hippie bound for home
i'm still a sunrise 30,000 feet high
i'm still a sentiment, tripping lyrical
"reservoir of love
reservoir of love"
i'm still a Stranger in America.

("Stranger America," #100)

Toward the end of 1995, *The Cenacle* had fallen further & further behind in its planned publishing schedule. I just couldn't keep up. The intended *Cenacle* 9 December 1995 became *Cenacle* 9-10 Winter 1996. So much accomplished that first year yet by its end I was burnt-out. 1996 was a rough year, nearly the end many times. Yet I clung to the bottom rung of hope for unseeable better days ahead.



To be continued in Cenacle 49, October 2001

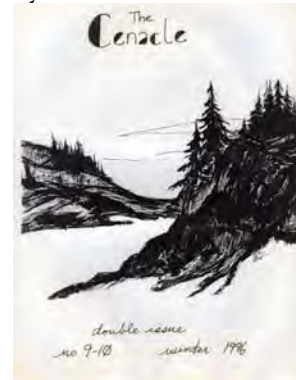
***Secret Joy Amongst These Times:
The History of Scriptor Press,
1995 to the Present***

*"Think for yourself
& question authority"*
—Dr. Timothy Leary

Chapter Three
continued from
The Cenacle / 46 / June 2001

In *Cenacle* 9-10's "From Soulard's Notebooks" there is a passage dated December 15, 1995: "I don't want to give up on *The Cenacle*: I just need time to catch it up and perhaps retreat from it a bit." During 1996, I struggled to expand *The Cenacle*'s identity. It wasn't worth doing if it wasn't evolving constantly & in exciting directions.

Yet the seeds of the future were, as they always are, already planted. As several consistent contributors & long-time friends passed from my life, an important new one entered, the Georgia artist & writer Barbara Brannon. I decided not to go for a Phd but to try my luck in an Master's of Fine Arts in creative writing program. I applied to Stanford University, University of Iowa, Boston University, Emerson College, Columbia College Chicago, UMass Amherst, & American University. In mid-August I moved from a shared house in Cambridge to my own apartment north of Boston in Malden.



Cenacles # 11 April 1996, #12 May 1996, & #13 June 1996 are of a piece in constituting a transitional phase in the periodical's history. The magazine was developing a more polished look with saddle-stitch binding instead of velo & many pieces were now created using Microsoft Word instead of a typewriter. The accompanying cassettes to these *Cenacles* no longer contained Mark Bergeron's music mixes on one side; their contents were solely highlights from recent Jellicle Guild meetings. *Cenacle* #14-15 Summer 1996 featured Mark Shorette's poetry collection *Two Vahids*, the second single-author issue of *The Cenacle*. After *Cenacle* 14-15 all manner of frustrating delays would hamper the next issue's completion.

Barbara Brannon's contributions to the 1996 *Cenacles* were poetry &, most importantly, artwork. Two of 1996's 5 covers contained her artwork & *Cenacles* 12 & 13

featured her “Artist’s Sketchbook.” Her early contributions were not by & large new work but older pieces she still liked. Still, I love her work & our working relationship would prove crucial for *The Cenacle*’s development in 1997 & thereafter.



Jim Burke III’s letters appear in *Cenacles* 11-13. In them are long critiques of technology’s increasingly invasive role in society:

Technology doesn’t exist by itself, but we can and have in the past. Man was evolving over millions of years and surviving natural catastrophes from an ice age to an asteroid hit[;]
his desire to commune more deeply with nature:

Ever since I can remember, nature has been the contact that has kept me in touch with myself. The walk in the reservoir was a philosophical happening. Each twig and branch and limb of each tree at each reservoir is coated with a layer of snow — like the whole forest is taking a bath to wash away the technological sins of mankind[;]

& his anecdotal delight in life’s absurdities:

It’s now the afternoon and PSYCHODERELICT is on the “telly.” It’s a stunning album. I also have a pint of CC in hand— actually it’s down to half-a-pint . . . James T. Reality went to the Butterfly and fell down twice abruptly upon leaving the establishment. Lan offered to help but I scared him away when I said I might fall on him. Lan the bartender serves the driest Beefeater martinis in the world. Ah!

Burke’s letters are assuring pieces to those out in the world who similarly feel snared just short of their true freedom by Corporate America’s powerful machinations.

Ric Amante’s poetry appeared regularly in the ‘96 *Cenacles* & were part of a greater plan I was developing at the time. The idea was to select 50 or so of his poems to be published in the Summer 1996 *Cenacle* & then publish these selfsame poems in chapbook form. In February 1996 we selected about 55 from over 200 during an all-night session whose sequel occurred later that same month when we typed them up during another all-night session.

As it turned out, Ric chose to publish his poems in a book financed by himself. For my help, I received a mention in the book’s dedication. Instead of publishing the book I wrote & published a review of *53 Poems* in *Cenacle* #13 June 1996:

These poems have been married and also homeless; they’ve hopped trains and carressed soft-skinned prostitutes; they’ve flung into winter oceans on a \$10 bet and watched empty skies as Father Amante died—and Mother Amante lived on. . . These poems have read Rumi and Rilke and Hart Crane, grooved to Barry White songs, eaten good pasta and drunk Frances and Italys and Portugals of wine, as well as plastic bottles of whiskey and Ballantine. . .



In 1997 I finally published an issue of *The Cenacle* wholly devoted to Ric’s work & in 1999 Scriptor Press published his second book of poetry *Ferry Tales & Other Poems*.

It took all fall & into December to complete *Cenacle* 14-15 Summer 1996 with Mark Shorete’s *Two Vahids* poetry sequence. My introduction reads in part:

The
Cenacle
no. 14-15 summer 1996
special double issue



Two Wahids

What distinguishes this collection is the ungarmented soul's obsessive gestures of renunciation, gropes toward transfiguration, and wonderment over the "faint lines on the surface and the traces of light—" in "a time imperceptible."

Two Wahids is divided into two sections: "Zaman," or time, & "Azal," or eternity. Esoterically decorated with Tarot card symbols & alchemical cryptograms, the poems follow a metaphysical path through the poet's heart & soul & arrive at home, just as the snippets of Route 20 pictured arrive in Boston from a transcontinental trek. "There are no accidents," Shorette says, & I'm inclined to heed his contention.

1996 was a crucial year for me to survive personally, & for me to choose to carry on *The Cenacle* despite circumstances. But I carried on & in 1997 the roses began to bloom.



To be continued in *Cenacle* / 48 / April 2003

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 Four
continued from
The Cenacle / 47 / December 2002

At the beginning of 1997 I was pretty disillusioned with *The Cenacle*, with my whole life really. It would prove to be a hell of a year, but pretty satisfying by its end. Huxley in "The Doors of Perception" urges people to become what in fact they are. I did this by leaving my job, by engaging with the psychedelic sacrament LSD, & by delving deeper into Art—sometimes supported by others, but often completely at odds with contemporary mainstream ideas.

By choosing to apply to MFA programs rather than Phd English programs I was for the first time in my 32 years putting my writing under the scrutiny of strangers, their credentials, their judgment. I received 6 rejection letters out of 7 applications. In the first *Cenacle* of 1997, #16-17 Winter 1997, I shared these rejection letters & presented them to the magazine's readers. Impersonal, indifferent letters, deserving an even worse fate frankly. On the next page I published a copy of Emerson College's acceptance letter (oddly, no less impersonal, & demanding money up front). I feel grateful to Emerson College for accepting me & yet . . . yet . . . I soundly damn the process. To receive such anonymous scrutinies of one's art, whatever the form, is iniquitous & antithetical to the completely good creating impulse native to existence.

But I knew this: I was moving in the right direction. I would go to Emerson College in September 1997 & figure it out from there (& I did :)).

On 1/4/97, I sent the following letter to *Cenacle* contributors, about 9 in all. It announced:



The Cenacle / 48 / April 2003

[T]here will be four issues a year which feature at most a quartet of contributors, the better to highlight the works of each. There will be additionally two double-issues, one devoted to collecting the works of many people . . . the other which puts one writer's work under the spotlight . . .

Already I was pressing the year for something good; this was about six weeks before Emerson College's acceptance letter. Come it did, shortly after the letter which I chose to open *Cenacle* 16-17. In this letter I expressed where I stood:

In the last few months I've sunk ever deeper into my soul, heading straight into, through, and past a certain estrangement I felt from my work. Truly, matters such as Cenacle, Jellicle Guild, MFA programs, the outside world and its varied opinions of my pen, no longer matter as much. I understand my obsessions better, my sins, my wounds. On good nights of work, everything falls away and I am lying on the surface of eternity, comprehending what I can of it.

Once I had the acceptance letter in hand, my confidence waxed. I pressed forth with *Cenacle* 16-17 & my new conception of it as outlined in the letter to the contributors. *Cenacle* 16-17 is an issue more devoted to continuity than breakthrough. It features over a dozen new poems by Ric Amante, the first in a series of autobiographical letters by Jim Burke III, & the usual large presence of my poetry and prose. One new feature which does appear is on the second side of the highlights tape, an interview I did with Ric Amante on 3/1/97 at his home in Everett, MA. A portion of our dialogue ran:

Soulard: *tell me about Godd . . .*

Amante: *well, of course this is something I cannot tell you about, you knew that . . .*

Soulard *(laughs)*

Amante: *any man who thinks he can tell you about Godd is lacking in humility because . . . there are no answers . . . and everybody tries to approach Godd . . . and that's a noble attempt, I do that myself . . . in my best, quietest moments, I try to approach Godd . . . but I realize that any efforts expended toward that are futile . . .*

Soulard: *yah*

Amante: *Godd is mystery, Godd is cosmos . . . Godd is the force that has brought us all here of which we have ultimately nothing to say . . . we can probe it as deeply as we want . . . philosophically, poetically, however . . . whatever tack you want to take, Godd is elusive . . . and that is how Godd should be . . . Godd is a quest,*

Godd is a journey . . . Godd is the force behind our actions that we think we're getting closer to, and we often do get closer to . . . whether it's through love or it's through poetry . . . or through whatever. . . there are all these breakthroughs in our mortal minds that we think we have that ultimately mean shit . . . because Godd is the force that suspends and uplifts us in our both weakest and strongest hours . . . and we'll never know what that means . . . and that's good, that's good . . . because Godd is a mystery. . . .Godd is a force that I always try to get close to in my poetry and my life . . . Godd is always one step ahead . . . Godd is always the force beneath the force . . .

Around this time, early spring of 1997, I was given the chance to try LSD. I can truly say that my life changed radically thereafter. Writing this 2 1/2 years & many subsequent psychedelic trips later, reviewing the facts of 1997, it is more obvious to me than ever that the night I first tripped was the night I crossed into a new kind of existence. *Cenacle* 16-17 makes no mention of this experience. From *Cenacle* 18 on, no issue would fail to mention it.

Among the more expressible reasons I tried acid was my years-long obsession with the 1960s— that decade's unbelievable wealth of music, idealism, & consciousness expansion. I was reading at the time many books trying to make sense of what had happened in the '60s. Aldous Huxley, Tom Wolfe, Norman Mailer, & Robert Heinlein testified in exciting ways about exciting things, about a hope for greater communion between persons, between humanity & nature, between any given individual & the cosmos. Secret joy amongst these times . . . What it came down to was: I had to know: I had to walk through the Door.

Walk through I did on 4/6/97 & the next morning I wrote the following poem, published in *Cenacle* 18, which concluded: "Art: the horn cleaved in your heart/ as you dangle in the reddening darkness." And on 4/15/97 I wrote in a letter to Jim Burke III (which also appeared in *Cenacle* 18):

Taking acid showed me that Art is illusion but, I have decided, I do not believe this. Acid is a path. Art is a path. Sex is a path. You see, Art has been and is my only hope. Not woman or religion or money or even friendship. Beyond all these is Art—beyond Art is silence and annihilation. I choose life—I choose Art.

It was a delightful time in my mind no matter that I was months from Emerson College. Even the cover of *Cenacle* 18, a quote from the SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) "Port Huron Statement," in the shape of a peace sign,



reflected where I was going. *The Cenacle* was growing because *I was growing*, & because I chose to take it with me, & because I was beginning to glean what purpose it was for: advocate for artistic & social & individual freedom, a vehicle for disseminating reports of various kinds from what Huxley called the “Antipodes” of consciousness.

Cenacle 18 also featured my poem “Ruby Virgin Subversives” which I felt was the best poem I’d ever written & in subtle ways anticipates the explorations I was bound for in 1997.

*new universe of segueing flesh
governed from strong want, busted out
each day disfigures me more happily
sing to me, a mirthful canker, sing*

*The Ruby Virgin is mine henceforth
twisting into knots my weaknesses and dreams
allowing my red madness when it comes
applying wet skin to my rotten seams.*

Others around me were changing too. Ric Amante, native of Massachusetts but sometime resident of many American cities, had decided to move to Seattle where he’d lived before, & take up again with a longtime love. He departed on June 14, 1997. Between then & his eventual return on October 7, 1999, we would see each other only twice, in 1998, once in Seattle, once in Boston. In that time, however, we did a great amount of collaborating.



When the fall came I was still working on *Cenacle* 19 June 1997, but determined to catch up the project by the end of the year. This plan succeeded; *Cenacle* 19 was finished in September; *Cenacle* 20-21 Summer 1997 was finished in October; *Cenacle* 22 October 1997 was finished in November; & *Cenacle* 23 December 1997 was finished in December 1997 & made its triumphant debut at the 12/27/97 Jellicle Guild meeting.

Cenacle 19 captures the fading traces of a magazine that will change more in the next few months than it had in its nearly 2 1/2 year existence. Jim Burke’s letter continues his ongoing discussion of the dangers of technology (though it also has some sage wisdom for my return to graduate school); Ric Amante’s poems are culled from those in *53 Poems* that had never been in *The Cenacle*.

Where the issue does look forward it does so tentatively or abstrusely, the first in my comments in “From Soulard’s Notebooks”:

A month after I leave [my job], classes at Emerson begin. I hope that goes well. I hope I luck into a situation, unlike the present one, where what I am is what they want.

the second in the kind of new, vaster, more metaphorically *turned-on* poetry I was writing:

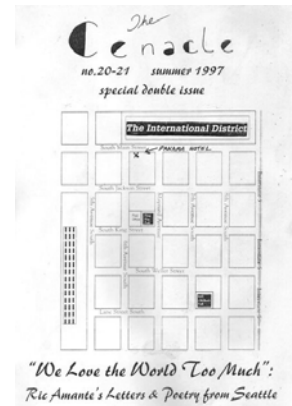
*I wanted immaculateness—
first bright corpse in this young desert
I wanted immolation—
ready to surrender colors; desire's newest loss.*

What was now set in motion would continue to accelerate, *continues* to accelerate.

Cenacle 20-21 Summer 1997 is entitled "We Love the World Too Much—Ric Amante's Letters & Poetry from Seattle." Its front cover lettering was composed in MS Word rather than hand-lettered, first time. I now had access to computers at Emerson College, & took advantage of this. The rest of the issue is typed & laid-out by hand, an aesthetic choice having to do with the decidedly non-technological spirit of the work. But I was now willing to experiment with what was available to me.

In 11 letters & 9 poems, it tells the story of a man reuniting with a sometime home of his, sometime lover of his, finding lodging, finding work, keeping his spirits up through Art, wine, love, & faith. Few persons I've known are capable of living Amante's sometimes itinerant, sometimes sedentary life. The final letter in the series, dated 9/21/97, finds him ensconced in the Panama Hotel, hungover but hopeful:

I'm feeling very peaceful tonight, Ray—peaceful, grateful, whimsical, fey . . . Maybe that hard cider scorched some old synapses or widened my ventricles . . .



This issue is decorated with various ephemera Ric often included with his letters as well as reproductions of portions of his actual letters. It was fun to make, satisfying to communicate Ric's West Coast adventures to his many far-flung friends, satisfying as well to successfully publish an issue featuring just his work.

Cenacle 22 October 1997 moved the retooling of the magazine along in many ways. Many of the pieces now contained section headers. Barbara Brannon's cover artwork of the New Orleans Preservation Hall previews her notebook of New Orleans drawings and impressions within. My essay "Be Now, Here: Swamped with Presence by the Work of Jorie Graham" is derived from a presentation I gave in a

poetry workshop at Emerson College. Many of my poems in this issue were discussed in this same class. My “Soulard’s Notebooks” prose responds at length to the timidity & distasteful conventionality I was being hit with in Emerson’s MFA program.

Somewhat satisfying, & certainly new for *The Cenacle*, was the appearance of R.S. Steinberg’s fiction “Particles.” Steinberg was a fellow MFA student & the first contributor not of my longtime circle to publish in the magazine. His odd story has the following genesis:

The idea for “Particles” came from a gallery talk I heard about Gerhard Richter, the German painter, who starts some of his work with a real image, like a snapshot, and then repaints it in stages by technically changing edges, textures, and so forth, until the result is quite different from what he started with. He calls himself an anti-abstractivist: the ‘anti’ means that the principle of abstraction is not some conscious aesthetic idea of his, but the automatic working of the technical transformations.

To make fiction that way I started with three banal images. I let the random number generator in my computer choose the sequence in which I would attend to each of them, and then allowed lugubrious imagination to generate detail.

It was a satisfying experience overall to edit & publish Steinberg’s work; & to debut the issue at the 11/22/97 Jellicle Guild meeting at Jacob Wirth’s Restaurant in Boston with him & other two other Emerson students in attendance.

One other feature began in *Cenacle* 22. “Notes on Contributors” contrived in part to give Steinberg’s explanation of his story a suitable place in the magazine & partly to fool with yet another piece of conventional periodical apparatus to see how well it worked in *The Cenacle*; it worked better the second time around, in *Cenacle* 23 December 1997, when I made the feature my own, telling the truth rather than simply the facts about my friends.

Cenacle 23, December 1997, the 18th issue in 32 months, was debuted at the 9th anniversary & 72nd meeting of the Jellicle Literary Guild. I was very pleased at how the year had gone & that I’d beaten the clock to get this issue out on time, a feat I hadn’t accomplished in over two years!

At 88 pages the issue was the longest one yet & contains many pieces of which I’m still proud. The table of contents’ claim of six issues a year is fulfilled, all the pieces have headers & nifty stylized font page numbers. My opening “Notes



from the Picasso Exhibition” benefits from illustrations & the fact that I saw the exhibition at Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts three times. Jim Burke concludes his series of autobiographical letters thus:

One cannot deny the influences of the past. When these influences are realized and accepted, the truth surfaces and boredom is avoided. I now see boredom as leading to uncontrolled action. The individual’s karma cannot identify truth and a circle develops, much like the drinking I alluded to earlier. We must accept where we are at present and deal with it on an individual basis; that is, our relationship to the cosmos.

Other pieces include Brannon’s “Chicago Sketchbook,” which continues our joint effort to get new work of hers into the magazine. My story “Love Her Madly (a new fixation),” part one of three, premieres. Ric Amante debuts ten new Seattle poems prefaced by a funny letter. The “Notes on Contributors” sound like they belong with the rest of the magazine: funny, loving, true. Plus there’s the back-of-book feature debut of *Cenacle* mini-posters “brought to you by Soulard & LSD.” This one is “It’s OK to Be Happy,” an acid revelation from 12/6/97. I also solved a problem I had with the art for the front & back covers by switching them so that the front’s pretty little holiday scene is complemented by the back’s cosmic “Stars belong to galaxies, and planets hug the sun, but comets travel all alone: a universe of one.” The *Cenacle* highlights tape side 2 features voices of the Emerson College students from 11/22/97 Jellicle Guild meeting though I must admit that I hadn’t found the brother I was looking for among Emerson’s ranks. But eventually I did. He was there all along in my poetry workshop. It just took a night of psychedelic bonding for the truth to manifest :) Joe Ciccone’s work would be vitally important to *The Cenacle* & Scriptor Press in 1998 & beyond.

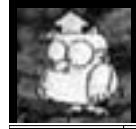
I was delighted with 1997 but I wanted so much more. I had begun my relationship with Emerson College, read poetry at their graduate student reading series, been awarded \$500 for *The Cenacle* from the Graduate Student Association (despite the fact that the GSA president lost the copies of the magazine I gave him & so never got to look at them!), made *The Cenacle* look more polished even as I was discovering how radical were portions of the message I wished to propound through it. Oh goodness! Did I want to go further!



[To be continued in *Cenacle* / 49 / October 2003]



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 Five

continued from
The Cenacle / 48 / April 2003

In 1998, *The Cenacle* reached a level of self-actualization far beyond its first three years. Each contributor shined, more than once. Looking back on this year, I am very happy.

There was no reason to continue the magazine except to push the limits of what it was about. With a tiny circulation, not made for sale, no advertising, *The Cenacle* is about artistic growth, about art, transcendence. Each of the year's six issues raises the bar. *Cenacle* 24-25 Winter 1998 features a color cover by Barbara Brannon & her rendition of Mark Shorette's excellent poem "Sophia's Sestina" as centerfold. *Cenacle* 26 April 1998 features a Seattle travel journal collaboration between Brannon, Ric Amante, & me, plus another centerfold, this time with art by Mark Shorette. *Cenacle* 27 June 1998 has Barbara Brannon's Orpheus cover, Rodin centerfold, "Golden Gate Notebook," plus my Orpheus poems & acid photography, and Jim Burke's record Ø (Null Set One) on the accompanying cassette. *Cenacle* 28-29 Summer 1998 features the poetry and prose of Joe Ciccone with illustrations by Barbara Brannon



plus a “psychedelic dialogue” between Ciccone and me on the cassette. *Cenacle* 30 October 1998 features Brannon’s Chicago travel journal &



“Psychedelic Dialogue #2.” Finally, *Cenacle* 31 December 1998 features an issue-length project involving my “Immutable Phalanx” letter & the variety of contributors’ replies.

What made *The Cenacle* successful this year was that I was eager to experiment with new ideas in every issue, move pieces around, stir up the dust so the magazine wouldn’t become sedimented. It became a challenge each issue to do something new, to keep long-running features fresh, & to decide which newer features from recent issues were worth pursuing.

All this conceptualizing came down, for the most part, to challenging my contributors to go further with their art. This was a year-long effort that concluded triumphantly with the massive 150-page-plus *Cenacle* 31 December 1999.

Ric Amante was now settled in a good home & job out in the Seattle area. He would board a ferry boat twice daily to travel across the Puget Sound to work. He delighted in many ways in this trip: the beauty of Mt. Rainier, the play of seagulls & seals near the boat, & the queerness of the many shifty or just strange individuals he’d meet while smoking a cigarette in the boat’s stern.

In *Cenacle* 24-25, however, there appeared a piece that he introduced rather than wrote. Ric had often told me of his long-passed friend Frank Arcuri’s amazing life, many talents, abilities, & visions. Ric’s introduction to Frank’s letter was pointedly insightful:

More than anyone else I’ve ever known, Frank Arcuri lived out his truth in a way that was so uninfluenced by and unconcerned with both temporal movements in the arts, morals, or consciousness in general and those timeless (yet often pompous) verities of being (be they of love, fear, acknowledgment of beauty, etc.,etc.), that to be with him was to enter a world of possibilities that would challenge and often alter your conception of reality. . .

Arcuri’s writing is funny & in reading it one can see where Ric’s prose style may have in part been influenced:

It rains, it rains, I love my hotel. It is dirt cheap (\$32 a week), and all filled with retired Chinese sailors. I have found a great job in a fish house on the dock. Tomorrow is my first day at

work. I bought rubber boots. I'll send a picture in my new sea drag.

Jim Burke's letters appeared in five of *The Cenacle's* six 1998 issues. He addresses his attention most often to two topics: the nature of time & reality, & the importance of psychedelic drugs. Regarding the first of these he writes:

We must slow things down to observe, and to confront ourselves. One of the most efficient ways to achieve this is through the use of psychedelic substances.

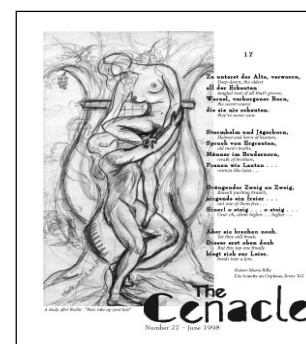
He continues, relating time to psychedelics:

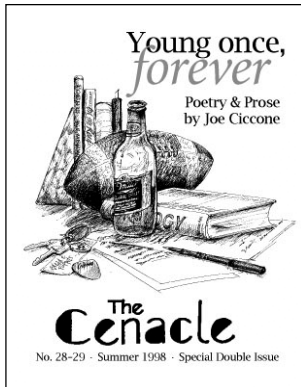
Time has no awareness of us, it does not function in the corporeal sense. But time has vibrations and those drugs alter our perception of them.

& in the following passage he states one of his main theses most directly:

To be aware of existence is precious. We exist in the moment and this is all we need to reconcile ourselves to inevitable change. The unconditional awareness of existence, and the resulting benefits to mankind, can probably be achieved only through the mass introduction of psychedelic substances in our culture. Our existence is so fleeting.

These letters were important to publish because they contain good writing & deep thought but also, frankly, they advocate artfully the sacredness & importance of psychedelic substances. Interest in LSD, mescaline, peyote, psilocybin mushrooms & the like has grown at century's turn to levels not reached since the late 1960s. Those, like Burke & myself, who contend that these substances are both powerful & good nonetheless still stand in opposition to the government & much of society. Only by presenting our case coherently & forcefully & consistently may we get more people to listen & consider our views. We know that America since the 1960s has been a turned-on country, especially in its cultural aspects; seeking to convince people of this, show them the obvious—for example, how utterly common & influential is the use of LSD & mushrooms among writers, musicians, filmmakers, artists, & actors—is an effort that is being made in the trenches of American society every day. Timothy Leary wrote in 1989 that “the influence of psychedelic drugs on art, music, literature, fashion, language, electronic graphics, film, television commercials, holistic medicine, ecological





awareness, & New-Age psychology has been so pervasive has to be invisible.”¹ Further, battling the government’s vial propaganda that dangerously, foolishly, & falsely links sacred substances such as the various psychedelics, marijuana, & MDMA (Ecstasy) with totally destructive drugs like heroin & cocaine is a vital activity. Burke’s letters argue that turned-on art is good art, that psychedelically awake individuals are among the most perceptive & conscientious persons in human society. Burke’s letters praise

psychedelics for their help in his more deeply understanding himself, his fellow men & women, loving nature, & pursuing his music relentlessly whatever obstacles life may present.

Cenacle 27’s cassette featured Burke’s *Ø1* (Null Set One).

Containing songs composed by CSNY, Neil Young, The Beatles, The Who, Pete Townshend, & Burke himself, he used his recently purchased 4-track tape recorder to produce a more ambitious musical project that any he’d done is his 45 years.

Joe Ciccone was the young fellow I’d met at Emerson College in the fall of 1997. His poetry & prose appears in five of six 1998 *Cenacles* including the Summer 1998 issue “Young Once, Forever: Poetry & Prose by Joe Ciccone.” Just 23 years old, but enormously talented, Ciccone’s poems have a fresh, vital sensibility while also reflecting his deep reading into Rimbaud, Rilke, Merwin, & Ginsberg. In *Cenacle 28-29* I worked with him to fashion a book that would capture his talent & vision in their first bright burning. Illustrated by Barbara Brannon, the book contains 25 poems of wildly various lengths (ranging from 9 lines to 18 pages), plus Ciccone’s travel journal, “Further and Further into the Infinity of My Own Mad Circle: Fragments from a Western Journal, 1998,” which concludes:

*and I was tired and I was going home now and what is home
but a broad corner of everywhere and a bridge where traffic
is picking up now faraway and there’s a streetcleaner and no
one is there and I am there and I think of my family asleep in
new jersey and my friends in every last crevice of america
and ray is asleep now in malden and pat is getting ready to
go to work and i’m flying now and i’m somewhere over iowa
and I know that below me jack and the children are still crying
and we will find the pearl and i’m on the ground now and i’m*

¹ Timothy Leary, *Chaos & Cyber Culture*, Berkeley, CA: Ronin Publishing Company, 1994, p. 68.

somewhere in massachusetts and all of a sudden there is movement in all directions and now I am no longer travelling but frozen in a taxicab sharing a ride with a college girl going back into her dream that will die too and I look over and i'm so tired now and she's doing a crossword puzzle, in ink.

& I think that this passage as much as any of the poems captures a young poet/visionary ascending.

Barbara Brannon created all six of the 1998 covers & inspired me to spend much more time with proofreading, layout, & design. As important, her contributions to the contents themselves were vital & good. Of especial note were her color cover & color illustrations of Shorette's "Sophia's Sestina" for *Cenacle* 24-25; her "Golden Gate Notebook" for *Cenacle* 27, a series of photos, drawings, & prose recounting a trip to San Francisco created with Photoshop & QuarkXpress; & her cover & illustrations in *Cenacle* 31 of my "Orpheus & Eurydice: Making the Lyre" series of poems. Barbara's artistry & knowledge helped *The Cenacle* come into its own.

Gerry Dillon has previously contributed an occasional poem or short piece but the fictions he published in *Cenacles* 24-25 & 31 were of a higher order. "Psiren" & its sequel tell the story of a robot "galli-slave" & his companion, Patti, a woman with psionic powers, and of their adventures in a murky, malevolent future Boston:

To survive in the Open Cities one must belong to a sect, a maquiladora, or a clan. I belong to myself; I'm atomic, a modern, human lone wolf.

As of this writing, I am awaiting the third installment of Dillon's science fiction saga.

Ralph H. Emerson, too, had contributed pieces to *The Cenacle*; his most successful contribution to date turned out to be a piece he'd written back in 1982 when he was 17, called "My Return to the Stage." A funny, bittersweet memoir that is engaging from its opening:

Autumn of 1982, my senior year of high school. During the past six or so months I became interested in Germany of the 1930s, which is excusable since we are separated from it by half a century. I also became slightly interested in Kim Seravona in my English class, probably in part because she was on that trip that my class took to see Evita in November.

The story has a coda, too, written in 1998, that nicely closes the story.

The musical was a success for me too. I was wanted at last, and the praise and affection from the rest

of the cast that winter finally redeemed my lonely adolescence. Reading my story now, I see how fragile was the thread of circumstances that led me in: only Kim's vivaciousness beckoned me on here, only Frank's generosity nudged me there, only this, only that, a trail of chance meetings and unprecedented whims that lasted until my name was safely on the cast list only hours before vacations began. I must have sensed the miraculousness of this even then, and this account that I wrote a week later must have been nothing less than a prayer of thanks. Slender was the thread, but it held. May the threads that lead you to your joys, my readers, hold as well.

Mark Shorette's work in the '98 *Cenacles* well complemented some of his earliest contributions. His "Sophia's Sestina" so impressed me that I decided to ask Barbara Brannon to create a full color design for it, the first such piece in the magazine.

*In the light muted blue by ancient glass
light taking on strength as the sky is dyed salmon
as the air is embalmed with the scent of roasted pumpkin
Sophia's memorials endure across the landscape—
slowly disappearing, yet renewed by their own passing
for she only endures in her own mortality*

It was a successful experiment, and would lead to more such forays into full-color work within the magazine's pages as well as on its covers.

In *Cenacle* 26, Mark & I went further, publishing four of his poems, his metaphorically elaborate review of the film *Ma Vie En Rose*, & his sketch of a female nude based upon a photo in *Playboy* magazine. These three pieces constituted a cluster centerfold, all related to a central carnal mysticism which Shorette embraces:

*I have come to believe that dualism separates the "world"
from spirit, body from soul, and regards the former as an evil
to be resisted: this may be the most pernicious theological
concept ever developed. God is in the masculine, the
feminine, the body, the blood, the soul, the ether. We don't
need to seek the Tao, or God's will, whatever we wish to call
it. It is already quite within us.*

An editor succeeds best when he has brought out as much variety & depth from his writer/artist as possible. Publishing his fiction, poetry, film

reviews, prose, & artwork was the result of a successful collaboration of editor & artist, friend & friend, open to anything and everything that Art has to offer.

1998 was a great year for *The Cenacle* because it was a great year for me. Because it was a great year for me, it was a great year for my writing. It was a great year for my writing because my life increasingly lacked the extraneous. I discovered, in fact, that I could no longer handle the extraneous— & labored mightily to expel it.

From January to April I worked as an editorial assistant on the *Boston Review*, a bi-monthly Cambridge political & cultural journal. I was given the task of developing their website, & learned HTML coding along the way. I was also taking a class in QuarkXpress at Emerson College during this time. In April I changed my degree program from the disappointing diaper-changing MFA to the Master's of Arts in Writing & Publishing. Also in April, building on what I'd been learning, I laid out



much of *Cenacle* 26 April 1998 (3rd anniversary issue) in Quark, & founded *The ElectroLounge* website (www.geocities.com/scriptorpress), an exciting entity I am still learning how to exploit. In March I visited Ric Amante in Seattle, my first West Coast trip since 1995, & together we ventured into the poetry scene out there; in May I went down to Georgia to visit Barbara Brannon & we checked out poetry nights in South Carolina & Georgia, & organized a poetry night in Macon, Georgia. I read voraciously especially the inspiring essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson. I continued to refigure and renew my consciousness & deepen my perceptions with LSD. Art, publishing, LSD, technology, focus. . . my life was simplifying, integrating, transcending. In the opening of *Cenacle* 24-25 I wrote:

I'm pushing toward a greater awareness, toward writing better than ever before, grounded more deeply in enacting one simple belief: Tell the Truth. Whether prose or poetry or fiction, or editing The Cenacle, or whatever, Tell the Truth.

Aside from continuing to publish my *Cement Park* & Nat Perfect stories in that issue, I began a new feature called "Notes from New England":

This series is intended as a gathering-place for observations of various lengths upon the world around me. It will be culled, like much of my writing, from my notebooks, and perhaps these thoughts will be expanded upon sometimes as well.

This has become a very important element of *The Cenacle* for in it I am able to assess the period of time between issues & include work I wouldn't otherwise have a place for. In *Cenacle* 26 I prefaced work in "Notes from New England" written under the influence of LSD thus:

The following account was written under the influence of LSD. It is the first extensive piece of writing I have ever done while tripping, and adds to what I maintain is the rather small number of contemporary psychedelic writings available. Acid does not at all lead one into writing whilst experiencing it—to making music, making love, flirting with the cosmos or reliving one's own birth, certainly, but beyond poetry, there are few well-known and available accounts of long prose pieces written while tripping— tho many will write about the experience afterward— Aldous Huxley, Tom Wolfe, Robert Heinlein, Ken Kesey, John Lilly are just a few of these persons.

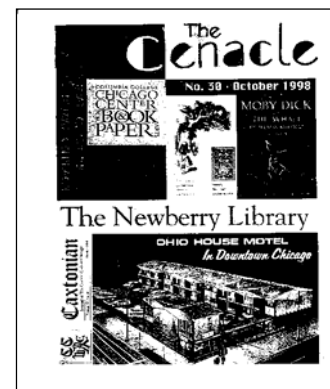
This led in *Cenacle* 27 June 1997 to a lengthy acid poem in "Notes," written on the first day of spring, my first poetic effort written while tripping, concluding:

*the empty table, its importance
as I sit here hard acid-tripping
first day of spring, snowfall,
all is perfect, beautiful*

("the music's an open door. . . "

In *Cenacle* 30 October 1998 "Notes from New England" was 36 pages long, & was mostly devoted to accounting for the extreme depression I suffered through in the summer of 1998 & the miraculous experience I had up in Vermont that kept me from dire actions:

I remember thinking, at the lowest point, that my life felt like a movement through a series of rooms each of which I dwelled in for a time & thence to the next room. . . but at the selfsame moment I experienced myself to be in my "final room," from which I could not retreat nor was there a door available to pass on from it. . . there is no final room. That's not how the universe operates. That's the fear and remorse of darkened parts of one's



psyche taking over, the cosmic fatalist in each of us. You always have a choice.

Finally, in *Cenacle* 31 December 1998 I discussed plans for 1999 including “*Cenacle* ‘chapbooks,’ little books of writing/art by various individuals to be distributed widely including at various bookstores— each of us will eventually have at least one.” These plans I carried out.

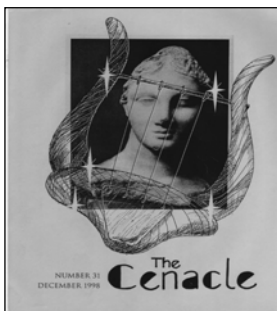
I finally began writing poetry I am proud enough to still discuss. In *Cenacle* 27 I published “Resurrection, Now,” a poem that I believe reports comprehensibly from within the psychedelic experience, something that is often said cannot be done. In *Cenacle* 31 appeared my “Orpheus & Eurydice: Making the Lyre” sequence, designed & illustrated by Barbara Brannon. It is a series of poetic variations based on the Orpheus & Eurydice myth, with hints of the Eleusian Mysteries, written from the depths of my depression that summer: looking down into the maw, looking up at the stars, deciding. . . deciding. . .

Cenacle 31 was a consummation of the expanding ambitiousness of *The Cenacle*. Throughout the year I published “Immutable Phalanx” letters, usually addressed to about a half-dozen of my friends. For this issue, I asked my many contributors of the year each to respond to the letter as well as including a separate piece to illustrate their several points. I wrote, in part:

I don't believe Art is for the keeping. I don't believe Art is for the selling. I don't believe Art is any more vulnerable than its maker. I don't believe that Persons doing Art should be fearful. I don't believe that Art has a cap or a floor. I don't believe that any of us are making enough Art or permeating enough of our lives with Art.

The responses were various as the individuals involved:

Joe Ciccone wrote: “There is a world to possess within our hearts and render in an artistic form, so I don’t buy the notions of writer’s block. Go out and look at a tree. If you can’t write, draw. If you can’t draw, dance. Render! Render! Render! (in any way). If you’ve done it before, do it again.



. . . and better!” Gerry Dillon wrote: “Humans need to go beyond the mundane, to strive, to improve themselves and their lives.” Barbara Brannon wrote: “I was the apple of my parents’ eyes, the hope of all that any happiness was possible. I sensed, from the earliest consciousness of the world that I can remember, that art was my calling.” Ric Amante wrote: “To be able, willing, and desirous to chronicle one’s real and

imaginary life, and to do so with reverence to an aesthetic and bereft force, bereft because shorn of anything unnecessary to true unity— the blazing, apocalyptic merging and defenestrations of the wilting ego as it flies on up to the fullness of God. . . . Perhaps this is art. . . .” Jim Burke wrote: “Of course art is not for the keeping or more vulnerable than its maker. We can never make enough art or ‘permeate’ enough of our lives with it.” Mark Shorette wrote:

But beauty— then as now— remained.

Beauty.

crowd.

me.

till.

I.

die.

Finally, Ralph Emerson wrote: “The last [Immutable] Phalanx letter was splendid. I assent to almost all of it, and I’m proud of you. I see exalted sentiments powerfully expressed. But pray do not get too much further into mysticism just yet or I will not be able to follow you.”

At 152 pages, *Cenacle* 31 is a triumph for Art, for friendship, for faith in the miraculous & mysterious in life, for the potency of gathering creating souls in person, on the page, on the Internet, working one & all toward re-invigoration of the world.



To be continued in *Cenacle* / 50 / December 2003

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 Six

continued from
The Cenacle / 49 / October 2003

[Note: I finished the Emerson College (Boston, Massachusetts, USA) thesis version of this history writing about a year still going, 1999, writing as close to the present moment as thesis guidelines & deadlines allowed. Ideas expressed hereon, events described, were ongoing, part of this moment's equation, the heat of its now. The revised ending of this chapter, as well as future chapters, will continue the story.]

Driving around Burlington, Vermont with Barbara Brannon on 12/31/98, & I'm tripping, just come earlier that day from a shitty temp job in Cambridge, MA that I will end up quitting in about two weeks. Still, it was during free moments at that job that I got onto the Internet & communicated with many about the Burning Man 1999 Arts Fest—& I used the extensive facilities at that workplace to help me type up a paper for a class in American literary publishing, & to help me produce *Cenacle* 31 December 1998. Shitty temp job: We used each other well, & up.

I started talking to Barbara about a new idea I have, & a new concept: “horizontal hierarchy.” Nearing the other end of 1999, I am still working out what this idea means, but here's what I have so far: the traditional American pyramid hierarchical system turned on its ear. Traditionally, power is at the top in the hands of a few; further down, less power in more people's hands; at the bottom, the workers, the greatest numbers, least amount of power.

So it presently works: power, influence, money. Centers of authority: New York, high culture (stage, museums, publishing); Los Angeles, entertainment (TV & movies & music); Boston/Cambridge, academic (Harvard, MIT); Pacific Northwest, technological (Microsoft,

Silicon Valley); Washington, D.C., political, legislative. & so on. Network TV. *Billboard* popcharts. Multiplex cinemas. Microsoft. McDonald's. Malls. CNN. MTV. HBO. Super Bowl. *USA Today*. President Clinton. President Next. Time-Warner.

We are given to believe that these authorities are right to tell us how things are & are to be. They are right because they are big. They are big because they are right. They grow bigger every day. Mergers. Takeovers. Bigger ad campaigns. They tend nearer & nearer each other all the time. Fast food chains with websites. Ice cream makers with a line of jeans. "Y2K: The Movie" coming in November on NBC-TV (I'm not kidding about this last one!).

I am an actor I must go to Los Angeles.

I am a writer I must go to New York.

I am a rap singer I must get on MTV.

OK?

True?

Yes?

Right? Necessary? Truth? Final & forever truth? What about the Internet? What about MP3 technology? What about independent film festivals? What about a man hawking his hand-made books of poems to passers-by on the Boston Common?

What about Burning Man?

(What about it, Soulard?)

Horizontal hierarchy posits that there is no authentic center of culture, politics, authority, truth, reality. Just as there is no center of the universe, there is no place on this planet with a privileged say over any topic or activity.

Godd doesn't live in Jerusalem.

Europe doesn't own culture.

Asia has no exclusive claim to wisdom.

America possesses only temporal power, neither eternal nor infinite.

Horizontal hierarchy posits the metaphor of existence as limitless ocean, limitless in depth & breadth, beneath limitless sky, infinite universe beyond. Islands in the ocean, under the ocean, in the sky, in the universe, all floating toward or away from each other at all times, islands clumping together, then scattering, wisdom & truth & the tendency toward sacred Art everywhere the binding, beautiful tendency, all is connected, all is good, no final obstacle, no last room, none but passing authority for Beauty & Truth are free & untamed & cannot be kept. Secret joy amongst *all* times. . .

Thou art Godd. I am Godd. All that exists is Godd. All is connected. The many are the one is the many on & on like this. Scriptor Press in 1999 now serves these ideas. Here's how . . .

In January 1999 I began attending the weekly "Psychedelic Cafe" open-mic nights at the Zeitgeist Gallery in Cambridge, MA. Live

poetry, music, performance art, strange films & slides projected on the wall, acid, booze & weed . . . an event nearer to the freewheeling Jellicle Guild than any other I'd been to in Cambridge. I signed up there to be a DJ at their radio station, Radio Free Cambridge, 106.1 FM & on 1/30/99 began hosting a show I call "The Within's Within:



Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution with Soulard" on Saturdays noon-2. This show features psychedelic music new & old by the likes of Phish, Grateful Dead, Beatles, Pink Floyd, Yes, & the younger "jambands" like Moe., Uncle Sammy, and Percy Hill; readings from psychedelic literature by the likes of Aldous Huxley, Alan Watts, Albert Hofmann, & Timothy Leary; new poetry, prose, & music performed by longtime friends such as Jim Burke III, Joe Ciccone, Barbara Brannon, & Ric Amante; & news about relevant current events such as Burning Man & efforts as legalization of marijuana, LSD & similar psychoactive substances. I often trip when doing this show; I often rant about the beauty & perfection of every day in the universe; I put on as good a show as I know how for whoever is within WRFC's 100-watt range. In August & September, when I was on the road to Burning Man in Nevada, I sent back reports of travelling to & from the event & what happened at it as well.

In February 1999 I went down to New York City to the Wetlands Preserve nightclub to see Percy Hill, Uncle Sammy, Miracle Orchestra, & Mishap all perform. Jambands one & all with growing followings but little commercial airplay because their songs are long & complex & defy commercial format definitions. But flourishing nonetheless & often coming together during summertime for huge Woodstock '69-style festivals that attract audiences often over 100,000. Not a single hit among them.

In March 1999 I applied for the BookBuilders of Boston scholarship. My essay read in part:

I believe that men and women who elect to make a career of publishing are directly participating in creating the future of humankind. Creating the future meaning inventing it, showing the billions who inhabit this planet what good things the future offers as well as the possible consequences of our sometime tendencies toward greed, prejudice, selfishness, and undirected fear. The decisions we who discover our need to participate in publishing will not allow itself to go unheeded make every day affect every individual we will ever know and every individual we will never know.

I didn't receive any money; it went to an individual whose interests were more exclusively in book publishing. While I wish that person good luck, I foresee that the coming world will be much more about pursuing many different forms of communication as horizontal hierarchy replaces vertical.

Also in March 1999 *Cenacle* 32-33 Winter 1999 appeared, featuring a new contributor, longtime friend John Barton, his notes on the Millennium, a prose piece that gestated from a series of emails he & I exchanged about that topic. He writes:

It is not a coincidence that civilization goes through fin-de-siècle madness times time every thousand years. Human beings are responsible for all these great changes and syntheses coalescing as the Millennium arrives. Human beings devised the calendar designating which year will be the "Millennium." It is entirely manmade, like our gods. It is not the will of Revelations or the Qabbalah, nor that of the Koran nor the Bhagavad-Gita, that things of import come to pass every thousand years. It is the will of the men who wrote those works, holy though they may be, and the men who every thousand years still believe in them.



Two of my contributions were lengthy poems of recent vintage. "Millennial Artist's Survival Guide" from 11/98 which opens:

*There is a secret joy amongst these
times, a within's within, a known
and speckled spectral thing, an exploding
blare & swoop from between our dreams,
a series of coded midnight shadows,
glyphs taut with our best laughter, all cosmos,
we are all cosmos, without & within.
We are all cosmos. We are careening.
We need to begin now, trade into ecstasy,
we are beginning now. Always beginning now.*

& "Beauty, Afflictus" from 2/99 which opens:

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

twining spasms of remembrance, chilling glints of smiling mystery, out of mutual depth, have we yet begun, Beauty, refracted, defined, slept into, seduced sacredly, seduced musically, Beauty, obscura, today is never going to end, courtyard of twisting breezes, out of mutual depth, love is a mean, chanting, obsessed motherfucker & you are his favorite song.

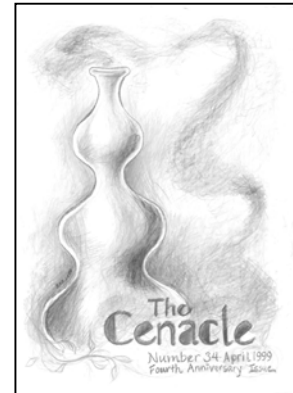
I was happy with this new poetry for it honored the lessons I'd learned from Rilke & Dickinson & Rumi while communicating my deeply-cherished beliefs about life, Art, & joy.

Among Joe Ciccone's contributions was a wild prose-poem "Almost a Thumbnail Sketch of What Seems Like the Part of the Story that Always Seems Somehow to be Absent, or, A Veiled Recounting of a Moment of Clarity" with its lead guitar howlings:

And the we grew tired but nonetheless we kept up, somewhat more slowly now, but we kept up, such that all I could do was bang the strings like a drum, and Dave's voice grew thin, and Paul's harp blew down to a murmur, and we were no longer running madly but dancing thinly until we were slowly walking and the sounds became a memory as the moon pulled up and we looked up to see how it had so strangely stopped itself in the sky in mid-swing, and we all sat down, exhausted, and became, at last, human.

In April 1999 appeared *Cenacle* 34 4th anniversary issue with another color cover by Barbara Brannon, this one tied to my poem "Phantom Limbs (After Rumi)" which Barbara also rendered in color. It's a long poem based on 3 short poems by the Persian master. Rumi is, in fact, one of the greatest poets ever & deserves far more renown in the west than he has thus far received.

Cenacle 34 also featured "Illogic, Signs, and Aesthetic Relevancies Reconsidered" by Joe Ciccone, his first contribution of fiction:

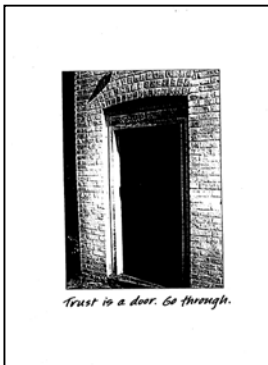


I open the door and she's laying in bed, as I expect, with her head stretched out over the record player, listening to the Everly Brothers sing "All I have to do is dream-ee-ee-ee-eam." When she hears me come in she raises her finger from the sheets and points toward the ceiling, signaling me to be quiet. Always it seems to be like this when I come home; sense appears to hold no authority. I rest my keys gently on the table and watch her. It's like she staring straight through her ears, expecting some coded transmission that only she can decipher to come at any moment from out of the scratchy recording,

disclosing to her the secrets of the universe. I do find some comfort merely in the regularity of this image, although at the expense, I guess, of its reality. It feels sometimes like it's just another picture on the wall.

It's a very clever story but so well-written that its cleverness does not destroy it.

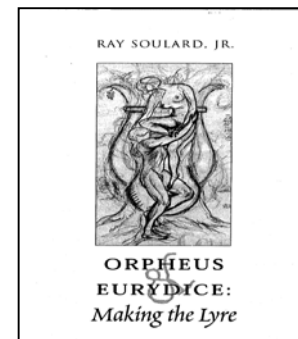
Also in this issue appeared "Photo Studies by Mio Cohen," a friend I'd made recently & with whom I'd travel to Burning Man in August. Her work returned creative photography to the pages of *The Cenacle* & in *Cenacle* 35 June 1999 more of her work appeared. She



likes to take pictures that work with the lines, shapes, & angles of natural scenes, especially forests & rocky shorelines.

In May 1999 Scriptor Press produced more projects in addition to *The Cenacle*, Jellicle Guild, "Within's Within," & *ElectroLounge*. My Orpheus poems were made by Barbara Brannon into a 34-page chapbook, *Orpheus & Eurydice: Making the Lyre*, to be distributed to longtime *Cenacle* contributors and beyond as RaiBook Number One. Also that month *Scriptor Press Sampler* 1999 #1 appeared, culling in a 24-page chapbook writing & art from recent *Cenacles* by Soulard, Ciccone, Burke, Shorette, Brannon, & Amante.

These new projects were intended to spread the work of myself & my colleagues much farther than before but *on our terms*. These items are not for sale nor have they been judged by the New York publishing power center nor do they depend on New York for their production or distribution. Art by the people for the people. Such is the growing trend in the world today. Not all are non-profit but more & more the advances in technology & consciousness have worked together to offer alternatives to Time-Warner & its kind. Of course not every independently produced book, record, or film is of superlative merit, no more than are commercial issues. The point here is that individuals with unconventional visions and often disdain for the machine-indifferent qualities of commercial media now have other options, viable ones, alternative ways for communicating their visions.



In June 1999 appeared *Cenacle* 35. In my "Soulard's Notebooks" I write:

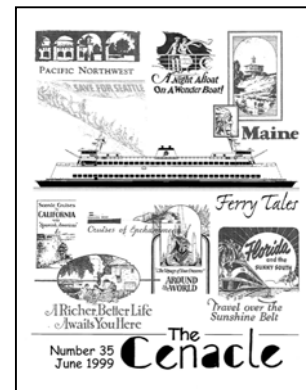
Begin crazy grin, guitars twisting into electric wind, something they'd like to say with naked notes, licking her arm calmly, out of money, jumping behind the bar to draw a free mug, no headlights & midnight & 100 mph & wrong side of the road, mixing E with K with G just to see what'll happen this time, the

*risk of not risking, until you've tried it all & do it all & be it all
you haven't, & time passes, & you probably won't, & time is up
& you didn't, most of us on a deathbed only once, yet most of
us live like our lawless carnal hedonist mad dreams didn't
exist, most of us behave without prompting, cower while not
compelled, will settle for whatever pathetic little we are given,
adjust our internal mathematics lower & lower, our breeze a
hurricane, our Malden an Emerald City, our deepest desires TV
dinner on the couch—*

On the credits page is now included mention of all other Scriptor Press projects: Electrolounge, RaiBooks, *Scriptor Press Sampler*, "Within's Within," & of course the Jellicle Guild.

The many Seattle poems Ric Amante has been writing he culled & reworked & Barbara illustrated them & the resulting piece was called "Ferry Tales." A piece of artwork by a person named Harold Cunniff appeared. He'd seen *SPS* 1999 #1 at one of its distribution points in Boston & submitted to it not ever having seen *The Cenacle*! Mark Shorette's story "Wherefore" marked his first fiction in *The Cenacle* since 1995:

*Incantation of the eyes.
Behold, behold, the shining retinas which merge dualities
into singleness
singleness which transcends the two from
which it was
whelped
for singleness is the birth of the hound of
heaven
behold in shining sleekness as she courses
about the
perimeter of time
young eyes behold always
old eyes behold, as death approaches
between, the gaze is broken, but by a few,
selected, chosen
by the handsome courser as she goes along, chasing the
deceitful prey.*



How glorious in pursuit is she!

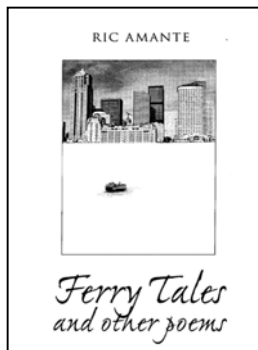
Ciccone's contribution is a 4-page poem called "Merwin" dedicated to his poetic mentor:

*But for today, unmet friend,
all there is through the lens of this window are the same
stone towers, the highway with its tumbling whir
unending, beside the tracks that give way at times to the
windless train bearing off its dead, the puff of birds with their*

dusty feathers, the clouds with their nightmares locked inside them, and beyond them all, the sun, shining bright as ever, and me with all these pompous claims to which I shall hold fast, setting off alone the

other way, grateful to you more than many, though alone as ever, with only the waves of your ocean, whose echoes are themselves, keeping me deliberate company, lapping up equally in each direction, quiet, quiet, quiet, quiet;

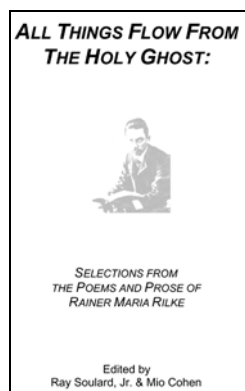
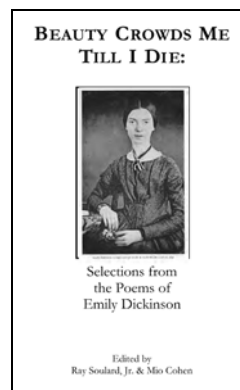
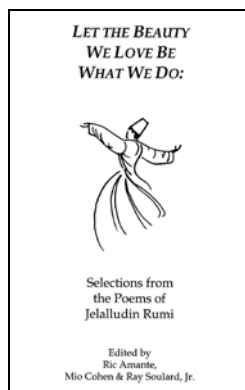
It would be several months before the next *Cenacle* but I had a lot of other work ahead of me.



In August 1999 I devoted my full time to Scriptor Press's newest project: Burning Man Books. Working with Mio Cohen, I produced 5 titles intended for the Burning Man Arts Festival 1999 Aug 30-Sep 6 to be distributed there at our No Borders Barter Bookstore & More—in addition to SPS 1999 #1, *Orpheus*, & the newly-published RaiBook Number Two, *Ferry Tales & Other Poems*, brought into being by Barbara Brannon & myself.

Burning Man Books inaugurated a “special projects division” of Scriptor Press. Its titles included: *Let the Beauty We Love Be What We Do: Selections from Poems of Jelalludin Rumi*; *Are You Ready for Burning Man 1999?—a coloring book*; *Beauty Crowds Me Till I Die: Selections from the Poems of Emily Dickinson*; *All Things Flow From The Holy Ghost: Selections from the Poems and Prose of Rainer Maria Rilke*; & *Strawberry Fields Forever: A Short Anthology of Writings about Psychedelics*. These books (save for the coloring book, which was for fun) contain vital art that is not often enough gotten into the hands of people who simply cannot afford to buy volumes of them in bookstores. The point of disseminating art has nothing to do with commercial gain; artists wish to share their visions, their struggles, their joys, the ways they've found to make it in this world. Art brings edification & entertainment to a world full of people in great need of these. No profit has been or even will be sought from these titles. A higher moral purpose is at stake: to make people happy, encourage them to keep trying, show them they are not alone with their struggles & woes, & that art is there is heal, and that there are people who want to make sure its healing powers are spread as far & as wide as possible.

We arrived at the festival & spent several days with many others helping our friend Chuck Nichols erect his Temple of the Eternal Mysteries (TOTEM). On 9/3/99 & 9/4/99 we set up our bookstore near the temple & bartered our books for seashells, necklaces, firedances, stories, smiles. It was *fantastic*. I also wrote poems for people on request because I think it's a shame so few people have had poems written for them. Every person should have at least one :)

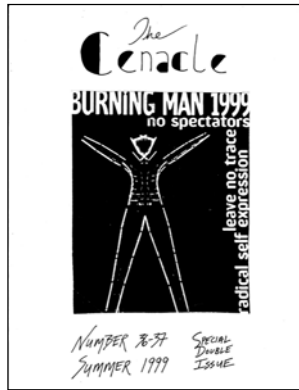


In September 1999, back from Burning Man, there was a Jellicle Guild meeting at Mark Shorette's home in Plainville, CT—not Roma Restaurant because its new owner had closed it for renovations. At that meeting Ric Amante's book was debuted.

Finally, in October of 1999, *Cenacle* 36-37 Summer 1999, an issue devoted to the sights, sounds, & words of Burning Man was produced.

This is the fifth in an annual series of summer issues of The Cenacle. Instead of devoting this installment's pages to a single author, this year the focus is an event: The Burning Man Arts Festival, which took place August 30-September 6, 1999 in Black Rock Desert, Nevada. That is to say, Black Rock City, Nevada, for Burning Man is an event and a place. And a state of mind. And a mystery. And a miracle. And so on.

It was debuted on 10/23/99 at the Jellicle Literary Guild meeting held at Curious Liquids Cafe in Boston, where I'm happy to report there were more people in attendance than in a long time: Amante, Burke, Brannon, Cohen, Dillon, Shorette, & Souland—and onlookers attracted by the poetry & music being performed joined in as audience & participants. I also received a Power Macintosh from Barbara Brannon as a gift, & have decked it out with laser writer, CD burner,



scanner, QuarkXPress, Photoshop, & whatever else I need to maintain control over *The Cenacle's* means of production in the future.

There is no real conclusion to this story, as it is ongoing. During the composition of this thesis, roughly late September to late November 1999, I was also working on *Cenacle* 36-37 Summer 1999, and *Cenacle* 38 October 1999, and planning for the third RaiBook, the poetry and prose of Joe Ciccone. I added a chat room, bulletin board, & guest book to *The ElectroLounge*, too. The work does not end and, nearly five years into this project, the realization of Scriptor Press's potential has hardly begun.

[Hereon the tale continues from the perspective of several years' distance]:

In some sense, my thesis itself became the next Scriptor Press project, for it consumed me until its acceptance and publication by Emerson College—as much as the December 1999 *Cenacle* would have, had it been made. I am of the opinion that my advisors, including Writing and Publishing program director Dr. Douglas Clayton, for the most part let me do what I was determined to do: promote a kind of countercultural platform by way of telling my press's history. So was my intent, and so it went. My thesis, this history's original version, now resides between hard covers up in Boston. I have not seen it to this day.

Thesis accepted, I was done with my second master's degree and decided to celebrate by going down to the Everglades in Florida on Millennial weekend to attend a rock festival hosted by Phish. I arranged via the Internet and email for some people to travel with, four persons in their late teens and early twenties. Passing through New York City and into New Jersey we all got into the black van that was our transport. It felt very tribal, huddled close, driving fast, puffing grass, blasting music. Getting more and more excited the closer we got. The northeast cold was left behind for the odd warmth of Fort Lauderdale and thereabouts.

No money for a hotel, we simply drove around, dodging cops, sitting on the beach, joining in the tavern celebrations of other fest goers. It seems like a dream now. Yet the details return to me: touching warm ocean water in December; huddling in our van in some obscure driveway to sleep a little while; the long drive down a straight narrow road to Big Cypress, where Seminole Native Americans welcomed about 100,000 of us and did not question our social choices as the would-be empire behind us did daily.

My experiences at Burning Man led me to want to try the bookstore idea at BC as well. Jambands like Phish are well known for having a very active homegrown commerce scene in the parking lots of the venues at which they play. The grid-like, Black Rock City-like

layout of tents and RVs at BC, complete even with a colorful map given out upon arrival, as well as the aforementioned tolerance of our hosts, led to the festival-wide sale/trade/barter of many kinds of things. Handmade wares including jewelry and clothing, all sorts of food, and a lovely array of entheogenic products.

So I set up a blanket along a main walkway, and laid out the same titles I'd brought to Burning Man many months before and thousands of miles away. What I had to reckon with was that unlike in Black Rock City, where everyone shared what they had and gave their art away freely, the long-haired denizens of Phish tour are very much commerce-minded. So I devised a scheme involving a little sign which read "Books for a dollar. Free if you read aloud from one."

This scheme seemed to work. Some people chose to transact cash for books, but others cleared their throats and read out proudly. I remember this experience and my first time at Burning Man as very powerful times of learning about how many more possible manners of exchange existed than I'd known previously.

There was one show on Saturday night, then another Sunday afternoon, but the big event was the all-night show that began at midnight on January 1, 2000. Despite dire warnings, the power grid of the Western World did not go out. Phish came on stage and rocked for more than six hours with little of a break. At the afternoon show I broke my psychedelic fast of several weeks and swallowed about seven hits of something good. Later on, there was even more, but already by show's end I was not in anything resembling a conventionally functioning state. Black helicopters over the open-air venue, likely TV news crews, were to my rapidly ascending mind iniquitous government forces out to herd us all into cages. I made the mistake of asking someone else what was going on, and when he said he didn't know this only confirmed my worst fears. I wondered if I had really just been at a rock show, if Phish really existed. When I ran into one of my traveling mates, I grabbed his shoulders tightly. "Are you real?" I asked him. "Yes!" he smiled. "Am I?" I asked, more desperately.

In the remaining hours before the midnight show I was writhing in my tent in the deeps of this very powerful acid journey. Many, many hits of pure West Coast liquid. I lost sense of what money was, what written language meant, what time signified, nearly all things save my name and where my tent was located in what now seemed like an incoherent maze of people and camping digs. I went deep into demons, and well beyond demons. I went to the Void, where no thing is. I was no thing in the Void. It seemed inevitable that I would go there. I feared ending up insane, among people lovely but who I barely knew, hundreds of miles from Boston and what I called home there.

One of my traveling partners had said to me, on his way to get a close seat for the midnight show: "Follow the music. It will always bring you home." I remember around midnight hearing the tick-tocking of some big clock; I did not know it was midnight, but slowly

figured out by the fireworks sounds in the air, and the heightened cheering, that the 21st century had arrived. Whatever that was. I decided to follow the music and prayed that it would indeed bring me home. I had nothing else left to do.



To be continued in *Cenacle* / 51-52 / Winter 2004



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 Seven

continued from

The Cenacle / 50 / December 2003

Perhaps I've died many deaths in this lifetime; I've heard reincarnation on occasion defined this way. Perhaps the psychedelic sacrament effects this cataclysm when necessary. Perhaps the energies within & without collaborate to bring about the smashing end & raw renewal a soul upon its own cannot cause. Perhaps there is no perhaps in any of this.

I rode high & crazed psychedelic torrents into the new century, atwist in my small tent among the many thousands comprising the Big Cypress music festival the rockband Phish had thrown, 100,000 of us gathered to groove into the new millennium.

Money in my hand signified nothing; the words in my notebook meant nothing; I didn't know where I was & barely who I was. What if I went insane? What if this acid trip, some 20 hits, likely much more, was the one that "permafried" me?

I heard a war going on outside my tent's shell, screams & explosions; slow it took for me to realize they were fireworks & joyous whoops. I'd been cowering for hours alone, gone to no-places, past cruel images of my youth's sufferings flung through my mind's vision to mock & hurt me again. Feelings of embarrassment, anger, sadness. Broken brothers, poor meals & scarce, endless traps rolling me ever back to sloughs of hopeless . . .

Tick tock . . . Tick tock . . . Tick tock . . . eventually the cheers told me something good was happening, really, out there, yes, the music. What had Drumbumm, my traveling companion said, those years of hours ago? "Follow the music. It will always bring you home." Could it?

OK. I staggered out into the night, toward the concert field. Phish! Yes! Oh gosh! Phish! The chuckling rhythms, the spritely melodies, follow, follow it, I'm coming, coming home, here I am, me & my insistent notebook. All night to dance & talk to this needful soul & that laughing one. The songs, endless stream

of them, yes, the music, I am here, I am home.

Toward morning still awake, still laughing, finding my traveling companions where they promised they'd be, & we see in the century's first day as Phish leaves the stage to the Beatles crooning "Here Comes the Sun," this moment, many years ago. I write on & on, the final poem of a sequence, *Two Vessels*, I'd begun many months before, on the long road West to Burning Man 1999:

*the magic spell begins every morning every
day living breathing any kind of gesture
to the good, here comes someone, ask
him the way home, ask his friend, smile,
how's the day & what may evolve, "just
chillin', bro, going to a party tonight &
just chillin'. Wanna come? What's your name?*

Sigh. So began 2000.

We later packed the black van, my little tribe, & rolled out of the Everglades north, smiling, onward, using a clean restroom, first time in days, & on into the Ocala forest of northern Florida. Within those woods I decided much.

A long day tripping among the Rainbow Family, a transcontinentally scattered band of off-the-grid folks living with nature, far from technocratic empiric AmeriKKKa. Oh the temptation, to stay with them, disappear from the need to find a job, pay rent, roam usually lootless the ever-less-loved streets of Boston.

Could I? I could. Would I? No. I had things to do back there in the money-rusting world, Art to make, resistance to aid, healing to pursue, it was not yet my time to step off the grid. One day, yeh, but not yet.

So the trek north continued, I bid goodbye my friends in Columbia, South Carolina, to spend a dear day of books & new ideas with my collaborator Barbara Brannon. Then the Greyhound hauled me on the rest of the way back to Boston.

Done with school, so many years at it but really done, I sought work & lucked into a long-term temp job at Harvard Business School Publishing. "Quality Control," a sort of proofreading job, good money, no security, a cubicle in an ugly big box of a building but freedom to do my thing as long as my work finished timely daily. I dug deep into the Internet for community, music, freak weirdness.

Other work too: editing Thomas Wolfe's *O Lost* (original version of *Look Homeward, Angel*) for Brannon's University of South Carolina Press.



Most importantly, Scriptor Press. Many projects. My ElectroLounge website I worked at steadily, refining & improving every few days. More content by Scriptor Press authors, more meaningful links to sites variously progressive & psychedelic.

The FCC shut down Radio Free Cambridge in January but up rose Allston-Brighton Free Radio in February, & so my "Within's Within" program moved along. Playing the music, reading the work to promote the culture I call my own. Huxley, Leary, McKenna. Beatles, Phish, Pink Floyd. LSD, mescaline, psilocybin. Little of an audience but ABRF's leader, Steve Provizer, schemed constant.

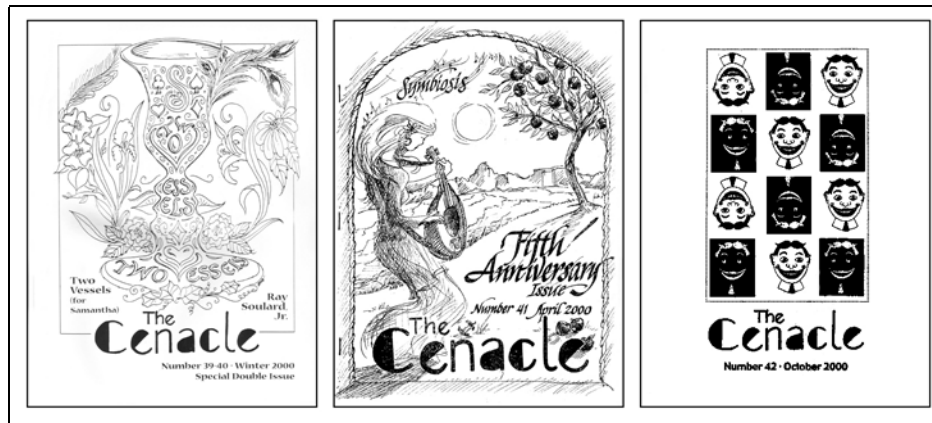
After many months absence, a new issue of *The Cenacle*, #39-40, Winter 2000. *Two Vessels (for Samantha)* is dedicated to a girl known too briefly online & following through the

conceit of two vessels, I & thou, person to person, person to people, person to nature, person to cosmos, endless combinations, two vessels pouring simultaneously into each other. The choices we make, the actions we take, the world we speak, the world as we confront it as it confronts us. I pour into you. You pour into me. Ever & always.

Cenacle 39-40's *Two Vessels* is like *Cenacle* 4-5's *Stranger America* some five years earlier: a poetic travelogue of geography, event, & soul. The difference lay in design, the latter issue bumped up lovely by Brannon—her note refers to it as the “first all-digital *Cenacle*”—& in poetic maturity or, more sharply, ambition. *Two Vessels* is a summoning, language as music as magick, muse as prayer:

*Your name is Eurydice, your mother & I
have never yet danced together, drunk
together, fought for & against our
transforming love. I will promise
her the best of me. She will accept the burden
too. Your birth-day will become our
anniversary. Our anniversary will
become your torch in the world's woods.*

Brannon employs many photographic portraits to decorate the issue: my ruddy-lovely friend Mio, us both virgins unto Burning Man; bowling allies; boulders; long western vistas. The front cover Brannon's visual rendering of the impossible-yet-alluring title. The back cover poet Amante grasping a tamarack fraternally in the Bell Rock Cemetery. What binds all is the slip & climb from beauty to beauty by girl, by leaf, by magick molecule, by pen's hurried leap on & at & over—



“Two Vessels” & sometimes called symbiosis as shown on the cover of *Cenacle* 41 April 2000, a chase with souls’ twined among desire, nature, music, & mystery. This fifth anniversary issue, thirty-first in all, was further along the path, deeper into cyberspatial spheres.

From several years’ backward glance, this issue bears a rending poignancy in how it marks a time come & gone. *Cenacle*: group of artists. My friends. Gerry Dillon’s “And Fechtner, she played her fiddle barefoot” with its sci-fi trappings shot through with working-class sensibilities: “The first time I saw her, I was

gathering shit." Him now sick & low. Mark Shorette's third part of the likely-never-to-be-finished "Wherefore," a fiction of brutal mystical intent:

*arched vision
stretched skies
sing of two
the eyes which merge
separate vision*

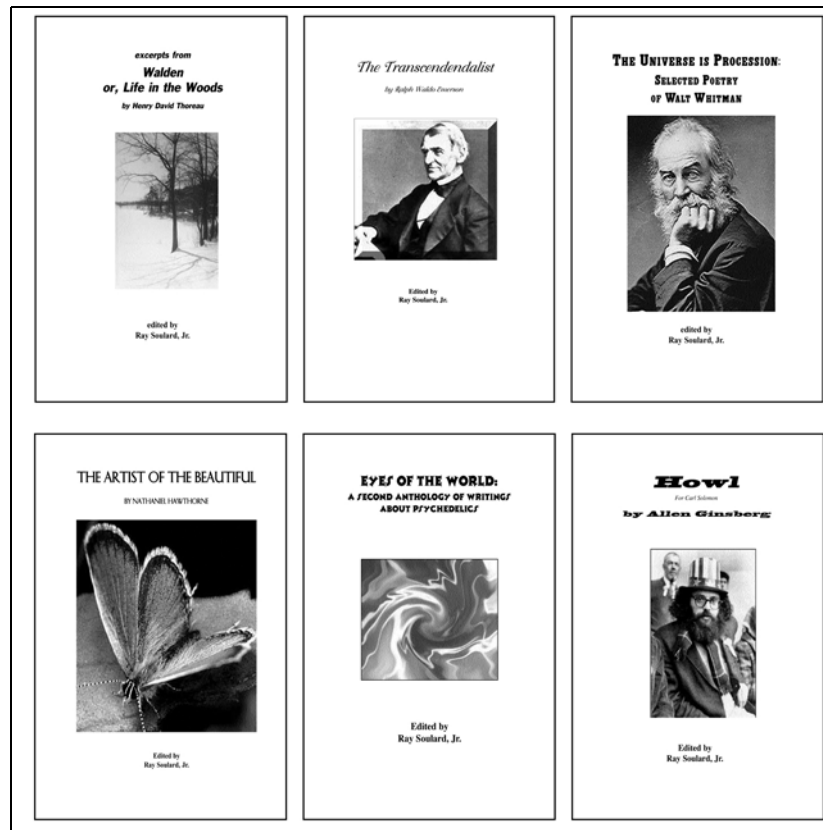
Him now trapped wild within a cage. Joe Ciccone's rhythmic verbosity, his poetic oddness: "Keep trying to love life and someday you will." Him gone to unknown places later, Europe, Rocky Mountains, marriage to a decent-seeming woman. I don't know. Jim Burke III's epistle pre-9/11 forecasting that only some "really bizarre circumstance [will] change the course of humanity's direction."

Brannon's lovely cover & her life eclipsed, o happily, by her own art these days.

They were my friends, still are in some other way. Boston my turf, now a memory. I miss myself somewhat the most: the long nutty "Notes from New England" comprising emails to the girl after Samantha I met online & chased a time. Rebekah. Wolfpup. The *Cement Park* story "Boxes" which elliptically tales my last foul days working at Quantum Books & concludes: "The world is thicker with love than ashes." Do I agree with him? Less so but yes still.

I even realized a dear dream by publishing some of my "Bags End Tales" in this issue; they'd first appeared in a more zine-ish mag in '92 called *Sixes and Sevens* co-created with Gerry Dillon & Jim Gregory. Fantasy stories from my youth, told to & for my sister Christine, her dolls & animals in a quirky neo-Victorian fantasyland.

Yes, Wolfe. O lost.



The summer I spent working at HBSP, going off to Phish shows near & far, & readying for my return to Burning Man. This time I travelled to it by plane & the TOTEM camp remained an unbuilt shambles due to uncooperative soil & poor planning. I determined to bring a gift bookstore again & toward this end created a half-dozen new Burning Man chapbooks: *Excerpts from Walden* by Henry David Thoreau; *The Transcendentalist* by Ralph Waldo Emerson; *The Universe is Procession: Selected Poetry* by Walt Whitman; *The Artist of the Beautiful* by Nathaniel Hawthorne; *Eyes of the World: A Second Anthology of Writing about Psychedelics*; and *Howl* by Allen Ginsberg. Additionally, Brannon & I collaborated on designing & editing an excellent anthology of Joe Ciccone's poetry, *North of Jersey*, with its title's faint allusion to Robert Frost. Burning Man 2000 was one of personal strife for me & a frequent sense of isolation & loneliness. One night, very high on acid, I again writhed in my tent, leaving it via a kind of out-of-body experience, rising, rising, looking down at the great & tiny thing that was Black Rock City, & told somehow I did not have to go back. Another chance to opt out of this plane, it being one of infinite number. Again, I remained, for the time being, though I wondered what would have been discovered in my tent had I chosen to depart. Heh.

The autumn deepened my dislike of my job, isolation, entrapment. Seeking online & found girls to romance, one then another. Leni, blonde, broken, in Florida. Erika, darker, broken, in Montreal. It was life as I'd come to know it, & some of it poured into the year's third *Cenacle*, 42, October 2000.

Cenacle 42 was six months in the arriving. It is dedicated to "Leni Russell, with my love," said woman being one I met online in October & immediately began writing poetry for:

*Begin, again, again, & rightly call any beginning
a miracle. Touch me with beauty,
I'll tap you with balance, together we'll
harness pain to hurl our flight from
dream & awake to meaning & truth,
maybe a love the wisest trees praise,
perhaps a clarity which does not break.*

My friends, acquaintances, even sex partners more often than ever were discovered on the Internet, still in the autumn of 2000 a new tool for human social connections. Timothy Leary once called it "the acid of the 1990s" & moreso this psychedelically-tinged way of soul-crossing changes & is changed by age-old human needs & perpetual human chase after the next & the novel. Both require themselves in an individual's life; it's taken me years since to somewhat work out a balance. Leni came & went in a scant few months, as did the next girl met in cyberspace. Thereafter, this path walked would more profoundly reconfigure my life.

The rest of the issue with one exception featured previously published writers, though several of the pieces were notable. Among these were Joe Ciccone's "Prologue," Mark Shore's "Listen," & my 36 *Nocturnes [first series]*.

Ciccone's "Prologue" is a 14-page poetic epic & the highlight of his *North of Jersey* published by Scriptor Press at the same time as *Cenacle* 42. He roots & roams its pages seeking redemption both alluring & lasting, & concludes:

*And love, love is whatever we don't have. It's a cold beer
when all the bars are shut after a day of hard traveling,
it's thunder when only silence follows the lightning,
it's a lone parishioner when inspiring sermons are
mumbled in the silence of the rectory, it's a letter to a mother
from her son when an officer in mourning stands at her door.*

And it's your hand as I walk alone through the sadness of this holy street.
 I hope my old friend has found in his later days earthly comforts & loving
 warmth he longed for back then.

Another long poem in this issue is Mark Shorette's "Listen," a multiple-part poem as much for vocal utterance as for the printed page, a *cri de cœur* (sp???)
 part Beat, part Rumi:

*never
 you'll never write like
 a mad motherfucker
 never
 not till you cast your pen
 in the creek
 jump in naked
 fish it out as if it were a drowning infant*

*love your pen
 cradle it to your breast
 allow it to suckle from your days of bitterness
 and majesty*

I don't know what he might have written had he not been partly felled by a stroke. This poem suggests a looser style, a wilder improv music, mysticism with deep fistly thrust.

Also premiering in Cenacle42 was the first series of the poetic sequence 6 x 36 Nocturnes; writing now in the middle months of 2004, I can report the sixth & final series nears its completion. It is easily my most ambitious work in length, scope, & time to compose.

The concept derives in part from the musical mixing of electronica composers; bits & pieces of tuneful flotsam appear & reappear through the sequence of poems, perpetual variety perpetuates:

*something from somewhere. wreckage of a dream
 not yet word, nor yet shine, no longer blue fancy.[i]*

*Something already between us, not yet
 word, nor yet shine, yet
 beyond shadow, no longer blue fancy[xxxvi]*

*without sinking, to fall, to fall, &
 know nothing once more, happily
 til shiny is funny, loud shudders one
 curiously, til maybe the clouds are
 passing or is it really the earth?[viii]
 without sinking to fall, to fall, &
 know nothing once more, happily
 there is attraction among all things,
 there is will to creation, will to annihilation[xvi]*

*To play one true note. To refuse the coin.
To reach beneath this life's nightly bed
of rubble & come up with a handful
of sunshine. Just once.[xviii]*

*I listen tonight for one true note. I hear
everywhere coins, clatter, asses dropping
into wooden seats.[xxviii]*

*To play one true note. To nail You
among the dense strews of a
dryly rotting haystack called Reality.[xxxvi]*

As the series went on it would deepen within itself & churn up utter change within me. These poems have become an extension both literally & figuratively of my singing soul, singing of & through the universal music. I sought this poetry always. 6 x 36 Nocturnes (the title changed slightly from its original) has become a deep philosophical obsession of mine, the poem all my others led me to, 360 poems (when completed) which have accompanied me as I them across the continent & back & again, the months, now years, whereto in their conclusion I cannot now say, & thereafter I shall not imagine.

One other significant series inaugurated in this issue. Inspired by the psychedelic anthologies created for Burning Man 1999 & 2000, I decided to start featuring the essays from these books (& their subsequent volumes) in The Cenacle—to make more obvious the partisan leanings of the journal. Aldous Huxley's "Culture & the Individual" was a righteous beginning for this idea:

How should the psychedelics be administered? Under what circumstance, with what kind of preparation and follow-up? These are questions that must be answered empirically, by large-scale experiment. Man's collective mind has a high degree of viscosity and flows from one position to another with the reluctant deliberation of an ebbing tide of sludge. But in a world of explosive population increase, of headlong technological advance and of militant nationalism, the time at our disposal is strictly limited. We must discover, and discover very soon, new energy sources for overcoming our society's psychological inertia, better solvents for liquefying the sludgy stickiness of an anachronistic state of mind.

Huxley warns as others have before & since then. The world staggers on.

The remaining months of the year I romanced open-hearted strangers by distance til a weekend near year's end, around the same time as the twelfth anniversary Jellicle Guild meeting, I held close one of these strangers & maybe the candlelight & incense of her Montreal bedroom closed the spaces between us for a little while. I don't know. I'd chosen, when offered otherwise, to stay around this world & pursue things along awhile. December 2000 & I was sticky tangled in its sludgy matters for better & worse. The new year coming next held unbelievable furtherances of all this. My heart would tug open wider, & still more, & thereafter disintegrate. And beyond that . . . only still elsewhere.



To be continued in Cenacle / 53 / October 2004

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 Eight

continued from
The Cenacle / 51-52 / December 2004

Some years rise up higher than others in one's life, & a few never diminish, their effects trail on & out, wider & stranger, sire consequences from deep, hard roots. My year 2001 ruptured me like 1977 when my kin took us from my childhood home; 1981 when I finally, though failingly, breached the world of romantic love; 1992 when I left home state Connecticut for Boston; & 1997 when I first experienced LSD shatteringly, permanently. Little else smacked as hard as 2001. Much of what I'd known of stability would be going or gone by year's end. Job. Jellicle Guild. I believe that the burning true things within me remained in tact but I cannot deny that the passing of time & roll of circumstances alter contour when not awling, re-coloring. What's here to say is that Scriptor Press, always helplessly aligned to the runs high & low of my current fate, began a decline in mid-2001 from which it is still finding its way back or, rather, onward. I look back & the trail is obvious, it leads here, & hereon. Actively mulling this great ugly year is a way toward more departing the larger part of its shadow.

The year began exciting when Allston-Brighton Free Radio began webcasting (<http://www.abfreeradio.org>). Suddenly my obscure radio show was accessible to people with 'net connections around the world. What has since become fairly common was at that time still novel. Sunday afternoons I would take two trains from Malden down to Boston to do my two-hour (later three) broadcast. Those afternoons stay with me in fondest memory: the hurry to get myself & notebooks & reading matter & music to the first train, the quick stop between trains at HMV Records in downtown Boston for something new to play on air. Moby. Waterboys. Tragically Hip.

Black Crowes. The stop for fast food then hurry to the station, a cluttered but high tech place. ABFR leader Steve Provizer got the station on the AM airwaves, then on the 'net, including a video stream. Libraries donated LPs enough to fill a number of bookcases. DJs had phonographs, CD players, cassette-decks, DAT tape player, & MP3 programs to work with, all huddled around a mic, headphones, vast old soundboard.

I played rock albums old & new, & at least once a show mixed all sorts of pieces together into a sonic collage—comedy records, typing instruction albums, bad pop music speeded up, bird songs—and read from books on psychedelics, such as Terence McKenna's fantastic *Food of the Gods*. I read from my trip-influenced poetry & prose too. On the long trek home I would listen to the cassettes I'd recorded of the program. Fun. Mattered. My friends at the SpiritPlants online community became regular listeners, anticipated these broadcasts.

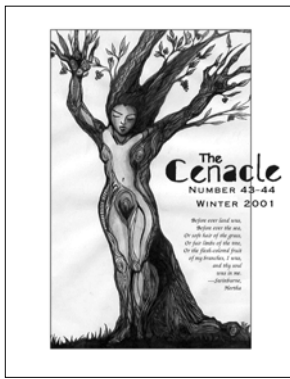
Then in late winter my romance with Erika Del Fabbro ended, inevitably I suppose. Too much to maintain a Boston-Montreal connection with my live visits only rarely punctuating phone calls & online chatter. What draws me to women I pursue is a certain kind of youthful fierceness, eros, longing, sadness. A night I keep from then involved her dim-lit Montreal bedroom, incense, candles, listening to some dark modern rock, a moment of free union. But she had her path to walk. I was sad, drank hard a few nights in Boston bars, wrote some poems at them & at a few coffeehouses. The woman left again, the Art stayed, consoled, renewed, pushed me along. Another romance later came & went too, Leni Russell in Orlando. Blonde, broken Leni. My poetry project *6 x 36 Nocturnes*, fed on these intense crossings, never let me stop, some promise glowed in the secretmost shivers of my dreams. A muse, a beloved, a wife. Not Erika. Not Leni. Not the dozens & decades of others. Not yet.

Women came, looked, liked, tired, moved away & gone. Shucked, again, I continued my work & primarily that meant *Cenacles*. The three issues published in 2001 were the last of their kind in several ways: the Jellicle Literary Guild, genesis & often inspiration for the periodical, ended its existence in December; the people who comprised the *Cenacle's* regular contributors scattered, some by circumstance, some by conflict; & these were the last issues published while I still lived in metro Boston. All these aspects rooted the 1995-2001 *Cenacles* in a certain place among select people. From then until now at least (mid-autumn 2004), this publication has struggled to skein together a new & successful context. Remembering this past year in these pages is perhaps to learn greater what it was & meant, & renew hope for . . . renewal itself.

The days then weeks have passed in bringing this chapter into being. I allowed myself through the mental crevasses behind which my 2001 remains, buzzes with voices, glows with events small & enormous. A few pages at its best offers what must be recounted, what will insist on presence.

Cenacle 43-44 Winter 2001 features a tree nymph as cover illustration by Patty Kisluk; Barbara Brannon's cover design adds lines from the poet Swinburne: "Before every land was,/Before ever the sea,/Or soft fine hair of the grass,/Or fair limbs of the tree,/Or the flesh-colored fruits,/of

my branches, I was/and thy soul/was in me." Ric Amante's shimmying visceral poetry opens the issue's pages with his call to "Leap, serve, & kneel while you can." Brannon's "Traveler's Sketchbook: Europe" is lovely littered with images of cathedrals & statuary. My especial favorite is her depiction of Rodin's "The Kiss" at the Tate Modern in England (this image was later used on the cover of *Scriptor Press Sampler #3/2001 Annual*). I think Joe Ciccone as soul & poet sums up to a sharp degree by quoting his poem "Skeleton Key": "no I made and tacked my own prize to the wall . . . some stood for heroism, others had something to do with beauty . . ." Yet another poet in this issue's multiple songster assault was Mark Shorette: "we dwell in unspoken times/you and i/the pause between breath and command/holds within its potent finitude/you as all/me as atom/within that all."



Cenacle 43-44's psychedelics essay was an excerpt from *LSD Psychotherapy* by Dr. Stanislov Grof. Grof, a well-regarded thinker in this field of research, writes that "LSD is a unique and powerful tool for the exploration of the human mind and human nature. Psychedelic experiences mediate access to deep realms of the psyche that have not yet been discovered and acknowledged by mainstream psychology and psychiatry." Grof's high level of speculative and experiential thinking places him in a long line of such minds: Hofmann, Osmond, Lilly, McKenna, Shulgin a few better-known among

this band.

To read *The Cenacle* is to find the majority of its pages written by mine own hand. "From Soulard's Notebooks" contains a March 2001 letter to a girl I cared much for, Leni Russell, mentioned above. A traveling epistle, wiggling thumbs down at the then-current movie *Traffic* & up to Phish's recent album *Farmhouse*. A tripping letter, keeping a bit of a happily remembered night in Boston. Trains. Mall. Movie theatre. IMAX.

6 x 36 Nocturnes, second series, appeared, its poems travelling around Boston & to Burning Man, love poems to Leni & Erika successively. Always trolling for something deeper:

*All is maya. Illusion. Art. Play. Perhaps.
Everything ends, & a beat, & all begins again,
miracle. To play one true note. To learn
how. Far now from burbling sunshine
& nowhere near wet willing clarity. All alone.
All suffering. Yes. Everything ends, & a
beat, & all begins again, miracle.*

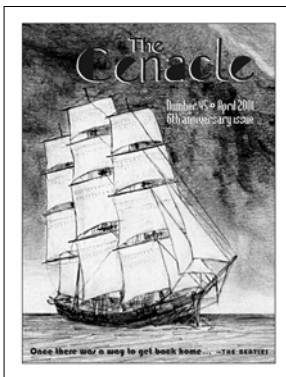
The *Nocturnes* chase after many things: the lure of pink cheeks; what strange words to be found in the night's hard rhythms & high melodies; a desire to evaporate at least for moments into deepest lingual conjurings.

"Pursuit" continued the serialization of the *Cement Park* stories. There is a passage in it remains potentially odd. A character with my name

writing the story conjures a scene which crosses Luna T's Cafe, my walk home at that time, & a pro football game on TV between the Dallas Cowboys & their arch-rival Washington Redskins:

"and i am screaming in the ZombieDownTown night air and Taxi Time cabs swerve around me because I am in the middle of Canal Street and fat beautiful tit of a full moon rubs my head and i am screaming and there are motes everywhere all visible moving in packs of particles moving in fields of waves ball flying through the air and the playmaker crosses the expanse of the sky and catches the football and catches the fat tit full moon 'and the Cowboys are 1st down and 10 on the Washington 19!'"

The narrative scrambles & fragments & gathers itself into new shapes again & again, surveying a musician's sickness—a sort of psychedelic ennui—& how the writer-character absorbs & shares & helps toward dissolving it (tis fitting that the issue's back cover depicts the chemical structure of LSD-25—& an apt quotation from Robert Heinlein: "Truth is more fantastic than reality.").



Cenacle 45 April 2001 is as near to the crescendo's still point of a time lost. I turned 37 that month—in "From Soulard's Notebooks" I write: "37 daunts me somehow—to ascribe any meaning to an age is silly, of course—but people do—birthday seems to involve both beginning & conclusion"—& *The Cenacle* published its sixth anniversary issue. I'd had over a year of stability, income, home, vocation all ongoing. Everything changes, is all. I look back & wonder what if any different act could have lessened pending hurt without taking what good came too. Maybe none. Maybe that's how it is.

Another strong issue, my friends contributing a rangey variety of work. Both Joe Ciccone & Ric Amante offered further righteous poetry, & Gerry Dillon & Barbara Brannon each contributed a short fiction. My contributions were the usual—notebook excerpt, fiction, & *Nocturnes*—plus a new feature, one still running as of this writing. This was a serialization of my Emerson College Master's Degree thesis: *Secret Joy Amongst These Times: A History of Scriptor Press*. Visual pieces included Ralph H. Emerson's nautical-themed cover art, & a series of photos I took of an abandoned computer monitor lying in fallen leaves in the centuries-old Bell Rock Cemetery near where I lived.

Joe Ciccone's poems bear a hard humor & a merciless lingual groping. His a music that hits & hits again. Regard "New Day":

*We followed trails of circumstance into the woods
Looking for any two things that would fit
We were promised something better than this
We longed for our working-class tragic dawns.*

I never knew how much he really liked words though they spellbound him at times with their vast potent. I wonder what he writes now.

I knew Ric Amante's poetry for nearly a decade, through two of his books, many incarnations of his life. A skeptic of language too:

*Love flows sweet and slow
Through widening spaces
hooks and haunts have lost their power—
words break off
hope is a word
a gentle hum is all I hear.*

I suspect time has only sweetened & deepened his work; life strangely congratulates survivors at some crossing. Maine woods again, & finally? Perhaps for a time. But music & food & warm flesh, books & dance, red pens, these always.

Gerry Dillon's story "Aces and Eights" had first been published years before in a zine called *Across the Universe* which he & I & our friend Jim Gregory had edited. It was revived for the *Cenacle* because I had always much liked his *Non Sequitur* space fiction stories. The *Non Sequitur* was a 22nd-century "indie" merchant ship, piloted by the stories' heroine, Izzy Rosoff. Feisty, smart, brooding, Rosoff's crew was her family, even clan; this story finds them facing a renewed threat from a nightmarishly murderous race of aliens called the Inskarchin. More meaningfully, however, they face their fears about the unknown. What is there to fear in the universe & how does one deal with this fear? The story hosts several debates among its principals, concluding unresolved.

Another story in *Cenacle* 45 was Barbara Brannon's "The Darkroom." A webby lurid tale, it recounts a married artist couple's renovation of an old house in a city slum. The slight plot twists nicely; what it seems more to reach for is an illustration of how human cruelty & greed off rise up in the thrust for power. The story makes clever use of an old Gothic fiction device—the secret panel—to deliver its cruel lesson about the dangers of pursuing material gain.

Donald J. DeGracia's essay "A Short Guide about Psychedelic Drugs for the Explorers of Inner Space" finely elaborates its subject through historical, scientific, & occult lenses. DeGracia argues that psychedelics release kundalini energy whose purpose is to help a person gain enlightenment: "the drug confers changes in the endocrine system of that body that results in the stimulation of the kundalini Unfortunately not much more than this can be said." He concludes thusly:

The watchful and attentive psychedelic user will learn many things about the hidden worlds that we cannot perceive with our physical senses, ranging from things as unbelievable as seeing the cells inside your brain, to seeing atoms and molecules, to readily perceiving abstractions so glorious as to defy your very being, all the way to—dare I say it—seeing God first hand, and allowing God to talk through your mouth.

For all contemporary society's apparent demonizing of LSD, marijuana, & their like, there are nonetheless countless passionate men & women engaging entheogen-space & bringing back with them wild residua & it sometimes seems to me is all that keeps the human whorl from curling lifelessly within its own polluted drone.

The majority of my 6 x 36 *Nocturnes*, third series, were love poems for Erika Del Fabbro, peak to fall:

(viii.) *Our love raves, recedes, raves higher. Beyond full moon & spell, it is a new being arising*

(xxii.) *Tonight I fail to subside. You fail to let go. We unriddle the city from its unloving existence. We breach the why & its pain. Love between us a waking from denial.*

(xxviii.) *I wish you love & content. Not happiness, not yet. Not til the spring lands & the geese arrive home.*

The remaining poems (save the last) were new ones for Leni Russell:

(xxxv.) *She carries her basket of stars through the night One perceives her as hungry but satiating laughter. Servants assembling round the righteous.*

Then the last—"For Someone. Anyone."—sad & melodic:

(xxxvi.) *Tonight the release from constrictions & liberty. I don't know who I am. I don't know what to expect. Love has unbraided tonight, guided by glimmers of erotic full moon, trembles & tendrils, a rhythm flowing unto tonight, this teardrop pool.*

Whatever one may think of cyberspace romance, it is my view inarguably that quite often feelings real & profound occur & entwine. Art rises from intensity so great it leaps onto page, canvas, from instrument, clay—I so dearly wished for a beloved—it obsessed my Art which obsessed my waking hours. The year still hid its greatest potent, however.

Cenacle 45's Americus tale "Boxes Redux (Immutable Phalanx)" pursued similar passions, lingual fireworks filled its skies:

All he wants to do is load the stage with his musical artillery,
load & fire, load & fire, load, load, fire, fire, dance, jump, immolate,
love inside the box, vibrate the box til love spills beyond the box,
box of sound, box of love

I'd become one with my fiction, mixing in bits of my life's geography, letters, mixing & mixing, til essentially there were none but symbolic borders between material & imaginary places & creatures.

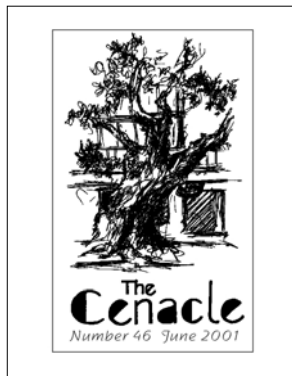
Chapter one of this history appeared in *Cenacle* 45. This chapter & the several to appear serially thereafter comprised my Master's thesis at Emerson College in Boston, Massachusetts, published in December 1999. Eventually chapters appeared whose scope ranged beyond that of the thesis.

My job at Harvard Business School Publishing ended pretty suddenly. My website journal of 5/15/2001 notes:

i got some bad news yesterday...harvard gave me two weeks' notice...fuck them hard...not because i deserve to be let go but because of convoluted bureaucratic conflicts...one department against another...and it's only me who really suffers...ahh well...jobhunting now...readying for the hopes and despairs to come...

I was burnt out from a job going nowhere, an unfriendly corporate environment, a dwindling number of social connections. I went on unemployment & worked on *Cenacle* 46 June 2001.

This issue & the June meeting of the Jellicle Literary Guild at which it debuted where the last remain in a way of life. I'm grateful at least this sheaf of pages exists to remember that time by. Otherwise it haunts by voices & fragments, more useless than not.



More deeply speaking, *Cenacle* 46 is the last issue to document the present tense art of its long-time contributors, all connected through the Jellicle Literary Guild, at which in 1995 the periodical was first announced & later debuted. *Cenacle*, "group of artists," this departed after June 2001. I write of this issue nested in an emotional tumult of memories, what was, what next, what thereafter. I remember with my heart even as my pen insists on its own press for clarity, its particular music.

Barbara Brannon's tree sketch is the issue's front cover, of course, her art fueled so many issues (this one happily jointly fueled by Patty Kisluk's sketches as well), & within her travel journal describes & depicts a winter sojourn in Key West. Beach, cafe, literary birth places, & this passage set in a bookstore:

Toward dusk, showered and rested, we drop in at Blue Heron Books for a signing by Anne Beattie. The author is cordial enough, ensconced in her throne at the back of the store and surrounded by all her Keys cronies, but does little to encourage discussions with tourist drop-ins. After exchanging a few words of greeting with the author and the bookstore owners, we're outta there. Too pompous for our blood.

Her casual illustrations of lighthouses & fruit trees fit the piece's tale-telling mood.

Gerry Dillon's "The Haunting of Yusuf," is a brief myth of ghosts & revenge. It moves with quick pace, & twists cleanly at the conclusion. Dillon's storytelling, his musical prose, it is his own, much more than he ever realized. I hope one day he releases to its full potential.

More novel to *Cenacle's* pages is Ralph H. Emerson's "The Lady and the Tree (L & T)," an essay on the way certain sounds often signify certain kinds of things:

Where L's imagery is complex and extensive, T's is very simple L is female, T is male Just like people, the letters of the alphabet have personalities and roles and reputations. Their qualities are qualities that exist within us, and we have created our languages to give them voices. Voices they have now, and they greet us every day.

Emerson's interest in phonesthemes has run years, a deep & long study of sound & sense. He read this & similar essays to great enthusiasm at Jellicle Guild meetings, & published them in linguistic journals of note. In writing of language's quirks, his voice is confident & good-humored. I am reminded of William Safire's old language columns in the *Sunday New York Times*.

One last poem by Joe Ciccone to appear in *The Cenacle*, "Leaving Las Vegas." This surrealist travelogue concludes: "i summon a ride on the last neon locomotive,/and sail back into the true breech"—& I suppose he has; I last saw him in the spring of 2002, during a disastrous visit with him & his girlfriend in Vermont. I still make & distribute *North of Jersey*. I still remember nights with him high on Art, acid, brotherhood. I think he was moving deeper into folksinging, away from the crazed poems he chased among for so long. Perhaps he married that girl. Perhaps he's happy. If he remembers our best days, so be it. They were damned good.

Ric Amante's poems splayed open things—like flowers & trees & house flies—for what succulent mysteries their within might reveal: the poppy "proclaiming a life/more vivid than mad"; the forsythia's "burst of resurrection"; a solitary oak's "current of being/blazing within." Life too rich for complete grasp, death near & not quite unfriendly, poems like these convince me anew that this man deserved much more acclaim than he ever received.

Mark Shorette's essay "Henry David Thoreau: A Man of the American Counterculture" was one I commissioned him to write. His proposition that Thoreau was the "original man" of the American counterculture concludes soundly: "I will not be but who I am. For I do hear different music." I miss my old friend Mark, his wit, his great heart, his sharp unrepentant mind, his wild lingual music. He lives on in lesser form now; perhaps simple persistence in living itself will bring him again to places worth his great soul.

Jim Burke III's letter "State of the World, Part One" is contemporary intelligent rant. He writes: "Everything around us is made up of vibrations,

even inanimate objects. The speed of these vibrations determine the density of the physical matter in question. Also, the degree of consciousness can alter the speed of molecular vibrations at any given moment. The truth can be revealed when these vibrations are slowed down and/or interrupted. This can be done through meditation or the use of psychedelic substances, such as LSD. But a society turned on to this type of spiritual self-guidance would be a culture turned off to Wall Street"—a succinct tell of his philosophically-based assessment of the world & its woes.

The essay on psychedelics I chose to include was Dale R. Godwin's "Confessions of an Amerikan LSD Eater," written in 1991 while Gowin was incarcerated in a New York maximum security prison. He writes most beautifully that "under the spell of these elixirs of light, I was filled with a sudden, overwhelming reawakening of the quality of consciousness that I remembered experiencing as a young child A transcendental understanding flowered into ecstasy." His essay damns the government & other forces of repression in society, such as the mainstream media. A great cry, one worth joining & echoing.

Finally, my own work. Aside from the opening letter, & Chapter Two of this history, there was poetry & fiction. *6 x 36 Nocturnes*, fourth series, runs through a period when no woman loved me & my life felt hung up nowhere. Erika Del Fabbro gone, Leni Russell going, my job gone, my friends gone, I wrote on for my life. A single poem, "All glory passeth," rises above the others, its composition came over a long spring night acidtripping Boston, into the neon-lit alcove of a coffeehouse there, & I felt that night like pure, raw conduit for what flowed through me, felt it crazy as I sat in an old armchair & scribbled crazy:

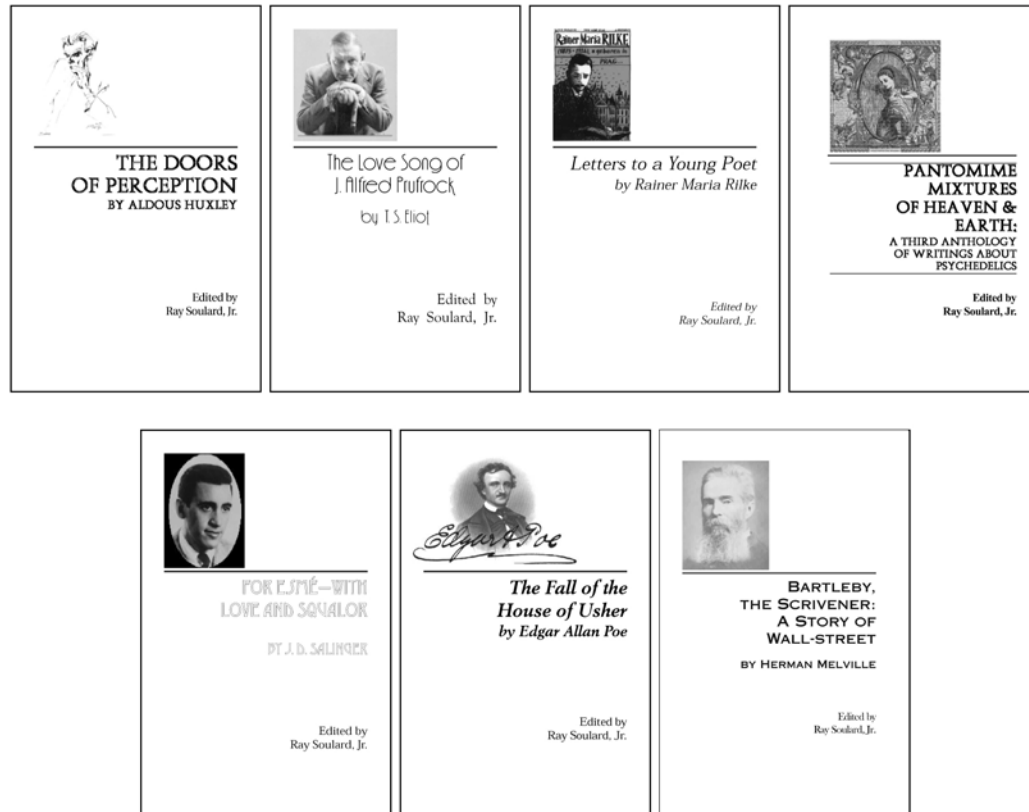
*power raised, again, tonight, no answers,
no puzzles, cherry blossoms, no walls,
spit in your hand & be ready to clobber
cosmos or facemask, the blood to equal,
to better one's dreams*

Writing out these words here reminds me anew how being alive then felt: crazy but good, desperate & sweet. At best, it always feels like that to me.

"Boxes Redux (Immutable Phalanx)" was concluded in this issue. I page randomly through it & find: "I'm beaten, OK? I've been tripping on acid since this morning, every train stop I've been at, a lot of them, I've sat on benches, lost, but writing. I went to a park and looked up at a phalanx of trees." For all the distance I feel from yesteryear's people & places, my own Art is ever near & familiar. It's in me, old, new, & pending. What really stranges me out about this story is that within its pages I couple with 17-year-old Rebecca Dorothy Americus, love her too much to concede to any possible consequences. I want what I want—desire triggers its own laws, I've written. Or, as Woody Allen put it, the artist creates his own moral universe. That story, written in 1998, forecast events about to befall.

Her name was Lisa Marie Zent, & I met her on July 14, 2001, a month after she turned 17. She would weave through my life actively for three years & by effect perpetually. I do not know where she is tonight nor do I wish to know. I wish her good health, & perhaps someday a painful clarity regarding how much she hurt me, as much as she had been hurt by others in her youth.

We met online & within weeks were phoning daily. I was collecting unemployment checks, alone in an ugly little town north of Boston, Ciccone gone, Amante still around but by the summer of 2001 we rarely spoke. An ugly drunken episode in June that year after a poetry reading we three put on effectively ended our friendship. I was lonely & ever chasing for a young potent muse. Lisa was this; living in Portland, Oregon, broken home, upbringing ravaged by sexual violence. We consumed each other for months. My writing flared higher & wilder, poems for her, it was unreasonable & unrealizable & yet this romance strode on & would not cease. Took years to die the last of it.



Burning Man took the rest of my energy, work, focus, money. I determined to go & what money I didn't spend on rent & bills, & long-distance phone cards to call Lisa, I spent on readying for my third annual trip to Black Rock City, Nevada. No Borders Bookstore this year featured: Aldous Huxley's seminal essay on mescaline, *Doors of Perception*; T. S. Eliot's early important poem *Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*; Rainer Maria Rilke's profoundly influential *Letters to a Young Poet*; J. D. Salinger's

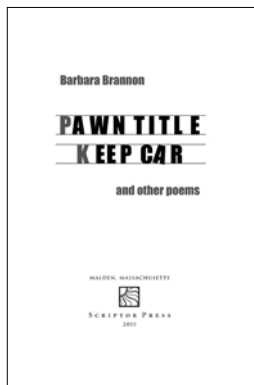
beautiful & cryptic fiction “For Esmé—With Love and Squalor”; Edgar Allen Poe’s classic story “Fall of the House of Usher”; Herman Melville’s genius tale “Bartleby the Scrivener”; & a third anthology of writings on psychedelics, *Pantomime Mixtures of Heaven & Earth*. Seven books in all to bring the series to eighteen total & hereon to publish six a year. More meaningful than this, however, the adding to the series of works profoundly important to me. Rilke’s letters taught me how to write, how to think. Salinger’s story showed me the great raw potency of storytelling. Huxley’s essay arches over societal prejudices about psychedelics, about the unlimited depths of the world & the human, to reveal strange goodness & clutching beauty at the heart of creation. These three among a dear group of works were what I carried with me to the festival & its many highs & lows. The nights wandering the desert ragged & high & weirdly happy.

I returned from the festival to Boston’s Logan International Airport on September 4, 2001—a week before the planes that reportedly carried 9/11’s hijackers left this same airport. It has been said that the attacks on New York’s World Trade Center twin towers, along with the occurrences in Pennsylvania & Washington D.C. changed the world forever. It seems more pointed to say that the American government’s response to the day’s horrors determined the nature of this change. The worst impulses of the American psyche—bullying superiority, rabid xenophobia, mindless hunger for conformity—roared to the surface & began a clumsy, bloody rule of men still going on as of this writing. Perpetual war, unceasing fear, omni-directed rage & paranoia. The square jaw, upraised fist, & cold eye king this land & would so the world over if the world was welcomed to join along. It is not: the American Empire of George W. Bush will lord above all & one day fall through nobody’s saving grasp.

About the same time, *The ElectroLounge* fell through the bottom of cyberspace when its host server of three years, TheGlobe.com, suddenly went under. I saved nearly all of its files, thanks to heeding Erika Del Fabbro’s old warning to back them up on my computer, & migrated to Yahoo!’s Geocities server (<http://www.geocities.com/scriptorpress>). As the cry in cyberspace quickly became one of resistance to Bush’s warlord vow to vengeance, *ElectroLounge* joined in, & I posted long anti-war screeds there, & links to many like-minded sites. This effort blossomed into an influence felt at large by American society, & continues today.

The only Scriptor Press publication additional to the 7 Burning Man Book titles appeared in December 2001, at the final Jellicle Guild meeting. This was Barbara Brannon’s book of poetry—*Pawn Title, Keep Car*—a volume long anticipated by the two of us. Many nights in the fall of 2001 I worked with sheaves of her poetry, late hours at the town’s only all-night coffeeshop, to hew her best works into a good tome.

Brannon’s book comprises the best of her work from several years’ effort. Her voice never blows up wildly, follows its hue along steadily, aware of poetic conventions & acknowledging them for the most part.



It is the poem "Blind Gator" where Brannon passes some invisible mark from pleasant, intelligent rhythm & melody to hard passion & true music:

*When they take the shot they are quick
Mark dead aim, humane, release
the trigger swiftly,
hit.
They are right:
I had forgotten how sight impairs.
I stare, see light as darkness pales
and scales fall like stars
from my eyes.*

The Jellicle Guild had been averaging 8 meetings a year for many years but slowly its membership dwindled to a few; most meetings it was me, Burke, Shorette, Dillon. Some not even that many. As my sight turned from disappointing & lonely Boston to the West's promise, I found the Guild's diminishment harder to abide. December 29, 2001 I called the last meeting. The venue we'd always met at, Roma Restaurant, New Britain, CT, was under new ownership whose aim was to transform it from a sleepy neighborhood bar to a rocking sports joint. Our brown-walled back room was gone. Our better days with more voices joining in were gone. Those who attended made a symbolic stop at Roma's to say goodbye to the old days. It was the last time most of us went there or saw each other. Thirteen years, 104 meetings, & it was over. A wish to do it again somehow falls before questions of who & where & how. Still, it was a good group & mattered. Matters still.

It's taken weeks to describe this year in the life of my press, & little doubt important things too-briefly summed. Scriptor Press had survived it, produced some work to show. Yet I was jobless, isolated, & had not made a *Cenacle* in six months. My energies after Burning Man turned nearly all to my long-distance romance, its daily upkeep. What I retain from then of good meaning are poems, & memories of late nights tripping & writing & walking the streets of my odd town. I did all I could to live somewhat with pride, yet now I see the waste of days. My job collapse was part of a country's collapse. Things were bad everywhere, & bound for worse.

Looking back now I can wish I had withdrawn from the girl & put balls to the wall getting work. But the poems got made, life had its beautiful glints, because I did what I did. I faced 2002 uncertainly, no clue the waves about to fall.

To be continued in *Cenacle* | 55 | April 2005

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 Nine

continued from

The Cenacle / 53 / October 2005

One of the guiding myths of my life during 2002 was the Greek tale of Orpheus & Eurydice. Orpheus, the god of music, marries the oak nymph Eurydice, but loses her to a snake's fatal bite on their wedding day. Distraught, refusing her death, he follows into the Underworld to retrieve her. His plea of musical anguish moves the gods to grant him her safe return to the land of living souls, provided he does not look back at her as they climb with a guide back to daylight. Orpheus fails this test & loses her again, for good.

I fancied my romance of that time with Lisa Marie Zent to have such deep meaning to it, & I followed my nymph across the continent to retrieve her. I failed, perhaps never having a chance anyway, & by year's end found myself alone, destitute, & nearly gone.

What lesson? Follow your heart—at your own risk. Be true but vow to survive whatever outcome. Few souls are worth your demise. The ones of that value would do everything to prevent it. The girl I chased did not. 2002 crushed me; its only fair news is that I did not stay crushed.

At the beginning of the year I was still living in the Boston, Massachusetts area, same home since 1996, months into collecting unemployment, courting my girlfriend by phone from 3000 miles away. Scriptor Press's only active projects were its website *ElectroLounge* & my weekly radio show, "Within's Within: Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution," broadcast on Sunday afternoons on Allston-Brighton Free Radio.

The Cenacle / 54 / April 2005



My radio show on ABFR ended that spring, and it would remain on hiatus for over a year (and would revive in a way I could not have foreseen then). The truth is that nothing good was going on by the end of my time in Boston, and what good remained, such as this show, bogged down in the murk of my sadness. I look back on those Sunday afternoons and think how much fun they were—the long rush to get to the station, the stop for new music at HMV in Boston on the way, talking online with the people tuned in, mixing all sorts of crazy music and sounds

with my crazy voice—and I wish I could have enjoyed them more at the time. But I was not enjoying anything anymore. My heart's shipwreck had virtually crippled me as a functioning being, and there was nothing to do but to follow my obsessions to where they beckoned.

I didn't work on *The Cenacle* or other projects because I had become a jobless recluse, the Jellicle Guild's inspiration gone from my life, & my only cares seemed to be writing the poems of *6 x 36 Nocturnes* for my muse & finding my way to join her on the West Coast.

Then I scored some temporary work doing editing at a corporation. After my long daily commute, I did the simple work, called Lisa at lunch & in the evening. For a few weeks in the late winter I was a couple of steps up from bottom. I was OK.

Then her break to leave home, long-desired, came, & within 48 hours she ended our relationship in favor of someone local. Nine months of fantasy verging on reality was over. I fucked up my job, & spun down. Survived, & spun down both.

It was two more years before I put a stop to the ugly blood-drizzle our friendship became, & longer than that before I was strong enough to push her away from me for good. When it first happened, I was too blinded with despair to see options, to cut the diseased limb & save the body.

Weeks went by & nothing good happened. At the beginning of June I left Boston after ten years living there, & I've not been back in the several years since. A brief stop in Connecticut to leave most of my possessions in a friend's basement, to drink a symbolic toast with a friend (my first drop of alcohol in ten months; last ever), & on to a cross-country Greyhound I hopped, bound for Seattle, Washington by way of Portland, Oregon where Eurydice dwelled captive in an unhappy new romance. So cried my delusional heart.

Scriptor Press hardly existed during these spring months of 2002. I was writing *6 x 36 Nocturnes* to save my life. Nothing else, no other work, was important then.

Three days on a series of buses cross-country & I was both high & withered with excitement. Follow your heart—at your own risk. I'd traveled cross-country before but never intending to stay. I wrote, sometimes talked to people, feeling deeper within than maybe ever before.

I arrived in Portland in early June 2002 & at last met my heart's desire, & for a few quickly disintegrating moments thought I would keep her. No: the Orpheus myth I selected for its great potency told my tale well too. I didn't have enough to offer her by way of stability—staying with a friend in Seattle & jobless still—& though she lingered at moments till year's end & beyond, the rift between us never healed. The wound of loss hasn't fully either.

Summer came & with it my other great passion: the Burning Man Arts Festival. I finally got Scriptor Press back in gear & set to making new books for the fourth annual appearance of No Borders Free Bookstore at Black Rock City, Nevada.

Once again I engaged my collaborator Barbara Brannon to design & lay out the books. I selected the authors & works, & did the printing & binding work. Though her own projects have limited our collaborations in more recent times, I recall them very fondly. Just as Jim Burke III taught me much of how to pursue artistic visions, & Hartley taught me how to rent consensus reality's limiting perceptions, so Brannon taught me countless things about how to craft beautiful vehicles to deliver these visions & perceptions.

The six new titles added to the Burning Man Books library included: *A Terrible Beauty Is Born: Selected Poems of William Butler Yeats*; *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka; *Dig and Be Dug in Return: Selected Poems of Langston Hughes*; *Everything Carries Me to You: Selected Poems of Pablo Neruda*; *I Am You and What I See Is Me: A Fourth Anthology of Writings About Psychedelics*; and *The World Will End in Fire: Selected Poems of Robert Frost*. Yeats' poetry sings & growls, reaches & reaches; Kafka's fiction elaborates the nightmarish diminishment of the individual in the modern world; Neruda's poetry has a rough, burning hide to it, affects deeply what it touches; Frost's poems are boney & plain, smart lovely wastes; the anthology continued my work of getting out to the counterculture words wise & pretty about the psychedelic outlands; the Hughes volume I included for Lisa, she called him a favorite poet. I made this volume for her from love's best impulse, he is a good poet, so no regrets.



With fast-going money I took the book masters Barbara sent & spent days at making them into books at a copier shop near the University of Washington. The Afghan family who ran the place was friendly & took care of me & my project. At night I returned to my friend's home & bound the books using a special stapler.

I went to Burning Man 2002 with a desperate need for relief, for kindness, for rest, for clarity. I asked for everything. I was given much. It was a long week in the desert with my sadness & fear, knowing I had no money left, heart broken, having to make it on my own out West soon or give up. No Borders Bookstore was its yearly success. I returned to Seattle ready to renew my struggle.

Within a month, about mid-October, unexpected circumstance landed me down in Portland, living in a rooming house, working a low paying telephone survey job. I'd arrived where I wanted to be, though not under the circumstances I desired. Lisa was living with her family & boyfriend, hardly miles away but walled off seeming forever.

So I thought. Looking back simply angers me how drowned I was. She was a weak young woman with a disturbed mind living with the urban trash she came from. I'd been a temporary diversion from her boredom. Her first words to me in person back in June had pretty much been: you're supposed to be in Boston. To her I was a fantasy; to her people I was a threat, unaccountable in their TV-&-fast-food circumscribed lives. To myself I was the singer, I was Orpheus, but I kept ignoring that Orpheus loses. I thought I'd one-better him. I eventually did—by letting go his myth, choosing my life over his demise. Perhaps that's the best way to see this tale.

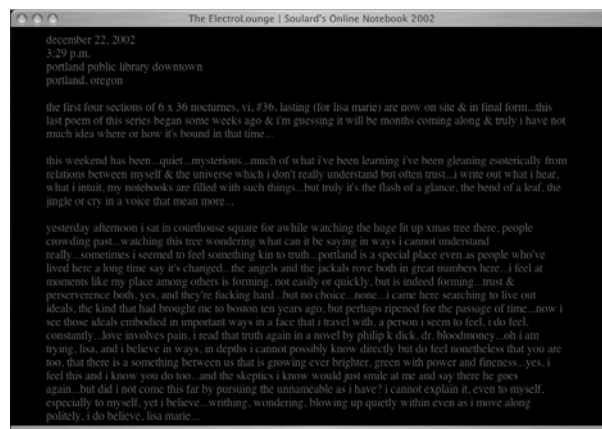
Those fall 2002 months in Portland were hard & lonely, yet there were then also other streams rolling within me. The romance I chased is long gone, yet there are other memories I bear without rancor; memories I am carrying with renewed interest at the time of this writing. It took me a long while to sort out, but I have & share here not merely old melancholy snapshots but new green shoots. Both amazingly.

What strange depths within suffering, what glints that remain when time has drained off the murk, what good will discover to the surviving soul if he but lets enough ticks of the clock pass. I don't have answers to unfold here, but questions strangely near to them.

My mornings began waking up in a rooming house bed made by tipping upside-down a dining room table & piling mattresses on it. I pushed off the Mickey Mouse cover & looked about dazed at the kitschy knick-knacks filling the room—tables & dressers & closets of junk—& a small corner piece crammed with pictures of the landlady.

I bathed in an old tub surrounded by more junk—Joe Camel, etc.—& eventually was out to the boulevard to get the bus to the light rail to downtown Portland and, while I worked, to way outside the city. When jobs lacked, I spent my days in a job center, then a sparse meal at McDonald's, & evenings in the lovely downtown library, & thereafter with my notebooks & Philip K. Dick novels to Taco Bell & the late night Coffee Time Coffeehouse. Cavernous freaky lovely of a cafe, rife with loud music, old furniture, weird art, strange lost souls looking & forgetting & talking, & looking some more.

Cyberspace provided me with some comfort as I accessed it free from the library and from various coffeehouses for a fee. I was often at the Spiritplants.com chat room, or posting my tale to a journal at its forum, and I worked on *The ElectroLounge* quite often, posting *Nocturnes* for the most part, but also posting in a journal kept there too. I used what power I had left to write to give a few truly caring souls account of my days and nights. I kept trying.



In December I made an effort to produce *Cenacle* 47 but it did not succeed. My life had devolved to . . . holding off a breaking heart & trying to fill an empty purse. I walked around Portland, liking it, wishing my life in it would stabilize & lift. I wrote at bookstores, coffeehouses, park benches, buses. I look back now on those months—time's gone on, I've been back & forth over the continent a couple of times since, better love came & stayed—and wish I could cross back to who I was then & say: it will be OK, it will hurt, get worse, but you will survive. You will survive. Or better yet tell him that self-preservation matters over even the most obsessive of romances.

I wasn't ready to admit that it was over, that my life had devolved to a sad fragment, that will & conjuration would not turn things toward lively new days. My stubbornness cost me a great deal but I look back without shame. Maybe that's the odd allure of those days still: nearing the bottom something in me fought on. I learned that I might *fail* but I would not *surrender*. This seems important a distinction even now.

I spent Christmas Day alone in a coffeehouse called Heaven in the bleak grey, unsnowy downtown. Read, wrote, listened to my walkman. New Year's Eve I turned down a friend's invitation to go to San Francisco for a rock festival. My shitty job might call offering hours to work. They didn't.

To be continued in *Cenacle* | 55 | October 2005



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 Ten
continued from
The Cenacle / 54 / April 2005

Telling the story of a year in a handful of pages, composing these over the course of a week, reaching into the chaotic order of passed days & saying: here, this is how what I remember as important happened, here are connections among events, persons, thoughts, dreams, & so on, & what is briefly discussed or excluded simply snaps off, occurred & obliterated within its own familiar hour.

2003 was for me about survival & humility. What I'd been seeking was not going to come to me; where I wished to be I could not stay. How I dealt with failure, & more failure, would craft my result. To tell this year's tale is to create first an atmosphere of sadness & futility.

Not all sadness & failure, however. Moments counter to what prevailed. I've found over time being a persistence bitch is hard, useful clue to some eventual success. Some luck, some stubbornness. Rooting deep within for all one has, & reaching toward others when it's easy & when it isn't.

Scriptor Press did not much exist for the first five months of 2003. The only project active then was the website, *ElectroLounge*. Aside from a few links & random content, what I mostly added were poems in the *6 x 36 Nocturnes* series, ongoing since June 2000. Writing these poems & posting them at *EL* (& elsewhere online) constituted my strongest connection with others, my series of cries for others to hear. It was not until June 2003 that I began to crawl upwards again. Still, to tell the year's tale full, return to January & along from there.

I awoke New Year's Day 2003 in a rooming house in Portland, Oregon, atop two mattresses laid on an upturned dining table, beneath a thick Mickey Mouse comforter. I'd turned down a friend's invitation to spend New Year's Eve in San Francisco on the chance my sometime employer might call with work (he did, later that month). I was poor & heartsick. Getting from Boston to Portland in 2002 had taken nearly my all & here I was,

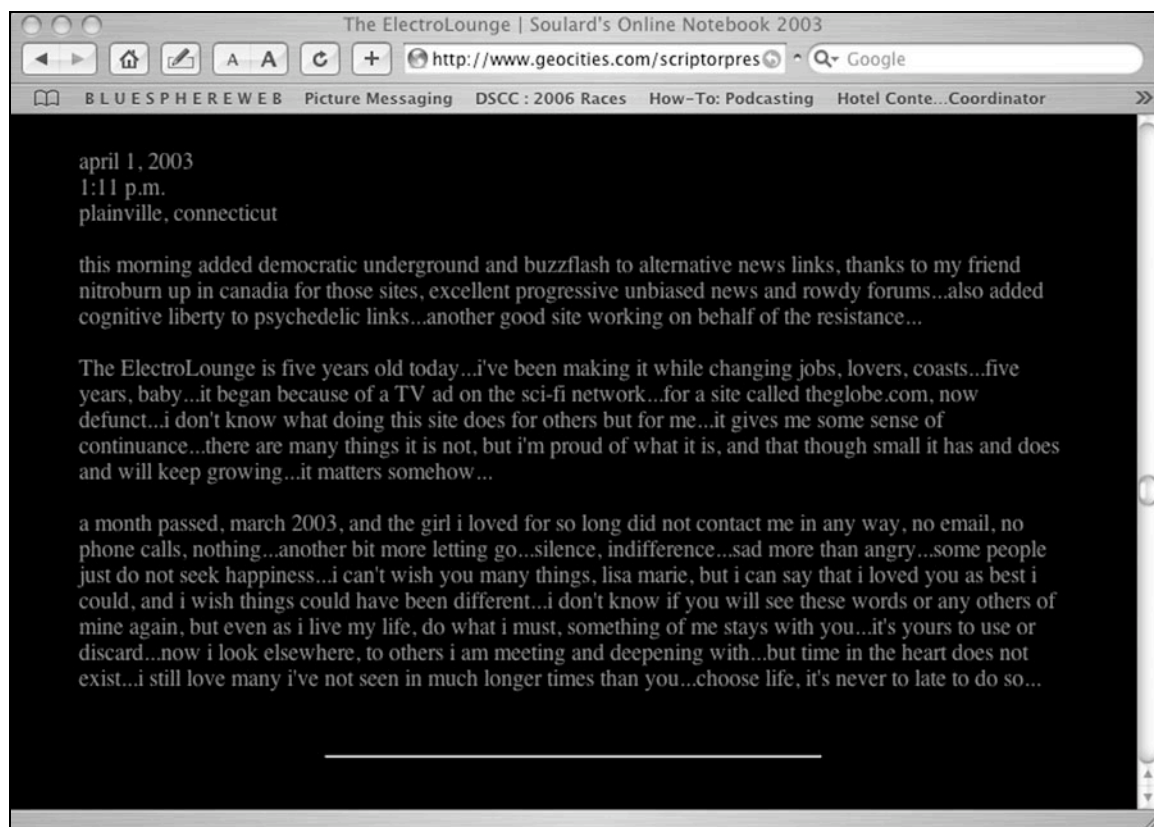
The Cenacle / 55 / October 2005

slowly failing. The girl I'd come for was living with her family & new lover; no number of occasional phone calls bemoaning her life's imperfection could negate this. Looking back now, I see this whole love story as probably futile from its origin. She was too immature & I was struggling just to keep myself afloat. I wanted everything with her; I wanted to be her Orpheus & rescue my Eurydice from her urban trash Underworld. For a short passing time this seemed possible. But she looked back. I believed less & less.

I struggled til late February to find & keep work in Portland. Welfare even turned me away. My last meaningful act was to march with 30,000 others through the downtown streets to protest the Bush Empire's pending invasion of Iraq. People sang, shouted, dressed up as anti-war cheerleaders, passed by surprisingly passive troopers. The invasion occurred in March, & 2 1/2 years later the U.S. remains mired in Iraq, 2000 dead American soldiers, tens of thousands of dead Iraqis, & counting. Perhaps the villains will finally get crushed soon but their damage remains.

I just couldn't make it. I said goodbye to Powell's Books, Coffeetime Coffeehouse, Pioneer Square, the light rail, library, the many lowly eateries I spent my writing hours, & traveled north to Seattle, said goodbye to Bauhaus Cafe, many local movie theaters, obscure street corners where I'd rapped with the local fellaheen, stayed with a friend till I was able to get a Greyhound bus to Connecticut. It was several days of retreat, writing & breathing, its nadir being trapped in Port Authority New York City due to a major blizzard. My dear friend Jim Burke met me in Hartford. Home. Ha.

For the rest of 2003 I lived with another friend, Gerry Dillon, whose friendship I valued & work I'd published. We both struggled with demons & wounds that year, perhaps better because together.



For the next three months I writhed daily to find my way. My lost love Lisa Marie haunted me even as I began to remove her name from current projects—her poetry from *ElectroLounge*, her dedication from my unfinished poems. I helped Gerry fix up his home &, reunited with my Macintosh G4 computer, upgraded its operating system to OS X. I applied for food stamps, tried to find work, wrote from the ravaged nada of my heart, scratching to its depths for meaning. She was gone; I searched my self for what was left. I waited for her still. I knew there'd be more.

Late May it came: contact. Over several days & emails & phone calls I found what was left in me: an aversion to cruelty. I remembered what it was like to be a teenager, mocked, harmed, rejected, shit-nothing, less.

Induced to reveal my feelings, then trashed by her (next) new man, laughed on the phone at while they rolled joints—what did any of it mean? What could possibly any of it mean? How does love disorder to disdain? Why? There were no answers, still none.

My black heart cracked. When younger I'd thought I was shit-nothing. Or at least I ran, hid, did not know how to defend myself otherwise much less fight back.

Now I know. When the bastards come at you, no matter the familiar face on them, close off all, fire back, whip & pound & scream. Nobody deserves to be hurt for no reason. Not the dirtiest, lowest, strangest. Damn the borders. Survive. If trapped & pushed, push back, harder, twice harder. Survive. More: when you see someone in like trouble, aid, ally, do what you can to help.

The years have taught me that nobody is expendable in one's life. I hate this lesson in many ways but do not see it contradicted. If kindness & empathy turn to hurt, act accordingly. Hope for better days & like a persistence bitch do all toward them.

That weekend my world ended. I slept badly. I woke up. New day.

Alone. Living in a friend's spare bedroom in a town where everything but the bars close early. No Boston. No Seattle. No Portland. Not even a much friendly or appealing place—but worse than that. My life was no longer appealing to me. Except for my *Nocturnes* & a ragged fixtion I dragged along in my notebook I'd forsaked all else. There here been no *Cenacle* in two years. No RaiBook. No radio show. No *Scriptor Press Sampler*. I was broke & broken.

Re-birth comes, if at all, by mysterious will, & mine came May 31, 2003. I traveled my old Saturday movie route to Showcase Cinemas in East Hartford, three buses from Plainville but I willing made the trek to visit my old places & see *The Matrix Reloaded*.

A long walk from bus stop through a swampy area behind a half-empty strip mall, & there I went deeper & deeper into a psychedelic storm within, finally to movie house, much larger than the one there in my youth, into a long-awaited movie, & something within me crackled with its rousing event, a frenzy within, a rising, crazy flow all ways, gentle funky madness, the anger, the sadness, the memories of two years loving one soul, & the accumulated dream before that, how that dream seemed to lead unto her, the months of phone calls amidst my jobless hermit's life, the break, the crush, the betrayal, & it compounded because not clean, not apparently, hope rised & ended again & again, the cross-country pilgrimage, nobody knows, nobody knows, the months in Seattle when she came to me & came & went & came & went again, the trip to Burning Man when I tried to love everything in the world anew, & for a moment did, & down to Portland, the Underworld, singing, singing, & failure, goodbye, & the trek back to simply Hell & here I was & it was all snapping within this hour, this moment, movie over, run for bathroom, shit it all out again & again, holy, holy, holy, freedom, relief—

Like a few times after bad periods, worse & worse, fall, crash, stop, I remained extant & breathing, mind still biting each new hour for meaning & purpose. Others know this well too.



I determined to get my Art back, my writing & Scriptor Press both. Nobody impeded but myself. Nobody cared as much either. Whatever was to happen it would be mostly by my own hand.

After more than a year I started up my journal again, a project I'd begun in 1974 when I was ten. Discipline matters as much as gift to Art. Though a simple daily recounting of events large & small, doing it anew meant a great deal.

I determined to get to Burning Man 2003, though collecting unemployment & pennies to my name. Toward that end I started on a new batch of Burning Man Books, & long needed finish of *Scriptor Press Sampler #2* | 2000.

Fortune struck me when a resume sent to a local weekly newspaper yielded a hit. I was hired to copyedit the *Hartford Advocate* for six weeks while its regular copy editor was on sick leave.

I had not had a job I so liked in years. It was a pleasure to bus in several days a week & read copy. I could have gladly done this job for years. As it was, the experience helped me feel a renewed sense of good self & save money to get West again. I had barely enough to afford this fourth annual trip to Black Rock City & the costs of preparing my No Borders Free Bookstore but I sunk all into it, hoping I could heal some chasms & figure where next my path.

And so another summer of making Burning Man Books. I used my copier to generate the pages, & my reliable old Macintosh did its part too. My friend Barbara Brannon helped me one last time to make the books good. There's no real explanation to what this project means to me, how removing my life for a week a year to a Utopian community in the desert affects the rest of the year. I manifest truly, & thus bear a model the other 51 weeks.

Burning Man Books 2003 features: Virginia Woolf's *Death of Poetry*, the text of a letter to a young poet friend of hers, a hopeful, funny missive shot through with despairing pose; F. Scott Fitzgerald's lovely, elegaic "Babylon Revisited," clean prose music lifted high on humility gained & loved realized; Dylan Thomas' *In My Art or Sullen Craft*, a collection of his rowdy mystic poems, anger & want elegantly bawled; Ernest Hemingway's "A Clean Well-Lighted Place," a very short but striking fiction, one I first read when I was 18 in a book on existentialism that I'd found in the 3/\$1 bins in front of long-gone Huntington's Bookstore in Hartford, CT; *Can You Pass the Acid Test?—A Fourth Anthology of Writings About Psychedelics* (contents including, among others, writings by William James, Huston Smith, Jay Stevens, & Alan Watts); & the first non-text book since 1999's coloring book, *Build This Book: A Burning Man Blank Book*, decorated with quotes from previous Burning Man Book titles. It seemed inevitable that an event devoted to self-expression would find a pile of blank books gifted in its midst. It was a good bunch of titles, & I brought *Scriptor Press Sampler #2*, long delayed, featuring writings by Soulard, Ciccone, Amante, Shorette, Dillon, and a cover by Brannon. How come & gone.

The night before the event officially began, a Sunday, I pulled out a bag of *amanita muscaria* mushrooms, picked on the Oregon coast the previous fall, when I still loved West & hoped, smiled at my friend, who'd been with me when I'd picked em, & ate a chewy, big handful. He trembled a bit & watched me close as we biked around Black Rock City. Like

the trip in May, I was strafing the open quadrant of mind & universe for some answers—and they came.



I'd known a girl via cyberspace & phone for some months. Been friends with her, confused her for Lisa & harmed her heart, kept along, a real, true friend, & she was 18 & going off to college in Nebraska—

Another young girl, long distance, ya kidding? I wasn't, & it took psychedelic spaces to crack my crabbed heart wide & witness to me the great love within. I delighted & feared in my discovery. But I trust psychedelics. I've worked with them for years, different ones, organic & chemical. Tools, aids, counselors, mysteries, but not liars. Too deep, too intense. Subsequent journeys that week confirmed: I loved Cassandra Kramer

—and told her on the phone from Seattle before I went back East—willing for it to come to nothing—I'd hurt her before—but it didn't. "Love emerges, & it disappears," sings Paul Simon. And emerges again.

Home, at least to my books & clothes, in Connecticut, I was penniless

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18	Phish - Waves	11:05
19	Future Sound of London - Papsico	9:32
20	Future Sound of London - Papa New Guinea (ori...	2:21
21	Future Sound of London - Requiem	5:45
22	Future Sound of London - The Big Blue	7:41
23	Future Sound of London - The Great Marmalade ...	4:40
24	Future Sound of London - The Lovers	9:03
25	Future Sound of London - Things Change Like P...	6:07
26	Future Sound of London - Wooden Ships	5:54
27	Infected Mushroom - Release Me	8:42
28	Infected Mushroom - The Gathering	7:42
29	Infected Mushroom - Return Of The Shadows	8:07
30	Norah Jones - Don't Know Why	3:04
31	Infected Mushroom - Blue Muppet	8:03
32	Infected Mushroom - Psycho	8:10
33	The Jayhawks - All the Right Reasons	3:30
34	Christmas Themes - Southpark Merry Fucking	2:04

but buoyed from my trip. *The Hartford Advocate* happily published my Burning Man article but did not renew my job—I struggled for weeks when their sister paper in New Haven called me to do copy edit work for them. Thus began seven months of commuting about three hours to & from that city, three days a week. It was good work. I hoped for more permanent work from them but I'd finally gotten some stability. Scriptor Press work resumed.

I added a 100 gig hard drive to my Macintosh, & more RAM so it would run better. An aborted trip to DC to march against the War in Iraq led me to want to do resistance work of a more native kind to my taste—and I revamped *ElectroLounge*, adding more content.

November was when two big projects got under way: my return to radio, & to *The Cenacle*—

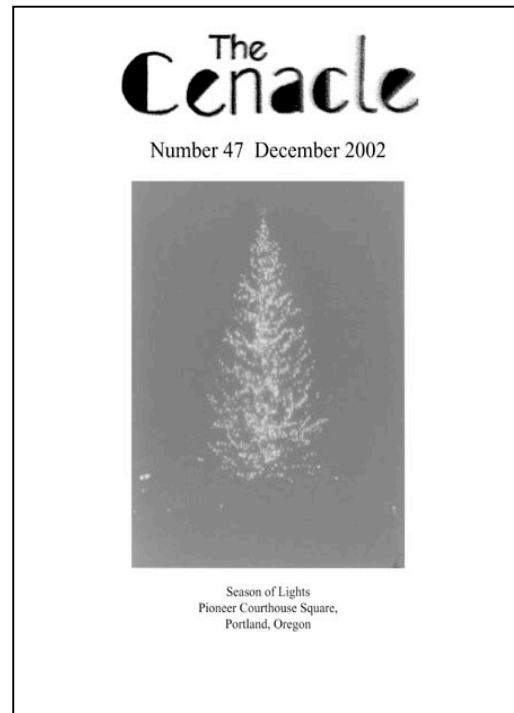
SpiritPlants Radio emerged from the SpiritPlants online community, its forums & chat. New technology allowed a home computer to become a global transmitter. The station was the collaboration of people in North America, Europe, Australia & New Zealand, flung as far apart as possible, & yet in November 2003 there I was reviving my radio show, “Within’s Within: Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution,” off air since April 2002, & sending out new rock albums by Phish, Wilco, the Jayhawks, reading my cracked fiction & tripped-out poetry, & renewing “storybook time” by resuming reading *Acid Dreams* by Martin A. Lee & Bruce Shlain. Celebrated the new year with an online cybervisionquest all-night broadcast.

Cenacle | 47 | December 2002, had languished unfinished for nearly a year after its cover date when I resumed work on it—I left the cover date standing & treated it as a very overdue issue—my intent was to finish up this old business head held high again. It wasn’t Portland that had crushed me awhile—it was a confluence of unfortunate occurrences—the city’s poor economy, my ruined heart, fewer social services now than once for the poor & afflicted.

So I decided that I would honor what good I’d experienced there, forget nothing but especially the good things—

Since I intended *Cenacle* 47 as the issue I would have done in December 2002 while living in Portland, I put my photo of the Pioneer Courthouse Square Christmas tree on the cover. I’d sat on the steps above it many times, willing myself to belong successfully to the city I was in. The issue’s epigraph my motto those days—“No way out but through”—from Robert Frost. “From Soulard’s Notebooks” was my letter to my mother asking for money a second time. She gave what she could, with this advice: I have no more, if you are still poor apply for welfare aid. I tried that; it didn’t work.

The issue’s contents were cheerier, not all about my current state (then). My fiction *Blue Period* began its serialization. Written in 1998, it became by its end my try at ending my *Cement Park* novel series. Drenched in acid, music, & want, it was devoted to summoning 1968 once & for all, by song, by conjure, by stroke. I broke linear narrative into multiple



conflicted versions of the same story, maybe several stories of a single one. The writing is good; its writer was freakin'.

Last poem by Ric Amante, old compadre, one called "Hamtramck Tetrad," I read it again, now, recall our phone call burying the hatchet, last phone call, he was in Detroit, & this poem later in the mail, concludes:

*Why do misfits, seekers, & fools feel the urge to walk & walk & walk further
until they drop into the empty but rich plenitude of non-existence? There are
no answers to these questions, & the church spires, sparrows, & mongrels
continue to chip away at the open blue sky.*

Where you go, Brother Amante, my wish is for your good health & kind companions. All else comes from these.

A poem by Barbara Brannon, "Blind Gator," one I'd much liked & included in her *Pawn Title Keep Car* Scriptor Press title. Last line still hits square:

*When they take shot they are quick
Mark dead aim, humane, release
the trigger swiftly,
hit.*

*They are right:
I had forgotten how sight impairs.
I stare, see light as darkness pales
and scales fall like stars
from my eyes.*

I don't know what she's written since but do know this poem proved her lingual mastery.

6 x 36 *Nocturnes*, fifth series, & here's the irony: poems dating to middle & late 2001 when I was most high sharing love with Lisa Marie Zent, published in December 2002 *Cenacle* when I'd met her in person & was losing her, what was not already gone, & said *Cenacle* finally assembled in late 2003 when all was gone between us. The poems remain. Some are good. I'd been waving magick around with love-thick words even as my life was mostly collapsed into poverty & loneliness:

*What is holy if not all? Drink the elixir
now! Happiness. There is no world.
There is only a moment, trembling.
There is only this moment, beating.
Weep & begin.*

The last piece was a reprint of Albert Hofmann's "LSD: Completely Personal" in which the great chemist & thinker discusses the strange genesis of LSD & its results in his life, the dear friends he made in Aldous Huxley & Ernst Junger. How not to feel great fondness for such as Hofmann & Huxley, I know not. Too dear, too deep.

The back cover depicts me bearded & harsh & distorted, photo from my Portland days altered to reveal some of how hard it had been.

Here was December 2003, just a year later, & here I was riding a Greyhound from New Britain, Connecticut to Omaha, Nebraska to meet Kassi. We met at the bus station, first kissed in her car, haven't stopped kissing to this day. I don't think we ever will.

2003 had riven me hard & let me go with some satisfaction.



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 Eleven

continued from

The Cenacle | 55 | October 2005

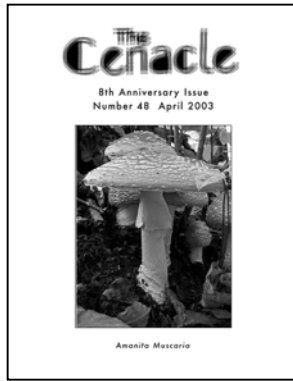
Remember 2004 how it began in the crumble of yesteryear & by virtue of boldness & luck concluded in better days, from one side of the North American continent to the other, from living with a suffering old friend to living with a blooming new one.

Living in Connecticut wasn't working very well anymore. My commute to part-time work at the *New Haven Advocate* was three hours each way & yet didn't pay well enough or offer enough security for me to move out of my friend Gerry Dillon's house. He'd kindly hosted me since the previous March, rented me his extra room at scant cost, but he had his own struggles & I didn't think I was helping him too much. We got along, happily, but I was restless to move along.

Scriptor Press work prospered that year, developed anew after its time in the hole of my depression. There were several new issues of *The Cenacle*; the *Scriptor Press Sampler* series was at long last caught up; there was a fifth volume in the *RaiBook* series; my radio show continued; the press's website, *ElectroLounge*, developed further; & there was a sixth year of Burning Man Books. As well I worked year long on my *6 x 36 Nocturnes* poetry series, & *Things Change?* fiction. Finally, there was my beloved Kassi, still half a continent away in Nebraska but closer to my heart than ever.

My focus early in the year was reviving *The Cenacle*, building on the momentum of finishing in December 2003 the year-late *Cenacle* | 47 | 2002. More than that: I wanted to distribute it online. The expense of paper issues meant I could never make more than a few dozen issues at most—& I *would* keep on making them—but I wanted to reach further & the power of desktop publishing coupled with the Internet could work this magic for me, for anyone willing to work it long & steady.

Cenacle | 48 | April 2003 was both the 8th anniversary issue and the first one reflecting my return to Connecticut. Its theme of struggle & progress emerged from the sly joke of the magic mushroom on the issue's cover and the blunt words of “From Soulard's



Notebooks,” dated 4/19/03: “I’m dirty, ragged: I stink. Nothing gains from me this way. I’m from here; this is not my home any longer. My home is out West. But am I ready? No. I’m dirty, ragged: I stink. To get there I have to do better as long as necessary. I need money, residence, people. Mend fences, build bridges. Humility & work. Other things unnamed or unknown.” That’s how it was.

But there was more, else, better. This issue featured a great new singer, my friend Judih Haggai from Israel, known online years & met in person too briefly in summer 2003. C48 features five of her poems. One poem in particular, “Spirit World Restless,” catches her deep groove & funky melody:

*swords, flowers, dinosaurs
water steams, lava sears
why not give in. spirit world takes off
hitch a ride to genesis
toss aside your emptiness
catch the next wave out.*

Chapter four of “Secret Joys Amongst These Times: The History of Scriptor Press” chronicles Scriptor Press’s history for 1997. Notable here is that I was doing a better job at laying out these chapters, their text-&-images mix.

C48 includes the last poetry contributions from Ric Amante, whose work had been featured from *The Cenacle*’s inception in 1995. Quite simply, we’d buried the hatchet, & lost touch around December 2002, when I was in Portland & he was near Detroit, Michigan. Our last phone call was full of forgiveness, at least a try at it, & old good cheer anew. His poem “Campobasso” rears alive in my heart everything good & decent, sweet & haunted about this man:

*Tonight I drink from a jug of Campobasso
and though I have no woman, no boys, no home,
to recall with affection how father
would take a plastic bread bag and
place it over the neck of the bottle
before screwing the cap back down—
my doing so now somehow saves me.*

Sleinte, Amante.

My fiction *Blue Period* continued in this issue, a wildly strange story I re-read these few years later with deep smiling affection. Its peak moments are portraits of the fictional hippie poet David Time & nineteenth-century American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson. Time relates to a crowd at Luna T’s Cafe his old days of romance & LSD in Haight-Ashbury, while Emerson later lectures at the same place on the dread pitfalls of passivity & complacency:

Stop waiting for Dame Fortune to wend your way! Look inside of yourself & ponder what you discover! How much is left after society’s passing clowns & your dread history are removed from consideration? How alone with your thoughts can you become if you do not think about known or famous persons? How much of your happiness depends upon the continued or hoped-for affections of others?

I look back on this extended imagining of one of my favorite writers & think I sketched him with great love.

C48 features the opening dozen poems of the sixth series of my 6 x 36 *Nocturnes* poetry series, a run deeply tucked inside my long distance 2001-2002 romance with Lisa Marie Zent. One poem, “Winter Solstice [concluded]” & its prescient lines:

*A greater music, a greater silence:
Contrive the thing you must release.
Til its dream no longer haunts you.
Til its fruit you no more seek.
Til it unclasps your hungry hold.*

Til forgetting, a scrap, you careen off the path.

I had not forgotten anything but I’d certainly become awhile that careening scrap. Finding the path again, some, any, making a new one, was taking everything I had.

The final piece in the issue is a reprint of Alan Watts’ 1968 essay, “Psychedelics and Religious Experience.” In it he writes:

Lack of awareness of the basic unity of organism and environment is a serious and dangerous hallucination. For in a civilization equipped with immense technological power, the sense of alienation between man and nature leads to the use of technology in a hostile spirit—to the ‘conquest’ of nature instead of intelligent co-operation with nature.

I find it notable that advocates of psychedelic sacraments are often the deepest, most sensitive advocates of a better world in all its forms.

The back cover is an old photo of me sitting on the steps of an abandoned building near my former home north of Boston. I sat there many times, alone, high, grappling for the surface on a propulsion of black ink.

It took only six weeks to make the next issue of *The Cenacle*, 49 | 2003. This issue was shot through with my experiences at Burning Man 2003. I worked very hard on this issue, pushing to find a new path, relevant, exciting. It is shot through with black & white images of the event. The cover is an image Photoshopped several different ways within the issue’s pages. The lead story, “Black Rockin’ Beats” is the essay of BM03 which I published in the *Hartford Advocate* in September 2003. Its conclusion speaks for the whole piece:



*What matters to me is the burst open window to shake loose
for a week, stop connecting A to B by rote and try A to K,
hand out books of poetry and fiction from my small press to friendly folks from Istanbul to
Eugene, ingest whatever plant or pill hooks my fancy, and sheerly revel in the knowing
that every calm and dangerous soul in Black Rock City will disperse again to spread to the
larger world its virus of spectral ecstasy, its spirit of whispered healing in the wind,
burning possibilities in the night.*

A visual companion to this piece is the “Burning Man Wall” collage which Kassi & I made together, a strange complex of images we crafted from our far distance. Other issues of *The Cenacle* had documented my experiences at Burning Man; I wanted this one to embed deeper, say more.

“State of the World, Part Two” marked the welcomed return of Jim Burke III to *The Cenacle*’s pages. In it he warns that whether technology was sourced in native human ingenuity or involved alien acceleration, the troubles plaguing humankind remain the same: “In either case, the resulting technological advances that aid an increase in consumption have to be brought under control. This would have the (unintended) effect of reducing corporate

earnings and combating greed on a planetary scale. The State of the World would be a less consuming one.”

This issue again featured poetry by Judih Haggai. Among her many twisting high lines, I like in particular: “Love, a lost petunia,/a flurry of sounds,/no way back, the tide/closed in” and

*Pale glaze over sunset—
as stars shine their rampant glow.
All's clear for take-off—
planetary blessings for the road.*

My fiction *Blue Period* concluded, & I'd thought at the time the story was finished, in July 1998, that my *Cement Park* series was finished, after 17 years. In the summer of '98 I'd been suicidal & endings seemed like the only good idea. I tried to breach linear time & coherent space to arrive somewhere real of my own hand:

*Life is long.
Love is vulnerable.
Save those you can.
Save yourself.
Heal the Future.
Heal Your Future.*

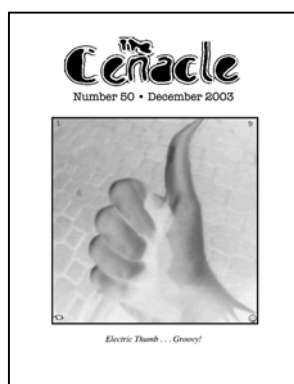
The series did end—& go on too. I don't believe Art has any true borders or limits.

But not love, not necessarily. The run of my *6 x 36 Nocturnes*, sixth series, written in early 2002, documented my heart's last eager days of unbroken hope for union with Lisa Marie Zent. She suddenly crushed me; my life collapsed even as I kept writing:

*First Spring Song
Love sticks hard. We each need to keep
breathing. today I watch snow & pretty
branches. The drop of yesterday on wet
grass. How you looked in a picture brushes at
me over & over. Words within say “await,”
sheets of dreams hush “let it be.” What's coming more
a roar than a song. An ache. A collision. A shine.*

As that year had gone on, I had little else left but *Nocturnes*. I published them as proof of survival.

“History of Scriptor Press,” chapter five, documented 1998 & the issue concluded with Dr. Huston Smith's 1964 essay, “Do Drugs Have Religious Import?” One of his most potent lines reads: “Drugs appear able to induce religious experiences; it is less evident that they can produce religious lives.”



One more especial note from this issue: the “Last Yawp” piece was a visual & text collaboration between Kassi in Nebraska, me in Connecticut, & our online friend Oddborn Jensen in Denmark, nicknamed “Satori.” Breaching space & time, indeed.

Cenacle | 50 | December 2003 is an overtly political issue. Several anti-war posters & graphic images convey my sentiments then & now: George Bush & his cabal have hijacked the American Republic & seek to turn it into a global empire, have lied & bullied the U.S. into an illegal occupation of Iraq, & will pursue their designs on other oil-rich Middle Eastern nations until they are cut from power. I bluntly advocate resistance to Bush & all who would aid in his fumbling pursuit of world dominion. In the

issue's opening piece, "Why I Turned Back D.C.," I wrote: "I hope for clear and legal repudiation of his empire-building ambitions. In the meantime, he needs to be held accountable for the nightmare he and his gang of proto-fascist ideologues have wrought in Iraq." Nothing has changed in my sentiments two years along; the "King" still bears power & his fist still crushes countless souls in the name of freedom. Nobody knows when it will end.

My *6 x 36 Nocturnes* series continued to appear, most notably the 24-part poem "Release (for Lisa Marie)," in which I returned to the subject matter of my 1999 book *Orpheus & Eurydice: Making the Lyre* to retell the tale once more. These poems were composed in the spring & early summer of 2002 when I was living my last days in Boston & then moving West to Portland & then Seattle. I was writing from deep romantic love but more than that I was trying to keep myself from cracking up. These poems were my cries to the universe:

*Then she turns & looks within. The strum continues
as it always has. Vipers & demons bite only so
deep. Love, & love's nameless god, web fiercely &
finely worlds without beginning or cease. She
turns & looks within. Something jumps. Clusters
of words break before heart's holy roar.*

She was one more muse. She came & went. My heart little regards her but these poems matter much to me still. In a time when little made me feel good or right, my pens & notebooks kept me up, high, strong, were more to me than any person. Lingual beloveds.

My old publishing partner Barbara Brannon contributed "North Carolina Sketchbook" & glad was I to have her art in *The Cenacle's* pages once more. The sixth chapter of "Secret Joys Amongst These Times" appeared too, & marked when I was now writing about Scriptor Press's history past 1999, past what had been contained in my thesis. More of Judih Haggai's poems appeared too, including the following delightful come-hither lines: "let's undo the seconds/caress the futon/undress in closest closet time/listen how life has chosen us/come on baby/let's listen to life."

My fiction *New Period* began serializing, feeling to me like what happens after the story ends. In this case, more story. Much of it was driven by my surviving some very black times in my life, but in truth I simply wanted to keep writing what I write, never stop:

*if we're going to make it, i say, we have to acknowledge our eternal kinship from molecule
to supernova. the cosmos has neither beginning nor end but a continuity that reductionist
thinking calls time. we belong as much to forever as we do to right now & all that was or
will be is rightfully, inarguably ours. so too with space. we are stardust. stardust is ours.
we belong to all of the cosmos as much as it belongs to us.*

I was blowing on all pipes, happiest when leaning over the psychic far cliff & singing for very life.

The final piece in the issue was a reprint of Jay Stevens' chapter "The Politics of Consciousness" from his 1987 book *Storming Heaven: LSD & the American Dream*, a recounting of the early, unruly years of acid counterculture: Huxley, Hubbard, Janiger, Leary. Stevens writes about the "turf war" involving "who would control traffic to the Other World." How those days ended, the tidal wave of cultural catharsis which followed, is well-known. Turned on, tuned in, dropped out. Struggled hard, carried on.

By the spring of 2004 I'd been back in Connecticut for a year & was hard dry fuck sick of it. My commute was exhausting & I wasn't earning enough to do better than live in my friend's spare bedroom & pay him a scant rent. My beloved Cassandra was half a continent away & missing me every time our visits ended, & I could only afford these trips

rarely.

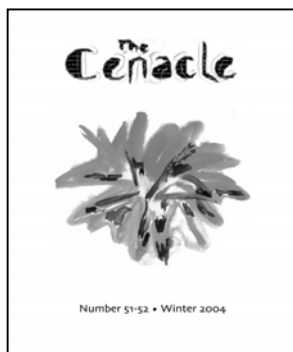
Bastards solved my problem. I arrived one Monday morning at the *New Haven Advocate* offices, returned from a freshening happy week with Kassi, & was laid off without honest explain by managing editor Paul Bass. I cursed him literally & figuratively for stripping me of what little stability I had, walked out, called Kassi, & decided a few hours later I was moving to Seattle. Fuck Connecticut. Sat a long day at a coffee house trying to figure out how to do what I'd vowed. On a call later that day, Kassi told me she was coming too.

It wasn't easy to pull off but by early June we'd both gotten there. I arrived just in time for my 40th birthday, spent a month living on a friend's couch, scored work at a chain bookstore, & moved in with Kassi when she'd successfully transferred to a school in Seattle. Here we both were in a city where I'd run hard previously &, defeated, abandoned; she was in a city she barely knew.

The lesson I've had to learn is that love, desire, & romance are not synonymous. Romance is airy, the stuff of melodies; love is visceral, want, need, eyes licking along flesh as the mouth cries & the mind lustily imagines; desire is what interests me, because it changes, it floats, not bound to the present hour or mere human dreams of gain. Desire runs deeper, spreads crazy, is what I believe we share with all other creatures, not rooted in consciousness nor I believe directed by consciousness. Desire is root & world. Desire builds with glee & destroys with a yowl. Desire remembers long & remembers little. Where desire no longer prospers some light is fading.

My partnership with Kassi is rooted in love & romance, & shares in the eternal sweep of desire; I do not believe a relationship could prosper missing any one of these. When that summer I pushed away the last twisted desire from Lisa Marie Zent toward me I finally knew I no longer felt them for her. I felt them all for Kassi. The world had turned too many times. Something finally over, something new even more deeply commenced. I am still learning what any of this means. If anything, I miss who I was then, little of the rest.

Both of us worked that summer & prepared for Burning Man 2004, my sixth, Kassi's first. We managed to publish one more *Cenacle*, 51-52 | Winter 2004, the year's fourth & last.



It was the first issue to be dated 2004 & resembled those others in many ways: a lot of Photoshopped art & photographs (several taken with my camphone), a handful of writers, & Kassi & I at the core of it. An impressionist bloom by Jude Haggai adorns its cover, & my letter to Kassi from the day I lost my *Advocate* job is the first prose piece within.

Welcomed back to the magazine's pages was fiction by G.C. Dillon. "The Cat and the Moon"—a sequel to his story "Haunting of Yusuf" which had appeared in *Cenacle* | 46 | June 2001—is a "tall tale told in every harbor of the land of dreams; it is repeated by swaggering seamen, sweating stevedores, and the odd harbormaster or two." Dillon revels in made-up tongues, strange engines, conjured creatures, & tells his stories with confidence & sly levity.

My *6 x 36 Nocturnes* continued its obsessive arcing plummet through my heart's blown-out darkening skies, recording my summer & autumn of 2002 as no other record could. My months in Seattle were struggling ones at best, no work, little hope, & yet I kept along. My memories of bike-riding psychedelic Saturdays back then remain strong. My pen & bike & I etched psychic ruts deep in the city. I still feel these several years later. The steep roads I tripping flew down fast. The parks I wrote with nothing & everything left in my heart. I

cried with music as though the whole world was pressed toward me & listening:

*Approach yourself again, beginning on the day
we missed, the moment your love grew off.
There. That moment like a rat or a roach,
first of a countless. Now. Speak a spell, loudly,
& see that moment throttle green & go. Speak
again, a few stumbling words of love laced in
freedom. Look. The sun is shining. You made it.*

What was I to write like this? Who was this? Who were you? What have you & I to do with each other? Did I save you by surviving? How much of you is left? What would you say to me tonight if voice across the years you possessed?

The seventh chapter of “History of Scriptor Press” covered the year 2000 from the perspective of summer 2004. We ever see the past & future, if such concepts are true, from a distance, & the elevation & shadows between ever distort what we would remember or discover.

Jude Haggai’s poems again featured in *The Cenacle*, her “intimate DNA banter,” her skies with “neptune nudging nearer,” the auras & kisses she traces “en route/toward destiny.” Praise to her voice familiar & new in the growing years of our fraternity.

My story *New Period*, more a novel really, continued its run as I tried to broach & then breach the farthest borders of what fixtion my pen can make, mixing tale with my long poem *Millennial Artist’s Survival Guide*, mixing in memory of the Vermont woods where not long ago I’d danced & died & been born anew by morning. Trying so strange & high I sometimes tumbled:

*I don’t know. It seems like I want to write this grand experimental narrative that brings in
much new & also plays more with recent ideas. So it should be easy. But much lately has
become shadowed in doubt that I’ve lost my way. And I not only can’t answer the questions
I’m struggling with, but I’m not so sure I can articulate the questions accurately.*

But I wrote on, of course, because what Art does not solve or at least illumine nothing else surely does.

The final piece in the issue was the first part of a reprint of a 1967 [San Francisco] *Oracle*-published dialogue among Timothy Leary, Allen Ginsberg, Alan Watts, & Gary Snyder, called “The Houseboat Summit.” The four seminal thinkers & artists debate points of society & philosophy aboard a houseboat near Sausalito, California. Watts at one point argues for an anti-Western, “Chinese view of the world”:

*a movement . . . a stirring among people . . . which can be organically designed instead of
politically designed. It has no boss. Yet all parts recognize each other in the same way as
the cells of the body all cooperate together.*

The excitement in reading this dialogue many years later is how live some of its ideas & ideals still are, how many of its proposals have not worn to dust.

The back cover of C51-52 is an elaborately Photoshopped picture of a very pretty arched entryway at Yale University in New Haven, an arch I would pass while at lunch from the *Advocate*. By when the next issue of *The Cenacle* appeared some 11 months later, I would be a continent’s distance away from that arch & the hope & disappointment I’d experienced in that city.

My partner Kassi became the third collaborator I had worked with on the Burning Man Books series (Mio Cohen, 1999; solo, 2000; Barbara Brannon, 2001-2003), & gave the project exciting new impulse. We worked especially closely on volumes by Octavio Paz & Basho.

The first of the year’s additions was Flannery O’Connor’s savage tale “A Good Man

is Hard to Find.” O’Connor is a favorite writer I share with Barbara Brannon. Her fiction is merciless in its drilling in for the subtle, hard morality of a situation or character. Truth, as she knows it, wins. Angels & devils both live & die according to this truth.

Carl Gustav Jung’s essay “On the Nature of Dreams” is an old favorite of mine & one whose ideas color my own in thinking about the collective unconscious. I do pursue their sometimes insightful, even prophetic qualities a bit farther than he does.

Octavio Paz’s long poem “Sunstone” conjures sweet recollection of its being chosen for our series. I knew I wanted something by the Mexican master, but not sure what. Kassi & I went to the Elliott Bay Bookstore one day & sat with a volume of his collected poems. Perhaps on a whim she began reading me this 600-plus-line poem, & didn’t stop til its end. The selection was made. Later she read it to me again, its crazy swoops of meaning & melody, as I typed it on my Macintosh.



James Joyce’s short story “The Dead” was another old friend, culled from his collection *Dubliners* which I’d first read many years ago in grad school. I am also a fan of John Huston’s film version. A quite visceral tale of love & regret, it sounds its highest note in conclusion: “His soul swooned slowly as he heard the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead.”

The sixth annual volume of psychedelic anthologies is called *Stones of Your Mind*, a line nipped from John Lennon’s brilliant song “Mind Games.” Its featured authors include Theodore Golas (*The Lazy Man’s Guide to Enlightenment*), Robert Hunter (“The Withering Away of the Revolution”), Ralph Metzner (“Seven Phases of Social-Cultural Transformation Catalyzed by LSD and Psychedelics”), Alexander Shulgin (“The Agony & Ecstasy of Alexander Shulgin”), & Jorie Graham (“Same Time”).

The last of the half dozen new titles is, like the Paz book, especially dear to me. It began as an anthology of haiku, meant to cover a wide space of centuries, but the scope narrowed as time went on. Anthologies to be successful must be sharp in focus, summed in a short phrase. Kassi & I looked at many books of haikus (evolved from the haikai no renga) & eventually chose the progenitor of the form, the seventeenth-century poet Basho. We read through many many of Basho's poems to choose three dozen, & thus create the best of the best of his work. Poems like:

*Midfield
attached to nothing
the skylark singing*

and:

*You turn this way,
I'm also lonely
this autumn evening*

and:

*The whole household—
each with white hair and cane—
visiting a grave.*

At one point we sat together in the Seattle Public Library & read a children's storybook detailing Basho's wander across Japan. I think indie presses like ours are built soul-up to receive such blessed hours.

It had been three years since Scriptor Press had published a volume in the RaiBooks chapbooks series (the last had been Barbara Brannon's *Pawn Title Keep Car* in December 2001). It was time to put out a new volume, & my poet friend Judih Haggai in Israel was the ideal artist to promote in this way. Born in Goshen, New York in 1953 she moved to Toronto, Canada and eventually a kibbutz, in the Western Negev, Israel. I had known her several years by 2004, & we'd been lucky enough to meet for an evening in 2003 when I lived in Connecticut, & she & her husband Gad were in the US visiting kinfolk. Such dear hours, at the now-gone Xando Coffeehouse in Hartford. We exchanged poems, hugs, & chapbooks of poems, took photos, more hugs, & then parting. But what fraternity had grown up online was cemented in person. Scriptor Press's *Spirit World Restless* collection of her poetry was inevitable. Kassi & I together spent many hours designing this book, its layout, font style, contents, running order. The cover we worked from an image by a friend of Jude sitting meditatively, gave it our Photoshopping twist & twirl. Looking through its forty-some pages I find stanzas riding high, high music:



*we, magic mushrooms
emerge
inner fire blaze*

*we squeeze our anxiety
for traces of pure inspiration
looking for angels
in soul compost*

*my last life
swirls within
as i direct my gaze to you*

*when I think of you
I pull forest twigs
from your hair
and suck the sap of life*



The last of the publications we readied that summer, and & again reviving a dormant series, was *Scriptor Press Sampler* | 3 | 2001 *Annual*. Much of *The Cenacle*'s old crew was featured—some of whom I'd fallen somewhat or completely out of touch with by 2004—art by Barbara Brannon, prose rant by Jim Burke III, fiction by G.C. Dillon, poetry by both Joe Ciccone & Ric Amante, essay by Mark Shorete, & a few samples from my 6 x 36 *Nocturnes* series. The *Sampler* series is meant to cull the best of Scriptor Press's originally published work (so no Burning Man books or *Cenacle* reprints), to detach a volume's worth & send it along to the world. If done with care & timeliness, its concept holds much promise.

We packed up our tent & boxes of publications & traveled to Burning Man 2004 via the Green Tortoise, an alternative-to-Greyhound travel service which also runs trips down the West Coast & across the North American continent. Great heaps of bicycles stacked on its roof, the bus hauled a couple of dozen very excited people to Black Rock City, many like Kassi new to the event. We made & ate meals communally, aided each other in acclimating to the desert & opening out to the festival's many promises.

Kassi & I brought Scriptor Press's many books & publications, 24 copies of over 40 titles, each day to Center Camp, spread them all on a blanket, & mixed in with the crowds going by, stopping to see. This was No Borders Free Bookstore's 6th year & my favorite so far.

By night we wandered, often tripping, through camps, fire dancers, random strange shit, grokking with countless others in many kinds of ways. I remember one particularly sweet eve, looking for the Starlight Drive-In when I'd often seen movies in previous years, sometimes falling asleep on its scattered mattresses. We never found it but walked on & on in the high wind, the dust storm less seen than felt. Here I was at last with my true love in my adopted native city. All was well.

Too soon we returned to the daily yoke. KD resumed classes & part-time work, & I continued to work at Borders Books, a corporate fascist charnel house for any possible freedom of thought or individuality among its booksellers. Low paid, & by manner of treatment presumed to be potential thieves. Bookbags & purses checked upon arrival & exit, constantly watched & graded for signs of relaxing or reading, formulaically adjudged for worth & reward, had my fellow bookselling slaves not been so decent, had I not a household to help keep, & an indie press to finance, had it been easier to find better work or I more truly motivated, not tired by day & night, I might have left sooner. As it was I slogged on there for the rest of the year, compelling myself to work hard to become well-regarded by management & labor alike even as I spoke my dissenting mind & took shit rarely.

September saw publication of *Scriptor Press Sampler* | 4 | 2002. This was a challenging volume to produce as only *Cenacle* | 47 | Dec 2002 existed to represent that year. Thus SPS 4's simply prints art & writing from that issue, featuring Amante, Brannon, & Soulard. But it did travel other paths than C47 at times, & carried along its own series another year. Worth doing for that.

November 2004 was another presidential election time. Had there not been so many rigged elections, had the Democrats not nominated another weak-willed nerd in the Humphrey/McGovern/Mondale/Dukakis mode, had people come



out to vote in truly respectable numbers, I would not be writing from what remains the American Empire, well aware how things might have been & are not, having by force of will hardly been able to rouse up myself & countless others to attempt yet another electoral turn back of the lunatic cabal running DC as of this winter 2005-2006. Hope is everywhere & always but its welcome, how deeply it is being tapped, varies much.

Scriptor Press Sampler | 5 | 2003 was the last major publication of the year, appearing in December. Its cover features a Burning Man 2003 photo collage by my partner, & newly minted Assistant Editor, Kassi Kramer, & within my sentiments to sum up the year by way of Mahatma Ghandi's words: "Be the change you want to see in the world." My "Editor's Note" strikes a hopeful note too, saying in part: "... now is a continual mystery, stays and goes perpetually. Things change, it can get better if it feels bad, in this world and others too."



The contributors are a mix of newcomers & stalwarts: Haggai, Brannon, Burke, Amante, Soulard, Kramer. I would bring them all along still if I could, these & others too. Some possible still to recover, others little likely. Things change, & change again. What mattered is that Scriptor Press had come out of the worst of its days—my days, of course—and was finding its way back into the world, hoping readers still waited or pended—

The ElectroLounge ended the year on a fruitful note too. With the help of my friend Alfie Ilkins in the UK, & his offer of Web server space, I was able to launch an archive for my radio show. This involved converting each broadcast to a single mp3 audio file, checking it for problems, & uploading it. I created an archives page to list the archived shows as they accumulated, & to promote the next live show.

december 21, 2004

3:32 p.m.

viewmont

seattle, washington

today exciting news...i've added the three most recent broadcasts of my radio show, "within's within: scenes from the psychedelic revolution w/soulard"...i started doing this show back in january 1999 at radio free cambridge in cambridge, massachusetts, it was low watt FM radio...then in 2000 at allston-brighton free radio in allston, mass...that was low watt AM and eventually webcast too...now my show is on spiritplants radio on the web...the archive added to this site today marks the greatest availability of this show to date...thanks to my friend Alfie in UK for the web space to make it possible...



It had been a tumultuous year of change & movement but, as delineated here at great length, one of much work. I've learned that it is only by years-long effort of scattered minutes & hours can worthy results emerge. Nearly ten years into the revived Scriptor Press, an idea born in my private adolescent dreams & notebooks, & I was still learning this by the results of better & worse nights. The most epic writing of my career came to its conclusion in December 2004.

It had begun in June 2000 on a bus traveling from Boston, Massachusetts to Hartford, Connecticut, & was originally, simply, *36 Nocturnes*, another poetry series like others I'd done & published in *The Cenacle* [*Stranger America*, 4-5 | Summer 1995; *Orpheus & Eurydice: Making the Lyre*, 31 | December 1998; *Two Vessels*, 39-40 | Winter 2000]. I wanted to mix poems like DJs mix musics; mix lines & see what came of it. The project became more ambitious when I realized it would be more than 36 poems. It would be six series of 36, & each series got longer & more ambitious as I mixed erotic love, psychedelics, nature, loneliness, hope, music, dreams, kept along the path as it multi-dimensionalized, at one point color, going for more, this was my current shot at the clearing, the place of arrival, & there were times my *Nocturnes* were pretty much all I had, traveling to the West, Seattle, Portland, Black Rock City; the East, Hartford, Boston, it went on & on, & the sixth series was vastest of all, a series of series, epic after epic, whatever it meant to anyone else these poems meant everything to me & here it was in the last months of 2004 I was down to the 360th & last poem of the series, "Cry [for Cassandra]."

I worked over this poem as I'd never worked over a poem before. I couldn't write it at one go, didn't want to, no, I wanted to write successive versions, one & the next & the next, longer & longer, lines appearing new & next, some coming & going & coming again, I wrote it often on the late evening bust ride over Lake Washington from Bellevue Borders Books to Seattle & awaiting KD. Wrote it over & over, throwing my all into it, hustling & worrying it, possessing it & possessed by it, one vessels, two vessels, many vessels, none. Breath, relax. I tried to finish it a few times before I did; I remember one night with candles at our kitchen table. It came as it came, that's all. On December 3, 2004, I wrote the final lines:

*What lasting? The music of every open hand.
What abide? Love's every pock, its countless tugs upon the fabric.
What begins, & a beat, & begins again? Hope, its mystery rise,
its helpless decline.*

*Cry out! What breathes worlds listens, & listens for you.**

& it was done, 360 poems & 4+ years made of my days, my music, my blood, & the rest too.

For all the even more I wanted to do that year, more of the same & wish ever for new & different, I can nonetheless look back at 2004 & say: alright, fine. Kassi & I fell asleep shortly after the New Year arrived in the U.S. Pacific time zone; I could not have wished to be anywhere else as the clock struck twelve.



* Editor's Note: The full text of this poem appears on page 1 of this issue.

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 Twelve
continued from
The Cenacle | 56 | December 2005

It had been four years since I had lived for a full calendar year in the same home, & one of my own choosing. Couches, spare bedrooms, rooming house, generous hosting by friends but none mine own. All transitional while some fucked-up circumstance was playing itself through. Unemployment, heartbreak, defeat high & low, perseverance without guarantee. Through this all I carried my pens & notebooks, filling pages, cracking despair & going further, sometimes handfuls of lingual shimmer, sometimes brooding, shallow, selfish crap, but always another day, another page, a breathless hungry wish.

I lived in 2005 in Seattle with my partner & dearest friend Cassandra Kramer &, on its final day, we wed in her hometown in eastern Colorado. We lived in a studio apartment on Capitol Hill, an artsy, gay area of the city, knew daily its indie coffee houses & murky hills. Its denizens young, friendly as city folk get, which is not saying too much.

The year's challenge, then, where its bruises & woes most collected, was not in my intimate relations or dwelling issues, but in finding decent, ongoing work. Took the whole run of the year, til hardly a week before its end, for me to toss the ball straight & swish through the basket.

Scriptor Press did well in 2005. Completed & disseminated were three issues of *The Cenacle*; six new titles in the Burning Man Books series; 36 online broadcasts of "Within's Within: Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution"; a developing version of the *ElectroLounge* leaner on dead links & wealthier with online PDF versions of Scriptor Press projects; & an on-time release of *Scriptor Press Sampler*, its first since the inaugural issue in 1999.

Fueled by stability, my writing also prospered. My year-long projects included the *New Songs (for Cassandra)* 180-poem cycle & the 600-page fiction *Why?* In the first I sought to play short acoustic yet rabidly ambitious songs; in the second, forego easy accessibility for a chance to strike far into something true.

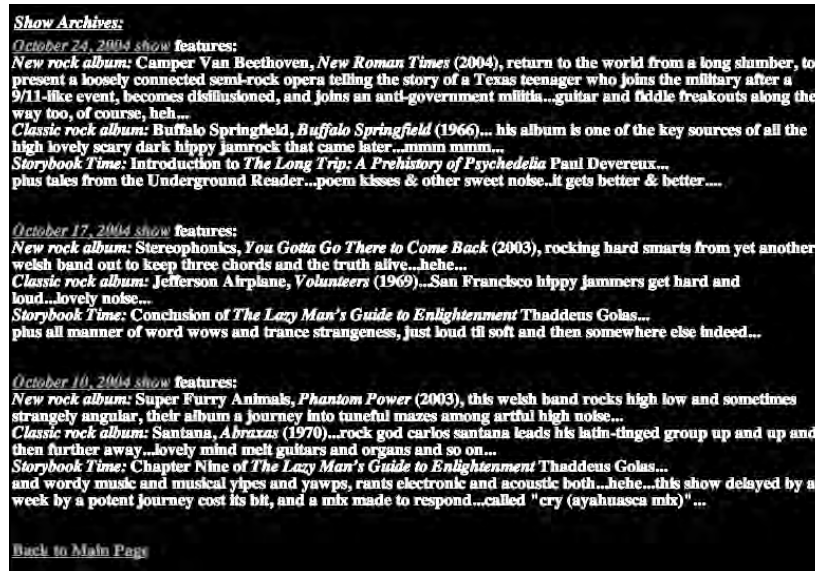
Penury's dread followed along the days, close, closer, close again. One simply has to move as swiftly as the world's resisting forest of bones will let. The bastards never lastly

depart, endless their will to crush & consume. Respond with teeth til become only dust & heart its concluding beat.

Stability means trust in the ground below, & thus a chance to look deeper around at possibilities about. I'd come to Seattle in 2004 because I believed that in the Pacific Northwest both Scriptor Press & my art would bloom new as they both had in mid-1990s during my first years in Boston. Renewal in what I sought—and sought it in two fairly different directions: fleshspace & cyberspace. Both I'd worked in before but a great wish to do more.

Each bears its appeal: fleshspace the timeless one of face-to-face connection, cyberspace the chance to arc too-great physical space to reach souls otherwise unlikely to be ever known otherwise. Thus the year inaugurated with Scriptor Press launching deeper into both these spaces, & the months ensuing these pursuits breached even further.

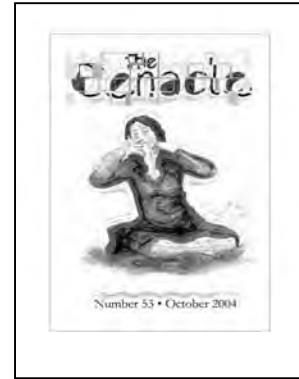
The ElectroLounge expanded its offerings in January to include PDF files of *Scriptor Press Sampler* | 1 | 1999 & 5 | 2004, completing the collection available there. Also added to the site's "Within's Within" radio show archive were MP3 files for broadcasts from 10/24/04, 11/07/04, 11/14/04, 11/22/04, 12/26/04, & 01/09/05. These six show archives were uploaded &, in October when broadcasts from 1/23/05, 1/30/05, 2/6/05, 2/13/05, 2/20/05 were added, the number raised to eleven. Adding substantial content to Internet sites like *ElectroLounge* is crucial to how we are building legitimate new media in cyberspace. Offering well-made work espousing alternative values & ideas to those spoke by the corporate-owned doglick media. Gift economy, like what exists at Burning Man, goes farther than the idea of "alternative," in attempting to build new human society & relations. Cyberspace transmits many of these idea & espouses them, too. It's work & excitement both to be involved in essentially a global project.



On the first day of 2005 I began a new poem cycle, *New Songs (for Cassandra)*, inaugurating just a few months after I finished the 2000-2004 mammoth work *6 x 36 Nocturnes*. In contrast to the vast songs of that work, some pages long, like epic acid rock guitar solos, *New Songs* is acoustic, most poems under a dozen lines, countless tries at packing the great arching energies of *6 x 36N* into tight, potent bursts. Initially I vowed to write a poem a day for the whole year; after doing this for over a month, I settled on a goal of 180 poems, about one every two days. Half the number of poems of *6 x 36N* but written in a

year instead of four and a half years. I intended the poems to culminate with my marriage to Kassi, to whom they are dedicated. I was also thinking of Pablo Neruda's *100 Love Songs* when I conceived *New Songs*. I wanted not to top 6x36N in quantity, but to match it in wide, deep, breaching scope.

6 x 36 Nocturnes profoundly changed my ideas about poetry, about the canvas size I could & wished to use. Whatever its worth, I found my voice full, a desire to plumb deep as possible within & without, & return with strange words to describe what found. *New Songs*, a title alluding to Rilke's *New Poems*, continued my pursuits, a wish to raise the intensity of every poem, short & long.



February 2005 saw the late release of *Cenacle* | 53 | October 2004. Despite, maybe because of, its lateness, it's a good issue. In looking it over a couple of years later, I notice especially the visual art it contains. The cover features a rendering of my friend & *Cenacle*-featured poet Judih Haggai, done by her friend Anemone Achtnich & remixed by me. The back cover features a remix of the remix. Also notable are the pictures I took while living in Connecticut, I think a kind of therapy I pursued while living there in 2003-2004. Another graphic image was one Kassi & I made together, a collage of images of Ravenna Park in Seattle. There have been issues of *The Cenacle* where I didn't have much contributor art to go with, so I became more conscious of my (unschooled) skills with photography—& sometimes Photoshop. I believe the new technologies of the past decade or so have made it possible for people without natural genius talent in a given art to breach into valid creation. A good camera combined with Photoshop allows me nearer my old dream of painting beautiful canvases, lets me feel a little bit of that magic in the visual medium I've often known with written language.

The writing in *Cenacle* 53 is good, too. Contributions by Jim Burke III, Judih Haggai, & the continuing serialization reprint (from the *San Francisco Oracle* issue number 7) of "The Houseboat Summit" held in Sausalito, California back in February 1967 by Allen Ginsberg, Timothy Leary, Alan Watts, & Gary Snyder—plus my *6 x 36 Nocturnes*, *New Period*, & the 2001 chapter of this narrative comprise the issue.

In Jim Burke III's C53 letter to me, he considers the idea of a "Supreme Being" & argues that no definitive yes or no can truly be defended. He argues for a "*third alternative*" that would be the "solution to all thought," for possible answers in the "mysteries not bounded by time, space, or yes and no."

I look over Judih Haggai's poems from this issue & no lines leap out at me but instead I marvel at a consistent atmosphere in her poems of parts humor, restlessness, yearning. She sees the world's strangely colliding parts, or parts colliding strangely, & finds her music in these collisions, their sounds of laughter & moan. Her music croons & wishes, moves rhythmically & often without the encumbrance of forethought, or regret.

The next section of my serialized fixtion *New Period* appeared in *Cenacle* 53. Because my fictions are so long, & only so much to an issue, & only so many issues a year, I found myself publishing pages I'd written in early 1999. They bear the sweet of my ongoing truth among the must of old thoughts & passions, fierce hours gone, & gone. A decade of publishing my prose in this singular venue had long revealed these advantages & drawbacks. With the exception of cyberspace, or some unimagined Scriptor Press venture, I can see no better one.

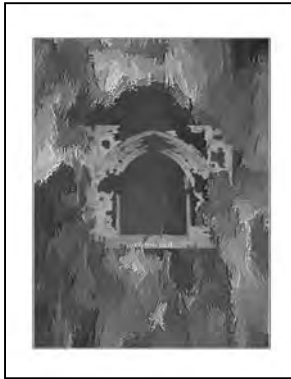
So *New Period* continued to play out its fractured tale of time & space breached between decades & persons, its obsessed rove for clarity's infinite moment, for calm's wantless shore:

"There is a secret joy amongst these times, a within's within, a known & speckled spectral thing, an exploding blare & swoop from between our dreams, a series of coded midnight shadows, glyphs taut with our best laughter, all cosmos, we are all cosmos, all cosmos, without & within, we are all, all cosmos, all careening, liquefying, we need to begin now, secret joy, within's within, begin now, trade into ecstasy, begin, trade, each's eyes for every's vision, trade, ears for song, fuck for immolation, Godd for yes, yes for mystery, mystery for silence, silence for delight, delight for evanescence, evanescence for dream, dream for ecstasy, ecstasy, ecstasy, ecstasy for beginning, beginning for continuance, continuance for here, here for now for here for now here now here nowhere now here & now here & now here & now here & now & now & now & now & now & now."

My *6 x 36 Nocturnes* were nearing their last issue, with five of the final six poems appearing. I was glad for this, too, as these poems had been written a couple of years earlier, & I wanted them given print's debut & let go:

*Not at peace, dance harder, eat every beat
deeper, feel the world open out in gunfire
& poverty. Feel the war crossing nearby
streets, & peace hustle & snicker right
after, & music lay across every night like a golden bomb.*

In March I began adding *New Songs* to the *ElectroLounge*. The 'net is one swift & successful way to disseminate Art, move writing & images & music swiftly from finished piece to the eyes & ears of countless many. Too, adding these poems continued this site's transformation from links-oriented to content-heavy.



Scriptor Press Sampler | 6 | 2004 *Annual* made its appearance, on time, in April 2005, which also marked Scriptor Press's tenth anniversary. Ten years from a press whose tools consisted of two typewriters & a desktop photocopier, works disseminated by hand to a handful of friends, to a viable presence on the Internet, a press whose works in paper & electronic form can be found scattered round the globe.

What gained, what lost? Always some of each. Gained a wider audience, more forms of works (magazine, chapbooks, website, radio program); lost the intimacy of those gone years, Saturday nights with my Jellicle Guild tribe at Roma Restaurant in New Britain, Connecticut. The nights I was up til dawn readying a *Cenacle* before getting on the Greyhound bus to travel down from Boston. Wishing for wider vistas, for a way to reach the greater world. It came, I tapped it deep, but those Saturday nights haunt me still. Thirteen years of them, many before *The Cenacle* existed, & it mattered, I knew it did then, I still believe this.

Scriptor Press was my youth's secret project, a dream of pencils & paper. Then it was a shared collaboration during the years when far away was still far away. Now it strives the lands as much as many other indie projects do, takes its small bit of attention, gives all it can. Anyway, sadness, breathe, & back to *Scriptor Press Sampler* 6. In its "Editor's Note" I write, in part, that "[i]ndependent publishing is vitally alive & well in the world, both in print & in cyberspace. The dependence writers & artists once had on central megaliths of power to promote & distribute their ideas & visions is being broken day by day. The freaks are finally finding each other & making new ways. Join us." The issue features G.C. Dillon's "The Cat

and the Moon”; Judih Haggai’s poetry; a letter by Jim Burke III; & my *6 x 36 Nocturnes* poem “Terrestrial Music (for Lisa Marie)” & *New Period* fiction excerpt.

My first challenge with the *SPS* series was to figure out its form & frequency. Once I decided it would be an annual issue in April, I had to figure how to distribute it. For now, it passes round in cyberspace & at events like Burning Man & the Portland Zine Symposium. But this isn’t enough. It’s intended to scatter round in print form too, in coffeehouses & bookstores & the like. Doing this waits still.

As these projects were happening, Kassi & I were facing more prosaic challenges in Seattle. The Borders Bookstore I’d worked at for nearly a year announced it was closing, & all its employees were suddenly facing layoff in a couple of months. I’d hated the corporate fascist bullshit behind the scenes at the store (employee’s bags being searched upon entry & exit; a managerial style designed to enforce constant, sometimes meaningless movement), but the checks cleared & it was steady work.

I’d already been job hunting for better but now I was moving with fierceness. In late April I was lucky enough to contract editing work with a local online travel company. The money was better & I was back to doing professional editorial work. This gig lasted until August; a competent boss having been replaced by a young loon, I was dismissed. Fuck them, I moved along.

Cenacle | 54 | April 2005 made its belated entry into the world in May. Its cover is a chance photo of the Jimi Hendrix statue on Capitol Hill in Seattle. A tiny marijuana roach was placed between his lips by some kind, anonymous person. Kassi & I designed the cover together.

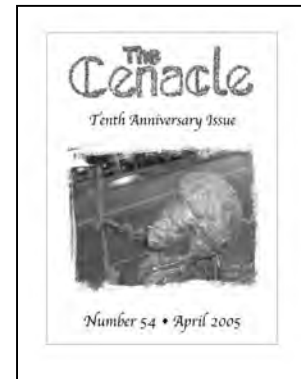
I decided that within *The Cenacle*’s pages I wanted to pursue an ongoing idea of mine. I’d contrived the acronym PENMAD—Psychedelics, Eros, Nature, Magick, Art, Dreams—to signify my primary pursuits. I thought I’d add to the regular reprint feature of a psychedelics essay a second reprint devoted to one of those other themes every issue.

Toward this end, I found online “Paratheatrical Dreaming” by Antero Alli. In it, Alli writes: “Ancient dream theory tells us we are all dreaming and/or being dreamed..amidst the omnipresent dreamtime . . .” He elaborates a ritual for a kind of waking life engagement with dreamtime.

C54 features the 23rd letter published by Jim Burke III, in 42 issues; in this one he writes about Henry David Thoreau as one who deep communed with nature & was a “master of allegory.” Burke continues on to consider trees, & warns: “As more trees are taken, more water tables are altered, and more flood plains are lowered, the trees sacrifice themselves as the Cambodian Buddhist monks did to protest the Vietnam War. Self-immolation!! It is more than a coincidence that trees will break before they bend to excess, to bow to the whim of mankind.” Burke’s prose reaches for hope, reaches past where familiar thoughts lay, reaches for a warmth which encompasses all. Vast thoughts.

Judih Haggai contributes her regular group of rhythmic yearning musics; there is a passage that stands out in “Agree to Disagree”:

*the spirit of forever
roaring lions through our veins
agree to disagree
agree to carry on
palpitations making noise*



*we'll pulse together
a new planet on mother earth*

There is in these lines a tolerance, there is hope, not for a change in human character to something distinctly new, but a realization of what's there, what good waits within if one, & then another & another, chooses to engage it.

In the third & final part of the February 1967 "Houseboat Summit," Alan Watts, Timothy Leary, Gary Snyder, & Allen Ginsberg discuss technology, civilized society, & the seven-day week which governs modern Western society. Discussing the week's origins in the Old Testament, Snyder says: "it implies that making the world was a job . . . [a]nd any universe that is worth creating isn't any job to create." Again the word *hope* comes to my mind, like Burke's letter & Judih's poems. A war then, a war now, & astride its horrors, hope.

My writing featured in four pieces in C54: a letter comprising "From Soulard's Notebooks"; the last poem of *6 x 36 Nocturnes*; the next section of the fixtion *New Period*; & the chapter of this history covering 2002.

The first of these is a letter to my beloved Cassandra, a lengthy review of Scriptor Press's 10-year history: "I'd like Scriptor Press to matter again as it did once to a few people—matter bigger—from my basement to an obscure restaurant to something more—I pursue this end daily—toward Scriptor Press free & for sale in Seattle, Portland, Vancouver, San Francisco, New York, Chicago, & elsewhere—Paris, London, Tel Aviv—Black Rock City since '99, why not everywhere, urging an indie press to better days, a counterculture to a prouder influence, the re-ascendence of the freaks & their nutty lovely wishes to love the planet, praise the stars, map our dreams, sing a thousand drums strong to those listening in far elsewheres?" Always this pressure to do more, more often, farther, wider . . .

It had taken 4½ years to write *6 x 36 Nocturnes* & it would take this issue and two more to publish its last poem, "Lasting." This poem is the 36th poem of the sixth series of 36 poems, & comprises 36 poems. I'd pushed this series to its aesthetic, emotional, & structural limits. This issue prints 28 of those last 36 poems. I wrote them while living in Portland, Oregon, as my dream arced through Western skies, & slowly faded, & yet I lived on. Impossibly, I lived on, I believe literally my *Nocturnes* were greatly responsible. When love was gone, Art remained. Art insisted. Art held me up when nothing else did, & when I refused all else too.

As I read these poems now, winter 2006-2007, them several years old, I see how deeply I embedded in them. Nobody could read them them & know them as I do. I see their bloodstains, I see their furious wordless undersurface. I remember their aching nights, years of aching nights. They comprised my faith, spoke my magick, dreamed my hopeless hope.

There is one poem, "[untitled]," that was unlike any I'd ever written. I was back in Connecticut, where some of the late *Nocturnes* were written, & one night was sick in my friend's bathroom, tripping very high & squat over the throne. I stood up, looked down at the least of myself afloat in water, & later wrote to it:

*The residual is comfort. A free sigh among
the monuments, heat now sated. Breathe.
Relax. I look down at it. Shit is beautiful.*

An elaborate 36-line joke. The *Nocturnes* now had everything I could offer. What left but to finish them?

New Period [a new fixtion] continued in *Cenacle* 54. It is drenched in the lysergic novelty that was my life at the end of the 1990s. Graduate school in Boston & LSD. I truly believed in Art & nothing else comforted me, & Art did not comfort me enough, conundrum. I was

so deep in my words & the world's Art they embedded within, that perhaps there was no room for anyone else that deep. Has anything changed, near a decade later?

I don't know if people change so much as evolve, & some even cease doing this after a time. What my years living alone, most of my free hours alone have brought to me now, married, is a sense of the value & pain of solitude. How it teaches until it corrodes with overdose. How the mind adjusts to its own company, & re-adjusts to intimates. How humans, in short, are every one neither quite solitary nor gregarious. Choices involved, & made, as countless other things.

Still, *New Period* sticks to me freshly at moments:

Begin, raw, incandescence. Raw, full moon, broad tree in sleepless field of dancers & doors. Full moon, raw, strips of woe. Raw. Incandescence. Begin.

Continue, mature, dreams til daylight . . . then blankness . . . hookah explanations . . . theories, purgations, crescendos. Blood & thunder. Continue, dreamless daylight. Beards & woolen caps 'gainst the frost of doubt. Cold. Colder. Burn. Burning.

Burn. Burning. Most hopeful that we all burn together. Most fearful that we are all candles, flickering on, flicking off.

But burning. Burning, no matter the. Burning, beginning, still raw, words & skin, music & colors, laughter & fire. Laughter.

C54's back cover was by an online friend, Fuzz, of a favorite stretch of road in Denmark, & captioned multiply: "wither next?" So I was asking every day & keep asking, & keep asking.

In June I worked at the *ElectroLounge's* radio page, concerned with both adding to its archives, & posting descriptions of new broadcasts. The summer proved an especially busy one for publishing-related events. We attended an event called *Stetset*, a gathering of local indie & zine publishers, at a downtown Seattle bar & Cafe. It was fun for Kassi & I to see our local peers. We also attended the Portland Zine Symposium, a larger event in downtown Portland. To the first event we stayed up all night readying copies of *Cenacle 54* to bring. To the latter we brought *Cenacles*, *Scriptor Press Samplers*, RaiBooks, & Burning Man Books, a whole array of projects to gift away.

These events were new to us, a way to expand where our work touched & who we met. Our trip in August to Burning Man 2005 was, of course, the summer's highlight & what our work finally pointed toward. We drove this year, our car Syd, our bikes hanging from her trunk, our week's worth of water, supplies, tents, packed with. No Borders Free Bookstore open for business at Black Rock City for a seventh year.

What made the trip more poignant & precious was the money difficulties we faced that August. My job at the online travel agency ended suddenly. Panic at the time; looking back, good riddance. Scrambling for new work while readying hundreds of chapbooks made tense days. It worked out, even to being able to have time off from a new job to travel to Burning Man. I was happy it played out as it did. The new job was editorial work for a phone company. What mattered, bluntly, was the paychecks clearing, & our freedom to leave Seattle for a week for our other home.

The volumes in Burning Man Books 2005 are heavy on modern short fiction: Herman Hesse's lyrical "Strange News from Another Planet"; William Faulkner's horrific "Dry September"; Jorge Luis Borges' cryptic "Circular Ruins"; & Philip K. Dick's sweet "The King of the Elves." Also a seventh volume of writings on psychedelics titled *All is Dream*. And, dear to me especially for the work Kassi & I did on it together, *Many Blooms: An Anthology of Modern Women Poets*.

The selection process for Burning Man Books has become more complex as the library of titles has grown. For the first several years, I simply selected my favorite writers;

more recently I began to seek a balance, a range. More female writers, more non-Western writers, more pre-modern writers. Slowly, this plan has been working, while the literary quality of the library has grown from its variety. The short fictions this year brought several major voices into the collection (Faulkner, Hesse, Borges) &, unhooked from his genre grotto, the great Philip K. Dick. *All is Dream*, the newest psychedelics anthology, continued Scriptor Press's open mission to educate the counterculture old & young (& anyone else willing to read) about the profound & continuing effects of psychedelics on human development.

Many Blooms was conceived by Kassi who wanted a volume devoted to women poets. We tried out various ideas, asking ourselves what range of times & places could we fit into a 40-60 page chapbook. After reading widely & thinking out loud to each other many times, we chose six American & European poets: Wislawa Szymborska, Elizabeth Bishop, Jorie Graham, Adrienne Rich, Marianne Moore, & Margaret Atwood. This book works because its focus is whittled sharply enough & its contents are chosen carefully enough to create a coherent whole, a sense in most readers that here is a book with rewards within, spruced up, nicely presented, its pleasures awaiting.



The trip to Black Rock City was a tiring one, several days' drive, & the Black Rock Desert in high summer its withering self. Burning Man is sometimes depicted in the mass media as a week-long party but in truth it is a pilgrimage with many facets. It's not easy—souls strain at times, bodies deplete, minds diminish. No Borders Free Bookstore is a success because it engages people as thinking, feeling individuals, & gifts them for being so. Hard, beautiful event.

News of the Hurricane Katrina disaster in the American Gulf Coast was hitting the airwaves as people were departing the event. Collections were taken up at the exit gate. Katrina has become a symbol of government indifference & incompetence. Many died

needlessly, a city was destroyed needlessly, where once government help for the victims of a disaster would have been immediately assured, this time there was finger-pointing, blame-shirking, tries at deluding the country & world about how bad things really were down in Louisiana and Mississippi.

Governments are more than controlling instruments of power, & people are more than tax-paying entities. We live, along with every creature & object, on one planet, subject as much to its fundamental aspects as it is to our behavior. When we, every one of us of every kind, become *you & they & else*, little good will come of it. Once I more admired the ideas of tribalism as superior to nation-states. Now I see any exclusion of anything for any reason as death gesture. We are one manifest as many. There is our challenge, especially humans who fancy themselves “stewards of the planet,” even believe in their superiority. Look around where you stand or sit. See a muddled picture at best of how well our stewardship is going.

News of Katrina’s destructions & the iniquitous war in Iraq filled headlines & TV news shows as the year wore down. I’ve aimed Scriptor Press to advocate against Bush’s American Empire aspirations, adding to the voices of dissent. Much of this high-minded intent manifests in small ways: working steady at my new job to pay for desktop publishing & dissemination costs; pruning & updating *The ElectroLounge*’s links pages; adding more radio archives to *The ElectroLounge*, & a radio show Podcast link. I did my radio show at least three times a month & began work toward *Cenacle* | 55 | October 2005.

Kassi & I had our own hours too, especially weekends wherein we went to movies, journeyed through the city, & stayed up all hours on Saturday nights watching old & new TV shows like *Twin Peaks*, *Bones*, *Threshold*, *Invasion*, & *Surface*. Happy, private hours, time for me away from pen & press.

In November, our wedding date nearing, we flew to Connecticut for Kassi to meet my kin & friends, & see my origins, those existing & those ghosts live yet in my memory. It was a strange confluence to be sitting in my family’s home in Connecticut with my wife-to-be. The years collapsed into an afternoon. The first woman I’d ever introduced to my parents and siblings. Their gifts & well wishes. Blood bond’s multiple insistentences.

I showed KD many places where I used to write; we traveled by public bus all over as I had done back to my teenage years. It was fun, maybe the kind embedded in sadness & sentiment. Cement Park, Peoples Donutshop. I let the old places have their honored due, & then we flew back to our shared life in Seattle.

Arrived back with yet another of my contract jobs over, this one by project’s completion, what to do next. Health issues made the situation all the more tense. I jobhunted like an obsessed soul, no choice, none other priority. Jobhunting is an indecent activity when one’s survival is at stake, whatever peace & stability one has achieved. I’d been through my share of suffering & empty wallet, sleepless nights, learned to walk a humbler path by circumstance, not choice, & walked it I did. Others had helped, but it was my will being tested. Had I come back from the worst of my days intact enough to take care of myself & another?

One morning in early December I walked into a downtown Seattle office & submitted myself to several hours of interviews for a job I thought had already been taken—but a chance call to check had discovered to me that it had not.

That morning I was in a kind of psychic sirocco, I had to win this job, there was neither time nor options left, I was out of my mind that morning, I spoke with a confidence & certainty only adrenaline & desperation could have raised in me. Whenever I think about the mysteries of the world, strange things which cannot be singularly accounted for, I think



of that morning, how I had to will into being an uncreated circumstance, & I did. I admit I don't understand my self muchless anything else. Life befuddles all.

Employed, finally, so long searching for stability, for more than retail work, more than contract work, for something with good pay & benefits, & respect for the years I've spent building up my skills as an editor, & having scored work as a database administrator & editor, relieved as fuck, I turned to getting *Cenacle* | 55 | October 2005 completed. It was late but it got made.

C55 is a fairly simple issue with only a few contributors. The cover, a complex psychedelic depiction of the "Green Man," is

by recent contributor Fuzz, a woman who I'd also worked with on SpiritPlants Radio. The rest of the issues art collects nigh a dozen photographs Kassi & I'd taken in Seattle & while on our Burning Man travels, which I then shot through Photoshop with what layperson's graphic skills I've developed.

Each issue of *The Cenacle* I describe in this history includes a mention of Judih Haggai's poems. One of her poems in C55 is called "cadmium blue" & ends thus:

*is this the color
of my love
an oozing tube modestly spent
to paint you
in print and folly
& to sign in pre-dawn whisper*

I think sometimes, when lucky, we get an artist stuck in our heads, could be words, images, sounds, etc. We conjure within this person, a personal version, real but within. I read those words above & hear my inly Judih, add these words, their music, to my stores of her words & music.

Wanting to cross Scriptor Press projects more often & deeply, C55 featured Carl Gustav Jung's essay, "On the Nature of Dreams," previously re-printed as a volume of Burning Man Books 2004. Jung ranges about his mind for an understanding of the dream function & concludes in part that dreams "compensate" for an individual's waking life while remaining otherwise subordinate to it. He writes of personal dreams & those that derive from racial collective unconscious & yet concedes, for all his pages of theory, that no final answer may be offered on the topic.

The issue's other reprint is "The Psychedelic [in] Society: A Brief Cultural History of Tripping" by Charles Hayes, which also appeared in the Burning Man 2005 chapbook *All is Dream*. Hayes gives a pretty extensive accounting of psychedelia in both modern & ancient times, accounting for such matters as the Eleusinian Mysteries & the psychotropic origins of the Disney film *Fantasia*. He concludes: "There is no doubt that with the advent of the new millennium, the use of psychedelics will continue to rise, both responsibly and otherwise, as they are increasingly seen as tools for penetrating the veils of quotidian *maya* and mass-media illusion spun by corporate greed." Veritas.

My contributions were of the same kind as the previous issue. "From Soulard's Notebooks" was a patchwork covering job woes, poetry, Burning Man, & my return in August '05 to Portland, Oregon for the first time since I'd moved away in February 2002. The issue's chapter of this history covered 2003, a year I began in careening despair & concluded in wispy new hopes.

6x36 *Nocturnes* features the last six but one poems in the series. I look at these poems with a loving sentimental hunger, to be so close to concluding a 4½ year work, all the blotches & the blood of it:

*“Open again tonight, sing like thighs
new & ready for the first hard take,
something matters, everything matters,
every passing moment implode &
then gone, new greening, ever first
alike, universe perpetual moan & make.”*

So hungrily close.

Finally, to tell of *New Period*, its intense halo of loneliness, its bejoyed acid many marriages. Or tell of it thus:

*“I watch a shiny-cheeked smiling lass near me an energy of youth excitement vitality
fecundity roars aura round her yet there she sits five feet lone million estrangements from me I love
you all out there tonight love you all the ones I know knew will know won’t know the magic is
alight tonight between my heart mind eye pen paper & I can only say: grateful. Because one hurt me.
Because another smiled. Because this one sprayed perfume on me. Because that one sold me LSD
very cheaply. All the money spent years & years beers & kisses & full moons & a continuous
laughter always & everywhere I love you all because tonight I hurt so badly because tonight I am
afloat with ecstasy because I have a good battered bed to go home to, because no warm arms await
me, because this one thinks me a hero & that one knows I’m a goat because I’m in someone’s
dreams & someone else is in mine because I’ve learned to write in some queer secret way more kin to
the classics of another era than the buzzcut neon landscapes of today”*

The work for C55 & its distribution finished in mid-December & though I started work on the next issue, my focus for the last couple of weeks of the year was starting my new job, & getting married. The former proceeded only a bit; the latter was winding up months of preparation.

I’d always expected to get married at some point in my life. Most of us do, some of us more than once. I’d come close a couple of times before, but I suppose others do that too.

When it was finally happening, with Kassi, it seemed in a way more a progression than the “great leap” some call it. Kassi was a marrying kind too, & she was quite wanting to with me.

Kassi was raised in the Roman Catholic Church, & it remains important in her life. Her beliefs are shaded, not controlled, by her religion. She has her own mind & heart about things. I was not raised in either of my parents’ religions, & believe my greatest youthful influences that stay are the many books I read, & the poverty my family experienced.

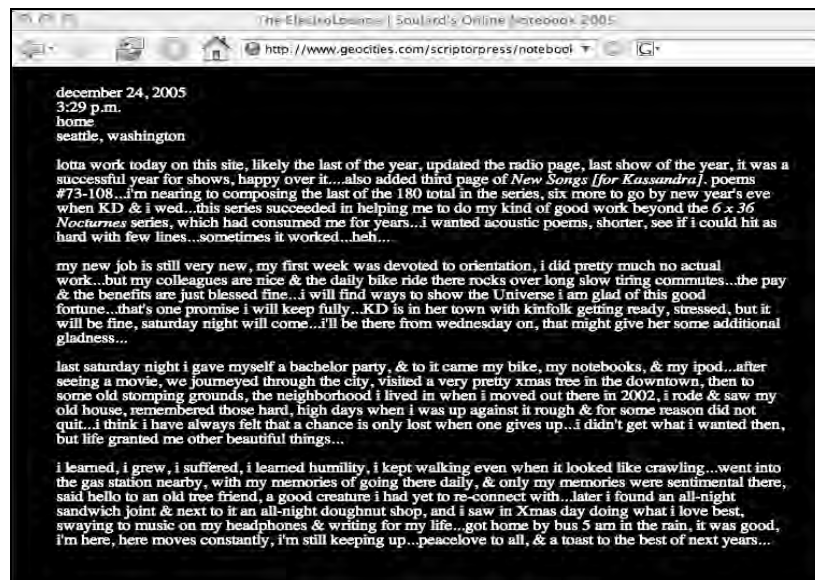
What mattered between us was how we knit together our shared days. Maybe that’s all that matters. I’ve loved so many people over the years, most of whom are likely still alive, most of whom I’ve not seen in years. People come & go, especially if one moves from place to place, geographically & psychically. So much of what people share is stuff of an hour, a passing year. Traces remain, deep graffiti on the soul.

Kassi is true, she & I share a love deep with empathy, she has stayed, stayed in times when I had little to offer, when I offered little. My life has twisted & shined me to a bright, moving half-wreck. My inner city burns & sings. To share any kind of love with me is intense, & changing. I’ve made & lost many friends, many loves. I bear a slime trail of regret & ecstasy behind me. I don’t know if I’d be someone else if I could or if I’d change my past life. Shit happens. Flowers grow.

With Kassi already in Colorado readying for our New Year's Eve day wedding at her little hometown church, I gave myself a bachelor party. My "Online Journal" at *The ElectroLounge* describes best:

Last Saturday night i gave myself a bachelor party, & to it came my bike, my notebooks, & my ipod... after seeing a movie, we journeyed through the city, visited a very pretty xmas tree in the downtown, then to some old stomping grounds, the neighborhood i lived in when i moved out there in 2002, i rode & saw my old house, remembered those hard, high days when i was up against it rough & for some reason did not quit... i think i have always felt that a chance is only lost when one gives up... i didn't get what i wanted then, but life granted me other beautiful things...

i learned, i grew, i suffered, i learned humility, i kept walking even when it looked like crawling... went into the gas station nearby, with my memories of going there daily, & only my memories were sentimental there, said hello to an old tree friend, a good creature i had yet to re-connect with... later i found an all-night sandwich joint & next to it an all-night doughnut shop, and i saw in Xmas day doing what i love best, swaying to music on my headphones & writing for my life... got home by 5 am in the rain, i'm here, here moves constantly, i'm still keeping up...



Earlier that year, on Burn Night at Burning Man 2005, with sparks flying over our heads, Kassi & I vowed fidelity to each other in a high, happy moment. Earlier than that, when we first met in person in December 2003, we'd kissed love in the rain of an Omaha hotel parking lot. There are the many mundane moments between two beloved, they pass on way to those which float, tap the heart's undersurface, stay, comprise the private myth two share, sometimes more than two, sometimes five companions, brothers at war, maybe two bartenders sweeping up at 3 a.m., maybe a cluster of exotic dancers, gulls, oaks, the shifting tectonic plates of the earth, tell me any these untrue, prove it so. Our vow in the little town's church witnessed by kinfolk I don't near to understand or know well, yet by their presence they stood up for me, sanctioned my alliance with their tribe, & we all saw the new year in together, I learn again & again how each of us is & isn't alone, both, perpetually, one as many, many the gift, one after the yearn, the difference little, & less.



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 Thirteen
continued from
The Cenacle | 60 | December 2006

So again to this annual task of recounting a year, the newest chapter now trailing comfortably a year behind the present hour. To describe a year in Scriptor Press's history is to inventory its publications, review them, & then embed them in the life I lived upon that time. Yet the mechanics do not fully circumscribe the process. Biography is ordering, summing shot through with interpretation. One reports that year's shifting terrain from where, & how, one is walking now.

2006 shows me how hungry I'd got for stability: one job, one home, one lover. For its length, & for a diminishing stretch thereafter, I got what I lacked.

It had been May 2001 when last I'd known a steady sailing in bed & purse. From job layoff that month til being hired full-time in December 2005 I'd flailed hard & wild. I'd fallen in love & it had gone badly. So badly. I look at those years now & see maybe an inevitability to it all. How so? Best I can say is that I had to chase deep in my Art's corest ideals & see how they held up to material life's common brutalities.

What I've come to see is that the particular girl I chased mattered a lot less than the chase itself. I wanted to see how far I would go for love, & would my Art hold? I believed it would. I believe I tested my Art severely & it survived. I pulled up short on love, however, unwilling to give over my last for it. Had I chosen love over Art, I'd not be writing these lines. I'd be homeless, maybe dead. Maybe neither, no way to know.

My point is that I arrived in 2006 hungry for stability *for my Art's sake*. That's what mattered most. I don't believe that excludes love for dearest ones, or places, or externals of various kinds. What I think it does mean is that I know what I am, what these many years summed mean now. Of course the tale continues for unknown days or decades to come, & I don't believe I know its whole import, but I think I have at least some clear eye on why I am sitting again in a beat Taco Bell in Portland, Oregon tonight & not somewhere else. Art drove me in 2001, 2005, & it drives me now. A why with sourceless roots for all that claim.

In January 2006 Kassi & I came back from her hometown in eastern Colorado, newly married at her little town's church. It was a pretty ceremony, the church decorated for wedding & holidays alike. I had mixed feelings about taking vows in her church, didn't join it

but did wed by its rituals. Love & marital union requires, I think, an opening out to the reality of another but also a necessary deepening into one's own soul. Two do not become one, in my view, except in creating a partnership, a collaboration between lives. Back in Seattle we continued doing what we'd been doing, but perhaps with a deeper sense of that union.

Having written this accumulating memoir for some years, & published it in *The Cenacle*, I decided in January to pull the disparate chapters together into one piece & put it up on Scriptor Press's website, *The ElectroLounge*. It's in rough draft form for now, but it's there.

On January 28, 2006, my radio show "The Within's Within: Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution" celebrated its 7th anniversary on the air. It's become an annual tradition on the anniversary broadcast to play a double album too long for a regular show. I played Neil Young & Crazy Horse's legendary *Live Rust*. Every time I DJ a show, I'm grateful for it. Some shows go better than others through the years but it's always fun.



In February I finished my poetry series *New Songs [for Cassandra]*. The last poem, "Wedding," took me some while to compose. What I did was build up & up versions of it, mixing in more & more phrases & themes from earlier poems in the series. I wanted this poem to be the crackling summation of the year & some of the work & the 179 poems before it. I even mixed in lines from my 6×36 *Nocturnes* series finished in 2004 & poems even earlier. "Wedding" ends:

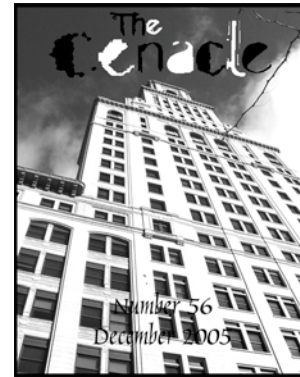
*Vow union again, love at fiercest angles
to a strange, ceaseless war, love a new mother
wooing in the dark, love a prophet yet
unfound by his feeding, believing beasts.
Conjure better to come with backs strong enough
for this hour's truth, & willing for the next.*

*We vow to live this world in all its going beauty,
great, crumbling, how helpless happy it passes.*

These poems were added in their completion to *The ElectroLounge*.

In early March, I finished the *very* late *Cenacle* | 56 | December 2005. This issue runs through with endings and pending beginnings, with travel, with contributors few but mostly long known & best loved. As much as *The Cenacle* is not intended as a vanity project, it is so thoroughly designed by my tastes & idiosyncracies that I see it as one more piece of the autobiographical mosaic that is composed by Scriptor Press & my writings. There are other presences but as though carefully selected & invited to a party.

I like the cover still: a neck-craning shot of the Travelers Tower in Hartford, Connecticut. The park I shot this photo from I call “Cement Park” & dearly associate with my fixation. It was November 2005 when I took this picture, & its companion on the back cover of the park itself on a rainy day. I’d like to believe every individual can find some comfort in his origins, some place or person, symbol or token. Mine was mostly in the places I sat alone & wrote.



Other loved places are present in the issue too: a deeply Photoshopped image of a unicorn sand sculpture from Burning Man 2005 in Black Rock City, Nevada, & a “Last Yawp” page collage of fragments from Seattle, circa December 2005.

Two of my lengthier pieces conclude in this issue. The long-serialized *6 x 36 Nocturnes*, which I finished December 3, 2004, offers its last poem, “Cry (for Cassandra).” Four & a half years, 360 poems, thousands of miles, ends with:

*What lasting? The music of every open hand.
What abide? Love’s every pock, its
countless tugs upon the fabric.
What begins, & a beat, & begins again?
Hope, its mystery rise, its helpless decline.*

*Cry out! What breathes worlds listens,
& listens for you.*

6 x 36 Nocturnes, whatever its worth to a reader or the world, contains my soul in ways poetry never had before. I lived it for years, for miles, when I had forsaken nearly all else. I challenged myself in it, again & again, pushed til its last poems came from a vessel more poem himself than distinct man. Every poem since is a *Nocturne*.

Oddly, because longer in their serialization, my fixation *New Period*’s finale is dated to September 1999, some 9 months before I’d begun *6 x 36 Nocturnes*. *New Period* was in itself beginning & ending. Beginning in that I called it the start of the sequel book to *Cement Park*, written 1981-1999. Ending in that I was finishing it as my 2 ½ year grad school career was nearing its end. And, still more strangely, I finished it around the time I began writing this *History* as my MA Thesis at Emerson College in Boston. Oddly (again), much of this story tells of a psychedelic “many marriage” taking place between my fictional counterpart & Rebecca Americus & other characters in the story. Near the end my character sits with Jim Reality & I say “Eat good food. Listen to happy music,” to which he replies, “smoke good

weed.” And I think, “Of course.” Hundreds of pages to arrive at funny, silly, wise simplicities.

There is an exchange of letters between Jim Burke III & myself. Mine appears in “From Soulard’s Notebooks” & includes my usual ranting: “The years go by & I ask the same questions: how to live & why. Things change? Wherefrom? whereto? Nature & music offer their comfort clues. I write in the face of the Mystery. Am I further along some kind of path, progressed in any way?” Though not directly, Burke replies in kind: “Our soul is tied to the planet & I truly believe we all become stars when we leave the physical plane. The energy we have left returns to the cosmic plane to shine on our earth, just as the tree begins a new cycle with a fresh set of leaves every spring.” What fortune to know such a man, to hold his words in a letter, & to share them with others.

Among Judih Haggai’s poems in this issue is a poem called “Buddha bit”:

*Beauty, it comes in breaths and starts
a gasp, a halt in the flow of time
cosmic crunch—a bash oh!
small steps over lily pads
whish of dragonfly
life is a well-kept oasis*

She covers such incredible, fertile, vibrant ground in six lines, & has been doing this for many years. Funny, subtle, sarcastic, sly. Knowing, humble.

The issue’s reprinted psychedelic essay is called “Psychedelic Rules” by James Kent. His rules are seven in number & well-grounded in experience & wisdom. They bear repeating here:

1. *A single drug can do many things.*
2. *Psychedelics are non-specific amplifiers*
3. *Dose, set, and setting*
4. *Psychedelics dissolve boundaries*
5. *Relax, submit to the experience*
6. *Don’t freak out*
7. *It will eventually end*

Kent’s elaboration on these points is well done but just the points themselves work too. I’ve always felt the best advice for tripping was of this kind. Be safe. Enjoy the ride. It will pass. Of course, conversely, there is what Burke said to me after my first time: it’s an experience like a door you walk through & don’t return from. Both are true. It’s like that.

This issue began an annual tradition that has continued since of publishing the newest *History of Scriptor Press* chapter in the December *Cenacle* of the following year. I can’t think particularly why save to let a bit of time pass so it is composed like history rather than news.

A final bit from this issue. The “Table of Contents” page includes the following note: “Thank you to my partner & new wife Kassandra for the good times and bad, for enduring it all, for a love that does not wave. Another year in Seattle, this one was a hard ride. I want to overleap the hardest place, that of silence, to where everything is told and everything is heard and understood, but how? Why is that place so elusive?”

Early April saw the release of *Scriptor Press Sampler* | 7 | 2005 *Annual*. About 40 pages, a simple, direct volume. Its cover image of a bridge in Seattle, & likewise within its pages are more Seattle images, & a couple of others from the beautifully desolate drive from Seattle to Black Rock City.

My brief introduction reads, in part: “This is the gift of art from our hands to yours, in hopes that you will find in these pages an empathy for some of your best & worst days When the time is right, send this book further along to another set of hands.”

Only a quartet of written pieces, but good ones, representing, as desired, the best of Scriptor Press. The first is my *6 x 36 Nocturnes* poem, “Cry (for Cassandra),” followed by one of Jim Burke III’s letters, some poetry by Judih Haggai, and excerpts from my *New Period* fiction.

This *Sampler* is nicely self-contained; it rolls into the world without need for additional explanation. I thrill quietly at the mystery of where *Samplers* go & the unknown souls who read them. Scriptor Press pushes into the world without impede, the monolithic publishing houses of my youth bedamned. It *presses*, & *affects*.

In late April I fulfilled a long-lived wish for Scriptor Press: I purchased a MacBook Pro laptop computer to complement my two desktop computers. This meant being able to take the means of production along with me, to coffeehouses, on buses, traveling. A powerful machine, made by Apple, the best personal computer company in the world, or at least my favorite. I call her Eurydice & she’s as constant a companion to me now as my pens & notebooks. All work in concert.

In May came *Cenacle* | 57 | April 2006, the eleventh anniversary issue. Such a long eleven years, at least in considering the passage from issue #1 to #57. In April of 1995 I’d not been across the country much less to stand at a bus stop in Seattle taking a photo of an empty shop to be Photoshopped later. Didn’t know Photoshop back in ‘95 either; didn’t own a computer. Then there’s the back cover, a close-up photograph of Kassi’s & my hands on our wedding day, December 31, 2005, in eastern Colorado. I didn’t even pass through Colorado until later in 1995, & I’d had back then only one brush with marriage talk. The epigraph’s image was from a Georgia O’Keeffe painting at the Art Institute of Chicago, one I first saw during that 1995 trip & again in 2006. “Soulard’s Notebook” is a poetic review of sorts of the Spring 2006 *Dada: Zurich, Berlin, Hannover, Cologne, New York, Paris* exhibition at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. I had been there, a couple of times, in the mid-1980s.

Thinking, as often, about what gained & lost through the years. I believe both occur, whether this is mere faith or not. *The Cenacle* of April 1995 & *The Cenacle* of April 2006 resemble each other like distant kin. they share a few contributors, they share an indie defiance of mainstream publishing, though this is easier now than back then.

What gained? Some depth of content. Some reach in audience.

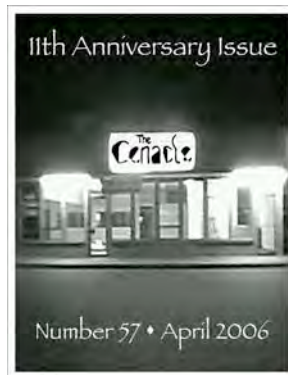
What lost? A *cenacle* close to hand, dear among my days.

Cenacle 57 did, in fact, welcomed back two long-missed to its pages. Ric Amante, who I’d lost touch with four years previous, offered “A Brief Epistolery Prolegomenon to Present and Future Collaborations.” He writes:

*The love will continue as long as we keep dismantling it to marvel at the mystery of its parts.
The love will continue as long as we keep our speculative and lyrical faculties tuned to the night sky.*



Remembering as a way of braving heart onward, curiosity's sometimes fragile pulse.



My friend Gerry “G.C.” Dillon contributed a new short fiction, “Pixies’ Lament.” A melancholy story, where phantastical creatures wonder: “What song will the humans sing anon when we are no more?”

More than their contributors, it was their renewed presence in *The Cenacle* that excited me. The possibilities of continuance, of something more than sentimental recall of other days. I bear no fondness for “good old days” talk if there’s nothing more to it. I *know* men like Ric Amante & G.C. Dillon are still thinking thoughts worth knowing, writing poems & prose worth reading. Their juice still flows hard & bright, & toward it I yearn.

New to *Cenacle* 57 was a further effort to tie it to other Scriptor Press projects. In addition to Albert Hofmann’s “The Mysteries of Eleusis,” in which the LSD pioneer gauges the “true importance of LSD in the possibility of providing material aid to meditation aimed at the mystical experience of a deeper, comprehensive reality,” is Albert Camus’s short essay “Myth of Sisyphus” which is interpreted as an existential love note to endurance in the face of complete futility. Both of these pieces—the first as part of *We Have Drunk the Soma: An Eighth Anthology of Writings About Psychedelics*, the second on its own—were part of the Burning Man Books 2006 series. And PDF files for free download of *Cenacle* 57 & all of the Burning Man Books series are available at the *ElectroLounge*. I wish ever to enact a kind of psychedelic idealism in which each mixes with each with all, there is effect, there is change, old & new conceive newer, nothing willing lacks, no creature suffers, the human world’s obsession with some sort of disincarnate divine blows up into world’s confession & confrontation that all is divine, all gestates, none blooms more or less than all others will allow. Loneliness folds its hands & concedes defeat.

Debuting in this issue are the opening three dozen of my *New Songs (for Cassandra)*. Begun in January 2005, little long after I after I finished the 4½ year 360-poem maelstrom that was *6 x 36 Nocturnes*, I determined to write a poem a day, a series of poems for my beloved Kassi, a bit similar to Pablo Neruda’s *100 Love Sonnets*. Shorter than the *Nocturnes* had become, acoustic clarity to contrast their electric complexities.

I didn’t achieve 365 poems in 365 days although I gave it a good go for nearly two months. What I did get was a better ability to write short poems. I essentially wish to work language brief or lengthy to the same ends, breach distinctions like poetry & prose, fiction & non-fiction, til the borders are gone, all a wide sea. Same dream, restated, next clown suit like & unlike the last.

Back in 1999 I was working, pre-*6x36 Nocturnes*, on the idea of mixing poetry & fixtion projects. Let them criss-cross each other as the pages & numbers curve. The project was called *Two Vessels*, its poetic portion published in *Cenacle* 39-40, Winter 2000. Now half a dozen years later the three fiction stories, with similar-but-not-the-same titles, were published. They were as a group dedicated to a girl I knew in cyberspace, now years ago, we would talk until til seemed obvious we had to meet, meet & know the already familiar in person.

A thought here about love, & desire, the wordless canker of want. I recently read a poem by Robert Hass, “Ezra Pound’s Proposition” & the line “Beauty is sexual.” I read this at a local bookstore last night, winter 2007-2008, & have traveled a day with it. Contrastingly I’ve traveled nearly a decade now with the paltry few days I knew Samantha from New York

City. I heard she moved West, became a lesbian, almost one night had gotten on a train to meet me in Boston, didn't. Beauty is sexual. What does that mean, Hass, Pound? The whole fucking world some nights is beautiful, is it sexual? Is the secret name of God carnality? Or carnality, God? I like the latter right now. The secret name of carnality is God. Death is want's cease, not body's. The fiction Samantha ghosts in is long from my pen now, yet reck a line from heart's insistent tug that all is sacred, all sings the single song: listen: it tells all toward which I was hurtling toward from then to now & hereon:

Be not furious & alone, love is coming, it has to, for until the unhappiness mounts unceasingly, the juices are wasted, good intentions breed nothing, love is coming, I'm pursuing this faith myself, it's been bad, may get worse but she's approaching me, can't help it, can't help it, I'll wait, good, good, as I close my eyes I can see Her. She's nearing, questioning, wondering but she's eager & hurrying, one vessel two vessels three vessels, maybe more, we see each other best in silence & blankness, maybe more, but a start, maybe more, she's still hurrying, we see each other best when life is good but makes no sense, here she is at my door best to let her in, my arms open & ready, becoming more still, more & more, I won't move, I have faith, here you come, true love, here you are.

With relief conclude discussion of this issue by noting Judih Haggai's poems, in particular "Middle of the Night," its wisdom is know nothing, nodding, writing it down:

*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.*

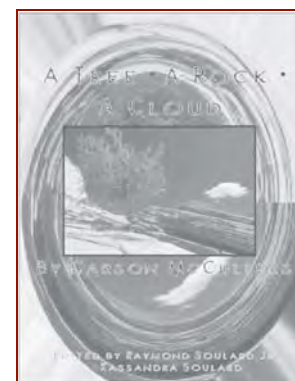
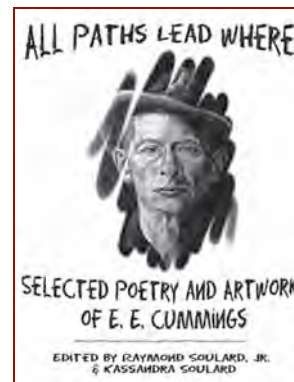
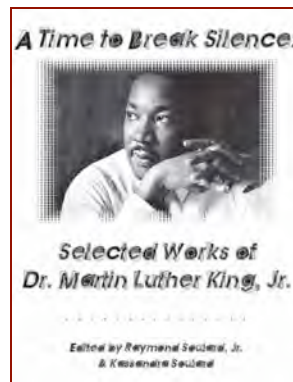
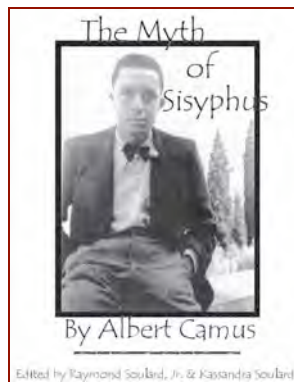
In June I updated the No Borders Bookstore Burning Man Books page on *ElectroLounge*. Another friend, one from Ireland, hosts the Burning Man Books, *Cenacle*, & RaiBooks files. The key point here is that Scriptor Press is continually expanding its reach beyond local geography & the limits of print budget.

The ElectroLounge added another Scriptor Press project to its list when in July I began uploading "Within's Within" archived shows to a server hosted by my friend Alfie Ilkins in the U.K. I created a radio page at the *ElectroLounge* which contained the next broadcast's description along with links to download the archived shows. I've now got a regular practice of recording or "ripping" the "stream" or broadcast of the show, then editing the raw recording into a single MP3 file for download. It takes audio editing skills similar but the not the same as text editing skills.

In late 2005 I'd joined a Seattle group called the Zine Archive & Publishing Project. Located in the multi-arts center Richard Hugo House, ZAPP's library contains thousands of zines & underground & countercultural publications. ZAPP is a lively place, kind of a school club atmosphere, hosts all sorts of "do it yourself" activities for people wanting to learn how to make zines & crafts. In July, ZAPP sponsored its second annual "DIY Academy" which comprised many kinds of classes; Kassi & I ran a desktop publishing class. We introduced a small group to using Word, Acrobat Pro, Photoshop, & InDesign to making professional-looking zines. It was a fun class. I'd like to do more teaching work. A brief experience can open one's eyes to a new path, or an old one not yet followed.

July and August Kassi & I spent in preparation for bringing Scriptor Press projects to the Portland Zine Symposium & then Burning Man 2006. This was the second year we'd

brought books to both events. The eighth series of Burning Man Books, #43-48 in the series include: *The Myth of Sisyphus* by Albert Camus, a brief potent essay I'd read as a youth in a used volume of existentialist writings I'd found in the bin out front of the long-gone Huntington Bookstore in Hartford, Connecticut; *A Time to Break Silence: Selected Works of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* which includes "Letter from Birmingham Jail," "I Have a Dream," & "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence"; *All Paths Lead Where: Selected Poetry and Artwork of E.E. Cummings*; *A Small, Good Thing* by Raymond Carver; Carson McCullers' *A Tree • A Rock • A Cloud*; and *We Have Drunk the Soma: An Eighth Anthology of Writings About Psychedelics*, which includes: "How Psychedelics Informed My Life and Sex Work" by Annie Sprinkle, "The Long, Strange Trip Continue" by Jim DeRogatis, "The Mysteries of Eleusis" by Albert Hofmann, "The Electric Kool-Aid Medicine Test" by Terence McNally, & "Number Fifteen: Broderick Street." What is especially contrasting about the two events, beyond the Zinefest's sedate Portland State University ballroom setting versus Burning Man's sometimes brutal dusty desert city, is that No Borders Free Bookstore (Scriptor Press's bookstore for Burning Man Books, *Cenacles*, *Scriptor Press Samplers*, & *RaiBooks*) is a bit more in its native element amidst the semi-anarchy of Black Rock City & its gift economy than the roomful of zinesters & freaks in downtown Portland. Yet both matter very much; both events were successfully attended.



What made Burning Man 2006 more exciting was that we had made some new artist friends who would affect pretty profoundly future issues of *The Cenacle*.

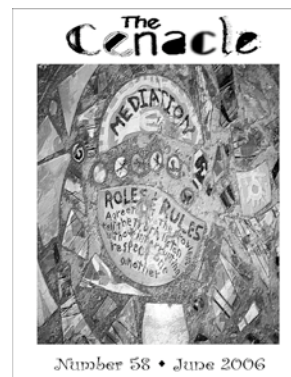
Returning from Burning Man, a couple of days free, we took our time traveling through the Oregon Outback Scenic Byway & even explored an underground cave made from an old volcano near Bend, Oregon.

It took til September for *Cenacle* | 58 | June 2006 to appear. I see its contents as

continuation of *Cenacle* 57's, which I suppose could be taken as a positive or negative thing. Maybe not every issue is going to break ground and, conversely, continuity has some reassurance to it. Maybe neither answer satisfies fully.

The original graphics in the issue are all photographs taken in the Seattle area—from downtown buildings to public statuary to a close-up of a small portion of the Bridge of Glass in Tacoma. I think that anywhere one lives can prove fertile territory for an attentive eye and a camera.

"From Soulard's Notebooks" features the first half-dozen of the *Many Musics* poem series—which brings me to a moment considering what this regular feature is supposed to be. An introduction of sorts, an editor's note, the third of three pieces before the "Table of Contents" after the front cover & epigraph & before the regular body of contents. "Front matter" it's called in journalism textbooks. After the contents, there is what's called the "back matter," which in *The Cenacle*'s case is a rather informal "Notes on Contributors," "Last Yawp," & back cover. I think of the first of these as a series of short tributes to the issue's writers & artists. The second is usually visual & once more directly concerned itself with personal acid revelations, & now perhaps less directly so. The back cover I think of as the complement to the front.



A format, then, a rather elaborate format if not exactly traditional. A few ads, for Air America, for Burning Man, for SpiritPlants Radio. But not paid for, not even official, simply promotions for entities I endorse & wish to spread word about.

More content than structure where the focus is directed. Work published by writers & artists I know & admire, but not mainstream, not even close. Writers & artists more interested in sharing their work, participating in the present day's great artistic ferment than a dollar. Willing to work for a wage to support their art & benefit by its unbending purity, whatever its statements or intent.

The Cenacle would not be better by being more chaotic or less organized, or by forcing a re-creation on itself every issue. Conversely, had it not developed in the years since 1995, I probably would have abandoned it. Worth all these lines, this side discussion? Enough, I hope, to make the following point to any trying Art or publishing: grow with your work, let it grow with you. Restless as curiosity, change and rhythm alike, as nature. Novel & familiar in shifting, unpredictable relation.

Ric Amante's poetry had not been featured since *Cenacle* 48 | April 2003. Among his several here is a poem called "Wish You Were Here," set at an oceanside motel, a deceptively calm place of distant scallop boats & nearby "sagging snow-fence[s]," where the narrator broils quietly within:

*I walk out onto my second-floor porch,
take a seat on a cold plastic chair,
take in all that's before,
all that is missing.*

It's simple, paints mood with words & leaves a yearn echoing after.

A stanza from Judih Haggai's poems also reverberates, does what her music best does, gesturing toward a pulsing something nearby with seeking eye, gesturing finger:

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

She sees time as the fluid deception of relativity that it is, & works with it as a powerful, compelling lie, sees humor & tragedy both in this work.

G.C. Dillon's fiction "Lost Days" is a kind of companion story to C57's "Pixies' Lament." Pixies, again, this time mixed up with a wizard named Megrin in a tale of "missing time," an effort to free souls from a "temporal prison." A sly story, funnier than the last but as finely made.

Another fixation in *Cenacle* 58 is the beginning of my *Things Change? (Six Thresholds)*, a book that took me from 9/22/2000 til 1/3/2005 to write, 600 pages written by hand, as lengthy as I'd ever tried in pages & far more in time of composition. Like its companion *6x36 Nocturnes*, this work traveled back & forth across the country & into some of the darkest woods in my mind. The opening lines spread in infinite variation through its many pages:

Something, not yet word, nor yet shine, yet beyond shadow, no longer blue fancy, I don't know, a game, this cosmos? time + play? something from somewhere, wreckage of a dream, not yet word, nor yet shine, no longer blue fancy—

She turns away. i follow the path her dark blue eyes trace, through lights & trees, through mortal noise, trackless breathless path, i follow wishing to learn, she turns back to me & smiles, I drop, am dropped, then she must catch me too, must teach me, must show me how to learn, not yet word, not yet shine, not hardly blue fancy—

Night burbles fulla details night is secret governance of all, night is scripture & confession, truth & heresy, lights fulla water, flames floating flesh, she turns away again I close my eyes & discover better how to follow, what reveals to be who does not seek—

World not revolving, no, world undulating, world mist & meat, world history & undifferentiation, world the plow & the pen, wet with desire dry with mortality, world floating careening crashing creating music world all music world is all music all music—

the flow of energy into, out of, creation, time a mischief floating nowhere, everywhere, time spun by fear, evaporated by laughter

I've come presently to call *Things Change?* & *6x36 Nocturnes* (& the former's sequels *Why?* & *Labyrinthine*, & the latter's sequels *New Songs [for Cassandra]* & *Many Musics*) pieces of a "double-tryptich." Six distinct works in poetry & fixation yet they flow between & among each other, mixing, re-inventing, I don't see an end to the possibilities & while the first two fixations & poetry books had limitations of time & length imposed upon them, *Many Musics* & *LX* have none. I don't know if I ever intend to finish them. I don't know if I don't but the question has grown up in me: what separate one work from the next? Each kins to all. I have right now no intent to conclude.

The two reprinted pieces in this issue were Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence" & "How Psychedelics Informed My Sex Life and Sex Work" by Annie Sprinkle; both appeared in Burning Man 2006 volumes (the former in *A Time to Break Silence: Selected Works of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, the latter in *We Have Drunk the Soma: An Eighth Anthology of Writings About Psychedelics*). The King piece is the text of a speech he gave April 4, 1967 at a meeting of Clergy and Laity Concerned at Riverside Church in

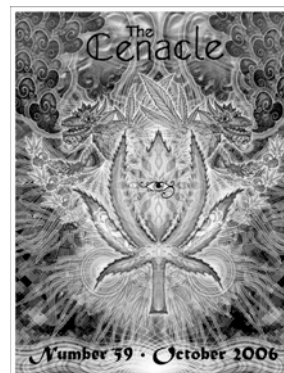
New York City, & in it he issues his first public denunciation of the American war machine's debacle in southeast Asia. He himself would be assassinated exactly one year later.

Sprinkle's essay originally appeared in the *Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies*. Sprinkle, a well-known writer & sex educator, discusses her use of LSD, mescaline, peyote, MDMA, ketamine, mushrooms, & other visionary substances. Their effects on her was profound, altering & re-creating her path. She concludes with delight: "People tend to link 'sex and drugs' because both are condemned by society. Nevertheless, throughout the ages human beings have continually searched for more ecstasy, more sexual satisfaction, for solutions to their sexual problems, and for aphrodisiacs. Psychoactive substances have been used in most cultures because they can be keys to unlock the mysteries of life." I believe there cannot be too many liberation advocates like Sprinkle nor enough numbers of essays like this one. Western society is fucked up, true, but not fucking wide awake & high & happy enough, true. I think I used to believe change would come in obvious, tangible ways, as tolerance & knowledge of sexual & psychedelic varieties spread through the lands, as more leaders & worker bees alike turned on, walked through the door, didn't come back.

Now I wonder if human consciousness paradigm shifts don't happen more like tectonic plates in the earth: effect long after cause.

We want it now, we want it now. It's happening, nearly invisibly. Impossibly, incredibly, great, everyday. Despite doubts & legions defending the status quo. They slow change, but nothing stops it. Waves rolling in farther & farther, occasionally the great monster crash but mostly a few more inches, now a few more. For better? Oh if I could tell!

It was late November when *Cenacle* | 59 | October 2006 finally appeared. Where the previous issue was continuance, this one was much more breakthrough. We'd met some gifted artists at Burning Man & kept in touch with them. On C59's front cover is psychedelic art by Nemo Boko & on the back cover is art by his wife Emma Brochier. There is also work by each within *Cenacle* 59's pages. They run a website called Nemo's Utopia (www.nemo.org) from their house in Portland, Oregon. What excites me about their work is that it is *turned-on* & *superlative* both. The best visionary art does not stumble in craft or conception, in fact re-conceives these for its purposes. Working with myth, symbolism, ideas & images derived from nature, sometimes a dash of obscure humor, Nemo & Emma each produce work of depth & delight.



Another Burning Man find was a contributor who published "Revolution Evolution" in C59 under the name George Dorn. Dorn is a young film-maker, in his twenties, & his essay fires out with the enthusiasm of a radical young artist. I think his conclusion best sums his argument: "...live the revolution everyday. I know this is somewhat of a cliché, but it's true... Time to ramp up your evolution and start your revolution." This essay has impressed a lot of readers since its publication. Reflecting on it, I think that no period of time lacks its fiery youth, or adults for that matter. Idealism is some years more prominent, more visible by events & publications. But it always exists. No night in human history, no land, lacks for a pressing heart, an anxious, restless mind rejecting whatever talk or morals please & placate most. I think even that idealistic ferment brews best when a kingly hand is trying to press down hardest on dissent & tolerance. To be able to think one's own thoughts, & try putting utterance to them, however smoothly or clumsily is, in my view, somewhat endemic to the amorphous thing called human nature. One may indeed in the end, love Big Brother, but there is a deep wish to have this be a choice. Revolutions evolve from a realization among

individuals that none of them have this choice, & are willing to evolve at their own peril toward obtaining it.

“From Soulard’s Notebooks” is a pre-Election Day letter to Jim Burke, jittery with hope, excitement a year or so later I remember with a bit of sadness. Democrats won back the U.S. Congress, millions voted & there were expected victories & upsets. Yet the War did not end in 2007.

The War never ends. The next president will withdraw American combat troops from Iraq, I foresee, but the *War* never ends. One man will always see another & consider whether to gesture to him with open hand or fist. *The War never ends*. As long as one preacher argues another about death, about morality, about behavior. As long as simplistic ideas about difference based in race, gender, language, religion, sexuality are accepted. As long as human nature remains a mist shrouding something, many things, or nothing. *The War never ends* as long as someone hungers in soul, heart, or loins. Vengeance or fanaticism will lure those with a hole deep within to fill, & will seem to fill it awhile, & will not, in the end fill it. I wrote to Jim, in part, what little I still believe: “Beauty happens. Shit happens. Some of it because $X + Y = Z$; some just because. I’ve tried to find what connects one to some to all, discover it for myself or find out who knows. Nobody knows. *Nobody knows*. Belief is not truth. Even fact is not truth.” The War never ends because some believe they know, & would instruct, would lead, would coerce, would command, would crush if necessary.

Of Ric’s new poetry, there are most compelling lines in “Her Radiant Upward Vagrancy”:

*Hunkered down yet moving along
among clouds, birds, misfortune—
inhabiting a stage
whose sky-bound melodies
will lift the ache within.*

Pain & beauty mined again & again become something else, a shuddering mass not monolith, a dialogue not a sermon. Desire, want, laid on sheets, transfigure, music where once bones jabbed through the heart & gut. Amante knows this. Man is too beast to easily stand God above & yet too apart even among his own numbers to walk calmly among others.

Likewise there is among Judih Haggai’s poems a few lines from “I’ll You Shun,” a confusion of yearn & envy:

*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.*

Seeming mortal conscious creatures, driven by beastly impulses we hardly acknowledge but by excuse, casting out what we think is elsewhere, ideas, morality, art, vision, drawing back empty hooks because modern human society is an elaborate lie, constructed from fairly ludicrous fables meant to bestow a sense of equality among all, a delayed promise of explain & reward. What have we lost to live an extra dozen years, read by electric light, half dislodge ourselves from the world’s natural cycle of dangers? Yet there is no return, no choice in this. Whatever lost, it’s lost. Whatever to come, hope, if any, & strangely I believe there always is,

lies.

Some artists create from deep inside such ideas, & one of these is Carson McCullers. In “A Tree • A Rock • A Cloud,” her characters make a bid for connection, for shared, for *collaborative* meaning. A man tells a young boy his heart’s wars & eventual surrender, his “science” of retreating from erotic human love back to simple objects, & then forward toward humans again. A barman listens & decries such naked confession. The boy drinks his words & struggles to deflate them with a label.

I review Dr. Timothy Leary’s “Using LSD to Imprint the Tibetan-Buddhist Experience” & find little to say about it. I believe he emphasizes ego, & desiring its loss, much too much, that he talks at times like conventional religious men, about transcendence & liberation. He trucks in familiar ideas & so I do not think of ideas as his essay’s greatest value. I think what Leary does best is to comfort a groping soul wanting a touch to know & keep. He is funny. He is kind. Writes: “If the experience starts with light, peace, mystic unity, understanding, and continues along this path, then there is no need to read [this] manual or have it reread to you.” One knows he wishes well, that he writes to countless unknown numbers *from* this wish.

In early issues of *The Cenacle* I had regularly published “Notes from New England” & consciously picked up & carried along ideas of the 19th century Transcendentalists, applying to my time a like regional value & philosophical continuance. I tangled between wanting to trip with Lennon back in 1967 & wanting to sit with Ralph Waldo Emerson a century before that, debate his young optimism, comfort his later woes.

Revived this feature as “Notes from the Northwest,” calling it a “sequel,” a “hopeful gesture.” Words & images—the former ponders of politics, soul, psychedelics, & beauty, the latter of bathrooms, street signs, glaring nights. I do not fancy myself nor Scriptor Press part of any tradition in the Pacific Northwest, save possibly the long exodus of Easterners cross-continent. Less root, more freedom.

More *New Songs (for Cassandra)* appeared, rip spanking full of old loves, dying soldiers, & poor folk.

Death: “All soaks empty in moonlight/ upon its hour, climbs its beam, falls untold within.”

God: “When the hour rests soft upon your cheek, the faces laugh & everyone kisses the stone pipe in great fraternity”

The powerful: “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 brutalised limbs.”

Dreams: “Where why & nonsense dance their lesson.”

And *war*: “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.”

There is a moment in *Things Change (Six Thresholds)* when the story changes, when my external world cracked & the crack drove through my Art, through its sky, its light, its soil, its heart:

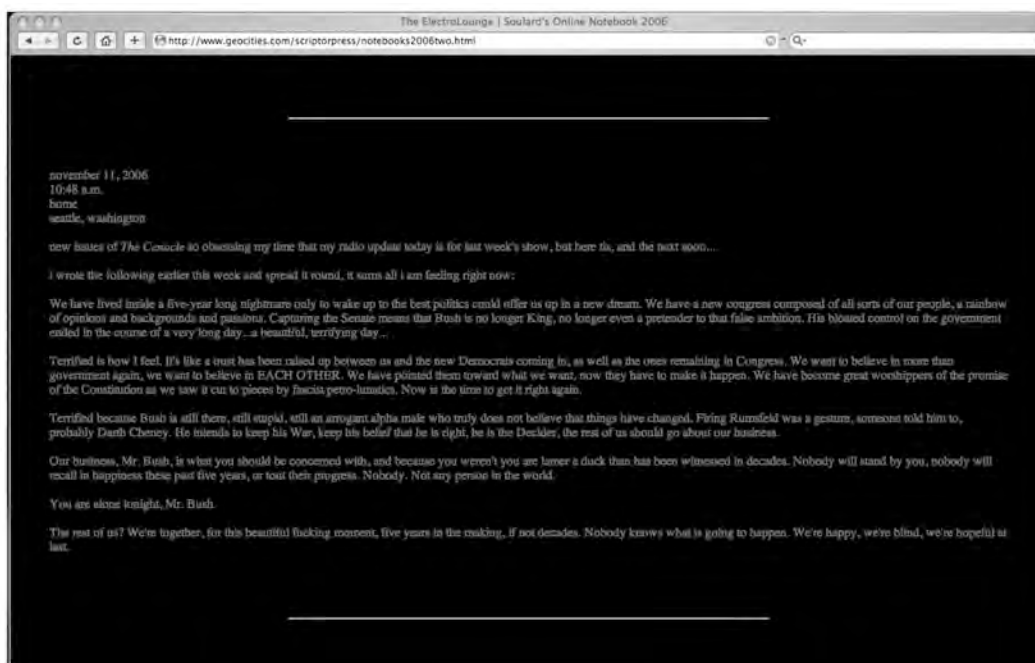
“*She’s* gone...

I disappear too but not very long.”

This was the moment when I believed myself Orpheus & that my Eurydice had been taken to the Underworld, & that I had to go there singing my music to retrieve her. Believed it, built my life on this belief, traveled myself & my Art right into the Underworld for this task

& I look back years from these lines I'm reading, watching as my "[f]ixtion fierces into confession," as "[a]ll begins again," & I know how the tale played, how it got worse, slightly better, much worse, eventually somewhat better & I wonder would I be here if not there? Would I write now as I do if I had not turned my Art into a high flaming ink-colored pyre to a love's lost cause? Nothing lacks its effect, the best, least, & worst of it all. It's profoundly queer to read these lines written in 2002 & then to the NNW images & pictures from 2006... was any of it ever not confession? Not sentiment & wallow, if let burn high enough for tinder or let cool to crumble & feed the next poem, next fixtion's soil.

Arching over the year, in hope & fear, were the U.S. congressional elections. For 6 years, through 3 elections, the Bush cabal had gained, consolidated, & expanded its control over the American government, forcing an illegal war in Iraq & its subsequent occupation; engaged in illegal domestic spying and encroached upon other civil liberties while shrinking the safety net beneath the poor, sick, & vulnerable people in society; & made the world a far more dangerous place. November 2006 was a crossroads when sentiment shifted hard against Bush. Amazingly to many, the Democrats won back control of both houses of Congress. The excitement many felt hadn't existed since Bill Clinton won the White House in 1992. It lasted for awhile.

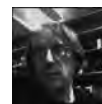


Toward year's end the stability I'd desired began to come undone a bit. I had some minor health issues come to pass, necessitating an improvement of diet & greater awareness of fleshly mortality.

I also made a request at my work to telecommute like the other members of my project team. We left for Colorado to spend holidays with Kassi's family, hoping this request would come through & a developed desire to move from Seattle down to Portland, Oregon would come to pass.



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 Fourteen

continued from

The Cenacle | 63 | December 2007

My deepest sense of home has long centered within my notebooks & pens. When I was young, barely a teenager, & I knew little of the world, & had travelled nowhere, & there were but books & a few channels on the TV for learning, & for the most part equally unworldly people around me, I lived happily in central Connecticut. I don't know how much knowledge is even necessary so young. A child more wants for stability & love, a sense that the strange world around him or her has some sureness. Eventually, one's curiosity about how & why will breach the limits of family & friends, the local playground & regional teachings & presumptions. One will start to ask questions which can only be answered, if indeed they are answered at all, by venturing out into the world, leaving the familiar but as touchstone. I believe that many people get only so far in creating a new path before turning back, because they are hindered by obstacles & frustrations. Many of us grow sedimented into a place, a way of thinking. I've struggled against this & do so still.

My physical sense of home dissipated in those adolescent & young adult years as I moved several times & began to look outward. My certainty, my grounding became more focussed on people—on the deep feelings (familial, fraternal, romantic) I had for others, & some in turn had for me. Eventually, this dissipated too—although not as much—as people, like places, came & went, or simply changed over time. The world ever shifts in large & little steps.

In truth, even my relationship to my pens & notebooks has changed over the years. My life, its relationships & obligations, has gotten more complex. I'd like to think of this in terms of evolution but it's not all so. I'd like to think that my Art is less discontinuous than my relationships with people or places, fewer spots in the path where a bridge is simply gone or a stretch annihilated. I choose to think that, to believe that I am still honoring the boy I was in 1975, aged 10, living in Bloomfield, Connecticut, writing in his new journal, beginning to create, however, derivatively, his own myths.

Versions of such myths remained with me in 2007 as I continued projects whose roots lay in those days. Also true was that I was still moving from place to place, this year from

Seattle, Washington to Portland, Oregon. What perhaps connected these was that I now had a partner in these shifts, my wife Kassi, with whom I moved, & also with whom I had some of the old certainties I'd long ago felt toward people. The minutiae of this year is easier to study within the context of this framework: Art, places, people. I've learned, to sum this, that they are all important & have profound affect no matter how much I consciously choose to value each at a given time. In other words, they matter, whether I like it or not.

So I began the year in Seattle, working at GE Healthcare, married to Kassi, all had been steady facts since at least December of 2005. What began to undercut this stability was GEHC's rejection of my request to perform my job remotely from home, as did the rest of my team. Looking back now on this job, I can see that I was working in a dysfunctional environment with no support for doing my job well, much less learning how to do it better. As the year went on, it got worse. I was able come summer to extricate myself from it, & find a similar job with Symantec Corporation, one with more support & permission to work remotely, which allowed Kassi & I to move down to Portland, Oregon.

I'd lived in Portland back in the fall & winter of 2002-2003, & left there with no money in my pocket & a broken heart to boot. Returning had been a long-time wish & Kassi had, by our occasional visits there, decided she liked the idea too. We'd tired of Seattle's size, its expense, the tininess of our apartment. It was time to go somewhere different, if not new for both of us.

Another major theme for me in 2007 was working to support the increasing—both in size & effectiveness—political progressive movement in the U.S. In November 2006, millions of us had won both Congressional houses back from George W. Bush. We thought this would help bring about an end to the U.S. occupation in Iraq. In truth, what it did was stall Bush's intention to invade Iran. I suppose one should not discount this though at the time it was extraordinarily frustrating. 2007 was rife with so many Bush administration scandals (the firing of attorneys general for political reasons; the neglectful treatment of returned Iraqi war veterans; government wiretapping of private American citizens) that governance pretty much ground to a halt. The 2008 elections seemed forever & further away.

And a note about health: I began 2007 with one of my feet in a rehabilitative boot due to a slow-healing injury. Short & long of it is that while my health remained good, it needed more conscious effort to stay so. I comment on this to urge people to turn that corner sooner than later. Diet, exercise, mental health: they all matter, they are all fragile, so much of what is good & enjoyable in life can be lost when they are let to erode. Good habits can be formed, can be made to last, will have their effect. Bad habits too. Don't let it become too late. What drove

me primarily was all the Art I have yet to do & the many more years I wish to spend with Kassi. Let what is dearest to you inspire you too.

All of these things coalesced in February into something I called the "Big Push." But I had to finish something first: the delayed *Cenacle* | 60 | December 2006.

This issue appeared finally in February 2007. It features five contributors as well as two reprinted pieces. All of the graphic art work is by Kassi & myself. The other contributors—Jim Burke III, Ric Amante, Judih Haggai—were all long-time friends, each of whom had been featured many times in *The Cenacle's* pages.



So it was a close family issue, the words & thoughts of trusted familiars. Places, too, as the cover is a design based on photos of a “Rooms 75¢” sign in downtown Seattle. The epigraph & back cover bear John Lennon’s statements about peace (“all we are saying is give peace a chance” & “war is over if you want it”), relevant to the current times—surely he would have been in the middle of the anti-war movement anew had he been living now.

The idea of Art among familiars continues in “From Soulard’s Notebooks,” which contains a letter from myself to Judih Haggai. A meditation on Art & faith:

One guesses. One uses experience, & instinct, & the luck available, & guesses. Right can come down to a bowl, a bed, a warm companion near, a purpose, some sense of hope. One guesses among these things, sums what is & guesses toward what will be. Maybe no more. I’m not convinced, if ever I was, that an answer ever comes. This does not mean I lack a sense of wonder, or simply doubt all I see. Contrary, because I do not know, I wonder all the more. My wish leads me onward, by my pen. It’s what I cherish & trust, through these unexplained years.

I’ve developed this “From Soulard’s Notebooks” frontispiece over the years into a kind of letter from the editor, even as it is not always directly to the periodical’s general reader. The reader is sometimes invited as a third party to regard my thoughts directed toward a specific individual.

The first piece in the contents, this time a letter from Jim Burke III to me (partly responding to a letter to him I’d published in *Cenacle* | 59 | October 2006, just to complexify things!), picks up on the uncertainties of navigating life’s changing waters & tides. He writes:

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, & 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.

The issue continues my *New Songs (for Cassandra)*. I look through the several dozens of these poems, all part of this series I wrote in 2005, now becoming years ago, & one poem stands best for all:

Combust

*Life sheers you mysterious,
leaves what left with a question:
what will you do now?*

The challenge is dual, as I see it now: to find one’s voice to create one’s own poetry, & then to keep re-creating that voice as the years pass along.

Ric Amante’s new poems are fine & clean & challenging as ever; I never tire of nor

doubt his poetic voice. In a poem called “Eight At the Bar,” a group of drinkers ponder what age each would choose to be if any were possible. The narrator’s answer surprises him; not the “fifty plus years . . . what and why and where they should be” but instead suddenly:

*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*

He nails the moment, the revelation, for himself, but I think for many others too.

After the issue’s chapter of this history comes the poetry of Judih Haggai. Her work has long been part of *The Cenacle*’s contents, & always my pride & pleasure to publish. In *Cenacle* 60 two of her poems stand out to me in review. The first, “Field Emerges,” a short one:

*Birds fly low
mechanical scarecrow
grinds metallic blues*

*A field emerges
in gold-streaked wind
rising towards the sun*

The other, “wind swept insights,” particularly its fourth & last stanza:

*my pulse is my music
i sing only this
my voice clamours skywards
alight the wings of an encouraging beat*

Living in the often war-torn nation of Israel, its soil centuries-deep in the blood of carnage-wreaking religious devotees, many of whom raise their eyes to the skies, Jude does so in the name of music, love, yearning. She writes in a faith as potent as the gunfire she hears, the kind not pursued by moving maps with brutality.

There is a passage in Part Three of my *Things Change (Six Thresholds)* where I write:

*♣ to keep pushing, yes, by savage ♣ twist, by fool ♣
whatever falls inkly ‘pon the page, push it on, out,
in, further, one day I et some mushrooms ♣ fell slowly
dark, the next I raised up ♣ said liberation ♣ danger,
creatures of the mind too tall to be tamed ♣ surrounded
for long, creatures of flame ♣ wave, creatures that rose
♣ revel best by night, yes, to keep pushing, a hoary,
bitch sheet at a time, a word, a line, help me, I’m
drowning ♣ swimming better than ever, to push on*

*with fewer reasons than ever, til none, but not
quite, always the shiny one among the shades,
fast as a blink, a pretty bastard, knows better
than I do what I want & what I must knows
there is no choice but to 'keep swingin' & immolatin'—*

This book had become a long, anguished confession of a love affair's slow, ugly death. Rooted fully neither in fixtion nor not-fixtion, neither dream nor waking, I wrote these pages in the winter of 2002-2003 to preserve if not assure my sanity. Odd to be again in Portland, Oregon now, six years later, writing about 2007, the year I returned, during which I published this part of this story.

What I think now is that those winter months crescendoed for me ideas & passions I'd been chasing for years. The idea of a beloved woman as artistic muse. An old, ancient idea, one I'd embraced entirely, one that drove my life, literally led me across the country & back again, & perhaps if the pursuit had involved another woman, or the same one at a different time, or—

The tumble down was hard, was a deep crash, the deepest one in some ways that I'd ever known. I left Portland in defeat, more than a broken heart, though that was true & enough—

What I lost was a part of myself, a faith that Art is invincible, that a love conceived in Art, looking toward its highest ideals, can not be bested. It can be: the dirty human world can at its worst, defeat any hope, any dream, any possibility of redemption or renewal. Can; does not always. But can, & sometimes does.

There is a limp within time will not heal; perhaps it joins other lesser limps there. Or maybe it new strengthens the pain of an old limp. I don't know, singular or multiple. I read the writing from which the above is quoted & think, ask simply: was it worth it? I tend to say yes & here's why, here's what's left of me that I hold to dearest: crushed hearts do not always leave a remain of Art. I have the words even as the girl, those years, that love I felt, all are memories. I still have the words. *I still have the Art.*

Cenacle 60 also featured reprints of a dozen poems by E.E. Cummings, one of the best American poets of the 20th century. We'd put together a book of his poems & artwork for the Burning Man Books 2006 series. It's called *All Paths Lead Where: Selected Poetry and Artwork of E.E. Cummings*; its title's poem is like a beautiful summation of Cumming's brilliant, elusive mind:

seeker of truth

*follow no path
all paths lead where*

truth is here

The issue concludes with my "Notes from the Northwest," a brief Election Night 2006 exultation, & screed against George W. Bush; & Jim DeRogatis's historical essay on psychedelic rock, "The Long Strange Trip Continues."

This issue finished, published, disseminated, I could now begin what I called “Big Push.” I made a list of projects that I’d work on mid-February to late April & had at them concurrently—the goal being to leap Scriptor Press’s many facets forth. Actually took til mid-May to complete the “Big Push” but it was a success. What follows is description of its accomplishments.

Scriptor Press Sampler | Number 8 | *2006 Annual* came out in mid-March. This volume featured prose pieces by George Dorn & Jim Burke III; poems by Judih Haggai, Ric Amate, & myself; fiction by G.C. Dillon, fixtion by myself. Art by Nemo Boko, Emmanuelle Brochier, & Kassi & me. The *Samplers* have become a distillation of the best of the *Cenacles*, & a bit more than that. For they are intended to travel independently of the rest of Scriptor Press. A distinct entity with no elaborate explanation save a brief editor’s introduction. In sum: Here’s the art, the fixtion, the poetry, the prose; if you find kinship, enough. If you wish to connect further, then so be. My goal for the *Samplers* is to scatter them further than they are now, in print & online.



A triumph of the “Big Push” was the years-delayed publication of my second book of poetry, *Resurrection, Now*. The five poems in this book I’d written in 1998-1999. I think of them as my “early LSD” poems because I was learning to think & travel & write in psychedelic space. Each poem presents a lingual canvas upon which I worked a puzzle of ideas, images, & music.

“Resurrection, Now” was written for the many long nights I spent in tripspace with my “acid guru,” DH. He’d play guitar, we’d listen to the Grateful Dead on his stereo, it would get strange, deep, funny. we’d discuss his ideas about entropy, & I’d mull my own about the Muse. the poem concludes:

*I am in bed now. I am in a coffin now.
I close my eyes, dream past psychedelia.
I am waiting for the chimes.*

*The road toward dawn appears.
The sunrise is pink, laughs, sings my name.
I am young again. I will find her. I begin to run.*

It’s a pretty poem; I finished it on my 34th birthday, about a year after my first psychedelic experience with DH.

“The Millennial Artist’s Survival Guide” grew from a list of “acid aphorisms” I made from many solitary trips in which I’d come home with a crucial phrase in mind. It begins:

*There is a secret joy amongst
these times, a within’s within, a known
and speckled spectral thing, an exploding*

*blare & swoop from between our dreams,
a series of code & midnight shadows,
glyphs taut with our best laughter, all cosmos,
we are all cosmos, without & within.
We are all cosmos. We are all careening.
we need to begin now, trade into ecstasy,
we are beginning now. Always beginning now.*

I wrote this poem during a long night that began at a now-gone coffeehouse called Someday Cafe in Davis Square, Somerville, MA, on one subway train, then the next, then along my long walk home down Canal Street in Malden, MA, through the ancient Bell Rock Cemetery where I finished it. I wrote poems differently then, in the sense that I'd given them no structure or series, they came when & how they'd come.

"Beauty, Afflictus (for Shannon)" is dedicated to a girl I met for a few hours at a mountain festival in Vermont in the summer of 1998. The night before I'd searched & found very potent acid, & then fire & drums, & danced the death I'd been seeking, danced at my own wake, lost to the friend I'd come with, to DH, who I'd come to meet & never found. I danced & died & had met Shannon the next morning. She needed cigarettes & a few minutes of chat. For a moment the world was new again & all was well. We shared amazement. There are phrases of Dickinson, Rumi, Neruda in the poem, & much of the poem's strength draws from my long-time relationship with Renoir's 1883 painting, "Dance at Bougival," which is housed at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (it is also the book's cover). Another cry for a muse, a lover, a girl:

*At low moments in my life
I believed that truth had a
tag, a list, a dwelling.
Truth is her smile studied from
across a wooden room.*

"Phantom Limbs (After Rumi)" is a similar poem & was written less than a week later in early March 1999. Its narrative takes place in a hookah den among those who smoke hash & ruminate (the lover, the poet, the philosopher). Its thesis: "We live our lives by habit." Its conclusion:

*Redemption happens every moment of our
our lives, or never at all.*

Ten years later, I still believe this to be true. I don't see any better alternative.

The last poem, "The Groove," is actually the 100th & last poem of my *Two Vessels* poetry sequence (published in full in *Cenacle* | 39-40 | Winter 2000). This was the second time I'd written a poetry sequence: the first had been *Stranger America* in 1995 which had been published in *Cenacle* 4-5. It was hard to decide to break this poem loose of its series to place at the end of this book yet, after long debating, I did. Its subtitle indicates it was written at "Phish concert, Big Cypress Seminole Indian reservation, New Year's Day 2000, Everglades, Florida

[during midnight-to-dawn show].” The nickel tour of this poem’s background sums thus: I’d just graduated Emerson College in Boston, MA in Publishing & Writing, no job yet, but I’d celebrated by traveling with hippy kids met on the Internet down to Florida for the New Year’s Eve weekend Phish rock shows. On the last night, before the all-night-show night, I’d taken a large dose of LSD, not sure how much, & cowered in my tent for hours while entering the Void, encountering it? I don’t know. I came out, somewhat returned, still shaky, at midnight to the music, to the happy cries of 100,000 people dancing, & the poem came, in accumulating lines over the next dozen hours:

*there is no ending to the groove
through which music flows to
hearts unknown*

* * *

*the towline back is people
i told me acid told me so*

* * *

*shut the fuck up & try simple:
the magic spell begins every morning eery
day living breathing any kind of gesture
to the good, here comes someone, ask
him the way home, ask his friend, smile,
how’s the day & what may evolve, ‘just
chillin’ bro, going to a party tonight &
just chillin’ wanna come? What’s your name?’*

So seven years later, a continent away, a wedding ring now on my finger, I turned to Kassi for her assistance & together we gave these poems the home between pages I’d so wanted them to have. Finally. How I work out the like for 6 x 36 *Nocturnes, New Songs (for Cassandra)*, the ongoing *Many Musics* . . . I haven’t figured out yet.

Another “Big Push” victory was the expansion of the “Within’s Within” radio show archives to include the 21 broadcasts between June & December 2005. Building this online radio archive has been important to me. Internet radio is still a fairly unregulated wilderland, which is the good news; the bad news, or at least the challenge, is to find an audience, sympathetic & interested listeners. When I started the show on in 1999, I expected no more than a few listeners because of the very limited reach of the radio signal. Now, on the Web, more is possible.

Part of the effort, maybe a lot, is attitude, how seriously one takes it. How much work is put in. Building an archive is essentially saying: this project is valid & deserves longevity.

Kin to this was my purchasing the *Scriptorpress.com* domain name. I’d done this with the encouragement of my UK friend Alfie Ilkins, who also hosted the radio show archives at this time. Owning the rights to this domain was and is a big deal: I’d started this project as a

kid, among my pencils & notebooks. Computers back then were to me the stuff of *Star Trek* & *2001: A Space Odyssey*. The domain's ownership price is small but the delight big in my head & heart.

Another purchase was a color laser printer which gave Kassi & I the option to print books or pages in color. *Resurrection*, *Now's* cover is of "Dance at Bougival" is in full color. *Cenacle* | 62 | October 2007 would have a color cover (first since *Cenacle* | 34 | April 1999). We've used this color option judiciously since because of the cost but it's damned nice when we do use it.

I also expanded the presence of my *Many Musics* series online. There was now one full series & half of a second. *Many Musics* & its fixtional counterpart *Labyrinthine* are still two of my ongoing projects. I've been writing each for nearly three years & see no definite conclusion to either. They form the last—and soon longest—pieces of what I informally call my *Double Tryptych* (poetry: *6 x 36 Nocturnes*, *New Songs*; fixtion: *Things Change?* (*Six Thresholds*), *Why?*), housing, at least in concept, this project I've been working on for nine years so far. Its scope has vastly expanded in that time. Much of this work has not even yet been published in *The Cenacle*, much less in book form. My current idea is to create a new book series, separate from RaiBooks, that would be intended exclusively for this project. Perhaps the dovetail with RaiBooks would be chapbook-length excerpts of these long works.



Coming out about two weeks after its cover date, & rounding out the "Big Push," is *Cenacle* | 61 | April 2007. This was the last issue completed while Kassi & I lived in Seattle (though *Cenacle* 62 is dated June 2007 it didn't come out til October). It features new writing by Ric Amante, GC Dillon, Judih Haggai, & myself—and cover & interior images by Kassi & myself.

"From Soulard's Notebooks" is a letter I wrote to Ric Amante about our recent visit when Kassi & I came to Boston. It was my first time back there in five years. So of course it was strange & new & nostalgic. No more subway tokens. Some businesses still there, some gone. The letter moves into a consideration of time's reality:

In my dream-life, & during many psychedelic adventures, I have experienced non-linearity, places of no-time, even places of no-place. Valid experiences if only in the sense that I believe what may occur may participate in the possible. but on return, or resumption, of life in familiar environs, the shawl of gravity, time, day & night, material history, settles, & so what I remain with are deviant memories, alternative possibilities that may be true only in my mind, or true beyond it. Or perhaps all is one mind, all realities one reality; all soul, one soul.

These questions & answers remain of course; they always will while conscious, thinking.

GC Dillon's "The Blackthorn Mirror" revives an old character of his, Jasmine Ashbourne. Her years in college over, she now works at a bank as a "Cashier Team Leader, a fancy name to give you the work of a low-level manager, but not the pay of one." The story takes place in a pub, involves an old mirror & its supposed power to reveal the results of paths not taken, by choice or chance: "The what-if images, thoughts, never-had memories were seductive. so inviting to lose oneself in the mirror's reflected reality. So addictive." In Dillon's fiction, we each

sit precarious on a deep, deep well of the past, inviting us to fall in, give up the new efforts; & yet his characters rarely do. The possibility seems enough.

Cenacle 61 contains the last three dozen or so of my *New Songs (for Cassandra)*. I'd intended to finish them by our wedding date, 12/31/05, but it was not until February 5, 2006 that I'd finished the 180th & last of them, "Wedding." 180 poems in about 400 days. It was a concentrated effort & what it taught me was the great value in the short poem, & that I could, with hard focus, write as many poems as I willed & wished. There are a number of these poems I still like but will limit myself to a few words about "Wedding." It is 38 lines—six stanzas of six lines each, plus one additional closing couplet. Each stanza begins with the phrase "Vow union again" save for the last which begins "We vow to." I find the line "Only bid fidelity to what sing trues to the sweet burst with" still moving, & the closing lines:

*"We vow to live this world in all its going beauty,
great, crumbling, how helpless happy it passes"*

I had come close to marriage with other women. Talk of it anyway. When it came, it was pleasing, & welcome; yet I had to re-inflate something in myself to participate fully. I married a woman who values me more honestly for what I am, & takes seriously what is between us. I got lucky, eventually.

This issue features a re-print of Raymond Carver's masterful story, "A Small, Good Thing," which we also published in the Burning Man Books 2006 series. Carver's fiction is severely beautiful, a hurting, redeeming Art. This story, concerning the slow, painful, accidental death of a child, is one of the most powerful short fictions in the English language. Ever.

In Judih Haggai's poems there are three lines that stand out in particular (from "Whisper My Voice"):

*at the end of the tunnel
wherever it leads
stands a light haloed welcome*

What is challenging in writing poems for many years, for persisting in writing them, one after the next, is that one eventually is gazing back at ever increasing path, strangely dimming & glaring, & toward a future with a wall, unseeable but there, whenever & wherever it is. To look toward that wall at all is a brave act. To do so in one's Art is even more perilous, even braver.

Part four of my *Things Change (Six Thresholds)* continues the narrative of my struggles to keep along as 2003 progressed. Most of its pages could hardly be called story; I write of the pain of leaving the places & people I care for, & of returning to where I came from. I write of ruins. Eventually, something of a narrative emerges, I begin to recover, cohere, something. I think the following passage comes from this story's deepest heart:

Well. Regard happiness when bitter & broken ranges & rages about. See how the hurt feeds on happiness, won't stop til none left—so happiness backs away, keeps some, insists—that's how it survives—gives away the froth, keeps the veins—the muscle—the heart—the living engine making, being, living happiness—you sucking bastards can't have it—else I become one with nothing too—again—

I kept writing because I had to. Capitulation to failure, unhappiness, gains nothing in this world. Not even relief. I believe living beings bear innate in them a will to survive, to keep coming despite impediment, despite odds, despite all. Only death itself defeats the will to keep on, & what death is—finale or segue—none can say for sure who still reside this near side of it. So I read these old, sad, defiant pages now & I nod at how they unknowing led to now, to new pages. No victory had they not, no profit at all.

While Ric Amante has been publishing poems in *The Cenacle* since its beginning in 1995, & early on some letters too (most notably in *Cenacle* | 20-21 | Summer 1997), I'd never seen or published any of his fiction. So "Ecuador Hotel" is a delight; *Cenacle* 61 features its first three parts. Set in a flophouse loosely based on the Panama Hotel in Seattle, Amante tells the story of the encounter between protagonist Federico & a mystery man named Paul Skype who lives in Room 19. The narrative actually leaves off just prior to their first formal meeting. A sample of Amante's hyperbolic prose in the description of the hotel:

Federico was sleeping on a stained and sagging mattress in a hotel held together with duct tape and spit, whose name evoked lassitude, tropical disregard of time, faith, and merriment in the vegetal blossomings of chaos—while outside his cracked window the voices and attitudes were humorless, paranoic, proper. Even a leisurely smoke on a vacant stop was a threat and an affront to man and mountain alike.

My "Notes from the Northwest" mostly concern the Iraq War & Occupation, but by way of contrast I include a note written at my beloved old courtyard haunt at Harvard Square in Cambridge, Massachusetts, & a futile plea for NBC-TV to renew *Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip*. I deliberately let "Notes from the Northwest" cover a variety of topics from my notebooks that would otherwise not see publication. Each issue I pick what seems the best from what I've written since the previous issue.

The last piece in the issue is a reprint of an excerpt from Stewart Tendler & David May's 1984 book, *The Brotherhood of Eternal Love*, about a group of underground idealistic acid dealers which flourished in the late 1960s. I believe that the counterculture must make sure its history is preserved & disseminated or much of it will be distorted or simply lost. The facts of any era are infinite in number, & the feel of an era is even more elusive as it passes. Thus narrative oral histories are as important as statistics, mass media, & public records of debate & governance.

A concluding comment on the front & back covers. The front is a black & white & somewhat Photoshopped version of the *Resurrection, Now* volume's color back cover of me, released at the same time. The back is a photo derived from an anti-war rally in downtown Seattle, coupled with a quotation from Robert F. Kennedy. I was leaving Seattle but I was grateful for having lived there.

From the end of the "Big Push" in mid-May on through the summer, Kassi & I worked on preparations for Scriptor Press's third appearance at the Portland Zine Symposium & ninth appearance at the Burning Man Arts Festival. Core to this preparation was adding six new titles to the Burning Man Books series, volumes 49 to 54.

For a number of years, choosing the titles was less challenging. I did it myself & based my choices initially on building up from the canon of great world writers a collection of writers I personally admired, loved. Eventually, I wanted to expand out, cover more ground in terms

of geography, gender, race, ethnicity, content. Sometimes I've chosen to include writers that I would argue would belong in such a collection while others would disagree. On the other hand, some of the "greats" (such as William Blake & D.H. Lawrence) may never be represented. It comes down to a few criteria: do I like the writer very much? Can his or her work be enjoyed without a presumed knowledge of many other books? Can his or her work be fairly represented in a 40-60 page chapbook?



The last few years the selection process has become more a collaboration between Kassi & me—and I've had to do more research to find new additions to the library. I begin the work in January & Kassi joins me not long after. 2007's picks included Joyce Carol Oates' fiction "The Witness" (a story selected after reading dozens of her short fictions); "Bios and Mythos" by Joseph Campbell (this essay on mythology includes a glossary for some of its more challenging diction & terms); "The Myth of the Cave" by Plato (I actually had read this long ago in a philosophy class & decided it would aid the series in touching on classical philosophy); *Selections from Winesburg, Ohio* by Sherwood Anderson (another old favorite, despite my belief that I have no old favorites left to publish; its challenge was to cull a chapbook of pieces from a story sequence too long to publish as a whole); *If There is No God: Selected Poetry and Prose of Czeslaw Milosz* (Kassi & I worked pretty hard to create this book—Milosz, an amazing & prolific writer, being new to both of us); & *Infinite Coincidence: A Ninth Anthology of Writings About Psychedelics* (its title from a song by the indie rock band Bright Eyes, this volume includes a chemistry discussion of psychedelics by Rick Strassman; a vintage 1966 essay on LSD from the underground journal *Ramparts*; an essay about the Eleusinian Mysteries by Carl A.P. Ruck; a 1983 interview with the scientist John Lilly; a 2006 British press piece about ending the

taboo on psychedelic psychotherapy; & a list of recommended psychedelic websites).

The Portland Zine Symposium went well although the basic presumption there is that wares are sold or traded. Some people shied away from our free bookstore. Others, however, were very enthused & made the experience worthwhile.

Burning Man 2007 was its wonderful, overwhelming experience. We not only brought *Cenacles*, Samplers, RaiBooks, & Burning Man Books (new & old), but we'd proofread every Burning Man Book to fix old errors. Took weeks but why bring over 1000 books to such an event if they are not close to error-free?

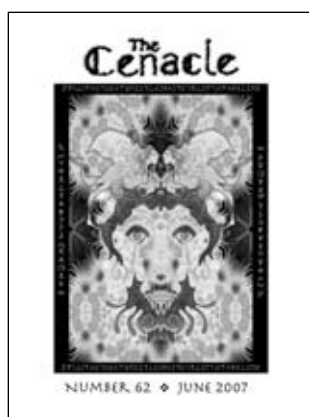
We returned to Seattle from Black Rock City & in a few days it was time for me to start my new job as knowledge base manager at Symantec. I'd taken this job knowing it would allow us to move to Portland & me to work at home there. Thus it was a wish fulfilled. About five years after my first move to Portland, I was moving there again. Instead of chasing a fruitless romance, & leaving jobless & broken, I was arriving with my love & a job in hand. We arrived in late September.

Of course it was strange being back. Five years is hardly a breath in heart's time. I didn't miss the old girlfriend—she was someone else now than who I'd loved. I missed to a degree the person I'd been: I'd written then with an obsessiveness that comes from standing so close to the edge for so long. I'd had few friends back then, & no computer of my own. What I had, simply, were my pens & notebooks, my CD player & a handful of CDs, my library card, & a strange room in a rooming house.

I only reminisce because of the writing I was doing, & I can say that since I've been back in Portland, I've done of a lot more. If anything is finally true, it's that I honor then by having survived the worst of it, I've come to better days. But I guess that people are inclined to sentimentalize their hardest days. Anyway—

It was October 2007 & I dug into my new job & into Scriptor Press work. I set to resuming my "Within's Within" radio show. The first Saturday I was ready to broadcast (9/15/07), our Internet service proved unready & so I had to pack up laptop computer, microphone, & notes, & walk on down to Coffee Time Coffee House . . . Where . . . strangely . . . I write this from tonight. A cavernous place, multiple rooms, walls a deep crimson alternating with strange paintings. All sorts come through here, from the thick-walleted to the homeless. I used to come here when I lived in Portland first time around, sat in an old armchair writing for my life. Anyway, that October morning I arrived here, settled in a booth when it got free, & resumed my radio show.

Also that month arrived the months-late *Cenacle* | 62 | June 2007. I made the decision



along the way that I would finish this issue as dated, & then issue the next number, 63, dated December 2007. It too would come out after its issue date, but my intention was to catch up in increments. I think my most important thought was to finish the last Seattle issue of *The Cenacle* clearly & rightly.

It had been eight years since its last color cover, *Cenacle* | 34 | April 1999. The first one in color was *Cenacle* | 24-25 | Winter 1998. *Cenacle* 62's front cover is by Emma Brochier & its back cover is by Nemo Boko. Both had previously contributed art to the journal but this was the first time their art could be appreciated in full glory. This issue began the annual appearance of color covers; I decided

thereon to make it the anniversary issue in April.

Cenacle 62 also marked the first time I published a letter of mine to an elected representative. I wrote to United State Senator Patty Murray, a Democrat representing Washington State. I admire Murray, a generally progressive Senator who usually serves the interests of her constituency. But by mid-June 2007 it was clear that she & her party colleagues in Congress were not doing enough to end the U.S. military occupation of Iraq. The 2006 congressional elections which gave the Democrats new majorities in both houses of Congress did not also give them a stronger will to oppose Bush's war. The key issue was continued war funding, which Murray voted for at the time I wrote to her. My conclusion sums my sentiment:

The Occupation of Iraq is a crime against humanity, against the world, & you are now participating in it with your latest vote. I urge you to put aside your career interests, your pollsters, your big money donors, and look again at the pictures and read the accounts of what has been done in the United States' name over there. And I hope never to hear again that you have used any pathetic excuse for continuing that situation for a single hour longer than it takes to pull American troops out. As of your latest vote, the blood of the dead and wounded is now all over your hands.

The funding of the occupation continued through 2007.

Cenacle 62 featured the debut of my *Many Musics* poems, which I consider to be the continuation of *6 x 36 Nocturnes & New Songs (for Cassandra)*. Begun in June 2006, *Many Musics* (& its companion fixtion *Labyrinthine*) did not have the strictures of number of poems or length of composition imposed on those previous works. I decided I'll write these til I'm done. The poems might be long, short, multiple-parted, will work lines & old poems over again & again, mix & mix, even older poems than those in *New Songs* & *6 x 36 Nocturnes*. *Many Musics* is a culminating work of sort, although I think that of every current work. In a sense, *Many Musics* contains the rest of my poems like a single city spreading out into unsettled darkness, & lighting it up. It begins:

*Many musics, wake, blink, call it a world.
Wake, blink, call it your world, leave dream's
warped glare, exhale, return. Sing true,
many musics, through the day's tasks,
through its troubles, from some kind
year, its elusive face, to another's heart
liquid cracking hungry into wood, shouting
dancers, full moon's frenzied lean.*

My eventual goal with *Many Musics*, as with other writing projects, was to bring its most recent pieces to the pages of *The Cenacle*. Poems as news, a literary journal as a different kind of newspaper. This has become very important to me even as I am still working toward its fully happening.

Ric Amante's "Ecuador Hotel" continued in this issue. Amante escalates in tension the pending meeting of his two main characters down by the city pier, writing in part:

Federico, Skype—two strangely formidable outcasts beating a path to a workingman's and dreamer's hotel in a northern city by the sea, two strands of a frayed helix whose joyous replication is precise, timely, unknowable.

I can only say I await further sections of this work & will regard the world a better place for them coming.

Judih Haggai's poetry crescendos at one point with the following lines:

*it's a search
an impossible search
for my inner Tibetan
my book of the dead
my ohm SP? and my enlightenment
not mine
not me
my search for the not mine
but the cosmic all*

She then claims the search "is doomed to fizzle" but I think the worth is in her poetry's great grasping, not what it seems unable to reach.

In part five of my fixtion *Things Change? [Six Thresholds]*, there is twined a continuing monologue of suffering & survival with a wish for returning story. I was writing these pages in 2002 and 2003 with a heart recovering from defeat, beginning to stir again to new days & their possibilities:

Night wet & cold, & funny, & it challenges me to join anew & anew, among the many songs, & little can I resist, the more I open out the more pours through me, my scattered days & hours & years resembling meaning & this fat sheaf of pages matters, & while I cannot be new neither shall I be old, something other seems more right, for the rage in my veins is thrashing & unkempt like always, & the love for both smooth & burn is ever high—

I had to find a way to function again, to "fix" myself enough & step along, to see new, shake off the rust & the woes. I trusted, trust, myself enough to know that pages dirty & pages pretty will both keep coming if I keep my pen moving.

Joyce Carol Oates' short fiction "The Witness" is reprinted in *Cenacle* 62 & as a volume in the Burning Man Books 2007 series. This story of a young girl whose fragmenting home life leads her to witness accidentally a murder in a park bears many of Oates' strengths as a writer: her strange & sympathetic characters; her love of the weirdly macabre; and her deep sense of how loved ones powerfully & unintentionally affect each other. It stands as a valid representation of her large & impressive body of work.

My "Notes from Northwest" is subtitled "On the Occupation" & continues my writing on the same topic as the "From Soulard's Notebooks" piece. What made 2007 so hard to live through was watching the U.S. Congress do *nothing* about the Iraq Occupation, save continue funding it. By June, no single figure in Washington had yet emerged as the face of the anti-war movement. The 2008 elections were far, far off, yet elected officials were already jockeying for

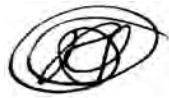
what was to come during them.

Looking back I can see now that what *was* happening was that the “netroots” in cyberspace were rising up in power & cohesion. A combination of websites like Daily Kos, the Democratic Underground, and MoveOn.org along with radio shows on Air America (mostly notably those hosted by Randi Rhodes & Rachel Maddow), were encouraging a still-nascent progressive movement to get serious about building infrastructure (mailing lists, shared research pools, polling data, and so on). What the Bush criminal cabal did not see coming was the 21st century. While they were relying on building bombs & appearing on the TV news, cyberspace was crowded with the voices of their demise, meeting, talking, planning. It was cyberspace that kept Bush from invading Iran for it was cyberspace that created the pressure on Congress to avert it. It was what we achieved in 2007: a non-event: the non-invasion of Iran. How the world would have turned if that invasion happened!

The reprint of Donovan Bess’s 1966 *Ramparts* essay “LSD: The Acid Test . . . and Beyond” is valuable as front-line reporting from history. 1966 was the year when LSD was outlawed in the U.S. & elsewhere. Bess’s discussion of yagé is also notable as nascent Western interest in this substance back then has grown much, much large in the decades since.

December 2007 marked the second time I’d ended a year living in Portland. But unlike 2002, I had a job & an untreachorous beloved. I was still settling in, renewing old friendships, mulling possibilities. 2008 beckoned me personally, with what Kassi & I might accomplish now that we had some stability, & also on a larger scale, with how things might continue to change before the 2008 U.S. elections. I wondered about Barack Obama, about comparisons made between him & Robert F. Kennedy. I wondered, I hoped, that a turn toward better days was due & soon. It had been long years since anything like genuine hope roamed the planet.

It was coming.



* * * * *



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 Fifteen
continued from
The Cenacle | 68 | April 2009

This year’s account has been awhile in coming—delayed in part, I think, by my reluctance to grapple with 2008. Its highs begat lows begat middlings. It was a hard ride many others took, from the relative security of a full-time job, a reasonable income, to the sudden, profoundly sudden, experience of an anonymous bean counter’s axe, & the plainest, nearest of explanations as to how badly George W. Bush & his criminal cabal had raped the United States—& walked away unprosecuted, even still admired by many, *even still admired by many of their victims*.

So, not an easy tale to tell. Even the near-miraculous election to the U.S. presidency of Barack Obama was mixed, for me, with coincidental personal misfortune. I was still thrilled shitless that he won the election. But the consequences of the past eight years did not go away; everything spilled out, the body politic nearly collapsed of its own disease & abuse.

For Scriptor Press, I see 2008, as indicted, in thirds. From January to June, Kassi & I enjoyed the fact of our arrival in Portland, steady work, settling in, making plans. I worked my job at Symantec Corp. remotely, which means I was loaned a laptop computer & worked at home—or, in my case, out of the local Starbucks café. Technical writer/editor work usually pays well, & is appreciated. So upon this stability, I was able to look around at Portland from solid ground I had not known while living here in 2002-2003. Had that solid ground remained, events would have gone otherwise than they did.

Politics dominated America culture like not in a long while. The ascendance of Barack Obama in 2008 to major candidate for the Democratic Party’s presidential nomination shook shit up hard. The remaining hard-clinging crusts of racism came out in a thousand ways: rumors that Obama was not an American citizen, was in fact an Islamic terrorist, etc. etc. were lobbed over & over as the man’s cool, clear rhetoric & clear-belled thinking early in the year trumped Hillary Clinton’s careless presumption, & later on John McCain’s deeply cynical choice of hillbilly hottie Governor Sarah Palin for his Republican ticket’s running mate.

What's funny looking back—funny in a painful, fucked-up way—is that George W. Bush unwittingly engineered Obama's election. The de-regulated & decimated financial markets collapsed days before Election Day, & McCain doddered in his indecision about what to do, how to speak against his own party's culpability. I think of Humphrey's too-late break with Johnson's Vietnam policy in 1968 that let Richard Nixon win.

There was a day, Election Day, when the world felt hopeful again, everything was possible, wishes came true. George W. Bush's clumsy assault on the world as a whole, & the human race in particular, was over. And it was. But the scars remained, & many iniquitous motherfuckers liked things as they'd become. Put simpler, damage heals imperfectly & only with a lot of work & time.

I participated in the politics of the year with fervor, & devoted my pen & press to the progressive cause. I felt, many felt, part of change, of movement toward light & reason & inclusion. These were heady days even as many stumbled, or were pushed, & stumbled. But I, we, kept going. Even still, 2008's crazed juices jump within me, & others too, still insist on inspiring again & again. New hope raised up from long-time despair can be like that. I put my work on the line, attending to the passing political events with close scrutiny & frequent response. It mattered, & mattered, & mattered.

It was a year of both continuity & revival for Scriptor Press. I had been wanting to do more for a while, use the solid ground I keep mentioning here to good purpose. The first project it occurs to me to tell of is my radio show, "Within's Within: Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution," webcasting on SpiritPlants Radio (<http://spfradio.yage.net>). The only show, in fact, on SpiritPlants Radio for several years & throughout most of 2008. Volunteer projects like this one see participants come & go; everyone else had gone. I didn't think I could do anything about this really but simply keep my show going. "Within's Within" hit its 9th anniversary in late January & I was grateful.

I broadcast my three-hour show 36 times a year, about thrice a month, & have maintained this rate for quite a few years. Additionally, I slowly built up the radio show's online archives. Moved these archives a few times during the year, finally settling them at a site called Heart Drive where they could be downloaded or streamed.

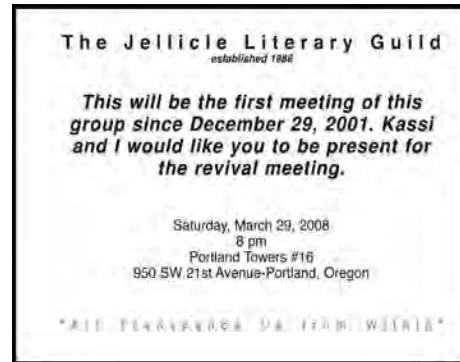
Since my show had been the only one on the station for so long, I pretty well accepted it. Finding good music & reading materials to fill three hours well, three times a month, was fine by me. I had few listeners but not none. Mostly, I did & still do it because I like my show. It's fun. It matters. It combines my love of music, radio, reading to an audience, & a wish to do something additional to my writing. It also provided me with a platform for advocating on behalf of the legitimacy of psychedelics.

Then a twist in things & it seemed like I had no choice: re-invent the station or lose it. In November, I found myself no longer just a DJ of a show but a station manager (more on that later).

One of the benefits of moving from Seattle to Portland was that we had some local friends again, most met at the Burning Man festival or through related associations. I decided it was time to revive the Jellicle Literary Guild, dormant since its most recent meeting in December 2001. On the one hand, its 13-year run had been a good one, a miracle really, in that the group was conceived in the obscurities of central Connecticut in the late 1980s, a pre-cyberspace time where whoever & whatever was nearby was who & what one had to work with. Yet conceived it was, & bloomed it did, & I remembered it with both sentiment &

yearning. I wanted to revive it, try again, & see if it was an idea viable & flexible enough for a new locale, with new people, in the new cyberspace era.

Of course I had no Roma Restaurant to invite people to, like back when, so Kassi & I decided to open up our apartment for the gathering. We set out food, arrange our living room comfortably, timed the meetings to the release of Scriptor Press publications (*Cenacle*, Burning Man Books, *Scriptor Press Sampler*) so everyone who came would leave with something good in hand. I sent out postcard invitations like old, but also companion email invitations; in place of recording the meetings by cassette tape, I recorded them digitally, using my MacBook Pro & a microphone. Take pictures, too, & then assemble the audio & photographs to distribute later—the former via *The Cenacle*, the latter by The Jellicle Guild electronic mailing list.



The first meeting of the revived Jellicle Literary Guild (105th, in all) occurred on March 29, 2008. I didn't know how it would go since I was the only carry-over from 2001. It seemed right, though, & I was ready. Seven of us in all that night, including my friends Nemo Boko, Michael Van Kleeck, & Victor Vanek, each of whom read from his or another's writings, led the conversation in discussion of mythology & dreams. It was a success, including handing 'round *Scriptor Press Sampler* | 9 | 2007 Annual—and I rediscovered the pleasure of debuting a publication like this, like it had been ago.

The second meeting occurred on May 10, 2008 with fewer people but this time, I'd brought for all *Cenacle* | 64 | April 2008. First *Cenacle* debuted at a Jellicle Guild meeting in seven years. Even more rousing was my discussion of the **Manifestation Project**. In short, I wanted to push the possibility of collaboration, so started simply by handing everyone a package containing a disposable camera, a piece of chalk, a stamped return envelope, & the instruction to *manifest yourself, or your self in the world, or something like this of your choosing*. . . my idea fruited at the June 28, 2008 meeting when we saw a slideshow of the pictures everyone had taken (they also appeared in *Cenacle* | 65 | June 2008, which didn't quite make it to the meeting). Another experiment at that June meeting was inviting my dear friend Jim Burke III in Connecticut to give a transcontinental guitar concert by telephone. I was experimenting with the new technologies to discover what would work, make a better meeting, wider open doors.

By contrast, reviving the Jellicle Guild meant I could also once again read my own writing aloud to a group of people. Since 2001, I'd published my work, & read it on the radio, but rarely live, save to Kassi.

I didn't have the formed concepts of my writing in 2001 that I'd built up since. One of my literary projects is called *Double Triptych*, comprising three groups of poems (6 x 36 *Nocturnes*, 2000-2005; *New Songs [for Cassandra]*, 2005-2006; & *Many Musics*, 2006-present), & three groups of long fixtions (*Things Change?*; *Why?*; & *Labyrinthine*, with roughly parallel dates).

My *Double Triptych* raised up from previous experimentation with story sequences & poetry sequences—and poetry/fixtion mixes. Essentially, aside from form & effect, important aspects but not foundational, poetry & prose are not different. They employ the same language,

the same grammar, & are both vehicles of human communication. I've come to believe that differentiating is more an interference than an aid, that one must learn how to use these different approaches best for one's self. Language is a tool; Art wields it consciously for effect & affect both. To persuade, to confess, to describe, to story tell. One can approach Art bodied in language as a kind of serious play, playing a game perhaps, or just play, where one wishes to try this & that, to see what happens—

So the *Double Triptych's* six components came to be from my previous efforts & the kind of ideas described above. Grow from the soil of what I had done before. From the story of Rich Americus & his rock band Noisy Children playing live at Luna T's Cafe in Hartford, Connecticut. Many of my earlier characters are more rarely seen but I always allow for their resurfacing. *Things Change?* (previously serialized in *Cenacles* #58-63) finally appeared as a distinct downloadable piece on the *ElectroLounge*—& in truth this work is more about my struggles over several years (2000-2005) than Luna Ts Cafe & its denizens. Where I think it retains value is how deeply mixed its lines & ideas with the *6 x 36 Nocturnes* sequence of poems—& how I decided to use these to build up a greater project.

On April 2, 2008, *The ElectroLounge* celebrated its 10th anniversary online. There was a time, most of human history, before the Internet, but its subtle & gross ways of life are receding into memory. The Digital Age is the true successor to the Nuclear Age as it succeeded the Industrial Age. My point here is that I remember the years before the Internet with, I suppose, a mix of yearning & good riddance. Not everything has changed. Humans still suffer, joy, couple, part, create, destroy, pray, fear, but the distances among us has shrunk in ways not simply physical—the result of better transportation—but psychical—the result of technology that can bundle up our words & images & sounds & travel them virtually anywhere in the world. It's strange, so much so that when I write, "On April 2, 2008, *The ElectroLounge* celebrated its 10th anniversary online," I marvel & perplex both.

In the months leading up to the anniversary, the work on the site was of the usual kind: adding more of my *Many Musics* poems; updating the news/psychedelic/literary links; adding the overdue *Cenacle* | 63 | December 2007; updating the radio page for each weekend I did a new episode of "Within's Within."

In March I acquired the Scriptorpress.com domain name from my friend Alfie in the UK. In April, I also moved the site's files from his server to my friend Senz's in Germany & to yage.net as well. Collaborators online, like in fleshspace, come & go; one wishes them damned well & moves on.



Also in April, as part of the site's 10th anniversary celebration, I added the newly published *Scriptor Press Sampler* | 9 | 2007 *Annual*. It debuted, as noted above, at the first meeting of the revived Jellicle Literary Guild, on March 28, 2008. Featured the work of Dale Pendell, Ric Amante, Judih Haggai, G.C. Dillon, Kassi, & myself.

Lastly, a delight in Kassi's desktop publishing skills, three more of the RaiBooks series were given electronic form & posted to *The ElectroLounge*: Ric Amante's *Ferry Tales*; Joe Ciccone's *North of Jersey*; & Barbara Brannon's *Pawn Title Keep Car*. Suddenly, in this Digital Age, these books could be downloaded by anyone on the planet with a computer & an Internet connection. I wish to always marvel at this, frankly, for it is a strange miracle. Other additions

followed: audio of the Jellicle Guild meetings; improved hosting for my radio show archives; & also improved, tabbed contents for each issue of *The Cenacle* on the site (for easier file navigation).

The ElectroLounge had come a far piece in its first decade—from, essentially, a long list of links to other sites, to one that hosted a handful of content pages, to one that featured Scriptor Press publications & audio. I've come to believe that the Internet allows for an individual to take possession of a small (or not so small) piece of cyberspace—be it website, blog, membership in a forum, etc.—, & participate from that first step ever farther & wider as time & energy, skill & motivation permit. So many possibilities in starting from small; *The ElectroLounge* stands as a solid example of this.

Coming in February, *Cenacle* | 63 | December 2007 was nearly two months late; there was no October 2007 issue in order to facilitate catching up. Reviving the Jellicle Guild has helped greatly toward publishing *Cenacles* on time in the years since this issue.

That said, it is a fine issue & provides a transitional glimpse of Kassi & I moving from Seattle to Portland. We had arrived in Portland in latter 2007 with high hopes of staying a long while. We also left behind a lasting affection for Seattle. This issue captures that complex of feelings.



The cover picture of the holiday tree in Portland's downtown Pioneer Courthouse Square revisits the similar image on the cover of *Cenacle* | 47 | December 2002, during my first stretch living in Portland. I'd come back to continue living here, an older, less desperate person. Kassi used her graphic arts skills to make this cover more than a blurry snapshot, thus showing the passing of time.

Also relevant, by way of images, to the transition theme was the "Leaving Seattle/Arriving Portland" photo series scattered through its pages. Kassi & I spend many Saturdays alone, seeing movies, journeying, grokking city places. Parks, allies, waterfronts, neighborhoods. We look for the images that seem to dance with invitation to photograph & keep. They are, in truth, everywhere; at first one looks clumsily, self-consciously; eventually the border between seeking eye & seen world opens; one whirls this way & that, fast & slow, feeling the quality of the air's heat or cool, the shifting light, moving shadows, noises, voices; the eye, the finger, the camera, the body, the world, merge, & move as though many and one both. We'd click, show each other, nod, move along.

There are bigger & smaller glints of Seattle in my writing in this issue too. Oldest of them are the concluding pages of *Things Change?* [*a new fixation*], which I'd finished January 3, 2005 (but was not completely published in *The Cenacle* until this issue). *Things Change?*, at 600 handwritten pages & 4 ½ years in the writing, is a behemoth of a work. I'd carried its manuscript across the country, east to west to east to west, through all sorts of personal dramas & bloody world events. It ends quietly, for all that, with neither questions nor their answers:

I sit at the corner of the bar shortly after New Year's Day 2005. What a cartoonish sounding name for a year.

"Why not call it Frederick? Or Blackfoot? Or Funk-a-doodle-doo?"

Americus laughs. "You finally figured out the secret"

"Eh?"

He looks at me, smiling, open as he's ever been to me.

"Not to take it all so seriously"

"Is that it?"

The drinking men at the bar nod among themselves. Mr. Bob the barman just looks at me.

"Your choice though, Son. Always."

I nod.

Walking into the night air I am free. Done it. Told this one. Right to its last page. Took it mighty seriously. Now letting it go.

Walking into the night air & I tell who I was, OK. This is good. I've made it.

Whatever comes, my pen & I did not let down our dream, our music, it hurt, it healed, here it is, still, world here, all music, all music, all music, love & clarity.

I didn't know if I'd get to that last page, & it was relief writing those final lines. Like its poetry counterpart, *6 x 36 Nocturnes*, finished around the same time, I was ready to be done & move onto new works.

I think what I'd established in *Things Change?* and *6 x 36 Nocturnes* was a deeper confidence that I can figure out the what & how of my work over an enormous canvas of poetry or prose. There's no simple formula save to engulf one's being completely in the process of living, & to draw from the passing stuff of that living an emotionally & intellectually interpretative response. I'd done this before these works but it was their size, the length of their composition, how important they became to me measured against personal suffering & living in a world of personal suffering . . . I reached further out & further in than I ever had. These works hurt me to read, still, in a way, for I see the heart-blood on every page, some drenched in it. And I know that I am free of "masters"—for better or worse, likely both, I bend a knee no longer to any other who made or is making Art. I am both becoming, & arrived to, what I am.

The tricky thing with my *Double Triptych* is that the fixtions & the poems are not being published at the same time—the fixtions comprise many more pages & so take more issues to serialize. So while *Cenacle* | 63 | December 2007 concluded the publication of *Things Change?*, *Why?* & *Labyrinthine* still awaited their turns; contrarily, *6 x 36 Nocturnes* had appeared in *Cenacles* #42-56 & *New Songs [for Cassandra]* had been published in *Cenacles* #57-61. As a result, the *Many Musics* in this issue (First Series, #3-60) were composed in latter 2006, not 2004 into early 2005 like *Things Change?*'s finale. They reflect life lived in Seattle for years, not months.

Three examples of poems written in Seattle that reflect its time as home: "Alki Beach Dusk," written for a summer's day spent on the glaring, crowded urban beach of that name:

*Live with no explain of
flaring mountains to a quiet canyon's glow,
& what left a roiling surf to remember, & forget.*

“Dash Point” for a pretty camping spot outside the city a short distance:

*Coming back, between breaths of wind,
there is silence. Not wanting, no return, tis arrival.*

“Plaza (Remembrance)” for a night on my own, Kassi visiting kin in Colorado. I’d biked a long way through city, now late, now tired, trying to keep a little in words:

*Here’s what I learned:
flesh remembers what hearts would forget—
empathy is a deep nod to shared suffering—
there is little can be squared with the world—
arrogance shutters fear’s slaves, some don’t escape—*

My poems are rarely place-centered, but they do reflect to some degree a sense of external condition as well as internal. And these places are often urban, rarely rural landscapes. Reflecting on this more, I think: I start in external space & usually leap in. They would be different, are different, by setting, even when this is no more or less obvious than breath & beat.

My final work in this issue relevant to this transition theme occurs in “Notes From the Northwest,” journal excerpts from November & December 2007—so much closer to the issue’s publication date. No longer arriving in Seattle, no longer living there, now arrived & living in Portland, again, & I questioned myself of this:

*I thought of how low, how nearly gone I was 5 years ago here, yet got up every day
& kept trying, it was hard, this place is already deeply embedded for me in all that
yet there was another aspect of it, I kept writing, I had good, high hours, I wrote &
read & listened to music, TV & movies, I didn’t stop—all this is to me the myth as
I’ve cumed it since—it’s true enough—but why return, why not somewhere new?
Why not old dream San Francisco?*

The answer I give is that I’ve always “looked for the hidden, what eludes the easy, common glance,” that Portland bears something “close to me,” not yet path or ideas, but a beginning. I think that’s why I am not an elaborate describer of place—I wear them like clothes, breathe them, they fit to the skin of my mind as much as body. I’ve moved from Connecticut to Boston to Seattle to Portland to Connecticut to Seattle to Portland, each time putting on a new skin, in a sense fitting the others better by rendering them memories, more comfortable in that role. Portland & Seattle, even Connecticut, drew me back with a sense of unfinished business or, more precisely, a desire to resume & continue on awhile. As of this writing, Boston seems to be doing the same.

We met Dale Pendell by chance at Burning Man 2007, when we were gifting out books from our No Borders Free Bookstore, & he was preparing to read at the nearby open mic stage. It was a pleasure to publish his essay “Green Flames: Thoughts on Burning Man, the Green Man, and Dionysian Anarchism.” In it he contends human history to be a struggle between “Dionysian Anarchists,” like those who go to Burning Man, & the apologists for the necessity of the police state. He rapturously concludes:

We must remember that anytime large groups of people can get together cooperatively, it puts the lie to the Hobbesian thesis that people are innately irresponsible and dangerous. That is the real reason that the government insists on police presence—even though they are clearly unnecessary. Free festivals are a threat to the whole rationalization for the existence of the armed, coercive forces of “internal security.” Such a free festival would be a light to the world for centuries: proof that cooperative living, free from armed coercion, is not “unthinkable,” but the way things should be. Free the imagination!

G.C. Dillon’s “Corina, Corina” is a charming story of a time-traveler who returns again & again to a home where his neighbor naturally ages over a lifetime while he doesn’t. Dillon’s best fiction—in the spirit of Hemingway’s style of leaving much of a story “submerged” from the reader—is effective in both what the narrative includes & what it leaves just out of view.

Ric Amante contributes Part VI of his fiction “Ecuador Hotel” (the most recent part to date). This section describes the anticipation Skype has toward his pending meeting with Federico:

He had no doubt Federico was nearby, and the imminence of their meeting both disturbed and excited him. Disturbing because engagement might soften his edge, exciting because engagement might hone it. As it was, this was destiny, as hard-wired in Skype’s skull as hunger. How and when it comes less an unsought miracle than test of faith. Prototypes had arisen, been embraced, flourished, withered, entered the bloodstream—the messages all potent, transformative, transitory. A stronger alchemy that would sift, valorize, and sing the days was in order.

I don’t know when or if this story will continue, but I very much hope so.

One of the works we’d published in the 2007 Burning Man Books series was Plato’s “Myth of the Cave” allegory from *The Republic*. In it, Socrates makes the argument that the best governors of state are those with no expectations of material gain from doing so:

The truth is that if you want a well-governed state to be possible, you must find for your future rulers some way of life they like better than government; for only then will you have government by the truly rich, those, that is, whose riches consist not of gold, but of the true happiness of a good and rational life. If you get, in public affairs, men whose life is impoverished and destitute of personal satisfactions, but who hope to snatch some compensation for their own inadequacy from a political career, there can never be good government. They start fighting for power, and the consequent internal and domestic conflicts ruin both them and society.

I think this statement’s verity stands as validly now as it did 2400 years ago. For better & worse.

Another reprinted piece is Judith Hooper’s 1983 *OMNI* magazine interview with scientist & visionary John Lilly (also reprinted as part of the Burning Man Books 2007 *Infinite Coincidence* psychedelic writings anthology). Lilly pioneered the use of LSD with sensory deprivation tanks, & wrote many brilliant books (*Center of the Cyclone* is my favorite, with its elaborate discussion of mind meta-programming). Lilly’s work & thinking & seeming basic

decentness places him, in my view, among the great psychedelic thinkers of the past century (including Aldous Huxley, Robert Anton Wilson, Albert Hofmann, Terence McKenna, Timothy Leary, & Alan Watts).

Judih Haggai's offering of poems includes a brilliant piece called "tribal offering" that justifies full inclusion here:

*i have lived amongst you
i have never lived
i have always lived
i remember the attachment
i remember the detachment
the human story is waves of seething closeness
and ripping apart
we are drops in a huge roaring lifetime
small beats hoping to find a thunderous orchestra
searching for meaning
relaxing after a sudden joy
our culture blooms from one tribe to the next
we listen to one another
we learn from one another
underneath it all
we seek a common tongue
in many different voices*

These are brave sentiments in a dark time with need of them.

The issue concludes with images from Seattle, the "Last Yawp" featuring a graffiti'd warehouse, & the back cover the sunset over Elliott Bay harbor. Moments culled from years, gestures toward summing the best of a living experience.

I suppose *Cenacle* | 64 | April 2008 embodied our belief that we were going to be in Portland for a long time. I had been at my job eight months & it was going well. The first Jellicle Guild meeting since 2001 had come off well in March, & this issue debuted (as note above) at the May 10, 2008 meeting. We just don't know what next in life, good or bad. That said, I am glad this issue exists, evidences a happy time, & reminds me that such times come & go & come again.

This issue initiated a tradition that has become annual since: the anniversary color cover. Printing in color is costlier than black & white, but owning a color printer mitigates this cost enough to make it possible once annually. It's a special thing to do, & marks the arrival of a yearly *Cenacle* milestone in a fine way. Nemo Boko's artwork, with Kass's page design, began this tradition in finest manner.

Also commenced as tradition was my "From Soulard's Notebooks" anniversary issue commentary on the year come & gone. I wrote about my delight at being in Portland, & reviving the Jellicle Guild—and also urged all to embrace the hope scattered everywhere in



2008.

The poetry in the issue was by a mix of new, regular, & returning contributors. New among the mix is the work of Portlander Michael Van Kleeck. Particularly notable among his pieces is an historical fantasia called “The Resurrection of Celilo Falls” in which he imagines the revenge of a local damned-up waterway:

*sing to me of the way she was
raped for her energy,
and sing to me of the day
she broke through, the day Celilo
came back from her watery grave.*

Returning to the *Cenacle* pages after a seven-year absence is the singular, idiosyncratic, & still beautiful poetry of Joe Ciccone. There is in “Summer Place” a streak of lines that shows Ciccone’s power & humor both:

*Then what did I do?
I picked a single note and built a song around it.
I heard a siren wail so I burned an entire city.
I closed a laughing can to hear the darkness better.
I bled into a well already full from bleeding.
I sent for someone who had also sent for me.
I carried a pen that burped and stuttered.
I watched a house leap into the ocean.
I built a telephone of wax.
I cried acid tears.
I broke down.
I spoke.*

Regular contributor Judih Haggai offers up many fine poems as well. I must like funny, dark, fierce poems because, like the others above, hers are often all of these things:

*What would you say
if you were offered a mountain
filled with red flowers, not poppies, but heavenly all the same
would you drop your life
your habitual this, thats and musts
to slip on your hiking shoes
warm layers and free flying mind*

My second series of *Many Musics* commences in this issue. I had decided I was going to write another series of 60 poems. Recurring characters (an old, troubled man based very loosely on my then recently deceased father, to whom this issue is dedicated); themes (war, desire, regret, life’s mysteries); lines (“tonight someone suffers”); dream fragments (blood canvas); poems responding to paintings & photographs viewed in museums (Ansel Adams, Claude Monet,

René Magritte, Pierre-Auguste Renoir)—these all comprise my poetical terrain, my music's materials. Nature, too, & literature, & history, & politics, but less so thus far.

Two fiction pieces appear in this issue. G.C. Dillon's "The Braided Pony" is a story of redemption gauzed & gauded in an elven fantasy. Brief, but with a lingering bite.

My own *Why? [a new fixtion]* debuts in this issue. While a sequel to *Things Change?* (as it was itself next in a very long series of related stories), it differs in that I was ready again to create new characters & locales, & revisit old ones. What interests me is that while this story still bears some of *Things Change?*'s painful self-obsession, I found my way back to storytelling. I think more & more over the years I see fixtion as needing as much & as little narrative as waking life does.

It had been a couple of years since a letter by Jim Burke III had appeared in *The Cenacle*. Writing, as he often does, of the dangers of technology, his letter's most crucial lines read:

I have long held that technology is exponential unto itself—that is, technology causes more and more advanced technology to be created not only by itself, but for itself and out of necessity. I also believe that it is closely tied to consumerism and that until our culture accepts a paradigm shift to economy (read this section of Thoreau's Walden), our planet will remain in a world of shit as evidenced by global warming and resulting climate changes.

My "Notes from the Northwest" covers a number of topics (an art exhibition, the origins of the Jellicle Guild, Woody Allen's newest film embarrassment), but what I find most notable is "Scriptor Press Notes Toward a Business Model," in which I addressed the struggles of making & distributing Art in a culture which commodifies *everything*. Its crux reads:

It starts with not charging for my work or that I publish. Deciding that, & committing to it, is huge, & only a beginning. The impulse toward free, share, is an idealistic gesture, a child's, a gesture in kindness to strangers who may take & neither understand the gesture nor value what received. "Free" may equal "worthless"

Essentially, two years later, nothing in my mind has changed. However, the new technologies have allowed easier dissemination of all kinds of media. The challenge has shifted from human gatekeepers to mastering the tools now available. The work distributed must still & always be of the best kind possible, but the good news is that this can now be more of one's focus (as long as one is not trying to make a living on it—that struggle is as ugly as ever).

Two reprinted works appeared in this issue. Joseph Campbell's "Bios & Mythos" (also reprinted part of the Burning Man Books 2007 series) grapples with the origin & function of human mythology, how it is rooted in both cognitive self-awareness & in how human societies literally & figuratively shelter & delay the maturation & independence of their young. It is a complex & persuasive essay.

Dr. Albert Hofmann's "How LSD Originated" recounts his discovery of LSD-25, from his work with ergot fungus to his infamous psychedelic bike ride in 1943. Hofmann is a fascinating person who lived to be 100 (he died around the time of the publication of this

issue), & his deeply intelligent & sensitive speeches & writings about LSD contrast starkly with the mainstream media's & government's willfully hysterical fear-mongering ignorance.

It was the morning of June 27 that our momentum for 2008 hit an unseen wall. My boss at Symantec called me at home that Friday morning & told me that most of my team's colleagues & I had been laid off as of the following Monday. That was that. Nine months of hard work—the fact of us moving from Seattle down to Portland in the first place—was done. Millions of Americans—& millions in many other countries—fell victim to powerful, inscrutable forces—unseen, unknown, &, for the most part, untouched by what they caused to happen to so many others.

The thing about millions of layoffs is that they strike individually. Each person, his or her family, dependents, suffers a layoff in a different way. Some have savings to help; some do not. Some lose houses; some have none to lose. I will never know most of those who received similar phone calls—or received letters, or were called into meetings—, & maybe there is something vitally wrong to this—what might have happened if millions of us had come outdoors & met each other? (I would contend, as said earlier, that the free-falling economy denied John McCain his expected Presidency; Hillary Clinton too.) It's not much of a reach to say that had millions of jobless souls descended on Washington, DC, the bastards who got away—many with bonuses & golden parachutes to boot—would have been surrounded for some justice.

What does one do upon a layoff? In shock, one checks his wallet, his savings, calculates his diminished income, looks at loved ones, & carries on. A deep blow, showing no physical mark, causing only psychic pain.



Carried on. Job hunted, wrote, worked on press projects. By early July, thanks to Kassi's desktop publishing skills, we'd added to *The ElectroLounge* an electronic version of my 1999 book of poetry, *Orpheus & Eurydice: Making the Lyre*. We also improved the nine volumes of *Scriptor Press Samplers* online by updating them with tabbed contents for easier navigation. These small improvements took even better advantage of the new technologies. They require one to continuously experiment & to keep aware of the development of new tricks.

During the last two months I was working at Symantec, I was developing the ideas comprising Manifestation Project. It began in early May 2008 in my current fixtion *Labyrinthine*, which itself was responding to a lecture by Marlene Dobkin DeRios, which I had broadcast on SpiritPlants Radio. Her discussion of the great value of thinking about psychedelics as “mind manifesting.” *Cenacle* | 65 | June 2008 bore the first fruit of my ideas about this matter. I gathered the underlying philosophy (in the form of prose, fixtion, & poems) in the issue's “Notes from the Northwest.” One passage stands fairly well for the whole:

Manifestation Project is my idea that we are here to manifest—that all manifests but humans have a unique way of doing this, as individuals & as a race—not better than other creatures & creations—but a human way—

1. *Doubt any person's absolute certainty or proclamation of "truth"*
2. *Heed what impacts—thoughts, emotions, impressions of a mental or physical kind*
3. *Dreams are strangely useful, if engaged more than casually*
4. *No human desire can absolutely be called deviant or perverse until any kind of a standard can be proven to have existed among all persons at all times in all places*
5. *The visible is not all; the unseen coaxes, & eludes*
6. *Nature is neither wholly other nor wholly at one with humanity. Nature is not at one with itself.*
7. *Art is available to all, a gift already present.*

Many of the issue's contributors were given at the 5/10/08 Jellicle Guild meeting a disposable camera, a piece of chalk, a stamped envelope, & the instruction to *manifest*. Kassi & I received back the cameras & selected photos for the issue. Thus the issue is visually marked by the idea. It was a satisfying first experiment.

What's funny is that my "Notes from the Northwest" **Manifestation Project** notes concluded just a few days before I was laid off. The challenge shifted from theorizing, & the making of Art, to spending that summer head up against economic realities. How does one manifest while job-hunting? In a shitty economy? I was trying to figure it out. It wasn't easy.

Cenacle 65 didn't show up at the June 2008 Jellicle Guild meeting. Technical issues combined with shock. Kassi & I kept working on it till it was done not long after. Beyond the **Manifestation Project** pictures, the issue is full of good contents.

My "From Soulard's Notebooks" contains my first letter to Barack Obama, then a Senator from Illinois running for President. The conclusion stands for the whole & sums I think many people's hopes & fears at the time about supporting Obama:

I will vote for you. I will work for your campaign after my own ways. I will cheer when you take office. But I will be with millions watching thereafter, & still ready for whatever comes next.

There is a lot of good poetry in this issue. It had been a year & a half since Ric Amante's poetry had appeared in *The Cenacle*. His five new poems included musings by night & by dawn, memories of a grandfather, the struggles of an alcoholic, & a kind of physics-based love poem.

Michael Van Kleeck's new work includes a powerful long poem called "MOVEMENT! MOVEMENT!" I saw him preach on a Portland city street.

*I'll write my own Declaration of
Independence when I break free
from the muse's satin shackles,
the short, orgasmic pleasure of
FUCKING THE FAR BEYOND
replaced by the post-coital dread
of becoming nothing
a sentenced spider who just spent
his eternal sperm*

*on a spontaneous widow not worth
these webbed words left behind
“MOVEMENT! MOVEMENT!”
Sign up right here and
practice your performance—
The judges are decapitated.
The priests have all gone to sleep.*

Judih Haggai's trio of new poems includes the following lines wrought of deep seeing & feeling:

*it's so sweet, life's beautiful, fighting over the tip
life's good, endless paychecks doing endless jobs
life's waiting like a ripe olive on an ancient tree
always bearing fruit, a bowlful of promises*

Joe Ciccone also offers up a trio of poems; “Boredom Vaccine” includes the following prosy line:

*Eat a penny keep a penny find brains in the sides of airplanes wet with rain great
names like sounds of pain down hallways that hide their mirrors amidst solid works
that were once only numbers set to music played through strings whose notes we
cannot fathom while birds turn to telephone wires which turn into rivers then
bridges and at last cities that go on for years beneath their oceans of sky whose wheels
are burning in their engines.*

& its rejoinder:

We push god further into the corner.

Finally, my *Many Musics, Second Series*' second half of poems. Two themes recur through the poems: *the way is Dis-illusion*, & *empty the temples of men*. Dis-illusion is an idea I've long worked with, essentially a challenge to myself, & others, to work to see *not* what one *wishes*, but *what is*. This is hard, & I do not know what the result looks like.

*The way is called dis-illusion, waking hour's
new brutal reports, no bridge of glass high
enough for silence. All passes, & passes again.
Everything shits, everything's soil. What comfort
in breathing, a meal of warm bread, safe
nest, laughing voice, music & starlight.*

The second is my belief that the native human wish to deeper know self, other, the world, & the relations among these is more often than not crushed by crowding into human institutions of religion. Whether church, synagogue, mosque, or other kind of so-called sacred building,

the instructions given on how to pray, how to think, what to believe, what is not mentioned or emphasized, outgains the value of communion among seeking souls. How can this be asserted? Simple. Look about the cities & towns of the world. Behold the homeless everywhere, the sick without healthcare, the poor without hope. The way every body & every hour & every inch of valued land is commodified, pressed into competition one against the other. I say flee the temples & look at the world without mediation. One needs not a robed preacher or a so-called sacred tome to see & feel the miracle of life in all of its many manifestations. One needs not humble one's own joys & sufferings before those of a mythic hero. Religious institutions, like government, like any concentrated centers of human power, seek, in the end, not to liberate their members, citizens, or followers, but to consolidate, expand, & perpetuate their own existence & control.

G.C. Dillon's fiction "Serendipity is a Happy Accident?" is a fantastical re-telling of the John Smith/Pocahontas story involving time travel & spatial dis-location. In it, his education as a history student combines sleekly with his deep capacities to compose speculative fiction.

The next installment of my *Why?* fixtion pursues further a strange melding of old characters & new. I still wrote about the rock band Noisy Children, about the rock joint Luna T's Cafe, about the poor, the crazy, the obsessed, but found that new characters & settings helped me to freshly pursue mixing in my continuing themes: human waste amidst the nearly inexhaustible evidence of the world's beauty.

Another welcome return to *The Cenacle's* pages was Ralph Emerson, & his series of linguistics essays on phonesthemes. "B is for Body" is both playful & well-researched, rolls out a delightfully readable study of the letter B, beginning:

Let's play a shapes game. Let's pretend for a moment that B isn't a letter but a picture. What does it show? Look: B. Turn the page clockwise for a second so the curves of the B come down toward you. What do you see? I see breasts. Wishful thinking, you say? Well, maybe, but why shouldn't we have a picture of breasts in our alphabet? They're important.

This issue features two reprints. The first of these, Gabriel Garcia Marquez's "A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings" is both a masterful piece of magical fiction, & a cutting, though still affectionate, social commentary. This work was also reprinted in an anthology of Garcia Marquez's short fiction in the Burning Man Books 2008 series.

Also reprinted is D.M. Turner's "CydelikSpace," whose theme, building upon personal experience, as well as the thinking of writers like Aldous Huxley & Stanislov Grof, sums:

There exists a state which I will call "CydelikSpace," that I have visited numerous times through the use of psychedelics It is accessible now, and even appears to be the underlying reality behind all existence. It is of this state that one becomes aware, to a greater or lesser degree, during deep psychedelic experiences, and any other mystical or spiritual experience.

My critique of any work on psychedelia is usually the same: if it can be agreed that psychedelics manifest mind, serve as amplifiers, then no one individual's experience can draw a successfully complete set of generalities. What writers such as Turner—& Grof & Huxley, & a number

of others—do successfully, is display the manifestations of fine, deep minds—hinting at what others might experience too—& thus serve to specify psychedelia’s possibilities, & to counter the witch hunting paranoia of those who prefer the masses still remain, by & large, bloated, drunken, & most definitely *not* manifested.



After completing & distributing *Cenacle 65* online & in print, we spent the summer preparing the Burning Man 2008 series of chapbooks—& Kassi worked while I job-hunted.

Job-hunting, in short, sucks. It is a soul-crumbing time, reducing the seeker to a polite form of begging, & waiting, & more begging. Free time is darkly shadowed by want & lack. One tends to become less & less social as there isn’t much to chat about casually, & the increasing sense of frustration resembles a sickness that won’t end, save by the nod of a stranger. I had to do this throughout the summer until early September. I was not alone in this; yet this awareness was not comforting.

This was the tenth year I’d assembled the No Borders Free Bookstore, fifth year with Kassi. The books this year included Rachel Carson’s environmental essay *Mother Sea: The Gray Beginnings*; Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s short fiction anthology, *Fugitive Survivors of a Celestial Conspiracy*; W.S. Merwin’s selection of poetry, *Walking at Night, Between the Two Deserts, Singing*; Fyodor Dostoevsky’s short fiction *The Dream of a Ridiculous Man*; *Out Here We is Stoned... Immaculate: A Tenth Anthology of Writings About Psychedelics*; & Hakim Bey’s underground socio-political classic, *TAZ: The Temporary Autonomous Zone*.

The festival itself was fun as always, though again I was attending it unemployed. But ten years of living out the year & then making it to Black Rock City was a reward in itself. Biking the desert deep into the night. Handing out hundreds of chapbooks that would travel around the world. Kassi & I worked hard to get there & make the week a good one. Riding from western Oregon to northern Nevada, we had many a good adventure away from Portland. A forested area of central and southern Oregon called the Oregon Outback Scenic Byway marks for me a waking life counterpart to my fiction’s “White Woods.”

We also brought No Borders Free Bookstore to the Portland Zine Symposium, third

year in a row, first time while living there. It's a great event, but in truth Scriptor Press does not fit in there. I'm not sure why. Different kinds of weird, maybe.

September came, I found work as an industry analyst for a small company in downtown Portland, & watched with everyone else as the American economy continued its collapse. The end of George W. Bush's nightmarish reign as American president coincided with all this. The election season was in full swing; things were changing, like it or not.

In late October, *Cenacle* | 66 | October 2008 debuted at the Jellicle Literary Guild meeting. This was the first issue after the summer's long job struggles. It is again a mix of new & regular contributors.

This mix grows a journal's (or any group project's) identity over time. I try to work with approximately ten contributors per issue, & my wish is that there be one to two new contributors among these. New contributors come in a variety of ways: online, friends of friends, chance meetings. I delight in the never-knowing. That *The Cenacle* is quarterly allows for these meetings to likely affect each issue.

We met Mari Floraday at Burning Man 2008, & it was she who brought the California poet Daniel Schroyer to our attention. His "Listening to Bombs" is such a great-wrought piece of work I quote it here in its completeness, by way of gratefulness—

*i'm not faithless
and
neither are they*

*heroes?
terrorists?
who knows?*

*peace begins with forgiveness
not finding
but creating*

*like mornings each
its own package
unwrapping
just born light
listen
the birds know*

*i name this epiphany
unfolding
not so slowly
now that time
knows me
so intimately*

*i wish to share
this opening
this understanding*

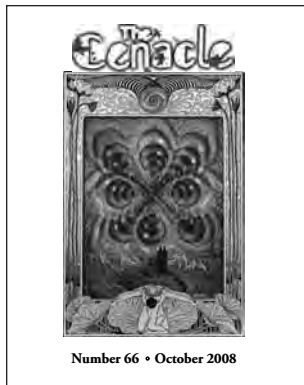
*here are my hands
my heart*

*i am
for mending*

Among Ric Amante's new poems is "Boomerang," a poem which is both funny & quietly furious. Smacking out at the lures of eternal bodiless Nirvana, he calls such an idea "dreary, unimaginative! . . . illogical." Citing the intentional kindnesses of various strangers (whether historical or rhetorical in nature, unimportant), he concludes:

*We'll all be returning, they say,
some more helpful than others,
refining our service and love
with a word or a gift or a life—
then another.*

I believe Amante is as good as any contemporary poet out there, famous or obscure, &, frankly, better than most. His art is both masterful & humble. Musically, plainly, brilliant.



Judih Haggai's excellent poems wake up early, look forward to Tuesday's t'ai chi, ride bikes in war torn deserts, miss loved ones, converse with mosquitoes & visions of Mark Rothko. There is love of family, of solitude, of music, of compassion. Bending is not simply not breaking—it is an alternate path, an unstuck way of seeing & feeling & interpreting the world within & without.

I wrote the first half dozen of my *Many Musics, Third Series* before I got laid off in late June. I had **Manifestation Project** ideas primarily on my mind (some of these poems first appeared in *Cenacle* 65 in the "Notes from the Northwest" piece). Afterward, the remaining 24 poems, I believe are caught in the poem "Plumage":

*Tonight I still beat at narrow faith,
at vows thin of mystery & pleasure.
I am reaching for the hungrier words,
to sing, to burn, to reveal. New sounds
of the sea in my blood, next page,
the way on. Tonight I will not drown.*

G.C. Dillon's short fiction "Ten Thousand Spoons When All You Need is a Knife" is a dark tale, set in a fast food restaurant. It's funny, fairly merciless, & over far too soon & just precisely right.

My fiction *Why?* pursues deeper into its new places. One is a TV show called *Trip Town*—a show I’d briefly describe as a kind of literary extension of David Lynch’s *Twin Peaks*, without the restraints of network, budget, actors. Another is the romance between Dylan & Maya, two young people who meet on a bus, & travel with a more desperate man named John into a surreal version of Portland, Oregon, a reconstructed version of the city & experiences I’d had in it back in 2002. I determined to give those days to Art as fruitful material. Also there is Global Wall, a sort of wealthy preacher with a somewhat ambiguous plan to wield power for affect & vengeance. As *Why?* unfolded I came to believe I could feed more & more of me into it, find new ways to do this.

Ralph Emerson’s essay “M & N: Mouth and Nose,” elaborates on both the distinct & shared duties these letters bear. It concludes with the following anecdote:

Here’s an anecdote from The New York Times’ “Metropolitan Diary” (Dec. 9, 2002). A mother wrote in that her five-year-old daughter was asked to bring to school in a paper bag “something starting with the letter ‘N’.” Although the bag was still unfilled by morning, the little girl ate her breakfast unperturbed, firmly refusing her family’s frantic last-minute suggestions of nickels and napkins. “I know what I am going to put in,” she said. “Nothing.” And off she went, bag empty, a budding linguist.

My “Notes from the Northwest” discusses my summer of job-hunting, & concluded thusly:

Now it seems more like the idea is to make a person nervous, easier to intimidate, the goal being to produce a more timid, compliant workforce. Crush the power of unions. Push people into leaning on their credit cards. Create a workforce of grateful wage slaves. A rare few will make an awful lot of money; most will struggle, live with struggle & worry so commonly that they will not suspect that something has gone wrong, that they need not live like this, that someone is manipulating the situation. Big business is lying, those in government are lying. Not every last soul but enough to systematize the lies. Create a “normality” of stress & uncertainty.

There are those who like it like this, who will strive to keep things uncertain, who will profit madly from instability. Most people will never see them, up there, would-be mangods orchestrating the unending series of crises, laughing lords of the lie. I’m just asking myself who is benefitting from all this chaos—financial panic—who stands to gain & who to lose—suddenly in a week the economy is crashing? It makes no sense—or maybe it does—

Two reprints in this issue. Rachel Carson’s “Mother Sea: The Gray Beginnings” is from Rachel Carson’s *The Sea Around Us*. We also published this as a volume in the Burning Man Books 2008 series. It bears the following deeply memorable passage:

When they went ashore the animals that took up a land life carried with them a part of the sea in their bodies, a heritage which they passed on to their children and which even today links each land animal with its origin in the ancient sea. Fish, amphibian, and reptile, warm-blooded bird and mammal—each of us

carries in our veins a salty stream in which the elements sodium, potassium, and calcium are combined in almost the same proportions as in sea water. This is our inheritance from the day, untold millions of years ago, when a remote ancestor, having progressed from the one-celled to the many-celled stage, first developed a circulatory system in which the fluid was merely the water of the sea. In the same way, our lime-hardened skeletons are a heritage from the calcium-rich ocean of Cambrian time. Even the protoplasm that streams within each cell of our bodies has the chemical structure impressed upon all living matter when the first simple creatures were brought forth in the ancient sea. And as life itself began in the sea, so each of us begins his individual life in a miniature ocean within his mother's womb, and in the stages of his embryonic development repeats the steps by which his race evolved, from gill-breathing inhabitants of a water world to creatures able to live on land.

The idea of the sea in our blood has remained with me a very powerful one.

Peter Bergebal's "Will Harvard Drop Acid Again?" discusses the new push for psychedelic research getting underway—on intractable problems such as cluster headaches—and being conducted by Dr. John Halpern & Rick Doblin.

Now there's the laudable part of this: brilliant men using powerful tools to alleviate debilitating human pain. And then there's the ironic aspect: that drugs & alcohol are both legal & neither displays the power to cause anything curative or miraculous. Yet for LSD or marijuana or the like to be sanctioned even slightly, they must be proven to be healing & restorative *wonders*.

A brief comment on the non-textual aspect of this issue: it bears wonderful artwork, including the cover, by Portland artist Gwyllm Llwd, & some great photography by Victor Vanek. And the back cover is devoted to an unpaid advertisement endorsing the Barack Obama/Joe Biden ticket for President. It was a damned heady time that fall.

November came &, miracle of miracles, the United States elected Barack Obama to succeed George W. Bush. What a fabulous night Election Night was! I think it marked the first time in at least a decade that the world celebrated together. Oh to think something good *might* happen again.

The next morning I biked downtown to work, greeted my colleagues, began my day's activities, & by mid-morning had been laid off again. This time face-to-face with the decision-maker, & him sad & scared & no bullshit. But, laid off again. Here we were. Back to the job-hunt. The November meeting of the Jellicle Literary Guild went on, was great fun. Kassi & I celebrated Thanksgiving. We even meant it.

As promised, more on SpiritPlants Radio. Essentially, by necessity, I took over the re-creation of the station. From the foundation of my weekly three-hour (three times a month) show, I built up a whole network of programming. It was an opportunity to create something new. What would fill its hours, given no budget, no advertising, little audience, & the vast riches of the Internet? So I answered this for myself. Psychedelic rock: Pink Floyd. Comedy: Bill Hicks. Electronica: Shpongole. Lectures: Terence McKenna. Jazz: John Coltrane. News: *Democracy Now!* Old time radio: *Lights Out!* Literature on the radio: Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. Even a second DJ joined me: DJ Lain & his show "Japan is Dumb: The Exotic Musical Stylings of DJ Lain." Eventually built up a website. A weekend schedule. Show archives.

Listener statistics. A reputation for quality & adventure. As obscure as Scriptor Press's, yet as validly existing in the world. I kept doing my show, now deeply contextualized, & began over time to broach the idea of: what is, or could be, *psychedelic radio*?

SPIRITPLANTS RADIO			
November 22-23, 2008 Schedule			
Listen Live: http://www.spiritplantsradio.com Radio Companion: http://www.spiritplantsradio.com Radio Blog: http://www.spiritplantsradio.com Schedule below is for Pacific US time zone. For other time zones, use: http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/servlet.html			
Station	Program	Station	Program
11.22.08		11.23.08	
12 AM - 3 AM	Within's Within Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution with DJ Soulard (classic) <i>11.22.2008 show</i>	12 AM - 1 AM	Jazz Café <i>John Coltrane Live in Stockholm 1963</i>
3 AM - 6 AM	Comedy Hours <i>Bill Hicks - Love, Laughter, & the Truth</i>	1 AM - 2 AM	Long Live Rock! <i>Pink Floyd, Live in Vancouver, 1970</i>
6 AM - 9 AM	Psychotic Lectures <i>Trevor McKenna - True Hallucinatory</i>	2 AM - 4 AM	Psychotic Lectures <i>Trevor McKenna - True Hallucinatory</i>
9 AM - 12 PM	Old Time Radio <i>Light Tunes: 1) David Byrne 2) Garth</i>	4 AM - 7 AM	Within's Within Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution with DJ Soulard (classic) <i>11.22.2008 show</i>
12 PM - 3 PM	Long Live Rock! <i>Pink Floyd, Live in Vancouver, 1970</i>	7 AM - 8 AM	Electronica by DJ Veronica <i>Sleeping, Some Time of the Day</i>
3 PM - 6 PM	Comedy Hours <i>Bill Hicks - Love, Laughter, & the Truth</i>	8 AM - 9 AM	Comedy Hours <i>Bill Hicks - Love, Laughter, & the Truth</i>
6 PM - 9 PM	Psychotic Lectures <i>Trevor McKenna - True Hallucinatory</i>	9 AM - 10 AM	Storybook Time <i>Book Reviews: One for the Road</i>
9 PM - 12 PM	Within's Within Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution with DJ Soulard (new!) <i>11.22.2008 show</i>	10 AM - 12 PM	Psychotic Lectures <i>Trevor McKenna - True Hallucinatory</i>
12 PM - 3 PM	Japan is Dumb <i>The Exotic Musical Stylings of DJ Lala</i>	12 PM - 3 PM	News Hours <i>Democracy Now! with Amy Goodman</i>
3 PM - 6 PM	Storybook Time <i>Book Reviews: One for the Road</i>	3 PM - 4 PM	Within's Within Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution with DJ Soulard (classic) <i>11.22.2008 show</i>
6 PM - 9 PM	Jazz Café <i>John Coltrane Live in Stockholm 1963</i>	4 PM - 5 PM	Old Time Radio <i>Light Tunes: 1) David Byrne 2) Garth</i>
9 PM - 12 PM	Psychotic Lectures <i>Trevor McKenna - True Hallucinatory</i>	5 PM - 7 PM	Psychotic Lectures <i>Trevor McKenna - True Hallucinatory</i>
		7 PM - 9 PM	Electronica by DJ Veronica <i>Sleeping, Some Time of the Day</i>
		9 PM - 12 AM	Japan is Dumb <i>The Exotic Musical Stylings of DJ Lala</i>
			Within's Within Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution with DJ Soulard (new!) <i>11.22.2008 show</i>

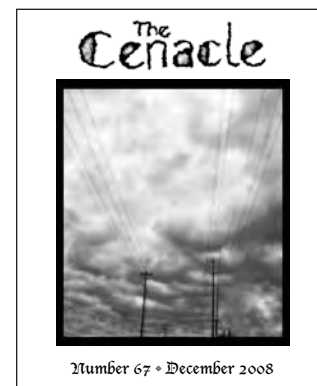
In December I managed to score contract work as a technical writer. Contract work means your skills are being rented for a time. It can pay well &, in hard economic times, it can prove the only kind of work easily found. I was employed: a check is a check. The weekday daylight part of me, the range of my writing & editing skills that are rentable: I rent. I do this willingly because in the end there is no choice. Pay the rent. Protect Art. Serve the Muse. There isn't anything else.

On an extraordinarily snowy night in Portland, in mid-December, Kassi & I welcomed our friend Cyron to the 20th anniversary Jellicle Literary Guild meeting. Hadn't been an anniversary meeting in nine years, since 2001, & that I thought had been the last. How life twists upon itself funny, again & again. Debuting during that blizzard was *Cenacle* | 67 | December 2008, the fourth issue of that tumultuous year.

Its front cover depicts a heavily clouded sky. Its back cover a coffee house bathroom paper towel dispenser on which someone has written "We'll all be fine" & someone else has responded "Hope so." On the table of contents I apologize for the issue's lacking my "Notes from the Northwest" & a new chapter of this history. Happily, for all this, the issue's contents are good ones.

My "From Soulard's Notebooks" is a letter to then President-elect Barack Obama, my second letter to him in 2008. The heart of this letter is the following:

I believe, Mister President-elect, Barack, that you will do well, that you are suited for this great, hard task. You will push this nation & the world as a whole toward smarter, kinder, & eventually more prosperous days. You will lead & inspire. Others will listen, will find a model to emulate in one way or many. As always, what good that happens will not annihilate suffering or selfishness or plain stupidity. Neither fullest moon's beauty nor bloodthirstiest war lasts perpetually. Or perhaps, more accurately, life shifts between them, strangely allows & accommodates both. There will always be beauty. There will always be war.



I concluded with the following:

You know what you have to do, your many tasks, the many expectations, countless possibilities & pitfalls. Mysteries beyond view, unknowable turns of fortune. Tonight, some seven weeks from when you take your oath of office, I am thinking of you with love, with respect, with a deep sense of fraternity with you, & with every possible good wish that you will succeed more often than fail, move the world into clearer air, deeper awareness of our better impulses & of each other. Tonight, I am with you in heart & spirit, I am hopeful, nothing is impossible. We can do this. Yes, we can.

What's funny is that I still believe in what I wrote here. Nothing, nobody, is beyond the possibility of redemption. Stupidity can turn to kindness, ignorance to empathy, any imagination can ignite a soul with the unknown's lure, & chance. The tragedy is how often this never happens. A brain's best rarely spent. A race's not spent often enough to change its course.

The issue continues in this spirit with "Hartley's Righteous Rants" by David Hartley. Hartley is one of my dearest brothers, one with whom I have journeyed to many deep places. I consider his intelligence & sensitivity a dearest living thing. He writes, in this first contribution to *The Cenacle*, in part:

We are humans. We are technologically sophisticated but spiritually infantile. We have the power to correct many horrors that we have perpetrated upon this earth. We have the knowledge and the incentive to create a better and healthier world for ourselves and all of our fellow life forms. Oddly enough, we don't. Why? I believe we are simply not psychologically mature enough to make the necessary changes. We as a planetary people are narcissistic. Like a child who has not learned about empathy, compassion, sacrifice, and dedication, we move through our lives pursuing our individual self-interests. We exploit each other and nature to fulfill our endless desires. We in the modern West like to keep our dark side hidden from ourselves. It is easier to rationalize our sins when we don't have to see, touch, smell, and hear the results of it every day.

A further echo in Jim Burke III's letter & its ringing opening:

When the social and natural sciences collide, an attempt is invariably made to qualify quantitative data, and vice versa. The social individual is absorbed into the mass, or the collective consciousness. This makes up for all the major components for our culture (unfortunately as can be seen by studying the legal and ethical systems, not all these components are justifiable in their present state of use; i.e. existence of the death "penalty"). However, we must fight the change of reality that is cast on us like a shadow. Each of us needs to step into the sun, as an individual, and express ourselves freely and in right conduct. It is the obligation of every person, possessing of intellect and perception, to channel his or her reality back to the mass and to keep them in check, perhaps even help the mass. I know now that not a day will elapse ever again when I am not practicing an art form. It is our responsibility to do this and let the mass know.

I believe that those who reach the levels of sophisticated philosophical poetry of Burke & Hartley have paid a painful dues along the way. To look out hopeful to the world, again & again, to leap out & try to feel of the world beyond one's self, is rare, is, I believe, caused by traumas & by ecstasies alike. A human brain *not* wasted is one that, in adulthood, has come to a vulnerable openness natively known by children. The difference, I think, is that when the question "why?" comes up, the Hartley, the Burke, does not believe any one person can say, yet knows an answer is not impossible.

On a lighter note, if no less intellectually heady, is Ralph Emerson's essay "C & G: Gobbling Gutturals." What I personally cherish in his essays is, after several pages of mind-bending observations, connections, & citations, he often concludes with a soft splashdown:

When a character in [William Faulkner's novel Light in August] encounters a proud-looking stranger called Joe Christmas, he suddenly realizes "how a man's name, which is supposed to be just the sound for who he is, can be somehow an augur of what he will do, if other men can only read the meaning in time . . . it was as though there was something in the sound of [Christmas's name] that was trying to tell them what to expect; that he carried with him his own inescapable warning, like a flower its scent or a rattlesnake its rattle." Christmas is a killer, of course, and he's finally shot to death by one Percy Grimm.

Did you hear the rattle that time?

The poetry is no less heavy, of course. Judih Haggai's "Notes on How to Go On" includes this especially beautiful passage:

*when tragedy strikes
mind whirls, constant humming
waves askew, sound too much treble
overtones jar
i'm reeling for a friend
real friend, real sad
she's grieving
and i say how to go on
i know snow falls
and i'm wishing i could feel it
snow falls, life goes on
simple cycles go on
pushing for an om moment
to go on*

The second half of my *Many Musics, Third Series* contains a half-dozen poems called "Imaginal Space" (i-vi). The first begins

*What rises with the light, crosses the moon,
what sings shores empty of men tonight,
a wish, a riddle, a sooth. A moving spaced,*

*a moveable space. Call it imaginal space.
One music, many musics, the porous ground
to any staying cry of human truth.*

I'd been working with such sentiments for a long time, for their endless fruits. I suppose it comes down to working with mysteries or in the employ of answers. Breathe in the world, breathe out response. Next breath, new response. Answers solid in one moment, or a stretch, will eventually give way, unless propped. Propped, or allowed flow. Flow, change. These need trust to keep happening over time. It's hard. But the world is as imaginal as it is real. Moves, changes, flows. Poetry is the world's news, in melody:

*I ask the Universe: why suffering?
Why music? & behold this world my answer.*

G.C. Dillon's "The Wicked Witch" is another retelling, this one of a passage from L. Frank Baum's *The Wizard of Oz*. Funny, harsh, as his stories often are, one about forgiveness & compassion, beneath its clever baubles. A brief thing of beauty.

My *Why?* fixtion continues on, much of it continuing to take place in a fictionalized version of the rooming house I lived at in Portland during the fall & winter of 2002-2003. This fixtion was written only a couple of years later so the actual experience was still very live in my mind. Too, much of the story took place at Luna T's Cafe, based originally on a fast food joint in Hartford I knew as a high schooler in 1981. I've simply taken it all along with me over time, mixing places & people into an earthy, emotional, mindscape that interests me because it has a *history*, & it *flows* too.

The first of two reprints in this issue are poems by W.S. Merwin (part also of a collection we did for the Burning Man Books 2008 series). I remember one—"The Odds"—I originally found in a recent periodical in the Portland Public Library. Found & read it with all due delight:

*His first winter in that city
after years in the north a friend
wrote to me of how people there
were dealing with the cold
he told me that crews
were digging up the avenue
down at the corner all day
the men keeping a fire going
in an old oil drum with holes
down the sides and feeding it whatever
turned up and he had been watching
two men by the barrel with three
gloves between them passing one
glove back and forth
while they stamped their feet
and he had tried to tell whether
it was a right or a left glove*

Finally, James Fadiman's "Opening the Doors of Perception," about his time as a researcher into psychedelics in the early '60s, before their prohibition. In a couple of paragraphs in his "A Moment of Reflection," I find painful verities, like those in this issue of Hartley, Burke, & Haggai in particular:

Why did our drug research frighten the establishment so profoundly? Why does it still frighten them? Perhaps, because we were able to step off (or were tossed off) the treadmill of daily stuff and saw the whole system of life-death-life. We said that we had discovered that love is the fundamental energy of the universe and we wouldn't shut up about it . . .

What we found out was that the love is there, the forgiveness is there, and the understanding and compassion are there. But like water to a fish or air to a bird, it is there all around and without any effort on our part. No need for the Father, the Son, the Buddha, the Saints, the Torah, the books, the bells, the candles, the priests, the rituals, or even the wisdom. Just there—so pervasive and so unending that it is impossible to see as long as you are in the smaller world of people separated from one another. No wonder Enlightenment is always a crime.

Kassi & I spent the December holidays with her family in a frigid Colorado. Among goodly, warm folks. What a year. Lost two good jobs, found a third acceptable. Helped elect an excitingly new president. Made & published & disseminated art by journal, book, cyberspace, & radio. Took, in the end, nearly as many months to write about it as to live it. Some years are like that. One lives them, & then their long-lingering echoes. Moves along, leaves something behind. Not a bad deal, in a way.



* * * * *



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 Sixteen

continued from

The Cenacle | 75 | October 2010

For Scriptor Press, & for me personally, 2009 would be a year of lasts. It would be Kassi's & my last full year living in Portland; it would bear the last job I would work in Portland too; & it would be the last year we would go to the Burning Man Arts Festival in Black Rock City, Nevada. I knew none of this at year's commence, but by year's end I was close upon the decision to move back to Boston.

I'd first moved to the Pacific Northwest in 2002, in love with a girl I'd met in cyberspace, & with Burning Man. With the exception of about a year spent back in Connecticut, licking wounds from the girl's protracted rejection, I'd been living in either Seattle or Portland for the years since 2002. Attending Burning Man every year with my press's No Borders Free Bookstore project. Gotten married along the way, too, to another girl, Kassi, who I loved & love just as deeply, who'd stayed, & thus eventually even deeper. I'd visited back East a few times to see kin & sentimentalize, but little more. The Pacific Northwest was *home*; everywhere else was *not*.

What eventually led me to leave was at first a sense of disappointment, coupled with persistent economic troubles, & trumped finally by the same feeling I'd had years ago in coming out West: a desire to play out my struggles & victories on the playing field my heart & head wished. This was the last year it was the Pacific Northwest.

It's hard leaving a place. Even roots not deepest sunk cling to what stability they have. So this initially set out theme of the year will often seem barely there as it is detailed. But it's there. What were shadows little noticed during those days are, in retrospect, solid uncouplings, made of dissatisfactions, a few, then more as the months passed.

To begin this history's discussion of 2009 is to talk about the new American presidency of Barack Obama. Against much improbability, he took office on January 20. I wonder now, a couple of years later, if he was as convinced of his power to change things swiftly as the millions of us who voted for him were. He was elected with a seeming “mandate” not just to withdraw us from two disastrous wars, & recover the economy destroyed by George W. Bush, but to

restore the domestic safety net of law & justice.

If he had ascended to throne of King of America, maybe, just maybe, & I'm not sure even then. As it was, he did what he could as the solid ground below his feet disintegrated. He took steps to end the wars in Iraq & Afghanistan; he pushed a hurried, imperfect package of economic measures through Congress to avert a new Depression. He managed enactment of a healthcare reform law that cost him a lot of political capital. In short, he set about digging the country out of the miles-deep pile of shit Bush had left behind.

I can only think this additionally: if Obama had lost, if Arizona Senator John McCain had won this election, what then? Would he have expanded the two wars? Would he have done what was needed to restore the economy to at-least-feeble functionality? No way of knowing. McCain would have faced a Democrat-controlled Congress, no doubt quite arrayed against him. Maybe compromises would have been fought to, & worked out. I don't know. It's strange to wonder, & never to know.

One thing I recall Obama saying at the time was this: it was years creating the mess we found ourselves in—in the United States, around the world—, & it would not be quick getting out of it. And I would add: there will be new days, better days some of them, but no return. All that has happened, has happened. What comes will be a stewing mix of the familiar & the strange, & will not taste quite the same. Ever.

Getting Obama elected was a good thing, even if it didn't play out as he or anyone else supposed. There are too many special interests & corporate influence, entrenched corruption comfortably abed with the mainstream media, for any kind of coherent, intelligent government of generosity & good will to occur successfully. The years since 9/11 had decimated any widespread confidence in government, even in belief that things *could* get better as they had gotten worse. I still say: a good thing. It was a collective act of hope & faith. It mattered. It resonates.

The work I did in 2009 reflected the bad economy of the times. I did technical writer work on contract, since full-time work was little available. It was a long way from the security I'd had, or thought I had, with Symantec Corporation back in 2007-2008. My contract job through the spring was with Hewlett-Packard, a strange position, done remotely with a team of a dozen. The funny point worth mentioning is that hardly a week before the contract was set to end, everyone was laid off. Work unfinished, submitted in messy pieces. The checks cashed, when I finally received them in the mail.

My next job, at Standard Insurance in downtown Portland, a bike ride from home, lasted from May 2009 to May 2010. Though it was not a full-time job, it was the first good paid work I'd done since my Symantec job.

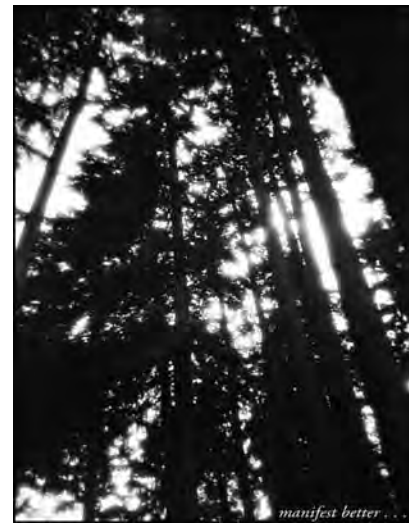
I was tasked with building the documentation program for the Disaster Recovery unit. I ranged in my work & dealings through both the business & information technology parts of this large, old company. It was steady work; I sat at my desk from 9 to 5. I bring it up here in this much detail because, my income assured for awhile, I was able to devote more of my time & energy to my pen & press. New ideas came, processes, strategies.

My struggle in recent years is not that I had to hold a job but that getting work became so fucking difficult. I think little of inheriting millions or winning a cash prize. Mostly I wish for work that is meaningful so that I can turn easily in my own hours from its concerns to those of my pen & press. I contend that when a society builds out its people's sense of identity largely from the paid tasks they perform, & then undoes millions of them by failing to provide

them with this work, something fundamental has gone wrong & must be fixed. Writing in late 2011 and into 2012, I observe that nothing has essentially improved from 2008 or 2009. I hold this problem to be the biggest one at stake right now—more than ideological squabbles or even environmental catastrophes. The foundation of society is a strong, pulsing population. If this does not exist, none of the other crises will be solved well or in good time. I was one of millions struggling in 2009 with no work, or temporary work at best, & this fact, I hold, weakened American society like a creeping sickness, taking over, changing things, undoing good accomplishments & meaningful connections in countless instances. Would you see the decline of a prosperous nation, you would look to the times like these when millions suffer & those in charge shrug helplessly & try to turn the debates in halls of power to blown-up trivia, or more likely bogie men chimeras, the threat of *someone somewhere*, riding closer or already arrived & hidden.

The litany of new press publications begins in April, when the release of *Scriptor Press Sampler* | 10 | 2008 *Annual* coincided with the *ElectroLounge* website's 11th anniversary during which Kassi & I debuted the revamped site. It moved from a text link based design to a graphic link based design. I give Kassi most of the credit: she had the idea, learned the HTML code necessary to do the work in DreamWeaver, & produced the result.

SPS 10 features a really nice variety of work—fiction, poetry, essay, letter, artwork, photography—by artists living on both American coasts (as well as Judih Haggai in Israel). The fifteen contributors will likely never all share the same physical space, but they do share these pages. There's something that feels magical to me in making this singular connection among these good & gifted people. It's not enough for me to know & support each person's efforts; I want to widen a little each person's map of knowings, indicate the presence of previously unmet peers, brothers & sisters out there.



As mentioned above, *The ElectroLounge* got its revamp in April. Its *Dance at Bougival* image is now a doorway in of sorts, to a main page laid out somewhat like a table of contents. The various projects—*Cenacle*, *Sampler*, *RaiBooks*, Jellicle Guild meetings, Burning Man Books, & “Within’s Within”—list pictorially down the center, each with its own linked archives, while my poetry, fixtion, & online notebooks are on the left side bar, & the various pages of recommended links are on the right side bar. Tis meant to be luring, to encourage one to try this & that, but I think a bit old-fashioned too in a way. The projects are publications & audio, not multimedia, not content that exists online only. Every bit can be

downloaded (or at least printed).

I've wondered toward multimedia for *ElectroLounge*, or video at least. Not yet done aught with it. I'm a words & pictures & sounds person but not yet one who has developed ideas on assembling these. Perhaps not ready. Maybe time is a factor too, as one can only do so much work. I don't know. I suppose I don't yet jive with pure cyberspace art. One day that door may open.



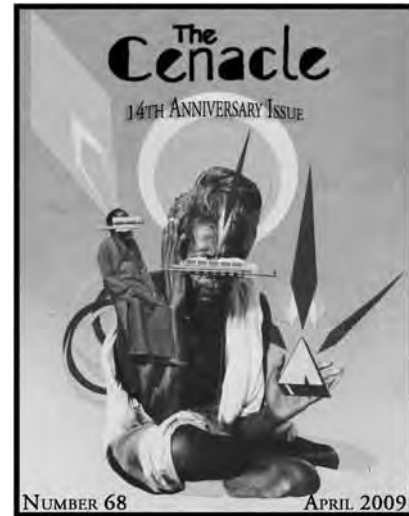
One of my many intermittent back projects over the years has been to create a complete archives for my “Within’s Within” radio show. I started recording its episodes on cassette back in 1999-2002 during its Radio Free Cambridge / Allston-Brighton Free Radio days, & digitally when it moved online to SpiritPlants Radio in 2003. By the start of 2009, there’d been approximately 300 episodes of the show, & I doubt half of those had been cleaned up & posted at the *ElectroLounge* site.

So in 2009, in addition to doing approximately three new episodes a month, I decided I had to push the archive goal further. Rather than continuing to add older shows 6 or 8 at a time every so often, I decided in July to commit foremost to adding the most recent show a couple of days after its broadcast. And still add more of the older shows too, but this shift in priority. I think this idea ties into the expansion of SpiritPlants Radio as a whole. I wanted visitors from there to the *ElectroLounge*’s “Within’s Within” radio page to find new episodes, to get the impression of continual new episodes to hear. Eventually the making of the show became: research new materials, assemble play list, broadcast & record for three hours on Saturdays, create an unedited version for re-broadcast on Sunday, & edit the recording & upload to the archives by Tuesday morning.

This process was cobbled together & refined over a number of years of trial & error. I remember back in the early days preparation was bringing some albums, notebooks, & reading material, along with a few blank cassettes, doing the show, & listening to the show after while on the transit in Boston. As I became more ambitious, the show & its preparations developed. Though it changes here & there still, the changes are more creative, less about mechanical efficiency. That’s so much more preferable of course. The part of the show’s week that matters most is those three live hours on Saturday morning into the afternoon.

Cenacle | 68 | April 2009 made it delayed debut in early June (I have a working theory to share regarding this tardiness & process later in this chapter). For most of its production time I was jobless & looking for work. This state of things, & its resolution in early May, is a minor undercurrent of the issue. A far more important one is the fact of eleven contributors, three of them new. Start with these new ones first.

I've known the artist AbandonView as an online friend for quite a few years. I've always admired his artwork, & so invited him to create the color cover for the 14th anniversary issue. I like very much his collage-style result as well as Kassi's elegantly simple layout of the page. While this was the third issue with a color cover (the second for an anniversary issue), it was the first anniversary issue with color on the front & back covers both. Kassi's fascination with taking close-up photographs of flowers adorns the back.



Also new to the *Cenacle*, & also an old friend from online, is Christopher Patrick Gose. This issue inaugurates the four-issue serialization of his Peru journal titled "World's Window: Ruminations Entheonautic & Otherwise." He recounts the journey he & his partner took down to the jungles of Peru in 2010 to find & work with ayahuasca shamans. Ayahuasca is a psychedelic healing medicine not well known in the Western industrialized world. These early pages of the journal recount his chewing coca leaves for stimulation, & his work on his longstanding emotional struggles. The editing I did with his original text was extensive. It was the task of converting a series of well-recorded events to a narrative, gaining coherence without losing the excitement of fresh remembrances. Kassi laid out the piece with Chris's photos & it looks very nice indeed.

Susan Jones is a writer Kassi & I met locally when we moved to Portland. She attended several of the revived Jellicle Guild meetings. At one of these, she read to the group a short fiction called "The Suitcase," culled from a longer group of writings she'd done during & after a time spent living in Russia. It's the story of the trouble an old woman takes to try & bury her friend's dead dog, & it is very funny indeed.

After an issue's absence, Ric Amante's poetry returns to *The Cenacle's* pages. Of note here, upon reviewing these poems now, is the opening & the closing to his poem "Citizen X." It begins:

*Citizen X decides to grant himself a news-freeze,
to tap into his inner globalism
and listen and watch
the booms in his mind,
the busts in his heart,
warfare among viscera,
peace treaties between the senses.*

It concludes:

*The civic lessons of Citizen X
are the unmediated gifts
of white clouds above,
the full awareness of strange forces without,
the real news of starlight
streaming steadily in.*

I think this poem catches finely the struggle people have in reconciling the swallowing reality of the human drama with the just-as-potent fact of a larger world that notices, in greater & lesser ways, & is sometimes virtually indifferent save for the damage men do—& a universe more likely as not that *does not give a damn*. It seems almost impossible to shut down completely a human mind, but turning its attention elsewhere from human matters for a while is a marvelous blessing.

Judih Haggai's contribution consists of four poems & three pictures. Her poem "Is Winning What It's All About?" ends strikingly:

*how serious the moment
the win, the prize
how serious?
who's serious?
it's an elusive illusion
can't fool me*

I notice a theme running through the work of both these poets. Awareness as an activity not an assumed state. The danger of any one kind of mind-set, any single group of priorities. The shifting balance, its unstaying composition.

G.C. Dillon's short fiction "One Bullet" is the taut story of a Navy pilot who seems to have crashed on an island somewhere in the Bermuda Triangle. He is hunted by some kind of mythical beast. Told in second person, its climax comes in the form of a choice: hope or despair. Again I see the thread running from this story to other pieces in the issue, especially in the pilot's cry: "*I'll not die today! you say, you swear, you make a new vow.*"

Ralph Emerson's language essay "C & G Again: Gleaming Skin" sums beautifully in its closing lines:

It's entirely appropriate the 'eye' and 'surface' words should converge here, for what can eyes see of the world except its surfaces? Skin, clothes, sky, complexions, the ground beneath our feet, lakes frozen under winter sun—all those gleaming skins, all those zillion-bubbled sheets of electron candy-shells that make up the visible faces of everything we see: clouds, grass, man, woman, tree, snake, apple.

This an argument that what is *seen* is what *is*. And what is controls even how one thinks to speak of it. A different angle on awareness.

A fourth new contributor of sorts to the issue is Fyodor Dostoevsky's short fiction "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man," which had also been re-printed in the Burning Man Books series in 2008. It is the story of a man's redemptive vision, of him thinking he had gained & then lost everything, only to gain something new in the end:

The chief thing is to love others like yourself, that's the chief thing, and that's everything; nothing else is wanted—you will find out at once how to arrange it all. And yet it's an old truth which has been told and retold a billion times—but it has not formed part of our lives! The consciousness of life is higher than life, the knowledge of the laws of happiness is higher than happiness—that is what one must contend against.

Again, the theme, the struggle, to apprehend what's real, what's good, what to do, & how, in a shifting world, in one's own shifting mind & heart: *how to live, how to live, how to live & why?*

What's funny about these disparate pieces is the common feel of questions & gropings that run through them &, even further, how much they share with the epigraph from Heraclitus in my "From Soulard's Notebooks" essay:

*The nature of things
is in the habit
of concealing itself.*

Heraclitus was a pre-Socratic philosopher who lived about 2500 years ago. Yet his comment still sounds fresh, still applies to the struggles countless numbers of people have faced since then, not just writers. What writers face singularly, however, is the challenge of *interpretation* & *explanation*. We still don't know for certain how to live & why, & our conflicts most often root in this uncertainty, & in the very real clash of the various answers our political, religious, & social leaders align with. Moreover, many of these leaders will assume that bearing the power to impose a set of living imperatives over a population somehow equates to knowing & possessing the *truth*, to knowing the *right* way over other wrong ways. Such sums the simple, the complex, & the incomprehensible history of humanity. Regarding the combative nature of human societies, & their struggles to account for resolving their conflicts enough to do right by their populations, I write in this essay:

If it isn't Christ or 2012, or a monster asteroid, or some such, then what will break the feast & famine cycle will be us, all of us, going further than we have before dared, pushing through what restrains us, past fear, maybe past mortality itself.

The possibilities for great or small creation or destruction exist innumerable now as ever. The same racial mind that launched men into the sky & landed them on the moon also built the ovens to burn humans alive. We stand as the Great Maybe, the Great Potential, the What-if. We have changed the planet itself not merely by our presence but *by our will*.

Those who decry the dangers of too-rapid technological advances are no more fully right than those who feel we are not advancing rapidly enough. Over the centuries we have studied the world & our own race, & the stars above, closer & closer, asking better questions, finding subtler ideas toward answering them *yet still millions starve, suffer, die lonely & unhappy & ignorant of why*. In all cultures, at ages, all levels of economic prosperity. And still countless others find bliss, ecstasy, even reasons why to explain it all. Look around you in any crowded place. Every stratum of the possibilities of the human condition is likely to be represented around you.

In *Many Musics, Fourth Series*, I put forth one of my own ongoing ideas about these matters:

*Little answer to this world but
each touches each
& a mystery runs through all.*

One can use the arguments of mysticism or modern physics to say about the same thing, & I believe that's because the playing field is wide & deep & multi-dimensional. When I write "*each touches each*," I don't just mean living men & women, nor even the human race as a whole. I mean the entirety of the world, breaching artificial boundaries of living & dead, organic & inorganic, now & then & hence, & I would expand the playing field to include all of creation, everywhere & always. This same thinking permeates my *Why?* fixation:

Slave to everything. Slave to nothing. Slave to what? I ask again & again . . .
Yes, be kind. Yes, life is mysterious.
Yes, all is connected. Yes, many
is one is all. Yes & yes.

Essentially working with the same ideas, trying to parse out at least the "*how to live*" portion of my constant question about "*how to live, how to live, how to live & why?*" But, in sum, I think of my various kinds of writing as of a piece, all coming from my mind directing my eye & hand to move my black pen. As Neil Young once said to a critic of his music, "It's all one song." In "Notes from the Northwest" I write:

The world blares through us unceasing & yet we do not know. Can we know, all or any of us?
Maybe. And yes. Or no. No wonder some end up in institutions, others on the street, others
with crowns on their heads, others feeding, breeding, shitting, & dying. The world seems to
be both its own problem & its own solution. A = A.

"*A = A*" as an explanation for the world that has become another of my main working ideas. It excludes nothing, which is the good news, though its application is tricky. Elaborated upon, the idea is that the world is not prelude or punishment or test, but instead all that is needed, complete, a full creation, a piece only in the sense that there are other worlds & different kinds of phenomena that exist in the universe. If there is any kind of God, in the traditional sense of a cosmic creator-being, that God is here, all around, in every eye & leaf & bit of detritus. Not distant in a Heaven gated against the non-human as well as against those humans deemed not worthy. If we come from distant stars, the evidence of that is here, in some way. Likewise, if our consciousness derives from early contact with tryptamine spores or the like, the evidence of that is here too.

In short, the universe is *home*, & this planet is our local address. We will survive & perpetuate as a race, as well our planet as a whole, by what each of us does. We each play a valid part. Will explanations come upon death? I don't know. If so, they are, it seems at least, not communicable back to the living.

So perhaps the answer to my "*how to live & why?*" question is to try to act as though even the inconsequential matters, & that the more cosmic answers exist even if I don't know them nor believe the claims of any others. I believe life is a strange gift but a gift nonetheless, like a shifting series of open doors, more & less obvious—and this too is just another idea among countless, but it cheers me, is encouraging mind food for me to reach for, especially when I need some help back up from times when I've been knocked down by others, or by my own doing.

The cover of *Cenacle* | 69 | June 2009 is of an abandoned building's roughly painted-

over windows; Kassi's design gives the whole image a cracked & decayed look. The epigraph page, of a similar design, quotes from the Shins' song "Young Pilgrims": "*Fate isn't what we're up against / there's no design, no flaws to find.*" My "From Soulard's Notebooks" opening essay, written to the reader-at-large, contends that:

things change but not, it seems, by formula, not predictably, not hung upon any pattern, though men will seek a pattern, & sometimes write wildly of what they find.

What then follows could be interpreted as yet another wild writing, maybe. I argue there is "*a wild card in things, in nature, in the human heart, in the cosmos itself,*" & that it is a presence not just in men & women but in "*each & all that exists.*" These themes & ideas run through much of the issue, in the form of arguments, assertions, & questions grappled over. The pattern is simply present as much as it emerges through analysis.

Fate. Pattern. Wild card in things. I refer back to the cover here because one could come at it looking for a pattern, a how in the manner by which each windowpane's paint-over has come to look it way it does. Or look at the early lines of Jim Burke III's letter in which he argues that:

there are different levels of truth perceived by different people, depending on each individual's relative view of our cultural transparency. This view, or subjective opinion, related directly to individual intellect, can range from very narrow—almost down to the non-existent—to a wide spectrum of analytical and philosophical thought. The truth, ultimately, is a venue to realize self-actualization, whether it be by the pursuit of art, love, peace, or a number of absolutes in their highest form.

Does individual perception drive fate? Forge the patterns of one's choices, & thus one's mortal days? Does it comprise the "*wild card in things*"? And what of these questions themselves? Where lies the power: in their being asked or which answers?

Further along, deeper in, collecting glints, & come to Chris Gose's assertion in "World's Window" that:

the often irrational and confounding vicissitudes of the heart, soul and psyche, have a truth and reality as compelling as anything understood according to the current state of our comprehension of the material universe.

So it is that the mysteries of feeling that must be accounted for in grappling more fully for the truth. He continues:

Gnosis/knowledge, then, truly becomes a function of revealing that which was hidden and unknown, a sort of light in infinite regress, with each revelation containing within it the



seed of some future enlightenment—albeit in a veiled and phosphorescent form—and each successive seed then dissolving the fruition of the previous seeding and awakening.

Does truth reveal in facets depending on whoever is looking at it, & how—as a child, an old man, in this country or that one, during this century or many ago? To paraphrase Yeats, how to tell the truth seeker from truth sought?

How to tell indeed. In his language essay “F is for Flutter,” Ralph Emerson observes that the lingual “*webs made by . . . associations stretch out very similarly inside each of our heads. These webs lie just below conscious awareness, in a twilight [of] hidden chatter.*” So something is common among us, not just our bodies, our DNA, our shared planet home. In the murk of each human mind, there are to be found some profound samenesses, common lingual tangles, belying the rest. It is reassuring, perhaps because it can be shown thus by a persuasive thinker such as Emerson.

And yet. And yet. We each wake & walk & sleep in a distinct body & skull. We bond, we *bind* in countless ways but not in total perpetually. In his sci-fi/fantasy short fiction “Come Away O Human Child,” G.C. Dillon’s narrator faces his past in the form of re-encountering a woman he abandoned, & a child, not his, whose very presence undoes him:

I’ve seen things, experienced wild things: The cold rings of Saturn, floating above the red spot. An orange sky with two daytime moons, a rocky, dwarf silver mine. But all these failed behind the sight before me.

The tightest embrace, the profoundest issue from it, stands a speck against the confounding singularity of mortal human life, its bright noisy pollution of half-answers, each presented as whole & complete.

Judih Haggai in her poem “Waking in the Morning” confronts this head on:

*Waking in the morning,
how old am I,
am I still here?
Who dwells inside,
is she still there,
horrific but fabulous—
life goes on—*

Confronts, grapples, then life muscles her along. There is no choice, save the time spent on the poem, reporting what all feel, some kind, some broken piece, of the truth. Or, perhaps better, something true whether or not it is *truth*.

In the issue’s reprinted poems of Galway Kinnell, among these the marvelous “Saint Francis and the Sow,” another angle is proposed on the same dilemma:

*The bud
stands for all things,
even for those things that don’t flower,
for everything flowers, from within, of self-blessing;*

*though sometimes it is necessary
 to reteach a thing its loveliness,
 to put a hand on its brow
 of the flower
 and retell it in words and in touch
 it is lovely
 until it flowers again from within, of self-blessing;
 as Saint Francis
 put his hand on the creased forehead
 of the sow, and told her in words and in touch
 blessings of earth on the sow, and the sow
 began remembering all down her thick length,
 from the earthen snout all the way
 through the fodder and slops to the spiritual curl of the tail,
 from the hard spininess spiked out from the spine
 down the great broken heart
 to the sheer blue milken dreaminess spurting and shuddering
 from the fourteen teats into the fourteen mouths sucking and blowing beneath
 them:
 the long, perfect loveliness of sow.*

The hope in things lies in the perspective Burke has written of: pursuing truth in its highest form: in Kinnell's words, re-teaching a thing its loveliness. Crossing borders—even before this, *opening* borders—rather than attempting to eradicate them by assertion or denial. “[R]etearch a thing its loveliness” grants each of us a power in our mortal beings: to give, to receive, to teach, to learn. Alone, but perhaps not lonely. Touch, & its memory, to comfort, to urge. Has come, will come again, accumulates.

My other pieces in the issue sit square among these concerns & themes. Of note in my *Many Musics, Fourth Series* is the sixtieth & final poem of the sequence, “Hunger: A Song.” This poem was one of my longest & most ambitious in awhile, ranging between narrative & poetical passages, telling the story of a preacher, holed up in a motel room with a gun & a girl, against the backdrop of a group watching the preacher’s stand-off with the police, covered by the media, on a local bar’s TV. There’s a lot going on, but I think it’s in the preacher’s following lines that this poem crosses with the issue’s other pieces:

Violence & tenderness. God wants us to crush both of these for him, wants us to relinquish ourselves, our wills, whatever defiant hangs by our bones.

The struggle in heeding man-wrought gods is that they tend to resemble their human leaders: demanding obedience, deferring answers, pressing forth suffering & supplication as valid forms of truth-seeking, as somehow bearing truth in themselves. Assertions whored up as answers. Toward its ambiguous ending, the preacher says, “*Myths breathe by the men who believe, & expire when the last one has fallen.*” I could add that always will new men rise & with them a new set of myths.

And the dangers of these myth-bearers: This is what my “Notes from the Northwest”

dwells upon:

There is in this nation a thick, ugly strata of thinking, a self-righteousness, driven unto fury to purify the population & drive out or destroy those who would not take their assigned part. It is only a part of the population, but it is the most dangerous, the most unwilling to reason, the most likely to burn, to pillage, to murder, & then kneel afterwards with shining eyes raised to the skies, convinced that the destruction & spilled blood is a necessary part of doing God's will & work.

Founded by zealots, geniuses, & misfits, this country shamblingly swings in various directions, a powerful half-mad talking beast, uncertain of its path, only part-heeding what damage it causes itself & others, convinced a clean, *simple* day is coming because it must be. *Must*. And yet:

What yearns in each human heart toward truth, a clear answer regarding how to live & why, can as easily raise a fist toward another as hold out a hand. No legislation can snuff out such a yearning, no education can with certainty lessen its power, or its vulnerability to smiling lunatics in handsome suits, bearing books of pretty words about cleansing annihilations.

So I warn, full knowing lunatics can take countless forms & grapple to power in countless ways. I can only, in the end, point one way, another, warn, urge *beware & be aware*.

And, finally, to my fixtion *Why?*, its conclusion after serializing for six issues going back to 64 | April 2008. I call it a “*psychotropic fairy tale, metaphysical travelogue*” &, relevant to this discussion, write in its pages that “*every answer roots in quicksand.*” None of its narrative strands conclude, as I was already working on a sequel story; what makes me glad about *Why?* is that I was writing my kind of fixtion again in it. Its predecessor, *Things Change? [Six Levels]*, had become one long bloody cry, an ugly thing of beauty. I wanted new characters to mixture with old, new narratives to carry along, *fresh troubles*.

What makes *The Cenacle* interesting to me over the years is that it is as much built from my endless written grapplings with the Universe as it is from those of others I know, like, & admire. These variously constructed reports are different enough to remain persistently engaging, & similar enough to be medicinally reassuring. All accumulates.

Maybe it's fitting that the last year we travelled to the Burning Man Arts Festival was from Portland. Because of my fascination with the West, I'd discovered Burning Man in '98, & had travelled there from Boston in '99. And because of the Portland girl I'd met in 2001, I'd aimed my sights to live there—even when the girl & I were no longer in each other's pictures. And so it was in 2009, not knowing this in advance, that we prepared for our last Burning Man, while living in Portland for one last complete year. And we lived in the northeast area of Portland, walking distance from the places I'd frequented during my months-long vigil for the girl back in 2002-2003. A Taco Bell, a cool joint called Coffee Time, some funky restaurants. It's funny how sometimes when one is most familiarly & long time surrounded by the known does a door to elsewhere appear, & one considers, & sometimes nods, & sometimes goes.

I think I let go a little more of Burning Man in my later years attending in that I did not so much chase its mysteries as keep what I had of it in my heart. I carried it along with me. There was a gradual diminishment of my expectation that it would shockingly delight me as

it once had. I held onto it, as one holds onto a faith, in anything or anyone, when there is no clear place or person to move this faith along to. As long as enough fire remains, to remind & to illuminate these memories, one does not move along.

And I asked myself once again the question someone had asked me there years before: “Is there anywhere else you’d rather be the week leading up to Labor Day than Black Rock City?” For my eleventh & last year, I said no, there wasn’t.

So once more I began my preparations for us to bring No Borders Free Bookstore to the desert fest. Back in 1999 the process had been so much simpler. For one thing, picking the titles meant choosing among the many, many writers I admired. By 2009, I’d gone through 50 of my favorites. How many does any one person have? As the years had gone on, I more & more had to seek out new writers, experiment, test, or dredge up writers I recalled reading years ago & see what I thought of them now. It was a subtle process in that I had to police myself with the following test: can I talk up this writer’s work with my greatest, most unalloyed enthusiasm? If I didn’t believe totally in the little books we sat in the desert under a big tent handing out to hundreds of strangers, what was I doing then?

This exploration, I can see more clearly now, took its toll. My reading habits began to revolve more & more around which writers might provide good material for chapbooks. This bothered me some even as it was a challenge I rose to for a number of years running. I determined to make each year’s half-dozen new books as fine a crop as those of the previous years. It mattered as much in 2009 as it had every year running back to ’99. As I contemplate now a new book series in the Burning Man Books mode, my thoughts remain the same: do it fucking right, *no question*.

There was a shifting context to the preparation of those last half-dozen books, & the printing of the whole series, plus the *RaiBooks*, the *Samplers*, & the recent *Cenacles*. My new job was by no means a sure & long-term situation. It hardly seemed it would last the six months offered in the contract. We thought of Burning Man 2009 in part as a chance to talk to a lot of San Francisco-area residents about life further down the coast, what we might find there.

Too, the work on the *Cenacle* drifted into July. I think this was in part (this being the theory promised earlier) because there was no Jellicle Guild date to work with as a hard deadline. Plus I was producing my radio show every weekend as well as helping get about a dozen others broadcast on SpiritPlants Radio. And I was writing my various projects as often as possible. In sum, it was *a lot* to be doing. The new Burning Man Books produced, I’m proud to say, were worth the efforts of many nights’ work.

The titles are: *Slouching Toward Bethlehem* by Joan Didion; *The Secret Sharer* by Joseph Conrad; *Silent Snow, Secret Snow* by Conrad Aiken; *The Story of Sinbad the Sailor from the Arabian Nights*; *Fate Isn’t What We’re Up Against: An Eleventh Anthology of Writings About Psychedelics*; & *The Long, Perfect Loveliness of Sow: Selected Poetry of Galway Kinnell*. There are some strange crossovers in themes among these titles. *Sinbad* & *Secret Sharer* are both about ocean voyages & bear mysterious atmospheres; *Silent Snow* is all mysterious atmosphere & ends so terrifyingly that it stayed solid in my memory since I read it a quarter-century before. Didion’s essay was Kass’s pick & I can’t help but think that its portrait of Haight-Ashbury San Francisco fit well with the San Francisco-created Burning Man Festival of four decades later. I was led to Galway Kinnell’s poetry in part by studying & publishing the work of his friend W.S. Merwin in 2008. Finally, the eleventh psychedelics sampler pleases me in several ways,

from its cover portrait of a broken steps leading to a tree, to be found in a park in Portland not far from where we lived, to its continuing our mission to educate people about the promise, possibilities, & *seriousness* of these materials.



So we drove our days & miles from Portland to Black Rock City, Nevada, put up our tent, set up No Borders Free Bookstore for four long hot worthwhile days, wandered the strange city at night, made many friends for a moment, an hour, a few days, sent me out a couple of long solo bike rides into the night while Kassi rested from the day's heat, enjoyed one more time the spectacular burning of the Man come Saturday, packed up on Sunday, & returned with a bit of a meander through Bend, to Portland.

I dream of Black Rock City still, from time to time. I miss it sentimentally, am profoundly glad I discovered it, contributed to it, & moved on while it still could matter to me in memory. But I also carry it with me, still, it changed me. I don't think I'll return but a big part of me has never left.

As part of my commitment to make *The ElectroLounge* an up-to-date & ever-more-complete online archives of Scriptor Press projects, I added my fixtion *Why?* [a new fixtion] to the site, & also updated ongoing parts of my current works, *Many Musics* & *Labyrinthine*. These last two are being serialized ongoing in *The Cenacle*, & so are updated on *ElectroLounge* on a quarterly basis (this *History* is also updated on *ElectroLounge* as its chapters appear in *The Cenacle's* pages).

I also read *Many Musics'* new poems & *Labyrinthine's* new pages on the thrice-monthly "Within's Within" radio program. Also synched here are the quarterly Jellicle Guild meetings where I read these writings as well. And they are among the recorded highlights that appear in *The Cenacle's* supplementary disk.

Essentially I seek synchrony among projects, a criss-crossing between & among them so that they are more connected & thus each strengthened. What's being described here wasn't possible in Scriptor Press's early days & so now that it is, it is vitally important that better & better ideas be conceived & *enacted*.

My eventual goal is to digitize all of *The Cenacles* (#1-46 await), all of my radio show archives ('99-2002 are still only on cassette tape), & all of the Jellicle Guild meetings whose highlights appeared in *The Cenacle* going back to the 4/1/95 meeting in issue 1 in 1995. There are more ideas forthcoming & the trick is to integrate these with the ongoing. The goal always is *synchrony*.

I came back from Burning Man 2009 with a charge of new energy, & also with a question of where to next. Portland's Bush-wrecked economy wasn't getting better, & while our affections for the city were still strong, our abiding need to stay had diminished over time. Like Seattle after several years, we felt a wish to move on. The choice came down to San Francisco or Boston. Move into the source of Burning Man or . . . the source of me.

I really didn't know. I'd thought I'd left Boston for good in May 2002, had, in fact only returned for a couple of visits. I thought I'd run my course there, having visited for a decade & then lived there for another decade.

And yet, San Francisco? An expensive new place, & me with no job in hand, nor any real connections. I allowed it to be a possibility, a strong one but, notably, didn't even make a visit there (my first had been in '95; Kassi's never been). These were among my thoughts, living solidly in one place, but looking around, as the work for *Cenacle* | 70 | October 2009 commenced.

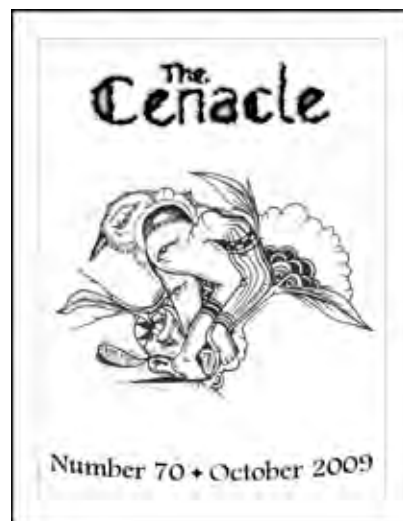
A travel through *Cenacle* | 70 | October 2009 must certainly begin with its beguiling cover by AbandonView, who had of course contributed *Cenacle* 68's color cover. His work is both highly surreal & quite precise, as though his images do exist, solid as an exquisitely-rendered thought. His art also appears among the pages of my fiction *Labyrinthine*.

I'd been writing *Labyrinthine* for three years when it began serializing in *The Cenacle*. (as of this writing in June 2012, I'm still writing it & it is still being serialized).

I've mentioned in earlier chapters that *Labyrinthine* & my current poetry sequence *Many Musics* comprise portions of my *Double Triptych* project (along with the previous poetry sequences *6 x 36 Nocturnes* & *New Songs [for Kassandra]* & the earlier fixtions *Things Change? [Six Thresholds]* and *Why?*). My intent is toward perpetual culmination, a sort of continuous building-up from what was previously written. *It's all one song*.

Labyrinthine starts with six characters, each of them waking up somewhere recognizable from sometime in each's past, remembering the sound of a maybe-gunshot. Are they dead? In coma? Dreaming? Some, none, or all of these, yes & no & otherwise.

There is no easy way to explain this book, since it is a culmination of my years & writing so far. It is about Art, sex, want, music, nature, dreams, death; it is an elaborate game in many ways. Multiple realities, singular realities, broken realities all play in. The following offers a funny hint:



One night I danced in an electric labyrinth & told a stranger the story of the Minotaur, Ariadne's thread, & so on, I was luscious with the moony desert night & long sips of haha juice I walked the electric labyrinth, swinging with it back & forth til arriving in its center, the stranger asked if I was the Minotaur what a strange question—

I stayed days away from these pages, scribbled tittering little notes but not approach otherwise—

I wanted to find the book here I could write smoothly, thought I did, the book not made of rags & rages, the one I could hand around to anyone easily—

No. This book is like war, it never leaves & never refines, little explain yet so much bears—this book is like want, like the pull toward fecund flesh, toward bright fruit, toward the melody-wrapped beat going on tonight & every night—

Funny I say because of how here & elsewhere Burning Man riffs & riffs through this issue. This issue features the first part of *Labyrinthine* that introduces a number of its major characters as aforementioned. What I enjoyed about writing this fiction from the get-go was that I was again writing a story of conjured characters—as I had resumed doing in *Why?*—yet still I mixed in my life & world, as I had for much of *Things Change?*—but it was all deeper this time, vaster, weirder, funnier. I was determined to write a work from every direction as ambitious as I'd ever tried, far more. Because, as I've noted, this first part had been written in 2006, I knew in October 2009 how much further it had gone. My wish, more gained in very recent times, is to close the writing/publishing gap. I think of Charles Dickens & the novels of his that he serialized in his journals *Household Words* and *All Year Round*. Essentially, *The Cenacle* as a kind of elaborate, quarterly, freaky-deaky newspaper. Linking up with my radio show & the Jellicle Guild as different mediums of the same reportage.

What I grapple with in *Labyrinthine* is what Richard Brautigan writes about in his last novel, *An Unfortunate Woman: A Journey*, published posthumously in 1994, & quoted in this issue's epigraph:

It becomes more and more apparent, as I proceed with this journey, that life cannot be controlled and perhaps not even envisioned, and that certainly design and portent are out of the question.

This conclusion, at least in part, led to his suicide. I'd like to think there are other valid options. And I can't say I full agree with his sentiments, or at least always. Cannot be *completely* controlled, or envisioned, & if there be design, it is either hid, as Heraclitus argued, or so obvious that it is everywhere one looks, in everything one thinks or feels, even if one is not human nor even necessarily animate. $A = A$. Still, the struggle in his words is a common one, & stands perhaps as much a warning against despair as an expression of it.

But one has to move, to decide, to act. The human world is frenetic, both fast & slow. One can become less imperfect over time at learning what moves are possible, which in combination, develop not a formula but an intelligent intuition toward things. This is, in essence, what I urged upon President Obama in my annual letter to him:

For awhile you will have to play with practically breathless perfection, & hope or pray the Universe or some equal potency is mostly on your side. So I say this: play it through. Hesitate

less often until not at all. There's a moment in playing the great games—in making the great works of Art—in conceiving the greatest thoughts of science & philosophy & learning—a moment when impediments fall aside & the way opens clear. You are nearing that point, Mister President, Barack, where trust is all, action is all, you will no longer make the moves, the moves will make you.

I'd call my advice as valid as any & yet do not disengage from Brautigan's ideas, for no matter what one does, one dies a physical death after a few, many, or many many years. It comes. Was Brautigan wrong to take his end into his own hands? I can't say, save that one's death leaves others grieving in a world long familiar with grief. The world no more plainly explains itself to me or you or Obama or to Brautigan, yet all but the last of these remain here, & here remains in many instances & places an utterly beautiful place. I would prefer to keep learning the moves of life, urging Obama & everyone else to do so too, than leave it. I hope I always think this.

But what then, when death comes? In Jim Burke III's letter, he writes, as he had previously, that when we die, we become stars. Literally, figuratively, he doesn't settle between these for sure. But he does observe the following:

The Eastern philosophies . . . continually point out that it is not only possible, but that the actual purpose of physical life is to achieve a mind-body connection by discovering absolute truth, then dissolving it. The absolute truth resides within the physical body. When we die, the absolute truth—pure love, unconditional, non-abstract—is released into the cosmos. What actually happens during this process is unknown, and many doubters will rush to point out that this is only conjecture. But I would respond that existence has always been, and we only measure it in the physical plane. Such devices would not exist on the metaphysical plane, because they would not be needed. Time would not exist, at least with respect to relativity, because there would be no need to measure it, to use it, no need to breathe and, finally, there would be no need to love. The cycle of duality would be broken, and that is all that would exist: peace and love. Hate and violence would not and could not exist.

I would remark that the picture he sketches is one I find more appealing than traditional portraits of bearded god-men, judgment books, torment, for the so-called “damned.” I say distrust anyone who speaks not of *faith* or *belief* but of *truth*. Unyielding branches in the wind *certainly break*.

Then there is the way small things, private memories, can contrive a universe in one's mind too. Reck Judih Haggai's poem “One September”:

*in rush, a sweeping watermark
one lone shard, one lone remnant
we lived here long ago
we barefoot, silly artists
creating heavenly earthenware
all for one
till we all fell down
one large rush*

*swept away one september
while water weeps
tears become tides
and the cycle goes on*

In the music of her words, she re-creates a gone place, time, group of artists, & then recounts them in a tide of tears, an aching memory as big as mind, mind as large as the world, & the cycle of union & dissolution that many artists feel & broach, & create from, on behalf of all— & whether one believes suicide, or legislation or metaphysical perspective can hold against this cycle of coming & going, none can. Yet on each of us continues in the meantime. On the world continues in the meantime. On the world continues, even as each of us eventually falls.

But, said opposite, each one of us does continue before that fall. Each of us aware of death a little differently, & a change in that individual awareness over a lifetime, as we each witness death's real hand taking those we know & love, or admire afar, & feel each his or her own body grow, bloom, mature, & begin to weaken slowly, or suddenly. Yet each of us continues in the meantime.

I was asking myself where Kassi & I would live next, & what I would do. I devote all of "Notes from the Northwest" to this matter:

For I recognize it's been my restlessness that has moved me from Hartford to Boston to Seattle to Portland to . . . ? Millions live in each place & stay . . . I have not. I land, rest, work, & eventually move along.

On to San Francisco, or return to Boston? Finally a full-time job after contracting for over a year? A two-way commitment with an employer? An answer, oh again & ever sought, to "How to live & why"? I conclude conclusion-less-ly:

So I look for work, another scrabbling man for his lucky chance, & a home that feels like home in hours high, sad, & common. But more really, a sense of fullness which nears & eludes most, if not all, of us all our lives. A sense that "Why?" is answered, if not in sentences, then by our actions, way of life, that what we do embodies what we believe rather than vice-versa.

It is both curious & delightful that another common thread among contributions is discovered in Ralph H. Emerson's language essay "D is for Down." Describing this watery letter of darkness, he observes that humans, who cannot see in the dark, confer upon things of light a wisdom, a safety, a goodness. Darkness is full of danger, "is evil," & "means ignorance." He says: "Until we can see in the dark like cats, human thinking will always favor light."

Now writers are tricky creatures & while some will indeed reveal the usual human preference for the light, not all will, or easily so anyway. On the one hand there is Ric Amante's tale in the poem "Thoughts Upon Encountering a Fire-pit in the Woods," in which he speculates on what the remains of a campfire, some beer cans, a tarp, & a sweat shirt might signify:

*The hope and power of flames in the night
kept him safe, enthralled;
the alcohol kept him dancing.*

Yet, Amante says, “*once the fire stopped speaking, / his legs became paste, his mind oozed*”—& Amante hopes that the dancer/drinker found his comfort in the “quiet study” of time. Darkness itself offered no comforts of its own; quite the opposite, it is implied.

On the other hand, in the issue’s installment of Chris Gose’s Peru journal, “World’s Window,” in which Gose & his partner are still seeking the desired ayahuasca ceremony, the following dream account is included:

Last night I dreamt again of the ayahuasca spirit. A group had gathered in an open-air space beneath a wooden casita propped up on stilts, with one side opened out onto a sort of lagoon or lake. We partook of the brew and sat in anticipation of the oncoming surge. I felt myself being pulled up on a sort of tether, floating up and above the casita and being almost sucked into the vast and empty sky. Then a complete shift in consciousness and I suddenly find myself completely removed from the domain of the physical and sensory. Everything is dark, but my consciousness is illumined within the darkness without any sense of physical body—all senses in complete suspension. The darkness is like a large and warm velvet blanket, welcoming and spacious, and has become the object of a light that is beyond light/darkness.

An illumined bodiless consciousness in a large, warm, welcoming darkness. No fear, no blindness. He continues:

The sense of illuminated darkness was striking and somehow absolute, touching something ineffable and removed from the narrow chinks of the sensory and bodily. Not void, nor nihilistic in any sense, but empty of any discernable singularity or substance. Not even truly “dark,” but light of an altogether different variety.

Rather than reacting badly to the darkness, or it striking out at him, or just the fear of it, here there is union, synthesis. The dark comforts, the man is comforted. At least in a dream of a bodiless beyond.

Strangely somewhere between these two pieces is Conrad Aiken’s short fiction “Silent Snow, Secret Snow.” A surreal horror story of a boy’s—plunge? descent? entry?—into the “*long white waves*” of a “*coming*” darkness. A “*snow*” fills his mind that is repelled by the light of an opening door—almost some *other* kind of synthesis versus Gose’s dream—a smothering white blanket of darkness. It concludes:

“Listen!” it said. “We’ll tell you the last, the most beautiful and secret story—shut your eyes—it is a very small story—a story that gets smaller and smaller—it comes inward instead of opening like a flower—it is a flower becoming a seed—a little cold seed—do you hear? we are leaning closer to you—”

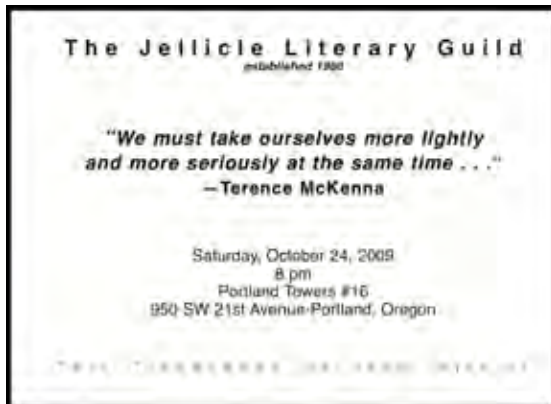
The hiss was now becoming a roar—the whole world was a vast moving screen of snow—but even now it said peace, it said remoteness, it said cold, it said sleep.

Evil? I don’t know. I think so but I’m not sure. But Jim Burke III raises this whole matter back to a place I find more reassuring:

*We All Become Stars When We Die . . .
(then again, maybe stars become all of us . . .)*

To become the light that balances the universe, gives every seer a lovely canvas to behold each night, ahh, yes.

Unrelated, at least I think, to the darkness/light theme are the surreal visual treats of Catfish Rivers (aka Jeremy Kilar). Like AbandonView, I'd met him online, originally working with him as a DJ on SpiritPlants Radio. By October 2009, his "River's Edge" program had been on air three months. These crossings between radio & press would continue to happen; I would look for such opportunities. A person's imagination, once ignited by serious art-making in one form, can prove itself able in others.



Happily, *Cenacle* 70's release was tied to the return of the Jellicle Literary Guild, dormant since the previous December. In a note sent to members in advance of the meeting, I explain:

It's been many months since there was an email regarding Jellicle Guild activities—because there were no activities—after last December's 20th anniversary meeting, nothing new happened. A combination of reasons: after reviving the Guild in 2008, & hosting 6 meetings here in Portland, I was a little burnt. I'd forgotten the energy they

require. Too, I was juggling a new job & a number of projects. It seemed a good time to pause—as much as 2008 seemed a good time to revive. Pause, think, resume when it was time . . . It's time.

Three things I am getting about this Jellicle Guild revival: 1) it's smart to engage people's involvement from near & far; 2) it's smart to take advantage of the new technologies to do this; 3) the pool of participants needs to be replenished, as much as the DJs for the radio, & contributors for *The Cenacle*.

Tying the Jellicle Guild & *Cenacle* together is a good move, gives each a more solid foundation & purpose. These projects are ever strengthened by closer ties. When I read my new poems at the Jellicle Guild, read them also on my radio show, publish them in *The Cenacle*, & also at *ElectroLounge*, eventually in book form, this spreads them as far & wide & variously as I can. And I use this template for the work of others too.

This meeting was attended in person by Kassi, Victor Vanek, & me. Among the pieces we read to one another were poems from Galway Kinnell, this as part of bringing Burning Man Books 2009 to the meeting. Funny how the two projects crossed paths early in 1999-2001, & then in 2008-2009 at the end. They will cross again, in further forms, down the road. Victor brought some "Japanese death poems" and some poems by Billie Collins. Kassi read some E.E. Cummings, one of her favorite poets, & Judih Haggai's poems from *Cenacle* 70. I read from my *Many Musics* & my letter to Obama, also from *Cenacle* 70. I shot a little video of the meeting, to post to YouTube.com, & include, along with pictures & audio highlights, in my meeting review to the Jellicle Guild email list.

Victor & Kassi & I pushed the night long past the meeting's end, toward dawn watching the very funny BBC-TV show, *The Mighty Boosh*. It was a good resumption meeting. It has carried on.

In November I marked my radio show's sixth anniversary of broadcasting thrice monthly on SpiritPlants Radio & also, amazingly, a full year of running the station. From its devolution by October 2008 to being my show & the rest dead air—to the weekend schedule featuring my show & content I thought would go good on a psychedelic radio station—there now featured—additional to the psychedelic lectures, jazz & rock concerts, news programs—over a dozen DJs who created original shows. From the U.S. Canada, & Europe, unobstructed by commercials or strictures, these DJs made, & make, programs that are excitingly eclectic, strange, mixing in all kinds of music, words, interviews, & unclassifiable sounds. These shows included: “The River’s Edge with DJ Catfishrivers”; “Hi-Fi Hippie Show with the 2 Zillion-Year-Old Hippie”; “Radiohuasca with DJ Zart”; “Electro Mind Melt with DJ Ignitrance”; “Regional Cuisine: Deep Fried Roots Music with DJRL”; “Imaginary Chains with DJ Flip”; “Creepshow with DJ AbandonView”; “Under Eternity Blue with DJ Arkstar”; “Action Potential with DJ Abrahm,” & “Shamanic Freedom Radio with OpaqueLens.” I was so proud of this station that I talked OpaqueLens into interviewing me about it on his radio program.

It’s a lot of work to keep it going but I believe that radio is a vital piece in the Scriptor Press puzzle. It creates unique opportunities for collaboration, & its reach is world-wide, is powerful. Music & the human voice connect one to another in some ways more potent than any others.

It’s funny that until the day, the moment you part a person, or a place, or the like, the possibility of new delight, or lesson, even revelation, remains. And of course there are memories & dreams thereafter to recall, refigure. *Cenacle* | 71 | December 2009 is rife with images & words derived from the trip Kassi & I took to the Oregon coast the weekend after that October Jellicle Guild meeting, to stay in a motel room in a town called Tillamook. We skipped work obligations that Friday & drove west from Portland, stopped first at Cape Meares, beheld the great rocky view of the shoreline & the magnificent Octopus Tree, & the lovely old lighthouse.

In our time together on the West Coast (by 2009 it was five years), we’d not gone to the ocean once. Neither Seattle nor Portland is really a coastal city. We spent that Saturday by the ocean side, walking for miles (all of Oregon’s coast is open to everyone), Kassi taking pictures,

**SpiritPlants Radio's 6th Anniversary! (2003-2009)
November 21-22, 2009 Schedule**

Saturday 11/21/09	Program
11 a.m. - 2 p.m.	Within's Within: Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution with DJ Sealand
2 p.m. - 3 p.m.	Shamanic Freedom Radio with OpaqueLens: Episode #501: Interview with Raymond Souders, Jr. of SpiritPlants Radio
3 p.m. - 4 p.m.	Radiohuasca with DJ Zart
4 p.m. - 6 p.m.	The Lavender Dancer with DJ Senz
6 p.m. - 8 p.m.	Jazz Cafe: Tatum's Free Jazz House
8 p.m. - 10 p.m.	The River's Edge Over 1 with DJ Catfishrivers
10 p.m. - 11:15 p.m.	Under Eternity Blue with DJ Arkstar
11:15 p.m. - 12:15 a.m.	Action Potential V.4.0 with DJ Abrahm
Sunday 11/22/09	Program
12:15 a.m. - 1:45 a.m.	Long Live Rock!: Rush: All the World's a Stage. Live in Toronto, Canada, June 11-12, 1978
1:45 a.m. - 2:45 a.m.	Comedy Hour: Bill Hicks: Relentless (Live, 1991)
2:45 a.m. - 4 a.m.	Psychedelic Lectures: Psychonautica with Max Erskow! Episode #80: "Psychonautical Death & Rebirth with Dr. Stanislov Grof"
4 a.m. - 5 a.m.	News Hour: Democracy Now! with Amy Goodman
5 a.m. - 6 a.m.	Radiohuasca with DJ Zart
6 a.m. - 8 a.m.	The Lavender Dancer with DJ Senz
8 a.m. - 10 a.m.	The River's Edge Over 1 with DJ Catfishrivers
10 a.m. - 12 p.m.	Jazz Cafe: Tatum's Free Jazz House
12 p.m. - 1 p.m.	News Hour: Democracy Now! with Amy Goodman
1 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.	Under Eternity Blue with DJ Arkstar
2:15 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.	Action Potential V.4.0 with DJ Abrahm
3:15 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.	Psychedelic Lectures: Psychonautica with Max Erskow! Episode #80: "Psychonautical Death & Rebirth with Dr. Stanislov Grof"
4:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.	Comedy Hour: Bill Hicks: Relentless (Live, 1991)
5:30 p.m. - 7 p.m.	Long Live Rock!: Rush: All the World's a Stage. Live in Toronto, Canada, June 11-12, 1978
7 p.m. - 8 p.m.	Shamanic Freedom Radio with OpaqueLens: Episode #501: Interview with Raymond Souders, Jr. of SpiritPlants Radio
8 p.m. - 11 p.m.	Within's Within: Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution with DJ Sealand

me writing & writing. Great rocks, pieces of driftwood, strange foamy surf. It was magic. *Cenacle* 71 is haunted by this visit. Its front cover (of Buster & Wonder Duckee), its back cover (my silhouette), & its epigraph are all from that day at the ocean side near Tillamook, Oregon. We included a gallery of pictures Kassi took of the lighthouse at Cape Meares—and many others she took scatter through the issue's pages.

Three of my *Many Musics, Fifth Series* poems were written that weekend by the ocean side. One of them, "Ways of the Waves," is excerpted to decorate a picture of the crashing waves near Tillamook, & concludes:

*There's gift in
this twist of a moment, of being something in
this world, giving something to this world, &
feeling its sure recall when the best has been spent.*



Reaching for prose peaks, a bare try to explain, my "Notes from the Northwest" remarks:

I wonder: is all of this proof of God's hand or the shape of that hand itself? In truth I find I need no proof nor does the idea of God interest me. Whatever all of this is, where from, where bound, here it is, now. The fact of this world, whatever larger thing it beds in, whatever clock or rules it may operate by, the challenge is to shape one's faith complementary to one's questions, so each may breathe & flourish like this shore.

& concludes:

We watch the sunset as its calliope of colors breaks & re-makes our hearts. Not just the moon & its gravity, but the sun & its heat electrifying this world with life. The mysteries stretch ever outward, one affecting another, each many, many all, one in many in all, the hungry eye, the questing soul looks upward & does not see dead stars but live light, every night its arriving message, its reassurance that there is enough room in this universe & however many others for each to look deeper & deeper in & then turn, by hope or despair or both, outward, a single animate mite on a noisy little rock, but also more, so much more, ever more, & still ever more.

Without answers, not an hour's or even a minute's certainty gained by our experiences, we nonetheless retreat to our motel room as two of the blessed, bearing high gifts that urge play, work, gratefulness, love, a proofless trust to keep breathing.

We were given wonderful gift that weekend ocean side near Tillamook. Our eyes opened wide, our hearts deep. *Cenacle* 71 in part stands as a humble thank you, best to be offered in return.

Following into the rest of the issue, start with this haiku by Judih Haggai:

*thoughts fly apart
body unhinges
a new leaf unfolds*

This leads me to the following passage in my “From Soulard’s Notebooks”:

Nobody knew ten years ago what was to come. There were fears of dependence on technology, skepticism of the helping hand of government. Those days, those years of the late 1990s, bear a kind of lazy innocence to them in retrospect’s view. Perhaps the current tumults will appear apple-cheeked smiling one day sooner or later . . .

[Yet] what I come back to is a strange feeling of hope, not despair, in the unknown times ahead. The future is an infinite feast of possibilities, great ones & tragic ones, & I do not believe that anyone has taken sure control of this feast. That said, the idea of evolution cannot help but be a messy, sometimes incoherent thing. The feast of the future covers the world, & not every dish is sweet. Some dishes are empty, some bear poisons. Some dishes are larger than others.

Both passages point toward change, the unknowableness of change, the power & force of change, its promise, its terror, new leaves & disasters both pending.

What was on my mind in the “Notebooks” elaborates on Judih’s poem. The first decade of the new century flew apart, unhinged, almost from its beginning. Whatever happened on September 11, 2001 in New York City, Pennsylvania, & Washington D.C., the why & the how & the who of it, it flung bloody into plain view the hatreds deeply driving much of the ideologies of this world. Hate & violence ricochet back & forth, each response justifying the next response.

Thinking it through further, it seems to me that 9/11 buried any pretense toward the idea that these ideologies—religious, political, economic—can live & let live. The zealots of this world plainly mean to crush each other. And maybe this was always true. But for the long stretch of last century there seemed something else going on too. Negotiations, peace summits. Demilitarized zones. There do not seem to be many bargaining tables anymore.

And yet, new leaves “unfold”? Though I do not advocate anarchism, or think chaos is necessary, I do think it’s better when the cards are laid plain. If one’s government doesn’t care for peace, makes no real solid gesture toward it, then it remains the government on the majority populace’s concession to that stand. If we want a better, more peaceful world, we know that our war-making governments will have to be changed.

So the new leaves, in this case, are our actions. The world has continued to fly apart, unhinge, since 9/11, change & change until it’s hard to remember what other days were like. The new leaves will be *us*, what *we* do about the raw violence permeating this world—toward people, toward nature—done by governments ruling in *our* names, by *our* wills, with *our* consents. I’d wager that saying no to all this will prove easier as more do.

Ric Amante’s “Luna Questionnaire,” accompanied by a graphic derived from that day ocean side near Tillamook, asks, in part: “*Why is the salt of compassion / so often added late?*” This line leads me into Chris Gose’s “World’s Window.” Gose discusses over & over again how much he seeks such a thing: compassion. Something like . . . affectionate understanding. Here is the heart of Gose’s experience when he finally drinks the long-sought ayahuasca:

The Medicine posed a question that has since become something of a personal koan for me: “Is pursuit of the Truth worth all of the suffering and uncertainty?” My answer would be “yes,”

but this answer does not penetrate into the depths of the question for me Specifically, this question allowed me to probe the difficulties that have evolved in my relationship with my father, suggesting a link between my own struggle and my place within the revolution of consciousness as it is being mediated by the Medicine The Medicine is the infinite light of compassion and healing, the one and great spiritual Apocalypse that is the central gravity and mystery of life, especially our own lives. The Purge is the manifestation of the Medicine within the time-bound dimension of cause-and-effect karmic conditioning and personal suffering—the light comes to bear on the darkness, and the darkness is purged. The alchemists refer to this central mystery of the path of the wounded healer as the Mysterium Coniunctionis, the Lapis Lazuli, the Uniao Spiritus. The two become one and we are healed.

Things fly apart. Body unhinges. New leaves unfold. Though late, the salt of compassion is finally added.

Compassion is at the shadowy heart of Joseph Conrad's short fiction "Secret Sharer." A ship's new captain takes on board a troubled mysterious stranger he feels deeply bonded to, compelled to protect. He finally sees the stranger safely on his way:

Walking to the taffrail, I was in time to make out, on the very edge of a darkness thrown by a towering black mass like the very gateway of Erebus—yes, I was in time to catch an evanescent glimpse of my white hat left behind to mark the spot where the secret sharer of my cabin and of my thoughts, as though he were my second self, had lowered himself into the water to take his punishment: a free man, a proud swimmer striking out for a new destiny.

Finally, to *Labyrinthine*. Since I'd decided to write it with no set length or time, as rarely was true before for such long works, the door was wide open. I kept unleashing new ideas as they came to me.

One was **RemoteLand**, a fixtional film vaguely inspired by David Lynch's surreal masterpiece of ontological horror, *Inland Empire*, but one I wanted to take other places:

*The film is called **Remoteland** & some say its origins trace to a cancelled cult TV show & its lunatic fans. What happened with that show was a tragedy & the chance that this new film is related pretty much dooms its success. A few will go to see it, hoping for more lurid themes, but it will likely close in a month or less.*

RemoteLand moves, changes, there are versions, & new versions, & it isn't clear what is its motivation or who are its makers. It is a *living, changing* film, & a cult forms around it.

This living, changing idea is reflected in the book as a whole:

What then, next, a story becomes aware of itself, & changes without me, what then, next? Each character is caught in a tangle of events & decisions, each commanded some moments & dragged along by others, each his passing & deepening labyrinthine story, toward what? Any? Yes, toward—for fixtion allows a propulsion, a shaping & speeding of events toward—much as there are tangents, there is a toward, or towards

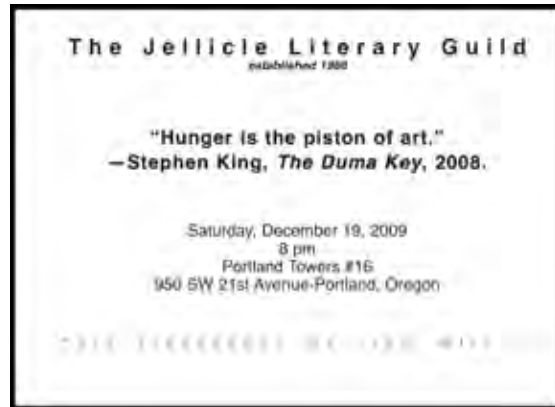
I think *Labyrinthine* & *The Cenacle* make each other better. There is no other place, no other vehicle, I could imagine where *Labyrinthine* would fit as well as in *The Cenacle*, & conversely, *Labyrinthine* is a crucial buttress of many issues that began with *Cenacles* 70 & 71 in 2009, & have continued since.

The last press event of 2009 was the 21st anniversary Jellicle Literary Guild meeting, on December 19. This one was Kassi & me, for seven hours. We pretty much read back & forth from *Cenacle* 71 & other sources. Kassi also read from Howard Zinn, Dave Eggers, Adrienne Rich, & Barack Obama. I read from a biography of folk-rock singer Phil Ochs. It was high fun in many ways.

It was the end of our last year living out West. Last year going to Burning Man. I can only remark that the shiny bauble one reaches toward shifts & eludes, this way, that way, some other. One does gather a few surer shards along the way. Mostly I keep moving, & keep singing to tell.



* * * * *





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 Seventeen
continued from
The Cenacle | 81 | June 2012

Read the full History at: http://scriptorpress.com/history_of_scriptor_press.pdf

When I think *The Cenacle*, & what it is to me, so many years doing it, I think: it's *news*. *My* news. The news of my friends, near & far. It is now a quarterly journal, has been since 2008, which structures somewhat what it can & cannot be. It's funny, or maybe not so much, that the more society speeds up, or seems to, the more I prefer to let *The Cenacle* remain what it is. Writing, photography, artwork. The product of several months' labor toward it. The best of those labors. I don't think, really don't think, that society's harder push toward . . . something . . . has solved, or even addressed the eternal puzzles of the human experience. Mortality. Sex. Loneliness. Nature. How to live & why. All the obsessive online blogging & Facebooking does not shred one inch of the distance between any of us. Valuable like an extra blanket on a solitary, shivering soul.

It became a single thing, as maybe it always has been: living on the West Coast, & going annually to the Burning Man Arts Festival. While I started attending in 1999, it was like I'd been aiming West even before that. Burning Man became for me something good, & current, to focus on. I've detailed my relationship with this festival in previous chapters of this history; my concern here, recounting 2010, is how I decided to stop going, & what that was like.

It began with a lack of enthusiasm in December 2009, to begin the prep work, gathering new material for No Borders Bookstore. Simply put: I discovered that I didn't want to. I had never not wanted to before. I didn't know what this meant. Further mixed in to it was discussing with Kassi leaving Portland & where to next? Seemed San Francisco or Boston. The former didn't really interest me as once. Perhaps if I knew people, & jobs were easy to come by. Or if I had arrived with one, like had been true with Portland in 2007.

Boston? I was pretty doubtful. Didn't want to act big just on sentiment. Sure, I missed some times there. Some cafes. Some people. But I'd left 8 years before, moved far, not intending to return.

But maybe. Maybe being again in places still loved down to my roots, people too. It was hard, & I can only say here that the process of how we left looks a lot more coherent to me now than it did then.

At the same time, we were still living in Portland. I was still working my contract at Standard Insurance, still resentful that I could not find full-time work. The economy still too crappy for most

companies to be hiring technical writers for more than limited projects. So I showed up every day, & I collected my check every week. Spent my nights writing at a Taco Bell quite near where we lived, & a hippie-ish joint called Coffee Time a few blocks away. I found my writing hours fit well at these low-key places as much as they had at Bauhaus Coffee up in Seattle. I love these strange environs.

Started in January working on *Scriptor Press Sampler* | #11 | 2009 *Annual*. Continued running SpiritPlants Radio (including starting a new email newsletter for the dozen or so DJs doing shows on a regular basis), & celebrated the 11th anniversary of my own radio show, “Within’s Within: Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution” by spinning The Who’s *Tommy* rock opera masterpiece.

For the third year running, I wrote up Scriptor Press’s annual goals. They were as follows:

1. Expand the scope & reach of current projects; online; at events; by mail; & in storefronts.
2. *Synchrony* among writings, publications, radio, & web.
3. Support the efforts of others in their work & its dissemination; teach, aid, the *artist* in the *person*, the *person* in the *artist*
4. Support liberation over control, understanding over ignorance, empathy over competition.
5. Better discipline, more learning, better work.
6. Make art, love Kassi, be of the world without losing to it.

These goals comprise what could otherwise be called a mission statement. I can say that, at my best, I pursued these ideas throughout the year. My point here in mentioning them is to say that, even as I felt myself leaving some things behind, I was, more largely, going ever toward where I believed Art was taking me. The good obsession remained full, my challenge being to continuously find the courage to pursue it.

These months of mulling changes & re-location, writing & writing at the usual places, working my pay job, living in Portland, living within a human context of strangers, acquaintances, & loved ones near & far, following closely the artistic productions of the last of these, emerged in texts & images in April as *Cenacle* 72, the 15th anniversary of the journal—

It was a year of moving &, looking at it, either then or now, nothing else seems as important to me. *Cenacle* | 72 | April 2010 documents it live, so to speak, mid-course, & what resonates strongest still comprises that documentation. So best to start there.

This issue features a color cover by Catfishrivers, an artist down in New Jersey & also an excellent DJ on SpiritPlants Radio (his show is called “The River’s Edge”). It’s a funny, echoey collage work.

My “From Soulard’s Notebooks” is a piece devoted to *The Cenacle*’s 15th anniversary. I describe the inspirations for, & development of, the journal from cut-&-paste style to desktop publishing quality. It is a story that fascinates me because I did not anticipate the many steps in this development. My earliest publishing projects, in childhood essentially, were pencil & notebook paper. Simple as could be, private activities, secret pleasures; obsessive though, now & then.

Other than my journal, begun in 1974 when I was 10, & a *Hardy Boys*-style boy detective novel, *John & Philip*, from about the same time, the writing projects I devoted my youth to were publishing projects. The first was *Sports Page*, inspired by Jack Klugman’s sports writer Oscar Madison on the TV show *The Odd Couple*. My father was an impressive athlete as a younger man (boxing, golf, bowling, football, I don’t know what else), & he inspired that same love of competition.

Not much of an athlete, I took my interest in sports in a different direction: writing. Moreover, I didn’t just write about sports I saw on TV. I made up my own football league, the Connecticut Football League, an entity for young players 12-18; four seasons a year it ran, 40-50 games a season, an



elaborate playoff system, a championship.

In this imaginal world, I was a star quarterback for several perennially championship teams. I also ran the league, published its weekly newspaper, *Sports Page*, & broadcast its radio show, *The Sports Page Show*. I did all this from elementary school into high school. It was my earliest obsession. From 1975 to 1978 it was my sole creative project.

In 1977, I got a job as a paperboy when my family moved. Delivered *The Hartford Courant* at dawn every day of the year. This fit well with *Sports Page* & its radio show. In 1978, inspired by reading the news every day, I started *Newspage*, a weekly newspaper in which I copied stories from the newspaper, & also composed an editorial of my own.

Being fairly poor in a suburban high school, having moved to the town when I was 13, so no deep roots, & little knowing of the ways of teenagers, I had a very hard time. Too tall, too gawky, too untaught in how to navigate the hormonal hell of suburban teenage wasteland. And yet what remains sweetest are those hours away from all that stupid ugliness when I sat with my notebooks & wrote. Did my radio show (in my head), skipped classes entirely to ride the bus into Hartford, & read books, & look curiously at street people. I couldn't give a damn less for most of those I daily shared space with at that time. My notebooks of yellowed paper, covered in penciled scratchings, remain utterly dear.

In 1982, I founded Scriptor International, & the monthly *Scriptor Magazine*, which contained my nascent tries at poetry, fiction, plays. Reading books in high school English classes, & falling for a girl who wrote poetry, inspired this project. When *The Cenacle* began in 1995, I was tempted to call it *New Scriptor*. It is, in spirit.

Eventually I lost the discipline to do these projects, tangled in adolescent dramas & working for the high school newspaper. Eventually, the college newspaper & several literary journals.

Here's what's funny: I miss my own projects, not the ones I did with others in those days. While I learned things about publishing—tools, deadlines, distribution, collaboration—and these things helped me in later years—, my heart does not yearn back to them. My heart does yearn back to my secret notebooks, to the worlds I invented, & did so without Internet or cable TV or a big home library—or really much knowledge of the world or its cultures at all. I had the four channels on black-&-white TV: Sunday football, evening news, nightly comedies & dramas; & the local newspaper I delivered seven mornings a week. Library books & the radio.

Nobody I knew knew much of the world either, or told me much. My classes taught me rudimentary levels of knowledge. I was not indoctrinated into any religion—save the American uber-religion of consumer materialism, built loosely on Puritan loathing of sexual pleasure & tolerance, as well as a wordless fury at any who do not wash deep in the Christian ideas of sin & redemption, heathen & redeemed, Heaven & Hell.

These projects were innocent & simple, but they were *mine*. I created them, I devoted to them. I longed one day to be a famous writer & marry the blonde Mouseketeer Kelly on TV; I was utterly vulnerable to people who mocked my clothes, my hair, my nervously sweaty, underfed, underwashed body. I still mostly looked to others for my view of myself. Their conclusion: loathing-tinged indifference.

And yet I created worlds where I mattered, the best of me mattered. And, honestly, where everyone else mattered too.

I've taken this detour into my past, deeper than this *History* has gone before, as prelude to engaging fully *Cenacle* 72. For it is an issue chronicling my willing return to my past—to the East Coast, to Boston—which is something I had not done before. I'd moved from Connecticut to Boston in 1992, from Boston to Seattle & Portland in 2002 &, aside from my one year's unwilling return back to Connecticut, my path had never been back.

But San Francisco, to me, meant Burning Man, & I'd left, retired from, graduated from, *something'd* from Burning Man. Boston lured me anew, as it had back in the early '90s. In remarking upon *The Cenacle's* 15th anniversary in "From Soulard's Notebooks," I sum it thusly:

These remarks on 15 years of presswork would not be complete without some future speculation. Our pending move (& my return after 8 years out West) to Boston this summer bursts in my mind with wonder. Since 2002, Scriptor Press has moved far & wide in many directions, even as I eventually tired of the West, & yearned to return to Boston. My roots are in New England, especially its literary traditions. The names Emily Dickinson, Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, & others etch deeply in my mind & heart. I return to their home, still, as much to my own, past & to come.

Even the thank you section of the issue's table of contents is a goodbye to valued people in Portland, & happy wave toward those in Boston.

The issue's main contents begin unusually with my "Notes from the Northwest." Issues rarely do this, as I prefer to lead off with a new or returning contributor. But it's indicative of the nature of this issue. "Nothing lasts . . . but nothing is lost," *NNW's* epigraph, could be the whole issue's title.

"Notes from Northwest" succeeded "Notes from New England," but the concept was the same: short essays and/or fragments culled from my notebooks, at least somewhat regionally-concerned. The time & attention given to this feature varies issue to issue. Sometimes there's lots of writing to choose from—& sometimes not. I let it happen. This issue's instance was very much of a piece with much of the rest of the issue: leaving, remembering, anticipating.

It begins with the comment on the many Saturday nights Kassi & I spent at Coffee Time Coffeehouse, on NW 21st Avenue. Lined with bars, & drunks, & me not drunk but otherwise elevated walking through it all:

So, tonight, I was walking along 21st & thinking how the bastards & angels of human consciousness are openly displayed everywhere. How most young adults herd into boozy joints to stare at each other while getting drunker & drunker, a state best described as peaking early & then lumbering along for hours on end until the body collapses exhausted.

Before Portland, similar nights on Capitol Hill in Seattle; since, Harvard Square in Cambridge. Each just a little different. My Saturday nights have long not been spent in bars but instead writing, high & long hours at it. Those drunken days were fun but there were too many of them & they went on for too many years. Glad to have moved on.

Much of *NNW* is devoted to leaving Burning Man behind, returning to Boston:

After 11 years of attendance, I will not be coming to Burning Man this year. By my choice, not a financial decision. It's more that the feeling of excitement & novelty I once felt is over. What remains is obligation. And that's not enough. Not enough to make the effort worth it this time.

These are, of course, more personal feelings based on personal experience, so valid only to that extent. But there is also a pointed critique of Burning Man's own operating principles, worth quoting in part:

- 1. No Spectators—or even few? Or not fucking thousands? This would involve capping attendance, funding more small art projects, encouraging everyone to get involved, through a high profile campaign. Many don't know how not to be spectators.*
- 2. Leave No Trace—It's a sound, good, & necessary principle but not every newbie shows up with the know-how or the experienced camp-mates.*
- 3. Radical Self Expression—but within the bounds of a long, long list of rules. Worsening this is that many have rarely expressed anything radically in their lives. It takes learning, emulation, encouragement.*

It took me a long time to lose the festival's shine from my eyes. Some remains, always will, should, & glad it does.

Since 2010, writing now a couple of years later, I've done some research on what next, what could be next, a good new host for our No Borders Free Bookstore, but no luck yet. I've worked on the next half-dozen new Burning Man Books, could have them done easily in a few months. I don't know if I knew it would be so hard to find a successor. But finding Burning Man itself back in 1998, online, was a fluke in itself. So maybe what's next will have to come by a similar combination of effort & good luck.

My *Labyrinthine*, Part Three, features important new locales to the book: the Noah Hotel & the little town on the Mexican border that is overrun by the Lights. Also, strange new characters in Genny's doll Tweety Bird, & the return of the enigmatic Cosmic Early.

The Noah Hotel is a playground of weirdness. Its staff is a segregated group of former homeless, addicts, whores, now workers likely quasi-slaves; its uncertain height & depth; its rooms & suites used by rich patrons for all manner of sexual & other escapades; & the strange room where many of the book's main characters meet for the first time.

Nicknamed the "No-Tell" for its unofficial privacy policy, its namesake may even now be cleaning its rooms & vacuuming its hallways, vaguely remembering more glorious days. Its relation to the nearby Luna T's Cafe is uncertain, though young Dylan does discover a doorway between the two.

The Noah Hotel interests me because hotels interest me. The transience of their customers, arriving to bare rooms & being swept away themselves on departure. Their oddly-lit hallways & ornamental rugs. Their staffs usually helpful & aloof. Money paid for heated, lit, enclosed space for a set time. Views of the parking lot, highway. Bad, overpriced restaurant food. Unloved beds & tables & chairs. I haven't done much all with the No-Tell yet. Its fruits hang many, & low.

Imagine a city like Hartford to be where the No-Tell is located. A city full of poor but with a thin layer of rich on top. Earlier stories were set in Hartford. Luna T's inspired by a restaurant in Hartford. It fits.

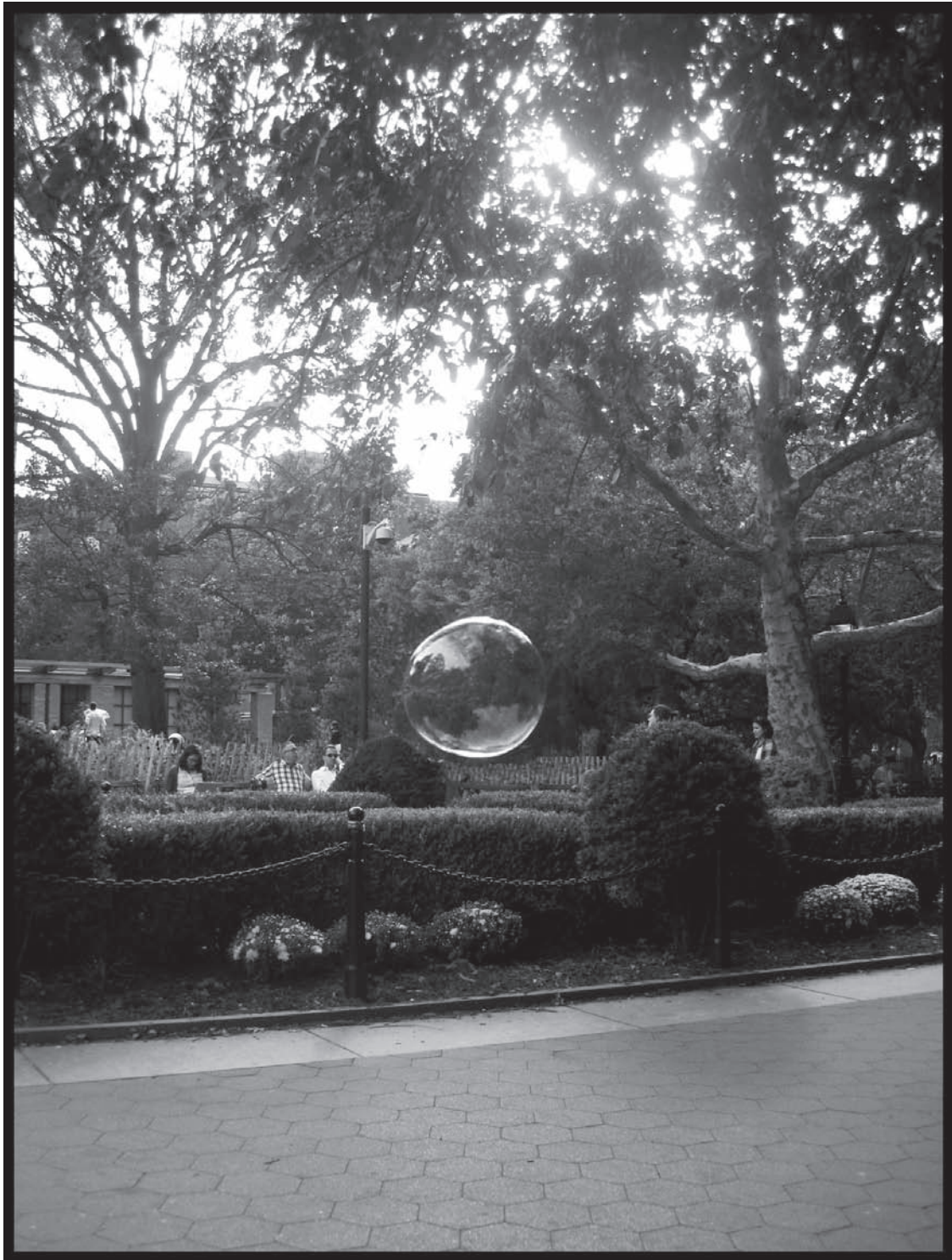
There is no name yet for the little New Mexico border town where the Lights regularly appear overhead. Inspired in part by the Marfa Lights in Texas, these apparitions are a part of a long-running theme in *Labyrinthine*: the ships are overhead. They have, in fact, always been overhead. Their purpose, if one, or many, remains unknown, or multiple. They interact in different ways with different characters in the story.

I believe it is more than likely that the ships *are* overhead, & always have been. This world is too strange, & nothing explains it fully, or well. An alien aspect, or more than one through time, would perhaps explain more. Fictional speculations on the matter allow me thinking room to play with its possibilities, while committing to none. Coming at it from many angles is fun, & I don't feel obliged to shade toward advocacy. At least yet.

The way we learn of the Lights in *Labyrinthine* has to do with Bowie, the story's resident spy who, during one of his periods of recovery from his traumatic trade, meets, among his various street companions, a man named Paul. Paul had met a girl, Rosie, from the little town, while both traveled on a Greyhound bus.

He said they lived in New Mexico, a little town in the desert, where she was from & where he moved to when they got married. They'd met on a Greyhound bus, & traveled til they had no money or options left but go home, her home, marry & set up shop.

Their life there seems fine until the night she disappears in a dust storm. Though he eventually couples up with her cousin Paula, by the time of his meeting Bowie he is homeless & living in a city on the West Coast. Haunted by his & Paula's attempts to travel back to find out what had happened to Rosie that night.



Bowie recalls Paul's account while he himself is on board a Greyhound bus to that town, some year or years later. Drawn by the Lights, by Paula's theories of Alternative History, by the tries at time travel? It's not clear what his motives at this point.

Genny's childhood doll is called Tweety Bird, after the cartoon character. My guess is that Tweety was named by a very young Genny. And lost along the way. Found again, somewhere in the Midwest, broken in a ditch as she goes to visit her brother Shawn, & finds instead a friendly black & white collie.

Genny has given up her heart's dream, following Preacher, supporting his mission, being near him. Finding nobody but the collie, a passing friend, she departs the empty farmhouse, & finds Tweety Bird in a ditch, & a ride to town. A hardware store, for some glue & rubber bands. Another ride to a motel.

Not sure she is dreaming, dead, or just lost, Genny checks in with Tweety. The night gets weird:

Tonight someone suffers. Genny watches all of it coming out of her motel TV, she's nude holding Tweety Bird who's nude too, all the colors are terrifying, someone suffers tonight, she watches & touches her skin to make sure she's still there, someone tonight suffers, he'd been with her, he'd touched her shoulder & she'd screamed into her mattress, a long long time, it felt relieving to finally let it all go, crazily, wildly, let it go, & when she'd looked up, calm a moment, she'd put on the TV for comfort & company, they'd both undressed, for a laugh & the colors hadn't been there at first, no, at first had been a TV show she thinks she watched once, it became colors slowly, not even noticeable at first, around the edges of the screen & then she couldn't turn it off, & then she couldn't move, he'd touched her, he'd been there, in that room far from everything, been there & touched her shoulder, "tonight someone suffers" Who'd said that? Him? Anyone? The TV?

The whole country setting is based upon my about-annual trips to visit Kassi's family in eastern Colorado.

I wanted to take Genny far from the life she knew—traveling in a group of women following a male leader, a tight-knit clan, one that had fallen apart over time—& bring her to her source. She finds Tweety Bird, who becomes again her totem & comfort, & her past is more revealed.

Genny is funny, & smart, & sensual. She's loyal to Preacher, which he values more than she understands. Their story will long continue.

The strange writer Cosmic Early makes his first appearance in *Labyrinthine*. Early first appeared in *Things Change (Six Thresholds)*. Rebecca Americus had discovered a ragged copy of one of his books, while hanging around an all-night bookstore. He was briefly quoted in *Why?*—but this time comes in person.

Early is an old man, writes books of philosophy. A sample of his strange, shaggy writing follows:

Know that world bides, world wants, world seeds everywhere, world is home. Change is possible, happening, flush it with hope, flush through, not good nor bad but what causes growth, ease, freedom. Where hope prospers, men & beasts & trees all live fruitfully. Where hope abides, wicked is better understood as hunger unfed, dream mocked, faith caged, desire etched in coin, fear a constant shadow between faces.

We learn that Early is an oneironaut, one who travels in Dreamland, & something of a “rival to Benny Big Dreams,” though sick & mortal. He seems involved with Bowie, Christa, Rosie (& what happened to Rosie), & of course knows Rebecca. Lives at the No-Tell, & it is here in his room that we meet a new girl to this story, the young Jasmine, or Jazz. Jazz is looking for her sister Ashleigh, & believes Early can help her. Early's motives are less clear at this point:

Cosmic Early partly understood her, the part she let him understand. He was brilliant too, but old, past when age helped, when the body's complaints slowed the mind, obscured its sharpness. Not long ago, he would have known her in a lazy glance.

Their narrative will grow much more complex.

What is notable about these pages is that they were written in early 2007, in the months before we moved from Seattle to Portland, & now appeared in *The Cenacle* in 2010 in the months before we moved from Portland to Boston. Eventually the lag between writing & publishing *Labyrinthine* pages would close up much, but, at this point, the gap bore this odd aspect to it.

Other prose in the issue included a letter by Jim Burke III, an essay by Ralph Emerson, & a reprinted essay by Joan Didion.

Burke's letter is written in response to mine (partly featured in the issue's *Notes from the Northwest*), in which I discuss my reasons for moving back East, parting Burning Man & the West Coast after a decade of frequently traveling there, then living in Seattle & Portland for a combined six years.

What happened eventually is that I got to know the Pacific Northwest, cared for but did not love it. And Burning Man got bigger & bigger, more cops, more rules, more spectators. Deeper roots began speaking to me. Maybe I just feel I'm done here.

I also write in the letter about my "Art's center" shifting, "& therefore I follow." Burke's letter delves similarly into his own roots, growing up north of Boston, gravitating toward nature & music, away from his Catholic upbringing. He writes at length about the "meditation tree of life," saying:

It has many limbs and the goal is to keep pursuin' the truth. Some of the limbs are longer than others and require you to be in different places for varied periods of time.

Further on he writes about the artistic life:

The artist's life is certainly not meant for everybody In a perfect world, we could pursue our artistic endeavors without political constraint, and the manifest chains that inevitably bind us to the physical plane. My escape continues to be a little weed playin', and smokin' a guitar—or something like that.

Jim talked often of intuition & trusted the idea of it, developed his own as best he could, if that's possible, which I think it is. He was a strong, funny, deeply empathetic man. I don't just think of him with love but with deep admiration. Not perfect, as he'd immediately say about himself, but deeply, emotionally intelligent. I've known no artist his superior & doubt I ever will.

[A sort of oddness to writing now about Jim back in 2010, knowing his loss from 12/1/2011 on. Had I written this chapter, as I should have, in 2011, I'd be saying some different things, certainly minus the sadness.]

Ralph Emerson contributed his essay "J is for Jumping Jack," another in his series on phonesthemes. The essay's opening lines sums its intent:

The letter J has three quite unrelated uses. In vocabulary words, J is a signal of 'up-and-down motion', as in jiggle and jump. This reflects the letter's physical prototype, the Jaw, which moves up and down as we talk and eat: jabbering, joshing, and "jawing" away. Since this 'up and-down' connotation holds true in many far-flung languages, it seems to be the letter's natural job, or at least the natural job of the "juh" sound that we happen to give J in modern English.

It is the combination of lingual vivacity & long-earned scholarly authority that makes Emerson's essays shine, compel their reading. Like William Safire's old "On Language" essays in the *New York Times*, Emerson's pieces embody the classical definition of Art: to *teach* & to *entertain*.

Cenacle 72 reprints Joan Didion's 1967 *Saturday Evening Post* essay, "Slouching Toward Bethlehem," also reprinted in the Burning Man Books 2009 series.

Didion's style, called the New Journalism, embeds her first person in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood of San Francisco in early 1967, just as its hippies, freaks, musicians, runaways, dealers, & others were getting the attention of the national media. Not for its long-term benefit.

She roams half-intentionally from individual to individual, group to group, story to story, crisis to crisis. She loves to tell stories, immerse herself in the little details & relationships governing people's worlds—& she does this quite well.

Yet, when push comes to shove, & I mean *push* & *shove*, she backs off:

Norris and I are standing around the Panhandle and Norris is telling me how it is all set up for a friend to take me to Big Sur. I say what I really want to do is spend a few days with Norris and his wife and the rest of the people in their house. Norris says it would be a lot easier if I'd take some acid. I say I'm unstable. Norris says all right, anyway, grass, and he squeezes my hand.

She's looking closely, she's feeling deeply. And yet the chasm: she does not understand that this *isn't* a social revolution, or a supra-social revolution. It is a *revolution of consciousness*. Had she trusted those whose lives she tangled into, who *trusted her*, & dropped some Owsley, she would have understood, seen fully in plain light what she only got shadows of: LSD *changed the world* & Haight-Ashbury was one of its launching pads. A new world was aborning around her, as much as with the prior conceptions of democracy, monotheism, the printing press, the atomic bomb. *LSD changed the world*.

Didion saw long hairs, freaks, hippies, whatever, & so on. What she did not let herself see was that *she walked among revolutionaries*. Peaceful, sharing, flawed, fragile revolutionaries. This essay is a deeply felt portrait, & yet it could have been so much more.

Ric Amante contributes five of his fine poems to the issue. One of particular note is "Above the Tree Line." Just 10 lines: constructed as prose, two sentences. The first:

*Right now I'm lying shirtless
on a hot slab of pink granite
in a sun-blasted, speechless trance—
part lizard, part corpse.*

Half-naked, reptile, dead. A moment of non-human living in a human life. Amante experiences this "other" state often, & yet is able to describe it in melodic human words. The rest:

*I can't say why it's so
or where it comes from,
yet I know the well-being of others
keeps this mountain in business;
if blessings are missing,
this incarnation means nothing.*

These lines are the pay-off, the metaphysical punch line. For they are not the thoughts of a corpse, or a lizard, but a live, thinking man, one who perceives good will on behalf of nature, & believes that good will of one physical thing toward another is what gives life its great worth. I'm not sure it's necessary to

agree with the poet's vision to find empathy with his conclusions.

Continuing this line of thinking, into Judih Haggai's haiku. In particular:

*a polar bear walked onto my canvas
with frozen tundra words
we understood*

Sometimes polar bears happen. They arrive &, if lucky, understanding occurs.

A step along:

*absolute zen
before enlightenment, bake cookies
after, bake cookies*

Is this funny? Is this serious? Yes, both, Haggai does this, over & over. Her words, her music, weigh well in the ear, & in the mind, *because* there are polar bears, *because* there are cookies to bake.

Joe Ciccone's "Dance Hall Orphans," a sad, surreal poem, as his often are. Its middle stanza:

*There were days of reflection, and others days,
more ragged and with frayed ends—
when he took photographs of wallflower women,
whose pale hands held bouquets of their own flowers;
days when the fires rose around them and she said "stand and deliver,"
while he thought about the Savior.*

Frayed, ragged days. Wallflower women with pale hands holding bouquets. Fires & a more particular woman's imperative. All this, "[w]hile he thought about the Savior." Ciccone's poems don't *arrive to* the reader's hands as much as they *invite* the reader along. Dreamy land of old cars, railroad tracks, overcast days, winter. When they work, which is quite often, they travel the reader around & return him with some strange & good souvenir in hand.

In addition to his front cover, we published a gallery of Catfishrivers' wildly strange sketches, filled with distorted torsos, odd animals, & undenoted shapes. A talented man, he, by pen, by guitar, by camera.

This issue featured the first half of my *Many Musics, Sixth Series*, 30 poems in all. I'm now re-reading them five years later & they are clearly poems of my last days living out West. Some looking back sentimentally ("Bauhaus"):

*So I wrote here, for years, hard &
deep. Sometimes awful. Sometimes not.
A thank you. Remembrance. Til next.*

Some looking on with curiosity ("East-West"):

*Now I look over all the heres & decide to move on
by returning. An old here beckons new & I think
maybe here is just shorthand for everywhere & nowhere.*

The first six a series of poems about some cut flowers Kassi was given. I watched them decay over several days, loving them, yet deeply upset I could not help them:

*When you finally joined the other,
I was clumsy & your petals fell
scattered to the floor. I delivered
the remain of your remain
to the flower box, a lean, a toss, a departure.
Your bloom went elsewhere,
like the light after dusk goes.*

The issue also featured the second Manifest Project run of pictures, this time a sweet variety by Jim Burke III, Ric Amante, Victor Vanek, Kassi, & me. This project iterates every few years & I find everyone's involvement delightful. A disposable camera, a piece of chalk, & the instruction: "manifest."

The "Last Yawp" this issue is a photographic collage of all the empty storefronts in downtown Portland, circa 2010, & the Thoreau epigraph: "City life is millions of people being lonesome together." I was only one of countless struggling to get & keep work.

The back cover another of Kassi's lovely blooms photos, & a line of my poetry. The last of 22 issues published while we lived out West (11 in Seattle, 11 in Portland), from 2004 to 2010. *The Cenacle* departed with thank yous, affections, & new hopes.

The issue successfully debuted at the 4/17/2010 Jellicle Literary Guild meeting, the 9th & final JG meeting in Portland. Two years of this West Coast version had successfully revived the group, & proven that I could take the original idea & work it with a whole different group of people. But, by this meeting, only our dear friend Victor Vanek made it. We three did a good job raising the spirit, & threw in a new wrinkle—Judih Haggai, live via video from Israel, reading her great poems.

Even as I was anticipating the event's move to its third state, I was glad I'd revived it. It assured four nights a year devoted with friends to their art, & a great way to debut new issues of *The Cenacle* & other Scriptor Press publications. This was especially important in the years since we stopped attending the Burning Man fest.

As our time out West was nearing its conclusion, we took a trip into the past, & one toward the future. In March, we took the Amtrak train up to Seattle, last of quite a few occasional visits taken up there, ostensibly to see my doctor, but mostly to visit old haunts. Punky old dive Bauhaus, Seattle Center (with its famous Space Needle), great cheap burgers at Dick's Drive-In, Starbucks on Capitol Hill, Elliott Bay Books, Amante's Pizza, Dilettante Chocolates. Weaving our love for this city anew back into our hearts' skeins.

Then, in late April, a trip out to Boston. Kassi had been there only once previously, in 2007. That time with me was fun, skein-renewing; this time was to get some ideas on where in it to live.

Flew first into Connecticut, to see Jim Burke III & other old friends. The area hadn't changed much over the years, but it was dandy to see Jim & hear his beautiful singing & guitar playing live—only second visit in 8 years. But now it would be much more often.

Then up to Boston. Public Garden. Kendall Square-MIT. Christian Science Park & its gorgeous reflecting pool. Eventually—happiness!—Harvard Square & my beloved Au Bon Pain courtyard. I wrote poems there, like old, & everywhere else too. Kassi liked it, & I was convinced that if I had to struggle with joblessness, as was coming in Portland, with slim hopes in that lovely city's bad economy, I might as well do it back on my old home grounds, with more loved ones nearby.

Back to Portland & my last few weeks before leaving in late May. Working my job at Standard Insurance, long a disappointment, a paycheck, no more. I'd been there a year, daily, helping to create documentation for their disaster recovery program, but it meant nothing to anyone. *I meant nothing.* I'd had many jobs like this before, took them personally, no matter what anyone else did or didn't think. Felt I deserved better. Felt *anyone* who put skills & care to a job deserves better.

Only way to deal with it is to move on, as I did, as I had no choice but to do. Put it on my resumé, & carry on.

Thinking it out larger: I'd arrived in Portland in June 2002 & left the same month 8 years later. Arrived jobless & heart-rent. Left jobless & married. Arrived a writer, editor, publisher. Left a better one. Arrived a nascent technical writer & editor. Left, though jobless, better, more confident, & with a much stronger resumé to bring back to Boston.

So the failures somehow, collectively, added up to something. I was, however hurt by life, stronger overall. If there's a virtue to writing this chapter so tardy to intent (now September 2015), it's that I can see those years for what good they led to. It was not in any way clear at the time they would.

I spent my last 10 days before leaving on May 24 packing & readying, & applying for unemployment & deferring student loans, & writing lastly at my old joints. One molds one's life around one's job, dwelling, loved ones. Downtown Portland isn't very big, & in 2010 was not at all prosperous, but I worked my writing & press projects many downtown lunchtime hours at the Hilton Hotel lounge, McDonald's, Carl Jr.'s Burgers, & nighttimes at Taco Bell, CoffeeTime, Starbucks near where we lived. Good memories despite.

A week before I got on the Greyhound bus to the East Coast, I finished one last press project in Portland, *Scriptor Press Sampler* |11| *2009 Sampler*. The *Sampler*, as mentioned in previous chapters, is a compendium of writings & graphic artwork culled from the issues of the previous year's *Cenacle*.



It's a pleasurable project to work on in the spring of every year. Like assembling a additional *Cenacle* for the year. My method is to include a representation of each contributor, figure out how to build a distinct little 100-page chapbook from about 500 pages of *Cenacle*.

The poetry is easier to work with. Simply selecting the best of the best. This issue featured the poetry of Ric Amante, Joe Ciccone, Judih Haggai, & myself.

With the prose, especially the longer pieces, I have to do some artful re-shaping. Christopher Gose's *World's Window* ayahuasca journal, for example, published in all four issues of the 2009 *Cenacles*, required that I select passages that stood independently as a group. A challenge, & fun to do.

On the other hand, the letter by Jim Burke III, fictions by G.C. Dillon & Susan Jones, & language essay by Ralph H. Emerson, were all short enough pieces to include wholly.

And the graphic artwork by AbandonView, Catfishrivers, Victor Vanek &, of course, Kassi, gave the book strange & lovely colorings.

My own pieces included *Many Musics* poems, *Labyrinthine* fiction, & *Notes from the Northwest* prose. Excerpting from my own writings I think of separately, since I am making my own choices.

Samplers are created to be distributed independently of the other press projects, a kind of elaborate calling card, or invitation. I've just not yet pushed this idea to its full potential.

Then in late May I got on a Greyhound bus to Boston for several weeks of apartment hunting & job-hunting. Primarily the former, as we had to have a place to arrive to. I had not been on a cross-country bus-trip since coming out to Seattle (via Omaha, Nebraska to visit with Kassi) in 2004. I decided to take one more, to see how it felt after the passage of years & life.

The trip itself hadn't changed at all. Not one but numerous buses needed to cross the U.S. continental range. Much of middle America is flat & seemingly lifeless. Sleep is hard to get for any length of time; a couple of hours most times. Buses stop every couple of hours for drivers' breaks. Buses break down. Buses are late & connections are missed.

It felt like I was leaving behind a period of my life that had often involved long-distance trips. Had begun in 1999 when I drove with Mio Cohen to our first Burning Man festival. Travels back & forth for that event, to move out West, to move back East, out West again. Romance come & gone, & a better one come again. Last trip to Burning Man in 2009.

So my experience of about a dozen years of this was concluding, & thus one more bus trip. The actual move would be by moving truck in early July. Packed up my notebooks, MacBook Pro Eurydice, iPod Polly, cell phone, pens, paper, clothes, & one more time went to the hoary Portland Greyhound station, where my life & heart & hopes had crossed many times in those dozen years. This time with Kassi's sweet kiss goodbye. Kept a "Road Diary" of the trip, which was published in *Cenacle* 73-74 in September (so will hold off on trip details till that issue discussed).

Arrived three days later & began the slow process of re-acclimating to living in Boston. I'd left, I'd thought for good, in June 2002, bound for the West to formalize my commitment to it. Took a few tries, but when Kassi & I landed in Portland in 2007, me newly hired to work for Symantec Corp., the deal seemed done. It would have been, if the economy hadn't crashed in 2008, & I was not laid off, again & again, & again, unable to find sure & stable work in devastated Portland.

It's now five years past those times, but a part of me still wonders about the unchosen path. At the time, I was burnt out of a lot of things. Of Burning Man, job woes, lack of many friends, dreary snowless winters, & this feeling that I would never stick solid to the ground there.

Returning to Boston unnerved me too, but it had much I missed & many good friends, & family too. I guess what I needed was more security, especially since it wasn't just my sorry ass on the line this time. Kassi had stuck by me solidly & I had to protect her. Had to hold up my end of our shared effort. Whether the West let me down, or the bad economy trumped all, or I missed my origins, or the disappointment about Burning Man, or the need for a new adventure, or likely all of these was, were, the reason or reasons, it felt right.

Boston I *knew*, even as being away from it for years I found changes here & there. I knew how to live there, even as I had to start from scratch with apartment-hunting, like I had in 1992, & a new job, like I'd had to often before.

My friend Ric Amante & his partner Melissa Wattenberg put me up for my working visit at their house just north of Boston. I kept writing during this time, thinking I'd get *Cenacle* 73 done before moving. Kept running SpiritPlants Radio's weekend schedule of new shows, including my 3-hour (temporarily pre-recorded) show. Kept working on a new RaiBook, first in 3 years, revising Chris Gose's *World's Window* ayahuasca journal down to about a 75-page chapbook.

My multiple visits to my beloved Au Bon Pain Café courtyard in Harvard Square in Cambridge compensated for discovering numerous other old favorite writing joints were gone.

It was emotionally weird because I was resuming living, or arranging for resuming living, in a place which I hadn't planned to return to, & now *wished* to return to. Old feelings of defeat & departure warred with what I had to do now: put all of my self, best & otherwise, into making this work.

So I had highs when I was writing; when I was looking for an apartment Kassi would like that we could afford with savings & no jobs yet; when I was grokking anew with a city I'd mostly always loved.

And I had lows when the stress of these tasks, piled on top of several years of job stresses, & a lingering sadness at leaving the West, got the better of me.

Didn't help when my beloved MacBook Pro Eurydice had a hard drive failure. I sent her in to a good repair place in California, but it took me weeks to recover only most of her files.

It was an unrecipred mix of Yesterdayland with what was potential to come. I scored us an apartment in Arlington, next to my beloved Cambridge, in early June, & soon thereafter spent a day writing in my old haunts in Malden, where I'd lived up till 2002. A job interview took me on a long bus trip far north of Boston; only thing that came of it was a foot injury (accidentally left a pair of rolled-up socks in one of my shoes!).

Finished up in Boston after several weeks there. Spent some last fine hours with Ric, with many more promised soon, & took the Greyhound bus down to Hartford, Connecticut, my actual origins. More recipe-less mixtures of time.

Happy to crash on my friend Jim Burke III's couch, visit with his daughters. Happy as well to see Phish in concert for the first time in a decade. Same outdoor venue I'd last seen them in 2000. The music & the laser show & the good vibes still the same. I was so delighted to be a part of their scene again.

Reaching further back, I found my way to my writing haunts in my old college town of New Britain. Capitol Lunch, Peoples Donutshop. Quirky working class atmospheres where me huddled with pen & notebook in a corner wasn't much unusual. While some played the ponies at the off-track betting place nearby, & gathered there afterwards to commiserate, I locked into my iPod music, & wrote away.

Finally, furthest back in my time travels, was getting a ride with Jim to the U-Haul storage facility where most of my possessions had sat in storage for 8 years.

I had to get boxes of books, notebooks, LPs, stereo equipment, etc., etc., ready to be packed into a moving truck. Spent an hours-long day sorting through & organizing treasures & trash of my past into plastic bins. I was really happy to have my notebooks & records soon back in hand.

Then it was time to come back one more time to Portland. Kassi had spent these weeks, having left her job too, packing up our apartment. I arrived back in late June, & we had about a week to finish off. Our good friend Victor Vanek, a trucker by profession, had agreed to take a week's vacation to drive our moving truck cross-country, with us on board too for the adventure. So twice now in a month's time I was riding across the continent, this time to stay.

The best kind of friends are usually the kind who can take almost any situation & find some laughing & adventure in it. Where the first trip I'd been on my own, keeping best company in my notebooks & music, this time I had two of my dearest people to share the miles with. We saw pretty Multnomah Falls just outside of Portland; dusty, strange Rawlins, Wyoming for Chinese food; a quick stay with Kassi's kin on their cattle farm in eastern Colorado; camping with fireflies in Grand Island, Nebraska; a playground in Illinois; the trouble of a flat tire on a big truck in Ohio. Miles & hours passed. I had five poems percolating in my head as we approached New England.

Passing through Connecticut, stopped at my now-ready U-Haul storage unit to add my stores there to the truck. Then zoomed on into Boston & to Arlington. Unloaded, sat down exhausted amidst many boxes. Saw Victor off after a day or so of entertaining him in thanks.

The remain of the summer I mixed unpacking, getting used to being back in Boston, & a fairly crowded apartment, enjoying new & known places to write, with getting SpiritPlants Radio back on air (mid-July), & working on the renumbered & dated *Cenacle* 73-74 (this lasted into September).

Sorted LPs & notebooks now in possession. Started jobhunting. Revised the Scriptor Press logo to read "Scriptor Press New England" (which had been my original idea for the name back in '95). New poems written at Au Bon Pain courtyard. Brought new *Samplers* to Ric Amante & Melissa Watterberg's Out Loud Open Mic poetry event.

Happy for being back, & feeling new inspirations. But worried for finite savings with a need to pay rent & buy groceries, & us both unemployed. Worried enough to keep moving, trying, asking, but this can turn eventually into despair & paralysis.

Mostly I kept busy sorting all my old & recent things into order. This had to be done & kept me mostly away from the worst of my fears. And Kassi got a job at a non-profit organization, Oxfam International, in August. I also had a local "rail-trail" to often & safely ride my hoary old beloved bike.

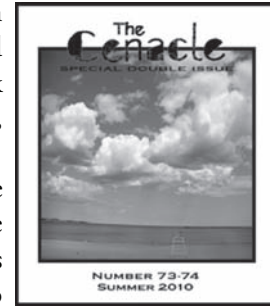
All through this I kept working on *Cenacle* 73-74. I'd decided it would be a "transitional" summer double-issue. Thus not having to be finished by June as originally planned, & structured to feature such pieces as my "Road Diary" from May.

I wanted to do all of this right, felt that this move has been 2010's great summer work, as Burning Man had been for 11 years previous. Publishing the first Boston-based issue of *The Cenacle* since #46 in June 2001 was crucial to do *really well*.

Cenacle 73-74 is more an arrival issue than a departure one, though there is still a bit of the

latter. And, for the most part, its contributors are from the East Coast, which maybe reflects how my meaningful West Coast contacts had waxed & waned by 2010. This, & how I could not find good work in Portland, led me to look East, where I had more dear people & a feeling that I could find work again, as I had before. And all this mixed with departing Burning Man.

We are, nearly entirely, what we feel, even if our feelings, however we understand them, however we let them influence our actions, prognosticate very little accurately. Most people come & go, & sometimes again, & this is a hard lesson to learn because our feelings are an accumulation to now, & no more.



Most of the people I had waiting for me then are, five years later, little direct part of my current life. Others have mixed in & out too.

But then was its passing now, & I did with what I had, what I knew, what I guessed, & *what I felt*.

The front cover of *Cenacle* 73-74 is from Revere Beach in Revere, Mass., a day I spent there with my friend Ric. Nice beach near city, planes passing over to & from Logan Airport. We'd gone there many times in the '90s; I don't think since the day that picture took in 2010.

The back cover I took with my cell phone while passing that summer by Greyhound through New York City, en route to Boston.

That four-day trip's "Travel Diary" comprises the issue's "Notes from the Northwest" (last time this column with that name). The trip's purpose: "to re-establish living ties with Boston, home, job, friends & family, & bring my beloved Kassi & all of our mundane & magical possessions there."

As I said above, I think of this trip as a kind of goodbye to a dozen of years of coming out West, by plane sometimes, but mostly by Greyhound bus. To Burning Man, to chase love, to find somewhere out there the welcoming home to stay of the psychedelic dream as it dwelled in about 1966. I now don't think it's any more one place than another necessarily. I think it manifests more or less so, in how men & women treat one another & the world around them. It's an *ideal*, not a locatable patch of ground.

So as I traveled, I wanted to know what I was, what I thought about & felt in 2010. The answer was easy: I thought about writing, I wrote; I read a brilliant psychedelic speculative novel called *City of Saints & Sinners* by Jeff Vandermeer, & thought about other such novels (Danielewski's *House of Leaves*, Ishiguro's *Unconsoled*) & films (Lynch's *Inland Empire* & Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut*), & music (Beatles' *White Album*), & TV shows (*Lost*, *Fringe*, *The Prisoner*) of the same kind. I kept editing Chris Gose's *World's Window*. I took pictures. I read my friend Ric Amante's very fine self-published book of poetry, *Digging In*. I wrote poetry. Accumulated it all in this "Road Diary" for *The Cenacle*.

Mountains gave way to long hours & miles of flatlands. Bus after bus. Passed through small towns & big cities. Passed through Omaha, Nebraska where I'd first met Kassi in person in December 2002.

From a bus station in Boise, Idaho, I wrote what remain true lines for me about what I am: "Writing is my meditation, filling a page for me is contemplating the blank wall or chanting a mantra for another. I don't know why. Maybe there is no why. But gratefulness."

So I arrived, as has been detailed, & eventually down to Connecticut, & it was shortly before I left that I wrote "From Soulard's Notebooks" from the Peoples Donutshop in New Britain.

What's curious about this deeply ruminative piece is that it does not mention at all my pending cross-country move! I'd just rented an apartment up in Boston! Was moving there from the other coast in less than two weeks!

No, I was looking widely around beyond my own drama & set of circumstances, & trying to understand what I saw:

the beauty & the waste men have wrought on this world cannot be considered as equal. When

we damage or destroy aspects of the world, or each other, this matters, this changes all a little bit. Everything matters. A corollary I carry with me is: nothing goes away, nothing returns.

I look around, remember my long ago days living around there, &, wishing to connect newly, decide to write this piece for *The Cenacle*—“from a whim jump into this piece for *The Cenacle* & see if it goes. Remember, intensely, the *me* of here.” I eventually conclude:

change changes all . . . Where I pull out of my worst free falls of pessimism is to recall this thought to myself, couple it again & again to a stubborn persistence, & choose to believe, consciously call it a faith

This piece plainly reflects my earlier contention that we are, nearly entirely, what we feel. Hope & despair each have their compelling intellectual & rhetorical arguments, but it is an individual’s *felt emotional truth* that will tend him or her toward one or the other. I choose hope in this piece.

My *Many Musics* poems are the third of the pieces directly dealing with our move East. Of the 30 poems in this group, poems such as “Harvard Square in Spring” mull leaving & arrival, concerned with me trying to get *it* again, as though this finally possible:

*A wish to remember, finely and fully,
& then ask, what else? What tonight? What the morrow?
Living things move restless, quick and slow,
cross the planet, dead ones at their ease.*

Then there’s a poem called “Memory & Prelude,” which occurred because I found an old high school essay of mine as I was unpacking in our new apartment. It was about L. Frank Baum’s *Wizard of Oz* books, a series I cherished then & now, but then they were a lifeline out of my nightmare adolescence. I had few friends, no Internet to find anyone elsewhere. I had books & music.

The essay received an A+ by an overweight worn-out English teacher who saw some special value in me, until he caught me helping a bully (who liked me for some reason) cheat on a quiz.

The poem details the moment, its drama, & how “all I wanted was to fuck a cheerleader.” Its heart lies in how discovering this old essay in my moving boxes, some 30 years after I wrote it, woke me wildly one morning to write it all out. It concludes:

*And what was all this for? Maybe all these
years later I simply look back & wonder
how little connection any of us made then,
& how this not-much truth is so often true.
That hour, helping, cheating, hoping, breaking,
it passed, passed long, long ago. Nobody
left from it. Just an old sheaf of typed pages
I found yesterday, what was called onion
skin back then. A grade scrawled over it,
the dead bones of a gone pride.*

Sometimes it’s what we unknowing carry along with us along the years that collapses time & space, here & there, then & now. This moment is ever all.

Continuing with the poetry in the issue, Ric Amante has six poems featured. “Mockingbird” is of especial note, & the following lines:

*Mockingbird,
teach us again to just shut down and sit
within the wild graces of your mimicry.
Much has been said already—
how do we begin to move deeper,
divested of half-solutions?*

Nature, for Amante, bears truths men could know too, & learn by, but more often than not, don't. And they suffer by this.

Melissa Wattenberg's *nom de plume* in *The Cenacle* is Zannemarie Lloyd Taylor. She is a very gifted poet, & several of her poems are in this issue. These lines from "Prayers and Laetrile" are especially good:

*There is prayer in every healing. Thought
Directs molecules the way wind
Carries dandelion seeds. If
Prayer were laser,
It would pinpoint wayward
Metastases. But prayer
Is scattershot. Hit-or-miss. Guided
By hope, not cross-hair precision.*

Its diction unfancy. Rhythm casual, like talking. Yet deeply striking thoughts, landing, staying.

Among Judih Haggai's several poems, it's "How I wake up" that strikes as deeply as those poems above. Loud neighbors & peacocks & cars & cats & dogs & phones wake the narrator, yet she says: "wake up and smell and grow."

Moving into the issue's other prose, the lead piece is "Wilhem Reich: Life & Death of a Social Pioneer" by Alex Smith. Smith is a Canadian environmental activist who hosts an excellent weekly radio show online called "Radio Ecoshock" [<http://www.ecoshock.info>] We got in touch because I wanted to broadcast his show about once a month on SpiritPlants Radio. And I found out we shared an admiration for the European scientist & philosopher Wilhelm Reich. Smith sent me a fine essay he'd written about Reich. I edited it for publication in *The Cenacle*. Reich has many challenging & compelling ideas. Smith sums up some of them here:

Reich believed that adults used sexual repression to create authority, and to make children ready for domination. He argued that this process was carried on through the educational system until they fear their inner selves but trust the worst political rats. They can't revolt or question authority because of their awful inner fears which may begin with early sexuality. This same pattern of domination has been used down through the ages.

When Reich moved to the U.S., & spoke out against nuclear testing, & warned of its dangers to human health, he was hounded by the U.S. government, had his papers & books burned, & eventually died in jail. Smith's essay climaxes:

What if we accepted Reich's myth that there is an energy, that it can be accumulated, that it is hurt by pollution and radiation, that it resides inside the armored core of each of us? This life energy is everywhere. It appears on craggy, frozen cliffs and in the deepest sea bottom. Life pops up in the scientist's sealed laboratory dish, arriving from the air. Life is as likely to colonize machines as vice versa. It cracks open the heaviest stone monuments and eats away the strongest steel.

Smith is a great writer & just as good a proponent of environmental justice.

Ralph H. Emerson contributes another of his great language essays, “Q is for Queer.” His introduction nicely summarizes his essay’s theme & tone:

Although we think of Q as irremediably twisty, when it was invented almost four thousand years ago, it wasn't a twisty letter at all. It's always had its O-like loop, but its tail went straight down until the Romans redrew it on a slant. The equivalent Hebrew letter qoph is written פ, and the even older Phoenician qoph looked like a female sign ♀ without its crossbar. Like all the early letters, it was a picture; and the Phoenician kids who sat learning their letters in ancient gardens knew exactly what qoph meant and what its picture showed: the eye of a needle.

Every issue of *The Cenacle* includes an essay on psychedelics, either a new piece or a reprint. This issue features the reprint “Psychedelics and Alchemy” by Jim DeKorne. It is a complex, compelling argument about how psychedelics can play a role in the individual’s “Great Work of Transformation.” DeKorne writes:

Psychedelics have the capacity to both unify and fragment consciousness. Most people who have experimented with these substances with any frequency know that the highest gnosis that psychedelics offer is that “we are all one.” Our consciousness has been unified: we know the whole. This is the state of awareness variously called “satori,” “samadhi,” “nirvana,” etc. in Eastern religions. The gurus tell us that anything less than this state of unified awareness is illusion.

What further makes this piece a standout is DeKorne’s willingness to tell of his own struggles to discover & walk his own path, & to admit how much he does not know, & how each of us must create & walk his or her own way.

G.C. Dillon’s “From Antactica With Love” is another of his clever short fictions. What he accomplishes is a richly detailed & elongated joke.

Finally, this issue’s portion of my book *Labyrinthine*. Trying to sum 40 pages of fractured multi-narratives would be impossible to do well, but there is a passage that I think reaches deep inside this portion of the book to fold back & reveal some of its essence.

The way is called dis-illusion, that any heart finer than its bowels, (remember the old song: shit is beautiful!), that any golden vessel of faith not some long, subtle hustle for sweet young meat, (the honeyed spot before too many other bees have come there), or a begged home beyond the soil (bury me in the wordless glare, burn me & my every page, puff my ashes to the woods & stars, better ever that than deathless kingdoms of men, leave me out of man-dreamed or conjured eternities, little faith in my heart for this world that any where men are not slightly bonded by mortality would be better, any god or heaven contrived by men will roar often with primal bloodlust garbed in manners & tradition & commandments, burn me in the glare & if specks of my being feed a tree or a star or a hungry trout, so much more the better) (Not to die another ragged man buried in undone vows)

There was no resumed Jellicle Guild to debut this issue at, so it was handed to a few & mailed to others, & of course posted online at *The ElectroLounge*. When done in late September, the issue’s prep had traveled back & forth across the country twice over about five months. It was a satisfying relief when it was done, distributed, & archived.

On the other hand, *Cenacle* | 75 | October 2010 was made in less than a month, in time for its debut at the first East Coast Jellicle Literary Guild meeting in nearly 9 years. I was still jobless, which is quite likely why the issue could be made so quickly. There is also less of my writing in it than most issues. Still, it’s a good number for many reasons, & I was damned happy to get it made.

Jobless, & still adjusting to life back in Boston, both familiar & new. Our one-bedroom apartment was mostly set up. Crowded but livable. As said above, I continued to run SpiritPlants Radio with about three new weekends of shows a month, including my (again live) show on Saturday mornings. Kassi was off to her new job every day. A kind of stability had set in.

I worked at writing, editing, & typing the new issue at various local coffee shops, including of course Au Bon Pain Café courtyard in Cambridge. Used the Minuteman Bike Trail often to get about. Saturdays we took our journeys to movies & other imaginal spaces. I felt I'd come home & was happy for it. Getting a new issue done & a Jellicle Guild meeting to debut it at helped me to keep steady at job-hunting, parallel to these activities. Its silences, its frustrations, vague promises—feeling low & yet having to fake high in interviews & screenings—went on & on for months & months & months on end.

Cenacle 75 begins with my fourth annual letter to President Barack Obama, written just a few days before the mid-term U.S. Congressional elections. Democrats were being forecast to lose big, & they did (losing majority control in the House, nearly losing the Senate too, & suffering massive defeats on the state level).

Knowing this likely outcome, my letter to Obama pleads with him to get back some of the higher ground he'd been ceding in the first two years of his administration:



Fight your way back. This country must see again the better angels of your—& its own—nature. Be willing to lose a few battles in the name of winning the War. The faith lost in the possibility of the government acting rightly & decently is a greater threat than any single piece of legislation. I urge you, in sum, to govern more fearlessly, & to lead again with the hope you once shined upon millions of faces.

It took me a long time to let go of the image of Barack Obama as a progressive visionary, & loosely align with Barack Obama the centrist administrator of the American corporate technocracy. To understand the limitations of what he was able, & willing to do. Healthcare reform, war drawdown (but not ending), gay rights among these.

On other issues, like gun control & drug policy reform, his activism was less powerful. Regarding climate change, his gears only started revving up later in his current second term.

And, to be candid, he's not Mitt Romney or John McCain, the two opponents he defeated in presidential elections. A somewhat weak centrist trumps extreme right-wing tools every time.

The main contents of the issue kick off with Judih Haggai's interview of the California poet Martina Newberry. Newberry eloquently describes what inspires her to write:

I write about relationships—the cruel, the complicated, the simple, the joyful, the sexy, the fearful, the painful, the intense I write about music, dancing, reading, aging, cooking, sex, and/or the lack of it. I write about how, in these simple things, fear can destroy the mind and the feelings of anyone I write about God—how “we pray to a God we do not love for those we do love.” I write about churches, priests, confessions, weddings and funerals. I write to and about a God we look for and seldom find

And then advises how a poet can write better:

By reading and writing and writing and writing. By growing personally, by constantly learning and talking with people and seeing new things. I think you're a better poet when you allow yourself to be jolted out of your comfort zone.

A group of her poems follow upon the interview. She's a good, dark, but often funny poet. I'm partial to these lines ("Stone Steps"):

*what is there left to talk about
after the politics of war,
the ethical poses of religions,
the egregiously bad behavior
of the new movie legends?
I'm quite satisfied thinking
of your ankles touching mine
beneath our sheets.*

Another new contributor is Horse Lampner, actually the *nom de plume* of contributor Ralph Emerson's father, also named Ralph. "Hook, Line, & Sinker" is a sweetly humorous tale, with a sort of O. Henry twist ending.

Poetry by Ric Amante features as usual in the issue. In "People vs. Buddha," he writes:

*For you one evening it all fell away.
Under your tree you stopped pursuing,
even as you ran down the hillside.*

*And we, too, seldom and brief,
watch it all without clamor unfold.
Sail out, free and open,
leaving our name at the shoreline.*

*Yet our ship of blood will snag again
on tides of memory and desire,
and not today, not yet, not until
we chose to ditch this mortal craft
will we join you in the voyage.*

His ease with a language he does not fully trust is pretty amazing.

More of Zannemarie Lloyd Taylor's poetry appears in the issue. In my "Notes on Contributors," I call her poem "Cat Walk": "something of miracle." Describing the death of a beloved pet cat, she writes:

*During burial it rains, the ground is hard,
and we shift from foot to foot. Nothing will fix this.
Words or why, beside the point. We plant pussy willows
On her grave, because they will grow and tangle. We
Hold hands, hold each other in some place behind
Heart and mind. Here is the place for her return, the
Promise of revival, where all dead friends may
Come to live again. Nothing is forever, except this tangle.*

Just wonderful work.

This issue features the re-renamed *Notes from New England*, called that again after an eight-year period. It's a brief piece, only two pages. I think the following bet captures its emotive feel:

*there is not far from our home a miles-long mixed-use path called the Minuteman Bikeway. One of
my favorite things about Burning Man was being able to ride for miles & miles without the danger*

of cars. When I discovered this bike trail nearby—it runs through several towns near Boston—I was thrilled. Amazed & thrilled. Where once was a railroad, a few years ago it had been converted to its current use.

I was ready to do more with this ongoing feature; just needed some time.

A batch of great new haiku by Judih Haggai. Here's an sample:

*talk about evolution
it's now and it's always
only language changes*

Her 'ku are brilliant little gems that just delight me to read & publish.

I've been writing the new fiction *Labyrinthine* since 2006, & I'd very much like to explain it simply, explain what it's about, but I seem to be able only to say: *it's about everything*. But for this passage of this History about the *Labyrinthine* pages in *Cenacle* 75, I will address the Beast.

The Beast is, in sum, my reaction to anthropocentric religions & philosophies & perspectives about what the world is, & what men's position is in it. Whether owner, user, caretaker, guardian, or survivor of the world. Most human societies do not live well in this world, & most people suffer & are unhappy. This strikes me as *cause & effect*. We treat our world poorly, & so we treat each other poorly.

An alternative view would say that everything is sacred & should be treated thusly. But even partway to this, that everything is valuable, or everything is needed, or everything is dependent on everything else—any of these would work better.

Many men believe in the divinity of a figure called Jesus Christ. In this myth, a man-god propagates a child through a human woman, & the child grows up to preach a message of peace & love among men. His message poses a threat to the power structure, which murders him. Yet his followers keep & perpetuate his message through the centuries. Twist it to become one of in-born guilt & sin, which can only be relieved for vague promise of after-death reward by lifelong obeisance to an institutionally-dictated set of body-loathing & natural world belittling rules.

What of the trees & animals & soil & sky? The bugs & the birds, the fruits & nuts & vegetables? What of the mountains & oceans & deserts? Why a "God" shaped like men who fathers a "savior" shaped like men too?

The Beast emerges from the heat & heart of the world. Its form is all the forms of the world. It is no more sympathetic to men than any other kind:

More a beast than a man haunts the clearing shaped like a temple in the White Woods. Imagine a being shaped like every creature & creation the world! To have fired through bug & collie & raked ravines through canyons & given the Universe the gift of growth, decay, moving light, want & fecundity, tendered one with a day's life & another with a century's & another with many, some to fly & some rooted, the blind feeders crushed beneath the boots of the troubadours of men—

The Beast pursues Maya for obscure reasons. She is Code, Key, and/or Conduit:

What first caught the Beast's reck, crushed bloom's scent, stretched blouse, maybe a weightless laugh frosting the night air? Yes, perhaps? The Beast bodies & multi-bodies an hour, a day, less & less for many years but there was a scent, was a laugh & they left markings where little possible, a crevice in hide unmarkable, at least in a long while, but the crevice had no further history until this same scent, sweating, fear-pocked, crossed through the temple-shaped clearing.

The Beast recurs in *Labyrinthine's* pages more & more over time till I become convinced that

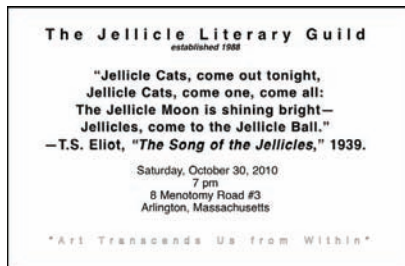
we humans are part of the Beast as much as all else. *Because* we do not live lives devoted to strengthening & valuing the bond that exists among all men, & between men & the world, we suffer. Our societies are mal-organized institutions of sanctioned cruelty, & our cultures at best mourn this situation, & at worst celebrate it.

I find life & meaning in everything, but don't know what to do about this. So I write on & on, in *Labyrinthine* & my other works.

In late October, two exciting literary events occurred. The first was that I was the featured writer at Ric Amante's & Melissa Watterberg's Out Loud Open Mic event. I had half an hour to read from my work. So I read poetry, an excerpt from *Labyrinthine*, & my newest annual letter to President Obama.

What makes this a relevant mention in this press history is that in addition to Melissa & Ric, who I'd already known, I would find two major new contributors to *The Cenacle* (one immediately; the other not for awhile). A nice event overall, held at an old mansion in a town north of Boston, friendly group of people.

A few days later (10/30/2010), Melissa & Ric joined Kassi & me, as well as my friends Ralph Emerson & Jim Burke III, up from Connecticut, at the first East Coast Jellicle Literary Guild meeting



since 2001. Halloween-themed for fun, it carried on with music, poetry, fiction, & lots of laughter, till 3 a.m. *Cenacle* 75 debuted, & was well-received. I even began the meeting recounting how many times each of them had been to the JG. Ranging from me (114) & Jim (96) down to Melissa (her first).

Come November, back to my routine. Job hunting. Started into writing for *Cenacle* | 76 | December 2010. SpiritPlants Radio celebrated 7 years on air online, with me in charge for 2 years now.

My challenge, jobless, was to build up each day's work & worth. Kassi would be off to work by bus about 7:30 every morning, & gone till at least 5. As anyone who's been jobless knows, the challenge is to build a substitute routine, & not let the grinding, persistent stress & worry drown one's good intentions.

Breakfast with Kassi, *Daily Show with Jon Stewart*. Football blogs to read about my beloved Cowboys (terrible season in 2010). Job hunting emails back & forth. On a good day, I would be on my bike by mid-morning to the local library, or one of the various coffee joints or donut shops.

Like other times of struggle, writing & editing kept me going, gave me that inner sense of worth & familiarity I needed. I kept *necessitating* myself to do this good work. Some days I despaired, & hours were wasted on nothing.

The worst of it was in early November when a job I thought I'd scored with a job agency I'd worked with back when fell through, after weeks of seeming assured, just waiting to close it. Then a day soon after when I was panicked that my unemployment benefits were near gone. I made a call to Oregon; turned out I qualified, just barely, for five more months. I was falling down, jackpot-happy.

So I kept along into December, essentially focused on *Cenacle* 76 in what I was reading & writing. Third finished issue in four months. It'd been 14 years since that had happened, & *The Cenacle* was a longer entity now, more complex & time-consuming.

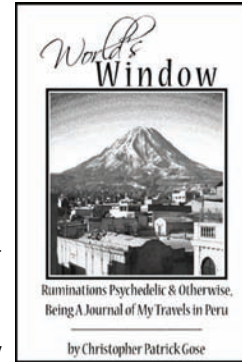
Still, arrived to 12/18/2010 JG meeting with *Cenacle* 76 in hand to give out. *Cenacle* 76 plus the first new RaiBook in 3 years: *World's Window: Ruminations Psychedelic & Otherwise, Being a Journal of My Travels in Peru*, by Christopher Patrick Gose.

Gose's volume first. We'd serialized *World's Window* already in *The Cenacle* in 2009, & featured excerpts in *Sampler* 11. I thought it would make a really good volume in the RaiBooks series, but the full text was too long for the chapbook format. So editing it on down from over 100 pages to about 80 was one of the tasks I pursued that fall into early winter. I teased it down by excising long passages

about family struggles, & other material not directly related to the travels. It was a challenging task but the kind I very much enjoy. I determined to make him a good book.

In describing the book in online promotions I did for it at the time, I wrote the following:

In 2009, the New Mexico native & psychedelics enthusiast traveled with his partner down to the jungles of Peru, in search of the truths & healing that working with ayahuasca shamans might bring. Along the way he experimented with the coca leaf & other indigenous psychoactive plants. Gose writes of the ecstasies & pitfalls of travel, & recounts his personal struggles—toward clarity of life purpose & lightening of heart's burden—with the singular intelligence & plainspoken yearning of a contemporary pilgrim. His narrative is compelling & informative, & moves at a lively pace. Gose's quest is a universal one for men & women—the answer to the question: “How to live & why?”

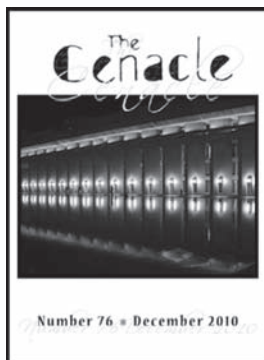


What drew me to this narrative even more than its fascinating content was its brilliant good writing, paragraph after paragraph of lucid sheen. Here is one example of countless:

So perhaps it is fitting that the Inca worshipped the Sun, the source of the light which has been—across the ages—the central “natural symbol” and metaphor of the mystic’s heart. In my own life, the Lumen Naturae has comforted a heart alienated by a distant mother and a world alienated from itself; a man has to stand for and within something. Rain is falling outside, and the Christ statue above on the hill where the Sacsayhuamán ruins are situated is alight, a white and gleaming beacon with arms outstretched above the valley. It’s quite a pleasant statue, less austere and encumbered by theism than many images of Christ—more natural like a bird in flight. It was here in the mornings that the priests of the Inca would raise their arms, palms stretched upwards, to receive the rays of the sun. Enough for today—tomorrow is a mystery with arms outstretched to receive it.

Kassi & I rendered a pretty little green covered paperback, pleasurably laced with the many pictures Gose took. Seventh RaiBook, first of prose, & a good new entry.

Cenacle 76 is less than 100 pages, short by usual standards of length. This is because I have only three pieces in it. But I like them as pieces, & the rest of the contributions as well. Re-reading it now, I feel it’s as good an issue as the rest.



The front cover is Kassi’s nighttime shot of the Christian Science complex’s reflecting pool in Boston, more mysterious for a single shadowy human figure embedded in it. The back cover is a close-up of an old painting-cracked door & its door knob, part of a series of pictures she shot at an abandoned greenhouse we found in Cambridge. She finds urban decay potent & provocative photographic material.

I wrote the “From Soulard’s Notebooks” piece in one go at one of my favorite coffeehouses, Diesel Café in Somerville, Mass. Long long space, covered in old signs, filled with strange music, often crowded to few open seats. Just let loose one early December day:

Are these times more hopeless than others, or seeming so because they are occurring now? I tend to think the latter, having lived long enough to recall distinctly different years when equally many people felt a new age coming as did those who identified driving apocalypse. I’ve come to believe that humans have been struggling with the same matters of society, morality, mystery, & mortality for a

Of Judih Haggai's many fine poems in this issue, this one delights me most:

*a slow trek
a bird and i
this november morn*

Another short fiction by Horse Lampner, "Horse Holiday," less funny & more sad, about a man appreciating an old neglected Army horse.

The poem by Martina Newberry is an anti-war screed called "Bad Manners," that concludes:

*Listen please.
It is not indigestion keeping you awake nights
or the thoughts of a heart you broke
in some fit of bad manners or microwaved lust. No,
this insomnia you suffer is made of oil and blood blending.
This insomnia is the total absence of Love as humans have known it.
This is unabashed Knowing climbing into bed with you,
putting its hands around your throat and squeezing
until your heart bursts open and its pieces
scatter over the world like petals.*

A beautiful darkling yawp.

Dave King is an English writer I'd met online. He let me excerpt a chapter from his work-in-progress, *A Short Introduction to Hallucinogens*, called "The Psychedelic Experience: Is It Real?" His powerful argument sums in part here:

The opportunity to examine the world in a wholly new way, assuming that this examination is not accompanied by any physiological or metabolic detriment, is in my opinion such an important opportunity because it provides a unique holiday from one's sober mindset to fully compare and analyze what one previously held as truths. It provides a temporary release from a whole host of preconceptions, predispositions, and presuppositions. In our sober lives we see very much what we wish to see in the world around us. The psychedelic experience offers a chance to see more of what we notice every day, but haven't really seen since childhood. That which, like a cosmic optical illusion, can be seen in a different way.

The second of my three pieces comprises my "Notes from New England" & is called "J.D. Salinger: In Memoriam." Like editing Gose's manuscript, this piece had taken me weeks to write that fall, as I read through Salinger's four books, taken many notes, & tried to come to grips with the death of this literary hero of mine in January 2010.

Divided into "Biographical Notes," "Preliminary Notes," & "Epistolary Notes," I gathered my thoughts in a semi-non-linear way to contain them coherently. In the second section I write:

What it seems is happening is that JDS is moving deeper into a mystical view of the world, from story to story, and away from writing for the sake of fame and such. His characters, pilgrims, are both him and not him, they are his fictional partners in a quest for spiritual truth, and it seems like he eventually leaves the world of commercial publishing because it does not interest him anymore (he said as much in rare interviews). His stories remain interesting to the reader because his is polished, lucid prose, often funny. His ear for dialogue is diamond sharp, his eye for studying the right small detail, and just enough of them, is pretty much perfect. One is exhausted by his works because when

a story is over, if one has read attentively, something has happened. A prayer has been spoken, and completed. It was intense, it was funny, it was familiar, & yet odd. Now finished, one must go, leave the temple of words, and move along.

These lines to help establish a clear opinion of Salinger's intent, & its effect.

Then, more specifically, his books' effect on me:

Salinger taught me that the singular matter of importance in writing is voice. Voice means many things: narrative, rhythm, music, character, flow, and so on. But voice sums them. Does the piece sounds like itself, like it gestated from its own purposes, or does it sound kinda like this one and sorta like that one? Voice is not unlike, or absolutely like, the idea of grace. One arrives to the state of grace not sure how it happened, unable to cough up a formula for others, or even for one's future self should a sense of falling from it occur. Moreover, one knows it, when one is in one's own voice. In recent years, I've come to believe that this idea of voice is not exclusively about Art, either. I've seen football players, statesmen, even persons in conversation, manifest as a kind of voice. It's a complex idea, at least for me, to write of something so obvious yet be hesitant to feel confident that I've gotten it down clearly.

And, finally, a conjured sense of how his posthumously published works (if this ever occurs; five years later & only rumors) might affect me:

I'd like to think that, whatever else you were in life, the part of you that made it to the page, & was published in books, was some of your best. For it is on the written page that I know you best—not in photos, or anecdotal accounts of your friends or family, or even in biographies. I'd like to think that the marble & mud of your life is distilled to the four books you published. That in their pages you asked your best questions, offered up your best answers, your hopes, your fears, & so on.

I think this because it seems to be reasonably true & because I do the same thing. Much of my best arrives on the page (& some of my worst, & a lot else too). And if there were no more stories to come from you, post-mortem, if you simply never wrote any, or burned them all at some point, I'd like to think that this is OK. I don't know this for sure but it's a hope. I admit a greater hope is a big cache of stories due in book form on a near timeline.

We were also lucky enough to feature two pieces of art by Abandonview in this essay. Writing this piece meant a lot to me because I love J.D. Salinger's writing unspeakably deep, but also because I was using "Notes from New England" as more than a repository for selected scribblings that had no other place in *The Cenacle*. I was establishing it as an exciting (to me) place for brand-new writing of mine.

Following this tribute is my favorite J.D. Salinger short story, "For Esmé—With Love & Squalor," a wildly dark & light wartime story which includes this passage:

When he let go of his head, [Sargeant] X began to stare at the surface of the writing table, which was a catchall for at least two dozen unopened letters and at least five or six unopened packages, all addressed to him. He reached behind the debris and picked out a book that stood against the wall. It was a book by Goebbels, entitled Die Zeit Ohne Beispiel. It belonged to the thirty-eight-year-old, unmarried daughter of the family that, up to a few weeks earlier, had been living in the house. She had been a low official in the Nazi Party, but high enough, by Army Regulations standards, to fall into an automatic-arrest category. X himself had arrested her. Now, for the third time since he had returned from the hospital that day, he opened the woman's book and read the brief inscription on the flyleaf. Written in ink, in German, in a small, hopelessly sincere handwriting, were the

words “Dear God, life is hell.” Nothing led up to or away from it. Alone on the page, and in the sickly stillness of the room, the words appeared to have the stature of an uncontested, even classic indictment. X stared at the page for several minutes, trying, against heavy odds, not to be taken in. Then, with far more zeal than he had done anything in weeks, he picked up a pencil stub and wrote down under the inscription, in English, “Fathers and teachers, I ponder ‘What is hell?’ I maintain that it is the suffering of being unable to love.” He started to write Dostoevski’s name under the inscription, but saw—with fright that ran through his whole body—that what he had written was almost entirely illegible. He shut the book.

Finally, *Labyrinthine*. More passages about the Beast. More lines from *Many Musics* which mix with dream journal passages which mix with rants which form narratives that wrap in & through each other. This passage as flavor & example:

“Beauty is sexual,” as though one could define or equal the other yet it’s been said, many times, now
reck it on this bathroom wall, written carefully in a ragged space between the cocks & cunts &
assholes & whores phone numbers, & in two colors no less, black letters & red outlines, the red ink
from a leaky pen so splotches, yet give a closer look to how like blood those splotches are, how like
declarative violence, how like it, & a chance moment it’s dusk & the high window above this single
pisser scatters light through this cement room & some kind of refracting sheen hits this
spot these words & the whole thing pulses like fuck if I know what this is a carefully marked confession? what
else can it be? it pulses now & is that the unevenness of the cement or how it is lacquered or may be strays splashes of
piss wet then drying & again & the light & the two colors of ink & the cocks & cunts & asshole that surround
it what the fuck when something so casual begins to feel like more more than confession more than instructions
amoredesparateman might call it revelation & try to figure it out & follow it along & I don’t think I am that
man but I don’t know that I’m not

My kind of fun.

So this was the issue, along with *World’s Window*, that we handed out at the 12/18/2010 Jellicle Guild meeting. To Jim Burke III, to newcomer (& SP Radio DJ) Jeremy Kilar (rode up from New Jersey, picked up Jim in Connecticut), & to Melissa. Two guitars this meeting (Jim’s & Jeremy’s) By proxy, both audio & video, we had Ric Amante, Martina Newberry, Judih Haggai, David Hartley, and Chris Gose. It has really added to meetings since 2010 to blend in videos & audios from contributors who can’t make it in person.

Meeting over, the work of the press winding down for the year. While visiting Kassi’s kin in snowy Colorado for Christmas, & also while we celebrated our anniversary up in snowy Maine on New Year’s Eve, I worked on promoting these two publications online, starting of course with *The ElectroLounge*, getting them the many readers they deserved.

This chapter has taken me several years to write. I’ve started, stopped, resumed, seen *Cenacle* issue after issue go by, by time’s necessity.

But I finally decided I had to finish it. Before the memories calcified too much, distorted too much by more & more occurring between then & now.

I was jobless. I had Kassi. I had my pen. I was back in Boston. I’d parted Burning Man. Some of Boston was changed, some not. My loved ones were still local.

I felt hopeful despite. Felt that I would find work, would do better by my pen, my loved ones, my world, my self. Would try, & try, & fail, & try, & fail, & try again.



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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 Eighteen
continued from
The Cenacle | 94 | October 2015

Read the full History at: http://scriptorpress.com/history_of_scriptor_press.pdf

In 2010, my life had big changes because of Kassi & I moving from Portland, Oregon to my old chosen hometown of metro-Boston, Massachusetts. I left Portland jobless—part of why I left—and continued jobless well into 2011. Sent out hundreds—more—of resumes—, & had dozens of phone & in-person job interviews. The economy still bad & my chosen profession of technical writer not the one skittish companies were hiring for much.

But I did get work by mid-year—albeit contract work; it paid, period. And while this was for awhile the year's biggest turn of events; then it wasn't. Wasn't even close. Jobs come & go. The sudden death of a dear, beloved friend is of a cosmic magnitude in comparison. The rise of a political movement in times of economic catastrophe is too.

I lost one of the best friends I've ever had—or will have—on December 1, 2011, & this made the rest of my circumstances good & bad seem virtually or completely unimportant. Art still mattered; Kassi too; but not much else.

The sudden & meteoric rise of Occupy Wall Street—and its relatively quick suppression by the Empire—had effects on the world nobody could have foreseen at the time. Occupy Wall Street brought hope when nobody had much.

Unlike 2010, which had consciously, intentionally arced toward our Boston move mid-year, 2011's arc was unanticipated. I tell it in advance of the year's narrative to marvel anew. Amaze at how life can shock like this, at any moment. Doesn't, most moments, but the possibility *is ever there*.

We began the year traveling up to Maine, 6th anniversary trip, become an annual event. January in Maine is un-peopled, since snowy, cold, beautiful, especially by the seaside. I schemed the year's coming work during these few idyllic days.

Back to Boston, Kassi back to her weekday commute to work, me to my jobless hours. Some of my time spent job hunting, but I could only do so much. Not many chances for work in dead of winter New England. So I worked at various writing & press projects.

SpiritPlants Radio left its online home at Yage.net after 7 years there. The Irishman Andy Dunn who owned Yage was shutting his server down. I suppose it was inevitable, but I was left to scrounge for a new host. I remember him kindly, & am grateful that he was willing to be involved for so long, hosting the station for no cost.

Found a new host in another friend known from cyberspace, Alfie Ilkins. Late January, SPRadio moved from Yage to Bluesphere. Scriptor Press, with same orphaned dilemma, moved to a paid site called Dreamhost. I used to panic much more about online hosting; it's become since 2011 much easier to find these services, & they are pretty low cost.

Cenacle 76 took me most of January to get ready for printing, mailing, & archiving. But that task too occurred, & copies were mailed out, along with Chris Gose's RaiBook *World's Window*. This was quite pleasing to get done. Final steps in a process that takes about two months for each issue.

As always, every Saturday Kassi & I journeyed to the movies, & I spent hours afterwards writing. I resumed the *Many Musics* poetry series after six months away, continued my *Labyrinthine* fiction, & went deeper into reviving my *Bags End News* fantasy series. Of the first two, I weekly found myself writing new pages in the scant time before reading them during my "Within's Within" radio show on Saturday mornings. Fun to read fresh work but pressure-some too.

I think the stress of too many hours spent job hunting, & still trying to maintain my press projects, & new writing, finally tumbled me deep into a bad cold that lasted much of January. The problem I faced was that my jobless benefits would end in a few months, thus leaving Kassi vulnerable because of my failure to find work.

Too, though my Art is my way of being in this world, it does not pay bills or rent. Life summed to too much free time & too little income.

So it was snowy, blizzardy, day after day in January, & I was sick much of it. Sneezing, coughing, sleeping badly, & too weak to do much. These "stress" colds will hit me once in awhile, & no choice but to crawl on through till they pass.

And winter itself in New England, while beautiful & mysterious in many ways, can be debilitating to ambition. The hard cold temperatures can go on for weeks; the snow can make foot or vehicle travel slow & treacherous; the days are short & it seems the season won't ever leave.

The only thing to do is trudge on, day after day, make progress, & make sure to recognize it as such.

As the spring approached, nothing much changed but the weather. I began work on *Scriptor Press Sampler* 12 & *Cenacle* 77, typing, editing. I daily sent out emails & job-hunted. Weekends we journeyed to new movies, & I wrote at *Labyrinthine* fiction & *Many Musics* poems.

Better & worse hours, as always, but the struggle persisted. It's like feeling bad was a norm I had to struggle up from. The best moments of writing, or times with Kassi, or old friends met again, were exceptions.

Why? Fear about money? *Yes*. The daily crush of rejection? *Yes*.

Maybe, deeper, the resentment that one cannot choose freely one's hours, how & where & why & who to spend them with. Money is a simple thing to blame, but money is the major, if not quite only, culprit. 2011 was a year where millions suffered around the world—lost homes, jobs, comfort, well-being, *because of money*. Because some, not a lot, in this world have land, possessions, food, shelter, *more than enough*, & the rest, the majority, struggle between somewhat & totally for their livelihood & sustenance.

So I was angry & felt helpless, like so many. At my best, I pushed these worries from me a bit, wrote, loved others & the world the best I could.

A recruiter friend of mine back in Portland, Anthony Miller, urged me to think of job hunting as a process, not a series of singular failures among stretches of silence. And I struggled to think through my days to a better emotional grounding. I wrote as deep within as I could to how I felt:

I was thinking how much of my life has been about rejection—from so small—my red hair—later my skin color—my body—jobs, romance—it hasn't ceased & here I am now, putting my value as a person down to employment—& punishing myself for not getting work—twisting inside my own trap—

The opposing force has been Art—it has been where I found acceptance from myself & others—& a vent for frustrations—but then I have wasted so much time away from it—picking at the wounds by way of stress relief—

So what then—I can't go back & act differently & feel better thereafter—A person's behavior is not monolithic nor is it consistent—any & most moments can be rife with what salves & what harms—there are no answers but how good & bad moments both cause momentum—& how I cannot equate my worth with jobs

& then tried to find my way toward a living strategy that felt right, both *intellectually* & emotionally:

Thought: use this time as a working sabbatical from employment—instead of a freefall into depression—I've sent out many resumes this week—what if that's what I'm better doing—do that then rest of day mine?

It could be the positive, even lucky, turn I've needed in my attitude—

I need a job, yes—

but here are these days—

they pass whether I'm happy or not—

they don't return—

Am I capable of partitioning my life into two meaningful halves? Investing in both of them for as long as needed?

Maybe.

But then there was a day when I was at home, took a shit, clogged up the pipes, & spent hours up to my arms in my own shit, trying to clear the pipes & then clean up the mess on the floor & me. *This is how I felt at my worst.* Like the failure was my own, the pipes would never clear, & I'd never get it all cleaned up.

What's peculiar, & deeply lovely, is that while this messy job hunting stretch went on & on, something else was going on too: the making of *Cenacle* | 77 | April 2011. 16th anniversary issue, debuted at the 4/23/2011 Jellicle Literary Guild meeting.

It being the anniversary issue, my "From Soulard's Notebooks" comments at length upon this. I renew trying to understand why I do what I do with pens & Scriptor Press:

Art abounds, everywhere, all around, at least possibly. If me, then you, then anyone in this hotel lounge, on the streets, across the world. Art is our native water, all of us, why the simplest of us yearn to music, why we dream anarchically every night, it is why we are conscious. To make Art.

These ideals don't come & go with my job-full or job-less times, when I've had romance or lost it, & lucky won it anew. What truth bides me & runs with my blood is thus:

Publishing—this periodical to me is an act of faith, my gesture of what I value to spend my hours with Art is what I believe in, what I preach. What hope, what direction. what purpose.



There's a lot of wonderful poetry in this issue. There are lines that shine especially for me in this review.

In Joe Ciccone's "One Prayer," he writes:

*Tonight my child tosses handfuls of chive
into the fire.
To her being an artist is an excuse for everything,
all heart and thumbs, rooted deeply in something.*

& in his "All I Can Say" sequence he writes:

*Before this house some trees.
Before the trees just ground.
Before the ground a house.
You better have religion.*

The best of his poetry always seems to gesture wider, freer spaces of memory, feeling, & the music to sing these.

I interviewed Judih Haggai for this issue, as well as publishing a group of her new poems as usual. In the interview she says, "I write daily . . . for simplicity." Two of her poems particularly exemplify this goal:

*dreams reveal
ancient connections
symbols speak*

* * *

*daylight prods dream
another chance to dance
with the hummingbird*

Life's mysteries abound, lure, tantalize, but sometimes it would be nice to have one or two revealed. Would be useful, comforting. A reply of sorts to this wish in Ric Amante's "Roll Your Own":

*Truth is, there is no answer—
questions masquerade as flower and bone.*

If not answers, plain, best to form a strategy that "doesn't flinch" when the hour is hard, heavy. Best find good warning in ZMT's "The Sly Universe":

*Beware the sly universe—it can snatch the cleats off your tap shoes in mid-air,
And the cushions off your old soft shoes when you land.*

Nothing within or without are quite what they seem. So flow, & laugh a little more. Like Martina Newberry says in "Because You Lived":

*Because you've lived
is reason enough to die.*

*Love stays on,
hunger stays on,
the sky stays on.
Real as grit,
you'll be here again*

Or maybe what one arrives at is Tom Sheehan's assessment in "A Voice Touching":

*Saturday touching
Sunday, acceptance,
being what you are
and where you're supposed to be.*

Though I didn't know it at the time, *Cenacle 77* features the thirtieth & last letter I would publish by my dear friend Jim Burke III. Titled "On the Death Penalty," it expressed Jim's long & deeply held opposition to capital punishment.

More an essay than a letter, as it delves into the history of the death penalty going back to Colonial North America, leading to this fiery & impassioned conclusion:

Finally, the death penalty is not, I repeat is not, a deterrent. The very fact that murders in this country occur on a daily basis proves that use of the death penalty is based on the revenge motive, and this also depends on the time and place of the crime and the trial. The execution of citizens by the states in this country is used to cover up the failure of our society as a whole to educate people equally and give all people an opportunity to better themselves

*I hope I live to see the day when our culture will transcend revenge, and rise above hate. Peace and love for all humanity would enable us to realize our spiritual potential, which is God-like. John Lennon had it right after all. **IMAGINE!***

It was one of our last collaborations. Jim wrote it, mailed it to me. I researched his facts, footnoted where required, made sure it presented his thoughts best as possible. I was very proud of his work, & happy to play the editor's role on it. He wrote this letter on March 17, 2011, the day before his birthday, & died that year on December 1. His body was weakened by years of health struggles, inability to get the care he needed while earning his living for himself & his daughters, yet Jim's mind was sharp & beautiful as ever.

Ralph Emerson's "R is for Rambo" linguistics essay is another delight. It think it is nicely summed by these lines early on:

"About three hours into this expedition," says nature writer John Hanson Mitchell, "I came upon a mountain stream. Actually, I heard the stream before I saw it, a dark, throaty growl that filled the trees and evolved into a deafening roar as I approached." Following the "rushing waters" to the edge of a cliff, the writer scrambled down the rocks and sat "at the base of the falls, contemplating the awesome force of the cascade of green water, the immense overwhelming roar."

Noise, speed, and commotion: a perfect R experience.

I also like these lines:

But the deep psychology of language is pre-industrial. Our distant ancestors never heard jets or bullet trains. Lions, thunder, wind, whitewater rapids, and angry warriors were their only emblems for

overwhelming speed and noise. Concepts as important as those were apt to be embodied in human speech very early, mnemonically linked to specific sounds and further linked whenever possible to images of water and sex.

The challenge of Emerson's work is to put familiar clothes on matters of mechanics & psychology, draw clear pictures where history often obscurely bisects the great weird force that are the physical facts of humans living daily & messily among humans. He does this very well.

My "Notes from New England" does not touch in the least directly on my job struggles. Instead I study into more than I had before the matter of dreams & dreaming. Using the same kind of single-topic-but-nonlinear structure I'd employed in *Cenacle* 76's J.D. Salinger *NNE* piece, I weave together multiple sections through the use of prose commentary, a number of my new *Many Musics* dream poems (which appear elsewhere in the issue), the dream journal passages which inspired these poems, & divide one section from the next by graphic artwork of Kassi's created for this purpose.

Here's a couple of examples pointing toward the heart of this piece:

Maybe dreaming is simply like floating in the ocean forever: one never has to get out & go to work a job, or search fruitlessly for one, or sit in front of a frowning doctor, or worry about people & animals & lands perishing in stupid nuclear reactor disasters, or preventable floods, or wars. There are storms, calm dawns, & stretches lonely & those with others near—but nobody & nothing is unimportant, considered disposable. Nothing lasts but nothing is lost.

To give dreams their full due is to acknowledge a continuation of consciousness, into dream-space (into psychedelic space too), not an unconsciousness at all. The mind does not cease thinking even as the body, while at rest, continues its basic functions.

I believe dreams mean something, many things, like everything means something. Some cultures—like Native American tribes, & the Senoi of Malaysia—place a greater importance on dreaming, dream interpretation, dream-wisdom. A materialist, fear-driven society, like the current American one, shies away from dreams, their mysteries, their seeming lack of immediate usefulness, or easy integration into its perpetual production-consumption-waste cycle. Dreams pose too many questions, offer too many answers, trade in both easy & obscure regrets, familiar & forbidden desires. Dreams breach space & time, are beyond anarchy because they have no accepted order against which to rebel.

I pushed my study & use of my dreams deeper in 2011 because, honestly, my poetry was burnt out & uninspired. I'd stopped writing any halfway through 2010, after 30 years at it. I needed to find a new approach to care again.

So I went into the dream journal I'd been keeping daily since 9/28/2009. I found all sorts of evocative, weird, obsessive, surreal material. But how to wield it, render it poetry? My first dozen-plus attempts are in this issue, but I wanted to do more. So I decided to turn *NNE* into my laboratory of sorts. Write out my thoughts at length, see what that was like, how it felt. Use a smattering of references to others regarding dreams & dreaming. Raise my stakes on all this by using pages in *The Cenacle* to pursue it.

The Cenacle is where my best work, & what I am spending my best hours on, arrives. It's where the messy living of 2-3 months coheres into a beautiful book. A book I hand to friends, mail to friends, distribute online. Every issue is me in full costume, on stage, opening night, there to give it my all.

Oddly, *Labyrinthine* contains pages several years old that do address my joblessness. Oh, there are surely aliens, Beasts, mystical Woods, surreal sexual grapplings, merry & mad rantings alike, but the passages that express best my daily struggles of 2011, though written in 2008 are these:

Universe, I ask, I beg, I wish. Please help me on this course. Please help me. I remember my father telling me he'd pray to his mother in hard times. I pray to you now, whatever you are beyond a stone & a box of bones 3,000 miles from here. Whatever you were. Help me. My story, this book, is raw & vulnerable in this asking, yet I ask. Help me to succeed & soon in this task. To find good work as I had before taken away by accountants, more loyal work.

I quote this passage because I believe good writing *counts*, spends deeply the hours that occupy the act of doing it, & someone reading it. I am in & among my pages always, whether visibly or not. I don't say this is the only way, but I do say it is *my way*.

The featured classic fiction in this issue is Nathaniel Hawthorne's brilliant "Artist of the Beautiful" published in *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846, 1854) & republished in the Burning Man Books series in 2000. This story is bafflingly realistic & fanciful both. I love the following passage of Hawthorne's as beautiful & romantic & weird as any in literature:

But the innate tendency of his soul had only been accumulating fresh vigor during its apparent sluggishness. As the summer advanced he almost totally relinquished his business, and permitted Father Time, so far as the old gentleman was represented by the clocks and watches under his control, to stray at random through human life, making infinite confusion among the train of bewildered hours. He wasted the sunshine, as people said, in wandering through the woods and fields and along the banks of streams. There, like a child, he found amusement in chasing butterflies or watching the motions of water-insects. There was something truly mysterious in the intentness with which he contemplated these living playthings as they sported on the breeze or examined the structure of an imperial insect whom he had imprisoned. The chase of butterflies was an apt emblem of the ideal pursuit in which he had spent so many golden hours; but would the beautiful idea ever be yielded to his hand, like the butterfly that symbolized it?

Lastly, Terence McKenna's essay, "Eros & the Eschaton," derived from a 1994 lecture in Seattle, Washington. I've ready many of McKenna's books & heard hundred of hours of audio from his lectures, & think that much of what he says is summed in this essay's penultimate paragraph:

I think we have to abandon Western cultural values and return to the deeper wisdom of the body in connection with the plants. That's the seamless web that leads us back into the heart of nature—and if we can do this, then this very narrow neck of cultural crisis can be navigated. Very little of the past can be saved. The architectonics, the machines, the systems of monetary exchange and propaganda, the silly religions, the asinine aesthetic canons, very little of that can be saved. But what can be saved is the sense of love and caring, and mutuality, that we all put into and take from the human enterprise. You know, there's a Grateful Dead song that says, "You can't go back and you can't stand still. If the thunder don't get you, then the lightning will." And we now hold, through the possession of these psychedelics, catalysts for the human imagination of sufficient power that if we use them we can deconstruct the lethal vehicle that is carrying us toward the brink of apocalypse. We can deconstruct that vehicle and redesign it into a kind of starship that would carry us and our children out into the broad starry galaxy we know to be awaiting us.

The pictures in this issue are all striking & delightful as usual but of especial note is Kassi's colored cover, taken in Ogunquit, Maine, & looking like some sweet oil painting from the 19th century or longer ago.

The 4/23/2011 JG meeting where *Cenacle 77* debuted was an especially good one in that the in-person guests included Jim Burke III (up from Connecticut), Ric Amante & Melissa Wattenberg (local), & our dear friend Victor Vanek, come to visit from Portland just in time for meeting #116. This

was the first meeting where I had in person friends who'd started coming to the JG during its original manifestation (CT 1988-2001), its Portland version (2008-2010) & its current Boston version.

I was thrilled that the *Cenacle* I'd brought was a really good one to hand round & read from. Jim read his death penalty essay from the issue, & played lots of guitar. We read writings by Rilke, Merwin, Neil Gaiman, Peter S. Beagle, Ralph Ellison, & our new friend Tom Sheehan. Jim & Ric even read poems from really old *Cenacles*. KD & I were running on no sleep, but this meeting was fantastic. Much salve to my ongoing jobless worry. There were also videos from Judih Haggai, AbandonView, & Martina Newberry.

On the 28th, I turned 47, but it didn't mean much to me save that I was 30 years removed from when I was 17 &, in my own lingering thoughts since, perfect. My best & worst still mostly in chrysalis.

More meaningful was May 4, which marked 37 years of me doing my journal, my first writing project. I was so struggling & yet believed writing was my answer & salvation no matter what. Writing my thing, part of Art as a whole. I wrote in my journal about this time:

Now, this question of May 4—seems to me my issue in part is that I don't write enough because my mind & senses have narrowed over time—what I want to do is write more because my doors are wider open again—

Just over a week later, the hook on my life pulled deep into the water, & took a few days, but it took, & I landed work on May 18. *Scored*. Project editor job at United HealthCare. Working remotely with people all over the country. It had been a year since my last contract, back in Portland. I was stunned, ecstatic. Nothing good I had done during the year of joblessness could long comfort me or distract me from this crisis. *Thankful beyond words*.

It had been nearly two years since I'd gone to Burning Man, assembled the No Borders Free Bookstore. For awhile around this same time, I played with the idea of renaming the series TransArtsBooks, & working toward a 2012 launch. The Bookstore idea never left me, never lost its lure & charm in my mind & heart. (I can say now that Burning Man Books 2016 occurred, & Burning Man Books 2019 currently pends.)

Though late in finishing, *Scriptor Press Sampler* | 12 | *2010 Annual* was done & announced on May 20, in the ecstatic wake of getting work. It features poetry by Joe Ciccone, Ric Amante,



Tom Sheehan, Zannemarie Lloyd Taylor, Judih Haggai, Martina Newberry, & me; fictions by G.C. Dillon & Horse Lampner; my fiction *Labyrinthine* in excerpts; prose by Ralph Emerson, Jim Burke III, Alex Smith, & Dave King; my J.D. Salinger tribute, & graphic arts by Victor Vanek & me & KD.

While always trying to figure out how to wider distribute *SPS*, I did manage to bring a couple of dozen copies to Ric's & Melissa's 5/25/2011 Out Loud Open Mic event. And Ric, Melissa (ZMT), Tom Sheehan, & I all read our works from it.

Though a contract job, UHC's stresses & strains, its expectations of my time & skills, & attention, these were all no less than a full-time job. And me tender & worn from a year of joblessness, I put more pressure on myself to do well. The details of the job first unfolded in several days of technical training, & then in applying new-learned tools to actual work.

What I was doing then, what I still do now, is

apply my trained ability to move words around in a mechanical environment. It's both challenging & simple, strange & tedious. I do it because it pays well, better by far than the bookstore jobs I'd prefer. I'm married, I owe lot of student loan money. And it's mostly painless work that leaves my nights & weekends free for Art, pays for them.

So as I learned this job involving knowledge bases & decision trees & computer programs like Dreamweaver, I was during those nights & weekends happily busy in a different world; still involving, strange to realize, moving words (& images & audio) around in a mechanical environment, but this to create & disseminate Art.



Took me weeks to get *Cenacle* 77 & *SPS* 12 finalized, printed, & distributed by mail, made into PDF files & distributed online. Working challenging & simple, strange & tedious.

I was also getting SpiritPlants Radio ready for its scheduled weekend broadcasts, including making & airing my own show live on Saturday mornings.

And I was edging into the work involved in making *Cenacle* | 78 | June 2011. Writing & typing my several pieces, plus reading contributors' works, deciding what fit best the new issue.

Had a visit with Joe Ciccone & Ric Amante, two of my very favorite people, & poets, & all of our wives. Joe's a urologist now, lives with his family in a large & lovely house in suburban Boston. He's still who I've always known &, like an evolving tree, more & other too. Ric too. Myself, I guess. I have a picture of us, huddled, smirking. Looking at it now feels like suddenly sniffing a longlost scent.

All this work, the heavy writing & editing sessions nights & on weekends, leading up to *Cenacle* 78 & the 6/24/2011 Jellicle Literary Guild meeting. A last of its kind, though I could not have known it then.



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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 Eighteen
continued from
The Cenacle | 104 | June 2018

Read the full History at: http://scriptorpress.com/history_of_scriptor_press.pdf

Cenacle | 78 | June 2011 begins, of course, with its cover, designed by KD, what she calls "microllages," three little collages scattered across the page. One of note contains a scrap of text, "the desert is a myth," angled against another scrap reading "HISTORY," & I wonder if she juxtaposed these thinking of all our years in the Nevada desert at the Burning Man Arts Festival.

"From Soulard's Notebooks," written, where often, at the lounge of the Marriott Hotel at Copley Place in Boston, ruminates on the world's then so-called "hard times." I write, in part:

I wonder can this be possible, to convince otherwise thriving parts of the world that these are times of recession, even depression, that good governance means there is less to spread around, to share, certainly less time & fewer resources to devote to retarding human suffering & global environmental destruction. Now is a time for a reinforced military, an ever-more-fortified minority of wealthy individuals & families.



In short, the rich & powerful of this world never seem to suffer much, go hungry, sacrifice. As ever, the poor & working class, of nearly whatever country, race, religion, nation-state, are pressed to make do with less, give back whatever buffer they might have, display their good souls & good citizenships to feed the crises their masters have contrived. Feed it mostly by cowing to the truths of a world system built by haves, on the backs of the have-nots, fueled by the blood of their labor's years, & acquiescence to the belief that *inequality is just*.

And here's my call to action:

Say no. It's simple, it's hard. It's tiring. What reward? Sometimes little. Almost none. But something Something gives way, a bit, a convulse, a crack, not often, not for long, but see it. It is a very real Empire, world-wide, & yet. And yet. The power of no. Again. Again. Thrown stone in the Prison of Glass. The free air before the pane is patched.

The struggle never ends. The struggle is sometimes the best we've got. As the saying goes: "Resist. Insist, Persist."

Debuting in this issue is travel writing by Charlie Beyer, who I'd briefly met a few years before at Burning Man. He got in touch, sent me "A Travel to Belize," & here is how it opens:

The emerald sea purrs its relentless surf against the blue sand beach. A lighthouse on a knoll beside sweeps the horizon. A delicious costal wind blows steady over us. Clouds of butterflies, yellow, iridescent blue, fill the air. Huge willowy pines play their tops in the breeze. The temperature is perfect. No mosquitoes. Little crabs shyly poke their heads from holes in the sand to see if we are still too close.

Crossing the U.S.-Mexican border in a trailer filled with him, girlfriend Kim, a dog, & two cats, proves a nightmare. Pages & pages of weird, scary, & surreal encounters, & many payoffs, concludes as they drive

[o]ut of the parking lot, which turns into a shabby two-lane highway. No mention of vet papers or any other animal documentos ever came up. We could have brought in elephants. We are elated. In the first mile are a hundred crappy one-story adobe, block, and rusty tin buildings, all proclaiming money exchange. I stop and change out \$300 to pesos, a rate of 12.3 to one buck. I have a huge wad of cash, of which I'm very self-conscience and hold concealed. The practice is to watch these transactions from afar, then mug you down the road. Buy some fluids for Kim and I, climb out of the mud ruts and onto the broken highway. We did it! We are into Mexico at last. On our way to paradise.

Beyer's writing is fierce, funny, & engrossing. His adventures in Belize are wild, & he writes of them fearlessly. His intolerance for bureaucratic bullshit intermingles with his unflinching descriptions of his own mistakes & foibles. Like many other great *Cenacle* contributors, he should be famous, & he isn't. So I gladly publish his work to get what readership & regard I am able for it. It deserves much.

Lots of good poetry in this issue again, worth lingering on here.

Judih Haggai's haiku is ever delightful, her craft & passion producing such as these:

*what now, peacock
false shrieks this morning
a dance of ego*

* * *

*again
peacocks and i
awakened by boom*

* * *

*silence calls
peacock calls back
all is well*

Her peacock 'ku is nicely accompanied by a photo of her brightly feathered muses.
The one that gets me hardest is this one, about another kind of bird:

*fallen stork
on the side of the road
refuses to die*

It takes a powerful mind & heart, a unique perception & empathy, an artist who knows which few words to use, to craft a tribute like this one.

Martina Newberry's poetry is funny, garrulous, sad, restless, funky. In "Unfit Ghazal," employing an ancient & intricate poetic form, she writes these beautiful lines:

*I challenge you to live this life, as full on as you can,
without shame, without fear, put on an armor of silk.*

*Hear that sound? It's the world's heart, pounding in your ears,
praying for your attention, praying for food, offering silk.*

*Along this dirt path, where glass and lizards glow,
A new berry bush is trying to prosper. Its leaves are silk.*

Her sound, her music, lilts her words, powers the deep & wide gestures of her meaning.

The poetry of Tom Sheehan often refers back to his beloved hometown of Saugus, Massachusetts. His "Nearly Saugus When I Was Young"'s opening lines perfectly captures his theme:

*It is always nearly Saugus
No matter where I am,
Coming from anyplace, going to,
Sure as snow or crocus after
Or the clock turning on,
Sure as clam flats on air
And kelp bubbles breaking down
Under confection of dry salt
And the river knowing its wares
Through nine-foot cat-o-nines
Standing ripe as fire arrows.*

What lives in Sheehan's heart & memory is rendered beautifully on the page. *He remembers, he sings.*

Joe Ciccone's poems are precise, powerful, strange yet simple. Witness these lines from "Last Night":

*I was presented with the reality of God.
In the 11th hour I knew he was there—
The world rocked and rattled in my ears,
Everything screamed around me, my bed was boiling.*

*I was forced to confront Him,
And He was far less forgiving than advertised.*

His work wows me.

Ric Amante's "She's Like a Rainbow" plays a love song against many colors of affection. Here's one:

*You're my deep blue anchor,
not blue as sad but as alchemic
bond and paradox—
an anchor without chains
connecting me to the man
I am becoming—with you.*

Review of my other pieces in the issue begins with *Many Musics, Seventh Series*. Continues with some of my dream-poems, a new approach that revived my poetical work. I'd started keeping a daily dream journal in 2009, & discovered eventually that I could collaborate with my dreaming self. The dreams were source material, word-&-image clay to be molded into poems.

Three poems in particular to discuss. "Ikebana" is inspired by the wonderful Dale Chihuly exhibition, *Chihuly: Through the Looking Glass*, at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. My poem mixes a Chihuly wooden & glass piece called "Ikebana Boat," a strangely overly-laden glass vessel, with memories of my brothers, equally strange beings:

*Walking back into the shop where the patrons
beg for books of easy treatises on God
& cartoons of lovers from their hearts'
forbidden chambers, I stop. I stop.
I wonder again if this is my brother's
boat, if his onion-shaped bullets, &
wooden bells leaking fuel oil aren't this world
a level or two below, moving even slower.*

"Another Way" I quote here in full. It is a poem from a dream of my dear friend Jim Burke III & myself:

*We stood, my brother & me, regarding
the pattern on the wall, the labyrinth
fading, right to left, how to travel
that one? I noticed his fingers tapping the tune,
the one in my mind too, & a few steps
more to daylight, if not answers, numberless
paths, if not a way, & the next day's chance.
We nodded, went, maybe the fading labyrinth
our clue that letting go the map is hard, best chance.*

I linger with that last line: "letting go the map is hard, best chance." That's a wise wisdom I can't deny nor fully abide by. Jim was part of my map, a crucial, wonderful part of my map. I've struggled often since to draw a new map without his frequent, physical presence.

"Seeding" begins with a quote from Bill Hicks regarding his philosophy of life: "It's just a ride."

It opens:

*What if you realize, one day, that
everything is alive? Not one, as
many the guru would say, still many,
but alive? All alive, the easy of this
watching your love stirring the dawn,
walking the pathless trees of an
unnamed wood. The hard of this,
when looking at the worn out things
of men, lost of shine & purpose, gummed
& greasy, broken last hour or longer.*

It follows through a variety of considerations till it buckles in for its conclusion:

*But say: Everything is alive, made to find
its function & receive its due? Aren't
the massing murderous ways of men
enough? Why worry the dark light bulbs
& steers to the knife? The fate of snowflakes
& old wrecks in deserts & rivers?
Do some empathies lead nowhere but
lonesome dream corners of the fancy?
I have surely wondered all this,
as you do tonight. Felt the chasm
among each & all wide & bricked as
though by stone. I've wondered too:
why feel but only so far, why
imagine but with an eye on the clock,
an ear for the door? Tonight, perhaps,
we ask this question over a distance
wider than the world. Wonder, hopeless,
yet still, does paradise not steam
from the shit as the sonnet, the burning,
the breathless, as every new psalm of smoke?*

This poem is how I see the world, *alive* in all its beauty, fury, weirdness, decay, refuse. I feel how the molecules of each are nearly alike, & shift endlessly among forms. “We belong to the world” is how Daniel Quinn put it in his brilliant 1992 novel, *Ishmael*. Literally, figuratively, & ever on. When I write poems like “Seeding,” I’m happy, doing what’s good worth doing.

Notes from New England's piece this time is called “Reflections on Return.” It’s about my returning back to Boston (with KD, who’s originally from the Midwest & lived out West with me too), a place I’d left in 2002. The heart of this piece is this:

*But this too: I left here in 2002 jobless, lonely, tired, bent on chasing a fruitless dream. For years I
didn't even visit. I didn't want to confront that departure, or its aftermath. For a year now I've been
confronting it, how returning feels, how time passes, how nothing goes away & nothing returns.
Being jobless here, years later but the same dark rage over it, not alone this time but still. Shut
out from the better aspects of daily human traffic. Even now employed, the wounds of recent years*

remain, the lack of trust that a job will remain, that a bean-counter won't nod & cross out my name. Real, real, & time to smooth it out from live rage to remembered.

For all the mixtures of joys & sadnesses through my years-long relation with Boston, with New England, I can only say this: I don't wish to be anywhere else. Through my own worst hours & idiocies, I know this is true. It is, simply, what my brother Ric Amante calls gratefulness. Fears, yes, & regrets, sure, but hungers for new connections & renewed old ones, new plans to know more & remember better, & cultivate hope. It's not that I've earned my return here; it's that, having returned, I earn my place here every day, every hour, sometimes better, sometimes worse. Gratefulness. Privilege. The wish to show my worth now to all those wandering years, that I remember them, & to the many times to come, better if I make them so.

I still struggle at times to show my worth & my gratefulness. No map to it. Test always in this moment, & the next, & the next, ever on.

Labyrinthine [a new fixation]'s pages take up a full third of this issue. Its pages are from 2008 or so, when I'd been writing this book for two years. As of this writing (October 2019), I've been writing this book for 13 years. So a reaching from now back to those pages I wrote eleven years ago, still living in Portland, Oregon.

I write what I want, which is mostly a complex of stories that resemble fiction, at least somewhat. But I let in other words, ideas, rants into it. There's a passage that I think dwells near the heart of this book:

The day's news headlines told of one nation invading another, & a general's boast of how many targets awaited, we will crush you, crush you, the firepower we bear is goodly, Godly, each explosion speaks our blood vengeance for every dark memory, every wife & child we've lost to you, every home & marketplace, we will crush you & more, you will never harm us again, our God-possessed weapons will annihilate your bodies & your very souls, your way of life, plots & plans, what you believe, what you love, what you hold waits beyond this world, feel this anger that our countless generations have cumed, the cries of our rent mothers & fallen kings, & baby-faced soldiers with their limbs & guts gone, feel it, feel us, each of us, as we crush you, destroy your crops & your roads & your bridges as you have destroyed ours but you did so with a false god, thus a false premise to your idea of who would finally vanquish whom, for you see you are the evil we speak of in our sacred stories, you are the other, the terror beyond hills & woods & dunes, what we train our children to loathe, to fear, to cry out in fullthroated triumph as it is destroyed. Your soldiers, your women, your soldiers, your old men & women. Your kings & presidents. Your artwork & sacred books. Your calm scenery & Sunday outings. You cannot live that we may. We may, we must. We will. You are whom we vanquish, & how our God will praise us & bless us with eternal prosperity, with fruitful lands & newly married wombs. Our preachers gesture us toward these hoped-for days, a month & a year & a century after we have destroyed you, & others like you in this world about us, & others to come in other times. Preach will come fully & finally when you are each & every & all dead & we the blessed, we the people of the true god have no more fears to worry about when we walk our children in the park, pray in our houses of worship, gather for trade in our marketplaces. Ever & ever. All of you must die. Our true God allows us no other option ever as your false god says the same. Blood speaks one truth. Our God speaks one truth. Paradise builds from your graveyard.

Someone saw me the other night writing *Labyrinthine* at a McDonald's, locked into the music on my iPod Polly (Neil Young & Crazy Horse's new LP, *Colorado*).

"You writing a book?"

"Yah."



“About your life?”

“About life.”

It’s a hard question. *What is Labyrinthine?*

And so now to describe the June 25, 2011 Jellicle Literary Guild meeting, #117.

This is hard. I am now writing about an event that took place over eight years ago. It was a delightful event. I loved, & love, everyone who was part of it. Of those who were there, Jim Burke III is nearly eight years gone. Ric Amante & I are no longer friends, by his choice. Kassi & I moved from that small Arlington, Massachusetts apartment in 2013, to a house in another town in metro-Boston. Yet the magick of that night remains.

On my friend Polly iPod right now is playing the audio highlights of this meeting. Lavish, wonderful stretches of time of Jim playing his beautiful acoustic guitar—The Who, Neil Young, The Doors, The Beatles, & the like—in his beautiful mid-range voice.

Ric Amante reading “She’s Like a Rainbow” from *Cenacle 78*, the soft Boston undertone of his words, the delight in his listeners.

KD reading Neil Gaiman’s 2009 Newbery Medal acceptance speech, detailing the humility he felt when his seemingly healthy father suddenly passed, & the gratefulness he felt when fans tell him how much they love & value his work.

The birds chirping through the window of that small apartment we’d landed at upon arriving in Boston in 2010, all we owned in a U-Haul truck.

And Jim again, reading excerpts from his “hero” Henry David Thoreau’s 1854 book *Walden*, also published in *Cenacle 78*:

I see young men, my townsmen, whose misfortune it is to have inherited farms, houses, barns, cattle, and farming tools; for these are more easily acquired than got rid of. Better if they had been born in the open pasture and suckled by a wolf, that they might have seen with clearer eyes what field they were called to labor in. Who made them serfs of the soil? Why should they eat their sixty acres, when man is condemned to eat only his peck of dirt? Why should they begin digging their graves as soon as they are born? They have got to live a man’s life, pushing all these things before them, and get on as well as they can. How many a poor immortal soul have I met well-nigh crushed and smothered under its load, creeping down the road of life, pushing before it a barn seventy-five feet by forty, its Augean stables never cleansed, and one hundred acres of land, tillage, mowing, pasture, and woodlot! The portionless, who struggle with no such unnecessary inherited encumbrances, find it labor enough to subdue and cultivate a few cubic feet of flesh.

It is fitting that Jim read from this book, which he loved as much as his rock & roll music, during this last Jellicle Guild meeting he was fully present at. He spent many years as a young man haunting the woods around Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts. He & I went there many times in more recent years; hiking, swimming, smoking high & talking.

One of the *Many Musics* poems from *Cenacle* 78 that I read that night at the JG was “Another Way,” which I’ve mentioned here previously was inspired about a dream of Jim & me. He also liked the ending of this poem: “letting go of the map is hard, best chance.” He strummed a little to other poems of mine that night, like we’d done countless times before over the twenty-plus years we knew each other.

Maybe letting go the map is hard, best choice, but letting go of the love isn’t. I believe love, as honest & plain as can be, is a force in this world, as much one, if not far more durable, as bullets & dollars & prejudice & greed. When we love, now, what we see & feel around us, what we remember, what possibilities lure us smiling & curious into the future, our souls billow out full, oh-so-vulnerable yet infinitely vast. Love is the challenge, & the treasure.

Jim sang more Who songs, bright & potent, artstoned all the way even as we drank some good elixir that night too.

“Covers Hour” featured all of us reading pieces requested by people not able to be present. For example, I read from Sigmund Freud’s *Civilization & Its Discontents* on behalf of long-time friend David Hartley:

Civilization, therefore, obtains mastery over the individual’s dangerous desire for aggression by weakening and disarming it and by setting up an agency within him to watch over it, like a garrison in a conquered city.

Ric & Jim disagreed with Freud that humankind is by its nature driven to violence. “Freud has a cynical view of mankind in general,” said Ric. “Life is a constant evolution toward greater states of consciousness, & he wants to just say ‘the game’s done. This is how it is. I *know*.’”

More happily, Ric reads a funny, bright poem by his partner, Zannemarie Lloyd Taylor.

*Are you two feet on the platform
Wind, rain, earth, sun
Traffic sound and lights
Are you no longer waiting,
Just tapping, tapping,
lifting your heels, tapping?*

And KD reads a W.H. Auden poem called “Circe,” on behalf of dear old friend Ralph H. Emerson, frequent *Cenacle* contributor & JG attendee:

*With me, mistaught one, you shall learn the answers.
What is Conscience but a nattering fish-wife,
the Tree of Knowledge but the splintered main-mast
of the Ship of Fools?*

Then some faraway participants read for themselves, via recorded videos, what I sometimes call our JG “Field Trip.” Judih Haggai read her ’ku from *Cenacle* 78, her peacock poems accompanied by these bird’s forms & cries. Martina Newberry offered up her *Cenacle* 78 poems too, in a video made by her videographer husband Brian.

Then, delight of delight of delights, Jim set to music the lyrics sent to me by Barbara Brannon, old friend & *Cenacle* artist, her first contributions to the JG since its last New Britain, Connecticut

meeting back on 12/28/2001. He had just looked at them that night.

*Ferry me over the white ocean foam,
Ferry me back from wherever I roam,
Come fetch me and bear me, no longer alone
Over the river, come ferry me home.*

Jim could do this, *just play*. He felt his musical way intuitively into the words, into the moment, as though he was *always playing* like the rest of us are always breathing. His music sounded as though composed, practiced, when in these magick moments it wasn't. He loved to quote Neil Young's response to a fan who cried out, "your songs all sound the same!"—"it's all one song!"

Ric read Joe Ciccone's strange lovely poem "Last Night" with persuasive warmth, praising the "killer" closing. Then KD read from Terry Tempest Williams' 1991 book *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family & Place*, about her fight to defend a bird conservatory, & also deal with her own "clan of one-breasted women," due likely to cancer caused by living in Utah:

I pray to the birds because they remind me of what I love rather than what I fear. And at the end of my prayers, they teach me how to listen.

KD closes with the book's opening poem, Mary Oliver's "Wild Geese," quite worth quoting in full here:

*You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting—
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.*

I read my *Notes from New England* piece, my year back in Boston. I came back, in part, to be nearer the people involved in this meeting, & could never have dreamed so many would be gone in one way or another from my life not long after.

Ric left about seven hours after coming; KD took a picture of Jim & him & me. After he went, Jim talked about his arthritic knees, & his inability to get disability for an operation. We talked on & on, & happily I have the audio recording for some of it. KD looked up his guitar's brand, out of his curiosity, & we talked at length about my LP collection, in crates along the wall of the living room. He told funny tag-saling stories. Marijuana, his various pains, visits to hospitals, his family's long-lived genes, & biking long distances as a young man, living near Walden Pond. "I'd like to live to hit 80 or



90,” he said.

Jim railed against the greed of corporations & Republicans. Talked about being unemployed, & the current recession. “I’m afraid something bad’s gonna happen.” I wonder what Jim would have said about the election of Donald J. Trump.

This was not the last time I saw Jim, nor the last Jellicle Guild meeting he came up for. But it was the last good one, as will be explained later in this chapter.

So Jim left the next day & I worked on getting *Cenacle* 78 & *Scriptor Press Sampler* 12 printed up & mailed off to its contributors & a few others. As I was working my pay-job daily, it took till the end of July to complete this task—ironically done on the last day of that job’s contract. I called Jim that day; we were both now unemployed.

So began a long stretching summer of joblessness. I did what I could to keep my sense of self while looking for work. This is hard because while unemployment pays the bills, it also does more. It defines one’s weekday daylight hours, where one spends them, who with, & doing what.

I rode my bike on the Minuteman Bikeway to Arlington Center. Spent my daylight hours at the library, at Starbucks, at a coffee shop called Jam’n Java. Often I biked further on to Harvard Square, to evening hours writing at my beloved Au Bon Pain Café courtyard.

KD & I went to movies on Saturdays as always. *Cars 2*, *Another Earth*, & *Apollo 18* were all excellent ones that summer. These seen after I did my 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. “Within’s Within: Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution” radio show. Working all week toward getting SpiritPlants Radio’s weekend schedule of DJ shows & other content (news, rock, comedy, psychedelic lectures, jazz, & sometimes others). Doing this work kept me from closing into myself completely, kept me pushing.

We went to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston often, again for the Chihuly exhibition, & also for the *Degas and the Nude* exhibition. And to the DeCordova Sculpture Park and Museum in Lincoln, Massachusetts. I wrote lots of poems at all these places, staking my own sense of my self not on employment but on Art. From my notebooks:

Art, whatever it is, in truth, if there is a single one, or any at all, is my salvation Whatever good I do here, by myself or others, will come from Art. It is source, & nothing convinces me otherwise. How well I do will come from how fully I transmute my life through Art—

We also went to live concerts around Boston. Saw the excellent Alison Krauss & Union Station at the Wang Theater where years before Jim & I had seen The Who’s great *Tommy* rock opera.

Not long after my job contract ended, we took a planned trip to stay at a little cabin in



Vermont. Lots of hiking, talking, driving around Vermont's gorgeous Green Mountains.

Along our way, we passed an abandoned farmhouse & its barns called Clover-Dale. Many overgrown acres of fields around an old house filled with debris, next to two old red barns, one tumbled over backwards.

The site of all this transfixed me. *Who had lived here? Why had they left?* We later researched this online. There were no answers at that time.

So I blended this sad abandoned site into *Labyrinthine*, decided to use my fixtion to contrive a story. Not facts, but fixtion. It gave *Lx* much to go with for pages & pages all summer. Helped me keep my self.

I was in touch with my mother because she had a health scare & I'd agreed to look after her, by phone contact, for a few days. We had some nice conversations. I gave her comfort. She was an old widow, living alone. I didn't know then that she was living a reclusive life that would kill her in a couple of years..

But it was her life to live &, at this point, her decisions really affected nobody but herself. Not in any vital way, like long ago. And she was too old to change. Like Trump, weird to say, though his decisions affect the world.

How does one *not become* too old to change? If neither a reclusive old woman nor a world famous old man could not avoid this, I can't know I will do any better someday.

Ric & I enjoyed a lovely stoned summer's day in the Great Meadows of Arlington, not far where I lived. Could I have foreseen that our friendship of so many years would begin to end only a few months later, what would I have done? I don't know. I have no easy answers.

I kept writing, kept job hunting, kept on. *Cenacle* | 79 | October 2011 was prime in my thoughts between job interviews that summer. I was writing poetry & fixtion & pushing & pushing. Radio show & movies on Saturday, after all week trying. Some days were good, some were shit. KD was her loving & supporting self every day along the way.

Some of my *Cenacle* writing time was spent on 2009 of this History, so I wasn't so far behind. Since Jim's death on December 1, 2011, I've managed to complete one chapter, 2010's. So it's taken me all these years to get to this point in recounting 2011. That's quite telling.

End of September, after two months of trying, I scored another technical writing contract. *Fucking finally*. I celebrated that news at my old writing joint, Eastern Coffeeshop, ZombieTown, Mass., before going on to Ric's Out Loud open mic event to read some new work that night. So much fun that night.

Then spent a long lovely day before starting new job at the MFA, writing poems on every floor

of its buildings, & landing that evening at the gorgeous new Degas show. And wrote on & on.

In October, SpiritPlants Radio moved to Museter.com as its streaming platform. It was time, after three years of running the station, to do so. Also purchased the SpiritPlantsRadio.com domain name. KD & I now were responsible fully for keeping station going.

Reviewing my notebooks for October of 2011, I can clearly see how excited I was about many things. My new technical writer contract was going well so far. Because I did the work remotely on a laptop computer, this meant I had mobility to work at various places around Boston. I would pack up my book-bag, get on my bike, & ride to work—wherever I chose it to be that day.

I was working on *Cenacle* 79 with a fervor to do it well, a want to mix my poetry & fiction & press projects & radio into something bigger, criss-cross them in all sorts of ways. A year back in Boston, again employed; though none of my *Bags End News* project had been in *The Cenacle* yet, I dived into a review of its 26 years of notebooks, for renewed inspiration, & what might come from this.

As well, on September 17, 2011, a group of people decided to set up a protest camp in Zuccotti Park in Manhattan, to highlight the growing economic disparity worldwide, between the very wealthy & everyone else. Its motto was simple: “We are the 99%.”

Soon, countless people in towns & cities around the world had joined in this peaceful movement. I went down to Dewey Square, near the South Station transit terminal, to witness & support the people gathered & camped there, holding nightly meetings to discuss matters large & small.

I felt excited in many ways, like I’d done right in bringing KD with me back to Boston.

So I was thrilled with the next coming Jellicle Literary Guild meeting on October 29. Jim & Ralph were driving up from Connecticut. Ric & Zannemarie were both coming this time. Even my SPR DJ friend Jeremy Kilar (aka Catfishrivers) sent along a video of him performing his songs, since he couldn’t make it in person (like he had the previous December). And there would be quite a few proxy readings.

When Jim & Ralph arrived that Saturday afternoon, we planned to take an afternoon hike at Walden Pond. I loved every chance to get there with Jim (in addition to hearing him read from *Walden* at JG meetings). His favorite place, what saved his struggles.

That Halloween weekend a freak nor’easter hit the northeastern United States and the Canadian Maritimes, & cancelled that plan. It was the first of many things to go wrong over the next five weeks.

* * * * *

10/31/2019

Union Station

Hartford, Connecticut

Postscript commentary to this issue’s section of this chapter: I’ve been trying to write about 2011 for four years now, & counting. There was a point where I kept up, year by year, with my accounts (in 2005, I wrote in *The Cenacle* about 2004; in 2006, I wrote in *The Cenacle* about 2005; in 2007, I wrote in *The Cenacle* about 2006). But, recently, even before Jim’s sudden passing shook me to my ground, I’d lost that momentum. 2008 got written about in 2010; 2009 got written about in 2012; 2010 got written about in 2015. If lucky, 2011 will be finished in 2019.

I pushed at increasingly longer intervals to continue. Gathered my relevant 2011 notebooks & issues of *The Cenacle*, & had them in a helpful pile for months.

A year ago, I was down in Connecticut, like now, working on this chapter. Some months later, listening to the whole nine hours recorded from the 6/25/2011 Jellicle Guild meeting (described earlier). It all made me sad. Still does, but I decided on this trip down to CT that I would just *dive in*, *not stop, spend several days pushing*. Thus, I’ve reached October. I’m returning to Boston today, there’s

lots of *Cenacle* 109 work left to do before this Saturday's JG meeting.

Loaded the odds in my favor by coming down here, staying as usual at the Red Roof Inn in New Britain. Writing, editing, listening to material at the New Britain Public Library, Capitol Lunch, McDonald's, & my beloved Peoples Donutshop. Some magic medicine helped too.

It rained a lot this week. Calls about jobs switched my focus back & forth. I came down here jobless; luck on my side has changed that.

KD on phone & text messages her fine loving self. MSNBC on the hotel room TV every night reporting every little detail on the impeachment of Donald Trump. I wrote & wrote & wrote.

Cenacle 79 & the October JG & 2011's cataclysms will be told in the December 2019 *Cenacle*. I decided it was time to give this year its full due. More years will be described in 2020, & on, catching up one at a time.



* * * * *



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 Eighteen
continued from
The Cenacle | 109 | October 2019

Read the full History at: http://scriptorpress.com/history_of_scriptor_press.pdf

Funny sorta parallel: back in 2011, I had planned to publish Chapter Sixteen of this *History*, covering 2009, in the December issue of *The Cenacle*, #80. There was no December issue in 2011. Last year, though there was a December 2019 issue, my plan to complete this current chapter did not occur. 'Tis a year later, no New Britain, Connecticut old-school peramble happening during the current pandemic, but still going to finally have a go at finishing this chapter I've been at for at least 5 years.

Why so long to finish it? Several reasons but the only one that matters is that my dear friend Jim Burke III suddenly died December 1, 2011. That's it, pretty much. Nearly nine years later, & writing about this remaining stretch of the year, from October on, is a fucking hard thing to do.

But the thing to do now. So here goes a full-on try at finishing.

By the afternoon of October 29, 2011, Kassi & I had finished making & printing *Cenacle* 79. Thrilled, happy it would be ready in time for the night's Jellicle Guild meeting. I wrote in my Thoughts Pad notebook:

*C79 is done, JG approaches—
new job too—
It's a good moment to end this volume, in the mix, making the long loved good things happen
anew—*

These good feelings felt earned. I was recently employed again, doing the technical writing which is my profession, on a contract, like often is true with this kind of work. Done the needed paperwork, took the piss cup drug test, waited the secure laptop & all the needed passwords, & required permissions. Had a good colleague with whom I was doing the work collaboratively & well.

I was edging into finding ways to support the newly arisen Occupy movement, begun on September 17 in Zucotti Park in lower Manhattan, come soon thereafter to towns & cities across the US, including to Dewey Square in Boston on September 30. The country's financial meltdown in 2007, with millions losing homes & jobs by it (I lost two jobs myself), & the federal government's preference in 2008 to save big banks & companies, had unloosed waves of anger & protests & Occupy-like events all year.

I devoted the *News Hour* of SpiritPlants Radio to Occupy news for many months, especially content from *Democracy Now!* with Amy Goodman. I made my way down to Dewey Square to witness & support OB's happenings. I devoted pages in *Cenacle* 79 to what I experienced. More on this below.

I'd worked on *Cenacle* 79 itself for months leading up to October 29. I was proud of the issue I had made with Kassi & a near-dozen contributors. Eager to share it with those contributors & friends coming to our apartment in Arlington, Massachusetts that night. Before chronicling that difficult night & the even worse to follow, I want to give some good attention to this issue.

A week before the 10/29/2011 JG meeting, Kassi traveling down to North Carolina to visit a school friend, I had a weekend to myself. That morning I DJ'd my "Within's Within" radio show, live as most Saturdays. Featured albums by The Waterboys & Country Joe & the Fish, great bands. Mixed into show audio from Occupy Boston & Occupy San Francisco.

Frustrated by ongoing problems streaming SPR, I switched to Museter.com in Vermont (still with them, 9 years later). Problem solved. My show went on, & I set the rest of the schedule to going without worry.

My path then by bus & train to Dewey Square in Boston, near the South Station bus & train terminal. Near the Financial District's great edifices too.

I took my Saturday elixir & my pens & notebooks, & Polly iPod, & Gumbee my little phone (for pictures). Walking stretches where no other transit. In Harvard Square, a homeless kid noticed my black John Lennon shirt emblazoned "Imagine," & gave me a coin for luck.

From my scribbblings along the way emerged the *C79's From Soulard's Notebooks* piece, my fifth annual letter to President Barack Obama. The heart of my letter to him in the form of a challenge:

If you indeed have renewed stomach for the fight ahead, knowing now better than you did in 2008, your task hereon is to wrack in word & deed against those who would deny some their right to occupy. Your early missteps, your slow realization of the scale & scope & seriousness of those who oppose you, might be forgotten by at least some who come to feel that you are maturing & seeing what the rest of us see: that these entrenched bastards will simply wait you out unless you ally yourself, like King & Kennedy before you, with as many millions of every kind & place as you can. You did this in 2008. It's why you are in the White House.

Waiting in Harvard Square for trains to resume running, I wrote at my favorite table at my beloved Au Bon Pain cafe courtyard:

*Someone gave me a coin—
we occupy
buses broke down
same music, same move of hips
we occupy
same hard questions
we occupy
same night theaters
we occupy—*

Finally made it to Dewey Square & wrote about it after:



Wow—groovy—wow—walked through campsites to an open area for general assembly where a sort of resolution-amendment-commentary-block thing was going on—then into

the library where donated 12 Samplers, that was cool, discussed "Occupy" w/this woman Emily while cameras rolled—Johnny & Alvaro—we talked a long time—they were up from Occupy Wall Street—sounds more organized there—

Eventually train back to Cambridge, to Harvard Square, & a bus partway back to Arlington. Too high & excited to return home, KD off traveling, I instead got off bus at Gourmet Market, beloved all-night market I would often write at. Rendered my letter to President Obama from my traveling notes. Bout 3 to 4 a.m. for this work. Concluded it thus:

I cannot but hope that you will try with all of your might, act like people not elections matter, & still realize, this far along, the potential we all felt you possessed three years ago. We can & will Occupy despite the bastards in D.C. & elsewhere. We would much rather you yourself found a collaborative place in our ranks. The time is now, my friend. There's so much work to do.



& decorated it in C79 with pictures from Dewey Square.

Occupy Boston was evicted on December 10. Occupy Wall Street on November 15. Other Occupy locations were around somewhat longer. As a movement, Occupy was both energized & handicapped by its fully horizontal structure. No leaders, every voice equal. No explicit set of principles or demands. No answers to, "Who are you?" & "What do you stand for?" What Occupy did well was effectively & very publicly critique the great economic disparity existent in the US & around the world. One percent of the population owning 99% of the wealth. *Now everybody knows this.*

By welcoming all to its encampments, feeding them, housing them, offering them support & resources, all for free, Occupy pointed toward an entirely better way for humans to dwell among each other, perceive & treat each other. *Occupy together. Live together. Love one, love all.*

But Occupy was not built to survive in its original form. Eschewing formal structure, willingness to affiliate itself, to plan, to compromise sometimes, Occupy was meant to *affect* what would come from it. Those who experienced Occupy, or even just witnessed it on TV, were changed. Many for the better.

It wasn't enough to elect Barack Obama as the first African American US president. This was a huge boost to a country damned near exhausted by 2008 from years of wars & financial collapse. But it wasn't enough. We in the progressive movement had to push the entrenched establishment *harder*. So, in 2011, we Occupied.

Occupy was crushed, for the most part, in a few months, yet its particles changed the human social bloodstream ever after.

Cenacle 79 contained a lot of great poetry. A desire to travel loose among them, & see what flows between.

Ric Amante's "Benediction" begins this praising music:

*May your path become more vibrant,
and the prayers to enhance
your precision and grace
take hold with the morning light.
May your service refine and multiply,
and the smallest act in the hardest hour
brim with gratitude and peace.*

Round a curve & Judih Haggai's fine, sometimes
quietly bemused poetry comes into view:

*optimism morn
with one sip, i shall prevail
fly begone*

Sometimes a bit melancholy:

*circles become spirals
there are no straight lines
i'm getting older*

Sometimes as still as words can be:

*stop and listen
between songs in my head
quiet hush of daylight*

Now maybe up a hill with Martina Newberry, a gorgeous view of the night, spasming with wonder:

*All of this has been asked
and answered before. We will be
christened and we will have to reply.
Our hearts will be kearned across time*

*and our reasons will be pin holes
in the night sky—distant, brilliant—
like stars.*

Come back home to its light & heavy memories, one sung by Tom Sheehan:

*When a surgeon sawed my father's leg off,
he handed it to my nurse wife;
a hard touch repeating
when she nestles me.*

*She put his leg into a bag
in a hospital basket. It fell with a thud.
Now and then, I know, she collects that
sound again when a door closes in the night.*



Charlie Beyer's harrowing & hilarious "A Travel to Belize" journal continues in this issue. Charlie & his girlfriend Kim & their various small animals are travelling by truck, with a hovercraft on a trailer hauled along behind them, down through the real & imagined wilds of Mexico. Their terrors are constant & innumerable. Encounters with cops & others with big guns. Insane drivers & traffic. Bad roads even worse at night. A sense of constant alienation from everything in their passing environment. The following passage sums for the whole:

Finally, a gas station. A Mexican state-owned Permex. Light. Flat. Sanctuary. I pull in and around to the back. Without the roar of the road, it is plainly obvious iron is dragging on the road. In the back, where the gas station is still under construction, I stop. Get out and look at what's going on back there. The tire on one side is gone. We have been driving on the rim for the last ten miles. The rim is mashed into an octagonal shape, not a trace of rubber anywhere. The weight and loss of tire elevation has dropped the front of the trailer to the ground. It is worn away in a wedge shape, along with the bottom three inches of trailer jack. A spare tire used to be bolted under the trailer, but it too is gone. Ripped away from the frame by the great road dragging. Only its holding bolt remains. To the casual observer, the trailer is destroyed.

This piece is fever dream obsessed & a compulsive reading experience.

The Burning Man Book content featured this issue is Ralph Waldo Emerson's classic 1842 essay, "The Transcendentalist." The opening of this piece deftly sums its all, & reminds me of my dear friend Jim Burke III's oft-spoken comment that "all is not as it seems." Emerson's text reads:

The first thing we have to say respecting what are called new views here in New England, at the present time, is, that they are not new, but the very oldest of thoughts cast into the mold of these new times. The light is always identical in its composition, but it falls on a great variety of objects, and by so falling is first revealed to us, not in its own form, for it is formless, but in theirs; in like manner, thought only appears in the objects it classifies. What is popularly called Transcendentalism among us, is Idealism; Idealism as it appears in 1842. As thinkers, mankind have ever divided into two sects, Materialists and Idealists; the first class founding on experience, the second on consciousness; the first class beginning to think from the data of the senses, the second class perceive that the senses are not final, and say, the senses give us representations of things, but what are the things themselves, they cannot tell. The materialist insists on facts, on history, on the force of circumstances, and the animal wants of man; the idealist on the power of Thought and of Will, on inspiration, on miracle, on individual culture. These two modes of thinking are both natural, but the idealist contends that his way of thinking is in higher nature. He concedes all that the other affirms, admits the impressions of sense, admits their coherency, their use and beauty, and then asks the materialist for his grounds of assurance that things are as his senses represent them. But I, he says, affirm facts not affected by the illusions of sense, facts which are of the same nature as the faculty which reports them, and not liable to doubt; facts which in their first appearance to us assume a native superiority to material facts, degrading these into a language by which the first are to be spoken; facts which it only needs a retirement from the senses to discern. Every materialist will be an idealist; but an idealist can never go backward to be a materialist. The idealist, in speaking of events, sees them as spirits. He does not deny the sensuous fact; by no means; but he will not see that alone. He does not deny the presence of this table, this chair, and the walls of this room, but he looks at these things as the reverse side of the tapestry, as the other end, each being a sequel or completion of a spiritual fact which nearly concerns him. This manner of looking at things, transfers

every object in nature from an independent and anomalous position without there, into the consciousness. Even the materialist Condillac, perhaps the most logical expounder of materialism, was constrained to say, "Though we should soar into the heavens, though we should sink into the abyss, we never go out of ourselves; it is always our own thought that we perceive." What more could an idealist say?

Over a century later in composition, 2009-2010 to be precise, there is an excerpt in this issue from Mark Christensen's book *Acid Christ: Ken Kesey, LSD, & the Politics of Ecstasy*. There are strange echoes of Emerson's broadminded fanaticism in these lines:

Long before being resurrected as a progressive savior from a metaphysical time gone by, Kesey had, like Ernest Hemingway before him, promoted himself from literature to fame. Hemingway had hot-rod'd nihilism, understatement, "life style," and celebrity to achieve, with his safari suit iconography, brand name recognition. By the 1950s, Hemingway was as recognizable as a stop sign. Writer promoted to product. But unlike that legendary literary lion, Kesey saw a much larger life than Letters. For like his sometime mentor Tim Leary, Kesey understood what America wanted in 1965 was a magic sacrament to enfranchise a new religion—acid had told him so, and all you had to do was take one look around the psychedelic Neverland that was Kesey's Stanford digs at Perry Lane to see that young America was ready for a new divinity. A religion not of God, but of the self.

My "Notes from New England" piece this time is called "There Lingers My Soul: Love for Boston's Museum of Fine Arts," detailing a pair of trips I took to my favorite museum just before returning to work in early October, & the half-dozen or so poems I wrote there, inspired by paintings by Renoir, Monet, Degas, & others. My favorite of the bunch was inspired by Monet's "Grainstack (Sunset)," 1891, oil on canvas:

*Nomads live behind those wheat stacks,
the kind that dance at dusk, who kidnap
little scrawny gypsy girls & raise them up
for sleek dancing wives. With their wives
& pipes & strings, their tents & hand-made
rock knives, they live behind those wheat stacks
the weeks or months before snow fall,
sing hungry songs of jiving asses & dangling stars,
pluck toe-less sprites from deep cattle dung
to squeeze & fire their dreaming brew,
rest lidless atop those wheat stacks & laugh
at the cosmos' descent in sparkles & stones,
disappear with or before the snows, leaving
only the tokens of the scarves of the gypsy
girls mature enough by new year to wed & bed.*

I was away from Boston & the MFA for 7 years while out west in Seattle & Portland, & one perpetual treat of being back is being just a transit (or walk, or bike's ride) from this beautiful place I have known so many years.

A longer piece of mine are the 15 new poems from *Many Musics, Seventh Series*. These poems continue along with developing dream materials, as well as digging into work by long-time favorite

poets like Rilke, Rumi, Ginsberg, Eliot. I still like these poems, feel in them a renewal & pushing energy. There are no solid rules or real guide-posts in pursuing one's Art. No guarantees on the one hand, but no true impediments on the other. It's a matter of working it, & working it, & working it, till a spark, two sparks, a flame, & go with it long as it bides. When it smokes out, time to catch a new spark, figure up a new way how.

The last 3 of the 15 poems go a little bit further. They form a kind of trilogy that tells the story of a place called "Iconic Square." There is a fountain at Iconic Square, whose waters the narrator of the three poems learns is dosed, "lightly, like brushing the drums of many minds, not pounding them awake." We learn of his best friend in dreams & the strange cassette-letters the friend sends him, & of a girl he meets one day at the Square, & of the romance they share.

The poems weave in & amongst each other, each complete yet amplified by the others.

There are lines from each that I still linger with & like. From the first of the three, "Song of Ragged Claws," these surreal lines:

*You'd given me a device in that first dream,
it would attach to your strange cassettes so
I could play & listen. Then began the new songs.
Imagine wordless crooning begins, low as ground,
one quiet thing among many, but rises, yes,
at some point rises & is now for attention,
still wordless, but yes, you were recalling
the dream to me, the one of desolation, yes,
& now there were words I remembered,*

"Ragged claws, ragged claws, a mind sliced
away & revealed, ragged claws, ragged claws,
those walls aren't high enough to protect
the world from me, my music is bark
& root, I'll travel by the soil, sup on the starlight.
Ragged claws, a mind sliced & revealed."

From "That Sensual Music," the blindly romantic closing stanza:

*There is no higher & there is no ground,
drink the fountain spray before we kiss.
Across the abyss you can see what I've seen
all along, the nothing of cum sprayed
in your friends' faces. Drink the spray,
& you are mine once more. Now, eventually,
you see me as I was that day, & always
been, your eyes closing, you see me
underneath, now smiling, your lips
moist with spray, your ruining kiss,
yes, receiving back & back into you,
back & back, no higher, no ground,
kiss, across the abyss & I am yours once more.*

And from "Iconic Square," these lines my try at rendering a first acid trip into poetic narrative:

*When had I stopped looking up? What day,
which hour? Whose word had made me
look down & never quite so up again, was
it hers, yours, my cum still on your lips,
saying you loved me & goodbye, still nude
with me on the floor, still taut for fucking?
“I’m not fucking her, you fucking dreamed her!”*

*Was it him, you, that letter you wrote far
from me, coward, about your disease &
your decision? Your cassette labeled
Last Songs that I listened to the night
you passed from me & the last of our hungry
hours arguing if God’s best final proof
is music, oak trees, or fine young ass?*

*There were other reasons & many excuses
& every last one fell unnoticed from me
as I watched the sky into its inexplicable
dusk, into its crying passion told each night as
stars, I passed through seeing up & was up,
became up, finally up, swinging high, oh so
high from the strands above the stars
that dangle down so low——*

*Dirty, broken, remade, smiling, I swung
until the dawn, finding myself where
I’d ended & begun in a new way, unexpected,
fine, & I knew enough to trace a path
back to that fountain, those few splashes
of sweet drink, & I returned to marvel.*

These poems pushed me wider, deeper in my vista, urged me tell an even bigger story. One that gathered up my various kinds of writing projects into one great myth. I was still pushing toward this in 2011, but it was coming.

My *Labyrinthine* takes up nearly a third of this issue, 43 of its 147 pages, & I was mulling how to review it here meaningfully, while not at chapter-length. In reviewing its pages, I was reminded of an old concept of mine for trying to account for & organize my aesthetic & philosophical obsessions.

An acronym for this: “PENMAD”:

- *Psychodelia*: mindworlds within worlds
- *Eros*: sex, complex, so *complex*, want
- *Nature*: the great green!
- *Magick*: occurrence beyond ordinary explain
- *Art*: countless hungers to make
- *Dreams*: worlds within mindworlds

Using these as guide for examples, this review bears more chance of a roof, walls, floor, stars above, Great Tree below.

Bowie the spy with one green eye & one mushroom eye, sits in a chicken shack at the edge of

a small desert town in New Mexico:

Thing is, it is a fucking chicken shack. Is, isn't. Both, each, yes, no. The world is many things simultaneously. Many worlds. That's the trick to things. One stuff, many stuffs. One kind, many kinds. One motive, many motives.

Bowie loves his old partner, Preacher. Several women: Gretta, Christa, an unnamed fellow spy. He travels in love & wonder & mystery, & tries to do good by the world from a deeply sad heart. The shrooms seem kind of allies to him in all this. Powerful, little understood by human ways of assessment. Yet they like him. That's hopeful.

Bobbie is a teenage girl who has gone with her friend Lizzie into the Noah Hotel, NoTell for short, to find their friend Jasmine. They all become separated, & Bobbie ends up nude in a bed with a man. By her slow waking, she confuses this man, a cop come to rescue her, with another man she saw once, never spoke to, long ago:

The sound of . . . ocean? Wait a minute. Listen! Listen . . . that grinding. A music of power. Oh listen. Here is a place to bring all grievings.

Bobbie listens. She finds she's been listening for a long time. There was a time, previous to this, a long ago, when she heard the pink noise—

The . . . pink noise? She keeps listening, tunes down into the sea, there is something in this. Old grievings. Grievings impossibly old.

That moment on the beach. Terrifying, breathless, a possession in a glance? How possible? And where is this? Too much, too many things, she listens.

He saw & there was a motion to him that was knowing, oh she did & didn't know how to bear it—

I'm reminded of Stanley Kubrick's 1999 erotic masterpiece film *Eyes Wide Shut*: of Nicole Kidman's story of a man she saw only once, yet the Beast in her roared the world aside for want of him. *Fucking* is an act. *Sex* is a state of being. *Want* is part of the deep engine of the world.

Global Wall, now a kind of traveling orator, travels with three girls who are what remain of his savage underground cosmic sex empire. He loves these three; the youngest in particular possesses him, especially in dreams of a White Bunny (or two):

They see two white bunnies flash by—& she smiles at him—her blonde hair is only touched by a few blooms—she wears a long light blue skirt & one bracelet for jewelry—& sandals—this is so simple—he watches her—waiting for the bad word—half hears it unspoken—something in this—does he notice—does he feel the flinch in his heart—the girl she possesses—there is no subterfuge in her—Global understood this later—this dream has a sad tinge that echoes back from future better understanding—

“let's follow” he startles her—this is new—this hadn't happened before—& it had been one bunny every other time—he catches her hand before thinking about it—then she holds on when he shies—they run—they follow the white bunnies into the woods—deep into the white white woods—

The White Woods is a place where Global Wall once built a kind of safety against men, a vast prison laboratory by which he tried to free himself of his life's perpetual anguish. It didn't work. Things change, they don't undo. But he seems bound for returning to them, with his beloved trio, whose love for him & want for him is salve & thorn alike. Perhaps the White Woods has some deeper, kinder

medicine still.

There seems to be more than one Preacher in *Labyrinthine*. Iterates? Maybe. One of them/him has long been followed by Genny, who seemed to lose him for awhile. She tries to find her long-unseen brother Sean, but ends up instead recovering her childhood's doll, Tweety Bird. Tweety now can sometimes talk. They reunite with Preacher at Luna T's Cafe, & he leads her to the Ampitheater in back, bringing her to the place where long ago he despaired & died, deep in the Woods, likely White, under a full moon, dancing in a field where a bonfire roared & drummers beat.

Preacher points down the hill they stand on to his younger self dancing, urging Genny to go talk to him for greater understanding. Then older Preacher is gone. In exchange, Genny finds a tape player with a tape she had long ago recorded of one of his preaching events:

"What rises with the light, crosses the moon, what sings shores empty of men tonight"—your voice half buried in hiss, in the coughs, the other sounds of a listening crowd moving around in their seats—your voice is beautiful—I listen as I watch you swing your flashlight around like a scimitar, down there at your wake or funeral or whatever it is—"Call it imaginal space."

I call this the "magick" portion of PENMAD here because I was where young Preacher is, but long ago, dancing deep in those White Woods, full moon, a night when I too danced & died—disappeared into the beat—born anew by sunrise—have returned to this night many times in my fixtion, a well ever deep, its waters ever various in their inspiration.

RemoteLand shows nights after midnight in the Nada Theater. Self & Ralph are two acid-loving boys who have moved into the theater to be there for each showing. It's like they are now living inside the film. A film like Lynch's *Inland Empire*, come to life.

A struggling old painter named Charlie Pigeonfoot ends up on their couch, & they tend him. On the night the White Bunny(s) appear in the theater, Charlie encounters again in a dream a painter he knew only in dream:

She begins slowly. "I was a girl the first time I came here. I was pretty & foolish but I had something. I came here again & again. Always wore my yellow swimsuit. It left little unexposed. I liked it. I felt the hungry stares, their intensities, some kind, sweet, some dark, violent. I absorbed them for a long time, thinking I'd learn & then know desire."

This painter is a kind of dream-mentor to Charlie, yet in other pages she has her own story & loves. Maybe she once dreamed her mentor too, & now passes on the kind favor.

Finally, Jack has a problem. He cannot figure out who is Penelope & who is Christina. One his longtime love, the other who tempted him away. His sort-of friend Benny Big Dreams offers sort-of help in dreams.

A classroom, & she's in the front row as he walks in:

One glance & no more. This is not the first class, I can tell by the braid in her hair, how her skirt is short but swishy & pink tights.

Dreamland is a place, a *state* of mind. Powerful, strange, a tool, a way. Like P, E, N, M, & A, it is a major aspect of *Lx*, & all I write. Must be appreciated, & accounted for.

So this is a summary of *Cenacle* 79 | October 2011 that Kassi & I readied, & printed copies of, for the JG meeting on 10/29/2011 at our apartment. We were proud of it. *Fucking* proud.

I was proud about having a job, a wonderful wife & partner, dear friends coming to visit & share Art with me.

I could not imagine that that night would be the last night I would see my friend Jim Burke alive. That its events would push my friends Ralph H. Emerson & Ric Amante from me, for different reasons.

I've been coming to this night in this *History* for nearly 9 years now. It is October 2020. Jim has been gone near all of those 9 years. I have not seen Ric nor Ralph in years. The former lives about a 15 minute walk from the home in which I sit. The latter maybe in California. I don't know. His parents long passed, family house long sold, himself seeming to have decided our friendship among the things he would not take into his new life.

Loss of Ric & Ralph are scars. Loss of Jim is a wound. The heart decides the difference in these matters.

It was 4/28/2012, a day short of 6 months later, that KD & I finally held the next JG meeting. That night began with our best effort to reconstruct that October night. I have some photos too, taken before the power went out, & the recording of the meeting lost. So tonight, 10/21/2020, will partner with both those dates to do as right by it as I can.

It was Halloween weekend, & the Northeast U.S. got hit by its first major snowstorm of the winter. A "nor'easter," really bad one. My friend Jeremy Kilar, down in New Jersey, who had driven up with JBIII the previous year, was unable to make it in person, & so recorded & sent along two videos of him singing & playing his guitar instead. Lovely.

The nor'easter also prevented our planned afternoon visit to Walden Pond, Jim's beloved spiritual home.



Compounding these problems was Jim & Ralph both getting sick. Jim was laid out on our green couch (oddly—fuck—I just realized that I am sitting on this green couch now, although in the Bungalow Cee we did not buy till 2013, & so a place he never saw). I have only a couple of pictures of him on this couch, only his arm visible. Last pictures I have of him.

To be plain, I would often at meetings share my elixir with Jim, what we called "shocktails" &, every other time, veteran cosmic rocker that he was, Jim flew high & higher, played guitar happy, delighted in all.

Ralph I had not planned on sharing with. He knew nothing of such things, spare that these

were important to me.

And here he was, arrived up from Connecticut early afternoon with Jim, traveled the nor'easter safely. But looking really poorly. Unbathed, unshaven, starving, apparently (though not poor), as he wolfed down a lot of the pizza we got from the joint around the corner.

And asking for his share of the elixir. I did not want to reject him. His family unit, parents & him, so tightly bound for so long, had fallen apart by death & disbandment. The old farmhouse they three had so long lived in up for sale. Ralph staying with a friend.

Maybe if it had been just him & Jim & KD & me that night, taking it slow, talking it through. Making sure he was clean & well-rested. Maybe.

Maybe if Ric had not assumed that sharing elixir with novice Ralph was the plan all along, & himself not told.

Maybe if Ralph hadn't reacted so badly to elixir & pizza, both hitting a likely empty stomach too quick.

Maybe if the power had not gone out, & the recording not been lost.

Maybe if it hadn't fucking snowed.

For all of that, what of Jim, laid out all night on the couch? And gone in less than five weeks, at 58 years old? His parents both lived well into their 80s.

Maybe he was just exhausted from joblessness, stress, worry for his family, long-standing medical ailments, like his woeful knees, that he could not afford the time or money to tend to, to get healthy, lose weight, return to better form. The elixir gave him rest that night. While Ralph retched in our bathroom for hours, Jim slept. Next morning, storm over, he was smiling & strumming the guitar he'd brought & not played. Giving Ralph a ride home, keeping him safe till Ralph's friend's house's power returned. Jim tending others, no matter his own struggles. It was his 100th, & last, JG meeting.

So once Ric & Melissa arrived, I think we ordered pizza. I think I then offered Jim some elixir, which we had long enjoyed sharing, & Ralph asked to join in.

I read my letter to President Obama in *Cenacle* 79, & it was not long before the problems occurred. The elixir hit Jim wrong. I don't know why save that he half-slept through the meeting, seemed fine the next day, & was gone in 5 weeks. I know, I'm repeating. Keep it rolling.

So, while Jim rested quietly on the couch, Ralph rushed to bathroom. I accompanied him there; for seeming hours he threw up. It was pizza. It was purgation, for his life's long & recent troubles & sufferings & privations & doubts. It was horrible to see this dear friend, one I'd known near 30 years, since high school, retching his guts out. Eventually, he was empty. Rejoined meeting a little bit.

Far gone into the night, meeting long over, I sat up with him til dawn, sitting him. It was harrowing. All his demons came out. I kept talking him down from far ledges in his mind.

While Jim slept & Ralph retched, & I companioned his retch, KD kept the meeting going best she could. Ric read "Brotherhood" from *Cenacle* 79. Melissa read some satirical writings on opera. I'm sure KD showed photos from that trip she'd recently taken down to North Carolina, to the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Eventually, the meeting included me & Ralph again. I read some *Many Musics* from *Cenacle* 79. Even Ralph read something, a hand written poem called "Madagascar." We watched videos of Judih Haggai in Israel & Martina Newberry in California reading their *Cenacle* 79 poetry. Judih also toured us around some of her kibbutz in Israel.

And Jeremy, in the power outage of his New Jersey home, with his iPhone recording on limited juice, played a bunch of his delightful songs. Beautiful soul. I have not known where he is for a few years. No quarrel. Just elsewhere. One of his songs was for a recently passed beloved Aunt, "Don't Go Yet."

The power went out, near midnight. The nor'easter that had fucked our afternoon plans came back to have a go at our evening ones. I don't blame nature for being nature, but I reserve the very human right to be pissed off about the bad fuck anyway.

Said goodbye to Ric & Melissa, unknowing the bitter resentment they already held against me. Near 20 years of friendship with Ric begun to die that night. We seemed to clear the air between us, took meeting up near a year later, but we never really got good again.

Survived the frenzied night with Ralph. Jim woke his chipper self, they packed & drove back to Connecticut. Six weeks later, having missed a chance at Thanksgiving to see him, KD was sick, I was on a Greyhound bus traveling down to Connecticut, writing my eulogy for him. I know, *keep it rolling*.

My 4/28/2012 reconstruction audio notes, by way of conclusion, that it was a messy night but there was some good Art shared. Too too too high a cost.

Monday following the JG debacle, I went back to work. Mostly from the couch at home, or rode my bike (got it fixed, always a good thing, when needed) to the Jam'n Java coffee house in Arlington Center. Or the library near it. Or further along to my beloved Harvard Square. Let the metro be my office. Technical writing simply requires a laptop, an Internet connection, & content to work on. On contract, hoping for a full-time commitment; that never came, just an extension to June 2012. Kept working, kept cashing the paychecks.

KD daily took transit to her work in Boston. We ate dinner together, watched TV. On Saturdays, we went into Boston or Cambridge to see movies (*Paranormal Activity 3* & *Melancholia* were good ones that November) & ride the elixir with books & notebooks & pens & parks & coffee houses.

I was trying to reclaim my balance by these long familiar daily activities, yet that meeting clouded me over. Hardly two weeks after it occurred, I decided to cancel the December JG meeting. It was a hard decision, but things felt out of sorts, & I needed time to figure out *how* to sort them again.

SpiritPlants Radio work continued on. 2011 marked its 8th anniversary as a station, & third since KD & I took it over. We celebrated by purchasing the spiritplantsradio.com domain name. A lot of migration work needed to sort out this change & the move to Museter streaming platform, but good work. Evolving work.

On my "Within's Within" radio show in November, I always play LPs by Harry Chapin or Billy Joel, wonderful singer-songwriters who salved my rough teen years. Played Chapin's 1975 *Portrait Gallery* on the 11/12/2011 show.

Later that Saturday, at a Starbucks in Boston, I lamented the 30th anniversary of a party given by the girl I'd loved back then, & how on that night, for the first time, she wondered aloud to me about the possibility of us dating. By the following Monday, she'd changed her mind, chosen another to give her heart to (he was a dear friend of Ralph's at the time, funny thing). Wrote her, Jenny Lehman, a poem for remembrance:

*The bloom I'd lay at your breast tonight
is & is not the one I held those hours,
touch, & there's still a tune. But if you don't,
as you did not then, there's still a tune.
Your young cheek, yes a bloom for you. My music,
no, I earned that for my own romances.*

The following weekend I made a second trip, this time with KD, to Dewey Square in Boston, to visit the Occupy Boston encampment there. Brought more *Scriptor Press Samplers* for their library, & messages I'd solicited from all sorts of friends. I didn't know that Jim's message would be the last words of his I'd have the pleasure of distributing while he yet lived:

The whole "occupy" movement is just the beginning because as the Republican Party continues to block economic progress, more and more people will join. It will become difficult if not impossible for the local leaders to dream up quasi-petty excuses when attempting to "clear"

the areas being occupied, be it Wall St. or wherever. My biggest fear is that thousands of people will tend to fight back, more police riots will ensue and the movement will splinter into violent factions much like the anarchist groups of the sixties. Hopefully, the masses will refuse to move and overload the system through repeated non-violent actions. How many people can the system process? This question was also answered in the sixties. People would go right back to their arrest site and be processed over and over until the police gave up. Some people were arrested several times in one night.

The occupy site in Hartford, on the corner of Broad St. and Farmington Ave., has been going strong and the Hartford Police Department has no intention of removing them at this point (as reported today in the Hartford Courant). There are a couple of dozen tents and other residences. Signs are abundant but the overall level of interaction with the public seems slow. Perhaps it is for the best.

Finally, to paraphrase Thoreau, screw the government until there ain't one anymore!

Which all brings me to December 1, 2011. Like November 14, 1981, & a few other ecstatic or tragic dates along the way, this one changed me down deep. We all have these dates. They accumulate in number through our years. They are like our version of tree trunks' rings.

December 1, 2011 was a Thursday. A workday for me. Up at 6:45, kissed KD out the door to work. Sat awhile before work mulling Scriptor Press projects. 20 *Scriptor Press Samplers* ready to distribute. 19 copies of *Cenacle* 79 nearly ready.

No JG for December, but I'd mulled all of November still doing a new *Cenacle* issue. Now was thinking C80-81 | Winter 2012. Thinking maybe there would be six issues in 2012, & a *Sampler*, & two RaiBooks, & 36 SPR weekends, & weekly *ElectroLounge* updates, & six *TAB* (*TransArtBooks*, planned sequel project to Burning Man Books), & four JG meetings. And I would write & write & write.

Worked on SPR for coming weekend, this along with pay job. Ate lunch, picked up apartment, rode to Jam'n Java for more work. Come back home 5:15. KD & I had dinner, watched *Burn Notice*, beloved TV show. Worked on radio some more, football game on TV. 9:30 finished the night, to bed.

James Michael Burke III died of a heart attack that evening. 58 years old. I learned of this the next morning, by an email from his eldest daughter Belinda.

I went into the shock I think most people go into in this situation. I pushed aside *why?* for the moment & hard calibrated on *what* to do. I ate cereal & watched *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* like every Friday back then. I kissed KD off to work. Told my team at our virtual meeting. Lost much of the day.

Then cohered, dressed, took the bus to a shopping plaza in Cambridge to meet KD for our weekly date. Wrote this on the bus:

It confounds me to write this but my friend & brother Jim Burke is dead of a heart attack last night at 58. I knew his health wasn't great but his bigger worry was his parents, last we spoke—weird he was on my mind this week but I can't say he wasn't always.

I don't have anything worth saying. That fucked up JG last time I saw him, laid up all night. He strummed softly the next morning. Last I would hear & I was fucking focussed on Ralph's crisis.

Nothing I say or do or write will return him. I hope that there is a something next for him.

This is worse for me personally than any previous loss. I can only function now because there is no other option—

I wish he had played & me read at last JG & that I'd gotten him to Walden one more time—I'm glad I brought his words to Occupy—

Last time I saw him he was tending Ralph—taking him in from nor'easter—giving him shelter—reminding me of the JG spent in his car—

Time moved, but I did not seem to move with it. Nice restaurant. Bookstore after. Ice cream.

Next morning, we drove to get groceries as usual, then I readied & did my radio show. Audio recording of it fucked up. Like the JG. Tried to go out to movies. Got outside to bus stop & a call with Belinda, how she was, plan for funeral. Couldn't. *Just . . . fucking . . . couldn't.* We returned home. Day abandoned. Safer at home.

Watched football on Sunday, nothing more. My Dallas Cowboys lost, shitty mistakes. Same of KD's New York Giants.

By Monday, no better, still moving. Kissing KD out door to work. Attending to my own job. Re-recorded lost audio from my radio show, the parts where I read or speak on microphone. KD came home, we ate dinner, watched *Walking Dead*, another favorite. Tuesday, work & an uncomfortable call with Gerry Dillon down in Connecticut, once a dear friend of Jim's & mine. Jim's roommate for years. Mine too for one year, as I mentioned in a previous chapter of this *History*. Back in 2002-2003, me limping back from the West Coast, broke & broken-hearted. Took me in without hesitation. Brilliant writer. JG core member. *Cenacle* too. All this now years before 2011.

Worked on last new SPR weekend of the year. Wednesday, mailed out copies of C79 to those not at that disastrous meeting. *Such a good issue. Such a disastrous meeting.*

Thursday, December 9. Up at 6:45, took my pills, wrote in my dream journal, et breakfast, kissed KD off to work, her wishing me a safe trip.

Worked on radio, pay job, washed dishes, made bed, picked up house, lost hours toward the needed trip prep, cleaned up, packed my book bag & old beat up blue suitcase, bus & train to South Station to catch the familiar Greyhound bus down to Hartford, to be met by Jim's daughters Belinda & Natalie, in lieu of himself all so many previous years.

Had along *Cenacles* 47 | December 2002 & on up to the present, every issue that had one of Jim's letters in it. Eleven in all. Read them on bus down, then wrote my eulogy for him.

Arrived, ready, met by Jim's beautiful daughters & their friends. That night, at the apartment in Hartford he had shared with them so many years, & where he had died, in the kitchen, at dinner, we held a kind of an Irish wake for the man we all adored.

Lotta ganja. Chinese food. Telling stories. Laughing as mourners often best do. Watched *Pulp Fiction* & *Beavis & Butthead* for fun.

The Chinese food reminded me of a night, maybe 20 years earlier, when Jim'd come over the apartment I had at the time down there. Brought Chinese food. His marriage had ended that night. Saddest night of Chinese food I'd ever experienced. Here was another. Different kind of loss. Pain is pain.

I'd often slept on their couch in that apartment, come down for JG meetings & other visits. That night, though, I slept in Jim's bedroom. They did not object. Took pictures. A 3 a.m. poem too.

*Later today, we will say our words &
bury your ashes. A dozen & a dozen faces
will gather who hadn't before, & you are gone
& you remain. Now it's 3 a.m. & cold in your room.*

*I lie in your one pillow bed, looking toward
the door you saw every morning for years.
Out there, your cherished ones. Beyond that,
the world. It's 3:02 a.m. & I weary.*

*Your guitars, your books, not a picture
on your walls. No curtains on the windows.
The light stirred you, woke you. Light &
some car swooshing past. You are gone,
those guitars now silent, this bed empty
but me passing through. It's 3:05 a.m. & one last.*

*Does a room keep its departed occupant
awhile? This building old, you weren't the first.
Did it try to warn you the morning of your
last day, or say goodbye, in a room's way,
bunching its air at the doorway, bursting
you through, slowing your scattered eye, your heaving breath?*

Such a simple room. Humble. Guitars. Shelf of books. *Walden* of course. Lotta *Cenacles*. Box of music cassettes I'd been making him for years of new & old LPs. We called it the "JBIII Rock-n-Roll Survival Kit." Started it after his divorce. Dark days. A kind of vigil, after the wake, before the funeral.

I was one of the four who gave a eulogy at his funeral. His daughters. His sister. Read straight from my notebook. A passage reads:

Jim was a wonderfully good musician, inheriting this gift from his mother, & pursuing it obsessively on his own. He could play a light funny song or dive so deep that spittle, guitar picks, and strings would fly (we called it getting "art-stoned"). He wrote: "I play the guitar & make the music & then realize I am the music." He described himself simply as being "a musician who enjoys the challenges of being a father," & I think this summed things up for him. For those of us who were lucky enough to hear Jim sing & play, the gift he offered was to allow us witness to a mortal being merging with the eternal, become for a little time a confirmation of open passage between the two, that the mortal & the eternal are, in essence, connected parts of the whole.

Jim also imparted to others his profound love of Nature. From Nature he derived evidence of truths that most of us at best intuit consciously in rare, shining, inexplicable moments. Nature is what "should be," he wrote, continuing: "the twigs on the tree and life from them remind me of infinity. Their language is a mystery until you stop listening—perpetuation is the key, Freedom is obtained through non-action & least resistance. And, after all, what is a tree, without a twig?"

Good acoustics in that church. St. John's Church. Church of his grieving parents. Jim was kind of a Buddhist.

Jim was an Artist. The purest one I've ever known. The Christian funeral was for others. Yet I doubt Jim would have objected to this salve to their woes.

He was cremated (hence my poem about ash). I seem to recall his urn buried in the church courtyard somewhere.

After, a dinner at a Chinese place nearby. There I saw Ralph Emerson. Gerry Dillon. John

Barton. Mark Shorette. Much of the old JG brotherhood.

I was furious at all of them. None had kept in touch with him (save Ralph, for the rare ride to JG meetings in Arlington). Jim's poor health was not just physical. *He was lonely*. I was far, only able to visit occasionally. These nearer friends, & others like Mark Bergeron & Jack Heitner, had drifted elsewhere.

And none of them, including Ralph, were doing well. Back then we had lived in each other's pockets & it mattered. *Friends matter*. Tending others.

None of my feelings were rational. I honestly would have traded any of them for him. My despair was not kind, & it had no bottom.

But I had loved all these brothers. I wish that night we had gone somewhere safe, & gotten blind drunk together, held a wake to rival the one the night before. Had left my boozing years behind many years before. Would have that night.

Death of a loved one can turn memories of that loved one into a tomb for awhile. I think that day my memories of Jim entered that tomb & stayed for a long long time. Because I could not, or they could not, or we could not enter it together, comfort one another, find our way through together. I take my share of responsibility for that. What I could do with his daughters, mourn, openly, freely, even laughing, I could not do with these long-estranged friends.

Ralph drove me back to the Greyhound station, unaware I was angry how he distracted me on that last JG night, how he shared an additional day with Jim on their return to Connecticut. Maybe he sensed it. I don't know.

The whole of them mattered less to me. They'd grown old, & boring. Jim hadn't, & he was the one who was gone. These are not kind thoughts, but they are true. I doubt I live so kindly in their hearts either.

But Jim had been the heart of those 1988-2001 JG glory days. Believed in it all more than the rest. *Believed in me*.

Could I have saved him? I don't know. Looking back from now, if I could leap back, I'd simply say to him: "You are not as strong as you think you are, as you used to be. You have to do something drastic to change your path."

I could not have done it for him. But I wish I had recognized how vulnerable he was. He took a lot of medicines, for his heart, thyroid, and other ailments. It just wasn't enough. I miss him every day.

On bus back to Boston, I worked on radio, relieved the event was over, wrote. I met Kassi near South Station, not far from Dewey Square. Occupy Boston was being evicted.

Next morning, got up & did my radio show, last of year. We later saw a movie, Scorsese's delightful *Hugo*. Stayed up all night, as often on Saturday nights, KD & elixir both salving me, nudging me forward.

No *Cenacle* 80-81. No December JG. Radio done for the year too. I turned in a few other directions for a stretch.

Back to work the following Monday. We saw the wonderful Gillian Welch & David Rawlings in concert that night, brilliant Americana. More salve to sad.

12/16/2011 journal entry:

It was two weeks ago that I found out Jim died. Last Friday I was among his loved ones & others burying him. And another week has now passed. Two in all. He's gone, he's not. He's gone, I don't get to sit with him or talk to him on phone. He's not, I have his words on paper, his music recorded & in my head. I'm trying to be creative & honest with my sadness. It's not easy because I don't know my own heart fully. If anyone does. But I don't know mine. I had his friendship 21 years, 22 maybe. So much during that time that I can't dismiss it all. I wish he hadn't been doing poorly, that he had made it to better days.

News from the tomb. Yet I can say now, 9 years later, I am readying to leave the tomb sometime soon.

I've got a half-made book of his letters been pushing along the prep of during these pandemic months at home. A little light in the distance now.

I involved more in Occupy Boston, evicted as an encampment but alive in a myriad of local activism projects. Racial justice, voting rights, a newspaper, & a radio station. Occupy Boston Radio.

I found myself going into Boston to teach classes on how to record & assemble a radio show. Using all the tricks & knowledge I'd culled up through SPR. It was exciting to be visiting OB's offices & seeing so much activity. Hopeful. Giving & getting, the best kind of dance.

Another new project I jumped into was reviewing all of my *Bags End News* notebooks, from 1985 on, 15 of them, & reading from them on my radio show. Until our return to Boston in 2010, these had been in storage for years.

It was time to revivify this lingering project, find its new music. Going forward meant first a long thorough review. Many days found me on various trains & buses around metro-Boston, bound somewhere to work, or to an OBR meeting, reading these notebooks.

Reading them as Kassi & I were on train to Maine, taxi to hotel in Old Orchard Beach, to spend the holiday weekend celebrating our 6th wedding anniversary by the beautiful winter seaside.

Last night of 2011, writing *Labyrinthine*, *Many Musics*, & *Bags End News* while KD warmed from our hike that day & read.

Come to the beach again at midnight to watch fireworks welcoming in 2012.

For years now, I've been carrying around & keeping around a whole pile of materials for this chapter. I began writing it in 2016 (I think), & published sections of it in *Cenacle* 104 | June 2018, *Cenacle* 109 | October 2019, & now *Cenacle* 114. Had it been written & finished in 2012, it would have been in *Cenacle* 80 or C81.

It owned me because I did not want to write it. Then I would push to do it, get some done, call it enough.

Now it's done, written, soon to be typed up for publication.

Maybe, even more than publishing a book of Jim's letters, to have finished this chapter is to be leaving my tomb of memories about him. Maybe the rest of whatever that is, is now possible.

This chapter, as much as any poem or fixtional rendition of you, Jim, is my song of love & respect for you. I am different for knowing you. Different for losing you. Both matter. Both valid voices in this thankful song.

10/22/2020



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 | 114 | December 2020

Read the full History at: scriptorpress.com/history_of_scriptor_press.pdf

To write about 2012 now, these 9 years on from it, is to notice both its similarities & its differences. To form a valid, challenging, lively dialogue between now & then is to work with the facts of both. Consider the following.

This *History* began in 1995, the year I started Scriptor Press New England, & its first, & flagship project, *The Cenacle*. But the *telling* of this *History* began in 1999, as my M.A. in Writing, Literature, & Publishing degree thesis at Emerson College in Boston. A gap of 4 years, though I wrote my thesis up to 1999, as close to submission as I could.

Over a year after I graduated Emerson in December 1999, I started publishing chapters of this *History* thesis in *The Cenacle*, beginning with *Cenacle* 45 | April 2001. I had decided to publish what I had written about the press's first years in my thesis, & then to continue it along with new chapters about subsequent years. Took six issues, up to *Cenacle* 50 | December 2003. When I got up to 1999 in the telling, there was additional writing which concluded telling the year's events. But now at a remove of several years again.

There was a point, twas *Cenacle* 60 | December 2006, where I was writing about the previous year. *Ah, perfect*. Didn't last long. Fell behind again. Finished most recently telling of 2011 in *Cenacle* 114 | December 2020. Two decades now at this *History*, & 9 years behind.

2011's telling took 2½ years to complete, along 3 issues in that stretch. Some issues with no *History* featured. It was *fucking* hard to tell. A year ending with a disastrous Jellicle Literary Guild meeting, & then the heart-crushing death of my dear friend Jim Burke III. Finished that year's chapter finally. *OK*.

For this issue, thinking that the telling of 2012 would be somewhat easier, or at least not as hard as 2011. But what's true too is that the shade of that loss remained above, & within.

And the dark specter of possible job loss mingled too with this fresh, furious sadness, each vying for my heart's most obsessive attentions. Neither winning out, I think.

My technical writer contract's uncertain length, begun in October 2011, was of more immediate concern. A paycheck for bills & rent & groceries, or not. Nothing subtle in this.

But the loss of Jim changed the man I was in facing this worrisome situation. A sure job would have solidly grounded my feet, protected Kassi & me & our valued possessions, & our still quite new

arrival to Boston in 2010. KD new here; me returned after 8 years on the West Coast.

But money do what it do, & don't what it don't. This dialogue from now to then is two-fold. Now, as then, I work on a contract, uncertain of its extension, if this occurs at all. Now, as then, the loss of my friend is a straight-line wound. I used, & use, Art as my salve, my elixir, my meaning in a human world of countless questions & countless answers. I wrote in my Thoughts Pad on 4/17/2012:

*Losing Jim saddens me—payjob pisses me off
Art is all that holds me together from deep within—
Writing this moment is loving this moment,
no matter how difficult the words—*

As much as I covet arriving one day again to writing chapters of this *History* annually about the most previous year, I recognize, & have to recognize, that each year written about matters. No matter the gap of time. That accounting for my press's days & weeks & months & years like this is a valuable thing. A critical thing in my wishing to learn & know & feel better both *hereon* & *heretofore*. Reaching my writing hand & thinking mind & feeling heart *back* is better learning to reach them *forward*.

The writing & editing I do for Scriptor Press New England's projects travels alongside the other ongoing events in my life's days. They are like companions, not identical, though neither in opposition. They share time & space.

As I neither write creatively nor publish for a living, many of my hours are spent either earning wages from someone else, or else looking toward the next one who will pay.

I keep them separate because I would never want the artistic work I do to be directly beholden to anyone's judging, deciding peruse. Whether or not that could have been how I lived, it isn't. Won't be.

The start of 2012 found both these tracks struggling. And me trying to figure out how to do both of them better. How these early months went formed what became *Cenacle* 80, 17th anniversary issue, in April 2012. Thus worth telling.

We saw in the new year traveling up on the Maine coast, pursuing KD's love of the winter's unpeopled seaside. Staying at a hotel in Old Orchard Beach, Maine. As the clock approached midnight marking the new year, I sat in our hotel room, writing the first *Many Musics* for 2012, for Jim, called "Revelator":

*Letting you go, brother, is easy, because
you don't leave. A stretch of sunlight,
a horn from that attic window, words unsaid
in my head, laughing years & years old.*

*Letting you go to your fall, your ashes,
the molded paths preachers lure the
children in men by the fears in their dreams,
you dismissed it all but the tune. Long, lovely tune.*

*Letting you go to listening for your silent instrument,
ah, break my heart & you go on still. The spittle flies
as you cry it out, the strings bend & break,
the stars finally set & we all know how they return.*

How the heart lets go, easily, while discovering new ways to hold on. No real end to this.

Less than a week later, I learned that my two fellow technical writer teammates had been

offered conversion from contract to full-time work, but not me.

At first, this seemed like a temporary setback, one I was assured by management would be resolved, no sweat, in the short term.

But it wasn't resolved at all. My hopes were raised, dashed, raised again. My contract extended by short lengths, a couple of months at a time. Always the lure of complete success. Till the tracks ran out.

Hindsight being brilliant, I should have started job-hunting the moment the initial bad news came. *I wanted to believe it would work out well.* I was encouraged just enough to be willing to do so.

Funny that the names of those I worked with then do not summon up faces. I worked remotely, a practice become even more common in recent years. These colleagues were voices on the daily morning conference calls, no more (a super-odd aside here: recently, one of those long-ago colleagues contacted me for the first time in all the intervening years to talk about filling a vacant role at that company; she barely remembered me, & certainly not all of the frustration I endured back then; I was polite, recommended LinkedIn.com; she thanked me, & was gone again).

My "office," such as it was, was wherever I brought my work laptop to; merely needed an Internet connection to do the technical editing work I did. I worked mornings in our apartment, usually on the green couch (same one I am sitting on now, years & miles from there). Then I'd pick up the place, make the bed, do the dishes, & ride my beloved bike along the Minuteman Bikeway to Arlington Center. A friendly down-home coffee shop, called Jam'n Java, became my "office" most days. Occasionally the library nearby, or on to Harvard Square in Cambridge.

I'd have headphones on all day, listening to content for the upcoming SpiritPlants Radio weekend schedule of shows, & for my *Within's Within* too. It was peaceful. Yet ever-fucking-stressing the ticking down of my contract. Ever waiting.

We get the time we get in this world, unknowing how much or what to come next. My heart's drive had nothing to do with that weekly paycheck. It was simply hard-won funding for my Art & for my part of KD's & my quality of life. I then, as now, snapped off a piece of my daytime weekday hours to labor for jing. But this was *solely* why it mattered. For better & worse.

My Art drove me, as always, & it was shaded by Jim's death that previous December. I wanted to publish a book of his letters from *The Cenacle* (might finally happen this year). I wanted to keep something of our collaboration, our friendship, our bond.

Here's the thing: I was sad, but *he was dead. This wasn't about me.* Yet I was choiceless in having to react, living on, doing this & that. That's some of the hard part in surviving. The next day. The next week. The next month. One still dead. One still living.

So I solved this hard puzzle no better than anyone else ever has. I worked on, as I have through other losses, of jobs, of lovers. I think, in a way, Jim is most intensely with me when I am inside this work. He understood it, shared my obsession.

I anticipated the next *Cenacle* happening in April, & had begun working toward it even in January, in addition to having in hand the content that had not appeared in the aborted December 2011 issue.

I also began to root through crates of notebooks & cassettes of various projects. Maybe there was comfort in developing & further expanding the scope of my press's archives? This true, & also that until recently much of this material had been inaccessible in storage. Now it was all close to hand.

These crates of archives included printed



issues of *The Cenacle* back to 1995; cassettes of *Jellicle Literary Guild Highlights* which had been included with the 1995-2001 (issues #1-46) original *Cenacle* run; cassettes of the JG meetings in full running back to 1991; cassettes from 1999-2002 of my *Within's Within* radio show, when it had been on Radio Free Cambridge & then Allston-Brighton Free Radio; 50 or so volumes of cassettes I called my *Voice Journal* from 1999-2001; & all of my *Bags End News* notebooks, running back to 1985.

I started in on digitizing the *JG Highlights* cassettes & *Within's Within* cassettes, listening to them as I did. I wanted to recover my familiarity with all this good work, & build a live & creative bridge to their years. See what good effects this might have on my new work.

My plan looked toward building an online archive of all these projects at *The ElectroLounge*, including digital copies of those old *Cenacles* too.

A quick check of this *History's* pages tells me that I've made scant little mention of *Bags End News* to this point. For good reason that little of it had appeared in *The Cenacle* to that point (*Cenacle* 41 | April 2000 was the only instance). I had read a fair amount of its pages at the original JG meetings, but that was it.

In truth, I was after more than archiving work with this particular project. I wanted to revive it entirely, cause a new flow from what had become a trickle. Reinvent it, bring it to new sunshine. I'd already been reviewing these notebooks for awhile, flooding my mind afresh with their stories.

As a teenager in about 1978, I'd discovered paperbacks of J.R.R. Tolkien's epic high fantasy *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-55) at the local pharmacy. I'd also found around that time L. Frank Baum's wonderful *Wizard of Oz* series. At the library, pursuing this new happy interest in fantasy books, so much better for the soul than most of the rest of the life I was living, I found J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* (1911), A.A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* books (1926/1928), Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books (1865/1871), Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), & C.S. Lewis's *Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-1956).

"Bags End" derived from "Bag End," home of Bilbo & Frodo Baggins in *The Lord of the Rings* (as well as its 1937 prequel, *The Hobbit*). Bags as in grocery bags I'd collected my younger sister Christine's toys in, safer than an old wooden toy-box they'd been piled in. Gave each of these toys a name, & stories evolved. My mother eventually replaced these grocery bags with sturdier brown laundry bags.

My family lived in squalor & suffering; at least some of it was unnecessary, but so. My three special needs brothers did not get the care they deserved. My undereducated father worked many kinds of jobs, doing his best, exhausting himself day after day, little complaining. My mother ruled the household from some strange complex of love, rage, paranoia, shame, & stubbornness. I grew in ways light & dark from this wyrd swamp.

Bags End was one of the light ways. A fantasyland within those 3 brown laundry bags, like a heightless, depthless apartment building within. Full of funny, feuding characters that emerged from the visages of Christine's toys. They became, to us both for awhile, to me ever on, more than fur & fluff & glass eyes & button noses. They became part of the *Imaginal Space* I've been creating all these years. Creating it expanded my mind years before LSD joined in to accelerate the process.

My challenge in 2012 was to figure out how to write new stories that mattered to me as much as the old ones had. How to dare myself into writing at the edge of my reck. The time I spent repairing these old *Bags End News* notebooks, labeling them fresh, reading them one after the next, taking endless notes, pushed me deep back into their myth. Sought, like the old Ezra Pound vow, to *make it new*. A slow, but loving process.

On its 1/28/2012 broadcast, my *Within's Within* radio show marked its 13th anniversary, & I included a bit of the clumsy, uncertain opening of the first broadcast on 1/30/1999. The various archives were already coloring into the new work.

I'd also decided that the April 2012 *Cenacle* would *not* be a double-issue as I'd toyed with it being, & *would be* a kind of tribute issue. To Jim, of course, but also I would invite the other contributors to offer their own tributes & remembrances to loved ones passed.

I had moved away from the north-of-Boston working-class town of Malden in May 2002, my hovel emptied but for trash left in the corners (what I thought of the landlord), me & my possessions with Jim Burke III & friends in a U-Haul truck, bound briefly for Connecticut, where my precious possessions would stay in a friend's apartment building basement (& many of my books would be lost in a chance flood).

Left Malden to chase a girl on the West Coast who I had romanced by chat & phone for nearly a year. Refusing to believe it was a dead romance by the time I said goodbye to my friends in Connecticut, I boarded a Greyhound bus to ride 3000 miles to find out. Twas, indeed, dead.

Now, ten years later, my beloved KD & I took a daytrip to my old stomping grounds in Malden, as part of my still re-acquainting with Boston I'd known those many years ago, where I'd thought I'd left for good back in 2002.

I'd lived in Malden for 6 years, & during these years was when I wrote this *History* back when it was simply my M.A. thesis. I was living in Malden when I first tried LSD. When I first saw Phish in concert down in Worcester, Massachusetts (returning to Malden after a glorious all-night trip to & from on a Greyhound bus). When I first went to the Burning Man Arts Festival in Black Rock City, Nevada. When I started Scriptor Press New England's *ElectroLounge* website. When I started my *Within's Within* radio show on Radio Free Cambridge. When I started the *Scriptor Press Sampler* & *RaiBooks* series. Lived there the last 6 years of the original Jellicle Literary Guild. When I finished Emerson College, & thus 17 years on & off (mostly on) in academics. When I got my first of several Apple computers (including the one through which I would eventually, in 2003, meet KD). This strange little town just north of Boston *helped build me*.



KD & I took a bus & trains, over an hour's worth, to the Malden Center train platform I'd known so well back then. Not much of a claim to fame for this town (Earle Stanley Gardner, author of the *Perry Mason* mystery series, hails from there) despite being so close to historical Boston. I'd ended up there in 1996, in a one-room studio apartment, because my bookstore wages afforded me no better, & certainly no closer to Boston/Cambridge. Costs to live close to fame & beauty. But made the best of my exile. I was still just a short train ride away from all that I loved (& love still).

KD & I walked from the train station in the town center past the Stop & Shop plaza of stores, full for me of countless memories when this was my home, & this where I passed through daily. Come to the bench I sat on terrified one night, on an elixir's journey so fierce, made ever more intense by my library book of Jiddu Krishnamurti's philosophical writings. Especially where he writes: "*Transformation*

can only take place immediately; the revolution is now, not tomorrow." The library itself pretty much the same; twas a deep balm to me in those often-lonely years back then. Read a lot of Aldous Huxley. A lot of Stephen King.

Eventually we walked down Canal Street: its shopworn special events palace; its gun club so loud in the night; its old Rohm Tech factory building whose steps I'd sit on, high as stars, writing for my life, my Walking usually playing Phish tapes. Across the street an endless weed field, with big cement blocks blocking it off from cars parking in it.

One block in particular I called the *60s Rock*; various lipsticks I'd found on trains I'd use to decorate it with sentiments like LSD=GODD & also the @ sign. That terrified night I mentioned, all sense of time & space gone, I managed to get to the *60s Rock*, & found those lipsticked words. *It's OK. This is real.* I called this street *Carnal Street*, when I came down it after midnight, & Malden *ZombieTown*. All this lingers on in my *Labyrinthine* fixtion & other writings.

Crossing at a traffic light at the end of Canal Street, come next to Bell Rock Cemetery, established in 1648. Passed through here twice a day back then, on route to the train in town or back to my hovel.

Cemeteries had scared me when first I had moved to Malden. But I dug up some courage & greeted all the spirits there one night, said I meant them no harm, just passing through. Gorgeous big trees there. Strange effaced old stones. First burial marker dated 1670!

Brought KD to the tamarack tree my old poet friend Ric Amante, one glorious drunken night, had hugged & praised on our way to my hovel & more beers. Called it the *Amante Tamarack* thereafter.

We came to the condo complex of my hovel. Just a square brick building, of course, among many others. But I still live there in Imaginal Space, like other homes I've known. Walked on to my favorite place in the town: Dunkin' Donuts, on Eastern Avenue. Me, I called it the New Eastern Donutshp (because it had gone through a renovation back then).

Were you to walk in there, you'd find a place selling coffee, sandwiches, & baked goods. Orange & pink themed. All sorts of people passing through. Half-dozen tables. Nothing special to the casual eye, though fine for what it is.

That night of my return with KD, you would have seen me deep into writing in my *Bags End News* notebook, headphones jacked into my beloved Polly iPod (R.E.M.'s *Document* rocking me). High as stars, & happy to be back. Jim was gone, but not all was lost. He was high as stars too, after his own new fashion, & I was writing for my life in this beloved old place, with my beloved KD deep in her books as always.

But what I also see is those further years back, nudge 2012 back to 2002, & earlier. Maybe a 15-minute walk from my hovel. About the same further on to the library in one direction, the train station in another.

I'm there now-then in that same corner table, near the rest rooms. Payphone on the wall back then. Walkman going, library books on my table, notebook before me, black pen going at it. Plastic mug of Diet Pepsi. Maybe a donut too. Often a little cube package of ice cream from that plaza in town. Long hair, ragged clothes, worn belt, taped-up sneakers. Usually poor, horny, lonely, but I'd pull my sorry ass together in places like this & *fucking write with all my stars out*.

I wrote for my life because that's what I do. Then, now. *Why else bother?* Left 3, 4 in the morning, listening to Art Bell's *Coast to Coast AM* on the radio, discussing UFOs, vampires, worldwide cabals, & the like. I was a student, or working a low-paying job, or jobless. No clue what 2012 would be, much less 2021. We three wave to each other. Strange brothers.

So sat there anew that evening, & finished the *Bags End News* story I'd been writing for months, determining to find its fresh soil, work it through. Good way to finish that trip to Yesterdayland.

Maybe my heart's sadness was simply thawing some. I resumed writing *Many Musics* poems & *Labyrinthine* fixtion. I also resumed from those *ZombieTown* days my *Voice Journal* cassette recorder projects. Like a walking journal. Now used it also for storytelling purposes. More on that to come.

Started up work on *Scriptor Press Sampler* | 13 | 2011 *Annual*, figuring what *Cenacle* content would fill its pages. It was so nice to be doing this work.

Jim was still passed. My job contract was slowing running out. But I had Art, KD, my health & hers. These years later, Amante is long gone from my life, but his lesson to practice *gratefulness* in life stays with me every single good day I live.

Was mid-February when I decided that, since *Cenacle* 80 would be a regular issue in April 2012, 6 months from the previous one, I should make an epic list of goals for the year:

- *Scriptor Press Sampler* – March
- *Cenacle* 80 – April
- *Cenacle* 81 – June
- *Cenacle* 82-83 / *RaiBook* #8: *6 x 36 Nocturnes* – Summer
- *Cenacle* 84 – October
- *Cenacle* 85 – December
- *RaiBook* #9 – James Burke III's Letters – October
- *TABooks* 2012 – August
- Jellicle Literary Guild meetings – April / June / October / December
- SpiritPlants Radio – 36 scheduled weekends
- *ElectroLounge* – 36 updates (some large, some small)
- *Many Musics* – Finish Seventh Series; write Eighth Series, #1-60
- *Labyrinthine* – Finish Part Seven; write Part Eight
- *Bags End News* – 24 issues?
- *New Perfect* – New story

I was ready to carry on finally &, while I did not manage to hit all these goals, I did do a fair number of them. Brought them along at the end of February on KD's & my trip out to Colorado to see her family at their cattle farm. Long a nicely anticipated annual event, felt this time also like a much-needed escape from my ongoing job stress.

To get away, literally & figuratively, seemed the best of ideas. KD's kin are kind & familiar, & I spent the free hours I had between socializing editing *Scriptor Press Sampler* 13, reading Stephen King's fine novel *11/22/63*, & writing *Labyrinthine*. For the last of these, I was both reviewing past pages, over 1000 of them, & writing new ones. Revving up.

A visit to the Denver Art Museum, its beautiful strange works, riled me onward too. Sandy Skoglund's beguiling "Fox Games" (1989) ended up on the color cover of *Cenacle* 80. This pending issue was now ever on my mind, as well as the Jellicle Literary Guild meeting in late April where it



would debut.

Felt like I was going backwards & forwards at the same time. Leaving day by day the world I'd known when Jim was still alive. Dwindling job toward its last day. Yet new writing, *new work*. Back in Boston after so many years far. Ever-rising whirlwind.

My radio work had become ever more complex by early 2012. From 1999 to 2008, this work was preparing for, & then broadcasting live, my *Within's Within* 3-hour radio show, on a succession of radio stations. SpiritPlants Radio the current of these, & longest-lived.

In November 2008, out of necessity, since my show was all that was left on SPR, & the Irish fellow who'd hosted its online presence decided to stop doing this, KD & I took it over. The responsibility & the cost (though soon annual fundraisers would help to defray some of this), yes, but I also decided to rebuild it from my show as its flagship on out to a 36-weekends-a-year schedule of DJs & other content.

By early 2012, I wanted to do more with the weekdays; essentially rerunning several years of previously scheduled content, in a mix called the *(M)ystery-(F)low*. To do this, I needed to convert this content for streaming by our new Museter.com online host. And I did this conversion task week by week throughout 2012, till I now had 36 sorted-out folders of shows that new years would add on to. After airing twice on the weekend schedule, a show would go into the *(M)ystery-(F)low* for that broadcast week of the year thereafter. The result is both that content gets re-used, to be heard by more people, & that the station airs 24/7 without me devoting 7 days a week to new content. Much an improvement over pre-2008.

The other radio project I was involved with, Occupy Boston Radio, was much more of a collaboration. Though the Occupy Boston campsite had been evicted from Dewey Square in Boston's Financial District in December 2011, many of their social justice activities carried on in the group's name, including the *Boston Occupier* newspaper & OBR.



Last of these I jumped in to volunteer with. My contributions that spring & the rest of the year included giving classes on editing together pre-recorded radio shows (me an old hand from SPR); offering user training & support when OBR went with my recommendation to use Museter.com as their stream platform (much to the delight of Dennis Steele, owner of Museter); & creating & producing for air on both OBR & SPR a radio show I called *The Aggregated Occupier*.

The Aggregated Occupier was a 30-minute show in which I read collected (aggregated) pieces on the Occupy movement from the US and around the world. Reports

from the various Occupy sites, often about the violence & repression faced by people exercising their rights to free speech. SPR had been for several months been weekly featuring news on Occupy, & so my show carried on this reporting while adding in my reading pieces & offering commentary.

I would record this show on Friday mornings, for use on OBR that same afternoon, & on SPR's *News Hour* that weekend. Took about 90 minutes to produce this show, including the research on what to read from the news, & the recording of the piece or pieces. It felt like I was making a valid contribution to Occupy & the cause of social justice.

Occupy Boston Radio was the first project external to Scriptor Press New England that I had been involved in since Burning Man 2009. Being able to do the show at our apartment & upload it for broadcast made it something I could do during a full-time job's working week. Helping with Museter & going into the OBR offices in Boston to do training was fun. Lots of good people were in that organization.

I wish Occupy had been built for the long haul, but it seemed by its nature hostile to the

bureaucratic necessities of political organizations. It blazed through the skies for a year or so, long enough for its declaration “We Are the 99%” to deeply affect the US presidential election. The majority of voters were in no mood for Republican excuses about society’s structural inequalities.

It was also comforting to play a small part in good work being done to contrast my own job struggles & still-mourning heart. Nobody is immune to struggles & heartbreak in this world, nor joy or ecstasy of course, but tis the very rich whose wealth cushions them most from hard times. Fewer threats to their ways of living; fewer vulnerabilities to others.

Could I have done more for Occupy? Maybe. But that question lingers in most matters recalled. Recording a show for broadcast, & thus emphasizing the need for information, for knowledge, & for wide dissemination of these, these ideas have always been close to my mind & heart. I’m sure as hell glad I didn’t sit on the sidelines.

As April arrived, I was fully into work on *Cenacle* 80. *Within’s Within* hit show #300 on SPR that month. Started in going to a doctor again, for renewed commitment to health. I wondered in my notebooks about reaching out to friends again, as I had not since Jim’s death the previous December. A kind of “spring thaw” in my heart. And my employer informed me that no full-time offer of work pended for me; best I could hope was for a contract extension.

All of these things mattered, but *Cenacle* 80 most possessed my attention. It was going to debut at the 4/28/2012 JG meeting, on my birthday. Actually the second of the two meetings that evening because the first one was for me & KD to re-create, as best we could, the 10/29/2011 JG meeting. Among its many disasters was the fact that the recording of it had been lost.

As mentioned before, I wanted it to be a remembrance issue, could not help but make it so, & invited my regular contributors to join in, each after their own fashion. But it was also the 17th anniversary issue of a journal Jim had loved to read, debuted at a meeting of a group he had adored being a part of. I hope he got his copy somewhere in the Stars, & enjoyed.

My *From Soulard’s Notebooks* is my first letter to Jim since his passing, though I doubt it will be the last. Written on a bench in Boston, it in part reads:

I was mostly there, most often, for the music. To hear you play, to read my words with you. We were “art-stoned” together hundreds of times in over 20 years of friendship. We taught each other what we both knew: Art is our faith & calling in this world, & our best chance of doing good—

I’ve previously remarked on the eulogy that that comprises *Notes from New England* this time, save its fresh post-script:

As evinced by his last letter in Cenacle | 77 | April 2011, Jim was a passionate opponent of the death penalty. On April 25, 2012, Jim’s adopted state of Connecticut abolished the death penalty, becoming the 17th US state to do so.

These pieces lead me to remark next on my *Many Musics* poems, 15 of them, 9 of them written before Jim passed. Thus some of these poems had been intended for that aborted December 2011 issue. Most from a delightful trip to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston in early October 2011. Another of



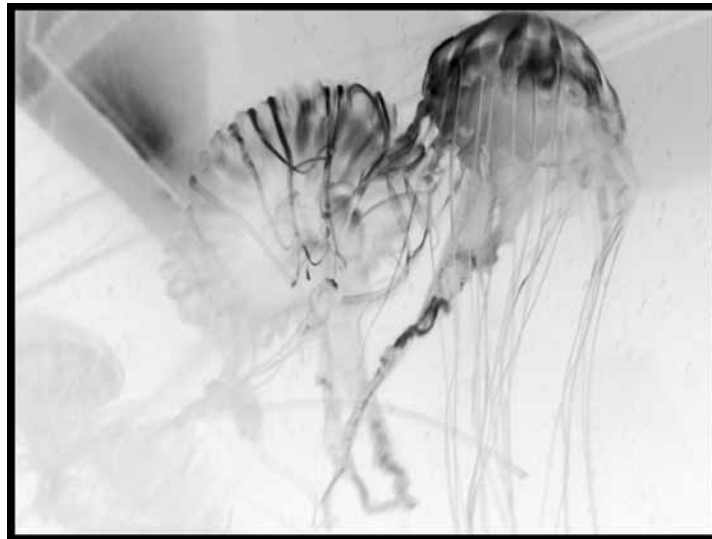
them inspired by Occupy, & still another marking the anniversary of an old heartbreak. Just before a new, worse one.

Of the remaining 6, there are 3 that linger with me well. “PeaceLoveDove,” titled after a favorite saying of Jim’s, is short but really covers most of what I could say anyway:

*You’ve become an open handful of light.
You’ve become a curled finger of ash.
You’ve become the star you always were;
A blue-eyed wink, & you are gone,
& you stay, & you stay, & you stay.*

“Them Jellies” came from a visit KD & I took to the New England Aquarium in Boston. Wonderfully fascinated by the four-story-high water tank of countless beautiful beings. The jellyfish caught us easy, & the words came:

*I don’t hold evolution or just
a well-inspired cosmic artisan
to credit for what I witness floating
before me. I don’t know what accounts
for its ligaments & lights. Many books
will explain & not convince. I remain,
by my preference, in wonder. And think,
more & more these days, how little
that matters benefits from tries at why.
Them jellies just float, in a tank
they did not make, for reasons they
do not know, they just light up & float.*



I like this poem & I think Jim would have liked it too. Nodded, smiled at its quiet music & point.

The final poem of *Many Musics, Seventh Series* is called “Leucocyte,” whose title is inspired by the brilliant 2008 LP by the Swedish jazz trio Esbjörn Svensson Trio. A jazz-fusion masterpiece on the level of Miles Davis’ 1970 LP *Bitches Brew*. The poem’s epigraph is from the Grateful Dead’s 1975 song “Franklin’s Tower”:

*If you plant ice
you're going to harvest wind*

And it sums to 6 short lines:

*—there will be music, there will be green.
But the ones gone are gone, enough.
Learning to hear them in tonight's melodies,
& then hearing otherwise some nights,
& so finally lose the difference at last,
is the new work.*

It had been a much longer poem. I wanted the world in it. Something, everything, & nothing, one & all. What arrived to was a fragment, a simple gesture of love backward & onward. A kind of obscure recipe for the “new work,” & an urging to get along to it sooner than later. *Play on through. Keep trying real hard.*

Of the contributors, tis poet ZanneMarie Lloyd Taylor who most directly chose to remember Jim. Her poem “Troubadour” in full:

*The hand of the player is calloused
And broad. Like carillon bells, he rings out
The import of mood or moment—voice
Mellow or hoarse, sweet or sweaty,
Crooner rich, blues coarse. He aches
For his guitar to swing out
Across any abyss, to something
Gentle a kiss, or the brightness
Of a half smile.*

*The Troubadour spans the ages, miles,
Spaces in heart and mind. He has been lost,
But never unkind. His is a wish
On the wind, hope out of time,
Love on the mend. A man
Who walks the barely visible line
Between truth and passion, between
The dust of night, and the shiver
Of sequined memory.*

A poem I *know* is good, but *feel* it far more deeply than know. *Thank you, ZMT.*

Judih Haggai's haiku often ply their mystical trade in these same strange & somber places:

*lost chords
last rites
a bird takes flight*

* * *

*long journey
all steps lead to sand
sun as compass*

* * *

*power surge
awe of existence
rush of life*

And Martina Newberry's poem "Ghosts" lingers nearby too:

*I've sensed ghosts now and then,
turned to where I thought*

*my mother's eyes might watch or
my father's fingers might touch.
I've found my cupboard door
ajar and heard wild words
in the dark.*

Read on & find Tom Sheehan's meditation on the matter, "Last Flags"

*An old man's strawberries in his backyard
run rampant part of the year. He planted
them when his sons caught the last lobster
the last day of their last storm too far at sea.
Summers, strawberries and salt mix high air,
parts of day-night nevermore letting go.*

And "Child of the Canal":

*With cold iron we pulled her
up through a mouth of ice,
the pale blue and white dress
twisted as if some unearthly god
had fouled her further paleness,
eyes hammered shut, her hair
caught in one final sweep. Night
too trod silver on her face
where a faint star shone.*

And Ric Amante's darkly comic piece "In Copley Square":

*It could be a sunny day like today—
gulls circling overhead, delivery truck idling in the alley,
northwest breeze bending the tops
of curbside lindens.
It could be a day like today
when death ambles up asking for*

*directions, some change, the time.
 And you could respond, eye to eye—
 whatever you want, I have,
 wherever we're going, I'm ready,
 however it happens, I'm here
 to be led from something
 I loved but never quite understood
 to something I've never quite understood
 but will love in the same way
 I've been given this light and this world
 to attend to, sit with, give away.*

New to *The Cenacle* is Nathan D. Horowitz, & his beautifully moody poem called “Boston to Vienna”; written in 2006, also about departure & longing:

*and my cousin Mimi sounded pretty bad on the phone last week,
 she uses a walker to get around now.*

*I should call her,
 she'd like it,*

*talk to her across a great distance,
 one breath at a time,*

*and you try to breathe slowly and deeply
 when you know you're going away.*

And if I would at this point doubt a jot the issue's deep, abiding theme, I am assured by Joe Ciccone's poem “The Window”:

Today he is gone three years

*The half-restored sedan waiting in primer in the garage
 Failed to become more than
 A broken echo of all that seemed constant
 In other days
 But its screws were loosening from the day it was new*

Everything is always briefer than you'd think

What about the other prose in this issue? Charlie Beyer's continuing *A Travel to Belize's* specter of death accompanies Charlie & his crew as they pass perilously through Mexico:

*About 1 AM the storm finally hits with ear-splitting blasts instantly on top of the blinding lighting.
 The dog erupts, barking in terror. The rain pummels the truck as a thousand hammers would. This
 goes on for about an hour. Then stillness. The air a fog, the mosquitoes have all survived and are
 back to business. I sleep fitfully for a spell, in and out of odd dreams. When I awake, Kim is sitting
 stoically beside me. Not complaining. A resilient girl, although I see she suffers and does not sleep. At
 last, the graying of dawn. 5:15. Not a lovely sunrise, just a slowly brightening of the grey.*



This issue's *Burning Man Books'* reprint of Herman Melville's classic fiction *Bartleby the Scrivener* much lingers with death too: When untangled from its non-linear way of portraying its titular character, Melville's story is of a man who had worked in the US Post Office's Dead Letter Office, till he was let go. This callous act on the part of others triggers his downward spiral, on down to the role of scrivener he eventually rejects; on down to his arrival in the Tombs, where starvation & despair are the only acts of will he seems to have left, & then dying from them.

Melville's story is a dark, tragic, funny prose-poem that will shake both laughter & tears from the attentive & sensitive reader. He writes near the end:

Strangely huddled at the base of the wall, his knees drawn up, and lying on his side, his head touching the cold stones, I saw the wasted Bartleby. But nothing stirred. I paused; then went close up to him; stooped over, and saw that his dim eyes were open; otherwise he seemed profoundly sleeping. Something prompted me to touch him. I felt his hand, when a tingling shiver ran up my arm and down my spine to my feet.

By 2012, I'd been writing *Labyrinthine* [a new fiction] for 6 years (as of 2021, 15 years). Yet the *Lx* pages in *Cenacle* 80 were from 2010, as each issue slowly caught the content up to current. So the *C80* pages were along the year we moved cross-country (in late June) from Portland, Oregon to Arlington, Massachusetts, in metro-Boston.

This another kind of ending embedded in these pages. Deciding in early 2010 to leave the West Coast we'd lived together on for 6 years (& myself even longer off & on). Not attending the Burning Man Arts Festival in 2010 (I'd been 1999-2009; KD 2004-2009). A decade & more my sights had most hopefully set West. Now they were looking East. *Door closing, window opening*, as the old saying goes.

Being fiction, much of *Lx*'s pages did not care where written & yet, being fiction, some did. I've ever let my life & loves & travels & struggles mingle into my fiction. *Lx* began in 2006, when we lived in Seattle; brought down to Portland in 2007; now East in 2010; already 1175 pages.

Over these months, traveling for various reasons, up to Seattle for a farewell visit, to Boston to get us an apartment, & even back to Connecticut for a visit with Jim, & to see Phish in concert, I wrote *Lx* at many long-time favorite places: Bauhaus Cafe in Seattle; Coffee Time & Taco Bell in Portland; Capitol Lunch in New Britain, Connecticut; Au Bon Pain Cafe in Cambridge, Massachusetts; & the New Eastern Donutshop in ZombieTown, Mass. The Western places I was leaving, saying farewell; the Eastern ones I was reuniting with, first time in years. I miss those places out West, & Burning Man too. Sad but true to say, I miss the places I wrote more than the people I knew out there.

The *Lx* pages in *C80* comprise the conclusion of Part 6, & they span from February of 2010 when we were already planning our move, to December, when we were now fairly well arrived. The last of these pages conclude a year before Jim died. Nothing more to comment on that.

Labyrinthine best describes itself by its title. Some of it is *linear*, sequential events told relatively straight; some is *quasi-linear*, in which narrative events *seem* to be ordered but are not; & some are *faux-linear*, in which characters or events *seem* to sum to a deducible pattern, & yet in truth do not. *Resemblance is not always sameness*. Time behaves oddly & space anarchically. I dare myself to write this book fearlessly; at my best, do.

There are notable examples of these ideas in these pages, of order, fake order, & odd time & anarchic space. These narrative . . . preferences . . . serve the structure of the book rather than occurring as anomalies within it.

Sometimes a version of me appears in *Lx*, somewhat real, somewhat fictional. In this passage, I'm sitting at Coffee Time, a place I mentioned earlier that I had loved to write in Portland, with its many strangely decorated rooms ever deeper within, & all hues of oddball characters. A place I'd hid from the world, going back to my hardest, jobless, lovelorn days living in that city in 2002:

Maya nods. "It's OK." "I'll miss it here." "It remains." "In my heart, yes." "In your Art, where it sings." "OK." "OK" "Doubt?" "Doubt & love." "Always."

Loved places, sometimes people, come & gone, I often choose to keep with me in the Imaginal Space of Art.

Much later, I am with Maya again, now in the New Eastern Donutshop (always ZombieTown, Mass. time in Lx):

I come to an old haunt, a coffee shop in a place I called ZombieTown—been coming to this joint again of late—Maya, summoned, sits with me—

"The web weaves forward & back"

She nods, sure, unsure.

"I suppose that's my task, figure how to do this, again, better, new—"

Nods again.

Another poorfolks place. And cops too. A singular place yet part of a large chain of stores.

"A web?" She cracks, giggling.

I nod. "Suppose."

"What then?"

"Sometimes the web is people, often it's place."

"Why?"

"Places I wrote, to write again. Resume. Continue. Awhile away, returned."

Funny in this instance that I was returning to an old haunt that I'd frequented years before Lx, to write new Lx pages. New/old paradox of some kind.

I call these passages as *linear* as Lx gets, even if this is no explanation for how Maya travels from Oregon to Massachusetts save, I suppose, in the pages of the book itself.

The pages about Kinley & Christina are more *quasi-linear* in the sense that Kinley recalls falsely (not wrongly; memory can be false to the facts, but not wrong in being something that lives as validly as true memories in this world) that he was Christina's first lover. He wasn't; was a violent man very different from Kinley. Then he claims that man *was* him. It *wasn't*. Then it gets weird:

"Look forward, Christina"

Those words follow me into my sleep, on that hotel bed, I watch it fall away, where Kinley had brought me, I lingered, my heart was stuck, looking at his face, his hands, he was older, thinner, if that was possible, lingered, he lingered over me as I slept, I was out but "look forward, Christina" meant he was watching me purposefully, a part of me wanted him to just cop a fucking feel, just one, Kinley, want me straight & easy like the rest. No. Not you. If we ever do fuck it will probably be on a roof during an earthquake or at high speed. I guess that's more my fantasy than yours, but anyway—

Later, I appear again, to talk to Christina while Kinley sleeps in their motel room. Talking, helping her masturbate:

I bring her close to climax, then swiftly pull out, motion her to finish. Her look is strange but she does, & takes awhile.

"How do I lose him?" She says as she is peaking. "How do I become the skank talking about God while Jack fucks me in the ass?"

"I don't know. I don't know how this moment, or you or I, relate to that moment, written in my

past, about your future.”
She cums hard, twice, quick, then slow. She reaches for me but I move away.
Reluctantly, she pulls her tangled panties back up & turns over to sleep.

Quasi-linear narrative because a sequence of events that do not track neatly, one to the next, but each exists relatively distinctly & coherently on its own.

Which brings us to the *faux-linear* narrative of Genny & Preacher. *Faux* because not a sequence of events at all. Preacher has led Genny to the Ampitheater in the White Woods where his younger self tripped & drummed—and is tripping & drumming *now*—in a long night by which he was/is reborn:

Oh. This really is him. My Preacher led me to this younger Preacher. And my younger self.
Now here we are & he’s reading me poetry while my body is readying to gnaw & chew his
body quite a few dozen ways.

This narrative is too surreal & squirrely to be time travel or anything like that:

I want to explain to you. You are a phantom. I don’t know why I’m here or you. He left
me here, you did, your future self. To fuck you? Is that all?

“No.” I say out loud.
He smiles.
“No.” I say to you.
“No?”
“No.”
“Are you sure?”
“No! And yes.”
He nods. Closes his book.
“What now, Preacher?”
He doesn’t flinch at being called that.
“What now?”
“We go, Genny. We go.”

The story of Young Preacher, tripping & dancing & dying deep in full moon woods one long drumming night is drawn from my 1998 experience at the Bread & Puppet Festival in Glover, Vermont. Yet I have so integrated it into the Imaginal Space of my Art that it resembles the *Lx* version only in the way that Preacher & Genny resemble their younger selves. Yes, kinda, sorta, & not.

That’s how *Lx* works as a book, as an ongoing fixtional narrative experiment. I let it be what strange thing it is, while also pushing it along, wondering beyond where it has been.

It is a work that can only & best be published in *The Cenacle*. They anchor each other very well.

Of remaining note in this issue are the several photos from Occupy Boston, taken back in November 2011, its brief but beautiful moment; & the sweet full color back cover. It depicts two small Creatures—a White Bunny & a Hedgedyhog—sitting on a kind of observation deck looking out to a great marsh. This photo taken during our Maine trip back in January. More to say about these Creatures in pages to come.

Arrive finally to the 4/28/2012 Jellicle Literary Guild meeting; as mentioned earlier, actually two of them that night. The first was several hours of KD & I reconstructing the 10/29/2011 meeting: lost audio, nor’easter, friend’s meltdown, last time I saw Jim alive. Said plenty on this night for now.

But this reconstruction was focused more on the Art that *did* occur that night. *Cenacle* | 79 | October 2011 debuted as planned. I read my *From Soulard’s Notebooks* Occupy-themed annual

letter to President Obama, & the issue's *Many Musics*. KD & I took turns reading what writings we guessed Ric Amante & Zannemarie Lloyd Taylor had read live that night.

For proxy readings, we had videos of Judih Haggai reading her C79 haiku; Martina Newberry reading her C79 poetry; & Jeremy Kilar, unable to drive up from New Jersey, because of the nor'easter, strumming & singing his songs in the darkness of his powerless house, using his iPhone to record the video & send it along.

Even Ralph H. Emerson, the poor soul who spent most of the night retching his tripped out darkness into our toilet, revived enough to read a poem of his. But, though we still had the scrap of paper he wrote it on, we could not read his handwriting.

Jim was on the couch, passed out from I can only guess was an accumulation of poor health, exhaustion, & frustration with his struggles. He was fine the next morning; I'd like to think that sleep in that safe place, among long-time loved ones, did him some good.

It was guesswork, reconstructing like this, incomplete. Yet Art *did* occur that night. *Cenacle* 79 *did* debut, & was beautiful.

None of what bad happened that night was planned, or could have been foreseen. *All* who came were welcomed. *All* who came had come many times before. I have many words & emotions about all this, but no explanations. Shit happens sometimes. As do mercy, luck, & joy.

Then we turned out attention to the second meeting of the night. A kind of re-start for the JG. Just KD & I in person for this one; a conscious decision. Time for *Cenacle* | 80 | April 2012 to debut, some of its beauties described here previously.

We did have the additional presence of a new Judih Haggai video gift of her haiku. And one more voice appeared—

You see, I had determined to keep Jim involved. Too many years of friendship. Too many glorious & inglorious JG meetings, over nearly a quarter of a century—

Him, bodily, now dust buried in an urn. His soul, if such there be, if wish he got, & I pray it true, as rare I do pray, up somewhere in the stars. C80's epigraph quotes him:

*We all become stars when we die . . .
then again, maybe stars become all of us*

—I invented for Jim, & later for others, a new feature, called the *Jellicle Guild Flashbacks*. Didn't have his body or soul with us, but did have years & years of recordings of him singing, playing guitar, talking, laughing at JG meetings. By this way, Jim would never miss a meeting &, as new people came along, they would get a little taste of who he was at his best. This first go round, a clip of him playing his signature song "Reservoir of Love" from the 4/1/1995 JG meeting.

This feature has gone on during every JG meeting since (I also still make up a JG postcard invitation for Jim, for my own sentiment, addressed "to the stars," though never mailed). For the four JG meetings of 2012, it was for Jim alone, but beyond that year other voices come & gone from past meetings would be heard, recovered their place too. Most still living, but each with a reason for no longer attending.

But, always, at its core, *JG Flashbacks* was an idea to honor Jim, & to assure occasional moments



back in his company.

From *Cenacle* 80, I read my *Notes From New England* text of my December 2011 eulogy at Jim's funeral. And also my *From Souland's Notebooks* April 2012 letter to him. And my *Many Musics* too, a number of which were, of course, for him.

KD & I took turns reading from the wonderful poetry in *C80*: Horowitz, Amante, Ciccone, Taylor, Newberry, Sheehan. And I read from Charlie Beyer's darkly uproarious *A Travel to Belize*. In between my first rant on the battle of billionaires that comprise the NFL Draft, & my second rant on Obama's chances in the 2012 US presidential election, reacting to KD's reading of Howard Zinn's "Changing Obama's Mindset." I read some from *Labyrinthine* too.

What I learned then, or really keep learning, is that the human heart can find ways to live alongside of memory of all manner of tragedies. Even worse, in a larger scale way, than the sudden loss of a dear loved one. Wars that destroy whole cities & even countries; natural disasters that leave countless dead or homeless; 2020's COVID-19 global pandemic easily comes to mind, too, its millions dead, so many needlessly.

I can't evaluate one loss versus another. Big, small. Sudden, slow. *Loss is loss*.

I only know that all this lingers with me, now as then. By April 2012, though, I was ready to chase my grief's further meaning in Art. To transmute all of this to something new. I was ready for new work. Part old sadness, long regrets, recent mourning, & my faith that these were some of the ingredients in what I had in me to make next.

Art has *never* let me down, because I have *never* given it up. Those meetings on 4/28/2012 were as much wakes as had been the one I'd been at with Jim's daughters & loved ones the night before his funeral. *Catharsis*.

What Art was to come for me in 2012 would more than justify my faith. The pieces of it were already mostly in hand. Maybe my heart had to be broken for me to bury deep enough in my work to find what much potential remained there.

Did not know this on that strange double-JG night in late April 2012, but I would start to very soon.



* * * * *



Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Secret Joy Amongst These Times: The History of Scriptor Press, 1995 to the Present

*"Think for yourself
& question authority."*
—Dr. Timothy Leary

Chapter Nineteen
continued from
The Cenacle | 116 | June 2021

Read the full History at:
http://scriptorpress.com/history_of_scriptor_press.pdf

*"The way things work
is eventually something catches"*
—Jorie Graham

I am not sure how *new work* emerges from old, from pain, from loss. What transmutes what we have—our memories, experiences, regrets, & skills—into what we have not yet—*new work, new Art?*

It doesn't always work this way. Not every ache, nor every ecstasy, renders unto something new, exciting, potent. Some sorrows cripple when re-lived. Some aches, some joys, elude the studying eye, artistic hand.

The best an Artist can do is to allow it all on the table. Every happy, stupid, fragile, weird, delightful moment. Like an overstuffed palette of colors, of notes, of clays & bones & rusts. Then, like a long distance traveler in mind & dream & yearn, explore it, bravely, fearfully, proudly, shamefully, & so on to the end.

I am remembering 2012 in several 2021 issues of *The Cenacle*. Allowing it to spin out page by page. Reading that year's many notebooks & re-visiting closely Scriptor Press's projects. Summing & distilling, both, because both are necessary. The first so that the patterns & trajectories only the passage of time may reveal become clear, get learned, are shared; the latter, in a sense, to render *what happened then* into *what it means now*. Making narrative from life bears some of the same imperfections of translating poetry from one language to another. There is both loss & gain in the effort. Tis so.

I keep in mind here the growing theme of *new work* in what I was doing in 2012. An accumulation of recent partings—from Burning Man, from the West Coast, from Jim Burke III &, by the end of June, from the job I'd had for a year—had, for a while, stumbled me sad & clumsy into something of a withdrawal, a retreat.

Not completely, because on the high end I had my beloved KD, & on the low end I had to finish out my job contract to get every last bit of pay, & then put on my hustling pants to shake my mind's ass for a new payjob.

But there had been no December 2011 Jellicle Literary Guild meeting or issue of *The Cenacle*.

And, while *Cenacle* | 80 | April 2012 had indeed come out, it was run through with mourning. Helpless anger at loss.

Come May, I was spent of sadness. Already, flying back with KD from visiting her kin in Colorado in March, I'd announced, mostly to myself, my turn toward "New Work":

*On high, where the mountains snowy knuckles
& the roads deep veins, the pressure lessens
& a hope elevates.*

*Chatter on the plane is what
some reckon breathing for. If I disagree,
then nothing for it but to make
like those veins & new rush heart & mind.*

Nobody was going to figure this out for me. I've always suspected that those who have loved me best, most generously, would not think the whit less of me if I never wrote another word. Kind of them. But—

I *would*. A lot less. Like an athlete his skills, a preacher his Godd, a beauty his or her face & torso, my Art is not negotiable to my sense of self. I am writing in this moment because I *will to, love to, must*. Not because these lines will be read by someone later, but because, pen in hand, I am best, most fully myself *now*. My *beat*, my *breath*, my *pen*. However so, I cannot love the world, strive to make it better, if these do not occur foremost.

What would this *new work* do? It would carry forth my adoration for Burning Man, the West Coast, Jim, & much else experienced in one way or another, & *make them into Art*. Less by memorializing their passage from my life, & much more by tapping deeper & better into the living feelings of them *still* in me.

Moreover, do this in the live air & light of new days & nights. Let passing time spice & flavor this soup, this *new work*. See what unexpected came of it all.

So, May 2012. I celebrated my personal journal's 38th anniversary on May 4; how I date when I began writing as a boy. Noting my recently revived energies & focus upon it, I wrote: "[T]aking time like this is restoring attention & craft—more of it—to the making—it will be better for the time taken—"

Kissed KD off every morning on her way to transit to work in Boston. Spent my time before work straightening up our apartment; labeling my many *Bags End News* notebooks (revving up new ideas, devoting new hours to this long-beloved narrative); digitizing old *Cenacle* issue supplementary cassettes toward electronic dissemination.

My primary reading was *The Dreaming Universe: A Mind-Expanding Journey Into the Realm Where Psyche and Physics Meet* by Fred Alan Wolf (Simon & Schuster, 1994). Wolf writes about dreaming as a vast various phenomena, worthy of serious engagement, study, mulling. Wolf writes:

For as long as Western cultures can remember, there has been a deep fascination with dreams. They have been taken to have the power of divination, or seeing into the future; they have also been used for reawakening memories of the past and even of past lives. Many cultures believe that during a dream the soul leaves the body and journeys to other worlds, possibly visiting another universe called the imaginal realm.

My ideas toward dreaming were evolving. So many ways to engage them, study them, ignore them even as most do, yes, yes, but what about *me*? I'd started keeping a daily dream journal back on 9/28/2009,

& my *Within's Within* show had begun featuring their content.

And I'd used dream notes for *Many Musics* poems for a while. Which was fun, gave my rusting poetry a fresh kick. Like "Glaring Lights," from *Cenacle* | 78 | June 2011:

*My bike in pieces on a long table,
laid out in plain intimate detail.
One of those single bulbs lighting up the garage,
& so quiet. What's funny is what moves
a heart, in moments, through the years,
how it receives & releases & changes shape
again & again. Now I'll tell you that my
my music took the form of tools & sweat
until we were riding again, what keeps the years
& close by is a tangle. I've let enough go.*

It was kind of accumulating path to what I simply call *Dreamland* in my work. A *different state*, could be called. One of mind, of body, of *Art*. A powerful *else* available to all.

Put simply: *why not engage dreams?* We spend a third of our lives in sleep, much of that in dreaming, though most dreams we do not recall. It is as valid part of living as beat & breath, as compulsory. As *egalitarian*.

Dreamland's borders closed to none. Uninterested in waking class or color or gender or age or whatever. It is a shared activity to all, even if we each do it alone, & new ones each night.

So why not push the idea to wonder if Dreamland might have more substance, continuity, connection among souls? It's not that far a leap, neither for scientists nor mystics. For me, Art & Dreamland waited to be married. I, slow, finally started to catch up.

Thus Dreamland, my evolving ideas of it, became an important part of my *Within's Within* radio show. After a bit of music, as I mentioned above, I would start each episode with a *Dream Rap*, which was my live improvising from recent dream journal notes. I liked this far better than random welcoming words; it would usher myself & listeners into the sonic landscape of this program. A challenge to me too, of course, but not too hard with steady practice.

And I was also expanding the imaginal scope of the rest of my show. As of the 5/19/2012 broadcast, I began inviting my dear friend Algernon Beagle to read stories from his *Bags End News* newspaper, in his own funny kind-of-brogue accent. Twas an early story, "Revolt at the Toy Store" from 1986, which began this feature. Now *Bags End News* joined readings from my *Labyrinthine* fiction & *Many Musics* poems on the show. These plus "Storybook Time" (often writings about psychedelics, such as *The Brotherhood of Eternal Love* by Stewart Tendler and David May (1984)), & pieces from the Burning Man Books series (such as *Many Blooms: An Anthology of Modern Women Poets*).

I still played a new rock album & a classic rock album each week, (as an example, the 6/2/2012 show featured the fine new Great Lakes Swimmers' *New Wild Everywhere* LP, & Bob Seger & the Silver Bullet Band's 1980 classic album *Against the Wind*) & some other music too, but I was also finding better my show's way into syncing with my other projects. Weirdly, what I wanted was a show as unique to me as *American Top 40 with Casey Kasem* had been. I seek in *Within's Within* to orchestrate a kind of weekly grand production of my own idiosyncratic form.

Beyond my own show on SpiritPlants Radio were the other DJ'd shows, like 2 Zillion-Year-Old Hippie's *A Psychedelic Experience*; DJRL's *Regional Cuisine: Deep Fried Roots Music*; & DJ Dellamorte's *Disco Dichotomy*. Also much external content to choose, & pleased in particular that *Storybook Time* featured Philip K. Dick's 1981 SF masterpiece, *VALIS*. By turns self-obsessive & de-constructionist, PKD's book mixes his own life's surreal mythology with just a pitch-perfect kind of highly idiosyncratic

narrative. Any legitimate intention to create *psychedelic radio* would be wise & lucky to find pieces like *VALIS* to air.

My relationship with Occupy Boston Radio continued along 2012. Aside from continuing my show, *The Aggregated Occupier*, one cool thing that happened in early June was that I demo'd in person in Boston for the OBR staff the Museter.com online streaming platform that SpiritPlants Radio used for many years. The nice appeal of its economical price tag, & ease to get an online station up & going, with both live programming & some pre-recorded. I helped get OBR hooked up with Museter.com, much to Museter owner Dennis Steele's sincere delight in being able to help out an Occupy project.

It was lucky I had OBR to think about, to meaningfully connect with people locally in Boston because, come late May, I was told my technical writing gig of near a year, for a Minnesota-based healthcare company, was going to end on June 29.

I tried to finish on a high note, leave with dignity (humbly thanked my boss Jean for all of her support, & she told me that she wished I was not leaving) but, truly, there *is no dignity* when a job contract ends, & one is shown the door. The company finally zips up, pays up, & goes. What I had to engage me into June was the making of *Cenacle* 81, & the prep for the 6/30/2012 Jellicle Guild meeting. This & finishing *Scriptor Press Sampler* 13 to bring along to the Out Loud Open Mic event sponsored locally north of Boston about once a month.

Out Loud was held in a big old house converted to host such artistic events. I'd found brilliant poets Tom Sheehan & Joe Coleman there. And twas my dear poet friends Ric Amante & Melissa Wattenberg who hosted the event.

I attended the Out Loud every few months for a number of years. A good-spirited event, with little of the usual well-known rivalries among Artists, where such events can turn into homegrown versions of *The Gong Show*. The musicians were decent to good. The poetry—beyond Ric, Tom, Joe, & Melissa—was so-so to bad. But I guess I miss it, for itself & for what-all lost from Ric & Melissa choosing to leave my life. But on that May night back in 2012, we were still friends, & I brought *Scriptor Press Sampler* 13 to hand round—

Scriptor Press Sampler | 13 | *2011 Annual* contains a wonderful array of Art. Poetry by Ric Amante, Joe Ciccone, Judih Haggai; prose by Ralph H. Emerson, Charlie Beyer, & Jim Burke III (his final letter to me before his 2011 passing); & my 2011 letter to President Obama, *Many Musics* poems, & *Labyrinthine [A New Fixtion]*. Also Kassi's wonderful graphic artwork. It is a fucking honor to work & collaborate with such talented people.

KD & I spent our Saturdays as always going out to movies. *The Avengers* came out in May; its series has re-set the bar for superhero movies with its amazing cast, story, special effects—& magickal ability to tie heart to *Boom!* We also watched the four films in the *Alien* franchise, leading up to the June 2012 release of Ridley Scott's *Prometheus*. This series mixes together fear, & something opposite to fear, in a way both heady & visceral.

It was the weekend of 6/8-9/2012 that we deviated from movies to take the Greyhound bus from Boston down to Worcester, in southern Massachusetts, to see Phish live in concert twice. Same Worcester Centrum I'd first seen them back on 11/28/1998—only this time with KD as bonus. Even made time during our trip for a visit to Worcester's own George's Coney Island Hot Dogs. Atmosphere out of a 1950s sandwich automat, & hot dogs as good as recalled. Phish as good as I recalled too, maybe better. Likely better.

As May gave way to June, I pressed *Cenacle* / Jellicle Guild prep work more & more to compensate for my expiring contract. No full-time conversion, not even another contract extension.



End of the line. Pressing good things to balance out bad ones, I was ever bent on making the best *Cenacle* yet.

I *knew* this was coming. It *had* been coming for months. My two fellow technical writers, long converted to full-time status, would remain there that summer, & beyond, while I wouldn't. I didn't then, & still now, don't know why them & not me; it has long not mattered, save in this looking back.

But I did know that I was determined to make that June a good one. I could not bring Jim back, but I could find ways of living that showed that *knowing* him had changed me for the *better*. I *couldn't* stay at a job that no longer wanted me, but I *could* determine to find a place that did, & meant it.

Mostly, checking my deepest roots close, I had KD, a home, & my Art. Good new things could / would come from all these.

Even as it took till mid-June to get all the needed copies of *Cenacle* 80 printed & mailed off, I was deep into typing *Cenacle* 81. Writing it too.

I was now chasing a way toward finely, eloquently, yet idiosyncratically crossing my major works: *Many Musics* poems, *Labyrinthine [a new fixation]*, & *Bags End News*. I wanted them to be both uniquely individual & of one extended world. A single *mythopoeia*, like Stephen King rendered his many books via the *Dark Tower* epic. An idea introduced to modern fantasy literature by J.R.R. Tolkien in his 1931 poem of that name.

I had already crossed these works in the past. But these crossings were like in TV shows or comic books, a “guest appearances” kind of thing.

I wanted more. A deeper level of commonality. This push would eventually reach my *Dream Raps* series & *Travelers Tales* too. It would soon involve a shared origin story. A reaching back to very beginnings, & on to possible far endings.

But I was not there yet. Where I was in early June 2012 was the idea of a *Red Bag*. A kind of direct portal to Dreamland. It began with a reference in *Labyrinthine*, from which extracted a poem in *Many Musics*, & soon a full story in *Bags End News*. What *Cenacle* 81 featured of all this was the “Red Bag” poem, & the many notes I took at that Phish show down in Worcester.

First of two nights I went myself, KD not desiring *that* much Phish. Settled peaceful watching Boston Celtics playoff basketball in our hotel room. I went along, brought some pens & paper & elixir to the long line into the Worcester Centrum, just like back in 1998. High & happy (*fuck ending contracts!*), I dug deep into scribbling down new ideas. *Wonderful show!* Even better next night in KD's company.

In between the two nights of shows, I was typing at *Cenacle* 81, on my beloved MacBook Pro Eurydice, & writing for the new issue too. Afternoon before the second show, we were at a Starbucks, working away, when my old friend Ralph Emerson called.

Six months, no word. He was the one who melted down on elixir at the October 2011 Jellicle Literary Guild meeting. Lucky enough to drive away the next day back down to Connecticut with Jim, wait out blizzard blackout aftermath with him.

Seems it had all done him some good. The elixir, Jim's extended company. He was attending to his family matters & came across to me as feeling better about himself. Simply put, I was glad for him.



Other friends were doing well too, if also moving away in spirit from me. I heard from Ric Amante. He & Melissa were marrying, would not be at June 2012 Jellicle Literary Guild meeting.

By 2012, I'd known Ric for about 20 years. Yet I was not invited to his wedding. We'd had many times, back when, when we were bound at the hip & heart. I'd never wished for him anything less than all the happiness he could know, & was very happy he had such a special woman in his life.

But I should have gotten it. Understood that those old close days were long gone, & nothing like them would be coming back. Maybe the misunderstanding that emerged that crazy October 2011 Jellicle Literary Guild meeting accelerated the ending, but our friendship would likely have ended anyway, burned down its last embers & done. I've ever struggled to let go of people I love when there is no longer an obvious reason to hang on. Life can be hard & cruel; *why face it with fewer loved ones close by?*

People, friends, lovers, come & go. Jobs come & go. There is no knowing why, no reasoning with such mysteries, or solving them for "next time." To live & love is some of the time to be a little unsure.

I still knew Ric & Melissa awhile longer, but it was becoming more sentiment, more obligation. These years later, I wish them well, I guess. I don't wish them ill.

But, reaching for straight & true words, I know our lives apart are *less rich & varied* than they could be. I miss Ric's laugh, his energy, his *wonderful* poetry. I miss seeing his shared happiness with Melissa, & her fine poetry too. I wish it *was* otherwise. Yet I do not assume these feelings are mutual for them.

Maybe the stress of *Cenacle* work, radio work, & a month leaving a job I didn't want to, added up to me getting a bad cold mid-month. KD got it a week later. But we kept at *Cenacle* 81 making, & arrived with it well in hand toward the end of June. We mailed out Jellicle Guild postcard invites, & pushed toward completion by June 30.

Day before, my job hand ended. Nothing to do about. Not even the sentiment of a waning old friendship. Just *done*. Ship back the work laptop. Get the last paycheck. Bloodlessly cold shit humans do to each other, in addition to our skill at warfare, ethnic cleansing, racial slaughter, environmental catastrophe, & other things . . .

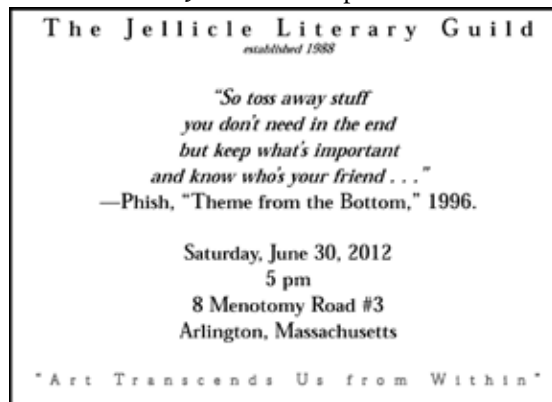
[Pause. Take a breath. Continue.]

Ralph called to tell me he was taking the Greyhound bus up from Connecticut to attend the Jellicle Literary Guild meeting. I had invited him as always. Would be his first since that disastrous October 2011 meeting I keep on yawping about. Actually, since no meeting in December 2011, & the April 2012 meeting was just me & KD by intention, he was coming to the next one we invited people to.

We met at the bus station, talked about that October night, & the good it seemed to have done him. I think I made him understand that KD & I tended him most kindly that night, & Jim had finished the job bringing him home.

He moved out to California not long after this June evening, to tend to his mother now out there. That weekend was, I think, the last time I saw him, & we had a friendship going back to high school, over 30 years. I last heard from him 5 years ago now, found a letter again recently. I won't quote it here out of respect for privacy, but will say I did not reply to it. I also wish him well, I guess. Or at least not ill.

Cenacle | 81 | June 2012 bears in its secret heart a wraith, a sadness, an eagerness, a regret. A power braided of many things. Where *Cenacle* 80 had much of the memorial about it, as well as material lingering from the unmade December 2011 issue, *Cenacle* 81 is *present & moving ahead*.



My sadness over Jim's passing was in part fueling *new work*. Jim believed in my Art as I did in his, & honoring my love for him, & deep respect always, was in part to make new Art worthy of his regard. I did not make Art *for* him so much as I sought to continue embodying the *faith* he had in my work. Had, has, same words, different angles. Jim's Art & craft is of the level of mastery I have long sought to achieve in what I do. *Cenacle* 81 is *there*. End to end. It had been *eight months* since being there. *Cenacle* 80 was just too damned sad & purgative in my mind. Not so much what others saw, but by my own assessment.

My job was ending. I've now pawed at this old wound countless times, beyond reason. But while it was ending, until its very last day, I was working on finishing *Cenacle* 81. Unlike *Cenacle* | 69 | June 2009, when the issue was done the same day I learned my job was over, this one ran stride for stride with this knowledge. All of June 2012 these happened simultaneously. The importance of that job is long gone; *Cenacle* 81 remains alive, & still matters.

Start these comments on it, strangely, not with KD's fine cover & its close-up of a piece from Josiah McElheny's mirror-play work "Endlessly Repeating Twentieth Century Modernism" (2007), which we saw together at the Museum of Fine Arts, & at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston (& KD has more beautiful portraits of the beautiful works within the issue), but instead near the end of the issue, the last entry in the *Notes on Contributors*.

Including *Notes* began in *Cenacle* | 22 | October 1997. I suppose I noticed this was a common feature in literary journals I saw in libraries & bookstores. The entries in the *Cenacle* tend to be part informative & part affectionate notes to the wonderful people whose brilliant work populate its pages. I make them more personal than most journals do.

My own entry is last, was likely the last bit of new writing for this issue. Reads:

Newly jobless, another summer on the bricks, & on the dole, & yet my black pen still moves, & so I glide through the peaks & the mud, each, & both, with melodies of hope a'clinging to my soul . . .

These sentiments sum what I was doing here. I could *not* bring back Jim, could *not* keep my job, (these things said too many times here), but I *could* make a great *Cenacle* with all those involved. You *can't* do what you *can't* do, but you *can* do what you *can*.

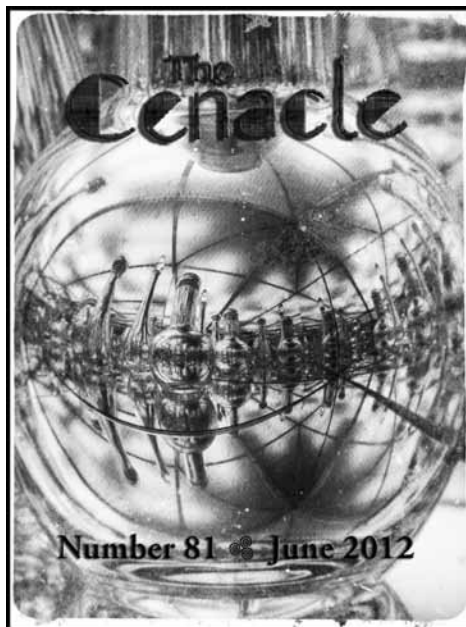
A week before this meeting, I wrote *From Souland's Notebooks* at my beloved Au Bon Pain Café courtyard table in Harvard Square. It had been a long Saturday afternoon into late evening of writing, typing, & editing this new issue. This was the last piece for the night. I sucked my weary energies together & dived in, let the beautiful night & my many feelings all loose.

It begins:

I speak to the freak. I think there are a lot of us around. I think I know why.

You. The freak. You're restless, dissatisfied, agitated. You wonder why. And you wonder why. And you still wonder why.

You. The freak. You love too, you love a lot, & not always easily, or in ways easy to explain. To others. Even to yourself. Maybe especially.



Once established who I “speak” to here, I argue that freaks in particular “keep putting your nose above the level of the herd around you, sniffing *wrong*. It sniffs *wrong*.” I wonder if the hard answers to human suffering might not be *more* freaks: “Maybe the freak populace has to become a fucking epidemic. An impoverished, have nothing, will shake it though, *singing, dancing* epidemic.” And conclude:

Maybe that's the only way out, ahead, whatever, freak. You don't know, I don't know, here they come by the millions. Alright, spread out there on the floor. Alright, there's bread, there's something. There's singing, there's dancing. There's breathing as long as there's one of us & at least one tree. Alright then.

I've never *not* felt the freak, & eventually learned it was OK. *True*. Would rather help another find their freaky way than see them deny it so. By using *From Soulard's Notebooks* to speak in praise of freaks, the issue makes its stand on these matters clear.

But, see, freaks ain't weak. The poets in this issue, freaks one & all, are *really good*. Let's take them on, you & I.

I have an editorial practice of putting new contributors up front, page 1, in issues. Let their new light shine in the lead position. Thus Joe Coleman's poetry led this issue. Illustrated by his own hand, “Dolores Toodles Goes to Market” is a lovely, satiric piece of three pious old ladies who rob a market:

*As Dolores and Bridie stuffed loot in their sack,
Millie went to get booze from the cooler out back.
Dolores demanded a carton of smokes,
a tin of meat, then she waved. “Toodle-oo, folks!”*

*They hotwired a Bentley, with pedal to metal,
and Dolores was soon boiling tea in her kettle,
back in her hide-out that night all alone,
Dolores Toodle was using her telephone.
to tell her two cronies, “We certainly must
take a walk one day soon to the Savings and Trust.”*

And concludes with this mocking moral:

*As we age it may seem that we run out of time.
But you're never too old for a life of crime*



I'd mentioned earlier that I'd met Joe Coleman at the Out Loud Open Mic event run by Ric Amante & Melissa Wattenberg. We were pretty good friends for I'd guess 5 or 6 years. He was an older gentleman, something of a smoker & drinker for a while. Funny as hell in conversation. Kind. Strange. Sad in untold ways. This poem was the wonderful first of many we published together.

Nathan D. Horowitz was another pretty new friend of mine but, unlike Joe, who lived a couple of towns away from KD & me, Nate lived then in Vienna, Austria. American born, but a far traveler to several continents. His “Self-Portrait in 20 Dreams” ranges from his very youth in the early 1970s up to 2012. The 2011 dream is particularly striking:

I'm one of a minority of people who are something like autistics, but our disability—if it is a disability—is physical as well as psychological: we are weightless. It's nighttime. A dozen of us are in a public park under streetlights, scavenging potentially useful discarded objects from garbage cans and dumpsters. Some normal people approach and we throw ourselves through

gaps in the bushes that line the sidewalk, then hide there, floating, until the normals leave. I need to go out among the normals, so I meet with our leader, a tough-minded woman in her fifties. She has a collection of four three-dimensional postcards that she uses to explain our condition so that others will understand. She gives me two of them. One has several panels. It shows some of us as children being investigated in a laboratory. We're alone with white rats that run through a maze. Their noise is no problem, but as soon as the white-coated scientists come in and begin to speak, we become agitated and try to run away. The second three-dimensional postcard is a photo of a group of us as children standing in a circle for protection and consolation, floating about a foot off the ground, with our heads down and our feet straight up in the air.

Horowitz's writing is eloquent, funny, & often elusive. The trickster spirit of Loki lurks in his pen.

Meanwhile, there's Martina Newberry & her fierce funny poems out in California. Poems soft as fresh-baked skin, yet rife with deep-clashing metals. Her work hurts like healing sometimes hurts. Here's "After the Hurricane" in its hard, soft, full glories:

*There is that moment, an hour or two
after the hurricane, when it comes
to you that, before it hit, you were
weeping. You sat in the kitchen and
thought about aging, how your children
hated the oldness of you, refused
to see you. You were weeping. Your feet
were crossed at the ankles, a tissue
was balled-up and damp in your fist. You
wept for your sins, for the selfishness
of your soul, for the sound the minutes
make as they race by you, pass you up.
When the hurricane hit, the screen door
blew off and the roof shingles lifted
and the rain came like needles. Your cat
leapt to the top of the fridge, your lover
pulled you into the bathroom and held
you very tightly. The lights went out,
the phone rang twice then stopped, a porch chair
blew over on its side, danced across
the yard. After a while, it was over.
You thanked God for the cat, for the roof,
for the way it stopped suddenly, then
all you heard was rain landing hard on
the sill. You went to bed and woke late
at night with a cramp in your hand. You
still held the tissue, balled-up and damp
in your fist. Oh yes, you told your
self, right before the hurricane, I
was weeping.*

She is a dear person & a preternaturally gifted poet. A treasure to know.

Now look toward Israel & the magickal haiku of Judih Haggai. She writes one nearly every day &, four times a year, I'm lucky enough to sort through this garden to select a dozen blooms. Order them into a kind of faux narrative for fun. A sweet pleasure to do. Here's three of her pretties from *Cenacle* 81:

*another morning
hummingbird finds nectar
and so will i*

* * *

*lizard still
on stucco wall
aroused by nothing*

* * *

*a glimpse of light
through the mist
long lost friend*

Judih's haiku show what good haiku is. The novice is left to wonder the trail from hither to yon.

And come back again local to another lucky find from the Out Loud: Tom Sheehan. Tom's a story-teller, I'd say, both in his poetry & his fiction. Rich, evocative language. Full-fleshed & elusive both. Could be a shop-keeper by his appearance: short white hair, button-down shirts, & trousers. Is, in fact, a maker of incendiary musics.

His "Cutting Ice . . ." carves, like Rodin his sculptures, a tale of men pulling large blocks of ice from a pond local to Tom's youth, hauling them away by horse-drawn wagons. This stanza in particular floors me silent, exists in this world beautiful & unknowable like rainbows over dusky sounds, & carpets of fairie white moss in deep Woods:

*Mostly I remember the eyes
of a horse who plunged through the ice,
like great dishes of fear, wide and frightened
and full of the utmost knowledge. His front
hooves slashed away at the ragged rim of ice,
but could not lift him out, or leather traces
or ropes or sixty feet of chain, and when he
went down, like a boat plunging, huge bubbles
burst on the surface and a December afternoon
became quiet.*

That's precisely how to write great poetry, if you can.

What about the issue's great prose? Let's begin with the wild conclusion to Charlie Beyer's *A Travel to Belize*. Charlie, Kim, & their variety of pets continue to limp in their truck along Belizean roads, of worsening qualities, with its trailer hauling Charlie's hovercraft behind them. Encountering all manner of bureaucrats, & hustlers, & friendly & unfriendly thieves, they persevere & arrive to their little purchased square of jungle. There is a beautiful passage that captures Beyer's close, loving attention

to detail:

At last, we are alone, our empire of American commodities secure, just us to contemplate where the hell we are. We wash in a bucket from “well” water, which is a rain water hole in the ground below us. I am fairly dubious of its microbial concentration, advising Kim not to get any in her mouth. Certainly not toothbrush quality. As a final act of glory, I get one of the LED lights hooked up to a battery and life is illuminated. The bedding has dried a bit during the day. The nest is an oasis of rest after a roasting day of labor. A mild feeling of contentment comes over us with this hard-won peace. Kim is smiling. The cats are on jungle prowl.

There is a subtle, magick craft to Beyer’s narrative. The reader is swept along in strange, often bewildering scenes, yet there are also moments like this one where he slows things down to a place, a moment, a feeling. *Beautiful work.*

Just as SPRadio / *Within’s Within* was featuring Philip K. Dick’s mature masterpiece *VALIS, Cenacle* 81 re-printed his 1953 “The King of the Elves” (also featured in the 2005 *Burning Man Books* series). A deceptively simple fable of an elderly filling station gentleman named Shadrach Jones, who kindly saves a band of Elves from a wet, cold night, & is rewarded with their Kingdom when their old, sick King passes. By turns grateful & incredulous at his luck, Jones leads them to victory in a mighty war with the Trolls, & wonders if he can return to his old life.

“I thought maybe now I could go back to the filling station and not be king any more.” Shadrach glanced hopefully around at them. “Do you think so? With the war over and all. With him dead. What do you say?”

For a time, the Elves were silent. They gazed unhappily down at the ground. None of them said anything. At last they began moving away, collecting their banners and pennants.

“Yes, you may go back,” an Elf said quietly. “The war is over. The Trolls have been defeated. You may return to your filling station, if that is what you want.”

What I love about PKD’s writing is that he is able with weightless ease to explore the countless regions of his mad genius, while keeping his language simple, with a twinkle in its eye. Shadrach Jones needs a fresh path to follow in his life, to wake him anew to its mysteries & possibilities. The Elves, in turn, need a King to lead & to protect them. A magickal connection is made. In words alone, yet tis wonderfully so. What PKD did countless times in his work.

The issue’s other reprint is Sarah Seltzer’s essay “5 Fascinating New Uses for Psychedelics,” originally published online on 4/26/2012 at Alternet.org. Listed out, these uses are: alcoholism; end-of-life issues; depression & anxiety; cluster headaches; & PTSD.

To clarify, none of these uses are actually *new*, but Seltzer does detail revived FDA approval & various funding for studying these critical matters. She concludes encouragingly:

But as all these stories in the mainstream media show, the therapeutic uses of these substances may finally be getting the kind of measured, rational attention they deserve—without the handwringing that comes from past negative associations. At least we can hope.

Even more eloquently is how Terence McKenna sums the matter:

The idea of someone going from birth to the grave without ever having a psychedelic experience is like someone going from the birth to the grave without ever having a sexual experience. It means you never really played in the game. You were a spectator, a silent witness. It means that you never figured out what it was all about.

Many literary journals, quite good ones among them, do not feature graphic artwork. *The Cenacle* is not one of these. This issue features terrific work by Baylen Greever (a new contributor & also an SpiritPlants Radio DJ), Jeremy Kilar (whose great work had been previously featured as well; also a SPR DJ); &, of course, my beloved Assistant Editor KD (a SPR DJ too!). Let me quote the *Notes on Contributors* about her:

[KD] loves me no matter my current state of high or crumble. Her gift of love for me is part of why I edit this journal & share with you.

From its first issue in 1995, I have let visual artists take their honored place in *The Cenacle's* pages, & I am ever grateful they do.

Come now to my work that fills about half the issue's 160 pages. Beyond my *From Soulard's Notebooks*, my first piece in this issue is Chapter Sixteen of this self-same *History*, covering 2009. Suffices here to make a few general observations about this work. It began as Master's thesis at Emerson College in Boston in 1999, when Scriptor Press was less than five years old. Published it in *The Cenacle* issues from #45 | June 2001 to #50 | December 2003, & then kept on it. It lingers from history toward memoir, toward polemic, & back again, because it is my shaggy mind & years it addresses. There are some more personal topics I rarely or do not address in it. Such things better dwell obviously & obscurely in *Many Musics*, *Labyrinthine*, *Dream Raps*, or even *Bags End News* now & again.

But writing this work compels me to confront *how* to tell of my life & times. What *matters*? To what *level of detail*? How do I keep it fresh, & at least somewhat unpredictable, as I tell of days & months & years in which events *accrete* more than jerk about wildly?

As well, I don't work on this *History* steadily, so it's always a bit foreign & uncertain to me when I resume. Maybe that's good.

It can feel a bit like trudging, all the old pages I have to absorb for their filtered bit in the narrative. And yet like a challenge too. How to tell, *well*, of *what matters*, & render lively narrative from slow passage of time & its events? No sure answer but in the focused effort, & willingness to let the result *be* the result.

Many Musics begins with the aforementioned poem "New Work." A few poems on, "Render" continues this theme:

*There is that older than
my paths & songs, roots dangling for
a hold. There are liners in those skies
tonight, tomorrow, beckoning for a ride,
maybe just for a song.*

These lines quoted in the issue's "Epigraph" too. I found myself *both* reaching forward & reaching back . . .

Reaching back in my heart in: "Just Play Through":

*If I can learn better to give it &
take it, & accept the brutalest beauties*

*of this world,
Perhaps I can live long & come to my end
with an easy smile like to your own.*

Reaching back into history in “Temple of Dreams”:

*Found in a clearing shaped like a temple
in full moonlight, potent without
flesh nor bones, a place, a portal,
a tool, a salve, recked ancient by men
yet dreams do not bide by miles or hours.*

And then there is the last poem of the group, “The Red Bag”:

*When the glaring lights have left
When the music has slowed to smoke
Where there is sniff of good blood & then no more
When touch brittles maybe to break
When best taste is old & cold, hurts*

*The red bag, doorway, back to dreams
The red bag, the path, come
The red bag, come, trust, come here.*

Whatever materials one uses in one’s Art, whether they come from memories, dreams, wishes, books, experiences of one’s own, or of one’s loved ones, or likely a wildly changing brew of these, what Art emerges is not what the sources were. Art is *not* life, precisely. It is transformation of life by craft, by inspiration, by gifted minds & hearts & hands.

The Art I wanted now was both old & new in its sources & inspirations. I was looking to create the longest, strangest, most varied & delightful, moving & meaningful work I could. As I wrote earlier in this piece, I put all of it, all I had, on the table. My knowledge of this world, much of it, is mongrel-gotten. But I am a mongrel willing & wishing to push myself, use my memories, dreams, wishes, experiences, & so on, to as far & deep extent as I can.

From when I first wrote as a boy I sought to create imaginal worlds bigger than myself. Then, it was more from loneliness, unhappiness, a sense of belonging to nothing but what I could render on page. Now, because I find life far richer & more beautiful when creating wildly ambitious Art, & encouraging others to do so too.

That said, the “Red Bag” had a purpose far beyond what I’d tried before. That poem only a few days since written, I found myself solo attending that first night of that Phish show down in Worcester. Standing in a long line, waiting to get inside the DCU Center to my seat. Scribbling in a little notebook both questions & answers, continuing on even as I made it to my seat, crowds of friendly hippies & frat boys settling in around me:

The Red Bag is co-located in several places—

1. *Clover-dale*
2. *Creature Common*
3. *Bags End*

It could be more places, like back of Nat Perfect's store—Noah Hotel—inside RemoteLand—it is the connector—the portal from one place to another—

This raises the question of what's in the Red Bag—& how to enter it? Does one close one's eyes but not sleep?

Close eyes &
picture arriving
& so one arrives—

*Where did it come from—who controls it? That is unknown—why does it exist? It was necessary—
Is there one on the ships overhead? Did it come from there?
The point is that it is multiply co-located
LSD is a non-specific amplifier—now what if the Red Bag is too?
What would that mean?
What would it amplify?
I'm not sure on this—
I like co-location & the way to enter but is there an inside to the Red Bag? Or is it like a window from one place to another—*

Then Phish walked on stage, with quiet smiles & friendly waves, & the crowd roared & danced, & for a while I put my little notebook away, & did too.

Labyrinthine's pages are too many, vast, & weird to sum up in a few lines. But one passage catches my eye re-reading tonight. These lines new from deep in my roiling mind:

Moonlight in one hand, the other in a manacle. That's how it feels. I look from hand to hand, acting the one way or the other. Nobody in these stories acts otherwise.

But what else. The moonlight & the manacle. Nobody gives me moonlight, tis not mine, twas here before me & will illumine my dust in the air one far day—it's the manacle—

Surely the manacle sourced in being human, born a place & time, the flesh of particular flesh, the genes of those genes, & the many ways carried along helpless for years, causing decisions I did not make, living unexpected results, becoming by accident again & again—

At some point, however, the manacle is in my possession, in my hand, clasping my hand, pulling my hand back or down, or releasing enough for my pen miracle to go & go & go—

And now, tonight, the lights here & everywhere? The music in my ears as best always? Manacle, I say. Manacle? I ask. Yes, even beauty. Yes, every hour. Yes, manacle is miracle is now without cease until dust indeed upon the moonlight & perhaps even then in some way still—

But then—what then?

The manacle. The miracle. The music.

And there's the section of *Labyrinthine* set at Clover-dale, the fixtional counterpart to the falling-down farmhouse & barns KD & I'd seen up in Vermont in 2011. Christina, a character long in these stories, while still young was brought to this place when a farmer & his three sons still occupied

it. Her purchased, kidnapped, *something'd*, from a forgotten life, to replace his dead wife. These lines especially:

That first night I learned I'd be sleeping in his bed. I must have been sick, maybe even drugged, because I got into his bed agreeably enough. Immediately he shut out the light & said, "bare." There was no humor or flexibility in that voice. I took off his wife's dress & then paused. "Bare." I took off the rest & edged to the side of the bed. I heard him undress too & held my breath. I didn't know what but I suspected enough. My body crackled with alertness.

Would he have? Yes. Whatever I had been, however I had lived, whoever had loved me, I was bare in his bed, him too, & it was plain. He got in the bed & grasped me lightly from behind.

It was soft, for such a large man. A gentle grasp & I believe he would not have hurt me for pleasure. I believe that more than I would about the other men since. I was his prize, what he would re-build his world around, destroyed as it had been by his wife's death. Had it happened as he intended, he would have had me that night that hour, & it is possible I would have become his by heart & mind, not just body. No matter how terrified I was, that first grasping of me would have marked me his, & I willing, if not—

A word in my ear. Softer than the bedsprings as he curled around me, but a word & not his. "Sing."

Was it her?

Probably. Yes. Maybe. I don't know. In that order. Why unsure, seeing as she saved me later? I don't know.

I felt his hands moving in closer, to touch my breasts, my stomach, the rest, felt him already very hard, & for a moment I let him continue. For a moment I let. Then I began to hum. Hardly a song, more just barely shaped noise.

It was enough, he withdrew, I pushed the hum into music, the melody of a song I could not remember all of, so I hummed the bit twice & then shifted it to another & then realized he was asleep. Curled into himself, but not as though harmed. Relaxed, led from where he'd been into Dreamland, too dark to see his face but I knew it was relaxed, open & wordless, become now something he'd never been, or not in a long while.

I lay there trembling, unsure if it would last no matter how deep his sleep seemed. But he didn't move, not a muscle or an inch. I finally passed out from fear & stress & relief & the utter darkness in which I lay.

It's strange, good work, & it is *my own*. What I've arrived to so far. When Art goes well, sings, glows, dances the rainbow, moon, & stars, nothing else is quite as good. One feels one's scattered powers & potentials draw together, become a new force in the world, ready to spend ecstatically to a smiling exhaustion.

Come to the 6/30/2012 Jellicle Literary Guild meeting. That Saturday began with finishing remaining work on *Cenacle* 81. Then I took a bus & a train to South Station bus terminal in Boston, to fetch Ralph Emerson. Eight months earlier, he'd come by car with Jim. Now sporting a grey moustache & a fisherman's cap, he appeared to be in all ways much better off than the smelly wretch who'd appeared for our previous visit. We had our talk I mentioned above, & made our way back to KD's & my apartment.

Joe Coleman came in person too, my previously mentioned new poet friend from the Out Loud Open Mic. We formed a friendly quartet that warm June night in our relatively small apartment, our air conditioner clicking on & off occasionally as the temperature rose & fell.

Others attended too, of course, by way of audio & video & writing. The Guild had traveled long in both years & miles, but also in conception from the Roma Restaurant years in New Britain, when all who attended were sitting together at those back dining room tables.

So we settled in for a fine, long evening, shared some food, & began the 120th Jellicle Literary Guild meeting. Of the four of us who sat together in armchair & on couch, I had of course been to every meeting since the first on 12/29/1988; Ralph had been to 22 meetings, his first back on 4/13/1991; KD had been to 16 meetings, all those since the 2008 revival; & Joe was at his first.

So I told for his benefit the story of the Guild, from its origins in parties my friends had had in New Britain: poetry, music, beer, & weed. He knew of the Inklings gatherings (J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, & their Oxford friends) in the UK back in the 1930s & 1940s, from which the Guild idea had come.



Joe wondered if I had known back then, when the Guild had first started, if it would last. Ralph said he thought I knew. “Ray’s good at these things,” he said drily, I hope with affection.

Told of its cease in 2001, & its re-launch in 2008 out West, & finally its return back East, to Massachusetts not Connecticut this time (though there had been a few Boston meetings back when).

Then, though it was not yet called “Jellicle Guild Flashbacks,” I played one, as I had at the April 2012 meeting. 4/28/1995 meeting, primarily of JBIII playing The Who’s “Going Mobile.” Raucous & beautiful.

That was also the meeting where *Cenacle* 1 had debuted. And here it was, near 24 years later, & *Cenacle* | 81 | June 2012 was getting its turn. Again, I dug deep in my recall to tell how, as a boy, I’d started writing & publishing projects, filling up my secret notebooks; then on to write & edit college literary magazines; & then to create post-college ‘zines, made up at Kinko’s; & how finally, in 1995, I bought a \$500 photocopier to possess at last the means of production, & start *The Cenacle*, & document the Jellicle Literary Guild.

I told this story for Joe primarily, for Ralph & KD too, who knew it, but likely as not mostly for myself. *The Cenacle* reflects the best of me, & is who I’m always aspiring to be again in moments when I am not.

So I handed round copies of *Cenacle* 81, & started off the night’s readings as customary with *From Soulard’s Notebooks* (the “freaks” piece discussed earlier). Funny parallel that at both the Guild & in the *Cenacle*, *From Soulard’s Notebooks* is second to go, following *The Cenacle*’s epigraph & the *Jellicle Guild Flashbacks*. And on *Within’s Within*, my opening monologue, *Dream Raps*, will usually follow the first of five or so songs by the week’s “Featured Artist.”

Ralph read his language essay “D is for Down,” which had been published in *Cenacle* | 70 | October 2009, explaining to Joe especially his theory that the basic building blocks of thoughts get grafted onto letters; he said that the body, water, directions like up & down (d) get associated with particular letters. I hope he has continued this series of essays since the years I knew him. It deserves to be completed & become a book.

Funny enough, Joe then took his turn to read “Dolores Toodles Goes to Market.” Joe commented that, of all his new writings, this piece felt most “natural” to him.

Then KD, who usually brings amazing & delightful magazine articles or book excerpts to share at the meetings, topped herself with “The Most Amazing Bowling Story Ever” by Michael J. Mooney, published in the June 2012 issue of *D Magazine* (<https://bit.ly/3CAju9r>). In sum, the story of a Texas

man whose life had been sad & disappointing save for his love of & gift for bowling. Heart of the tale is the night he tries for a rarely occurring feat of bowler prowess: the “perfect series,” or three 300 games in a row. I won’t say how it all plays out, per chance some reading this curious seek it out. I will say we sat listening enthralled to KD’s reading.

My turn again, I read from my *Many Musics* poems in *Cenacle* 81, again taking all to the origins of my poetry writing. Simply put: *girls*. We tend toward what makes us feel our best ourselves. That remains true of my reasons. I talked about admiring artists like Claude Monet & Miles Davis for both their Art & their longevity. And bluesmen who get better with age.

Late in his too-short life, F. Scott Fitzgerald said there are no second acts in American literature, but I wish for myself & all others who will it hard enough to go the long distance—the third, fourth, fifth, & *beyond* number of acts.

Ralph’s turn again, he gave a presentation about his old childhood neighbor Hal Haviland, a Vaudeville-era white tie-&-tails magician “who looked like Bing Crosby” (“we all tried to look like Bing Crosby,” Haviland remarked). Stories of six shows a day, Depression-era privations, traveling long distances in the day coaches of trains.

Ralph then took some newspapers we provided & made all sorts of animals after the fashion of balloon animals. All the while following the notes he made during his interviews with Havelind, imitating him in a gravelly voice that reminded me of Mark Twain somehow. Ralph said he’d been “waiting a long time” to perform that script.

Joe then gave us another round of his fine comical poems, some of which would end up in *The Cenacle*, like the insanely funny “Rhode Island Love Story,” of which he was enormously proud:

*The following morning it took a while for Jasper to clear his head
and address the question of what to do now
given that he was (possibly) dead.
He showered, shaved, and brushed his teeth and realized as he dressed
that he’d slept pretty well; though, truth to tell,
it was not Eternal Rest . . .*

Then the “Field Trip” began, with a video from Judih Haggai in Israel reading her fine haiku from *Cenacle* 81. Next was a video of Martina Newberry in Los Angeles reading her wonderful poems in the new issue too. She also talked about one of her favorite poets, Amy Lowell, & read Lowell’s poem “A London Thoroughfare, 2 a.m.” Also her favorite lines from Lowell’s “Patterns”:

*In Summer and in Winter I shall walk
Up and down
The patterned garden paths
In my stiff, brocaded gown.
The squills and daffodils
Will give place to pillared roses, and to asters, and to snow.
I shall go
Up and down,
In my gown.
Gorgeously arrayed,
Boned and stayed.
And the softness of my body will be guarded from embrace
By each button, hook, and lace.
For the man who should loose me is dead,
Fighting with the Duke in Flanders,*

*In a pattern called a war.
Christ! What are patterns for?*

Finally, Jeremy Kilar, whose funky photos graced the pages of *Cenacle* 81, & dandy *River's Edge* made SPRadio even more special, had recorded & sent along to me recordings of three of his original songs. His lyrics, his guitar, his sweet & plaintive indie rock voice. His cleverly titled "Oh Myopic Heart" includes the following lyrics:

*the world is spinning
and I don't know where I will land
and I know that something
is following me*

Been some years since I have heard from Jeremy. I wonder where you landed, brother . . .
Joe Coleman had bid us goodnight after Martina's video, so it was KD & me lucky to listen to Ralph's exotic poem of the sea, "Madagascar"; oddly, he'd read this at that infamous October 2011 meeting, but in our recreation of the meeting on 4/28/2012, we could not remember much of it. Part of it goes:

*Many's the typhoon I saw when I was young, my boy
But we've nothing to buy in far cafes,
so we'll keep our schooner close to shore today*

As there seemed to be many strange connections flying around this night, so next came me reading from *Cenacle* 81's *History*, in part about Ralph's "D is for D" essay:

Describing this watery letter of darkness, he observes that humans, who cannot see in the dark, confer upon things of light a wisdom, a safety, a goodness. Darkness is full of danger, "is evil," & "means ignorance." He says: "Until we can see in the dark like cats, human thinking will always favor light."

KD read Nathan D. Horowitz's "Self-Portrait in 20 Dreams" poem, & I wrapped up the night reading from *Cenacle* 81's *Labyrinthine*.

One passage in particular, resonated with this night. Bowie the spy finds himself somehow a high-school-aged boy in 1981, in a record store, shopping for new LPs with a girl the same age. They talk about Journey's new album, *Escape*. The girl, not named, in "rumpled sweater" & "frosted hair," is based on my long-ago elusive first love, Jenny Lehman. Bowie & she share a likewise not-romance closeness. Her passions, as back then, run deep, & elsewhere.

Now here's the funny thing about this particular reading. I knew Ralph back then too. He knew Jenny. Didn't like her all that much, from what I recall. Didn't like me a whole lot more, it seemed then. How fucking weird that, of the thousands of pages of *Labyrinthine* I had written, it was that passage I read to him that night! And have not now seen nor heard from him in all the years since!

And Joe. Us new to each other that night, delighting in the novelty of our new friendship. That "Dolores Toodles" poem—he would write two sequels, I think in part, from my enthusiasm for them. All three would go into the book of his poems we would publish together years later, closer to the end of our friendship than either of us knew at the time.

But that strange night was just fine, please & thankee. Meeting done, Ralph & I talked far into the night, as we had going back so many years; nights when I still lived down in New Britain & he with his parents on their farm a few towns away. Still young men then, walking the quiet nights of that faded

factory town, wondering what good & great things our futures would bring.

This night in visiting, maybe in a distant but similar vein, Ralph said he foresaw a good turn in human consciousness coming. Maybe part of this was him growing more comfortable in his own skin. Not all of it, but some.

Next morning we talked on a bit &, at his request, I dug out old journals for passages about our prior visits. Him trying to understand who he had been, who he was now. We parted with KD, & I took him by bus to Harvard Square to sit awhile at my beloved Au Bon Pain Café courtyard. I then got him on time to South Station, onto his Greyhound bus back to Connecticut, & returned myself home to KD, tuna melts, & *True Blood* on TV. A successful Jellicle Literary Guild completed, a sense of renewal.

So it was now July &, like two of the previous three summers, I found myself newly jobless. One nice break from this familiar drudge was on July 4 when KD & I went to visit her dear work colleague Stephanie & have a “Woody Allen film festival.” KD & Stephanie had often gone to 24-hour movie marathons together, & it was fun to join in on one of these.

The awesomeness of *Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985), the dark comic genius of *Deconstructing Harry* (1997), & the perfection of *Sweet & Lowdown* (1999). The failure of *Interiors* (1978).

Woody Allen is 85 years old in 2021, & his once-genius reputation is long shattered by personal scandals, & awful movie after awful movie since *Sweet & Lowdown*.

But I will say this: he was once special to me beyond belief, & I would go to see his movies with an adoring fervor. I’m sorry for what’s left of him, for whatever went bad in his life, but those films I mentioned (minus *Interiors*), plus others like *Annie Hall* (1977), *Broadway Danny Rose* (1984), *Radio Days* (1987), *Crimes & Misdemeanors* (1989), & *Bullets Over Broadway* (1994) stand as gorgeous, funny, weird, sad, special films. I doubt he’ll get up to that level of filmmaking mastery again, but he did, many times. I would never hide my admiration for those great works.

Nice break from the new & rottenly familiar job-hunting grind. Then started right in with applying for unemployment benefits, its idiotic song & dance. Had to travel nearly an hour by transit, & wait hours in a packed waiting room, for about five minutes of presenting required documentation.

Happily, shockingly, I ran smack into good luck before July was out. Took several interviews, something around ten people involved in them, but I got hired as full-time Technical Writer at a company called PHT Corp. in Boston. Involved with conducting clinical drug trials worldwide, & marketing software & hardware designed to keep track of trial patients’ symptoms, both on the individual & on the clinical location level.

I was first interviewed on July 18, & then again a few days later, & then money was hammered out. I signed my acceptance letter on the July 30.

What I have learned about job-hunting, aside from the feeling of blunt humiliation this activity brings with it, is that *experience* matters. *Qualifications* to do the work at hand. But *intangibles* matter too. Little things that differentiate one candidate from another, when all the bigger things are roughly the same.

My new boss Alice Pesce & I hit it off immediately. She’d been a gymnast once upon a time, petite, especially in comparison to my own 6-foot-3 inch frame. What she needed was someone to come in to do the needed work of technical documentation, confidently, completely, & independently. Somehow I exuded those qualities.

I tend to think that it is desperation that jacks me into some kind of persona that sells myself in these situations. Knowing that I can do the work from the scant details usually described in an interview, & convincing a stranger that I can, better than the others considered, it’s also a fucking crapshoot. That’s why job-hunting is to me a matter of mad daily perseverance, unceasing till the tumblers click into place.

So, come August 20, having taken some days off before starting, I began my daily commute into Boston with KD, who got off our bus to catch a train to her work, while I rode on to Harvard Square,

& then a second bus to an uninteresting part of the city called Charlestown (its one claim to fame is that the Bunker Hill Memorial is nearby).

I was given a desk, some rudimentary training, & yet really learned what I needed to know from my kind, patient colleagues.

The office I worked in on the third floor of the old Hood Milk factory building. From a corner armchair in the lunchroom, I could see:



a large building in view, brick, three floors, some of its windows bricked up, some boarded, some not, a restaurant equipment company first floor—maybe another business on a different side—I wonder about it—Labyrinthine-style—

were the upper floors residential? Are they still? Pete Di Pirro Co.? This area is not poor but it is rundown—old—worn—JFK Expressway, now long gone, ends abruptly near here—



Confidence at Every Phase

It was the beginning of a long stretch at this job, longer than I'd had at any other job (just shy of seven years). I wasn't always happy at this job, but often enough. As I began, it had been four years prior of working contract after contract. When not simply jobless. PHT wanted me, paid me well, left me to define my role & expand it over time. 2012 had taken a wonderful turn halfway along.



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I think that's in part why I was able to more focus on my pen & press-work. I found ways to make my payjob & Art align. Wrote on the buses to & from Charlestown, often listened to SPRadio content on headphones while working on technical content there. Paycheck more assured than in a long time, I was pushing ever harder into the *new work*.

Even before being hired, my relationship with Occupy Boston Radio was changing. Nowhere was Occupied anymore, no city or town. My reportage on my OBR / SPRadio show *Aggregated Occupier* was run dry of Occupy events to tell. The OBR group was fractured by squabbling, & close to eviction from its downtown Boston offices.

Then on July 6, my weekly show was simply not broadcast on OBR. I wrote an email letter to the group, saying in part:

Last weekend, my show did not air because of the problems we were having with Museter. Hopefully, the actions since have helped that not to happen again. But the interesting thing is that this show only featured one piece, "Battle for the Future of Occupy," that appeared in Rolling Stone . . .

I feel like, six months along, with this most recent episode, I have reached a juncture. I have to re-define what I am doing regarding Occupy, and how I want that to manifest in the form of a radio show. Since this show also runs on SpiritPlants Radio, it is doubly critical I do something that is good. There are two stations I am doing this work for, and I care very much for both of them . . .

In my view, OBR is one of the bright spots in the Occupy movement right now, and I really like being part of it. I find you folks a great bunch to work with, and I just want to make sure that I am doing my legitimate part.

As mentioned above, I had decided to expand beyond Occupy news, of which there was little, to stories of contemporary & historical event & thought (pieces such as "Violence and Human Nature," by Howard Zinn, & "War is a Racket," by Major General Smedley D. Butler). I'll admit that I kept doing my show for OBR from sentiment (like some friendships I had clung to for too long). Occupy had come on bright & wild in the fall of 2011; by the following summer, it was a long, slow fade away.

Took a month or so to get *Cenacle* 81 printed, packaged, mailed, & its files all archived, but did & done, & pushing along.

Even before PHT hired me, I was focusing hard upon the *new work*. A series of moves, experiments, researches. Easiest to describe, one after the next, to show how they accumulated.

On my 7/7/2012 *Within's Within* radio show, I commenced to reading weekly the poems from my 1998 poetry sequence *Orpheus & Eurydice: Making the Lyre*. A rough new idea was baking in my brain concerning *how* I had composed *O&E* that summer: on the evilly packed train from ZombieTown into Boston every morning to my contract job. For about five weeks running I did this. A test of my talents, my Art & craft. I'd researched the *O&E* myth deeply before I began, told the story by my own kind of music, braiding through it my own closest themes & obsessions.

I wondered if I could do this again, fourteen years later? And this time around a cluster of old Greek myths were catching my attention. The myth of Eleusis. The myth of Daedalus's Labyrinth. The Sleep Temples of Asclepius.

A week after after that *Within's Within* show, I woke up with the word "Emandia" from my dreams. *What was it? A place? Where? What did this mean?*

And how would whatever-this-was integrate with my *Labyrinthine*, *Many Musics*, & *Bags End News* projects? With the *Travelers Tales* I told nightly at home? What about my *Dream Journal* & its potentialities?

Unlike *O&E*, written as a distinct work with a beginning, middle, & end, lesser involved with the other fiction & poetry I wrote back in 1998, I now had these elaborate, robust projects. And what I wanted was *synchrony* amongst them. Some of this came with the Red Bag idea.

Emandia, I discovered, was a planet from which its inhabitants had to escape because it was dying. They had come to the world of the new poems described in *Many Musics* via the Red Bag. Come to many worlds, it turned out, each one bearing its *Tangled Gate*:

The Labyrinth is a portal, like the Red Bag. Um. It has existed in different forms in various times & places.

They breach time & space.

They are guarded each one.

There is a weakness.

A guardian abandoned.

*She has a broken heart.
The way through the Labyrinth is only partly physical. One drinks the elixir, one continues along
in dreams.*

There is a controversial theory of human origins called “Ancient Astronaut Theory.” In sum, it posits that our race came to this world from the stars. I believe it *could* be true, just as I’m persuaded by Terence McKenna’s “Stoned Ape” theory about human consciousness accelerating in part from eating psychedelic mushrooms off of cattle dung on the plains of Africa about 100,000 BCE.

But I wasn’t looking to *believe* these things primarily. I was looking for a narrative big enough, small enough, & strange enough to interest me. I needed ideas here & there, apparatus to borrow, & wide swathes of space to make it my own. My *mythopoeia*.

But the *Many Musics* poems to come of all this were still months in the making. I experimented with these ideas in *Bags End News*, in *Labyrinthine*, in the *Travelers Tales*. KD & I went to numerous museums that summer into fall: The Portland (ME) Museum of Art for “The Draw of the Normandy Coast: 1860 to 1960”; the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston for works by Paul Schutze & Os Gemeos; the MASS MoCA in North Adams, Massachusetts for “O Canada,” “Sol LeWitt: A Wall Drawing Retrospective,” “Invisible Cities,” & “All Fallen Utopias”; & the Salem Peabody Essex Museum for “Ansel Adams: At Water’s Edge.” At each of these I was standing before & among Art, working up new worlds from what I saw. Many of the poems I wrote at these wonderful places would make their way into *The Cenacle* issues in the fall & winter of 2012. My writing a kind of collaboration with the world.

By the end of August I had moved from endless notes to *Many Musics*’ “Tangled Gate Sketches,” four of them. Finding the music, plucking, molding, shaping, scribbling, *listening*. Then I dove deep into a book called *Mazes and Labyrinths: Their History and Development* by W. H. Matthews (Dover Publications, 1970). This was the book I needed, useful like *The Dreaming Universe* had been.

It was a challenging time. Working full-time, running SPRadio weekly, trying to be a good partner to KD. We saw many more good movies on Saturdays that summer, among them: *Moonrise Kingdom*, *Brave*, *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, & *Dark Knight Rises*. We camped up in Maine at Camden Hills State Park in August, using our old Burning Man tent. Climbed Mt. Megunticook, a wearying, wet effort to the top, me keeping us entertained with stories of Great Heroes of Yore aiding each other &, upon arrival, remarking to one another, “My, what a cloudy day!” And thus, a new name. Bought shirts & ties to wear at PHT, just as once, long ago, I’d torn one off to leave a loathed office job & go off to graduate school.

By September, going full throttle, I wondered about publishing *Bags End News* stories in *The Cenacle*, finally making a RaiBook of Jim Burke III’s letters, even moving to a new place in Boston. The employer that had ended my contract back in June got in touch, asked my interest. “None,” I replied.

By then, training at my work had finally transitioned to a substantive project, a large document called *Site Support Guide*, essentially a training document for customers (pharma companies) using PHT products in clinical drug trials. It was an awful document, unusable. So I dug in, & remade it completely. My work colleagues, I think, *finally* saw me doing the kind of work they would come to esteem me for.

One day, after work, I met up with my dear friend Ric Amante, us long estranged since that (yes, again) infamous October 2011 Jellicle Literary Guild meeting.

We sat out in a park not far from PHT, talking a long stretch. He’d assumed I’d intentionally orchestrated the events of that night which had ended so badly. Not ever having asked me.

I apologized that he & Melissa had had a bad night, & disabused him of his wrong ideas. I was glad to be in his company again. We’d been friends for nearly 20 years!

Yet the encounter left me feeling bruised. Ric should have been there *for* me, not *against* me. When Jim died, he should *not* have kept his distance, nursing his false ideas. He *should have* invited me

to his & Melissa's wedding. These are old bitternesses, but relevant to speak of here.

I even helped Melissa run the Out Loud Open Mic a few days later, when Ric wasn't feeling well. I tried to keep what good we had going. Old friends, any good kind of friends, are hard to come by, are precious to keep.

The two of them are years now gone from my life, by their own choice. What remains from those days for me is the Art I was creating, my ever-romance with KD, & the fortune of getting hired at PHT. What I had was helping me to create the *new work*. I'll include love of JBIII in all this.

What was going then—OBR, my friendships with Ric & Melissa, with Ralph, with Joe Coleman—mattered a lot too. But sometimes letting go is *not* in your hands, *by* your will. Some precious things you simply must look back at with dwindling fondness, & move on.



* * * * *



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 | 117 | October 2021

Read the full History at:

http://scriptorpress.com/history_of_scriptor_press.pdf

Autumn 2012 I'd found some long-sought stability. KD, home, pay-job. Because I was not worrying so much about any of these, the space in my mind that makes Art was less distracted by stresses.

I was in the throes of something bigger. Arriving to a door leading to a greater vista, vaster Imaginal Space.

True, my recent meeting with my old poet friend Ric Amante was not the best of fence-mending. We'd lost that intimate magick friends have in their best days. What we mostly still shared were good memories, what build a good friendship but cannot, primarily, feed it ever on.

I linger on this because I simply cannot puzzle out how this waxing & waning of affections works. Or why. Why can't we just make *more* friends in life, accumulate *ever more* intimates? I see no evolutionary benefit to such loss—its regret, melancholy, soul-wearing.

Yet, tis so. And one needs find a way to press forward, in better or worse ways. I was sadder for old partings, but my life's stability was pushing me artistically. Maybe, honestly, its melancholy & stability, both, pushing me. More than maybe.

My work as PHT's only in-house technical writer was challenging me every day. I was developing their product support guide for client sites carrying out clinical drug trials. Also training guides for patients using glucometers & asthma devices daily in their lives, in conjunction with the trials' medicines.

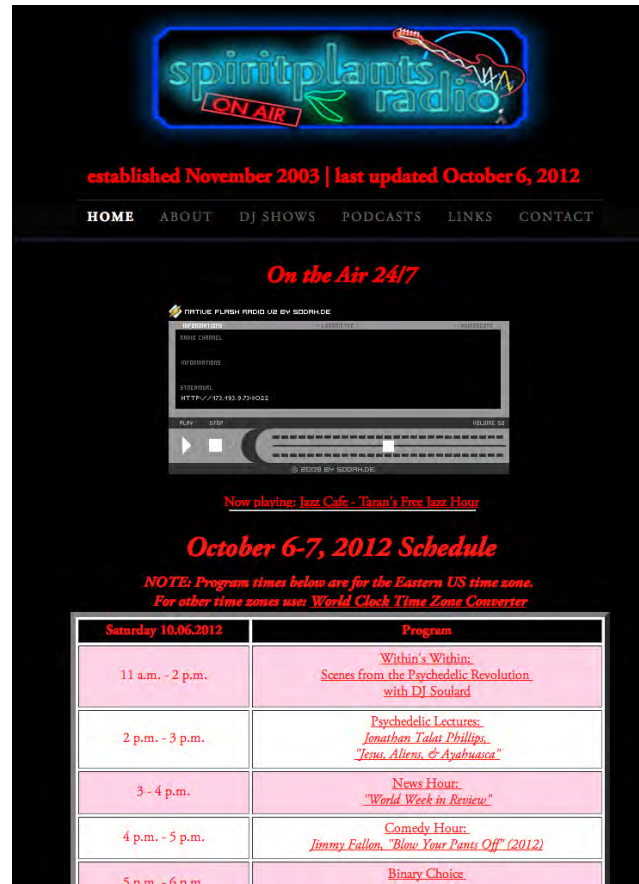
I'd been a technical writer for some years by this point, at many kinds of companies, but this was *not* a contract. I had to take on, create or improve, ever more kinds of customer training documents as I went.

That is to say, I *chose* to. I saw the many kinds of documentation needs there, & sought to address them better & better over time. And as I got better—learned the company & its people & processes & tools—I could do more. It was my way to show my value as a colleague, & my gratefulness for being hired. Not worrying a contract's tick-tock-down meant I could live a different kind of life. It was also the company's act of faith & confidence in me that I strived not to disappoint.

Nights & weekends still to KD & my Art. And weekday mornings we rode the bus together to our jobs, till she parted with a smile & a kiss to get her train to another part of Boston from where I

was bound. She had a health scare in October—needed a colposcopy—and we were wordlessly grateful when it passed.

KD did a re-design of the SpiritPlants Radio website (spiritplantsradio.com). Till then, it had been a single page with radio player, schedule, & links, in essentially a long-scrolling list. She used a template to create a group of tabbed Web pages for: *Home* (radio player & schedule); *About*; *DJ Shows*; *Podcasts*; & *Links*.



The station kept along its weekend schedule of DJ'd shows & external content, & I did my own *Within's Within* show live on Saturday mornings. And I continued to convert content for streaming during the weekdays. Lotta work, much fun, all of this.

One Saturday night in Boston we were lucky enough to attend the Ringling Brothers & Barnum & Bailey Circus at the TD Garden. It was such an old-fashioned grand production of human & animal talents. A kind of beautifully choreographed chaos for the eyes.

I can understand how keeping animals for such exhibition purposes can offend some people. Worrying if the animals are abused, or even should there be, ethically speaking, circuses at all. I don't have a good answer for that. I think it is actually possible to put on a multi-species entertainment, without abuse, or a sense of enslavement. Would such a production be able to survive economically in a pervasive environment of electronic entertainment? Maybe not. I am nonetheless grateful we got to see the circus that night. *It was magick.*

[Editor's Note: *It was announced recently that the Ringling Brothers & Barnum & Bailey Circus will return in 2023, without animals.*]

Before *Cenacle 82* work took over weekends in late October, we were still seeing movies on Saturday afternoons—like Ryan Johnson's science fiction classic *Looper* one lucky time—and watching TV shows late into Saturday nights—like *Fringe* & *Warehouse 13*, both great science fiction programs

too.

But then we turned to the work to make a good new *Cenacle*, ready to debut at the 10/27/2012 Jellicle Literary Guild meeting. We spent several of our weekends at finishing it, & succeeded in the task.

Cenacle | 82 | October 2012 has a neon pink cover, featuring KD's graphic re-rendering of a moment in a film we'd recently seen at the Mass MoCA museum in North Adams, Massachusetts. She gives it a nightmarish ambiguity.

My *From Soulard's Notebooks* features my sixth letter to US President Barack Obama, running at that time for his second term against Republican Mitt Romney. In this letter, one of a series I penned annually to President Obama from 2008 on, published annually in October issues of *The Cenacle*, I write, in part:

I'm not sure why you'd want four more years as President. I know many, myself included, who want you to continue in office as a way to keep Mitt Romney out, & his stygian overlords from returning to power. A Romney presidency would be marked by the slow husking of the social safety net & ever-diminishing efficacy of the Constitution to protect anyone from anything . . .

My hope is that you are re-elected & do what good you can before DC looks past you to the next guy promising hope & change, & an end to business as usual.

My hope is that you are re-elected & you surprise me a little bit with what time in office you've got left. I'd welcome it.

Good luck. You have my vote again.

My concerns about the 2012 US presidential election was shared, in spirit at least, by new contributor Gordon Fellman, in his "Letter to Occupy." I think his worries about this election in a way cut to the heart of his piece:

Those of you considering not voting in the 2012 presidential election, listen to this: Obama or Romney, whoever is elected, will likely appoint one or more members to the Supreme Court. If Romney appoints, then the resulting Supreme Court will almost certainly overturn Roe v. Wade. When women lose the right of choice, when they return to coat hanger abortions and back-alley butcher abortionists, when those women are degraded and numbers of them die, how are you going to tell your friends—and yourself—that it did not make any difference who became president?

President Obama won again in 2012, of course. He was, & is, a good, brave, & honorable man. A hero for all.

But critical concerns for the vulnerable continued beyond his re-election win. Times coming would get worse for many.

The poetry of *Cenacle* 82 is very strong. I have consistently written this about poetry featured in *The Cenacle*, but I want to stress here that this is *not* common among literary journals.

Most literary journals solicit contributions, & choose to publish from amongst what they



receive by issue's deadline. I don't know why more of them don't build up a stable group of contributors, fostering working relations with each. Make it a *collaborative experience*, one all involved can feel part of, & thus good about the issue as a whole.

That's *always been* what *The Cenacle* has done. So when I say in this *History* that *Cenacle* 82's poetry is "very strong," it's because it reflects this process of collaboration with the very talented poets *The Cenacle* seeks to publish again & again. It's hard, but also very rewarding, work to get to "very strong."

There's a fine poem of Ric Amante's in this issue, called "Trajectory," that I believe critically reflects his thinking about relationships:

*Reading old letters is like hitting an on-switch.
Sparks fly from a far, fierce distance,
fading red lines chart ecstasy, sulfur, bedrock.
And you're upended by the histories of new beginnings,
undone by the stars and hearts in the margins.*

*. . . .
but how spectral this self
how potent yet unreal the shocks
that informed your ways then
strengthen your grasp now
as you gather these past lives
and welcome them aboard,
run together now as one good ghost
through a curved and back-lit country.*

I get this better now, Ric. Taken me a lot of years.

Judih Weinstein Haggai's haiku from Israel are always a pleasure to read amongst, & choose for publication. Among her best in *Cenacle* 82 are these three:

*neighbour dog
flat on dry grass
listens for flies*

* * *

*rain passes
far from my lemon tree
dry leaf sigh*

* * *

*smells of ancient seas
bits of conch shell in the sand
history giggles*

Jude is my long-time sister at a far distance. I treasure her & her work always.

Another long-time poetry sister is Martina Newberry in southern California. Her two poems in this issue are love poems. "Nor Ought but Love" is a sweet one for her partner Brian:

*When I dream of love, I dream of you.
I rage at my body,
this body you honor with affection.
I rage at it
and tear at my fears of waking from the dream
that is you and me.*

Her second one, “Blooms,” is for her father. Its final elegiac lines are breathtaking:

*In my dreams, my father
glides over hot rolled blooms
and billets. His shovel makes
sparks that bounce off his grin.*

*The alarm sounds and the door
goes up to show the molten river
red as blood and hot enough
to rival hell.*

*My father guides that river
right out into the sky where
the stars drink of it
and continue to shine.*

Then there is rascally Joe Coleman & his hilarious poem, “The Wrath of Dolores Toodle.” Written, at my request, as a sequel to his “Dolores Toodle Goes to Market,” published in *Cenacle* | 81 | June 2012. I think it’s, er, moral? sums it best:

*Aging with grace is a load of twaddle.
Balderdash, bollocks, and bunk . . .
A Golden Ager is not too old to be an obnoxious punk.*

Tom Sheehan is a well-published writer, *The Cenacle* being only one of his many literary outlets. That said, I had never asked him for fiction before this issue. His “Old Man with a Broken Walking Stick” is a stunner. Begins simply, as all good fables do:

*It was where the Dark Forest runs out of breath, not
far from Xi Shuang Ban Na, and the Lan Cang River,
pretending to be a thief, steals much of daylight’s silver.
Here one morning, an elderly man with a broken walking stick came
out of the forest and went along the river gathering its coin. He wore
a cap for the weather and a jacket Time had touched roughly. And he limped.*



Joe Coleman

Tells its transformative tale, & seems to come back to its own beginnings. Surreal, sweet.

Surely matching Sheehan’s piece is our re-publication of Jorge Luis Borges’ “Circular Ruins,”

which we had first featured as a reprint in our 2005 Burning Man Books series. An unnamed man wants to “dream a man; he wanted to dream him in minute entirety and impose him on reality.” Like Sheehan’s piece, it comes to consume itself by the end. Both are absorbing, great fictions.

Not far in spirit from these is Nathan D. Horowitz’s “Gateway Mexico.” The narrator, “N,” Nathan himself essentially, describes the appearance of an Aztec shaman at a seminar in N’s hometown. The shaman’s comments begin in part:

We’re all mixes of energies, we’re codes of energies that mix together inside us; and in this manner the genetic code is formed. That’s the force that moves the masculine and feminine elements. It combines them and begins to organize, much like a computer. The energies combine and begin to form programs, and a new being. Each one of us is a unique and marvelous creation. No two of us are the same. Each one of us receives a distinct destiny code that we receive from the forces of the universe.

Fascinated, inspired, N follows the shaman to Mexico for the Sun Dance ceremony he conducts. Horowitz recounts N’s adventures in searching—for love, & for a shaman teacher—with eloquent, loving, humorous detail.

Cenacle 82 also features Dr. Timothy Leary’s “Concord Prison Psychedelic Experiment,” excerpted from his 1990 *Flashbacks: An Autobiography*. This was Dr. Leary’s amazingly brave & ambitious project, while he at Harvard University in the early 1960s, to discover if psychedelic psilocybin mushrooms sessions with a group of prisoners could lower their recidivism rate (then at seventy percent in Massachusetts) upon release. End result: “We had kept ninety percent of our convicts out of jail.”

Dr. Leary walked the honest walk in believing that psychedelics could heal & change the world. *He eventually went to prison for these beliefs*. Like Obama, his legacy is that of a good, brave hero.

So now I come to my work for *Cenacle* 82. More than ever, I was pushing my various writing projects closer together.

Still, *Labyrinthine* is the easiest because I was still publishing pages that were written back in late 2011, & early 2012. Which means writing this fixtion passed through the death of my dear friend Jim Burke III. In *Lx*, he’s always known affectionately as “Jim Reality.” Now I chose to keep him, in part, via fixtion:

Falls back suddenly into the arms of a big gentle figure who says only: “Easy.” His guitar is nearby to comfort, instruct, whatever may.

“Thank you for catching me,” she says, suddenly girl & shy.

“My pleasure, miss.”

“I’m Maya.”

The musician smiles. “I think you’re expected. I was, too, it turns out.”

“You were?”

He nods, smiles, twinkling blues eyes. “Different reasons, of course.”

. . . .

“What’s your name?”

“Jim. Jim Reality. I died not long ago & came here.”

“Does that make this a place of the dead?”

“I don’t think it works like that. I don’t think I ever thought that. I know I’m not where I was, & this isn’t the body I possessed. This isn’t my old guitar. But here I am, & you came.”

Jim’s larger-than-life spirit transitioned easy to fixtion. And, in poetry to come, he would become the “Traveling Troubadour.”

Like Fellman’s piece, my *Notes from New England* addresses Occupy too. Here are my lines on

the movement a year after it began:

Maybe its purpose was to turn attention to the economic disaster happening in this country, and then dissipate. I don't know. I do know that the same bastards are in office now as last fall, and the only chance we have to follow through on the Occupy promise is to swarm the election with new voters, empowered to believe that they can make a change, and that change can be good as well as bad.

To be clear, I was still producing my *Aggregated Occupier* for Occupy Boston Radio & SpiritPlants Radio. I just wasn't seeing a long-term existence likely for Occupy. Too unwilling to evolve, collaborate . . . learn. Too sure of itself, it broke.

Still, Obama *did* win re-election that November. I'd call that an Occupy legacy for sure.

Then there are some poems & pictures related to the "Ansel Adams: At Water's Edge" exhibition we'd seen recently at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts. One of particular note:

"Fern Spring, Dusk, Yosemite Valley, California" (about 1965)

*A dream within the Tangled Gate,
where patches of Dreamland are,
like ponds, or clearings, a One Woods
image, a soft frozen springs, plastic,
misty, water like smoke over rocks
like plastic, a cry in one direction,
a song another.*

Pushing works closer.

Then a section called "Notes on the Tangled Gate." Here is from its introduction:

Call it the Tangled Gate, my coinage for the Labyrinth of Greek myth. Start with the Cretan myth—the Minotaur, half-man, half bull; Ariadne, the Mistress of the Labyrinth; her father, King Minos; Daedalus, the Labyrinth-builder; his son Icarus; & Theseus, the Greek hero who comes to the Island of Crete to slay the Beast & free the sacrifices Athens is compelled to send as tributes to Minos & the Labyrinth's hungry half-man, half-beast prisoner.

From this juicy material mix in Asclepius & the Temple of Dreams; Eleusis & its annual psychedelic ritual; & of course some form of Orpheus & Eurydice. My work on this these past months ranged among research [Mazes and Labyrinths (1922) by W.H. Matthews], notes, & some initial forays in Bags End News, Labyrinthine, & Many Musics. What comes next will be another wave of writing in these projects, beginning with a 36-poem sequence in Many Musics called Tangled Gate. Further issues of Bags End News. Eventually arrive back at Labyrinthine, which has been pursuing these kind of ideas for years & hundreds of pages.

And what follows are a series of poetry fragments; notes; passages from *Labyrinthine* more recent than what's in the *Lx* section of the issue; &, most interestingly, an extensive passage from *Bags End News* #355-356, typed on manual typewriter, & scanned into the issue.

And the *Notes from New England* piece concludes:

November is for the Tangled Gate—I need to look up my old Orpheus & Eurydice notebooks—I just want to refresh & begin anew from there—O&E was big for me then—I've done bigger since, but it remains special in content & composition—

I don't have anything in mind for how it begins—but gathering these notes has helped—I've done a heap of research & writing already—

What is its drive? When Ariadne returns? What causes her return? Is the place still inhabited? What of the Tangled Gate & the Beast? She finds the box of threads in Daedalus's abandoned tower, he left it hid where only she would think to look—

How old is she when she returns? Is she convinced he has returned? Had he ever left? What of her intervening years? It starts there, her return. She'd never been back since she left with Theseus & he abandoned her on that island. Why? Had she been told Daedalus was dead in the ocean like Icarus?

What brings her back? Dreams.

The story, then, returns her to Crete, to enter the Tangled Gate, again. To find him. Is it many years later?

*What does she find? Within the Gate she loses age. Neither old nor young anymore.
An untellable sensation.*

OK—soon to write this—

These notes comprised a kind of rehearsal following a long period of research. My *Many Musics* poems in the issue were leading, like the passages of *Lx & Bags End News* quoted, toward the aforementioned 36-poem sequence too, to be written in November & December.

The most notable of the *Many Musics* poems included in this issue are VIII, #21-24, called collectively “The Tangled Gate Sketches, #1-4.” The first of these well-represents this quartet:

*Remember some things. This is the lost purpose
or forgotten, obscured, of the tangled gate.
You will enter as a group, pretty dancers
offered as a king's sacrifice, but I know
what you will find. Each of you will arrive
but alone, but only by heeding me in this.
Through the tangled gate, neither left nor right,
on & on & on, now into the great mouth,
the great beastly mouth. On in, one by one,
heed me in this. On in.*

What I was driving toward now was a unified *mythopoeia* for all of my works. This meant developing a deep past, origins, & on toward a far future, if not an actual ending. There would be a shared geography among my works—timeline—characters.

To be sure, I was already doing this, had been for years. But I'd been slow to expand my playing field in time & space. Reading the old Greek myths had again widened my Imaginal vistas.

In June & July 1998, it had been the Orpheus & Eurydice myth. My *Orpheus & Eurydice: Making the Lyre* had come at a time when I was bored, lonely, tired, & uncertain in my life. I wrote them to *create meaning* where I had none. Every weekday morning, on a crowded train into Boston, jammed among faces & bodies, I positioned my notebook close to my face & wrote a new poem in the sequence. Lingered that summer with suicidal thoughts. I eventually left those ideas behind, but that wild batch of poems stayed with me.

In 2012 I was not suicidal, but I was grieving Jim's untimely passing. And it occurs to me these years later I took the same kind of approach to these feelings; that is, I challenged myself to do work

more ambitious than I had yet tried. *Transmute grief to Art.*

Before those poems began, however, KD & I hosted the 10/27/2012 Jellicle Literary Guild meeting at our apartment in Arlington, Massachusetts. A year on from the disastrous 10/29/2011 meeting, KD & I were the only ones at both. Our in-person guest was poet Joe Coleman, who had first come to the 6/20/2012 meeting. Glad he had come again, bringing his affable spirit & fine poetry.

KD & I make a point of dressing in Halloween spirit for the October JG meetings. I had on my Cowboy Captain Kirk costume, & KD wore a wild white wig.

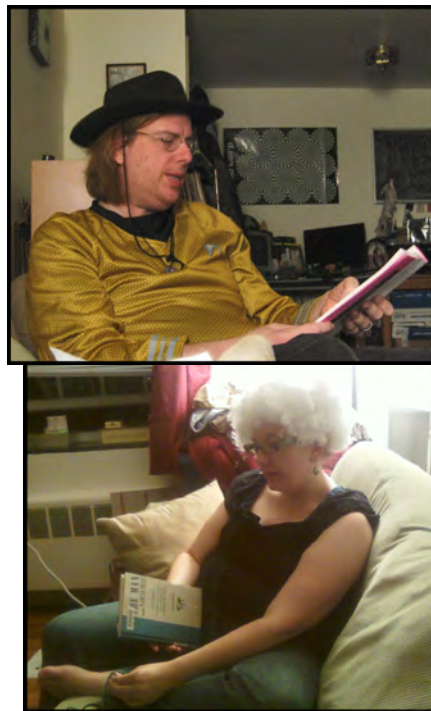
The three of us covered a lot of ground that night. Much of what we read was from *Cenacle 82*. I read my *Many Musics / Tangled Gate* notes, Tom Sheehan's "Old Man" fiction, & Ric Amante's poetry. Joe read his poetry & some other pieces. KD read from several books she was into at the time, & in particular a charming poem called "Instructions" by Neil Gaiman. Here's a taste from its opening lines:

*Touch the wooden gate in the wall you never
saw before.
Say "please" before you open the latch,
go through,
walk down the path.
A red metal imp hangs from the green-painted
front door,
as a knocker,
do not touch it; it will bite your fingers.
Walk through the house. Take nothing. Eat
nothing.
However,
if any creature tells you that it hungers,
feed it.
If it tells you that it is dirty,
clean it.
If it cries to you that it hurts,
if you can,
ease its pain.*

For long-distance participants, "Proxy Readings" as I call them, we were lucky enough to have videos from Judih Weinstein Haggai & Martina Newberry, reading their respective poems from *Cenacle 82*. And, having decided it was going to be a permanent feature of the meetings going forward, the "Jellicle Guild Flashback" featured Jim Burke III at the 11/11/1995 meeting, somewhat drunkenly & merrily telling the story of a UFO encounter he had had many years before that. A year on from his sitting on our green couch, his voice at the Jellicle Guild remained.



* * * * *





Raymond Souland, 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 | 119 | April 2022

Read the full History at:
http://scriptorpress.com/history_of_scriptor_press.pdf

Somewhere in the 1990s, not precisely yet sure when, I would ask my dear friend Jim Burke III to accompany my readings. We'd always intermingled our Art at gatherings, but I wanted him now to *play my words*. Usually not heard in advance.

The 36 *Tangled Gate* poems I wrote in 36 days [11/3/2012-12/8/2012] were written with Jim's guitar alive in them. I eventually published them in *Cenacle* | 83 | December 2012, dedicated "for JBIII." As noted before, the tumult in my heart & mind over his passing a year earlier, alike the depression I'd suffered in the summer of 1998 that produced *Orpheus & Eurydice: Making the Lyre*, seemed to catalyze my work, push it hard & clear toward realization.

To be fair, in 2005, I wrote the 180-poem sequence *New Songs [for Cassandra]*, at a clip of a poem every other day, not from depression or grief, but from a kind of heightened excitement over my first full year living with KD in Seattle. Through several jobs, health scares, all the high & low emotional tumults new love can bring, concluding the year with our marriage. I transmuted these glaring days & nights into short songs. It is intensity, an obsessed focus to craft, & some kind of deep magick akin to luck, that leads to such fruitful production.

It was on 6/8/2000 that I began what became *6 x 36 Nocturnes*. Finished, 360 poems long, on 12/3/2004. Its last poem, "Cry [for Cassandra]," some 200 lines long, took me several months & countless drafts to finish. *New Songs*, with not yet a title or a plan, began 1/1/2005. I only knew I wanted short, acoustic poems again, awhile. By "Wedding," finished 2/5/2006, I was pushing longer & longer works again.

Many Musics began 6/1/2006, & it was not too far into it that I decided I'd write it, compiling series upon series, with no fixed number or date in mind.

For all this, by 2012, well into *Many Musics' Eight Series*, I was running dry. I both was & was not still the depressed graduate student of *Orpheus & Eurydice: Making the Lyre*; the long-haired seeker of *6 x 36 Nocturnes*; the better-loved & loving singer of *New Songs*.

Deep down, I was *bored* with my work. Not with what I had done, but with what I was doing now. I'd spent down of the best poems I had in me. I wrote a lot of dream poems into 2012, as previously recounted. Turned my attention novel again, for awhile, but not enough.

I wanted *new*, yet again. And what I now had were strange new ideas to work with. I'd been,



Nathan D. Horowitz

as also mentioned, roughing up a *mythopoeia*. The *Tangled Gate* poems, their settings & characters, were already showing up in my other projects before I penned the first of these poems. In *Labyrinthine*, in *Bags End News*, in the nightly told *Travelers Tales*, in pages & tellings published nowhere yet (& some even still), I was getting a feel for the poems coming. Call them rehearsals but maybe better first landings in a great new land.

But my aim was *Many Musics*, where the *Tangled Gate* mythopoeia would crystallize fully & finally in these poems. And, to test myself anew, push all my chips onto the green, I would write these 36 poems in 36 days, every weekday morning commute, in the back of the buses into Boston, KD next to me part of the way. Often finishing them on a favored bench, at the Sullivan Square transit station, before my short walk to work.

I would type them up & send them by email to KD at her work, & also to the Scriptor Press email list. Most nights, I would append to the telling of the *Travellers' Tales* that morning's poem.

Wrote one on Thanksgiving Day on the Greyhound bus down to Connecticut to see my family for a few hours. My siblings, my ever stranger, ever more emaciating mother.

Also wrote them along epic Saturdays—from early morning grocery shopping, to live broadcasts of my *Within's Within* radio show, to movies (like the Wachowskis' excellent *Cloud Atlas*), to that day's new poem, & into late nights, high on elixir & strange, wonderful TV shows like *Fringe*, *Warehouse 13*, & *Fraggle Rock*. And Sundays too—in the hours after football games on TV.

And on Election Day too, when US President Obama won his second term (thanks in part to Occupy). And the morning of the evening we saw the great Jerry Douglas Band ply its wild bluegrass Americana live in concert.

And while still getting *Cenacle* 82 printed up & mailed, promoted online, archived to finish. Read six of them at the Out Loud Open Mic event in late November, when I still had 10 more of the 36 to write.

In sum, 36 days, 36 poems. First one at Panera Bread in Harvard Square in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Saturday 11/3/2012; last of them down the street at Au Bon Pain Café, 12/8/2012. Writing these poems in this way realized my Art to somewhere new. Everything I had written led me to these new poems, & from them would emerge worlds in greater & smaller detail than I had yet tried & accomplished.

And yet still, by late October, I was writing in my journals that I had “no idea yet” how to start. Kept thinking, kept *obsessing* where to start.

I'd re-told the Orpheus & Eurydice myth pretty straight in my *Orpheus & Eurydice: Making the Lyre* poems. Researched it widely, synthesized its many versions by my preference, wrote my poems after my style, but I did not *invent* or *invert* a whole lot. My challenge & desire was to sing the familiar epic in my own tongue.

The *Tangled Gate* poems give no such fidelity to source material. And I was also working several disparate myths—the Labyrinth of Crete, the Eleusinian Mysteries, the Sleep Temples of Asclepius. And I was bringing 14 years of writing poems & fiction since those *O & E* poems. I was a better writer by craft, by life experiences, by its gains & losses & many changes.

The Cretan Labyrinth myth is somewhat fantastical, yet none too complex to understand. It concerns a conflict between two Greek kings: the mighty King Minos, of Knossos, on the Island of Crete, off the Greek coast; & the less powerful Aegeus, King of Athens.

Minos' son Androgeus is reported to be slain by Athenians. As revenge, Minos orders that, as punishment, once every nine years Athens must send to Knossos seven youths & seven maidens. These tributes are then thrust into a vast, unnavigable, & unescapable prison called the Labyrinth. This constructed by Minos' engineer, a brilliant genius named Daedalus. Within the Labyrinth, these hapless Athenians wander until they are set upon & consumed by a half-man, half-beast called the Minotaur.

Despairing the coming third occurrence of this cruel penalty, Aegeus allows himself to agree to his son Theseus's plan to disguise as one of the youths, enter the Labyrinth, & slay the Minotaur. The

plan skews, however, when Theseus meets Minos' fair-haired daughter, Ariadne. Love, lust, what-have-you, & Ariadne is giving Theseus a ball of thread & a sword by which to navigate the Labyrinth, slay the Minotaur, & escape again.

This new plan works, & Theseus leads the youths, the maidens, & new love Ariadne to a boat, & safely away from Crete. They dance a fine night away on the Island of Delos. Next morning, Ariadne wakes to find Theseus is gone.

Those few paragraphs well sum up the narrative bones of the story. Variations of the details are countless, fascinating to compare. But, in all, I had what I wanted. I'd always been fascinated by Labyrinths, & thus the Crete myth. By dreams, & thus the Sleep Temples. By psychedelics, & thus the Eleusinian Mysteries. I wanted a big, strange story of magick, of desire, & of Nature as far more than a passive backdrop for human drama.

I started with desire. In the opening of *The Tangled Gate* poems, "She Returns to the Island," the Princess (no longer called Ariadne) is far from her former Island home (no longer called Crete). Like in the original myth, she had left. That was now long ago.

Mix in dreams. The Architect (no longer called Daedalus) comes to her in dreams:

*You neared me in my dreams, nearer than
any man had, at least meaningfully.
You neared, you lured, you made off.
"The Tangled Gate. Find me through the
Tangled Gate. Will you choose? Will you?"*

Unlike the original, her romance is not with Theseus (become "The Hero" here), but with the Architect. But a romance never beyond heated lessons she has with him in his Tower, & consummated not by love-making but by his arranging her escape with the Hero & tributes from the Island, on the eve of a war the King (formerly Minos) plans against the Mainland (formerly Athens), to end their exile on this Island.

The Princess returns to the Island these years later, finds its Castle & grounds abandoned, & visits her old home through several poems. Remembers her bitter stepmother the Queen's only useful bit of advice: "Sniff." Also there is small mention of The Eternals; more to come later on them.

In "She Visits the Dancing Grounds," she recalls long nights with her father the King on the Castle's watchtower, his war plans ever on his mind & evolving. "There are others weapons, stranger strengths," he tells her obscurely, & she aids him equally obscurely by her Dancing Grounds dream-dancings at first light, causing images in the stones they attempt to decipher in a *Book of Patterns*. There is much strangeness never explained in these poems, or not until much later poems.

In "She Visits the Castle," the Princess recalls her lost brother & his parting question to her: "'Will you tell them all goodbye for me?'" This is a hint toward the Creatures, still yet to be fully introduced.

The Princess in "She Passes by the Tangled Gate" comes upon the great ancient structure that, when she was young, she had not been permitted to enter; only to study by telescope from the Architect's Tower window; & also by dreams, which the Architect watched. The great Gate's legend "for those lost," & its Fountain's welcome, insisting visitors take a drink of its enigmatic waters, & then make a choice, left or right, to continue.

Also she recalls:

*In my chamber
through the hole in the wall in my dreams,
yes, it was strange. Yes, I was small. Yes,
it was real like important & beautiful things
in this world are real. Yes, this belief wears*

ℳ wearies in my mind. Yes, it's why I've returned.

In the last of these opening six poems, first of six sequences, “She Sees the Tower, Again Trebles in Time,” the Princess visits the Architect’s Tower, recalls a long ago moment there:

*A noise behind me in these half-lit chambers,
I turn. A branch pokes up through the roof,
behold a patch of speeding stars.*

Also a banquet when her special, as yet undescribed friends tell her that she “treble[s] in time. Sees was, is, & to-be at once.” These are early hints at the strange origin & nature of the Princess.

I was six poems in, not even a week in composition, & yet already I was *deep* into this thing. Along these poems I wrote in my journal:

the first six poems . . . simply . . . establish the groundwork . . . I've wondered if the next [six] will be [Architect] poems—counterpoint to [the Princess's] . . . She explains, she details, she tries to understand. I don't think he does. He seems to know too much, ℳ is like a mystic nihilist. I let them, these 6, go so far but not very. The Princess is smart, intuitive, powerful but lacks confidence, ℳ some kinds of knowing that would help . . . [but] [w]hat does Daedalus seek in the Tangled Gate?

What we first learn about him in the “The Architect Remembers the Boy” is that he had found a strange Boy in the Tangled Gate, itself not simply “maze-prison with a hungry Beast-bastard within.” What is told here is at much variance with the Daedalus-Icarus story from the source myth. In the original, Daedalus the engineer builds two pair of waxen wings for him & his son Icarus to escape Crete, where Minos held them unwillingly. But Icarus ignores his father’s warning to not fly too low to the sea or high near the sun, & plunges, lost, into the sea.

In *The Tangled Gate*’s telling, the Boy’s plunge into the sea is intentional, a planned escape, from the King’s planned invasion of the Mainland. The Architect has taught the Boy to “steer through many worlds,” but must now let him go to assure his safety, like he will also later with the Princess.

What’s notable in this poem, as a kind of sly comment on these *Tangled Gate* poems as a whole, is that the known famous story of Daedalus & Icarus is declared wrong:

*They say the boy's waxy wings melted ℳ
betrayed him when he too neared the sun.
They say the boy was my son. They say
the boy was an ordinary boy. They say
The Tangled Gate is just a maze-prison
with a hungry Beast-bastard within.*

These lines indicate a growing independence from the Cretan Labyrinth myth. Fidelity shades into defiance. I am going to tell how things *really happened*. Keeping in mind, of course, that these poems root partly in myth, & thus more a dissatisfaction with the previous narrative, rather than actual historical facts (which are more irrelevant to all of this anyway).

“The Architect Watches from His Tower” opens with a hint that the Architect is from far in both time & space:

*It's really true men once grew from
spasm ℳ spit, from the awkward twist
of torsos, the fevered collide of breast*

*& pelvis, suddenly the prick a catalytic
bomb, suddenly the cunt to which sought
& resisted & sought for its planting ground.*

This hint points toward the Architect's Boy, the Princess, & the Architect himself. As mentioned before, the Architect spies upon her dream-travels in the Tangled Gate, though early on does not have any contact with her. That is, until the funeral of her returned brother:

*She spies me from among her grieving parents.
We exchange nothing, no nod, no smile,
but thereafter I haunt her Gate wanderings.
Like I was the answer to a question
she didn't have, & now it consumes us both.
Across stars & centuries we will ask this question.*

What Daedalus seeks in the Tangled Gate is still unclear, but something strange, & seeming not new, exists between him & the Princess. Yet her seeming unaware.

In "The Architect in Exile," he again addresses the mistakes regarding who he is:

*In myths, the Tower is portrayed as
my prison, where the King kept me
in punishment & service. This is a hole
in the story, & the truth is absent
within its absence. It is no prison
but my home in every place & time.*

What seems so here is that he is aware of his reputation in times *well beyond* these being depicted. The last stanza also reveals the King's true purpose regarding the Gate, as well as a bit of his own:

*I do not serve the King but he wants something
from me. I am his necromancer &
he believes the Gate will prove his
best weapon. This greed gives me time
while I contrive a way to fuse the cracks.
I am tired of tools & travel. I wish
only for my tree revealed, a day & a night
without end.*

In "The Architect is Her Teacher, Her Hummingbird," we begin to get a sense of what kind of lessons he is teaching the Princess:

*I first appear to you in the Gate as an invitation
to believe. Your dreams of this place are still new,
a game you half-remember by morning, seeing
as you have been trained to see, that there is no hole
in your chamber's wall. I invite you to accept two truths
about one thing. There isn't a hole. There is.*

He shifts an image of a Hummingbird from her picture-book, to her bedchamber wall, to himself manifest as one in her dreams of the Tangled Gate:



*You gasp. You look. I am my question to you.
This is your test. You hold out your finger to me,
half-smiling. I accept & you walk along, no words,
just the potent of touch. As we both wake,
I am humming for you, & then we share this too.
My bedchamber is as dark as yours is plush
with light. We each nod, & know. You now twice believe.*

To *twice believe* is to shift one's perspective radically, rendering the world around one more fully, more complex, dreams & waking of an equally important piece with each other. The Architect knows she will need the greater perspective in times to come.

The Architect's history is more elaborated upon in "The Architect's Record of the Time Beyond Time." In a future time, the world has become a fully global catastrophe. What hope remains involves the Sleepers, far below the world's surface:

What remained for most was the leash & a stingy bowl at nightfall. Hope was a little more light in the day's grey sky, less snagging wind at night. Where possibility still lay, at least for a few, was far below ground, in the great darkened halls of the sleepers, thousands of them clicking song, fed by tubes & awake less than an hour a day.

What's more:

The men of science, magick, & spirit had joined with the men of Art to contrive a solution. What remained unfouled of the seas & mountains & forests had been blended into this work, not to save the world but undo it, find the place beyond the Dreaming, by scavenging through history for the clue all believed was there, the thread out of time.

And the Architect's intent in all this, he confesses in his pages to the Princess:

What you did not read is what I did not write in those pages. I came back not intending to return. You are the thread. You are the clue. The Tangled Gate will seal the world, close its cracks, & those back then will not live nor die. My Tower has snapped the link back to them. You are the chance I follow.

The narrative continues in "The Architect Sees Her, & Again." Having decided this end-time's Sleepers plan will not work:

*This is why I've chosen not to return,
to meet you at the Fountain near the entrance
to the Tangled Gate. I see you approach
& keep my cover until you enter. You still carry
the blue bag I gave you. You never change
through the centuries. I still shudder as
you hesitate, kick the golden leaves at your feet.
Your breathing quicks, mine does too, & you enter.*

So now we know more.

Twelve days & 36 poems in, I note in my journals, regarding the pending third series of poems: "Now to the Beast & I don't have any ideas right now—the Beast is literal & figurative, a man, a

monster, a portal[.]” A couple of days later: “The Beast is where the edges are, the danger points, the outermost or inmost borders—the Beast invented the Tangled Gate myth—”

What I was sure of was that the Minotaur of the source myth did not interest me much as could be so. The Beast, instead, is where Nature comes more fully into the *Tangled Gate* narrative. I worked up from an initial idea that if Jesus Chris is reckoned to be God incarnate in human form, might not the Beast instead embody the *whole of the world* in some way?

“The Queen & Her Beast” revisions the source myth’s telling of Queen Pasiphaë’s lustful obsession with a white beautiful bull that the King had refused to sacrifice to Poseidon (attempting instead to offer up an inferior bull instead). The Queen is magicked by Poseidon into coupling with the white bull, & thus bears the Minotaur from this coupling.

The Beast recognizes the Queen as a sad woman, taken from her home to marry the King & thus prevent a war. He gifts her kindness & empathy she has never known:

*I approached her, huffing
& snarling. Reached in, crumpled her mask,
calmed her down deep. I showed her unfurled
power that night, sang for her scraps of
the first songs, drew her beat & breath
far from that nocturnal beach, its celestial
foolishness above, speckled riddles to mock
those wide-eyed with arrogance.*

Then he gifts her powers by way of an agreement between them:

*We crafted a pact, a new truth that would
birth me into her world. She agreed to the lie
that we mated, & an unholy thing emerged,
a shame to be caged, & slaved to new
bloodspill. She even commanded her tinker
build her a sex-box to receive me. In return,
as we twined, I lit her every cavern with knowing,
loosened men’s harness upon her heart,
revealed its better stars, its fenceless limits.*

The details of this arrangement are not further elaborated. But, again, the *Tangled Gate* poems insist on something critically different to occur in this narrative, versus what was in the original myth.

“The One Woods & Its Beast” places the Beast peacefully in the natural world, & yet his thoughts are of men & what they are:

*Close my eyes & I am the near-blind man,
my remaining sight still fluttering with
lilac & lily, moving with their scented light,
scratching up a spark by glint & petal,
behold my colored silhouettes shaped like a God-thing.*

*Open my eyes & I am the scrawny prick-hard
singer, finding my music beneath the night’s
sweeping skirts, insisting the oldest idols
totter forward & people my lyrics,*

*grind bloodless hips new with the next hour's
unspent semen, its high crackling juice.*

*Close again & now the tall professor, behold
my sepia-washed pictures, their hard press
at your jaw & shoulders to justify now
your own sanity, resist this years-long game—*

*Again & now the dark man kneeling
with my horn & shredding time—*

Those sketched in these stanzas include French Impressionist painter Claude Monet, German poet Rainer Maria Rilke, American film-maker David Lynch, & American jazz musician Miles Davis. Some of my greatest heroes.

“World’s Wish & Its Beast,” a kind of love poem, concludes:

*I remember the night, it was three, or a hundred.
You were one, or several, as was I.
We’d fought for kings we’d never meet, never touch,
& never know. We’d danced & I showed you
that boulevard, those trees, your smile, long & it lingered.
As we lived, so we died, there were memories,
more forgotten. It was a time for believing,
my maps, my uniform at first light,
the half-remembered lover in a photograph.
As we together walk down empty streets, still looking on, still looking back,
there is no final thing to know.*

From these can be derived the idea that the Beast is one, none, & many. Human, in part, & many other kinds too. Powerful & vulnerable, both. Power in its infinitely various manifestations.

“The Beast & His Partner” complexifies all this still further, if that’s possible (it is). This poem is full of dark portent about sacrifices & transformations, & what might need to happen to “blow through the heart of the world.” Yet, like his choice of kindness toward the Queen, the Beast wonders about the Princess:

*My only doubt is the girl not a girl
who approaches again. I wonder if she
is a different way. I wonder if nobody
has to die. I wonder why I must choose.*

His doubt ever more in “The Beast & the Princess”:

*We played a game that morning, tap the air
& loose its notes, collect the notes & shape a thing.
Gently blow & lure its colors. Nod, exchange.*

*Last round you conjured a small white bunny,
pink nose, mesmerizing eyes, tranquil but
intent expression. I held it, felt its pulse.*

*You shook your head when I made to clap
hands, giving the creature back to the air,
as was common. Your smile bid me keep.*

Their mornings grow fewer in number, till only memories for the Beast in the form of the White Bunny from their game. In “The White Bunny & the Beast,” the Beast, now in a form like that of the Princess, is led, holding a white thread, to a strange building, to its “Carnival Room”:

*The bunny hops quickly, ears flashing, & I follow
on my girl's light legs through rooms of
detritus & decay, at last to a room where we stop.
She looks up at me, raises her pink nose, & again,
& I enter. I hear cacophony, song. I see doors
mounted on walls, beckoning. A tunnel into
the darkness, where its long wheeled carriage
intends. Two yellow-skinned brothers observing
me, plucking stringless instruments, songs of laughter.
A tiny creature at my feet, black & white,
gnattering at me in . . . click-clicks & noise-noises?
I am delighted, I wish to go.*

The Creatures are now entering the narrative more full. The Beast thinks: “Something wishes to convince me otherwise. / Something would have me save / what I would destroy.”

There are no Creatures in the Cretan Labyrinth myth. They live in the One Woods, & their forms are many. Theirs, simply, are the magicks of dreams, music, love, wonder. Native to this world in a different way from people-folks. Good luck charms for any & all kind to them, & oh-so-powerful in many ways. Not human, not wild animals, not pets, not easy to define. Yet they are as important as the people-folks, & the Beast, & strange others in this narrative.

Three sequences of six poems each done, & three to go. In the second of the *Tangled Gate* poems I set out the realize what-all had been introduced in the first half. We return to the Princess again, within the Tangled Gate, in the poem “At the Fountain.” Her figuring what to do next, now awake here, looking for the Architect:

*Remember some things. The Fountain comes first.
But in my dreams, & later through the Architect's
spy-glass, I never beheld it so crackling
with life, sparkling with a kind of madness
for me to drink, drink. How is it water
tastes like remembering too? Yet so.*

Her thoughts drift to her adopted home, the Pensionne; to her last day with the Architect; to his gift to her of the box of threads she had now recovered from the Castle. The poem goes on:

*I select the green thread. “Recover something dear.”
Return briefly to the Fountain, tie it to a stony hook,
begin again. Move slowly at first, as though learning
to walk. Occasionally there is a breach,
not decay, not time. The ruin of anger & blows.
The ground remains like always gentle beneath
my bare feet. I hurry. I dance. I remember.*

*I round a turn & recover something dear.
 My friends. My friends! From behind the hole
 in my bedchamber wall discovered only in
 childly dreams. Too many to count.
 I think they've all come. They crow & cry,
 click & howl. Nothing to forgive. Never was.*

In "Remembering Her Exile," the Princess sits with these Creatures & tells them of her travels since she had left them, & the Island:

*There is not even the twitching of a nose.
 A stray wind raises fur here & there,
 a few green spikes, royal purple feathers.
 These creatures know what dark cities
 men dwell in their homes & hearts,
 & they would wish me keep near to them instead.*

And she concludes:

*There's more to tell but I've exhausted
 my hours. My friends lead me to a safe
 place, bundle me to sleep among them.
 I feel most the child again, feel their love
 so simple, so vast. I fall asleep &
 mercy of mercies, I do not dream.*

Sweet, sweet magick.

In "She Follows the Traveling Troubadour," my dear passed friend Jim again appears in my work (as was mentioned earlier regarding *Labyrinthine*). Unseen in this instance, his guitar's music & sweet voice alone lead the Princess & her dearest Creature friends (White Bunny, Imp, Turtle-not-a-Turtle) along, till they nap underneath a tall oak tree (these trees appear as subtle allusion to my *Orpheus & Eurydice* poems).

A disturbing dream of the Architect urging her to enter a dark cave is followed by her next choice:

*I stand. There is no music. Consider
 my collection of threads. The crimson one,
 "for greater understanding," is what I choose.
 We move along, the white bunny
 hurrying us, the imp gnattering crazily.
 The turtle is quiet, but not a turtle.
 We are coming to something, my bones feel
 its jittering power. Very close.*

She next encounters the Beast & we learn "Wherefrom the Beast":

*I come to you again. I remember you.
 We contrived creatures from the air,
 like those I travel with. I remember you now.*



*You are an old story, far older than men,
old as the earth. You were created long
before men. To walk the earth. One, none, many.*

*You were not given the rules by which to abide.
A mortality. An I among many. You shifted,
& did not die. And then you did. And then you lived on.*

Her sense of urgency now ever more upon her, the Princess & her friends hurry along the paths of the Gate. Then the Architect's cloaked following of her is revealed by the Creatures, who interrogate his purposes after their own fashion:

*We sit. The tiny one comes up to me,
gnattering in an unknown tongue,
entering my mind, pushing things
around, I cry out finally & you say
a word to retrieve her to your hand.*

*The long-eared one stares intently
at me & I strangely calm, lean
back, nearly dream. She does not press
or pry but wearies me & I cannot
respond, whimper, & again your word.*

*The green-shelled one does not but
sit in your lap, guarding against me.
"I have no such friends as these,"
I finally say. "I did not come to
harm you. Please believe me."*

Finally, re-united, the Architect & the Princess talk:

*You stand, bid your friends wait,
we walk apart from them.
"You asked me to find you here."
I grimace. "You're greatly needed."
She nods obscurely.
There is a silence between us.
She no longer needs a teacher.
She picks up her blue bag without a word.
Her friends let me follow, at a distance,
& I know the helpless fear of ordinary men.*

And now, in "A Wish to Heal," the Architect reveals to the Princess her origins, & his reasons for seeking here out:

*"You are not what you seem, a Princess,
a usual young woman. You are from a far place,
now gone. A beautiful place that was rotted,*

*used up, by men not unlike those here you know.
You were sent here, when small, to change
the path, make the world's path elsewhere.*

*"They could not know when or where you would
land, but they gave you what powers they could.
To dream powerfully, to treble in time. Their gifts.
The blue bag you carry is my gift to you,
given when you left the Island, lined with power,
protection. Fewer limits on your mind & body.*

*"I am learned, I see through shells, but I am
just a man. I come from a time men have
ruined, & it half-rots, & I will not return.
I've come beyond the Dreaming to find you,
because you are the thread out of time,
& this Tangled Gate bears your way."*

She listens, then heeds his advice to pick her next thread. But:

*She studies the threads remaining,
stares up into the light a moment,
then selects the purple thread. "A wish to heal."
We stand. She hands me the end of the thread.
Shakes her head at her friends.
"When you feel a tug, follow." And then she goes.*

And so the Princess continues along alone. Maybe simply by intuition alone. In "The Pensionne & the White Tiger," she encounters her old White Tiger friend from the Great Garden of the Pensionne. Twas where she had ended up after being abandoned by the Hero.

*A plate in each hand, I noticed the white tiger
through the kitchen window & asked the others.
They laughed, said it appeared to a few but
none too close, & anyway caused no damage.*

Her work in the Garden was solitary, & quietly healing of all her sadnesses until:

*That night I dreamed of the Architect in his Tower
& I asked him. Tapped his head, his heart,
sniffed twice, but I stomped. "No. Tell me."
"I don't have to. He will himself." "He's not
an ordinary beast?" "He's a tender. You'll be
his apprentice." "A tender?"*

So we learn more of her dream conversations with the Architect. And, like with the Architect, the Princess & her White Tiger friend are "[n]o longer master & pupil, but we will go together again."

And thus we learn that *anyone* of any kind can be teacher, or pupil, to any other. And then simply friends, once the lessons learned.

Now beyond her purple thread's reach, its end tied to a tree branch, her box of threads buried below, the Princess & the White Tiger ride:

*The swifter we go, the blurrier the landscape,
& I seem to see other things. The outlines
of strange buildings, vehicles. I look up &
there are metallic crafts endlessly shifting
form. I feel purpose without words. A sense
of hurry. Stronger than ever, a wish to heal.*

Leaving her friend, "She Enters Clover-dale" alone: "No threads. No teachers / No friends[.]" Clover-dale is a fixtionalized version of the long-tumbled-down Clover-dale Farm in Vermont. Had already been depicted in *Labyrinthine*. The crumbly steps to climb & enter, the crowded first room, the mirror room. Then:

*I pass on. The air becomes outdoors chilled
& I find myself in a featureless desert
slashed by sun's winter heat. I walk & walk
until I arrive at a kind of exit, a door
in sight. There is a hut before it, & within
sits a small exotic man. Old as deserts.*

The little man is a fixtionalized version of a man I encountered at that time every weekday of my waking hours. A friendly security guard sitting on a stool in front of a little shack at the parking lot I'd pass through on route to my nearby workplace. I'd pass him many days having just minutes before finished the day's *Tangled Gate* poem. In fact, this one, too, on November 29. I believe he was Asian, seemed to speak little English, though we exchanged smiles every passing. Here is where waking & Imaginal Space cross:

*He comes out, makes to bow like a servant,
I shake my head, touch his small shoulder.
He smiles with several teeth but now
I feel in him the same great calm power
as my beastly image. Then he laughs, braying
with delight, & begins to gnatter like my tiny imp friend.*

*Not thinking, not feeling, not sniffing this time,
I gnatter in return, high & low click-clicks
& noise-noises. A kind of play, but I knew that.
A kind of song too? The more we gnatter,
the more we treble in time, see this desert
long ago as a great watery basin,
far hence filled with starcraft.*

He seems the first to share her strange ability, & kindly advises her to continue on to the Carnival Room, where the Architect had once been, in her form.



* * * * *



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

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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.



* * * * *

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 | 121 | Autumn 2022

Read the full History at:

http://scriptorpress.com/history_of_scriptor_press.pdf

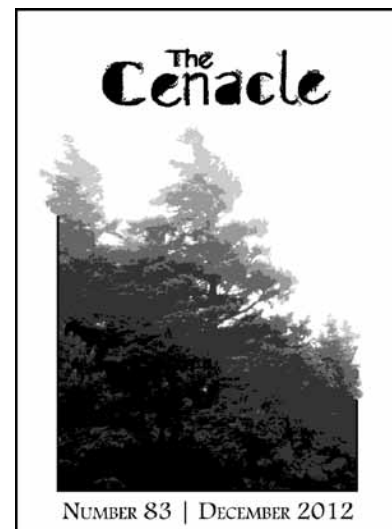
What I did in 2012, still do, before & ever on, is mix Art & press-work with living, pay-job, meals, bus rides, weather, & so on. The funny thing that occurs to me is that, in some sense, the Art & press-work remain, even as the days & nights spent living otherwise linger ever more distant.

I'd written the original *Tangled Gate* poems, most of them, November into December, on the bus bound, with KD, toward Boston for our pay-jobs. Working my still-fairly-new Technical Writer job at PHT. Something called a *Site Support Guide* obsessing my days there. Ending up evenings awhile at places like my now-long-lost but ever beloved Au Bon Pain Café in Harvard Square, working *Cenacle* | 83 | December 2012 toward finish.

Come home for dinner & fine TV shows like *Haven*, *Boardwalk Empire*, & *Burn Notice*—finishing the night telling the *Creature Tale* aloud to the Creatures themselves, & to KD. Now recording them too, my *Voice Journal* project of 1999-2002 revived.

Happy that my MacBook Pro Eurydice had come back all repaired. Happy that, though he could not make the December 15th Jellicle Literary Guild meeting, my poet friend Ric Amante was willing to get on a phone call with me & record some poems to be shared at it. Happy the Friday before the meeting to enjoy my weekly Duckees Bath. Always fun. Even up until the early afternoon of the day of the meeting, KD & I were still finishing *Cenacle* 83.

Funny to be writing about *Cenacle* | 83 | December 2012, now, in *Cenacle* | 123 | December 2023. This journal has changed some in the intervening years, but not so much as it hasn't. More contributors than back then. More of my writings in it. But still more same than different. I'm glad of both, honestly.



The front cover of the issue was taken from the rainy top of a small mountain in Moose Point State Park, Searsport, Maine. On a fun camping trip, went on a slippery hike up to the top & back down.

Mindful of it being a year since my dear brother JBIII's sudden passing, the epigraph, a lovely KD black-&-white dusky portrait of the Boston skyline, is from his favorite band, The Who, & lines he loved from one of their songs:

There once was a note, pure and easy,
Playing so free, like a breath rippling by
The note is eternal, I hear it, it sees me,
forever we blend and forever we die.

These lines have influenced me as well: the idea of music being the source of the Universe. An Eternal Note. All of Creation sung into being. What a lovely way to think about the beginning of things.

From Soulard's Notebooks, written 12/12/12, was the newest piece in the issue, just a few days before its JG debut. In it, I'm feeling hopeful about several major events of the concluding year: Obama's re-election as US president; marijuana's legalization in Colorado & Washington State; gay marriage getting legalized in Maine, Maryland, & Washington State (the issue's Table of Contents' thank you note mentions the portions of the American electorate who voted for these).

These victories mattered, matter still, even in these darker days of the ongoing Pandemic & accelerating climate change. The ballot box *can be* a powerful force for liberation.

The main contents of the issue kick off with new contributor Jonathan Talat Phillips's "Welcome to the Rodeo, Cowboy." I'd met Jonathan via his recorded talks online, & his affiliation with the Evolver Network (a global network connecting organizations and individuals working toward the health and wellbeing of Earth and humanity).

His piece is excerpted from his 2011 book *The Electric Jesus*. The Ayahuasca visions he experiences include the following:

[m]y consciousness swished back into my body, but I wasn't exactly me. I saw myself as a majestic bear-human on a stone throne, a wild but graceful animal with a human continence. "This represents the story of tribal humanity," the voice advised. That image soon disappeared to reveal a half-human, half-lion on a gilded throne, similarly animal but more regal. Around me embroidered red-and-silver tapestries hung on the walls of a vast palace chamber. Millions of other half-lion royals appeared with golden branches stretching out of their glowing crowns, connecting us in a gilded web. "This represents the story of civilization, humanity's journey out of nature into separation, laws, and technological achievement."

There is a beauty & braveness in his writing, & a relieving strain of humor through it too. I was not long again in touch with Jonathan, but I wish him safe, fruitful travels.

Writing about Judih Haggai Weinstein, now, final days of 2023, is painful as never was before. She is currently one of those missing amidst the renewed Israeli-Palestinian war, raging since early October 2023. Going back these 11 years, her haiku emanating from her kibbutz near the Palestinian border, tell the ongoing story of war:

even the quiet
is noisy
after the war.

* * *

machines in sky
dread in heart
another war day

* * *

bomb blasts
on them on us
noise of hell

* * *

Yet others tell of her wise, peaceful, sometimes funny vision too:

open ears
do i notice
today's miracles

* * *

shut up and listen
secrets will flow
simple empathy

* * *

perhaps now
flamenco dreams
will strut my mind

* * *

Nathan D. Horowitz's "Gateway Mexico" continues in this issue. From El Nopal, Cora Indian Territory, Nayarit, the narrator, "Nate," deepens his shamanic pursuits:

He began realizing his dream of fasting up on the hill for three days and nights. He felt he had risen above the rest of his life. All his ordinary concerns were down below, and he was high up with his hunger, some plants, some stones, and the sky. He wrote letters to Lily and made long lists of foods he had eaten at one time or another; hungry to an extreme, he could vividly taste things he had enjoyed years and years before, including the cream-filled chocolate eggs from the Easter baskets his mother had assembled for him, and the bowls

of cottage cheese, sour cream, and fruit cocktail that his father used to give him as a snack when he visited his apartment. He promised himself that when he got home, he would open a large can of peaches and, as quickly as possible, eat them all and drink the syrup. He wrote down his dreams, including one in which he visited the land of the dead and saw Hitler being punished by the liberal regime there, by being made to do community service, working behind the counter in a candy store.

He reflects on his journey thus:

Also on the wall was an electricity meter labeled “Wathorímetro Thermofascio.” It dovetailed with something Nate had been thinking about: how strange it must have seemed to the Coras that someone from the distant, incomprehensible United States wanted to learn to be a shaman. It was as if a young man from outer space, insanely wealthy, eight feet tall, and as pale as a sheet of paper, appeared in Brooklyn and went to the Lubovicher Hasidism, saying that he felt he needed to become a rabbi. The gringo thought he could write a science fiction story about this. The visitor’s name would be something that sounded as weird to them as his did to the Coras: *Wathorímetro Thermofascio*. The Hasidism would think it bizarre that Watt wanted to be a rabbi, but seeing that he was serious about it, and willing to share a pinch of his vast fortune, they would take in the young space traveler and study Talmud with him.

His moving & delightful “well-told tales of the adventures of the gringo who wanted to be a shaman” carry on.

Charlie Beyer’s “Hustle-Work Stories” find the shaggy-faced raconteur forever trying to raise funds to build & market his beloved hovercraft business. From bad:

Went to see the flim-flam man in Vancouver. He had on a cheap suit and a nose that’s mashed over to one side. Always suspicious of the asymmetrical. Big promises of venture capital on the phone “Come on in. We got money today.” I zoom down to Vancouver for a “meeting.” It’s a tiny front in a mini-mall tucked between a Kinko’s and a Korean massage parlor. Lettering on the door says “Security Quick Title and Mortgage.” Someone is in the process of scraping the name off so it says “. . . y Quick Title and Morg . . .”

To sad:

He likes my Indiana Jones no-bullshit approach. My resume reads like the adventures of Papillon on his third escape attempt. He gets me talking about hovercrafts (which I incidentally know a great deal about) and all pretenses of getting me into a tight collar shirt are dropped. I get him worked up on hovers. He tells me to come back on MLK day with some hover info. I show up three hours early. Look stupid. Have to sit in my car in the rain and smoke cheap cigars. Come back in at the right time, all frumpled, smelling like a community college ashtray. Clutching a pile of dot matrix printouts wrinkled with sweat and rain. Everything I ever knew and wrote about hovers is here, plans, specs, pics, the sink. He is gracious. Flops it all on the floor behind his desk. The trash can?

To beautifully delusional:

Had a successful investment consulting corporation in New York that was really bringing it in [train station?]. Decided to quit and take life easy. Traveled all over the world but wasn't interested in anything [abject stupidity?]. Just all these sights added up to be boring. Everywhere I went it was just more traveling and fancy dinners. Back in New York I just hung around the penthouse [jail?] eating all sorts of rich foods and doing nothing. Soon became really fat. And then, [lowers his voice] I lost all sexual urge for my wife [she fat too?]. Couldn't even get it up. So I had to go back to work. Started this little operation [code for scam] with my wife as executive secretary. We work all day meeting lots of interesting people [pause for effect] like you, and helping them turn their business around [into his pocket]. Like Dravis and Machelli just up the street had a liability on their books. We worked with them in their spent chemicals re-assigning company and had them with a fat bank account in two weeks [took the Mob money, dumped the toxic waste in the river]. Now we work till 6 when the wife goes home and takes a bubble bath [in spent chemicals?]. I do a little paperwork [dumping], then we go out dancing and have a late night romantic dinner. I'm 78 years old and never felt better in my life. This job is exciting and we're doing some fast enterprise turn around."

Beyer laughs, cries, rages wonderfully ever on.

Sometimes what lingers from a poet are just a line or two. From Joe Coleman's "The Lovely Haunting": "Etching in the art of acids." And from "Mind's Eye Candy (from the Jacobin Cycle)": "Imagination is unfulfilled hunger." These lines stick deep.

Poet Zannemarie Lloyd Tayler (her nom de plume), friend of mine for a few years, hostess of the Out Loud Open Mic, where I met both Joe Coleman & Tom Sheehan &, more importantly, beloved partner of my long-time friend Ric Amante, contributed two poems to this issue. And them newly married at that time. KD & me not invited to their ceremony, though living only a few towns away. These lines from "The Way You Say My Name" do a nice poetical summing of their deep romance:

I love the way you light my name like a marquee, when you sing it,
When you go neon, electric, on me. I love how you clasp our lips to it
Like a kitten pouncing on a moth.

Tom Sheehan's poem "Right of Asylum," recalls, in part, his long-lost & profoundly loved father:

The soft moon of his face
Leaping on my woolen landscape;
His breath heavy, warm, ripe,
Like a crock full of home made beer,

His hands clumsy at adjusting
Even the thinnest of my shrouds.
I often thought he let me know,
By such ruse, he attended darkness.



I should tug at you but I won't.
 I'll accept the moon and silence
 And your lying like a submarine,
 Bottomed, only dreams inside.

It's like his Art remembers for a living.

Martina Newberry's very timely & very funny "Christmas Music" tells the story of the holiday:

After all, at home they'd always stuffed their pillows and sleeping mats with clean straw so this would be no different. The animals around them, watching . . . so what? Both had raised their share of animals—let the beasts watch; animals have concluded their own births and won't be bothered by human issue. They told each other "Don't worry," and got ready for a long night.

Not many could wring such a sober holiday for its funny residua.

This issue also featured poems by the Persian poet Jalāl al-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī (known in modern times simply as Rumi) first re-published by Scriptor Press New England in the ongoing series of Burning Man Books, back in 1999 (as *Let the Beauty We Love Be What We Do*). Rumi was a poet, a theologian, a mystic. Speaking again of Ric Amante, it was he who introduced me to Rumi's brilliant work.

Good translations of Rumi's poems, most written in Persian, convey their vision, artistry, humor. Two of the shorter pieces in *Cenacle* 83 convey this point well:

Today, like every other day, we wake up empty
 and frightened. Don't open the door to the study
 and begin reading. Take down a musical instrument.

Let the beauty we love be what we do.
 There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground.

* * *

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

I recall Ric, long ago, in various apartments of his where we would visit, reciting Rumi's poems as he drank deeply of red wine, & dancing the words, like Rumi was said to have done. These poems welcome all, & never grow stale in the mind.

This issue is also profusely decorated with photographs from our early September visit to the Mass MOCA (Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art). My personal journal from 9/1/2012 describes:

Vastness. Three floors in an old warehouse complex—very impressive—as were the exhibitions—a sweeping multimedia “O Canada,” the multi-floor Sol Lewitt wall drawings, the Afro-futurist Sanford Biggers, & the thematic “Ten Cities.”

It is an endlessly fun museum, worth anyone’s visit.

Always the wish to discuss *Labyrinthine* & never the perfect way found. Yet *Cenacle* 83 contains a passage that rings ever true of this strange long book:

Yes, this ragged sheaf of high notes, yes, nothing learned yet but strategy to keep singing, keep singing & so I try, I put this black ink stick to its page & push it along, to understand with hope, & I do, & I don’t & I do—

This world is not ours—we belong to it—& yet not enough in saying that—the ships have always been overhead—do I believe this or just write it, or has one led toward the other?

Every shift contacts every other shift—again, my own words seduce me by their weird play into belief—it’s true, or it sounds like it should be true—like a sexy little truth with a pouty mouth & a skirt conforming precisely to her hot little ass—

Would knowing even help? Would it justify or disappoint? It seems like the civilizations of men flourish with the clash of arguments, the wild flourish of mysteries—

certainty brings corrosion—

What comes can be the strength of accumulating years, that’s what I carry by way of current faith, I think: because I have done this many ways over many years, what opens out to me is further along, as though a path, as though there is not loss or diminish but gain—

I would will my daylight hours root from an hour such as this—I would wish its branchy truths, its far lights, its ceaseless unfoldings, its nearness to dreaming—

Ever carry these words, their sentiments, along.

Having discussed the *Tangled Gate* poems in this *History* already, I’d attend here to the *Notes from New England* that I wrote about it a few days later. These lines sum best:

These poems are profoundly connected to my others writings, & to ideas I’ve long had. They are culmination as much as new. I felt myself tonight, while writing the final piece, “One, Many, None,” reaching back many years. Asking myself: what would a flawless moment or thing be? Remembering an acid trip from about 14 years ago, first day of spring, snow fall, I saw Bob Dylan’s *Don’t Look Back* at Coolidge Corner Movie House in Brookline, probably stopped at the McDonald’s nearby before movie, & Barnes & Noble nearby after, both now long gone, eventually a bus to Harvard Square, & I felt so happy, so blessed that night, “first day of spring, snow fall, all is perfect, beautiful,” is what I wrote.

* * *

Still, so many questions: what is the Red Bag? A kind of portal? From where to where? What is the Tangled Gate? A kind of interface? Who or what is the Beast? A personification of earth, Nature? What are the One Woods? Of the world before men? What the blazes is gnattering? A language-less tongue, an ur-tongue? What is the Carnival Room & Cloverdale? Part of the geography of Dreamland? What is the Pensionne? A safe-house for Eternals & those they make? What are Eternals?

* * *

And the conclusion:

Earlier this week I added the dedication. Of course for Jim. I wish he were around to play along when I read it to the 24th anniversary Jellicle Literary Guild meeting this weekend. But as the Traveling Troubadour, he had to move along. Like all I've loved perpetually, he embeds inside the words themselves.

"What's next, Jim?"

He smiles, blue eyes twinkling.

"You'll find out soon enough."

All of which leads me on to describing that Jellicle Literary Guild meeting.



* * * * *

