

The Cenacle



Number 120 | Summer 2022

Why not go out on a limb?
Isn't that where the fruit is?



--Frank Scully

September 4, 2022
D: 14 p.m.
Bungelow Co.
Attic (fury table)
Millsboro, Mass.

Welcome to the Summer 2022 issue of The Cenacle. There are two themes running through these pages. "Summer Noir" & "Radical Collaboration". The first of these is a reflection on the state of the world this issue arrives to; the second more concerned with the issue's contents themselves, & their strivings.

The term noir sources in the French word for black. But its use in the worlds of film & television concern works which are "cynical, bleak, pessimistic in nature". Classic Hollywood examples include The Big Sleep (1946) & Sunset Boulevard (1950). To these films could be added Fargo (1996) & Mulholland Drive (2001) of more recent vintage.

Watching the world, & most especially the U.S., engage ever more in a kind of "pandemic denial", to me, as, if not far more cynical, black & pessimistic. A kind of



-14-

fatalism that is, in its own way, every bit as bad as the pandemic itself. As though nothing can be done to stop people from getting sick, or really sick, or dying. Vaccines, masks, social distancing — none of these work if most do not engage them as fools & behaviors. Engaged, all of them work.

The current message that "we mustn't let COVID-19 rule our lives anymore," & this benign sentiment not translating to: more science, more protective technology, more support for anyone who is struggling to stay safe or, worse, uncertain what is really going on — this is cynicism, bleakness, pessimism. Living like an immediate, & preventable, mortal threat does not exist, because one can't be fucking bothered to get a shot or wear a mask — maybe this is closer to nihilism in truth.

All that said, hope is never gone. US President Joe Biden recently signed into law a long-mark climate change plan. And the legal walls are ever closing in on his criminal predecessor, holed up in his Florida compound, not dissimilar to Hitler in his Berlin bunker, circa April 1945.

-15-

There seems growing intent, fueled by the race over the U.S. Supreme Court overturning the 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling (protecting a woman's right to autonomy over her body & choices (and life it), to punish at the voting booth in November those who celebrate — who fundraise by! — this decision.

And the science to actually end the COVID-19 pandemic is day by day hearing medicines to protect all.

These important examples are given here to indicate that we can intelligently collaborate to change the world for the better.

I call this idea "radical collaboration." Let me elaborate.

Each of us is an "I," a singular mortal being traveling space & time among many others. We become responsible over time for our lives, our choices, their consequences. Till when this might ever change, each of us will die. Being alive, being mortal, being self-aware beings of flesh & bone — these are the core things we all share. And we actually share them, at least the first two, with all life

-16-

on this planet. How each of us lives the life given, defines its meanings, its values, its hopes, its fears, are secondary to the facts of "I."

But primary to the facts of "We." Each person, born, becomes immediately engulfed in social constructs. A tangle of geography, politics, gender, religion, economics, & multiple other factors: each of us is an "I," & then also a "we." We learn about all this, embrace some of it, resist others, all the while forming & reforming our conceptions of ourselves, others, & the world as a whole.

"We" is where each of us are navigating through most of the time. Dreams, emotions, & bodily functions are some of the common exceptions.

Success is usually defined for an individual in "We" terms. Relationships, jobs, groups of all kinds. "I" is still at the wheel, making better & worse choices, but "We" is usually judge & jury. As quasi-social creatures, the assessments of "We" matter. Be it mates, friends, family, bosses, & so on, we conform by, or against, the will of others. I include everyone reading this as ~~The Circle~~ has little reach to those living alone.



-17-

off the grid.

For those not, that is, not all of you, there is ~~one more~~ category to "radical collaboration," & this is where the word "radical" really comes into play.

There is a "Greater We." Not "I" alone, not the "We" of one's family, friends, lovers, work colleagues, & fellow members of party, club, cult, whatever.

The "Greater We" comprises many many each of us will likely never meet. Don't live in your town, don't work at your job, don't go to your school, don't believe in what you do & how you do. Mostly don't live by your country's laws, or know its history as you do. Have their own.

To consider who & what you are, beyond "I," beyond "We," leads to this "Greater We." Takes some work. A lot of questions, & the willingness to listen, to respect, to use one's heart, & one's imagination, to empathize.

You & I are not the same. This is true even if you & I comprise a "We." But "We" is easier, ~~so far as figure out~~ than "Greater We." "We" is a treasure, & a trap. "We" brings presumptions.

-18-

pressures on how to behave, what to think, who is "other" to us, & how do we regard them?

"Greater We" snaps into two any "We's" presumptions about what is good or true in this world. To seek to be part of "Greater We" is, ideally, a way to discover "I" again. Who am I, if all these choices are possible? Who do I want to be?

Collaboration occurs when many "I's" work together. Not to agree on everything, but to find out what matters to agree on. How do we move beyond now? What is the hard work needed? Can this be a world big enough for all to prosper, to choose what this means?

The words & images in this "Summer Noir" issue will not give you your answers. Maybe, at best, will encourage you to ask new questions, to expect more of yourself "I" others "We", & maybe even "Greater We."

We cannot endure, as a race, as a planet, an endless "Summer Noir."

9/4/2002



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FEEDBACK.....	1
FROM THE ELECTROLOUNGE FORUMS.....	6
POETRY by Judih Weinstein Haggai.....	22
OF GLYPHS AND OTHER THINGS Martina Reisz Newberry Interviewed by Judih Weinstein Haggai.....	29
POETRY by Martina Reisz Newberry.....	34
NOTES FROM NEW ENGLAND [COMMENTARY] by Raymond Souland, Jr. [©].....	37
PHOTO GALLERY by Epi Rogan.....	49
MABON CALLING [FICTION] by Sam Knot.....	52
MANY MUSICS [POETRY] by Raymond Souland, Jr. [©].....	67
THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE SASQUATCH [PROSE] by Richard & Charlie Beyer.....	78
POETRY by Tamara Miles.....	82
MISERABLE [FICTION] by Ace Boggess.....	84
PHOTO GALLERY by Louis Staebler.....	89
SECRET JOY AMONGST THESE TIMES: THE HISTORY OF SCRIPTOR PRESS by Raymond Souland, Jr. [©].....	92
POETRY by Tom Sheehan.....	109
DIALOGUE ON THE PRESENT by Jimmy Heffernan.....	110
PHOTO GALLERY by Michael Couvaras.....	116

TESTING ME [TRAVEL JOURNAL] by Nathan D. Horowitz.....	118
POETRY by Colin James.....	123
BAGS END BOOK #20: GO INTO THE SEA! PART 2 [FICTION] by Algernon Beagle.....	125
PHOTO GALLERY by AbandonView.....	140
RIVERS OF THE MIND [A NOVEL] by Timothy Vilgiate.....	142
POETRY by Jo Monea.....	158
THE STORY OF SINDBAD THE SAILOR [CLASSIC FICTION] Translated by Husain Haddawy.....	160
LABYRINTHINE [A NEW FICTION] by Raymond Soulard, Jr. [👤].....	171
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS.....	187

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please be safe. You are needed. Better
days always pend. Find your way to them.
Help as many as you can. Thank you.

SCRIPTOR PRESS



NEW ENGLAND

2022



Feedback on Cenacle 119 | April 2022

From Louis Staebler:

What I like best about this issue is that I cannot put it down. Rigorous in its harvesting crops from the seeds of creativity. Makes me want to walk around in a most wakeful state, snapping the shutter with any camera I get my hands on. I see the peripatetic urge that pulls my brain into nooks and crannies that offer new problems and possessions to overcome, examine, and quantify.

So it is in this dreamer's journal. I became immediately impressed with the writers and poets, picture-takers and painters and art-makers in general. I will leaf through the pages again and again. I know I will pick up on something later on a year from now.

The pages of the issue hold together like a close community. It's a diverse group of folks making good trouble. I expect things to happen in this haven for creators. There is music here. Free form like jazz.

* * * * *

From Colin James:

After reading his short fiction, "The God-Maker," I've decided that Ace Boggess should get some business cards made up like this: "Ace Boggess—Provocateur!" He could carry this little stash with him at all times. When at a cyber café, or a reading, he would need a small basketful set near the front of his table. Someone is bound to walk by and ask, "What is this?" "Please take one," says our hero. He or she or they reads it aloud: "Ace Boggess, Provocateur! Hmmmmm?"

* * * * *

From Sam Knot:

Loved Ace Boggess's "The God-Maker." Packed with wonderful ideas. Profoundly amusing, perfectly wrought.

And stunned by Nathan D. Horowitz's "Back in San Pablo," with its tales of shamanic hammock burials, and World Trees filled with fish. As he writes: "*It's hard to believe and hard not to believe.*"

And left speechless by Judih Haggai's poem "Pathless," and its closing line: "*I'm free to slip away.*"

* * * * *

From Nathan D. Horowitz:

Martina Newberry's poem "Sadie Climbing the Stairs" drove me to the online dictionary in search of the word "ambages." "*I was made of ambages,*" the narrator of the poem says. "Circumlocutions," the word means. The word's Latin etymology whispers of ceaseless movements around. A linguistic circulatory system; the body a maze of flowing language.

The word is key to the poem. Only language circulating in one place can draw such a detailed portrait of an old love affair whose freshness retains the power to shock. Only love circulating in one place can let the author still feel "*the all-night warmth / that clung to your arms*" and "*hear your erotic gasp— / breath raking over your teeth.*"

Martina's second poem, "April Now (Skirling and its Consequences)" also sent me to the online dictionary; I wanted to make sure I understood what Martina meant by "skirling." It means making a shrill wailing sound, as imagination and memory do. In the poem, it's a thing the animate, searching Southern California wind does, up out of canyons and down palm trees like a snake, celebrating, mourning, and mournfully celebrating the dead and the living, shrilly wailing over bottles and cans and jasmine vines, war and climate change, gangs, homelessness, heroin, and the possibility of the possibility of hope.

* * * * *

From Martina Newberry:

Ace Boggess's "The God Maker" pulled me in and had me entranced up to the ending, which was dynamite.

Jimmy Heffernan's "Dialogue on the Eternal Now," with Sam Knot and Raymond Souland, Jr., was fascinating. I returned to it several times, in love with the concepts and ideas discussed.

Judih Haggai's poems are absolute diamonds. *Accessible, tangible, delirious.*

* * * * *

From Jimmy Heffernan:

I was blown away by the photographs of Michael Couvaras. The beached boat punches me in the solar plexus, in that it comprises a resonance with multiple aspects of concern I have for the world.

Firstly, it is an artful metaphor for our whole "high and dry" civilization. We are rapidly nearing the point at which we will have no ability to navigate, and even wiggle room is drying up fast.

Secondly, and a bit closer to home, as I live in Utah, is my concern for Lake Powell, in Utah and Arizona, and Lake Mead, in Nevada. Both are drying up. They provide power and water for tens of millions of people.

I have seen scenes almost identical to Mr. Couvaras's in desultory pictures taken by people on vacation in Southern Utah. This is very, very frightening. Lake Mead is at 27% of its capacity, and Lake Powell is at 25%. Mr. Couvaras's photo hit me with all these thoughts and concomitant emotions as I looked upon it for the first time. Serious kudos, Michael, your work knocked me out.

* * * * *

From Charlie Beyer:

Brilliant photographs in this issue by Epi Rogan. Masterful in both form and content.

"The God-Maker": excellent story by Ace Boggess. True and wonderful description of the AA world. An engaging tale that drags you down the road like you were tied to a car. We need more stories like this in our lives, to balance our complacency.

* * * * *

From Kenzie Oliver:

I got a bit of a chill reading in Nathan D. Horowitz's "Back in San Pablo" of Rolando Lucitande's account of Fernando Payaguaje's grave. It was a nice choice to intersect it with excerpts from *The Yagé Drinker*, along with the author's notes to explain the mythology. It grounds the story for that stunning last line: "*at the moment of Fernando's death, a giant jaguar, three meters long, ran through the center of the village.*"

* * * * *

From Ace Boggess:

Having just read Martina Newberry's newest book, *Glyphs* [Deerbrook Editions, 2022], I'm drawn immediately to her poems in this issue. "Sadie Recalls Climbing the Stairs" picked me up and knocked me down. A beautiful poem, intense with passion and nostalgia, it also fills the mind with doubts, uncertainties, things about which one must not only envision, but experience.

* * * * *

From Jo Monea:

In Martina Newberry's poem "Sadie Recalls Climbing the Stairs," she writes:

*Do you know: I never saw my body
in the same way after I submitted it to you?
Scars became stars.
Bruises became Fauvist paintings.*

Oh, how someone else's eyes can transform our own way of seeing, particularly when it comes to seeing our-selves.

* * * * *

From Timothy Vilgiate:

I have been watching a lot of TV shows centered around potential science fiction futures—the current political mood seems to be drawing me to a lot of dystopian shows like *Altered Carbon*. I love how the world that Sam Knot is building in *Mabon Calling* imagines a different, not necessarily utopian, but not necessarily grim, future in a way where technological advancement and the flight of people from earth doesn't necessarily do away with the belief in magic and the sublime, but unlocks new registers of it. Details like the altar built in the forest, and the idea that the ocean could hold a superconsciousness that will outlive our planet.

Additionally, the photos in this issue are stellar. Great galleries by Louis Staebble, Epi Rogan, and AbandonView, that feel poetic and grounding. Rogan in particular does a great job in capturing what seem to be ephemeral situations and incidental forms with eye-catching contrast.

* * * * *

From Epi Rogan:

After reading "Back in San Pablo" by Nathan D. Horowitz, all I can say is: *don't nail me in*.

Strangely moved by Louis Staebble's photo of the daffodil bisected by two blades of grass.

* * * * *

From Judih Haggai:

Before I begin to address the content of this issue, I need to mention that I was recently on a month-long trip to Toronto, Canada, and to Woodstock, New York. I was lucky enough to experience a beautiful Tibetan Buddhist monastery, fine music, and encounters with lush green woods, families of foxes, raccoons, squirrels, chipmunks in shapes and colors unknown to me during my everyday life on Kibbutz Nir Oz, in the western Negev of Israel.

Back home, I returned to the super-heat of our dry desert, together with severe jet lag. Then, four days after landing, on Friday, August 5th, we were suddenly surrounded by road-blocks, with soldiers forbidding entrance to our western fields bordering the Gaza Strip. Clearly, something was up, but no one was talking. Friday afternoon, we were ordered to remain within running distance of our safe-rooms, with the official beginning of "Operation: Breaking Dawn." The army had entered the Gaza Strip, less than two kilometers from my home.

So, here we were, once again, faced with a constant state of tension involving audible and visual Red Alerts, which warn us of incoming rocket attacks. We are alerted by our phone apps and, as we do during wartime, we turned on the TV to catch the pop-up rocket alerts for around the country, including where our kids live. The country was inundated. We had to run to the safe-room far more than during previous "operations," trying to maintain a calm mind while knowing the warning gave us a maximum of ten seconds, including slamming shut the iron door. After hearing the rockets explode, we left the safe-room, and I observed how long it took for my racing heart to calm down.

When walking outside, we scanned each section of our route to check for potential safe spots, in case we had to run for cover. It happened a few times, and once we were lucky enough to reach a neighborhood shelter just as we heard the alert. This situation lasted till Sunday at midnight when ceasefire was official. Monday was a "wait and see" day, hoping the ceasefire would hold. Tuesday, we

were back to our normal routine. Life continued. However, jet lag plus post-war tension has made my reading of this issue of *The Cenacle* something of a different experience.

I know that those of you not living here (or other war-threatened parts of the world, like Ukraine) cannot possibly imagine what it's like to have ten seconds to run to save your life. I hope you never have to know. And I find that we who live here seem to get used to the onslaught of these intense periods of "fight or flight" and, with each one, our resilience gets a little more efficient in bringing us back to zero line.

But it takes its toll and infiltrates one's thinking. First, it takes courage to realize that, even with meditation and qigong, my body and mind have indeed been under stress, and I need to take action to undo the knots.

But there's also another side effect: relishing others' experiences. Everything takes on *more* vibrancy, *more* life. There's new power in living each moment rather than imagining the worst. Military operations re-awaken that understanding. There's no space for complacency.

Sam Knot's charming way with words enters each phrase in his *Mabon Calling*, and I'm taken away by that relaxing timbre of his. His words about the old tree: "*She wears her different ages like rings around her, a parboiled white onion of revelation.*" Such an invitation to stop all other thinking, and simply meditate upon the image. And he goes on, in each paragraph, in delightful nuances. His artwork adds to the experience. I truly appreciate this piece.

As I read this piece, and many others in this issue, I find myself in rehabilitation, as perhaps we all are. Again, my world begins to open up and soften.

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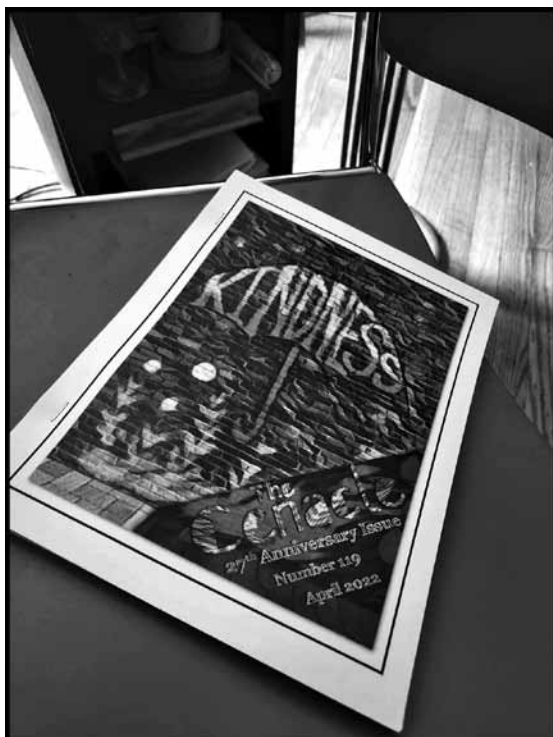
Epi Rogan



Tamara Miles



Judih Weinstein Haggai



AbandonView



Sam Knot

From the ElectroLounge Forums

Remembering Your Early Artwork Challenge!

Published on electrolounge.boards.net

Post by Raymond on Aug 7, 2022 at 6:39pm

Hi everyone,

So this is a group project I have been mulling on for awhile. I've been looking at the writing I was doing when I first started. This was when I was 10, 11, 12 years old. I had several projects going, just trying things out. In a separate post, I'll go into details.

But in terms of the general idea here:

1. I'd invite you to think back to Artwork you created when you were significantly younger, whatever that might mean for you in terms of age. Could be writing, could be visual artwork, photography, or anything of a creative nature.
2. From this work, is there a piece that you can share here, & as part of the upcoming *Cenacle* 120?
3. And here is the challenge: *What does this piece make you think about, in terms of who you were, who you are, & what has changed?* Could be you as a person, your own biographical journey; or it could be you as an Artist, how you've grown & changed over time. Or both of course.
4. If this challenge interests you, please post your piece(s) of Artwork here, with your explanations of what it is, & comments on it, by Friday, August 19th.

I think we can have a lot of fun with this, sharing these aspects of ourselves, & seeing what others share too. Next post will be me jumping into the deep end on this idea! :-)

* * * * *

Post by Raymond on Aug 7, 2022 at 7:25pm

As promised, here I go . . .

So I date my writing back to when I was about 10. I remember in school our class watching some kind of production of Sergei Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* (1936), & then being assigned to write up a description of it. I seem to recall that my teacher was so impressed with what I wrote that she / he (do not remember which) showed my piece to the school principal. That's just a nice memory to think on once in awhile, as meager of details as it is.

In terms of my creative projects, I think I can name three that would be of note for earliest endeavors:

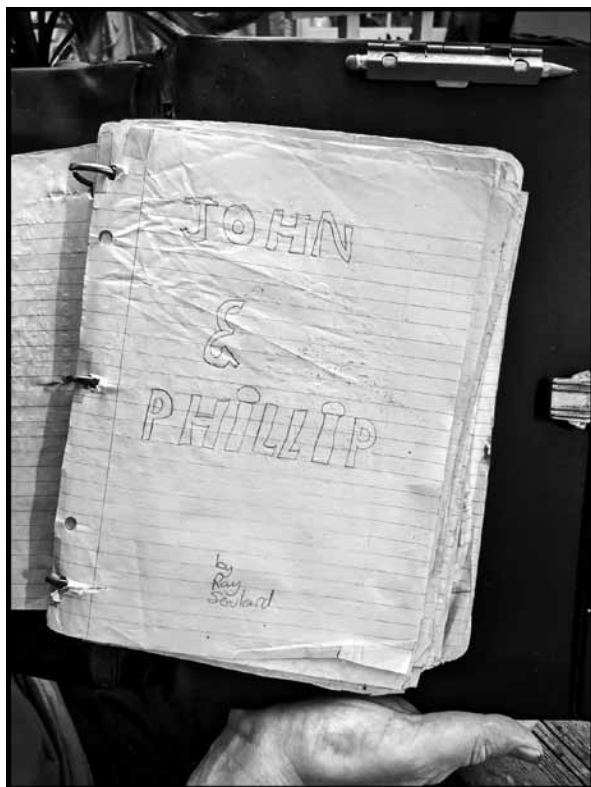
1 - *My journal* - I started this in May 1974, inspired by a book called *Henry Reed, Inc.* (1958) by Keith Robertson. This novel is the story of a boy who keeps records of his adventures in a journal. *Not* a diary, mind you, those being for girls, haha! Funny thing: years later, I kept a diary for a year.

I still keep my journal to this day. Now 30 notebook volumes of it! Helps me to finish off a day, review its challenges & pleasures, think about its continuity in my life's path.

2 - My 1975 novel *John & Phillip* - My grandmother worked part-time at a thrift store when I was a boy, & would often bring me books when she came to visit. Most cherished among these were the *Hardy Boys* novels, by Franklin W. Dixon, mostly written in the early 1900s. They were about two brothers, teenaged sleuths who, with their chums, would solve mysteries. I had so many of these!



So I tried my hand at such a book, & called it *John & Phillip*. Also about two brothers, & their chums, who solve mysteries. I suppose the value in this very amateurish book was that I finished it, 32 handwritten pages in all. Tried other ideas for books back then, even a *John & Phillip* sequel, but never finished them. Funny, because since 2006 I have been writing *Labyrinthine* with no planned intention to conclude it!



One more funny thing is the *Dedication*: "This book is dedicated to all famous authors who I may someday be among." Maybe I was convinced of this by that *Peter and the Wolf* praise?

3 - My newspaper *Sports Page* - In August of 1975, inspired by Jack Klugman's sportswriter character on the TV show *The Odd Couple* (1970-1975), & already in love with all sports anyway, I decided I wanted to be a sports writer. In fact, as I sat at a little desk in the basement of my family's house in Connecticut, I decided I would start my own imaginary football league, in order to create a newspaper about it. Thus, *Sports Page* came to be.

It involved rolling a pair of dice, to figure out wins & losses. The league was called the Connecticut Football League, & the players in it were kids, 12-18. And I was a star quarterback in the league, for many seasons, for one team, the Bloomfield Sharks, the town I lived in; then later the Newington Flames, which was the

next town I moved to when 13. Won many championships.

The CFL had four seasons a year, essentially running all year round. There were 40 games a season, later on 50. Playoffs, a championship, all of it. And it all took place, mostly, in my head, & in my notebooks. I did sometimes play out games in my family's basement too, with an orange Nerf football, & some well-placed chairs.

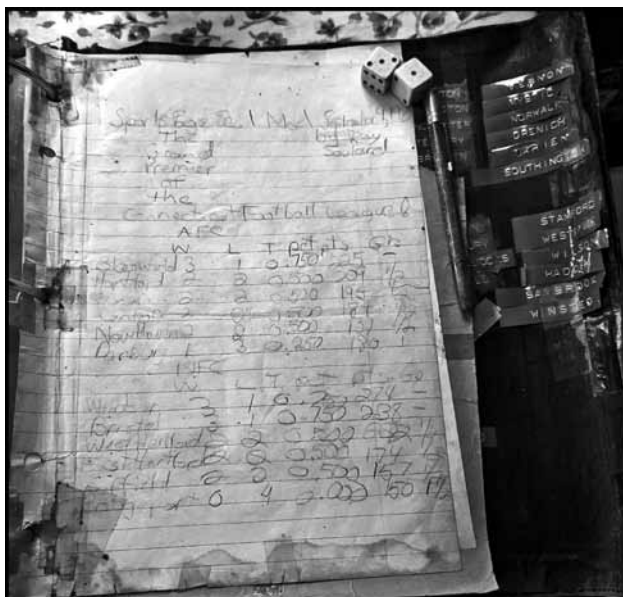
Eventually, *Sports Page* led to me doing a daily radio show, *The Sports Page Show*, also in my head, when I got a paper route. It was a talk show, about the CFL, & its ever-evolving doings. This project was probably why I did not finish many novels back then. It was completely consuming. I was rolling dice & doing new issues every single week. Went on steadily for about six years, till I was 17. At that point, I had some friends, & was chasing girls (actually just one girl, & fruitlessly). I just lost the obsessive mojo I had, & the project petered out.

Yet doing publications very much stayed with me, as in 1985 I started *Bags End News*, originally just for my sister & me, in the form of letters, but which now shows up in *The Cenacle* too, & on my *Within's Within* radio show.

And *The Cenacle* itself is really a publication that sourced in those early years. Back then, from 1982 for a couple of years, it was called *Scriptor Magazine*, & contained fiction, poetry, prose, illustrations, all done by me, in pencil, in my notebooks. Maybe more on that another time.

I did *Sports Page* because it was fun, it was mine, & the endless details of it fascinated me. **The Great Grand Braided Narrative** I am in the middle of now is simply further along the path for me, similar in this way.

I also did it because my home life became harder & harder, & my high school years were even worse. In my writing, I had *purpose, control, clarity*. I created worlds in which a version of me was well-regarded within them. Kind of escapism, yes, but I think really more. I wanted a place, even just one in my head & notebooks, where I could work out my ideas of self, society, the world. And play with these ideas as far as I could take them. Not be so poor, lonely, mocked.



I suppose how I made Art back then formed how I still see it now. As a kind of play, creating worlds, trying things out. Never became a "famous author," but I think I actually did better than that. Especially, likely, as I would have failed at that.

I found that looking at these old notebooks as I have this summer, & seeing who I was before my harder adolescent years, has helped to connect me better with something good in myself. I started writing before those rough years, was already doing it when they came. And am still on my writing path, these many, & better, years later.

Looking forward to what others will offer here :-)

Post by Nathan on Aug 9, 2022 at 8:32am

How to write in bed

(Paris, 1989)

1. All these ideas swimming, floating, buzzing around your brain like bugs around a candle flame.
2. Arrange all necessary accoutrements and condiments. How wonderful it is when everything you need is within arm's reach. Books, picture books, postcards, pens, notebooks, lip balm, a glass of water, clock, Walkman, tapes.
3. Climb in bed and get to it. Arrange the pillows behind your back. Pull the blanket up: A woollen, mustard-colored tide has rolled in over your legs and laps against your belly, and your notebook is a soft stone tablet that the sea has cast up for you to write on under the sun, which until recently was your lamp, and the page is a bed for the lovemaking of the two great spirits, and the words appear like newborn angelic animals netted by the shadow underneath your hand and stunned out of the air by the hazy white reflection!

* * * * *

Post by Judih on Aug 9, 2022 at 9:17am

When I read this challenge, I thought of my first book project. I was in high school (1970) and, through brainstorming with myself and a whacky friend, I concocted the idea of a world built of two parallel forces. The higher ruled everything, effortlessly, while the lower, known as the Blobs, drifted through their life's duties, seeing nothing in their future but more drudgery.

The book was called *Fungus*. Part of the concept was that it was hand-written. For the higher-ups, I used a calligraphy pen, black ink, a fine quality paper; and, for the Blobs, used pale green stock, I wrote with a regular black pen. The finished book was circular, the end leading to the beginning and it was housed in a flat box, wrapped in green floral tape for a sticky feel when you picked it up. It took me a year to complete, and then I began re-working it.

There's a Part 2 to the evolution of this book. When I was in second year, University of Toronto, my mentor for my Independent Studies was Margaret Atwood. When she saw my boxed, hand-written work, she was horrified. No publisher would give such a thing a second look. I had to type it all, and fast, and then we could start to get serious.

Seriously, I listened to her, typed it, diluting its soul along with my teenaged intention. At a certain point, I withdrew it from her guidance and began bringing out my short stories. Happily, they were typewritten and she was more willing to mentor me.

What happened to the book? It was abandoned, placed in a box of my other work (including a big hand-bound poetry book) and, as fate might have it, all was caught in a flood down in a basement storage room. So, nothing to show here, other than my recollection of how writing that book helped me survive the torture of high school. (A valuable hint of how writing can act as therapy throughout times of war, poverty, heartache, loneliness).

* * * * *

Post by Raymond on Aug 11, 2022 at 8:45am

“How to write in bed” is lovely, Nate! How did you end up in Paris? What was your life like then? How long did you stay?

And, oh my gosh, what a story, Jude! Do you remember any of the details of the story? Have you ever thought of re-creating it somehow, with what you remember, & ideas that have traveled with you since?

Amazing!

* * * * *

Posted by Judih Aug 11, 2022 at 2:05pm

They were thoughts of a Canadian-grown teenager, Raymond, too young to be at Woodstock, too old-soul to take anything seriously. There's no way I could or would want to recreate that extinguished creation.

But thanks for the encouragement, Ray!

* * * * *

Post by Charlie on Aug 11, 2022 at 9:13pm

I met her at a Joan Baez peace conference on the Olympic Peninsula. We were 13-year-old flower children, she dragged there by a step-parent, and I a free rider with an 18-year-old hippy who my exhausted parents had dumped me on . . . to get me out of my gang ways in the city.

We fell madly in love, Tamar and I, with the intensity of Romeo and Juliet. We could give a crap about Peace, an obvious red herring even then as the Vietnam War ramped up. We wandered on the beaches all night . . . holding hands . . . engulfed in each other's aurora. We kissed a bit . . . but nothing more . . . as our hormones of attraction and the wonder of passion gripped us like a straitjacket.

In a few days the conference was over, but Tamar was delayed by her step-something getting thrown in the drunk tank in the nearest village. My “guardian” was hot to leave and start some peace initiative crap back in Seattle. I was insane to not leave her side, to let go of her hand.

In the dark, I lifted the hood of the hippy truck and removed the rotor inside the distributor (as engines were then). This got me another day before the problem was diagnosed and cured.

Then we parted ways, never to see each other again. For you see, she lived in Arizona and was up north on a similar loan as was I . . . “Get the maniac teenager out of the house before I sell them to Saudi Arabia!” was the general thought pattern of our haggard parents.

I went back to my confused life in the city, her to dysfunctional family in hot Tucson. We wrote . . . silly babble with hair cuttings and bottle caps . . . paper wristbands and peace button paraphernalia. Then we discovered the phone.

The phone was a big black block of the hardest plastic known to humans: Bakelite. It weighed close

to ten pounds, and could kill a man with one blow, except that the cord was only three feet long. The latest innovation that was the marvel of the day. At that time, long distance from Seattle to Tucson was about a dollar a minute. We would sneak into the “phone room” in the dead of night at our respective positions on the globe . . . and yak meaningless words, into the night, on the sly.

The day of reckoning was the end of the month when the bill came in. In my house, it was \$220, equivalent to over a thousand bucks today. That brought the wrath of God. We were chained and filleted. Officially grounded for the rest of our lives. All we could do was pine, contemplate suicide, and make plans to run away and get married in Nevada. But we were kids and did not know what a hundred bucks looked like, much less how to come up with it. My divorce from another . . . thirty years later . . . was not close to being so painful.

Then my artist father, an overeducated bum actually, came up with a plan. He would excuse my debt by me writing full stories, paid at five dollars a story. These had to be true stories . . . with a protagonist who is changed . . . and, as he stipulated, “something happens.”

At first I balked in a stubborn teenage way, then endured a few days of hard labor, being rented out for free to the neighbors against my will. The definition of slavery. So I began to write . . . stupid complaints and blather. These were burned in my face, along with my comic book collection. Having gained no traction on the debt, I was forced to apply myself. The next two were accepted, then one off, and a few more accepted. I started to get into it, dreaming up weird tales. My mind began to churn with simple stories. I began to take pride in the stories, and would be excited to present the next and the next. Only now do I realize that all this was a story in of itself.

In a year or so, the debt was paid off, and I was released from obligation. By then, I had started to read, having ignored books up to that time. This gave me new ideas and exposed me to many styles. Never since have I stopped reading and writing. Although my art was not fit to wrap fish, it began a career of creativity in all things.

Of course, all around me were creative people, and I came to think the whole world was like this. I better hurry up and step up. I did not realize the world is actually populated with mindless drones until my 30s, when I entered the corporate world.

My true love . . . my puppy love . . . my Juliet . . . vanished into static roar of the world, and we never spoke again. I did hear from her cousin she had been conscripted into a religious cult in Virginia.

* * * * *

Posted by Judih Aug 11, 2022 at 11:42pm

Charlie, what a fascinating entrance into creating daily to pay off debt! A good lesson—like being dumped in the heart of downtown Tel Aviv, including buses, cars, donkeys, and wagons—for a first driving lesson (speaking for a friend). Learning to just get on with it. Wonderful. Too bad about your beloved—hope she found her way in or out of that cult.

* * * * *

01.13.11

I used to write often.

I used to sit up in my room for hours, at my desk overlooking a tree-line horizon, with pen in hand scribbling away. My favorite time to write was always at night. I think it's because darkness came. I would stare out a window and see nothing. So that's when I would re-create the world I lived in.

AND NOW, I BARELY WRITE.

BUT, I HAVE TO WRITE.

BECAUSE THAT'S
WHO I AM.

THE WORDS ARE IN ME.

GOD PUT THEM THERE.

AND THEY'RE TEARING AT MY FLESH TO BE RELEASED.

MY HEART RACING...

Gregory Kelly

Posted by Raymond Aug 12, 2022 at 1:19pm

What a brilliant story, in and of itself, as you say, Charlie. I have known you, what, 15 years maybe? And this is the first “back-when” piece you have let loose to share. Like Jude said, you showed your gumption, even as a bare spit of a boy. No wonder these years later you mine for gold in the wilds. Ain’t no thang with your history :-)

* * * * *

Post by Charlie on Aug 12, 2022 at 6:18pm

Yeah. Ain’t much for slobbering over the past. Do enough of that slobbering over the future to come. As I’ve said before: “Nostalgia is the death of Hope.” Generally not worth spit except as story material. Names and places altered due to liability.

* * * * *

Post by Nathan on Aug 12, 2022 at 7:49pm

Raymond, I was in Paris for a semester-long study abroad program. Why did I go to Paris? Because I fell in with a girl in Yosemite who worked alongside with me for Greenpeace in Los Angeles in the summer of ‘88. Susan Lee. I went back to Oberlin in September, and she went on a long odyssey across Asia, heading for Paris. Our idea was to keep in touch by mail, then meet in Paris.

I regularly sent her love letters at the central post office in Kathmandu all fall, and signed up for the study abroad program. In the spring, I went over to Paris and began to learn language and literature and history and all. I waited for Susan but she never ever *ever* showed up.

A week before I went back to the States, I received a bundle of letters, tied with string, which had evidently piled up in the Kathmandu post office, and only after some months been sent on to France. They were letters from Susan, initially warm, and then growing more and more upset that I wasn’t writing to her. Finally, in the last letter, she announced that, because I had stopped writing to her—*not even a single letter!*—she had decided not to go to Paris in the spring.

“The Portemonnaie” is a vignette I wrote later about Paris:

The Portemonnaie

In the spring of ‘89, I took a semester abroad in Paris, studying literature, language, history, art, and architecture at the Sorbonne while living in the flat of a conservative sixty-something lady from an old aristocratic family in the 16th Arrondissement. I kept hash, a pipe, and a lighter in a portemonnaie, a leather change purse.

One evening, I got home and found that my landlady had tidied up the room and the portemonnaie was gone. I looked in all the normal places I hid it, to no avail. I weighed the possibility that cops were going to haul me away. I would lose the chance to study in the world capital of culture and be sent home in disgrace to my parents, who would lose the considerable sum of money they had spent sending me there.

After an hour of frenzied search, I gave up in despair and turned in for the night. At least the cops hadn't shown up. My landlady had made the bed. Right in the middle of it, between the sheets, was my portemonnaie, with its contents intact. We never spoke of the matter, but I silently admired her genius.

* * * * *

Post by Nathan on Aug 12, 2022 at 7:51pm

Cool story, Charlie.

* * * * *

Post by Sam Aug 15, 2022 at 4:34am

Great stuff all! :-)

Here are some thoughts on an early poem and some old illustrations that turned up recently . . .

I have a little red notebook here, with "Sam Ross: Poems," written on the front in blue ink, showing the distinctive cut of a proper nib. It is from 1990, when I was nine years old. I also have another notebook here, in almost the same shade of red, from 2021. I can see that in June of that year I was experimenting with the idea of a long piece of writing exploring the history of my journey with poetry, so far.

*a novel essay of poetry
imagined written in thought
on a rainy day*

Perhaps it is something to do with hitting my forties, but one of the stronger callings I feel within my work these days is a desire to stop and take stock. It is as if I will not be ready to move on until I have made sense of where I am, by first taking a good look at how I got here. There is an equally strong desire just to leave the past behind me, plunge straight into whatever is next. Such feelings are not necessarily in conflict—they might even be rooted in the same frustration—something new wants to come through, but its house is not ready yet.

*in my mind
it was a bloodshot eye
a big bloodshot eye
at the velux window*

*that little attic
on the road
forever titled New
where the stories that were told
were never the same as those that happened
though they happened too*

My earliest memory of my own poetry is the image of a bloodshot eye crossed with a storm. I can remember being upstairs with Grandad Ross—my dad's dad. They lived in a bungalow. There was a hatch in the hallway from which a ladder came down, and we loved it up there, my brother and I. It

was our room, when we came to stay, but mostly it was Grandad's place. He had a big desk, and his paintings were everywhere: English landscapes and seascapes, for the most part, in oil or watercolor.

I remember we spent an afternoon exploring poetry together, although the memory is hazy and suggestive. I believe he read me a poem of his own—which we later found among his papers and displayed at his funeral—a poem about Dutch elm disease, which made the dying trees look as though they were bleeding. I am sure he encouraged me to write a poem of my own, and must have guided me on how to do so. I remember that I pleased and surprised him, and he made me feel as if it was something I had a gift for. I think it was that image in particular that struck him—the veins in the eye as red lightning.

I had only these vague memories to go on, to begin with, for all I knew the poem itself was lost. I was quite sure about the common thread of blood in our poems. The stormy bloodshot eye reminded me of a nightmare I once had of an angry giant peering in through the roof window. One of my favorite books back then was a compendium of monster stories, and Grandad used read to them to me before bed, at my request. Perhaps I was challenging myself not to be scared, dealing with realer fears through confronting more fantastic ones? I thought of the bloodshot eyes of my father, the trauma of encountering his drunkenness as a child, watching him argue with mum, sometimes catching his wrath myself. Was all this in that one early poem, somehow?

It was not until later, in 2021, that the little book of poems actually surfaced. I was home for the funeral of my other grandfather, my mum's dad, when my brother told me a box of my old things had been found, and that I should check through for anything worth saving before they were cleared out.

The book is a little water damaged, and less than half full. It seems I was mostly copying out the poetry of others. It opens with a version of the "Black Paternoster," which is followed by Christina Rossetti's "Hurt No Living Thing." There is a sweet little poem about a hedgehog, which I think must be an original, and something about Richard III murdering his nephews in the Tower of London. Then there is the poem I had been remembering, accompanied by a little illustration:

Thunder and Lightning

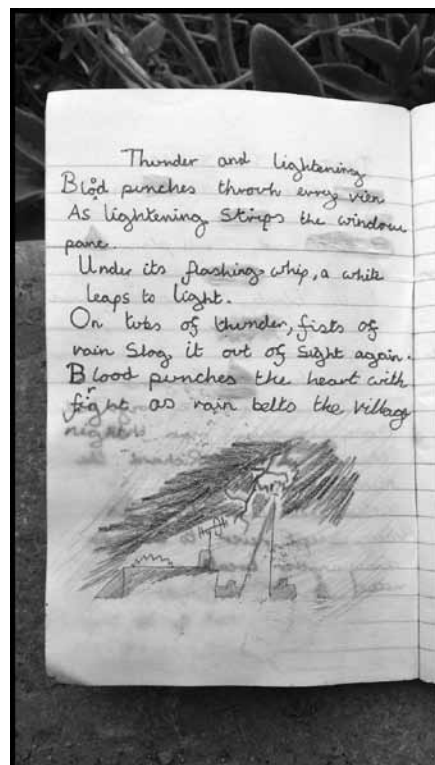
*Blood punches through ev'ry vein
as lightning strips the window pane.*

*Under its flashing whip, a white
leaps to light.*

*On tubs of thunder, fists of rain
slog it out of sight again.*

*Blood punches the heart with fright
as rain belts the village night.*

The rest of the book shows my basic tastes have barely changed: an assortment of animals, real and fantastic, a few witches, much silliness, and some good old-fashioned religious feeling. I have little doubt it was put together by pretty much the same person who I find writing the following, late one September night, 30-odd years later:



*The smoothed out paper
of night's imagined silence*

*A cloud bunny
shrinking from the gentle pat
of all that*

*We cannot remember doing
ember doing*

*A planet of perhaps
&
Two starry grandads*

The poem is a stoned, disjointed affair: stream of consciousness stuff. I wander off on a philosophical tangent, instead of sticking with what I now insist must be the real content (something closer to the memories themselves). I list my three favorite tautologies, which may or may not be tautological, before wondering if I have a favorite contradiction—such that I seem to be playing some kind of arch joke on myself, as if ridiculing my efforts to understand at the same time as I attempt to do so. Perhaps underlying this is an awareness that such abstractions could be a way of dealing with trauma on another level, or in a different way. Or maybe traumatized people just see trauma everywhere, and there is no connection between violence and logic, except by extension from healing and thought?

*Visible is visible
Nothing is nothing
Love is love*

It had felt something of a revelation, to be writing about things written so long ago, while looking down at the same crooked (left) hand doing the work. The poem says I laughed out loud, but it does not strike me as very funny just now, that my nine-year-old self was writing quite proper poetry rather meticulously, with a fountain pen, while my forty-year-old self was scribbling spontaneous obliquity, in all-caps, with a biro.

*I bet you thought
there was no shame in
the animal world?*

*Not for them
maybe*

It has not all been degeneration, of course—this is a very restricted sampling—but I admit to feeling a little lost, at the moment. I suppose all explorers sometimes must!

*I don't think I can really
have
a favorite contradiction*

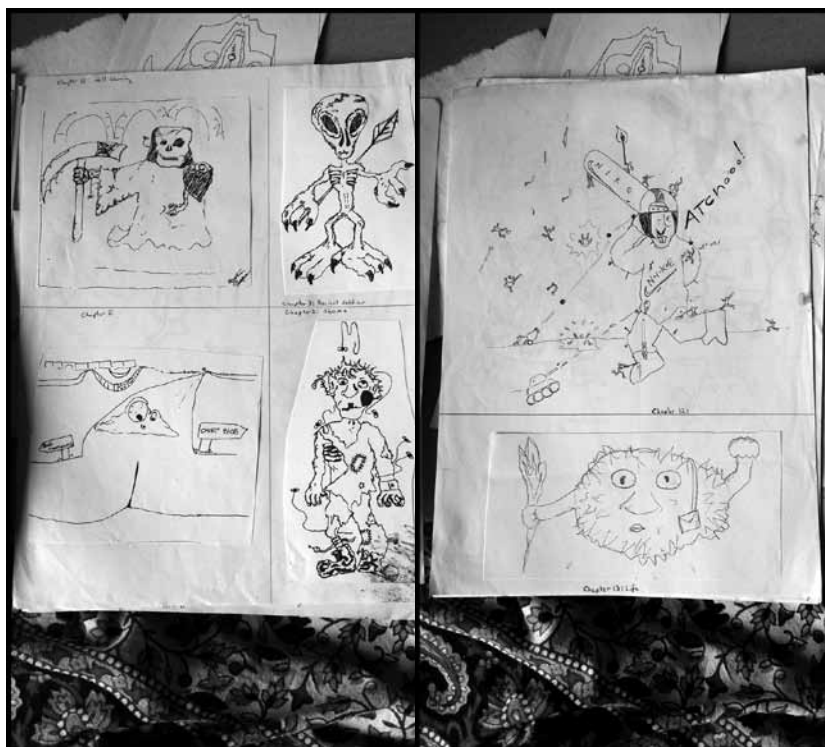
*& not necessarily
'cos there might be
a true one
or not*

*but
because I've told myself already
I don't want to count
the ways
I already disagree
with what I say*

*Love is nothing visible
& yet it is*

xxx

As well as the little book of poems, I found the remnants of a project I had forgotten about—a series of illustrations for a story a friend was writing. It was the final year of primary school, so I guess I must have been eleven years old. I made a new friend, Adam, and we rapidly became very close. I was very impressed that he was writing a book—one that was weird, fun and funny, being heavily influenced by Terry Pratchett. There were aliens, elvish Elvises, a pub called Lucifer's Bottom, zombies, little people, all kinds of good stuff!



I remember being really absorbed by the project, and really hopeful about it. I also remember my sadness when Adam was admitted into the local grammar school, but I was not. I was borderline on the exams, probably let down by maths and English grammar, and my appeal was turned down due to my poor attendance record. I suffered from asthma, and had regular chest infections throughout primary school. We were such close friends for that last year, but I never saw him again, once we had gone our separate ways.

Just now I searched for his name and discovered a published author of some repute, fitting his description. I am quite sure it is him. The novel is *Feeding Time*, the author Adam Biles. My old friend impresses me yet again!

Not to be looking back, so much as inward, in service of moving forward?

Here's hoping!

* * * * *

Post by Jimmy on Aug 15, 2022 at 7:19pm

The piece below was written by me sixteen years ago, when I was 25. The thought process is just the same as it is today, though I would say my current thinking has greater subtlety—more complexity, more shades of gray. I also sense a very slight change in writing style, but maybe I'm just imagining that.

Musings on the synthesis and/or observation of truth

Let me briefly address the notion that the truth is a subjective creation of humans. The concepts “we create the truth” and “nothing is true, everything is permitted” indeed have some aspects of merit, which I will not go into here. Rather, I will discuss where this “truth” of creating truth (did we create that one too?) seems to turn out to be false. Let me illustrate by way of analogy:

Let's say you ingest a psychedelic drug, and look at a very good piece of artwork, art which may be conducive to increased stimulation of a more highly energetic brain, such as, for example, some works of Impressionism, Post-Impressionism, Cubism, and especially Surrealism. Now let's say that you look at a painting that you have never seen before while in the state you are in, and new and perhaps startling images begin to appear that you never noticed before in your “normal” state of consciousness. Here is the crux: are you hallucinating these images, or did the artist, being very clever and not a little familiar either with use of entheogens or a genetically warped and very possibly enhanced perception, put them there deliberately, only to be discovered by those who find themselves in these “heightened” states of awareness? You come down, and you can't see these extra dimensions anymore.

Are they really there? Did the artist paint them in? Or did you project them onto the painting? To know the “truth,” you would have to ask the artist, wouldn't you? Just because you may have created these extra features does not mean that they are “truly” there—i.e., intentionally, deliberately, and objectively placed there by the artist through whichever arcane technique. Conversely, if it is truly in there, as per the artist's willful rendering, then you didn't really “create” it in any sense other than the networks of neurons in your brain constructed something coherent out of what are chaotic stimuli before they are decoded. It would be more accurate to say that the artist created it, and communicated it to you. So if it is “truly” there, you didn't create it. If you created it (i.e. creation being defined as making something novel where before there was nothing), then it is not truly there, unless by “truly there” you mean accessible to your brain and no one else's.

I would add that this analogy of course doesn't address other contradictions with the now popular view that truth is essentially a subjective synthesis, such as: the laws of physics being what they are, rather than what any reasonable human would indubitably prefer them to be (maybe read: easier to understand, and conferring of greater technological prowess in less time, for two of many valid examples), simple matters of linguistic consistency such as "my name is 'Jimmy' and not 'Kansas City Slim,'" or "we have defined that shape as a circle and that shape as a tetrahedron" —the truth of which statement and definitions you did not create, nor did anyone else in the thousands of years since those shapes were given names. And there are quantities of course. Yes, you can define quantities arbitrarily, but nobody created the fact, so far as anyone can reasonably demonstrate, that I will weigh less on the moon and more on Saturn.

The list goes on and on, of course. I just wanted to point out that the truth of the aforementioned dictum may only apply to select situations, which leads one to wonder if it is "true" at all, or "true enough" as Wittgenstein was fond of saying—the answer to which would not be something we invent (would it?), but perhaps rather discover. (You see, as a metaprinciple, if the statement is true, then the proof of its truth does not fall into the subset of all other things to which the statement applies, meaning that the determination of its truth cannot be something that is created, making the statement itself perhaps false, and definitely inconsistent).

Like Gödel's Theorem.

* * *

I definitely stand by this piece's thoughts. There is nothing in here I would change, and nothing that makes me cringe, which is very surprising to me, for some reason, as I look back. I no longer think much about the premise of this brief essay but, as I say, I find nothing wrong with its premises or consequences. All in all, I think sometimes we place less faith in our past selves than we deserve. I could be right or wrong about that.

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Post by Epi Aug 16, 2022 at 1:55pm

I'm loving the photos of old written pieces.

* * * * *

Post by Raymond Aug 17, 2022 at 2:26pm

Nathan, that is an insane turn of events! For both you and her. What if . . .

Still, each of you waiting for the other . . . that's how it was back in the days of written mail & phones on the wall . . .

Reminds me, in a small way, of the end of one of my romances from long ago. I was on the losing, rejected end, but eventually had stopped trying to reach out. Crickets. Then, some months along in this, there was a phone call my roommate picked up while I was not at home. Told me about it that night. It was a girl, *the* girl in question. He knew her voice. I'm not sure if I called back. Likely did, as I was pathetic at love, especially endings of it. But we never talked. So I kept on with my plan to move up to

Boston, and leave all that behind.

But, again, what if . . .

Reflecting these years later, as one does, best I did not get that call. Nothing good would have come of it. Our ships were far better passing in the night, as they did, and keep on passing . . .

Wonderful stuff, Sam, about your Grandad artist and your early efforts! You were writing better poetry at nine than me twice that age at least :-)

I don't think looking back is always one kind of thing, good or bad. We travel in both time and space, and I think also consciousness. Our sense of self travels along these pathways, and sometimes stopping to assess, gather it all up, see what it means right now, can be really moving. I like the idea of coloring now with then, without overwhelming it. Maybe just tinting it a bit.

Glad old writing and art bits of you were recovered :-)

It's a fascinating topic your younger self addresses, Jimmy. I love the idea you pause with of an Artist burying visual suggestions behind a kind of perceptual door. Only some get in to see. Just a cool thought!

* * * * *

Post by Louis Aug 19, 2022 at 4:31pm

I am going to use this opportunity to, as you all have, to take a look at my own origins as an artist. I have not done this for a long, long time. For me, I started off when I was eleven years old to become obsessed with architecture. Since I had an admitted phobia to mathematics, I remember that I took heart in a keen interest in drawing structures. From there, I began to find that blueprints were a really cool form of expression. I enjoyed the process. It made me consider space in different ways. How the details made up the whole.

My preadolescent mind burned with a desire to create. But with what tools, I really had to reconsider, since my sketches and renderings became less than adequate. I mentioned this to my maternal grandfather, who happened to be an excellent amateur photographer. He came with the opinion that a film camera would be an excellent device for me to capture my ideas. He also introduced me to the darkroom.

I learned a quite a lot just screwing around, making mistakes, and coming to the conclusion that one can learn the rules to photo-image-making, and then summarily break them. This manner of doing things has served me greatly. I am now the practitioner of the magician's vice. Through tough guile, and agile trickery, I can change the world. Now I simply love digital photography, fooling as many eyes as possible.

P. S. Someday I will recount how I became a poet in 1971 and kept reckless journals.

* * * * *

Post by Raymond Aug 20, 2022 at 5:48pm

Louis, would love to read of your poet days back-when! And I think your great photography now is revealed even more by understanding your path to it.

I'm wondering if thinking of your photos *architecturally* might not bring new insights :-)

* * * * *

Post by Epi Aug 29, 2022 at 4:01pm

I was trying to remember today what sort of things I made as a child, or even as a teen. I've lived abroad for years, so actual physical work is long gone, or with my parents. I do remember painting as a teen. Great big paintings.

My family was secular, and one of my friends informed me that I'd be going to hell. I became obsessed with religion. I went to probably every church in the town over the course of a year. After coming to the conclusion that I was not going to hell, or at least any time soon, I still loved the imagery in churches.

I would paint these quite large canvasses in the style of Russian iconography. All the colors and gestures of the figures had symbolic meaning. I was intrigued by that. It was the first time I'd encountered or thought about it.

Anyhow, I'm still interested in religious imagery and its meaning.

I'm sure if that's helpful or meaningful but it was nice to think about on my end.

* * * * *

Post by Raymond Sep 3, 2022 at 12:43pm

Epi, I have long wondered about the religious imagery in your photographs. It makes sense it comes from more from aesthetics than spirituality, though of course both can play a part.

Thanks to everyone who joined in this discussion. What weird, wonderful, & amazing stories told!

* * * * *



Judih Weinstein Haggai

Judih Weinstein Haggai



yes bird
you lead the way
your song to greet dawn

* * *

vase of dried flowers
object of her affection
for better or worse

* * *

from far away
fading voices of discontent
as i watch for bears

* * *

man down
man in slump
man lets go

* * *

3:30 a.m.
sore knees, blurry eyes
no problem

* * *

dreams of bony dogs
poems of aging cats
change beyond control

* * *

His Flute

through darkening skies
the howls of coyotes

chants shared through centuries
echoes of lost tribes

me, a lone pilgrim,
enveloped by ancestors

one flute's homage
beckoning me on

* * *

Out of Nowhere

out of nowhere
you appeared
and kissed me

* * *

the entire moral world
watched
as i enjoyed every molecule
of your lips

* * *

such a kiss
after all the kisses
taken by default

* * *

your forbidden smile
in lightning and thunder
attached to my skin

* * *

my clothes tied
yours fully buttoned
from any future bed.

* * *

years of walking,
to neutralize the blush
of further fantasy

* * *

Behind-the-scenes

She was used to it,
her parts around the room,
calves grazing by the window
knees in temporary squats
elbows wide to guard the hallway.

till doorbells rang
and she'd scurry
to assemble her compartments
equip her gaunt corridors
wring out soaking hands to reapply her visage

and opening the door,
she'd greet her other side

* * * * *



Judih Weinstein Haggai



Of Glyphs and Other Things:

Poet Martina Reisz Newberry

Interviewed by Judih Weinstein Haggai

*This interview occurred in May 2022.
Haggai previously interviewed Newberry in Cenacle | 75 | October 2010.*

Judih: Everyone's talking about "these uncertain times." It's fairly clear to me that no times have been certain. Outer circumstances and inner, all things are impermanent. Our emotions come and go, body sensations make themselves known, and then we stop noticing. Uncertainty is the only certainty there seems to be.

Yet I ask you, do you find yourself going back to prior times, memories, nostalgia, perhaps? What about rediscovering old poems? There may be something, or some quality, that you once expressed that you feel is very relevant now.

If so, could you share such a piece?

Martina: There is a poem from one of my early books that seems to reflect who I am at just about any given time, certainly in my adult life. It's from the book *Learning By Rote* (published in 2012 by Deerbroke Editions):

The World is Not Ending

*Let me get my bearings. These are spaces
I will never own. I feel such regret,
especially now that the world is on fire.*

*The air is eaten by flame all around.
Monks with their skirts billowing, jump from the
Mountaintops, chant poverty, chastity,*

*indifference. Keep laughing in the face
of this molten planet—laugh your ass off.
It's what you'll have left in the end. You think*

*this is an hallucination? A joke?
A fantasy? Perhaps you're bewildered—
the world is not ending, you've only backed*

*one last war, one last steaming holocaust.
You've only stayed silent while continents
starved and died, whittled down to rock*

*and bleached bone. Is your own part in this
unlikely or misunderstood?
Mine, unfortunately, is not.*

*I've participated and want
to move on. Just give me a moment, please,
just let me get my bearings.*

Judih: Your latest book, *Glyphs*, offers a new range of deep insights. Have you noticed new fans appearing, new minds reading and commenting on these poems? If so, could you share some of their comments?

Martina: I think, over the last few years, there are a couple of new readers. A poet whose work I really love is Rick Lupert. He reviewed *Glyphs* and said that: "Reading these poems is like walking through a city's neighborhoods . . . each neighborhood with its own characteristics. You're on the same walk and you can see the connection as you turn a corner from one poem/page/street to the next, even though the one you've ended up on tells a different story, and smells and sounds different." I really love that. I feel like he *gets it*, if you know what I mean—that my poems are the reader and me walking along, having a coffee somewhere, really listening to each other, and saying words that must be said.

Another nice thought came from Terry Wolverton, whose work I love. She said: "'What pulses in us?' asks poet Martina Reisz Newberry in her collection, *Glyphs*. With a sensibility reminiscent of Nobel Prize winner Wisława Szymborska, Newberry employs a deceptively conversational tone to wield resonant insights about the spirit of nature, faith, aging and mortality, and love." The comparison to Szymborska absolutely knocked me out. It just thrilled me that my name would be mentioned with hers.

Judih: Is there a poem from your new book that especially resonates with you these days (not three weeks ago, but now-ish?)

Martina: There's a poem that reflects many of my thoughts and feelings, especially now with the muddle that is our world:

Dark Feast

*A banquet: hot dishes
of disappointment,
cold desserts of rage
and revenge.*

*Where shall we eat this dark feast?
Forked lightning,
small flat stones,
shards from broken mirrors—
these are utensils.*

*We can only feed ourselves, you know.
There are no “take home”
receptacles to refrigerate,
to pack up later
in brown bags
to feed the hungry
and homeless.*

*Sunset shows us
bruised clouds and
a bleeding atmosphere,
untrustworthy signs
that there will be a tomorrow.*

Judih: Do you feel that the barriers of COVID have lessened? Have you planned any personal poetry readings?

Martina: I’m still a COVID scaredy-cat. I go out but always with a mask and sanitizer in my bag. I still don’t get on public buses or the subway so I walk most places. That being said, I haven’t scheduled any readings for *Glyphs*.

Judih: If you could arrange a line-up of readers at a poetry evening, who would you include? Live or dead, no problem.

Martina: What a fun question! Well, first would be Larry Kramer (now passed), a poet of excellence who was my mentor, and friend, and brother for many years. Then Amy Lowell, Diana Rosen, Karen Greenbaum-Maya, Jack Kerouac, and Gary Snyder.

Judih: Do you ever dream of an alternate self, able to write completely different work? Or do you fantasize of being able to express something in a way so unlike the voice you’ve nurtured?

Martina: I would love to be a novelist. I love fiction and just get buried in stories. My alternate self would write clean, beautiful lines like Hemingway; wonderful accessible stories like Steinbeck; gripping scenes like Donna Tartt and Shirley Jackson; and amazing emotional rides like F. Scott Fitzgerald. That would be me—a mixture of those people.

Judih: You inspire me, because you write every day, come what may. I go through spurts where that’s possible, and then I’m forced to leave the house, and the writing gets put aside for a bit. I would like to know about your writing space. Is there sunlight, a view, a favorite drink, a timer, a cushion? Or do you have a ritual that you follow?

Martina: Well, I do follow a ritual. I am nowhere as busy and productive as you are on so many levels, so it’s not difficult for me to have the time to write. When I was younger and working outside my home, I got up around 4:30 a.m. to have a couple of hours before going to work. Now, I get up about 7 a.m., and go immediately to my desk. My husband makes coffee and kindly brings me a cup.

I usually read something, just to get the brain going a little—a poem by a favorite poet, a paragraph from a novel or an essay. I look at the previous day’s work, and see if it needs editing or if I still like it. Very often I have notes taken when I was reading something, or listening to, or watching something,

and I look at those notes, and begin finding the poem in them. I stay at it even when the end product is dreadful, which it sometimes is. I try to stay at my desk until 4 p.m., which is when I'll have a glass of wine or a martini, and close up shop for the day.

Judih: What do you think is the most pressing issue of the day as a society (as a world society)?

Martina: I think that there are so many issues all rolled up into one big scary ball that feels like it's leading to something apocalyptic: constant wars, disrespect for the planet, despotism, new diseases. All the things that keep us strangers to each other. I'm not ashamed of being terrified a good deal of the time, nor of sometimes losing hope. The pressing issues are always there and feel, to me, like they're getting worse instead of better.

Judih: Do you think that your attitude has changed this past while? Do you find yourself longing more or less for others' society? Do you gravitate to different places on your walks? Do you ever imagine being somewhere else for an extended period, alone or with your beloved?

Martina: My beloved (I love that word) Brian and I sometimes think about living somewhere else, like Scotland or the UK. It's a fun fantasy. Walks—I like to walk the same paths generally. There are outside cafes and markets that are habitual to me, and places along the way that I like to just sit and think for a while.

I'm passionately in love with my city, Los Angeles, and just sort of sit and hug her sometimes in my head. I've always been a bit of a loner, so I don't go to many gatherings. I'm awfully shy except with family. Luckily, my beloved is the same about most of that. Except for the shy thing—he isn't shy by any means. I've experienced three residencies at writer's retreats, and wrote well there, but I have my own little writing retreat right here, and don't think I need to retreat again.

Judih: Is there anything that you'd like to add, something that you'd like to be on record? Or is there a poem you'd like to share, just because?

Martina: This poem from *Glyphs* I think embraces my everyday hopes and wishes:

Deference

*Today I will look for astonishment
damned if I won't!
I'll show deference to all the gods;
the huge great Gods with old familiar names
and the insignificant Gods I tend to ignore:
God of termites
God of rattlesnakes
God of hives
God of the common cold
God of dog poop on my heel
God of high utility bills
God of stubbed toes and bad hair days
I'll walk my favorite circle around this
wonderful, fallen city and will understand
why I lived to get to this day*

*I will invent a new language of praise today
 (mindful that Life is never in remission
 I'll walk my city without one prayer to those huge Gods
 for a miracle anti-wrinkle cream that only costs \$5
 or the loss of 10 more pounds.
 I'll invent new words for "Thank you for my eyesight,"
 and, if tempted to relapse,
 I will look at the world through the tiny holes on a button.
 Through there, I'll see all that is necessary.*

Judih: A button. A button! That's brilliant. Here's to a button!

* * * * *



Judih Weinstein Haggai



Martina Reisz Newberry

Martina Reisz Newberry



The Dream at the End of the World

It is difficult to describe, coming as it still does to each person at a different time.
—Louise Glück

There is a dream you have
of a stranger waiting for you
as you leave a science class,
and walk out to the university's quad.

It is September. Your boots
crunch and crackle the leaves.

He calls out to you,
asks your name, says
you are beautiful. He offers
a flower picked furtively from
the Administration Building's
flower boxes. You ought not

accept it, but you do,
and suddenly this stranger
is everywhere inside you,
and you are inside him everywhere.
Your clandestine visits are afflicted
with a desire that embalms you.

At his home, there are small bowls
of shelled walnuts and pecans, cut apples
and red wine redolent with the warmth
of earth and stem. Never again strangers,
your own heat and your bodies betray
your fierce longings for the near-sacrament
of your weekend's excavations.

At some point, you call each other's names,
watch for signs and portents in the wine glasses
and the churned sheets, and the empty bowls,
and say goodbye. You'll know that,
forever after, this will be a dream of
something that was never really there.

* * * * *



Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Notes from New England

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

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

The Great Grand Braided Narrative ***[Gr. Gr. Br. N. for friendly],*** ***Part 2***

i. Inside the ferment, along the ferment, of the ferment.

Part 1 of these *Notes* on the *Gr. Gr. Br. N.* (*Cenacle* | 118 | December 2021) was written about eight months ago, late December. I had started this work, rustled up some promising ideas, but I was still in the shallows of this project. I had more to *tell* than to *show* at that point.

But I kept at the work, more & more of it. In February, I spent a few days down in New Britain, Connecticut, my old college town. Wrote some *Labyrinthine* pages, some *Bags End News* pages, a lot of *Many Musics* notes. It still being the Pandemic, I wore a mask everywhere in public. On the Greyhound bus there & back, at the New Britain Public Library, Peoples Donutshop, McDonald's. Not many others did. Pandemic denial everywhere.

Thought KD & I were going to Burning Man this year, our first since 2009, a return so very long awaited. Did not come to pass; it still being the Pandemic; 2023 the new goal. The time & effort not spent on getting & being there I've tried to pour into press work, radio work, & writing most important of all.

Kept working my Senior Technical Writer job at a Boston biotech firm, remotely from home. Hired full-time there after over a year of hoping. I am profoundly grateful, & try to earn my appreciating keep each & every working day.

Saw Phish live down at the Great Woods Amphitheater in Mansfield, Massachusetts, first show of theirs we'd seen in three years (again, before the Pandemic). A visit to my beloved Museum of Fine Arts in Boston; so-so J.M.W. Turner exhibition. Curators trying to jam a British Artist who died 171 years ago into contemporary American politics. Clumsy, foolish, unconvincing. But other good works there, always. Politics comes & goes; *Art matters*. *Art stays*.

Not yet been to a movie theater this year. Still plan to, at least once, like in 2021. Masked, of course.

-36-

Gr. Gr. Br. N. status 1/17/2002

* MM - pending new poems - begin in Lx "room"
~~then~~ Roddy & GK in White Woods, "remember some things"
 (& Mentor?)

* Lx - A song donna "remember some things,"
 who does she travel with? From her past?

* BEN - AB & Odom story still starting; will
 travel w/ Leo, AC, Alex, Alie; Memphis in BW?

* Dr Reps - Need to cohere, explain his grips,
 Hekk stick, conflict w/ King, where to be ~~blinded~~

* Travelers Tales - F & Travelers, etc, his picture
 becomes very important

* Heroes/Kittes - King & Goyer w/ Heroes & Kittes
 in BW "remember some things", exile, War
 conflict, Hut

All been in common:

"Travelling
 Tropes" (1/16/2002)

* A Brother w/ companions

* "Remember some things"

* Pass through Rutab. Festival/Talent Show

* Come to Abe's Beach to help

* be helped by Gate-keeper

* Perfect Laxaana! * Mrs. El letter?

* Season of Lights? Grand Production?

* Gentleman Photographer (1/24/2002)

I spent a lot of time in this Attic Study of the Bungalow Cee, Dreamland Jazz on the radio. Gets real cold up here in the winter, so a heater, a sweater, a blanket (last two of these crocheted by KD). Gets real hot in the summer, & fans only help so much.

These events, kinds of days, traveled with me parallel to the work on the *Gr. Gr. Br. N.* Shared my living hours between them.

I worked on all of the 6 projects, each in a different way. Filled up volumes of my Thoughts Pads with notes & more notes. Let this be my primary work, however each project needs it to occur.

ii. Traveling Tropes

I found myself working on both a macro & a micro level. *Macro* being what the projects shared in theme & structure; *micro* being how each one is different.

What I had by January was this idea of “Traveling Tropes,” elements of narrative shared by all 6 projects as each moved along its unique route.

These “Traveling Tropes” include:

1. Each Brother-Hero travels his narrative with companions (Asoyadonna with Raymond the Author guy; Roddy with Gate-Keeper & Mentor; Dreamwalker with the Gentleman Photographer; the King with the Great Heroes Miss La & Miss Ta; Odom with Algernon Beagle & his friends; Francisco with the 4 Famous Travelers & their friends);
2. Each Brother-Hero passes uniquely through the Thought Fleas’ Rutabaga Festival & Fleastock, occurring in & near their Great Clearing;
3. Each Brother-Hero hears, & joins in, the Perfect Braided *Laaa!* traveling from La Chateau Boot atop Mt. Cloudy Day to many places (including the White Woods & the Beach of Many Worlds). This song of Heroes & Hope & Whereabouts braids their singing into its song, & carries along like a message from Brother-Hero to Brother-Hero. Though long unseen to each other, the Perfect Braided *Laaa!* (with its cackle & *hmmm*) lets the Brother-Heroes connect with each other again, each & all now traveling to a common place;
4. This common place being the Beach of Many Worlds—beneath the Deep Deep Sea, by the shore of the Deeper Deeper Sea—where resides Abe the Ancient Sea Turtle, expecting them all, urging them come from afar;
5. But getting there means to “remember some things.” Each Brother-Hero was Wobbled from below the Cave of the Beast in the Tangled Gate, & experienced a strange kind of amnesia. Traveling to the Beach of Many Worlds involves the sometimes hard work of remembering; &
6. Once united on the Beach of Many Worlds, the 6 Brother-Heroes will travel with Gate-Keeper down the Deeper Deeper Sea to the Great Tree at the Heart of the World. There is a Hut nearby, where until recently the King dwelled in exile. Its interior walls are frozen rainbow waterfalls that, seen through properly, allow one live passage to long-ago Unitive Time. By coming here, & in part studying the Great Tree from dawn to dusk, the Brothers may learn why they were Wobbled far from one another; & also perhaps how they can help Gate-Keeper free his home-world’s clan, & conclude the endless circuit he has been on trying to do so. Perhaps the Brother-Heroes will also return again to the Cave of the Beast in the Tangled Gate.

-50-

Rutabaga Festival 4 Flostock: Talent Show!

ref.
583
23

- 2012 Explainers Fest in
Domestic Backyard & Carnival Treks
- 2013 Old Gent-Explainers-Summerland
- 2014 Art Exhibition

★ Review CTale for
any additional details!

- 2015 Great Rutabaga
- 2016 Royal Thumbs Meister/lesson Gr. Prod.

Sp Flea/Starline Joe Co FF MissK
O.C. Calgary Kitees Sea Fleas

- 2017 Model Islands / Beacons / Turcans
- 2018 Th Fleas guard above: Mushrooms below No Roots!
- 2019 Alvin & the Poses & Gr. Mandol Mass
- 2020 Braice-a-lot → Great Filled → Aze's Beach
- 2021 Talent Show; Blood Canvases



iii. Narratives

1) *Labyrinthine* – Asoyadonna travels with me, or at least a “quasi-semi-fictional” version of me. Of the 6 Brother-Heroes, she seems least struggling to “remember some things,” once she recalls herself. Maybe being in my company helps. This being *Labryinthine*, I hesitate not to discuss the bones of the narrative structure we are in, including the narrative imperative that she “remember some things.”

What this turns out to be is recalling the time her father the Tinker & her Aunt affixed a group of 36 flower stars, a “star spiral,” to her bedroom ceiling in the Pensionne, laughing as they would often do, & arguing over whether there really is a Carnival of Creatures in its center, “dancing eternity away, & with any lucky enough to visit!”

The Star Spiral represents the “Many Worlds” which is, at broadest description, the setting of the *Tangled Gate Mythopoeia*. These worlds are connected through the Beach of Many Worlds, among other ways, & this Beach is where she is bound.

She also recalls the handmade book her Brother-Heroes gave her after she was injured in a battle, one their bravery, & loyalty to her, assured that she survived.

We depart the Pensionne, bound now through the White Woods for the Rutabaga Festival, another of the narrative imperatives. Along the way we are discovered by the Perfect Braided *Laaa!* Hearing in its traveling song the voices of her Brother-Heroes, Asoyadonna joyfully chases after it. I follow, clumsy slower.

Missing a caution sign, Asoyadonna tumbles into the waters of the Wide Wide Sea that surround the 6 Model Islands, built for a previous Rutabaga Festival, & still fully active for visitors.

The story of the 6 Model Islands is told in *Bags End News* #435-449, not yet published in *The Cenacle*. But summed in brief, the 6 Islands of the main world of these narratives once clustered together, close like Creatures, till they were spooked & fled one another. They were re-united in a different manner, but true to their affections.

This *Labyrinthine* passage recounts Asoyadonna & me coming to one of the Islands & encountering what I dub a “Helping Hut,” seeming empty, yet very powerful to visitors’ dearest wishes.

Oddly, it is not Asoyadonna but me whom the Hut helps. In a passage at least metafictional, if not meta-meta, I find myself eyes closed in the Hut with her, & eyes opened in the New Britain Public Library, where I was writing these pages. I had not been down to Connecticut in 2½ years, since before the Pandemic, & my “remember some things” task involved how much these old haunts still matter to me.

Us having both remembered some things now, we luck into a Boat-Wagon trip with the Kittees & Friend Fish to the Bungalow Cee, where Asoyadonna & I end up briefly back in the Attic (that is, here), before heading back to the Rutabaga Festival. There, I leave her in the good company of Miss Flossie Flea to tour its highlights.

Asoyadonna hears that Dreamwalker & his friend the Gentleman Photographer are at the Rutabaga Festival, somewhere deep inside its Talent Show’s green-&-gold curtain, but assured all concerned

-36-
 Tuesday, April 12, 2000 - 8:31 p.m.
 Bangalore Co. Art & Study (Book) - Melrose, MA.
 Many Musics, XII, #1924
 notes cont.

Crash T6 Ship IT/DW Clar Isl. Restaurant Office	RL room	Hut	Fest	Thrift Store	Monet World	Laaa	Abies
#19	Crash T6	Waterfalls / #1	Blood Canvas	TV	Yellow Bldg	Laaa	?
#20	Car Crash T6	Two Armchairs	Mane Moss	Papars	Laaa	!	
#21	IT/DW	Mailbox House	Mushroom Patch	Poppies	Laaa	Candle?	
#22	IT/DW Clar Isle	Two Modern Armchairs	Bed of ferns	Soap	Laaa	Candle?	
#23	Clar Isle	Modern	Soap	Kettle	Laaa	?	
#24	Restaurant Office	Clarendale	Blood Canvas	Soap	Laaa	?	

#19: RL Car Crash / Blood Canvas / Waterfalls / #1 House / Thrift Store / Yellow Bldg / Laaa / Abies?
 #20: RL T6 / Two Armchairs / Mane Moss / Papars / Laaa / Abies?
 #21: RL Ship Under / Mailbox House / Mushroom Patch / Poppies / Laaa / Abies?
 #22: RL IT/DW / Narrow Hut / Bed of ferns / Thrift Store / Soap / Laaa / Abies?
 #23: RL Clar Isle / Modern / Soap / Kettle / Laaa / Abies?
 #24: RL Rest. Office / Clarendale / 6 Modern Isles / Soap / Laaa / Abies?

he will be fine & she will re-unite with him with him at the Beach of Many Worlds.

I am guessing her path to the Beach will be at least partly via the *Good Ship Ker-Plow-ee!*, captained by the Commandeer Masta' Splasha (an Imp iterate, naturally), whose ship she & Dreamwalker had traveled aboard early in their friendship.

2) *Many Musics* - Roddy is the one Brother-Hero still in *Many Musics* right now, & he is currently traveling with Gate-Keeper, director of the film-not-film called **RemoteLand**, & Gate-Keeper's Mentor. Gate-Keeper is from *Labyrinthine*, going back to 2006. Mentor is a new character, from 2021, appears in both *Labyrinthine* & *Many Musics*.

Roddy & Gate-Keeper share in common their travel to the Beach of Many Worlds, & what seems like Roddy's promise that his re-united Brother-Heroes will help Gate-Keeper to free at last his clan from their captivity, & bring them to the home-world they long ago intended. Mentor knows of all this, once had a group of Brother-Heroes too, & wishes to help both of these men.

The challenge of this current run of *Many Musics* poems (XII, #19-24) is that Roddy & Gate-Keeper each have deep histories, in separate works, & bringing them together has to blend well their two long paths. So I designed six poems in which these three men only appear together twice; in different pairs with Roddy twice; & Roddy alone once. They are, at root, Roddy's poems, but the other two are nearly as important. I expect Gate-Keeper will eventually return to *Labyrinthine*, but not for awhile.

Roddy's path to the Beach of Many Worlds is probably the hardest regarding "remember some things." Poem by poem, he recalls ever more clearly his conflict with the King, how only they of the 6 Brother Heroes emerged from the Cave of the Beast to sail back to their Kingdom on the Mainland.

They both wanted to go back to the Island of the Tangled Gate, but ended up warring over how to do so. When Roddy hears the Perfect Braided *Laaa!*, it brings him more pain than joy, because he hears his King's voice. He finds himself back at the various Huts he'd long lived in in the White Woods, each now helping him to face his forgotten pains.

Roddy's encounter with the Rutabaga Festival so far has been somewhat circuitous. He encounters the Blood Canvas in which Francisco left a message for his Brother-Heroes, an image of them together back at the Cave of the Beast, indicating his belief that, once they re-unite, help the Gate-Keeper, they must go back to wherefrom they were Wobbled.

I expect Roddy's path will continue to reveal to him the details of his conflict with the King, & that he & Gate-Keeper will eventually travel on from Mentor. I also intuit that more will occur & reveal than I can imagine right now.

3) *Dream Raps* - Dreamwalker has made the transition from *Many Musics*, written poems, to *Dream Raps* which source from my daily journal, transfigured to oral tales during my weekly *Within's Within* radio show, & eventually transfigured again to texts published in *The Cenacle*. Like the other Brother-Heroes, I expect him to arrive back to *Many Musics*. But this path of weekly tellings has taught me *a lot* about the more ambiguous figure borne of *Many Musics*.

He raised up as a son of a mother Scholar & a father Singer. The Manse they lived in a kind of

-9-

6:49 p.m. Same place

Dreamwalker/Dr. Raps notes (2022)

Dw asks:

* Starts at stream - "What Dreamland? Down in the
mole cutes? What remains in to waking? 2-way traffic?"pushes "wall" - boulevard, endless theaters of mind - "waking
the residual of dreaming" ^{DW stuck in Dreaming/waking} ^{GP unhook in time} ^{called by touch}* ^{DW} Stuck - lays back under Bridge, eyes shut, humms, made
a White Room, live, imaginal walls, pushed in, pulled out puppet,
gift for another the Scholar; found it on floor of office; looks at
book; one looks back* Pulls out chair, pets book; puts puppet back w/ pencils, calendar, clock
makes away, but could not read it; took book to bed; one night
stirred, book in arms, opened, strange (un)deafal words (un)ges,
but slept, unreadable as ever, nearly* Tried again, pushed, book resisted; relaxed, book allowed; stuck
till one night Full Moon Hill, long book, calmed, heard humming White Words,
joined in; book fell open: You ARE Dreaming!; in dreaming,
book You ARE Awake!* Book becomes elusive - sees a figure & chased in dreaming
or waking \Rightarrow Zazen - Opposite sides of tree - never saw her face
long tatted hair - trace* Fest Poser \Rightarrow Travel Angels \Rightarrow Medic* Push \Rightarrow travels \Rightarrow Mass Map

* Blood Cammas

Why on
Floor?

Zazen

Map

I think on too-short review, these plus new Dream
Journal pages

experimental facility for a group of people from the far end of history, called Sleepers, whose mission is to mend history, try to prevent the collapse of the world.

Dreamwalker does not train with the Sleepers, but he does find his own ways to learn how to “dreamwalk,” a dual state of waking & sleeping. He is taught by Creatures, by a strange female counterpart called Zeeyah, by the same Mentor Gate-Keeper knew &, perhaps, in different ways, by his parents.

His travels to “remember some things” include a night up high in a wondrous tree, enthralled by the Perfect Braided *Laaa!* & unknowing sitting along the same branch as the Travellers of *The Creature Tale*.

He is now traveling with his old friend the Gentleman Photographer. They come to the Rutabaga Festival, & Dreamwalker encounters the Blood Canvas, & receives Francisco’s message. Eventually they meet Flossie Flea, who encourages them to find their “hidden talents” behind the green-&-gold curtain of the Talent Show stage.

Dreamwalker & the Gentleman Photographer find themselves somehow back at the Manse of Dreamwalker’s youth, at a strange Sleepers party, Dreamwalker learning & remembering more of what went on there, & how he came to be who he is.

I cannot say how Dreamwalker & the Gentleman Photographer will find their way to the Beach of Many Worlds. But I have this strong feeling that what occurs along the way will be important, if not critical, to what happens once the Brother-Heroes are re-united.

4) *Great Heroes of Yore Adventures* - The Great Heroes are called Miss La & Miss Ta, iterates of the Creatures Rosalita the Imp & Bellla the bloo-&-pink Piglet. About annually, for many turns of the calendar, they get together to share an heroic adventure, usually narrated by the Sea. One time it was helping to solve why all the colors had gone wrong. Another it was helping to unite the 6 Islands.

Their current adventure involves Miss La’s dream of a Perfect Braided *Laaa!* which brings her & Miss Ta & many friends back to the site of the Great Heroes’ first adventure, Mt. Cloudy Day. From La Chateau Boot atop Mt. Cloudy Day, they broadcast out their song of Heroes & Hope & Whereabouts.

The King had been exiled to the Hut near the Great Tree at the Heart of the World, to find calm & clarity again. It is Abe the Ancient Sea Turtle who summons the King to the Beach of Many Worlds, & determines that the King is calm & clear again, & ready to find his Brother-Heroes. Thus he is brought by the Great Heroes & Francisco’s friend Goyer to La Chateau Boot to join in the Braided Perfect *Laaa!* A song become one of comfort & summons.

Eventually he wishes to leave Mt. Cloudy Day & search for his Brother-Heroes, riding with the Kittees & Friend Fish in their Boat-Wagon. But a Wobble tosses them far out on the Wide Wide Sea. It is there where he begins to “remember some things,” urged on by a brief vision of Dreamwalker saying they are all doing so on their separate paths to the Beach of Many Worlds.

My speculation on the rest of this narrative is that it is bound for the Rutabaga Festival, like the others, & that the King’s part of his war with Roddy will be told. I also have this thought that the

Filed in categories 8/15/22 ^{8/19/22} ^{8/21/22} ^{8/22/22} ^{8/23/22}
 Trainers: Dreamer, Kira & Dan, Islanders, Cosmo, Memphis, Francisco, Miranda
 -33-
 9:15p.m. C/20 NNE Gr. Gr. Br. N. Pt. 2
 [Cont'd C/18/Dec 2021]
 Need scans - tables, Fest map ⇒ Form a method of each
 3 poems * MMV - Roddy - XII, #s P-21 [note R/M/GK structure] [Cabo Hody] #1 these
 #19 - Thn'g Shop - Roddy / GK & Mentor - Trans of Mentor's Care of Beast Falls [Brothers near Laga - needs conflict w/ King]
 #20 - Meta - Roddy / GK - Ancha's choice - discuss RL - nearly remembers more conflict w/ Laga - more
 #21 - Great Mound of Mass - Ralm mostly - Initations - Ralm by Laga - Compass - Moss - Maibor House - better way
 LX notebook LX - Asaya doing - Pt 12, VII-X - * Star Spiral story
 * Brothers, Du book * Travels w/ R * Perfect Laga! leads to Mad Island
 via Calgany * Helping Hut * New Britain * Look... Sea! Book * Boat -
 Wagon to Ahic tree ⇒ Ringo Ahic ⇒ Hallway ⇒ White Woods / Interludes
 BEN notebook * BEN - Odum - Started in LX, then BEN - Odum's sent to Sep End
 back for help, tells AB Ylari's story + "AB in C Tale" (LX BEN) combined James sends him
 in the Dreamer - write to June / One Pt travels to Laga! Fest Cape at Post Pass, Odum takes Cassy, Odum, Memphis, Abe
 (they are first) (Wobbe) (Laga) (Himm) (Beach: AB, Cassy, Odum, Memphis, Abe)
 Secret Books Heroes - Kiny - Pt. 1 Cover w/ K & FF find Kiny excited to start at
 cassettes * Pt. 2 - Goes to Goven in Goven to find Brothers, Wobbe, Perfect Laga!
 [R 44 Notes] [10th Annv.] * Pt. 3 PENDING Wobbe, Laga, Division back to La C.B.
 Typed up notes pending on Wobbe
 * Dr. Raps - Dreamwalker - Jan-Aug [weekly] - reunited w/ GP4
 Recalls Manse - back to Travels White Woods / Travel Angels / Madie / Fest - AB, [sup]
 Blood canvas (Cae); Gent. Protg. girl, Met Hossie Flea, Wise Wobbe's: Stage, Manse, Ralty,
 Secret Books C Tale - Francisco - Jan-Aug [6x/week] - Gert & Friends to
 cassettes * Miss Barb, then to find Brothers; Francisco joins; Tree, Derek & W; Gert & Laga no GK ELIDES to
 RALOS END; via buses to Beach, Cross Lands - Wobbe lands in White Woods w/ canvas meets Goven;
 they stay w/ Goven to save E - see Fest in painting wishes to go Laga - Cassy tells the story from that point
 (Laga) (Himm) (Beach: AB, Cassy, Odum, Memphis, Abe) (Wobbe) (Laga) (Himm) (Beach: AB, Cassy, Odum, Memphis, Abe)

King will arrive as last of the Brother-Heroes to the Beach of Many Worlds.

5) *Bags End News* - Brother-Hero Odom's story had, of course, begun in *Many Musics*, then jumped to *Labyrinthine* briefly, & now arrives to *Bags End News* for a stretch. Like several of the other Brother-Heroes, Odom was Wobbled far from the Cave of the Beast, to a kind of Forever Spaceship, & then tossed from that into a fountain. He makes the acquaintance of a strange figure named James Starsden, & is eventually taken in for a time by the Thought Fleas.

James Starsden delivers him via the Dreaming to Mr. Algernon Beagle on Milne's Porch in Bags End, where he tells his story of loss & exile. With Algernon Beagle & a number of others, Odom travels by Memphis T.S. Bear's Bike-Wagon to the Rutabaga Festival. He hears stories of his Brother-Heroes passing through, & experiences Francisco's message in the Blood-Canvas.

At the White Birch Cafe, Odom's dreaming self is re-united with his sleeping body. Odom & Algernon Beagle & friends also end up at the Helping Hut on the 6 Model Islands, & eventually arrive down to the Beach of Many Worlds, to be greeted happily by Abe the Ancient Sea Turtle. Odom is the first of the Brother-Heroes to arrive.

And for a long time, even though there is no time on the Beach, they wait for others to arrive. The first to do so is Francisco in *The Creatures Tale*.

6) *The Creatures Tale* - Francisco the painter Brother-Hero's story of remembering is told most circuitously in this nightly oral tale. The 4 Famous Travelers & their friends, who have befriended Gate-Keeper, & wish to help him with his quest, though are parted him for the moment, encounter Francisco along their travel via Roofless Bus & Bloo-&-Pink Trolley. He is trying to "remember some things" even as he is trying to find his Brother-Heroes.

Along their travels, Francisco encounters his old family servant, who reveals that it was he who found Francisco in the White Woods, Wobbled far from the Cave of the Beast.

Eventually they end up at the Rutabaga Festival, where Francisco encounters the Blood Canvas, & embeds in it his message to his Brother-Heroes. The Gentleman Photographer travels with this group too to the Rutabaga Festival before parting them (& re-uniting with Dreamwalker).

After a strange series of events along the way, Francisco & his friends arrive to the Beach of Many Worlds. But no sign of Abe or fellow Brother-Heroes. They build a boat & from afar espy an Imp (the one who lives in Abe's tooth) who leads them to Francisco's happy reunion with Odom.

Currently, while waiting the other Brother-Heroes, Francisco is on a Painting Expedition with Algernon Beagle & Princess Crissy. In a place of seeming-sentient & dimensional Shadows.

iv. Conclusion

The *Gr. Gr. Br. N.* is well along its way, especially considering where it was eight months ago. My goal is to bring all of the narratives to the Beach of Many Worlds before the end of October.

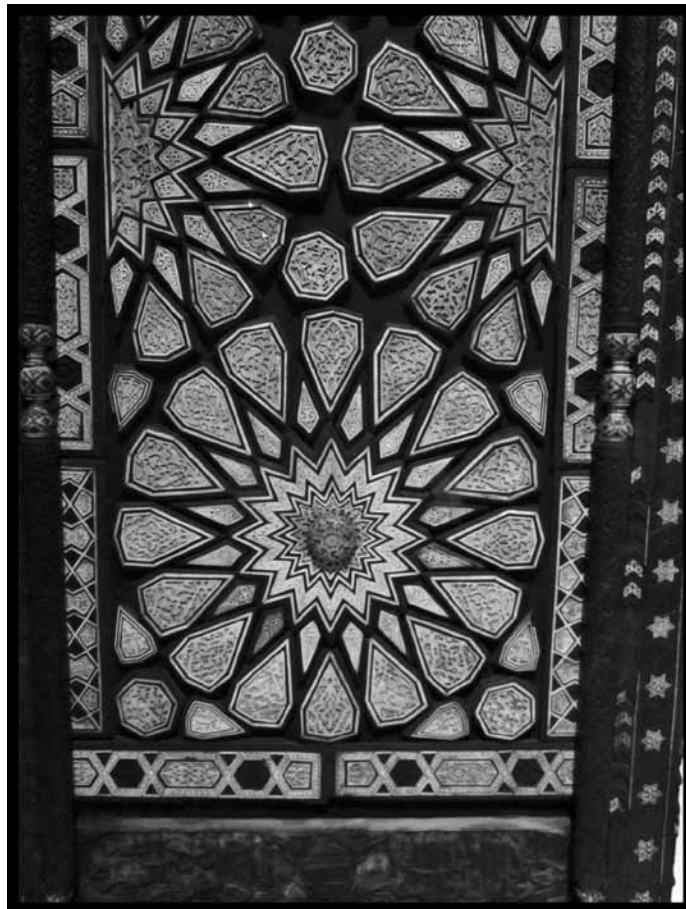
Then? Write 36 *Many Musics* poems in 36 days to bring the story to its conclusion about December 10th, which marks 10 years nearly to the day since the original *Tangled Gate* poems were finished.

Is this possible? Well, two of the narratives have already arrived. The others, with much devotion to Art & craft, can be arrived in good form too. So, yes, very possible.

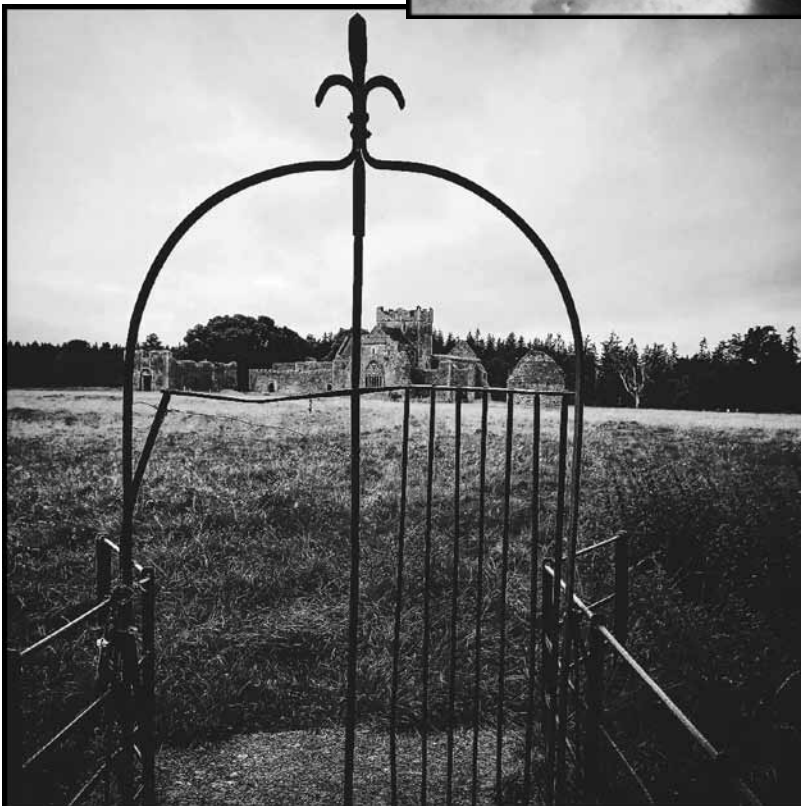
And then? The *Mythopoeia* continues. Changed for all of this, & for the better. Other ideas will burble up, new ambitions, stranger goals.

I am grateful every single day that I do this work, this *play*, this *magick*. I believe that because I devote some of my best hours to it, I can better devote others of best hours to loving KD, my friends, my colleagues of various kinds, the world. I am a better person for this precious & delightful work I do.

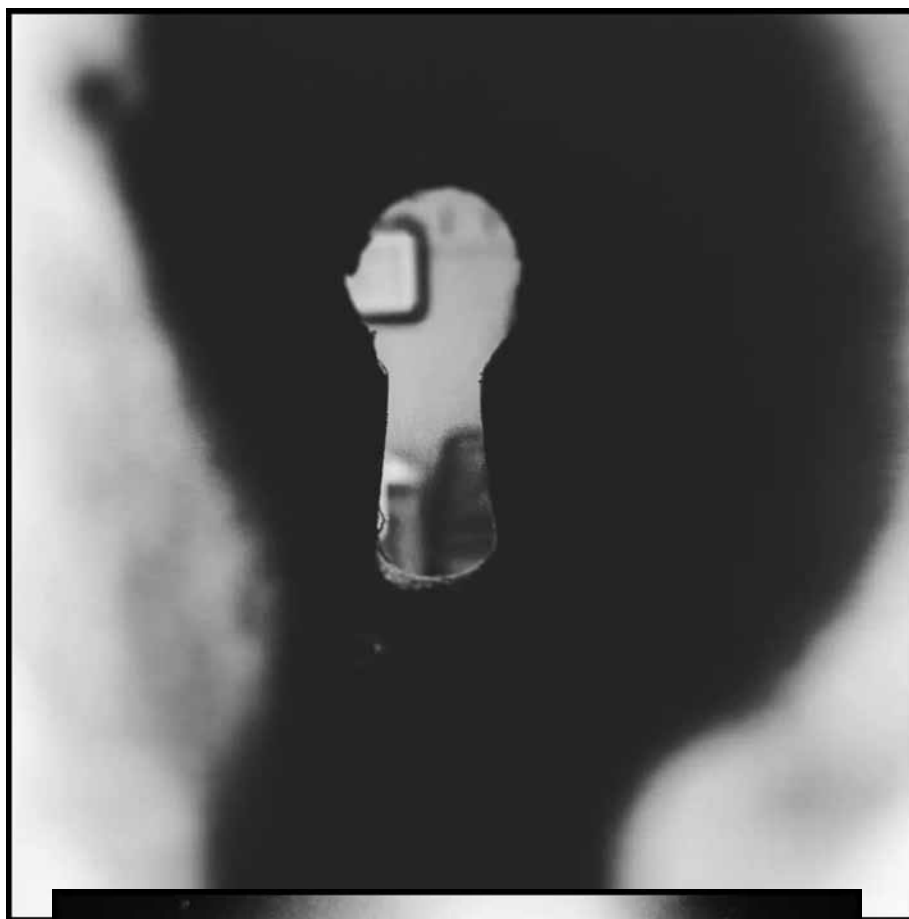
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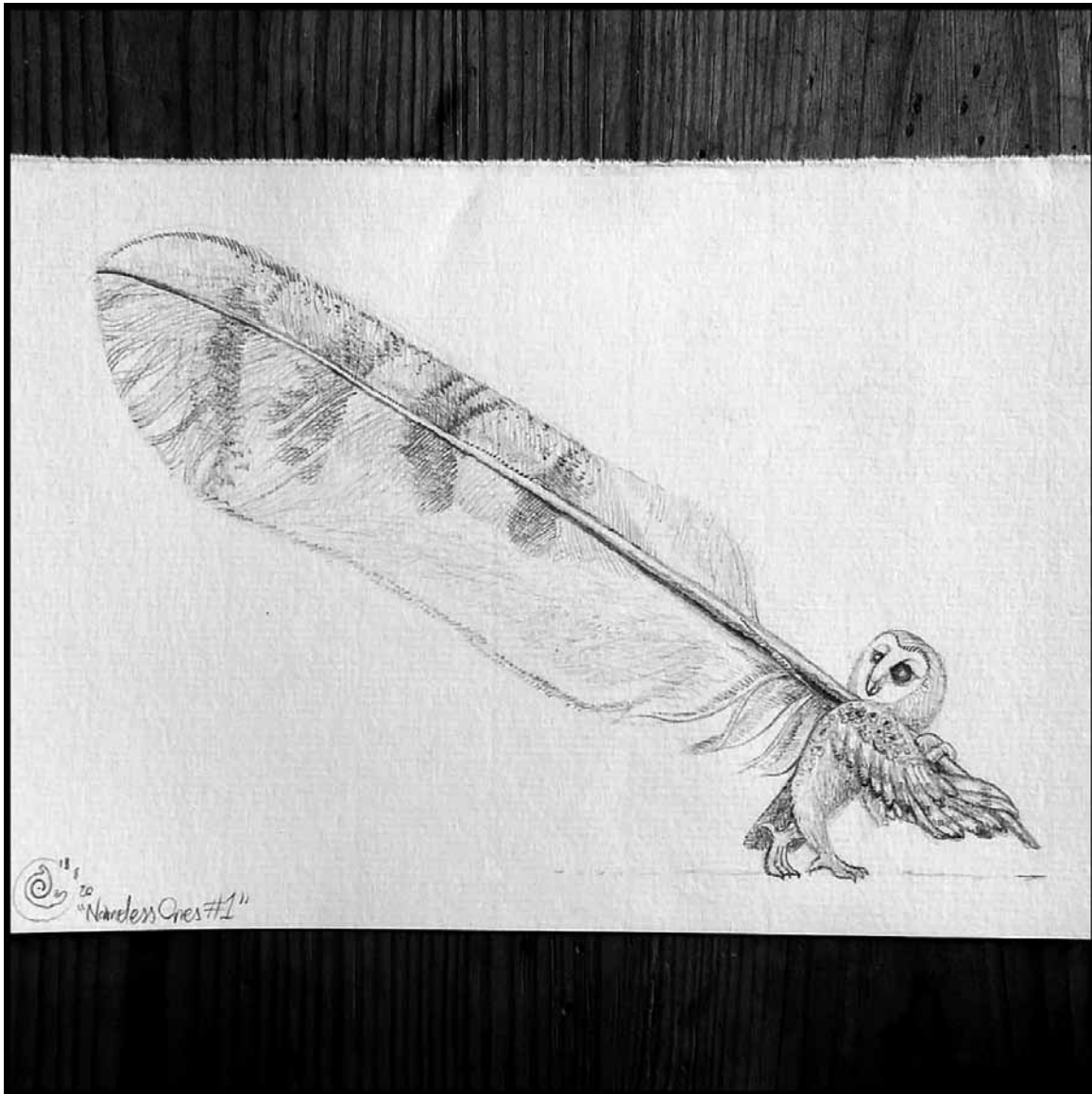


Epi Rogan









Sam Knot



Mabon Calling

[Fiction]

Concluded from Cenacle | 119 | April 2022

Well, it has been a heck of a day, and now we are all gathered in the roundhouse again, talking amongst ourselves, but with our attentions half on Doc, who is knelt by the fire with Inneth, who will introduce herself shortly. They are laying out the mushrooms we picked earlier, and talking quietly. I cannot hear the details, but can tell it must be about how to approach the sharing of the mushrooms, and what form the evening ceremony might take.

Inneth now turns from the fire-lit fungi, and looks around the roundhouse, taking in our faces with a calm smile. She is a beautiful woman, with something of the fairy queen about her. Long gingery-blond hair with the odd flash of silver, big innocent eyes, and a wide smile. A face that manages to be simultaneously soft and pointed, having hints of a curling, as if each element in her expression might be a magical word, written with appropriately elven flourish.

The burble of conversation dies down, and she begins to speak, in a voice that is calm and confident, soothing because it is solid enough: “I am glad you have all made it here, at this magical time of year, this time of quickening, when the green goddess is awakening, the trees springing into leaf, and the bluebells rising from the moist fertile soil to fill the air with their heavenly scent.

“In but a couple of nights, the moon will be full. This year, in something of a rare event, the full moon falls on the eve of what, for our ancestors, was a sacred day. Thus also a very special night. The word for this time is *Beltane*. It was a time of lighting fires on high hills, of celebrating the strengthening sun, of waking to nature’s reborn fertility.

“It was a time, here in Treesigh, of the great animal fayres, where beasts were brought and sold, and thus a time when girls and boys might seek each other out, coming together in the dancing and jollity that surrounded such great communal happenings. It was a time for sensuality, a night when the great horned god and goddess were said to consort, a time when magical children were born.

“Taliesin, the great poet of whom Sailor told last night, was a child of Beltane. And Mabon, Son of Modron, the Great Son of the Great Mother, a very important figure for us here—he was a child of Beltane as well.

“But it was not a time just for birthing children, but for the birth of inspiration as well—a time when Awen was strong. A time to celebrate, to fill ourselves with nature’s wonderful creative spirit. It was a time when we ourselves could be reborn.”

She turns to look at Doc, and he grins and takes over: “So then everyone, as you’ve probably heard, we’ve got a little treat for you tonight.” And now he slips into a kind of jokey grandeur: “For, in the first

breaths of this fair morning, went a few brave warriors out upon the heath, and stole the hats right off the heads of the fairies!

“Now, all is fair in love and awe, and so can we be sure that the joke we played on them will soon be at play inside us. By which I intend to communicate, that if you feel so called, you might approach this here mini-mountain of magic, and take some of it for yourself. Perhaps a small handful only, say twenty or thirty at first, in order to give everyone a chance to have some.

“Thus shall we enter the spirit of this land as its flesh enters our own—and together share stories, songs, and laughter.”

He pauses, and looks around the room with one eyebrow raised: “And, of course, assorted random noises!”

There is a general smattering of laughter, and a few silly sounds. The Witch starts up a beat on the drum, and while this is going on we each get to our feet, as and when we feel called, before returning to our seats with small handfuls of shroomy corpses.

Some of us are beginning to eat them already, while others appear to be waiting until everyone has got some. Once that appears to be the case, Doc calls a halt to the beat.

“Well, my good friends, as we proceed to munch these wee pixies down—who are, of course, our good friends as well—let us loosen up a little, try to get a bit more comfortable with our inner fools, for it is quite possible we are soon to realize just how very ridiculous we humans really are. *Aaaaaahhh-wwweeeeeennnnnnnnnn!*”

And now most of us are responding with our own drawn out *Awens*, or maybe we are exclaiming, like in they did in old merry-cana: “*A-wen brother, a-wen!*”

Or perhaps, following Doc’s example, we might be generally exploring the range of bizarre sounds of which our bodies are capable, from full blown raspberries and blubbing lips, to whoops and yips, via an exceedingly wide range of experimental utterances, from the rather retarded, to the bizarrely beautiful—or, for the most part, mammalian night words which are a complex and increasingly pleasing blend of the two.

* * *

Eventually we seem to have mostly exhausted our capacity for vocal novelty, and a quiet descends, in which The Witch speaks up: “We would like you to know that, at any appropriate moment—for instance in lulls such as these, which seem pregnant with uncertain expectations—if there is a stirring in you, and you feel something inside that you wish to share, it would be our pleasures to bear witness.”

There is a moment’s quiet after this, and as it begins to go on just that little bit too long, a strange anxiety builds up inside me, but then The Witch says she will start us off. She begins to sing in a voice that is honest with trembling, natural with an eerie quiver that makes it quite beautiful, seeming to complement the silence all around us rather than breaking it, making it grow in fact. She sings words that do not quite resolve into any language that I know, but still seem elements of this one, and give the impression of familiar words, like *hue*, *moon*, *dew*, *drew*, *awe*, *eye*, *ma*, and more.

And then Ring, who is knelt by the fire, without looking up from it, begins to speak a poem of quite some beauty, about a mysterious lover who might be all in our imaginations, or might even be the night herself, or else perhaps the man in the moon.

Then Ernst pipes up, making us all laugh with a somewhat monotonous rendition of what must be an ancient pop song, something about being unable to hide one's excitement, even to the point where one loses control over oneself entirely, and yet this sensation being portrayed as somehow pleasant.

It goes on like this for some time, with the laughter getting wilder and more unrestrained as the mushroom mountain disappears. The silences begin to swim, giving the sensation of having just stopped spinning around in circles, the way that feeling continues to circulate even in stillness.

And then there is a silence longer than any so far—although it is not in the slightest bit uncomfortable—and, into the midst of it, Sailor steps closer to the fire, looking like he has the swaying inside him, seeming to await his own words with a faint amusement.

* * *

“Well, good people. Tonight I shall tell of Mabon, who was born but a few days from now, and who lived his legendary life in this very area. They even say that he is buried not far from here, out in thee wylds proper—” and now he leans in, and says in a loud whisper, with his hands patting the air above the ground, as if to keep the words down: “—I have even heard tell that we ourselves might make pilgrimage there, this coming Beltane Eve.”

A murmur of incredulous excitement goes around the room, and I dismiss what he just suggested as part of the art of storytelling, a way to get us excited, or peak our interest somehow. For, so far as I know, no humans have set foot beyond the wall in a good two hundred years.

Sailor continues: “Mabon might be older even than Taliesin, for his name means the great son of the great mother, which suggests, to me at least, that he might be a remnant of the matriarchal, fertility-based goddess religion of the stone people, who walked these lands back before history began . . .

“Although, perhaps some of their words, some of what they thought, got passed down through the ages into the stories that still echo around these mountains. . . ? Maybe some of those ancient thoughts still lie behind these words, these words I shall now speak, as I tell you the tale of Culhwch (*kil-ook*) and Olwen.”

He pauses, and gathers himself. “Now, Olwen was a great beauty, with long legs and delicate hands, and the fairest of faces, and sun-risen hair that flowed all down her back. But her father was, to be frank, something of an arsehole. A gigantic arsehole, in fact!”

A chuckle ripples around the room.

“In fact, he was literally a giant, the chief of the giants no less, and his name was Ysbaddaden (*es-ba-tha-den*).” He draws this strange name out, pronouncing it syllable by syllable.

“So then, Olwen's Pa was well known to be a bit of an arse, because every man who tried to marry his daughter most always had their heads bitten off. But Culhwch's stepmother was not much better, for

she cursed Culhwch to be obsessed by Olwen. And so he wanted to know what he could do to win her, and asked his Pa, who wasn't very helpful in himself, but bade him go unto Arthur's court—and so here is Culhwch—

And now Sailor mounts an imaginary horse, holds himself proud, and his voice goes into a kind of hushed shout that conveys his astonished excitement. He holds the reins, bends into the wind, and suddenly it as if he is telling the story for himself as much as for anyone else.

“—he is on his horse, the most beautiful big grey steed, whose bit is made of gold, whose saddle is inlaid with gold, and he is galloping wild towards his love. In one hand, he carries two silver spears, and in the other is his battle axe—so sharp it draws blood from the wind itself!

“At his side is a golden sword—as bright as the morning sun in the sky—and around his ears four clods of earth fly up like swallows from the hooves of his horse!”

We laugh at the brightness and briskness of the images, the exaggerated shine of them.

“Oh yes! And his two white greyhounds are with him, running in front of the galloping horse, criss-crossing from side to side, a double helix of superfast hound they are! *Haha!*” He looks genuinely surprised and amused, as if he's just seen them for himself.

“And so Culhwch arrives, but Arthur's gatekeeper won't let him in, so he says—” (and this in a great booming voice) “—if you won't let me in, I will let out such a cry as will be heard from deep south way up north, from far east way out west, and it will so frighten all the women who hear it they shall all be struck barren!”

“—and so they open the gates and Culhwch rides right into the hall on his horse, and Arthur agrees to give him six of his best men—Arthur was a man who knew an adventure when he saw one, you see! And so off they go to find Olwen.”

He stops for a moment and thinks, and I wonder if he has lost the thread. When he starts speaking again, there is a slightly ramshackle sense to the whole construction, that adds to the enjoyable feeling that the story is out in the room somewhere, and Sailor is in fact plucking it out of the air, piece by piece, and just chucking it all together.

“Well, even finding her was a bit of a mission, and when eventually they did get there, they tried asking that giant arsehole for permission to marry his daughter, but all he would do was jab at them with his great poison-tipped spear!” And now he's looking intent and jabbing out at us.

“But eventually he got tired of that, and he said, ‘Okay, you can marry her, but only . . . this and that, and this and that. . .’ In other words, he had this great list of tasks, and was rattling them off, and they were all quite unlikely things. But Culhwch didn't seem phased at all.”

He pauses now, and looks at Doc, who is grinning up at him. “But then Ysbaddaden said, ‘And of course I myself will need a haircut! But my hair is haystack, and my beard is a tree! And the only things strong enough to cut them are the golden comb and scissors, which are themselves stuck betwixt the legendary tusks of’—I don't know if I can even pronounce this—” and his whole face gets involved in trying “—Twrch Trwyth (*tawuk troyth*)—the biggest craziest wildest wild boar in all the land!”

I began laughing some time around the announcement of the haircut, and was not the only one, but now it seems the laughter is running away by itself, and Doc is squealing. “A most barbarous beast was he! And in possession of the very instruments of barbery themselves!”

And now Sailor is laughing too, it becomes an unstoppable force. I have tears flowing down my face, my stomach muscles are starting to ache. I am *actually* in pain. It is not just the wonderfully absurd exuberance of the tale itself, or the way Sailor seems to be discovering it as he goes along, with a kind of incredulous look on his face, suggesting also the possibility that at any moment he might lose the thread entirely. It is not even just the mushrooms, I don’t think. It is the ridiculousness inherent in the very creatures we are, supposedly self-aware apes, with this weird gift for language, gathered around these bits of tree that we have chopped up, and set fire to, and are watching burn, while the guy in the middle seems to be making up a story as he goes along. Except he *didn’t* make it up, someone else did, or perhaps *someoneSSS else*. So maybe Sailor *is* making it up then, and it’s been made up now for so many lifetimes that whoever first started it is lost. *And yet here they are, right?*

* * *

And here we are, supposedly the most advanced and civilized we’ve ever been, with our perfect cities, our nigh-invisible technologies, and yet still needing to fill ourselves to the brim with the giggles of tiny mushrooms that we actually half-believe might be elves after all. And we are sat in a house that is based on a design that might just as well be as old as time, laughing the same laughs at the same lines we have been laughing at for thousands of years—at the least—and then laughing at laughter itself. Laughing at our own eternally overactive imaginations, our love of absurdity, and the ways we quite naturally distort reality which, after all, probably doesn’t really exist and, even if it does, must do so impossibly.

* * *

Somehow Sailor manages to soldier on, between random droppings of the laughter bomb, telling us that the *only* creature fast enough to catch the boar is a magical white horse with a dark mane, and the *only* person able to ride such a horse is Mabon. But that of course no one knows where *he* is, because at only three days old he was taken from his mother, and hasn’t been seen since.

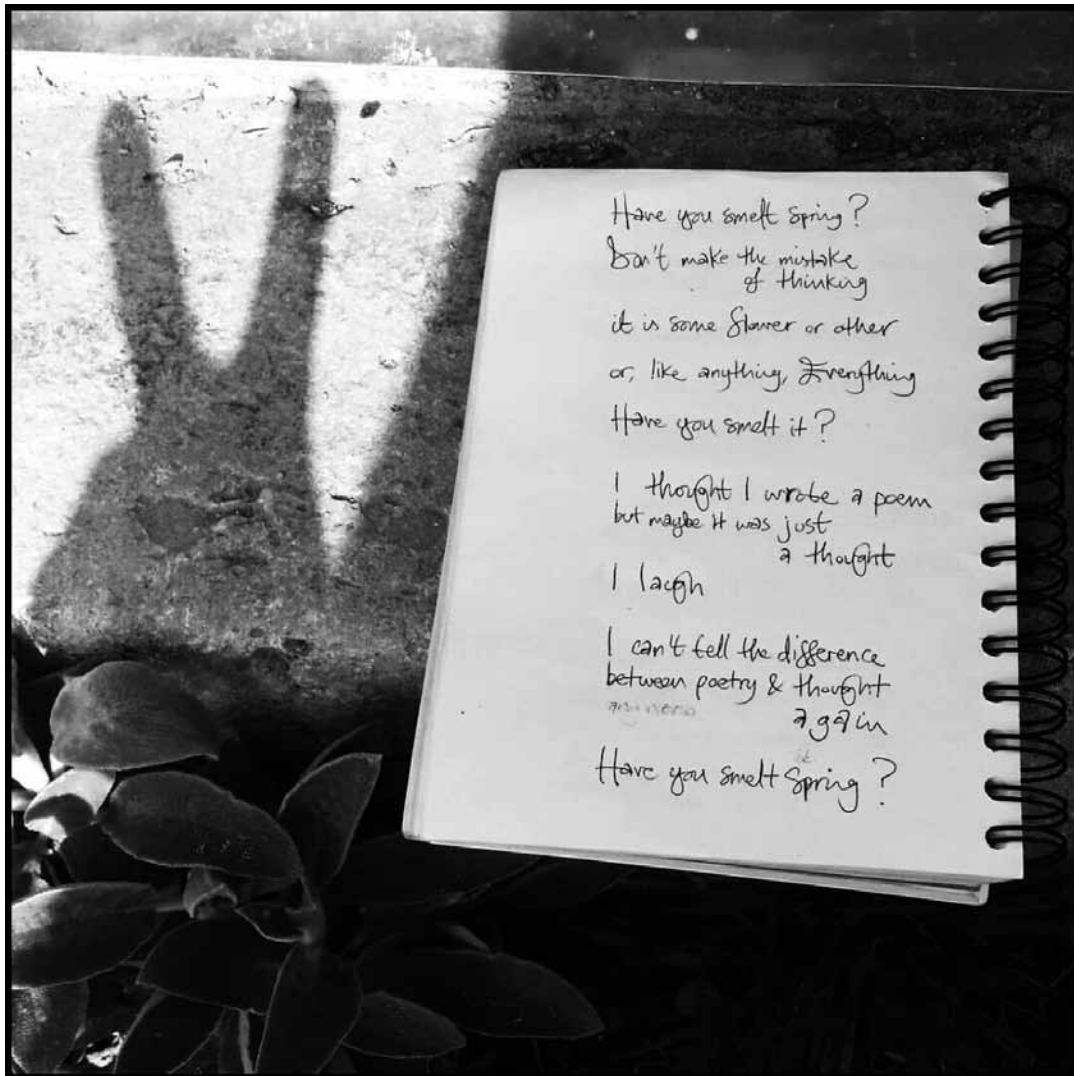
And now we are being asked to join in, as Arthur’s war band go about asking the ancient animals if anyone has heard where Mabon might be. First we ask the blackbird who says—and this will become the refrain, so therefore Sailor puts out his palms out to ask us to join in—“I am old, very old . . .”

We chorus it: “I am old, very old,” and Sailor continues: “Ever since I was young, this anvil has been here, and every day I have wiped my beak on it, and now it is no bigger than a nut! But still, in all this time, never have I heard tell of the one of which you speak. However, there is one older than me, and that is the Stag of Rhedynfre (*rehdynfre*). Go and speak to him.”

“And so they go to the stag and the stag says—”

We chorus it: “I am old! Very old!”

“—when I was young, there was a tiny oak sapling here, and it grew into a great tree with a hundred branches, and then bit by bit the branches dropped, and the tree withered and fell, and now all that is left is this rotten old stump filled with beetles. But in all this time, never have I heard tell of the one of



Sam Knot

Have you smelt spring?
 Don't make the mistake
 of thinking
 it is some slaver or other
 or, like anything, Everything
 Have you smelt it?

 I thought I wrote a poem
 but maybe it was just
 a thought
 I laugh

 I can't tell the difference
 between poetry & thought
 again
 Have you smelt Spring?

which you speak.

“However! There is one older than me, and that is the Owl of Cwn Cawlwyd (*coon cow-loyd*) Go and speak to the Owl.’ And of course when they get to the owl and ask him if he knows this Mabon fellow, the Owl says?—”

With an increasingly earthy fatigue, slightly emptied now from the more extreme bouts of laughter, we dutifully repeat, “I am old, very old!”

“That’s right! When I was young, there was a great forest in this valley. Then a race of men came and cut it down, but it sprang up again, and now this is the third forest to live in this valley. But still, in all that time, never have I heard tell of the one of which you speak.

“Still! There is one older than me, and that is the Eagle of Gwernabwy (*gwerNABway*). Go and speak to the Eagle.’ And you know what the Eagle said?”

“I am old, very old?”

“Yes, I am afraid so!” And we are still laughing, perhaps now at the possible endlessness of the story: the sense of being old, old enough as perhaps to be ageless, becoming palpable. “When I was young, there was a great rocky crag here, and I would perch on the end of it, and peck at the stars. But now there are less stars in the sky, and the crag is just this patch of bare earth. But in all this time—I am sorry to inform you—never have I heard tell of the one of which you speak.

“However! I once went to the pool at Llyn Llyw (*khlin khloo*), and there was a mighty fish such as would feed me for days, and so I dove on down, and stuck my talons into it, but it was so strong that it pulled me under the water. I barely escaped with my life! And when I gathered my people to return, and to make war upon that giant fish—a Salmon it was—it would only offer us peace! Well, if that Salmon does not know of the fellow of whom you speak, I do not know who else ever will.”

Ah, that’s better. The giggles are letting me rest.

“So they went to Llyn Llyw, and talked to the Salmon, and he said he would tell as much as he knew, and this was that every tide as he swam up the Severn River, when he got to the fortress of Caer Loyw (*care loi-oo*)—which was later called Gloucester, and is now not even a stop for the train—he would hear the most godawful wailing, the worst sound he had heard since time began, and so he thought that must be where Mabon was locked away.”

I am starting to feel like I have been sat down too long, I would like to stretch a bit, but I am stuck between people. Someone has passed me a glow, I have toyed with it, and now it sits strangely upon my skin. I am inexplicably nervous about what might happen next. I feel something stirring inside me, the need to say or do something, but I cannot tell exactly what that might be.

Sailor is wrapping up: “Well, ladies and gentlemen, of course Arthur’s band were able to free Mabon, although it was quite some fight. And although it was quite some fight, and many of Arthur’s men died, Mabon was able to ride the white horse with the dark mane, and pluck the golden scissors from twixt the tusks of Twrch Trwyth.

“And, after Culhwch had chopped off the irascible giant’s head—rather a close shave it would seem!—he and Olwen were married, and Mabon . . . well, maybe we’ll see him around one of these days soon?”

* * *

As the laughter and clapping dies into silence, I become exceedingly uncomfortable. I start to feel so hot that I become confused as to whether I am too close to the fire or not. At one point, I feel as if I am in it, quite literally burning.

I have to make a dash for the door. There is an energy in me that I do not quite know what to do with, and it seems to be turning on itself, becoming an anxiety. I must get away from everyone in case it makes me act crazy. Part of me wants to blubber like an idiot, wagging my finger up and down across my lips, while another part of me suddenly wants to curl up and cry, but I cannot bring myself to act on these things, nor do I feel like I should. Yet I *cannot* ignore them.

I become increasingly worried that I will say or do something embarrassingly strange, even a little paranoid that is what I am *expected* to do, that is what everyone is waiting for. And so, feeling slightly seasick, I run away at walking pace.

I try to find my *hobome*, but am confused about where it is. I stop and look up at the stars. There are many of them. I feel calm, for a moment, as I watch my breath float up into them. But then I think that it is not my breath after all and, in actual fact, perhaps it is clouding over?

I worry that I need to get inside somewhere, and start to feel a bit cold. I panic a little, and am lost. I am under some trees with dappled moonlight, and the shadows are darker than any I have known. I have no sense of spatial proportion at all. My balance has left me completely.

I have to get down on my hands and knees, and suddenly there seems to be a wind getting up. I crawl towards the tree. It is big, and there is an opening inside it. I crawl inside, out of the wind, just as I feel the first few drops of rain on my skin. To my surprise, my heavy woolen cloak is inside, and I can wrap myself in it.

I feel so very tired, and yet wired at the same time. I can hear mad laughter and shouts from the round-house somewhere below, and then a big drum starts up—*boom! boom! boom!*—as other drums join it, and the rhythm becomes more complex, a storm begins to whip itself up around me.

I worry it is the storm to end all storms but, as the wind howls, and the rain rips at the leaves, I realize I am not just sheltered from it, but completely out of it somehow, as if in a void that is off to one side. *I ask myself if perhaps I might be in a void that is off to one side of reality itself?*

* * *

I am in the middle of a kind of dream trip, something that has resulted from my leaving the group and going off by myself. There is a kind of . . . death . . . to it. My individual. Ality. *Individuality*. Has left the party. Snuck off to the cool dark . . . what? Not mama, not mother nature, my old mother nurture. This is something darker, colder.

Back into the old war room to trip on death, the taking away of group from self and self from group.

And some of the see see-feeling ceiling? Wants to . . . pixie play and helefuck with me. I must go back into the roundhouse and whisper in Doc's ear, "I now understand that dream is reality, and we are *havy awoo habla sumsum*. You know, *see see patchouli pet you knee?*"

So I am still part of the group then? Are they apart of me?

An owl hoots in the distance. I beg for sleep, but it feels like a lie. The truth does not have an off-switch, and so, were I to sleep right now, I fear I would remain awake inside my dreams, which currently feels like a terrible thing to contemplate.

I cannot bring myself to ask to be lied to, nor will I yet accept death, so that leaves me beg for nothing, just wait it out here, *wherever this is*.

It seems I am on a highwire far above the storm, and the storm is the banging of the drums far below, some wild celebration—a storm that seeks to keep a storm at bay, maybe? All existence feels a semi-impossible balancing act that my loneliness here is somehow integral to. Everything in this moment is perfectly necessary, and yet this moment has been arrived at by compounded choices.

* * *

I am aware of two presences being foregrounded inside myself: one being Uncle Wayback, and the other big G. Big G is comforting and makes me feel brave, but Uncle Wayback is difficult to understand. There is great love there, but it is like a knot I am tied up in, because it is tired too, which makes me think it wants to die. *Wait, is that me?*

And now I believe I can feel the presence of the mushroom itself, or rather the *mushroomsss*, for it is a somewhat multiplicitious sensation, a pervasive background feeling, sunk into the darkness, yet also the darkness itself. I realize that it is much bigger than I am, and also somewhat stranger than I might imagine, but that we also have certain things in common.

I think about my reaction to the *urpix* earlier, and worry that I have to define myself negatively because I have some sort of poison in me. But the mushrooms also seem to share this quality, possessing a strangely deconstructive cosmic negativity—I *am that I am not*—never nasty but not always nice. Not caring either way really, sometimes. Not caring about feelings.

Maybe it is just because I have always tried to be too nice, to have people like me, and this has twisted into its own strange medicine—but every *maybe* is also a *maybe not*. I am seeing that it is also part of the necessary mystery that has to do with finding what you like, finding out who or what you are, or where best you fit. And I see that there is some deep sense of humor in it, that actually humor is its gift, and thus perhaps also a way of soothing it, dealing with it.

So the not-caring-about-feelings stuff is not quite the truth. This detachment is, in fact, part of being able to care, even a sign of being able to feel, as if one only detaches oneself because of how intensely one feels, or experiences something. The only danger is of getting somehow stuck like that.

It is strange to feel the mushrooms as somehow insecure, like myself, needing tact and something like warmth to approach—although now they reject my warmth metaphor as being far too *ma-mmm*-alien a concept—whereupon I have the image of extending my hand towards them, into the darkness, to-

wards darkness—and my arm is increasingly distending, getting thinner and whiter and longer—until it is curving back around towards me, coming up to meet the same hand—which somehow still understands itself as going out towards us—and when I pull my hand away from that impossible knot of a shake, I see there is a golden poop tingling inside my palm—a cute little thing that starts me chuckling. *A knot impossible shit-handshake.*

* * *

The drums are still banging on, but I am no longer sure about the storm, I start to believe I am in my *hobome* after all, and the *nanostate* police are all charging down the hill, because our weird little party has become the source of an inexplicable irritation, and simply by virtue of trying to scratch their itch, they are descending upon us, armed with batons and transparent shields, coming downhill to bash our heads in.

I see that Doc well knows this, and in fact the whole shebang is one big trick. The party never was what they thought it was, and never is where they think it is. Some mad drummer leads them on a wild goose chase off into the woods, a crazy decoy intended to entrance them *away*, but so we can be sure where *they* are, so they won't intrude on the *real* ceremony.

And then suddenly they are upon me: not the *nanostate* police, but wave upon wave of wild ancient humans, faces painted all kinds of ways, bodies bedecked with bones and shells and feathers. I understand it is my job to let them tear me apart. To allow the bloody frenzy of my imaginal dismemberment, until each of them is holding a piece of me, and a calm can descend, and the meeting can begin.

It might as well be music to me, the conversation they are having, the back and forth and back and forth, the build and drop, the loud and the quiet. I can tell from the music that they have long understood something we have yet to realize, something I am understanding now, in the very same way as one *gets* the sense of a piece of music.

I know why it is necessary for some to bleed and suffer in the night in order that the sun may rise again—that this is a work of magic humans must perform just as the earth must turn. That its name is *life*, all its names are *life*, just as all of ours are *love*, and all other words will die in time. All other words but the one they both descend from, which is some kind of wild cosmic laughter we are yet to fully comprehend is *light*.

Somewhere inside me now I will always know that life is something that wants to be *spoke*, because otherwise the silence would become meaningless, instead of the most meaningful thing there can ever be. And to speak means to *show*, to tell of *yourself*, which is always the very thing you are only just growing into.

And now the drums begin to get softer, and there are big funny sigh noises riding over them, bubbling up from somewhere down inside, and though at first I think I am looking at the fire in the center of the earth, I realize that, in actual fact, I am seeing the deep, rich amber glow of the door to the roundhouse.

And now, as the song of the cosmos recedes, I hear growing out of it the sounds of a people I can only call my own, a rainbow band of friends without end, that will break and convene again and again, different every time, yet never not the same—and this very fact seems to be the punch-line of their every crazy joke, making mad fools of themselves in a magic that is calling me back down to earth, grounding

me out, making me feel human again.

* * *

My eyes have adjusted to the darkness, and I realize I am wrapped in some random person's blanket, and nestled in the crook of an old apple tree. I know that it is up to me now, that if I want to go in there and try to say something then I can, and that I might well feel better in the morning for having done so. But I also know that, whether I do it or do not, the world will go on either way. Everything is going according to plan because—trick of tricks—*there is no plan*.

I stand up, and, as I walk towards the roundhouse, my footsteps become one with the final few beats of the drum. I pull myself inside, where all has become hushed. As a gentle wind rustles a round path through the trees outside, I let myself speak, and, for the first time in my life, I hear the words of another as if they were my very own—as if, in fact, it was language that lived us, and not the other way around:

*Be Sure,
This is for you:
Mystic purple vein
In folds of blackened blue.*

*Extending milky arm
Beyond the sparkling black exterior
Of the lucky charm
Dangling from the wrist of our lady: Youtopia.*

*Jangle us, rub us, extrude good luck,
As we play around oblivious
To the games above:
A tug o' war between Gods!*

*Riding chariot Earth:
The giant baby blubber God of Birth!
Tugging invisible, umbilical threads,
Bringing close: the morose & shrunken,
Leather-skinned Daddy of Death!*

*Put his alkaline eyes to the acid test:
Look into his spiral pupils and let
Your second-sight emerge
From the back of his head*

*Like the first time you slept,
Leapt into worlds beyond those we let
Exist, no friction in the fiction of my life—
I ride the helter-skelter slide through truth & lies!*

*I hide inside the outside world,
A clam in his shell, suffocating wisdom's pearl,
Propelling himself with his jabbering jaws,
He'll talk and he'll talk until words mean no more.*

*No less
Than the most compassionate caress
From the psilken psalms of the Goddess
Would put peace in the rest
Of this bulbous beast.*

*And peace is a must!
For the release of us
When death's wrinkly starfish grip
Snatches the lucky charm from our lady's wrist
And casts us back into the abyss
Where the ego twist
Tickles our feet as we shift
Between spinning paradigms:*

*Make **UP**
UR mind.*

I repeat the last line, finding new messages in it that I'd not noticed before, letting it echo into the quietness as I reverse, shuffling back to take my old seat in a nervous unintentional bow, but people are applauding me now.

I am shaking a little bit, but Q puts his hand on my shoulder and says: "Well done mate, that was great." And then I notice that Sailor, and Inneth, and Helio, and Doc, are all sat across the way with big grins on their faces, so I let myself relax.

I drift a little in my mind, knowing I won't be far from sleep now, and someone starts up a jig on a flute.

* * *

NeuroMagica

*We live now. Look
to the stars the future
past. Old light reaching out
to embrace the ever-present
dark. Down into the earth, look
there, beyond the layered histories
to ancient future furnace forming,
mixing-pot of melting fossil star
heart. Death, breath*

*without pause between blood and air—
only the ways we transform together
making any difference at all.*

*We live here. Green skin,
the black behind blue skies,
a shadow flicking its tail
on the lawn / around the fire
yawn... sigh. Space
and star meat, blood red
sun white light. Honey lens.
Seeing the golden light
in throughout. Rain drops
with clouds on top
to hover just above the fields.*

*We dream. Friend of endless
friends. Minds open, nature
listening in, speaking
tree thoughts, animal desires
more pure, compound ideas,
antlers, anthers, feathers,
fluttering freedom in the wind
that brings us together, in the water
we eddy and swirl, in the fire
we reveal, and hold, in the earth
our ashen brains
paint the body we are
something else.*

* * * * *



Nathan D. Horowitz

Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Many Musics

Twelfth Series

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

xx. *Meta*

Twas atwist of events, & Gate-Keeper never sure of
which order, or it yet too mixed to know.
Twase come luring again that strange traveling
music, *Laaa!* Many voices. *Many, merry*
voices. And so he followed, forgetting & remembering,
by many turns, his search for Mentor & Roddy.
These White Woods wildly a-flutter with this
story & game & braided ecstasy of a song.

Or was his tall ragged fool self yet with these fine
companions, close by? In the complex back room
of Mentor's Thrift Shop? Too big, too deep,
too many spaces to count by usual waking's turn?
Each space its screen to watch, or several,
scenes from his film-not-film, **RemoteLand**.
Like that car crash or, through it, the one
on the Island's beach, with the dead girl.

But yes, no, neither these, more nor less,
than him & Roddy come crashed, staggering, onto
the crumbly porch of a strange little hut, White Woods
about them more crafty & intelligent than
most men he'd ever known. Collapses big Roddy
into one of the porch's pair of old green armchairs.
An old leather bucket of water between them,
one which a sniff & a taste tells it be fresh.

Gets a wooden ladle's drink in both of them.
They breathe together quietly awhile. White Woods
protective around them, by the secret talk
& touch of root to stem, trunk to leaf to berry.

"We didn't know where you were. Looked for
the longest time."
Roddy grunts, slow to return to human tongue.

"I found you not far from here, passed
out cold."
Gate-Keeper sips another ladle of fresh water,
but Roddy shakes off his offer.

* * * * *

"Mentor told me more of your Brothers' quest
for the Tangled Gate. I suppose I've always
known of you best as a story it could be said
is, er, *adjacent* to the one I long chased in my film."
Not-film, the unspoken end of my sentence.

Roddy now rouses more, seems more pleasurably
aware these familiar whereabouts, though
also now aggrieving upon my words. "You know
I'm a *man*, not a *story*."

I nod, abashed. Urge him one more ladle
of the good water to drink. Surer now this
is one of his beloved huts of old. And these White Woods
a soft magick to whatever had lain him prone.
"It was by chance my film chased to an Island
of the Tangled Gate, to tell of your King's time there.
I knew, much more vaguely, that he had traveled with,
& broken by, a band of Brother Knights."

Roddy jerks forward. "You . . . filmed . . . him?"

"No, his story. But not actually him. The world
I'd traveled to had an Island, & a Gate,
but no men dwelled there. And there I told the story."

"Why?"
"I was looking for how to free my home-world."

"From who?"
"From their captivity."

"At whose hands?"
"I'm not sure."
"I don't understand."

I sigh. "It involves the story of a dead girl."

* * * * *

Was he then quoting that scene in **RemoteLand**
 from memory, or were we watching it
 on that Thrift Shop back room screen,
 or while walking along these brilliant
 White Woods, story unfolding again on
 his tripod camera, our faces touching close?

* * * * *

Strawberry blonde hair. Green eyes.

Traveling north a long way after you
 believed you'd died. Traveling a long time
 to reach the Sea. Swam, from the Mainland,
 to the beach of the Island of my set.
 We found you, nude in the surf,
 waking, & filmed you, one to the next, to the next.

"What are you?"

"I am the dead girl you found in the surf."

"What are you?"

"I share your bed when it pleases you."

"What are you?"

"I am seducing the King to invade the Mainland."

"What are you?"

"I am no longer seducing the King because we have drunk the waters of the Fountain."

"What are you?"

"He will tell me the truths of this Island."

Strawberry blonde hair. Green eyes.

I filmed you because I could not film her.
 I loved you because I could not have her.
 You were Queen. You were Princess. You were Demon.
 We told this story but it did not free
 my home-world, & quite simply spilled
 you back to the Sea.

* * * * *

"Your film is a record of your memories?"

Roddy asks, letting his curiosity creep up a bit.

"It's hard to say for sure. I don't think
 memory is always literal. It can be imaginal.
 It can be emotional. It can be what
 you rather you were, or what other things were."

"But is that memory, or is it something else?" Roddy asks.

Gate-Keeper laughs. "I'm not sure myself.
I didn't start out filming, but I found my friend,
along the way. Some of it is memory,
but I think some is something else."

Roddy nods.

* * * * *

"Who was the dead girl?"
Long pause. "I dreamed of her, long ago.
She was in a bookshop. Strawberry blonde hair.
Green eyes. Skirt short as a soft whisper.
Pallor of someone long, long gone,
long, long ago."

Longer pause. "Sat in an old rose-colored armchair,
slowly turning the pages of an ancient,
frail volume of pictures. They were images of *my*
home-world, Roddy. Not where my kin-folks
had crashed. My *real* one. The tall poplars.
Bright poppy fields. Great grain stacks.
A lily pond with no shore."

Roddy starts. "Like mine in these White Woods?
Where we met by your Mentor?"

"Alike, & not alike."
"And your dream?"

"I knew she would be my lead actress."
"And how would you film her? In the Dreaming?"

"I knew she was no mere dreaming figure.
She was quite real."
"But dead?"
"Just in the wrong world. I lured her, beyond it, to mine."
"I don't understand."

* * * * *

"I'd watched the story of the Tangled Gate
long before I knew what it really was.
The moving pictures I saw as a boy were
silent. I only knew they were from afar.

"They told stories of a magickal Island.
There was a Castle. There was a Tower.
There were Dancing Grounds. There was the Tangled Gate.

“There was *great power* in what I saw.
There was *goodness*. There was *freedom*.

“And thus I sought the Island, as I learned
you & your Brother Knights did, but *not* to
save the world. Rather, to *free* my own.
Could the power in this story free my home-world?
If I told it well enough?

“The dead girl came, & others too, &
I filmed the story again. Not my first try,
but my best. She was my Queen, my Princess,
my Demon. Strawberry blonde hair.
Green eyes. Because I could not film
the other. *Because I could not have her.*”

* * * * *

However atwist they be, Gate-Keeper shows
Roddy what he filmed about the Tangled Gate.
The famous story of the Princess returning
to the Island of her youth. Beloved
daughter of the King. Yet somehow also
from the Sea.

Her meeting the Architect in his great Tower,
& learning from him about the Tangled Gate.
Her dreams of traveling through a hole
in her bed chamber wall, to the caves & tunnels
beneath the Tangled Gate.

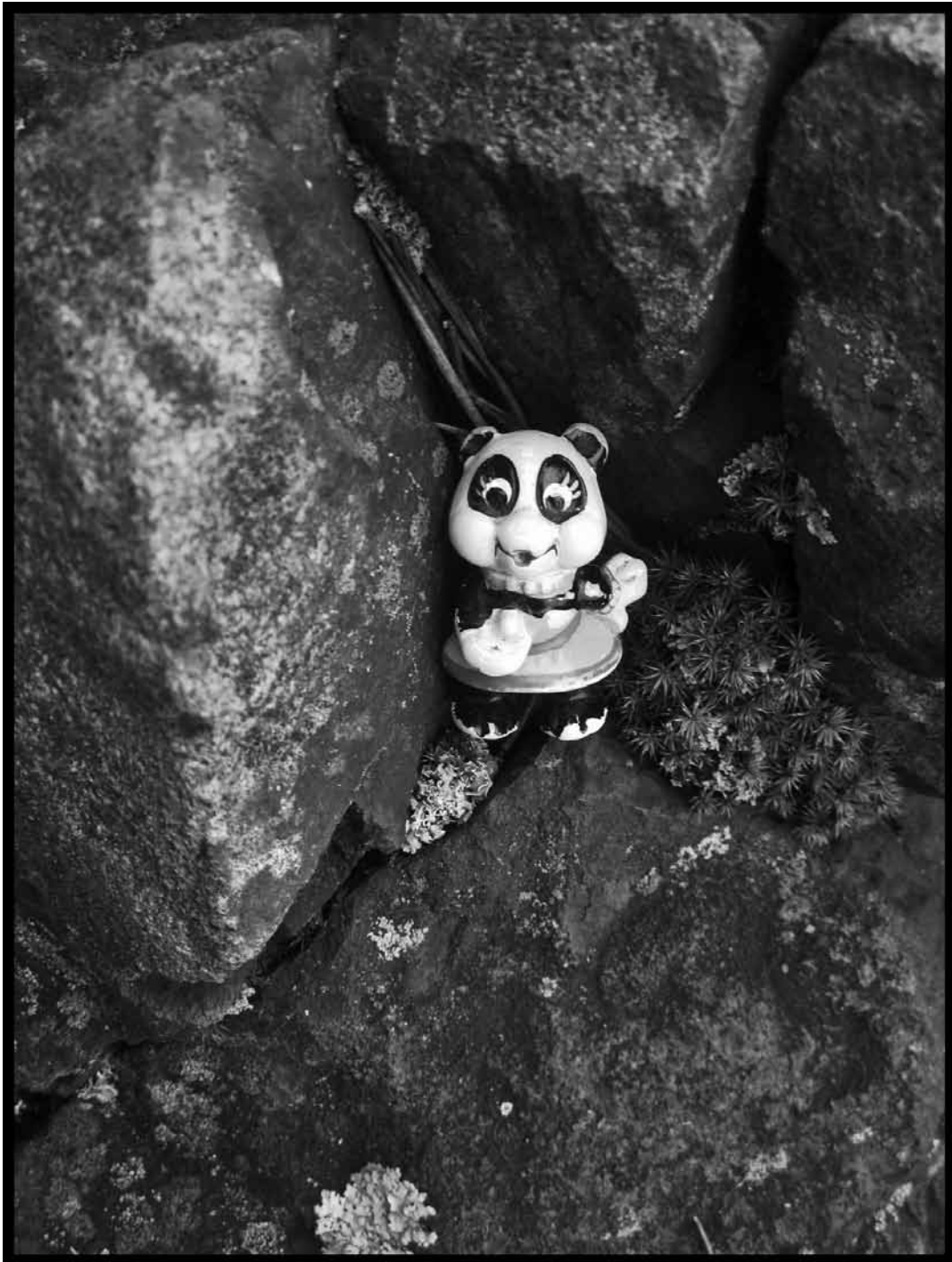
The Creatures she befriends.
The Beast too.
How she saves the world by choosing to stay.

* * * * *

Enraptured, Roddy watches, or listens to,
or follows, this story, until he finally stops.
He slumps back, heavily, from it all.

“That is *my* King.”
“I know.”
“We were Brothers.”
Gate-Keeper nods, but not a word.

“We broke, over what we found in
the Cave of the Beast. Over how we
lost our other Brothers. We became . . . foes.”



His head now between his knees,
 his body stiff & brittle with anguish.
Is he remembering all of it now?

“I fought against him. I drove him,
 & what few followers he had left,
 off the Mainland. Back to exile
 on that Island of the Tangled Gate.” Silence.

“He was exiled there for a very long time,
 until he mounted another assault on the Mainland.”
 Silence.

Gate-Keeper now risks a word. “And what
 happened then, Roddy?”

Roddy shakes his head, slumped, & again
 silent a long time.
 Then, of a moment, he takes a quick breath,
 nods, stands.
 Offers his hands to help up Gate-Keeper.

No longer atwist, they walk on.

* * * * *

xxi. Great Mound of Moss

Gate-Keeper was showing us a game
 he would sometimes play with the Imps,
 when somewhere far from other people-folks
 in the White Woods, & them agreeably about.

“We, or at least I, called this game *Imitations*,
 as you will see why,” him smirking &
 leading us to a clearing where he had just harked
 a Chaos of Imps cackling & skittering about.

He sets up his Tripod at the edge of the clearing,
 it glowing in the dusking light’s friendly, peculiar colors.
 Patches of Mushrooms spreading through patches
 of Rainbow Moss. Calls us close to stand with him
 before his Tripod, & together lean under
 a kind of green & golden cloth, covering us all,
hmmmming lightly.

“Close your eyes, & imagine with me the endless
 poppy fields of my home-world, these Mentor you
 showed me, & Roddy I told you of. *Hmmm* with me
 of them! Together we will sing them forth,
 & then behold what occurs!”

Our shared *hmmming* begins slow & uncertain,
 as they sometimes do, but then begins to braid
deeper, fuller, dusking with this clearing,
 softing, like down of a dream.

Slowly too, but curious as could be,
 the Chaos of Imps, one, then many, hark, &
 cackling join in. Clearing filling with
 many, merry musics!

“Now, my friends, open your eyes slowly, &
 let us look through the lens of my friend before us,
 & behold!”

We do, & behold the clearing transformed
 into a *brilliant, crimson sheen of blooms!*
 Each one still cackling & *hmmming* away!
 Singing: “We are not here to *sleep you down*,
 but *dream you awake!*”

Roddy hears something else too, dusking through
 all this music & song. The Perfect *Laaa!* braids
 into it too . . . yet, somehow, *not* in what
 he views in the lens before him . . . but . . .
behind him somehow?

He slips from under the cloth, eyes so dazzled
 by their shared vision he has to turn &
 stagger away from the clearing.

Sits heavy against a great tree-trunk,
 slowing his breathing to calm, hark his abouts better.
 Yet still that Perfect *Laaa!* somewhere only
 vaguely near *How to give chase of it?*

Then a thought. His uncle’s compass, gift from
 his boyhood, ever tucked into its own deep pocket
 of his jacket. Dusking golden case,
 its inscriptions less readable than memorized
 by him: “Get out to the Green more, Rod.
It’s coming.”

Holds it tenderly in his hand for a long moment.
So much lost.

* * * * *

The compass's needle responds very strongly
 to the Perfect *Laaa!* but I cannot say how.
 But, yes, as it travels, the needle tracks, very closely.
 I stagger up, stand, make to follow.
 I hear my Brothers' voices among the many
 braiding, & *especially my King's.*

I vow: I am coming to all of you.

* * * * *

Now arriving, near, nearer, & come to
 a Great Mound of Moss, alike the one I had
 lain in my first time hearing the *Laaa!*
 Feeling like the many-colored Mound &
 my dear old compass have together drawn
 me here, to best listen anew, I gently
 settle myself in. Feeling my worries again
 lift from me, loose & lift, & sniff something
 kindly, luring, ever softing, ever sinking . . .

The *Laaa!* cackles & *hmmms* all around me,
 & this time I join in too, a feeling near like
 when I was a boy, running to keep up with
 my brothers, them laughing & urging me
 along, slowing for me, loving me, *loving me.*
 To see again the two of you, long unknown,
 as well as the Brothers of my manhood . . .

Sinking now seems more arriving, &
 I open my eyes to find myself under
 a long unseen quilt, many kinds of feathers
 embedded. Crow. Peacock. Robin. *Still cannot*
identify them all. This room is dark but
nearly familiar. I feel something strange
in my pocket & pull out several glowing blue pebbles.
Where?

Mailbox House. So long unseen! The blue pebbles
 glow more to reveal me the crudely nailed
 together frame of the bed in which I lie,
 & the writing table next to it. On the table
 is writing paper, toasted tan in color, &—*how?*
 A battered copy of *Aftermath* by Cosmic Early.

I think of red-haired Iris & her many letters I would find
in that silver mailbox just outside, shaped like
a loaf of bread, red handle raised for some, or lowered
for none. *Should I? After all this time?*

I do. Whatever dream or vision or Moss travel
I am in, I step outside into the Full Moon's
night, & walk to the mailbox. Its red handle
is *up*. *A letter inside.*

A cryptic handwriting on the envelope
still spells out, "For Roddy, upon your return."
I knew it is yours.

* * * * *

Dear Roddy,

What you cannot recall is how you ended up
on the spaceship. You have only recently
recalled how you & your King, not fully awake,
not fully together, fled the Island of the
Tangled Gate, without your other Brothers.
How you could not shake yourself to ask:
How? Where? Why? Did you save the world?

And nothing became clearer on your voyage
on the Wide Wide Sea, back to your Kingdom.
The smiles that greeted you. The questions
in your heart shaking to ask, none others did.
The nights you spent alone, sans King or anyone else.

And you wonder: *why did you war with
your King? Why did you drive him from
the Mainland back to the Island of the Tangled Gate?
Was it you or he who wished to return?*

Learn the truth now, Roddy. When you could
not stop his return to the Island,
to the Tangled Gate, *you came back here,*
to this Mailbox House. Someone had convinced
you there was another way to save your
Brothers from here. *Your King would not
listen to you.*

* * * * *

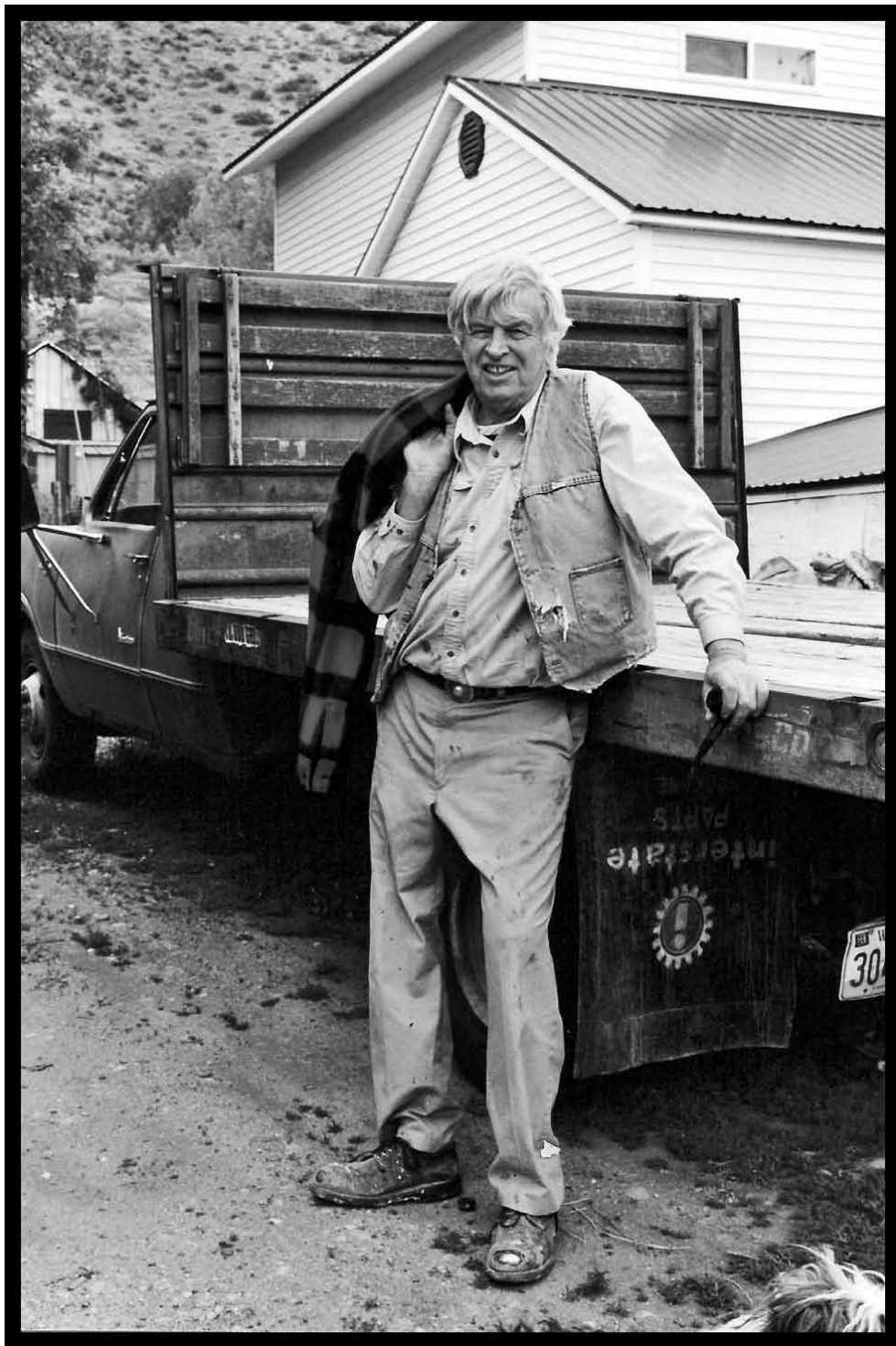
Mentor finds Roddy sprawled face down
in the many-colored Great Mound of Moss,
out cold. A letter clutched in his hand. Gently
looses it from his grasp, & sits next to Roddy,
free hand resting gently on his back, reading it.

Grimaces. Nods. Smiles a bit.
“It was about time, Roddy.”



* * * * *





Richard Beyer, courtesy of Charlie Beyer



The Natural History of the Sasquatch

[Prose]

i.

The name “Sasquatch” comes from the Salish Indians who lived in and around Southwest British Columbia. The beast’s infrequent but impressive visits gained it the name “The Wild Man of the Woods” or, translated, *Sasquatch*.

Historically, the Sasquatch originated in Asia, descended from the huge ape *Gigantopithecus*. These ancestors migrated across the Bering Land Bridge long before the true humans. Their Asian origin was verified in 1934 by a Dutch anthropologist, who found a massive tooth, twice the size of an adult gorilla’s, along with other fossil bones, in the basement of a Hong Kong chemist’s shop.

Once frequent on the west coast of North America, from Alaska to Mexico, the Sasquatch appears to be on the decline in the advance of civilization. Rapid *Homo sapien* development has isolated what few of these creatures remain to the coastal wildernesses of Washington State, British Columbia, and some inaccessible inland mountain areas of the Rockies. Some experts say that the Sasquatch may be more numerous now than in the recent past, due possibly to a recurrent population cycle.

ii.

In appearance, the Sasquatch race is ape-like, though more erect, moving about primarily on two feet. The height of a mature creature may range from 6 to 8 feet (the largest ever seen being 10 feet tall), with weights ranging up to 500 pounds. It has a barrel chest, with remarkably long arms ending in prehensile hands that are scoop-shaped with chisel-like nails.

Its hair color and length depend largely on its environment. The most common hair is either black or brown, of one to two inches in length. Young Sasquatches have been known to be either buff or grey, or occasionally a beige color that glows slightly in the dark. Sasquatches are subject to a virulent mange, and are frequently beset with psychic disorders as a result of excessive scratching. Whole nights may be made terrible by a Sasquatch’s agonizing whistles, screeches, and howls.

A Sasquatch commonly has no neck. Its head is completely covered with hair, except for its face that has sunken beady eyes, of either a black or red color. Its nose is wide and flat, with flaring nostrils, and it has a wide jaw that holds numerous teeth. These teeth, that have qualities like opal, are the size of cow molars, and have been found in treasure troves as far south as the Inca civilization of Peru. The teeth of an old Sasquatch turn a shiny metallic-black and, if thrown on water will float, for all Sasquatch teeth are hollow.

The strength of a Sasquatch is astonishing. It can twist a young pine tree ten inches in diameter off its stump, or shake a fir tree until all its bark falls off. A hunter in the Pacific Northwest came across a Sasquatch “nest” in which a depression had been packed with twisted off six-inch trees. The bedding area was matted with wire-like rust-colored hair. The stench was enormous. Upon returning with associates to display the find, the entire area was found to have been logged, and the site destroyed.

iii.

The only known capture of a Sasquatch was by a train crew, on June 30th, 1884, near Yale, British Columbia. Reportedly, it lay stunned after falling from a cliff. The young Sasquatch was named “Jacko,” and kept captive on a logging chain. Although “Jacko” weighed 127 lbs., and stood 4’7” high, it could break a railroad tie with its two hands by squeezing it from the ends. Fed potato peelings for a week, “Jacko” regained his strength and left in the night, dragging away the locomotive wheel that he was fastened to.

iv.

The fact that it is a relatively vocal animal is confirmed in a report from Albert Ostman, a gold prospector who was kidnapped to a den of Sasquatches. The creatures conversed loudly in what sounded like Asians swearing, accompanied by grunts and snorts. Ostman, held captive for six days, succeeded in tricking the eldest Sasquatch into eating his can of snuff, and escaped in the mayhem and confusion that followed.

The diet of the Sasquatch is omnivorous, consisting mainly in the summer of vegetable matter, fish, and clams. In the winter, the Sasquatch is more prone to eating red meat. A woman observing a Sasquatch digging for clams at Moclips, Washington recently was not terrified, but enraptured by the soft moaning the animal made while it worked. They have been known to take up a cudgel, and drive a bear from the fish that it has just caught. Skulls of cows, horses, and deer have been found in Sasquatch dens. A woman near Chehalis, Washington reported that every year a Sasquatch comes around, breaks the backs of all the pigs, and carries off up to four at once. They are particularly fond of dog meat.

v.

The Sasquatch are of three sexes. Breeding orgies amongst them for continuous periods up to 18 hours is attended by a horrible uproar, as they bully and push each other for position. The brutality of this process has engendered perversion. They frequently excite themselves sexually by exposing themselves to large machinery or airplanes. This trait is the cause of numerous footprints around wilderness timber and construction projects, and accounts for 70% of logging camp theft.

When the Sasquatch is seen on some rocky eminence from the cabin of a low-flying plane, it will have, in all likelihood, placed itself there for gratification. With the declining population of Sasquatches, and the dwindling availability of “normal” sexual outlets, this mode of sexual exhibitionism has been predictably increasing. This is confirmed by the recent increase of sightings.

vi.

The Sasquatch young leaves the nest in which it is born after about two years. The youth wanders wildly in its early life, as though it were pursued. The California Indians knew the Sasquatch as the Traveler or Patroller, one who travels hundreds of miles in a season and then returns.

Puberty is reached around its fiftieth year, and it soon mates. It is uncertain if it will mate with its own kind at all, or choose a life of perversion. As it grows older (some as old as 300 years), it will haunt some desolate valley, hunting alone, for it is an aggrieved creature, beset at every turn by knowledge of its own decline.

vii.

The peculiarities of the lonely Sasquatch are many, it being one of the most diverse and mysterious creatures on our continent. For example, stolen pieces of contractor equipment can be found in caves where the Sasquatch has taken up residence. Wheels, sheet metal, winches, gas cans, discarded motor parts, cables, etc. are but a few of the pilfered items. Toying in the pile of junk, or tapping on a ringing piece of metal, the animal seems to be endowed with an instinct for rhythm. Their music, heard on a quiet evening in a wild canyon, can be quite beautiful, though filled with the sadness of their dwindling existence.

viii.

Another solace the Sasquatch characteristically develops is a urine tree fetish. An enterprising logger, who was cutting Christmas trees in the vicinity of Mt. Baker, unknowingly cut down one of these trees, and threw it into his truck with the lot. The Sasquatch, coming to look for the tree and not finding it, scented it on the truck. Leaping upon the load, he tore it apart until he found his marked tree. This he took back with him to the place where it had been cut and, as if to replant it, jammed it back in the ground, relieved himself with great exhibition, and disappeared back into the forest.

ix.

In the misery of its existence, the Sasquatch at times turns to tainted mushrooms and destroys itself in hallucinatory fits. One animal that died in this way was autopsied. The mushrooms it had been eating were found growing in his joints, between the vertebrae of its backbone, and just under the skull.

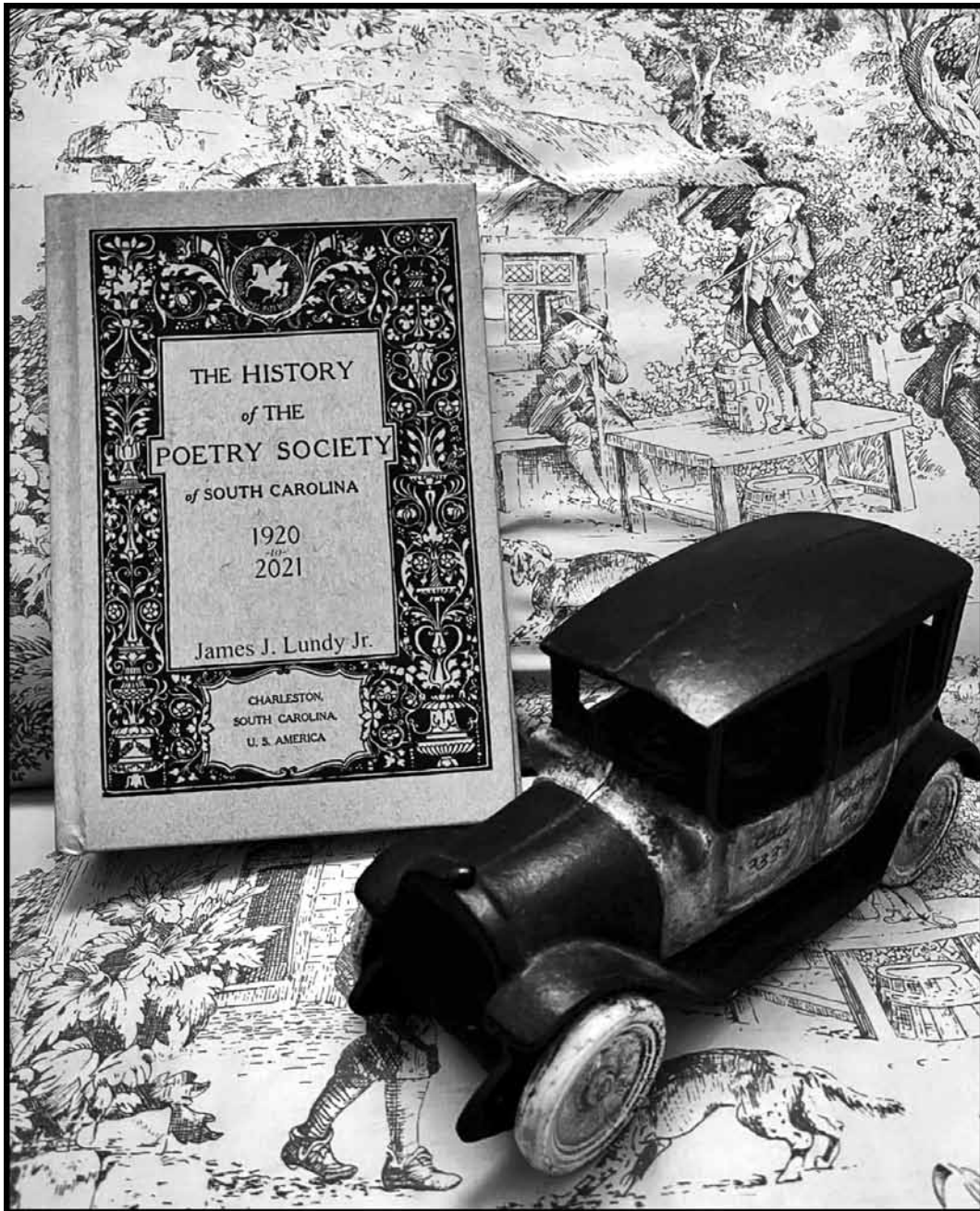
Several other characteristics of the Sasquatch should be mentioned for the purpose of identification. The beast has a strange facility for healing itself if wounded. Because of this it has been difficult for hunters to kill them for trophies.

The Indians of Vancouver Island resort to pitfalls to catch and rid themselves of infesting Sasquatches, burning the beasts alive in the bottom of the pit. The ashes of the Sasquatch, lifted into the air from the turbulent fire, metamorphose into a host of blood sucking mosquitoes.

If the bones of a Sasquatch are kept in a small house, the house will walk around as if it had the legs of a chicken, stopping here and going ahead erratically.

The funerary box of an Indian, with whom a container of Sasquatch bones was buried, traveled about the vicinity of the village where he had lived. At length, the box decayed in the weather, its contents spilling out near a river, where they were washed away in a spring freshet.

* * * * *



Tamara Miles

Tamara Miles



Martian to American

I see your trees are burning,
Even the *metasequoia glyptostroboides*.
I learned the scientific name
from satellite television.

All ideas were not first yours—
we too have witnessed
everything burning, post-Asteroid,

glass signatures gleaned from rocks
launched skyward, shrapnel and sand-grain
falling back changed into a layer
like your beaches, miles long, in August,
that sear a dog's toes,

leaping with you toward the water
of yesterday, when it was still
deep with hope.

* * * * *



Ace Boggess

Miserable

[Fiction]

i.

Calvin Flynn shouted into his desk phone as if he despised it, as if the plastic were unfaithful to him, or the star button backed over his dog and pulled away with the body still twitching in the road. “I don’t have time for this! Why would you do it? Why would you call me with all this crap when you know I’m working?”

He paused to grimace at Walter Hart’s prairie-dog head rising above the cubicle wall like a Kilroy with glasses. “Don’t answer that. Jesus Christ! I have to go. I have to get back to work.”

Walter shook his head, the mop of oily brown hair bouncing over pasty skin. He mouthed “Carol” while making a question mark with his eyes, as if he didn’t know the answer.

Calvin chewed his lower lip. Pain shot through him, and his face flushed. He held the receiver up and away from him. His wife’s voice could be heard through the earpiece, going full speed in a series of clicks like keys banging on an old-fashioned typewriter. Every few seconds, a word sounded clear: “birthday” for one, and “mother.” Leaning back into the receiver, Calvin spat, “Whatever you want. I don’t care anymore, and I don’t have time . . .”

The clicks and clacks on the other end cut him off.

Walter dangled an arm over the cubicle wall, his hand waving a fat stack of documents. He pointed at them with his scowl.

“I know, I know,” Calvin mouthed, holding his hand over the phone’s receiver as if he’d spoken the words aloud and didn’t want his wife to hear. He glanced at the clock on his computer screen. Almost one. Four more hours. “Listen, honey, that’s enough. I have to go. We’ll talk about this when we get home.” Did he actually call her *honey*? he thought. That wasn’t good. “Don’t tell me to go fuck myself. *Fuck you*. I’m hanging up now. Goodbye.” Pause. “Goodbye.” Pause. “Goodbye.”

He slammed the phone down so hard on its cradle that it sent an agonizing jolt racing up his arm. “That bitch,” he said. “Sorry you had to listen to that, Walter.” He started to give his colleague a rundown of the conversation, but decided against it. As it was, news of the argument would spread quickly through the Motion Team, and probably throughout the whole building before the end of the day. Instead, he forced a calmer tone and said, “What was it you wanted?”

Walter cleared his throat. “Barry needs these finished up before you leave today. MandaCorp earnings reports. They’re on the network in the Limbo file under M-C-E.”

“Christ,” said Calvin. “I still have the Devlin Mortuary account to work on.”

His colleague shrugged.

“I may never get out of here.”

Walter resisted the urge to chide Calvin about all the time he had wasted on the phone arguing with his wife. That couldn’t be helped. It was a part of life these days. “Just do it,” he said, as if *he* were the supervisor instead of Barry. He felt himself grin as he sank back down into his hole.

ii.

Carol slipped her cell phone into the mini-pocket on her brown sweater vest. Her hands, by instinct, smoothed down the front of her flowing beige skirt—before rising to cup her eyes, as if they might stop tears. Then, nervously, she removed them, and brushed her auburn hair off her forehead.

“Carol,” Mrs. Kern chided from the other side of the perfume counter, “you know you’re not supposed to be talking on your phone while you’re working.” She feigned a smile as she spoke. Mrs. Kern was a short, round woman with a dome of white hair frozen in place on her head. Her scent like dead roses wafted everywhere, even piercing the lingering mists of different perfumes Carol had sprayed for customers that day.

“Yes, Mrs. Kern,” said Carol. Her thin, pale lips curved inward, and she looked as if she might break down at any moment.

“And so *loud*. Do you think our customers want to hear all that whining and complaining?”

You know they do, she wanted to say. As if to prove this, she glanced around to where two older women jostled blouses at a nearby rack. Their ears were pricked up, taking in details. “No, Mrs. Kern,” said Carol. “I’m sorry.”

“All right, well, get back to work. Be sure to straighten up all the displays. Especially the *Passion*. We’re pushing *Passion* today.”

“Yes, Mrs. Kern. I’m sorry. I’ll . . .”

Her floor manager walked away before she could finish. *Well*, Carol thought, *I guess that’s that*. Then she squatted down to open the nearest display case.

iii.

His fingers raced across the keyboard. Calvin typed with steadiness and precision as if he were writing poetry—the words, numbers, and symbols he chose equally as impenetrable to the unskilled reader. On page after page, he filled in the necessary information, made calculations, fudged a few responses, then corrected them by slamming the Backspace key and saying “Shit!” in a grating yawp loud enough to be heard three or four cubicles away.

Carol really knew how to get under his skin, he thought. It was best if he didn’t think about her, but just now he couldn’t help it. He saw her at the wedding three years ago in her off-white dress, sleek and silky as if the tailor had started out making lingerie and forgotten to stop. How he burned for her that day—even now the image in his mind brought an unwelcome bulge to his khaki slacks.

“Shit,” he cried, slamming the Backspace key again. He hit it five more times before saving the document and resuming his steady typing.

He thought about their trip to Virginia Beach a few months before the wedding. It was their first vacation together, and he remembered how she looked in her reddish-orange bikini. She had small breasts, but firm, and her waist was so slender he could almost surround her with one arm. When no one was looking, she flashed him in the hotel swimming pool, then splashed his face while his eyes were wide and hungry.

They ate filet mignon in a classy restaurant, listened to a jazz band play notes on fire at a small club, then went back to the hotel and made love for hours.

The ache in Calvin’s groin grew too intense, as if he were looking at porn on the Internet rather than analyzing data and filling in all those reports. He cursed again, a bit louder, repeated himself, and slammed the keyboard several times with a full, flat hand.

As expected, Walter’s head levitated above the cubicle wall. “You all right, Calvin?” he said. “Having a little trouble?”

Calvin quickly fingered Control-Alt-Delete, resetting his machine. “Fucking thing locked up on me,” he said. “It’s been going berserk all day. Now it’s just dead.”

"Jeez, buddy. I hope you saved it. How much did you lose?"

"I don't know," said Calvin, which wasn't strictly true. "Find out when I restart it, I guess."

"Crying shame," Walter said. "Hope it's not too bad, or you might be stuck here forever."

Calvin shrugged and listened to the hard drive whir. *Wouldn't that suck?* he thought. He waited until Walter sat back down, then returned to his vision of Carol in the pool.

iv.

In the break room, Carol sat sipping burnt coffee across from Julie Melton who worked the jewelry counter. A tiny-framed woman, Julie stood about four-eleven, barely shorter resting in a chair. She wore her gray-streaked hair long and straight, covering the shoulders of her navy silk blouse. She always seemed jittery, more so today as her hands fiddled with her Styrofoam cup. "What about a divorce?" she asked. Divorce to Julie was the perfect solution, having just gone through one herself.

"I've thought about it," said Carol. "We've even talked about it."

"And?"

"We're not ready to go that far."

Julie responded, "So you just keep suffering. I was like that, too, until my shrink explained to me nothing feels bad enough until it is. She said to me that most of us have to hit bottom before we pick ourselves up. But let me ask you, is it worth it?"

Carol said nothing, staring down at the reflection of her eyes in the thick, black coffee.

"Well, let me ask you this. Is he having an affair?"

"I don't think so." She didn't. "It's not like him." It wasn't. "He's . . ."

"What?"

"I don't know. Busy, I guess."

"You're fighting because he's always busy?" Julie's hand twitched, and her cup almost tipped over.

"Well . . ."

"There has to be more to it than that."

"You see, it's my mother's birthday this weekend. She lives up in Hartford."

"And you want to go?"

Carol nodded.

"And he won't take you?"

Carol kept quiet.

"He hates your mother?"

Carol said, "She's not the easiest person to get along with."

Julie groaned and shook her head in long, slow swings. "That's what he says, I bet."

"Uh . . ."

"Listen, I'm not one to put pressure on you, but maybe you should go by yourself. Get some time away from him. It'll give you a chance to figure out whether you like things better that way."

Again, Carol kept to herself. She didn't need time for that. She already knew how she felt when Calvin wasn't there.

v.

He walked up beside her on the platform. Both stared straight ahead, not speaking at first as the crowd around them buzzed. There were so many things they wanted to say to each other, so many things they kept to themselves for now. A minute passed, and then another.

Carol spoke first. "I thought you were going to be late," she said.

"So did I," said Calvin.

Both felt the tension rising. It was like that moment each remembered from high school biology

class when the frog lay pinned on its back in a box, right before the scalpel in a quivering hand drew near. Not wanting to make that cut just yet, both stood still, neither pushing boundaries, each wanting the other to strike first.

When the train arrived, Carol and Calvin stepped forward at the same time, their feet moving in rhythm as if those of two clarinetists in a marching band. Calvin paused at the entrance, and allowed his wife to climb aboard first. He followed, watching her sit on the far side. He chose to stand, looking away from her at first, not knowing how it would begin. There'd be a wound to start it off, but one of them had to choose the dagger.

The car filled around them with men in gray suits, women in blouses and skirts or slacks of muted tones. Calvin felt their eyes on him. He recognized a lot of the same people with the same bleak hearts who rode the subway at this time every day. They waited for what would come, urging it on with their instigating stares and mysterious cooing or clucking of their lips. Calvin tried not to disappoint them. He thought about the war ahead, considering his options for attack. But nothing came to him. He felt too exhausted, so he kept quiet, listening for vibrations as the train began to move.

That left Carol to fire the first shot. In a voice louder than seemed reasonable, she spat, "Are you having an affair?" She'd thought about Julie's question all afternoon, and it struck Carol as the perfect place to begin.

"What did you say?" said Calvin, turning to face her. The question caught him unprepared—a flawless Sun Tzu strike against the flank.

"I asked: are you having an affair?"

As the words wormed their way into his psyche, finding themselves a home, Calvin's expression changed. His lips twirled into a freakish snarl of fear and anger. His eyebrows arched until they looked like devil horns on his forehead. His face burned the red of an October leaf.

"Are you?" Carol demanded.

He replied, "Christ on a crutch, Carol! What's the matter with you? You ask me that *here*? Now? Out of the blue, and in front of all these people?"

She kept her calm, but her voice resounded with the ripping viciousness of a table saw. "That's not an answer," she said. "I want an answer."

All eyes around them turned toward the spectacle. There were many upstanding people on this train. All of them knew what to expect, and they were eager for it.

vi.

She went into the building first. He followed fifteen feet behind, as though he were chasing but just too tired to catch her. Carol took the elevator, while Calvin walked up the three flights of stairs, preferring exercise to build up his energy for what he knew came next.

When Calvin reached the apartment, he found the door open, Carol already inside. As he entered, he thought about slamming the door behind him, but decided it wasn't necessary. There had been enough noise already. So he eased it shut, listening for the soft click of the lock, then turned the deadbolt.

Carol stood across the room with her back to him. She bent slightly over a tall, marble-topped table where she sorted through the day's mail. Bills and circulars. No good news.

Slowly, Calvin approached as if a matador in the arena, careful of the bull should it lunge. He stepped up right behind her, sniffing the cocktail of perfumes swirling off her. The air around her smelled like the middle of a greenhouse filled with a hundred different blossoming flowers. How he loved her confused scent. He inhaled, smiling.

Carol heard the intake of his breath. She didn't move, staring down at the electric bill in her hands.

"What was it today?" he said.

"Passion," she answered.

Calvin wrapped his arms around her waist, pulling himself in close, the groove of her back fitting against his slightly extended belly. He sniffed at her neck.

"Mmmm," she sighed.

He squeezed tighter. "How did it go today?"

"The usual," she said. "You?"

"An outstanding performance. A couple slip-ups, but minor. I don't think anyone noticed."

She rubbed her shoulder blades against his chest. "Do you think it worked?"

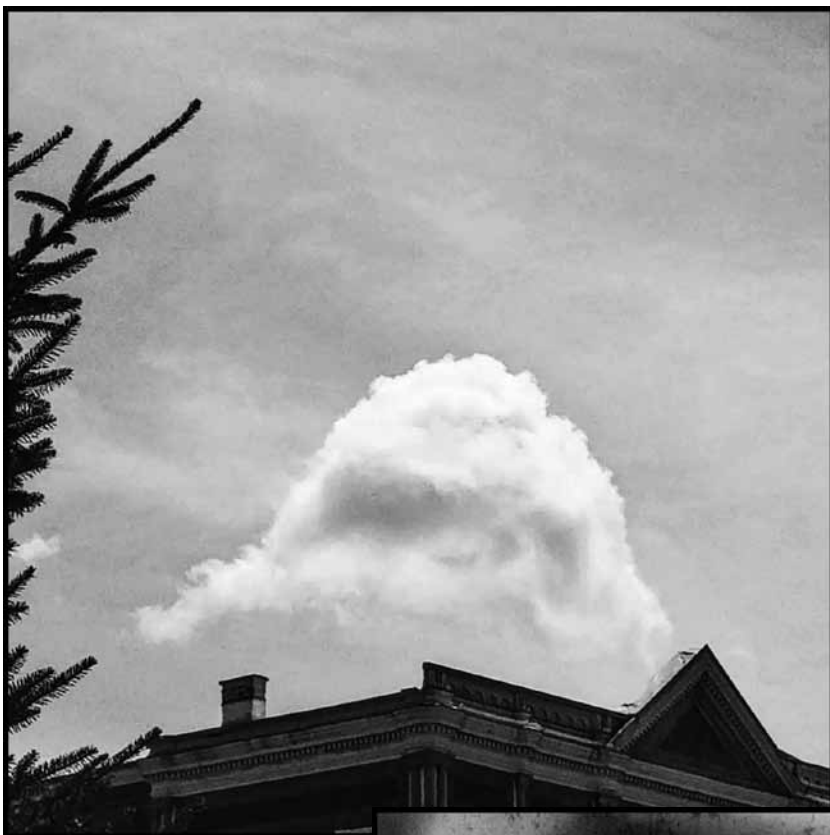
"Yes," he told her. "As long as they think we're miserable, they'll probably leave us alone." He dropped his hands to her thighs, grabbed her skirt and inched it up as if he were still typing on his keyboard. When he reached the hem, he slid his fingers onto her bare skin. "You're not wearing any hose."

Carol answered, "Only for you, darling. I know it's what you like."

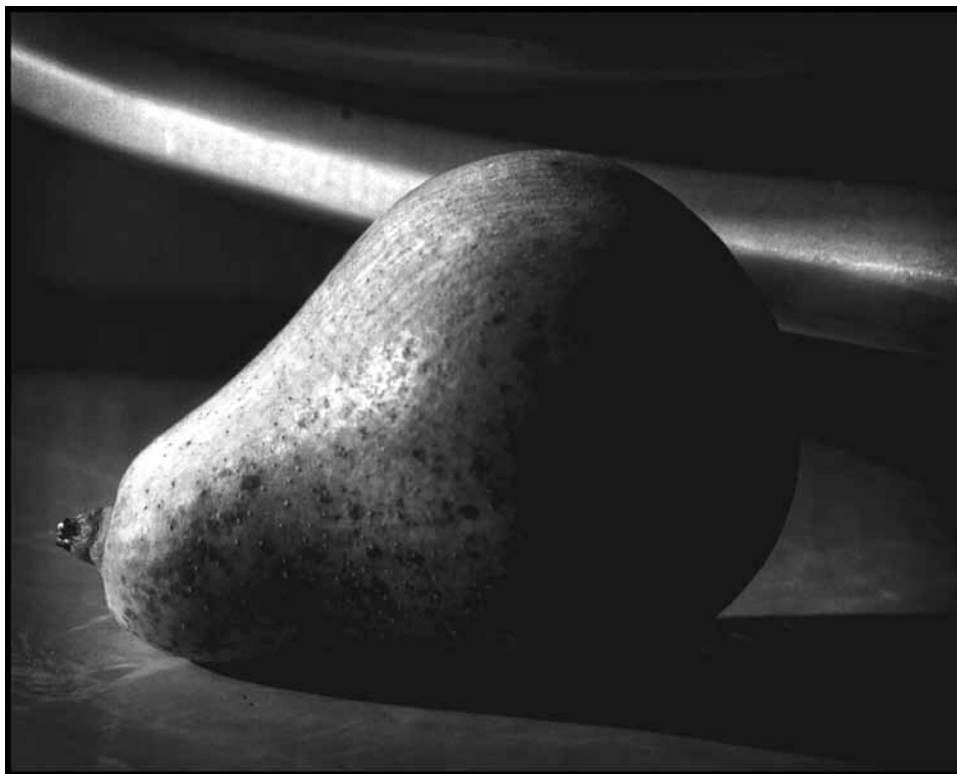
* * * * *



Louis Staeble









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 | 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:

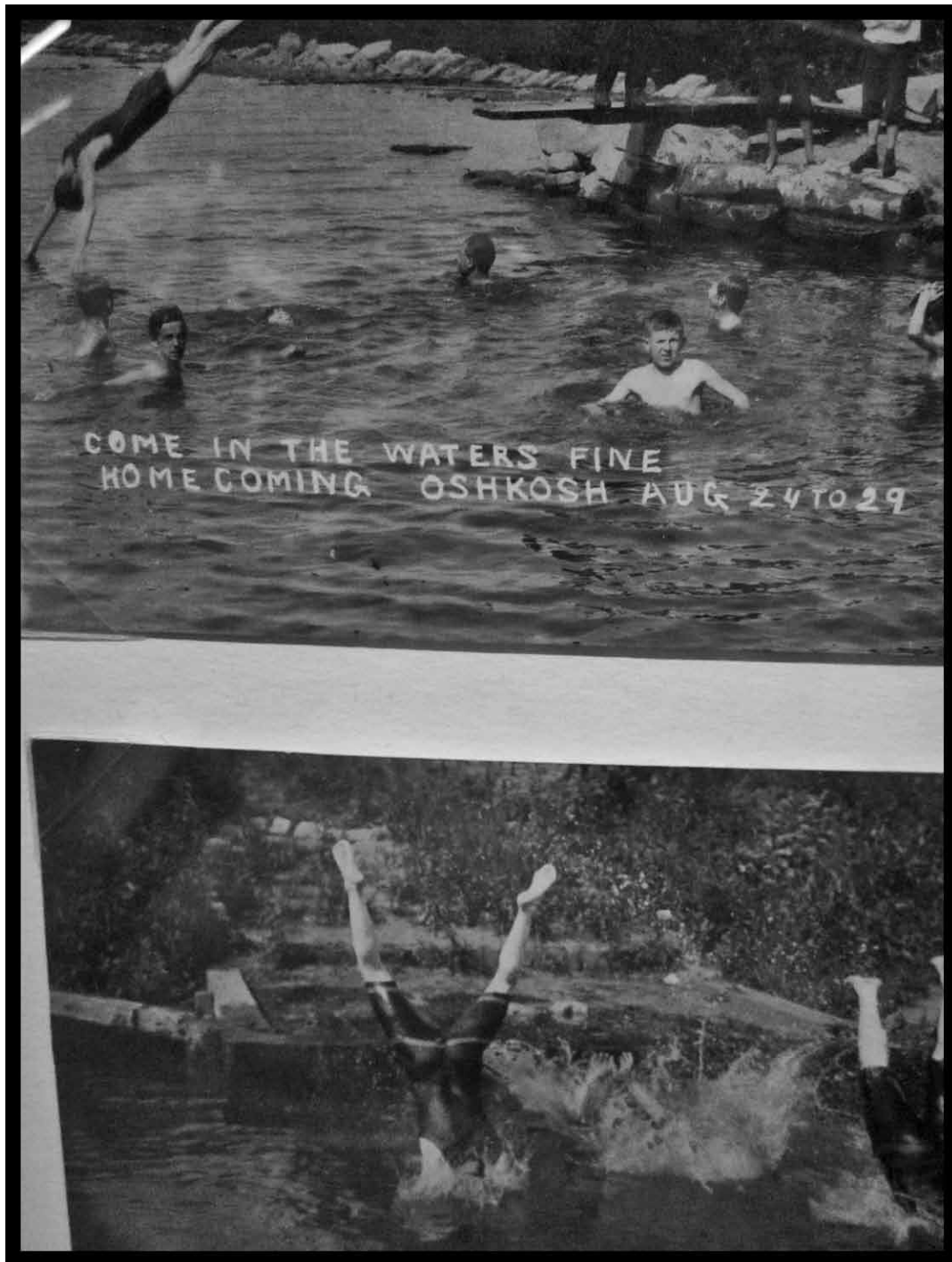
*He comes out, makes to bow like a servant,
I shake my head, touch his small shoulder.
He smiles with several teeth but now
I feel in him the same great calm power
as my beastly image. Then he laughs, braying
with delight, & begins to gnatter like my tiny imp friend.*

*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.



* * * * *



Tom Sheehan


Death Be Absurd

There's an odd weight at the back of my head,
the way crickets hang their parachutes in trees, or peepers,
I'm never sure which because their density's heavier by equations,
and I was never very good at math.

Now, at unhurried hours, river throws all its daylight away,
every last cent of it, the silver squabble and bauble day
took its time dropping in sunlight's last battered clutch, or better,
blossoms from my zealous azaleas landing, mosquito-quick,
or mayflies slyly furtive trout waited all winter for.

The redwing blackbirds, two pair of them near me now,
bush-hummers, reed squatters, artistic as Spads or Zeroes
(before the super-propulsion),
curl head-under-wing in vast night-hood.
And the worms rest easy for darkness of night,
graceful in the muck and mire if you can believe any of it
(everything having a place in all of this).

I say the only way you can hear the wind is the nerves it cuts,
one edge across the throat of a limb,
or slices its fingers on a downspout or gutter,
or a last leaf October might leave,
or tries to turn a worm on its back
(which is never there, you know).

River water, reeds and birds and the worms
and all the spilled or thrown daylight and all the azaleas,
no matter what thought they were what,
all will outlast me, in my 93rd year,
but only by the species. Bet on it!

* * * * *



Jimmy Heffernan

Dialogue on The Present

Published on <http://electrolounge.boards.net>

From a new poetry book I'm working on releasing in a few months, which I am calling *Ripples on an Infinite Sea*, I am sharing two poems here. The first poem is the more abstractly conceived, while in the second I actually give a free-verse exegesis on what the previous poem means. What follows these is a lively discussion of the poems' content with my dear friend & fellow *Cenacle* poet, Sam Knot.

The Present

*Of course we all hear, we are now and here
And that this is the primary fact
It is plain, in the brain
We're in pain we don't feign
But we are dimensionally backed*

*When we examine, the feast and the famine
We see a picture not so simple
There's the flood of the blood
In the crud of the mud
And the present is given a dimple*

*Why this need be, it flows free, it flows free
And there is indeed some delay
We've a clock that goes tock
Not a rock that time mocks
And we're into it every day*

*It's that one may see, one sees one may be
At a vantage that takes in a view
For some who aren't dumb
Zero sum, no end come
Non-fundamental time is what is true*

*Escaping its clutches with feather-soft touches
We may be permitted to do
But in the beginning, winning and winning
And sinning until we're up and we're spinning
At some point the session is through*

*So when we reach the end, the past did portend
And find that there's time and the timeless
We take both in our oath*

*Quoth the sage in his growth
Hoping when the twain join we're not spineless*

* * *

The Present, Part II

Our awareness is always in the present

*But, considered carefully, time must be brought in
The heart beats, the blood flows, the brain processes
The organs function in sync
And this is all in some sort of temporal dimension*

*These processes do not occur
At precisely the nexus of past and future
But have some extension in time, or necessary duration
The brain-mind-awareness loop has a kind of bandwidth
So in reality
Everything we experience took place
A few milliseconds in the past*

*Moreover, physicists feel strongly
That time, whatever its illusory properties
Exists as a dimension
Through which it would, in principle, be possible to travel
With sufficient technology*

*So it would seem
Even though time may not be
A fundamental property of the deeper existence
We nevertheless must be subject to it
At all applicable levels of our being*

*And if that is the case,
What is the meaning
In the most literal sense
Of the present moment that is timeless?*

*Perhaps we can attain to it
With advanced meditation, psychedelics, what have you
But inevitably we return to time
Even the Buddha had to die*

*So in the end, we must take both
Time and the timeless into consideration
Together
As humans*

* * *

Sam: I wonder: *Do we return to time, in the end? Or is eternity the real homecoming?*

I like these poems a lot. I like the contrast, or the interplay, of one commenting on the other, and the formality of the first in contrast with the latter—there is something in this that opens a really mysterious gap or rich-feeling vein for me—that you explicate in less formal fashion what you first explore in strict form, yet what you are exploring in this form is something which—well, it’s not clear to me precisely how the subject matter confounds form, only that it seems to—

It seems as if the formal relationship of past and future leads to the conception of the present as a point which cannot exist—and then the idea of it instead, as duration, somehow undermines either the concept of the present, or of past and future—such that we seem to be being lead precisely to something we cannot put our fingers on—which is somehow maddening in the same way it is satisfying!

“Escaping its clutches with feather-soft touches”—love that!

I love the way the music and the patterning of the first poem is inseparable from what it is saying—but also seems like a surface one has to pay real attention to see behind—as if it is all dazzle and scintillation—and one is trying to peer through but, if what lies behind is fathomless, one somehow needs all this play of light to get the measure of it—

Starting with the reality of our experience of pain, and then bringing in *“feast, famine, blood, mud”* as you do in the second stanza, is an interesting move—hinting that this question, or questioning, of time, is not necessarily as “dry” as it might seem to some—but that perhaps the ways we conceive time might be wrapped up with more worldly-seeming problems—*“Hoping when the twain join we’re not spineless”*—great ending! (“ending”? hehe!)

I remember being taken with the idea of “the lag” described in Tom Wolfe’s book *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*—the Merry Pranksters talking about the fact we are always living at a lag—on the level of our nervous system taking some time to process the present—thus us always playing catch up, in a way. I wonder about playing this off against Jacques Derrida’s idea of how meaning is continually deferred in/by language?

I sometimes have this idea, “the future is behind you,” as if it is almost literally true—it’s somewhat complex to get to grips with this reversal, but it makes a strange sense when you do—it is as if our habitual or normal way of experiencing is not so different from facing backwards on a train—such that all that we are seeing, still as it may seem, is moving away from us in time—and the future can feel a dimensionless point, the source of it all, hovering “not far away” in-and-beyond behind our “heads.” And in this particular future, (dis)located thus, one can feel the origin of the universe—after a fashion—or at least one’s own.

Regarding the notion of “looping,” you write: *“The brain-mind-awareness loop has a kind of bandwidth.”* The feeling I am having is of this *little* loop—the moment we call *now* in the most concrete and limited fashion—the now we *actually* or *seem* to experience—

It is as if this little loop in a piece of straight string that I am seeing—like a *loop-the-loop* in a roller-coaster—as if time has its directionality—but rather than conceiving of the now as a dimensionless point—or instead as some portion of this line in a linear sense (marks on a ruler)—we see rather a little loop—this loop can expand and contract, though I expect within limits—

The “point” here becomes the place where the thread of time has crossed itself—and perhaps this is both the heart of the moment, and the beginning and end of it. The length of the duration—which I would consider subjective—would correspond to the length of the loop—

But what this all seemed to point to, for me, apart from this curious feeling that the present moment thus conceived makes a place where time flows back on itself, from a certain “angle”—was some more abstract notion relating this *little* loop to a *great* loop. The little now, the present moment, being envisaged as a twist in a larger temporal flow (that may strangely be “really” working in the opposite direction to the one we perceive).

Jimmy: It is indeed a paradox that the “present” is usually considered to be a sliver, a point—a differential, in calculus terms—yet, in our everyday awareness, the present seems to be spread over two or three seconds. There is therefore some overlap between past and future, and this brings into question a lot of the comments one reads made about the “present moment,” often described as eternal.

Essentially, though, the notion that the present is all that exists is brought into question if we have to admit that the past and future really have some sort of necessary being, and it really throws a monkey wrench into things.

Indeed, the first poem, which might be dubbed the *implicate* version, was written in a much more “stream-of-consciousness” style—felt, rather than thought. I had in mind these ideas, and just let the poem take me where it would. The second poem, which I dub the *explicate* version, was just the opposite—it was a more straightforward, explicit manifestation of the specific notions I had in mind.

Your mention of the “lag” in the Wolfe book is precisely on point. It is the very phenomenon of which I write.

I like your metaphor of rear-facing seats on a train or bus. The future, which we can’t see, runs into the past, and it’s a blur that is very difficult to resolve.

In terms of the loop, I think there are two pertinent meanings. One, it’s simply a convenient term for the whole apparatus of *brain-mind-consciousness*, which is sort of a loop and sort of isn’t, because thoughts are continually being converted into memories. In a second sense, I envision loops in thought as an illustrative exercise to simulate the workings of the mind.

To find an answer to a question, for example, the brain will begin at a starting location (how, I can’t say). It will link with other thoughts in the brain like two points on a circle. This circle will then link up to another thought in a different part of the brain. This thought will link up with the correct or incorrect answer, so we have a bunch of circles linked together. This is just one way to think of the associative nature of the brain, but it’s one I like.

What none of this addresses is the more objective side of things. It is commonly held that space is expanding, because of the Big Bang, but what is often not mentioned is that time is expanding right along with it. So the present could be the leading edge of this expanding dimension of time, creating a flow and a directionality. The past is time that has come into being; the present is some smeared junction; and the future is time that does not yet exist. Food for thought, anyway.

Sam: Do we know that space is *expanding*? What reference point do we have to say that it isn’t rather *intending*? Are we able to say in which “direction” the movement is going, objectively? Or is it rather

objectivity that makes it seem like a certain direction? The *redshift* phenomenon described in physics shows that distant stars are getting more distant—so indeed, from here, they are getting further and further away—but if there is no “here”—if the expansion is happening equally from every point—all throughout space—then can we really say it is not rather as if space is looking into itself, somehow, (physically it could correspond to those mysterious little “curled up” dimensions), and there is no center?

Thus, rather than expanding continually into nothing, until everything loses energy and becomes effectively uniform, or dead—it is doing more like what we see life doing—*complexifying*, say, but not absolutely, more tending towards some kind of sweet spot—effectively, it is *intensifying*.

What if we cannot separate the *physical* expansion of space from the *biological* intensification of life? What if they are entangled in ways that, not only can we not measure, but that confound or limit our ability to objectify? Curious as to what you make of that angle—

So, I remember reading awhile back about a guy involved primarily in string theory who said that the entropy equation, I guess the physical one, didn’t specify a direction it necessarily worked in—a vector?—you know—it wasn’t necessarily a picture of moving from past to future. Now surely it must be a picture of moving from an ordered state to a more chaotic one—because that is how it is talked about, what it seems it is meant to describe? I guess both these totalized states—total order, total chaos—mean death, so far as life is concerned.

Basically though, it seems to point to, or to describe, a state of equilibrium, right? Even as it is said to be all about chaos, or disequilibrium, in a way—and how that is the direction in which physical systems tend—and organisms are a kind of temporary exception to this—or even feeding off it somehow, certainly not exempt from it—as the fate of the entire universe, expanding and expanding, until it is some kind of uniform chaos, total dissipation.

How does or might this relate to time? Is time really entropy?

But then—the equation is not talking about movement in a particular direction (so I gathered)—it is rather pointing to a kind of critical state, a place of balance or equilibrium between extremes of order and chaos. How about if we use this as our way of thinking about “now” or the present moment? Do we come thus to some more *living* idea of eternity, one that can never mean “all time”?

If the universe is a closed system—which seems to be a kind of axiom, so far as physics goes—because this is what *universe* means, it means *everything*—how can there be something *outside* everything, like “putting more energy in”? The entropy equation operates upon the assumption of this form of finitude. That totality is then a kind of equilibrium, the *big* zero everything has to add up, or cancel out, to. The entropy equation depends on, or assumes this state of affairs, and so produces a *little* zero that is, effectively, like moving around a little equals inside the big zero.

Differentiate “eternal” from the idea of now as a point at which the observer is always located, from which point the future is always potential, and the past is always over. This now is “always with us” in the sense that it is our ordinary way of both experiencing and conceiving of things, perhaps necessarily so. But eternity, for me, is more like the future, from this ordinary perspective.

When I make the example of facing backwards on the train, it is not the future that is behind us, but eternity, which is the now we cannot catch up with—perhaps similar to how, should we catch up with

light, it wouldn't be moving, nothing would—but this kind of stillness cannot be mistaken for the static—

Jimmy: It is my understanding that the fabric of space-time itself—at every point in space—is expanding. So that, wherever you are in the universe, it looks like the whole rest of the universe is moving away from you. Kind of a mind-bending concept, and I confess that I don't really fully understand it. Of course, the issue is far from resolved scientifically.

Along with entropy there is the notion of negative entropy, or *negentropy*. In any system supplied with energy, there tends to be a move toward greater complexity. Now the concept of entropy does imply that, trillions of years from now, the universe will undergo “heat death,” in which the cosmos is a dead, tepid soup.

But, in my opinion, a lot could happen in a trillion years. Negentropy is not really a scientific concept at this point, but it was Schrödinger who introduced the idea, in his book *What is Life?* (1944). There is, he argued, a clear progression toward greater and greater coherence, at every level. So, who knows whether entropy or negentropy will win out?

In terms of the separation between past and future, I contend that there is no infinitesimal point which divides them, based on experience. There seems to be about the three-second smear between past and future, in human awareness of reality. So time is a series of orders that are arising and dying, constantly. Anyway, this is what I base my difficulties in even identifying a present awareness on, in any consistent or straightforward way.

As far as eternity, I think this is the essential point. The present moment business is, I am only really saying, confusing. Time is a dimension, and an order that can be transcended, and I think we do transcend it sometimes. And I prefer to call what is left “eternity,” rather than the “present” or “now,” because present and now are time words, and in this eternal state, time has been obliterated. All I'm really trying to clear up is how we use our words. The validity of the concepts I have never denied.

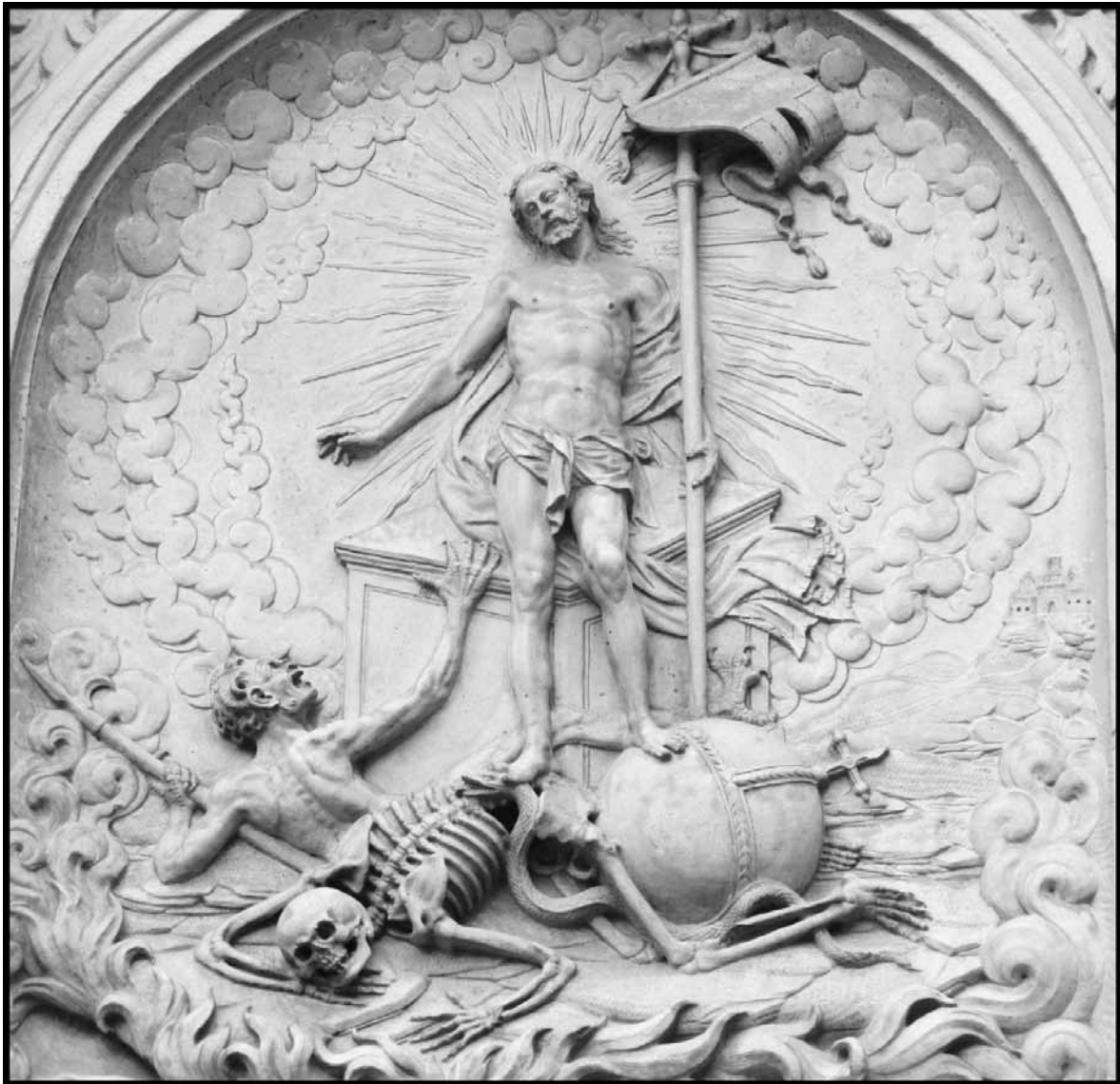
* * * * *



Michael Couvaras







Nathan D. Horowitz



Testing Me

[Travel Journal]

i.

Before sunset, at the pump, I ran into Rolando's wiry older brother Sebastian, who, as I have mentioned, looks like a jovial Julius Caesar with his eyes looking in different directions. He and I did an impromptu comedy routine for one of the other teachers and her son and some other kids. They nearly fell on the ground laughing. Everyone has seen martial arts movies in Lago Agrio. Sebastián and I did a fight scene in slow motion, chopping and kicking and punching each other, screaming as we did so, miming great pain when we got hit; a skinny old *indígena* in a long blue tunic against a gigantic white guy in shorts and a t-shirt. Naturally, we fought to a draw.

Afterward, I asked him about Rolando's story that Francisco had risen from the dead and that, at the moment of Francisco's death, the ground had melted into waves, and a giant jaguar had run through the village.

He nodded until I got to the detail about the giant jaguar. "No," he corrected me. "It wasn't one giant jaguar. It was three normal-sized ones."

ii.

Yesterday, there was a *minga*, a collective work project, to which I wasn't invited. Afterward, three men were sitting with their backs against the wall of a house. They had a plastic bucket of *yuca chicha*, and they were drinking it out of gourds.

I'd met two of them before: Aurelio, one of Serafin's sons, and Pancho, one of Katia's brothers. I didn't recognize the third man. He was shorter, stronger, younger, and drunker than the others. Aurelio and Pancho called me over and invited me to have some *chicha*. I sat down and drank and made small talk.

After I'd finished the second gourd, the three men suddenly started saying, "What are you doing here? Who the hell do you think you are, coming here and stealing our culture?"

I got up and started walking away. Behind me, I heard the short, strong, young, drunk guy say, "You better walk away if you want to stay alive."

I turned around and came back and sat down. He snarled, "Culture thief! Cunt! I'll kill you! What do you think you're doing here?"

"Living here," I said. "Sharing what I know. Working for the community."

Pancho's broad face was sweating under a blue bandanna he was using as a headband. He leaned forward and drilled me with his eyes. "Why did you come here? Why didn't you stay on your own land?"

I looked away, thinking as fast as I could, struggling. The alcohol had dulled my mind. I needed to answer the question without mentioning *yagé*, as Joaquín had forbidden me to discuss it.

"In my land, most people don't believe in the spirit world," I began hesitantly, my voice quavering. "But I do. I've always felt that way. I've always felt I needed to understand it better. In my culture, we used to know about it, but we don't anymore."

"Just a second," Aurelio interrupted, his voice calm. He had a thin face with narrow eyes and

long hair pulled back in a ponytail. He wasn't sweating like the others. He handed me a pack of tobacco and some papers. "Roll cigarettes for us while you talk," he commanded.

"All right," I said, and started doing it, my hands trembling. "I had some problems in my life when I was younger. My parents divorced, and that gave me a lot of psychological trouble. I figured the only way I could get better was to cure my soul."

"What are you going to do when you leave here?" Aurelio asked.

"I'm not sure. Maybe help other people. But I don't know if I'm learning anything. It's hard to understand what goes on here. Hard to understand how you people see things. The first thing is, I want to help myself feel better. I felt like if I stayed in the USA, I would kill myself." I handed a lumpy cigarette to Aurelio, who took it with wiry fingers. He nodded, lit the cigarette, drew on it.

"We see you writing things. What are you writing?"

I put another pinch of tobacco in another rolling paper. "It's mostly about me. Partly about you Secoyas." I glanced up. They were all watching me.

"Maybe I'll publish a book," I went on, wrapping the paper around the tobacco. "People like to read about other people's struggles. Also, Secoya knowledge about healing could help people where I come from. If I ever make any money with it, I'll contribute back to the community, I think."

The third man finished off a gourd of *chicha*, wiped his mouth, and growled at me with a slurred voice, "You think? You're a fucking cunt, a liar, and a thief."

Licking the rolling paper, I ignored him. "They tell me last year some woman from Switzerland was around here shooting video. Do you see me shooting video? I take with me what I can perceive with my senses. I have a camera, but I nearly never use it." I handed the second lumpy cigarette to Pancho, and tried to gauge his expression, which was calculatedly impassive, though with a brutal edge.

I remembered my training with Joaquín. I remembered I'd lost my fear of death. I stared into the third man's muddy eyes. "If you want to kill me, do it now. Just kill me. I'm not fucking around in this community. I'm here with a high moral purpose, and I'm ready to die for it. So if you want to kill me, cut my neck. Get a machete right now, and cut my neck."

There was silence. Then Pancho muttered to the others in Paicoca. Aurelio held out his hand to me for the tobacco and the papers. Our eyes met, and some minor understanding passed between us. I looked toward Pancho, but he had looked away. The three stood up. Aurelio and Pancho walked away supporting the third guy, who continued to snarl obscenities back at me as they proceeded down the path through the center of San Pablo.

I picked myself up, dusted off the seat of my pants, looked around at the several onlookers, and headed back to my hut.

When I was on my own, I decided it had made a kind of sense for them to put me on trial like that. I'm a stranger in their community. It's reasonable to wonder what I'm doing here. The business about rolling cigarettes took me by surprise, but Aurelio needed to see some submission from the stranger, some tameness, some obedience. Even at the time, I felt that rolling cigarettes was as far as that would go. And anyway, it was an incentive for him not to make me too nervous, because the more my hands trembled, the worse the cigarettes would turn out.

This morning, Domingo the pastor asked me if I would translate into English a big book on Secoya culture that he and his brother Serafin the educator are writing.

I was delighted with the request, and said I would be glad to.

Domingo explained that they are writing it with funding from the oil company, and there might be more money that could support my part of it.

My heart fell because I didn't want to accept any money from the oil company. But I immediately rationalized: *I can take their money and do something good with it.*

iii.

I dream I'm at a house party at night in upstate New York, talking with a long-haired artist from the Netherlands who has just published a graphic novel. He shows me a copy. I immediately have a negative reaction to it. It's so full of glossy advertisements that it's hard to find the stories. But he's proud of it, he says, because it doesn't go for easy answers.

The first panel of the first story shows two little spaceships speeding toward each other in a remote part of some galaxy. One pilot is a man with the head of a lion. The other pilot is a beautiful, mysterious woman, fleeing from someone or something, and wearing only a skimpy black dress.

The ships collide and plummet to the surface of a jungle planet. I expect some kind of romance to develop. But the woman has been killed by the collision, and thrown out of her ship. Her skimpy black dress is bunched up around her hips. Her legs are spread. The lion-headed man crouches in front of her and, after staring for a while, touches her nether lips with two trembling fingers. He's curious about her anatomy, and sexually aroused, and no one is there to see.

His interior monologue goes on for six pages like this: "Á†ÇĪÊ āŌÇĪŃ ØÈĪÊ †áŌØĪĪÊ æŌāæĪ ŪĪÇā ÈĀā †áŌØĪĪÇ ÇŌÊŌāĪ ÈŃŌÇŌ ĪāæĪ ÇāÇĪÊāÇā æĀŌĪÊ ĀĪŃæā ÈĪŃÇĪ ÈŪŌāā †Ī ĪÇā ĪŌĪŃÊ †Ī ĪæÇĪÊ āÊ†ŃĤÊ ÈÇāŌ†Ê ÇāŪŃÊĪÊ æĤŌÇŪ ŪŌÊ. āā ĪāÊ ĀĪŃĪ ĀŌĪÊ ÊāÇÊÊ ĪāæĪ ĀŌŃÇÆĪĪĪā ÈĪŃæĪ ĪŃÇĀ Çā†ĪÇŃ ŌĪāÊ āÇŌ†Ê ĤŃÊ ĀāĪÊāā †Ī ĤŌÇŪ ŪŌÊ. ĪāÊ Çā†ĪÇŃÇÊ Ūā†Ê ÊæŌØ ÈŪĪÇĪ †Ī ŌÇŪÇÊ Çā†ĪŃ ÇāĀāĪ āŪ ÇŌÊāŃÇŃ ŌāŌāÊ āā ĀŪ† ÇāŪÇŃÇÊ ÇāĪæĪ ÇāÊĪ ÊŌÊĀ† ÇāŪÇŌāÊ ÇāŪŃÇĪÊ. ßāÇ Ā†ÇĪ āŃÇŌā ÇāĪŌĪŃÊ †Ī ÇāÊŌŃÊ ÊĀā ÇāāĪāÊ ÈŪŃŌÊ †ĪŃ ÇāĪāā āĤŌ† ĪæĪ āßÊ†. æÊŌāĪ ÇāÊŌŃÊ āŪÇŃß ŌÇŃĪÊ ÊĪā ÇāĤæÇÊ ÇāŪŃÇĪÊ æÇāĤæÇÊ ÇāŪÇŌĪÊ. ÊæŪĪ āÇÆÊ ÇāŃÆĪŌ ÇāŪŃÇĪ Ōā ĪÇŌĪā ŃāŌÇā ÇāĪāæĪ ÇāĀāĪŃĪā æÇāÊŃĪŌÇāĪā ÇāāŌÇŃĪā †Ī ŪŌæ ÇāŪŃÇĪ æāß †Ī āŪŃŌ ĀŌÇĪÊā ÈÇāŪāĪÊ Çā†ĪÇÆĪÊ ÇāÊĪ ā†āÇ ĪāĪ ŪŃÇĪ æĀŌ†ŃÊ Ūā āŌŃŪ ĀŃÊŪÊ ĪāæĪ ĀāĪŃĪā. ßāÇ Īāā ŃāŌÇā ÈŌĪÊ ŪāĪ ÇāĀāā ÇāāÊĪÊ æĀŪāā Ń†Ō ÇāŪŃÇĪ ĀĪ ÊāÇŪÊ ÊĀāæÇāā ŪÈŃ ÈĪÊ ŌĪŪÊ ĪĪĪÊ áÇÊ†ÇĪ Çāā†Ø āĤÇÊā ÇāŪÇĀ. ÊæÇŌāÊ ÇāÊŪÇāŃÇÊ ÇāāĪĪÊ ÈÇāŪŌæ ÇāĀāĪŃĪ ÇāÊŃĪŌÇāĪ āāŪŃÇĪ †ŪāĪ ÇāŌŪĪ ÇāŪŃÊĪ ĪŃĪÊ ÈŪÇāŃÇÊ ŪÇŌÊÊ †Ī ÇāĀŃÇŌĪ ÇāāĪÊāÊ; ßāÇ ĪŃĪÊ ÈŪÇāŃÇÊ ŪÇŌÊÊ †Ī ÈāŪāÇĪŌ æāÇāĪŌĪ æĀŌÊŃÇāĪÇ æŪĪ āā Īāā ÇāĤÇŃÊ ÇāĀæŃæĪÊ...."

I flip ahead in the graphic novel.

The next story is a series of images in the middle of the pages, surrounded by ads. Each image depicts something meant to evoke a vulva. The first shows two peach slices with curtains blowing in the wind behind and between them. The next shows the curtains and, behind and between them, a close-up view of two fingers with a gap between. The next image is a close-up view of the two fingers and the gap, with a pair of long, thin green leaves behind and between. Then comes a pair of pink feathers, and then the vocal folds of a human throat. The final image, first seen between the folds, and then directly, is of the artist himself, sitting cross-legged on the floor of a European train station, smoking a joint, drawing in a sketchpad.

iv.

There was a collective work project yesterday to continue working on a cement and wood bridge over a stream near the village center. We moved a lot of pilings, and mixed and poured a lot of cement.

The third man from the other day was there, the short, strong one. His name is Maximo, I learned. "Gringo!" he sneered. "Go back to the whore of a giraffe who gave birth to you. Drink her milk till you're strong enough to work alongside us."

"Don't bug me, dwarf," I retorted. "I'm concentrating. As I'm chopping this sapling with my machete, I'm imagining it's the side of your head."

The bystanders were interested. I think I heard the word *waho* a few times. I knew it meant

war, but I guessed it also meant fight. I had guys working alongside me I could trust, including Lucho Payaguaje, as well as Diosdado Noteno, a Quichua who married into the community.

When the women served lunch, I was one of the last to knock off work and get some. All the forks were gone, so I ate the rice and tuna with a big kitchen knife off a Styrofoam plate while a kid sat with his back to me watching the other direction. This was Dardo, who had paid me with a necklace of Job's tears for some beads of mine he used to make a necklace for his mom.

That night, Lucho invited me to his house for dinner. When I got there, he was drunk. He went on for an hour about how poor he was, and how much his eighteen-year-old daughter needed money to go to accounting school in Lago Agrio. I told him I'm running out of money myself and can't spare any. This is true, basically.

I had the feeling the various men were testing me and studying me like scientists with a new substance, learning what they could of me, and of the world I come from. All of them were senses in the superbeing of the community. They would file their reports to the brain.

Lucho and I went over to Eva's house and drank *yuca chicha* with her and Aurelio and his wife until late. Aurelio was civil and didn't ask me to roll cigarettes for him. I told Irish legends and sang Grateful Dead songs.

Last night I stayed home because I like having this little insular world where everyone speaks English, and no one wants to kill me. I always have my machete close at hand in case Maximo comes over to make trouble.

Though two people have said, "Don't exaggerate. He wasn't serious. That's just how drunks talk."

So I translated a couple of tales from *The Yagé Drinker*, and wrote a couple of letters.

I imagine if it comes to a machete fight between me and Maximo, I'll win because I'm not bad with a machete, and reach is a factor. But then I'll have to fight his friend Cristóbal, Serafín's oldest son, and Cristóbal will definitely beat me, and I'll lose an arm or even die. So I'm not eager to fight.

* * * * *



Colin James

A Sympathetic Susceptibility

I shovel the wax out of my ear
with a protein-reinforced fingernail,
dump it on to a peasant's cart
used to ferry passengers to and fro,
mostly from this remote railway station.

Here the station-master sulks when
his daughter mis-times his dinner,
delivers it cold and unwelcoming.

I am now able to sense a chorus of townspeople,
even observe them gather on a moonlit hill.
They are transporting something in chains
and thick ropes, and are not quiet about it.
This phenomena is, weather willing, seasonal.

My booking agent emphatically assures me
the static air will carry no other voices,
and, after a reasonable amount of time,
a cleansing rain should amicably descend.

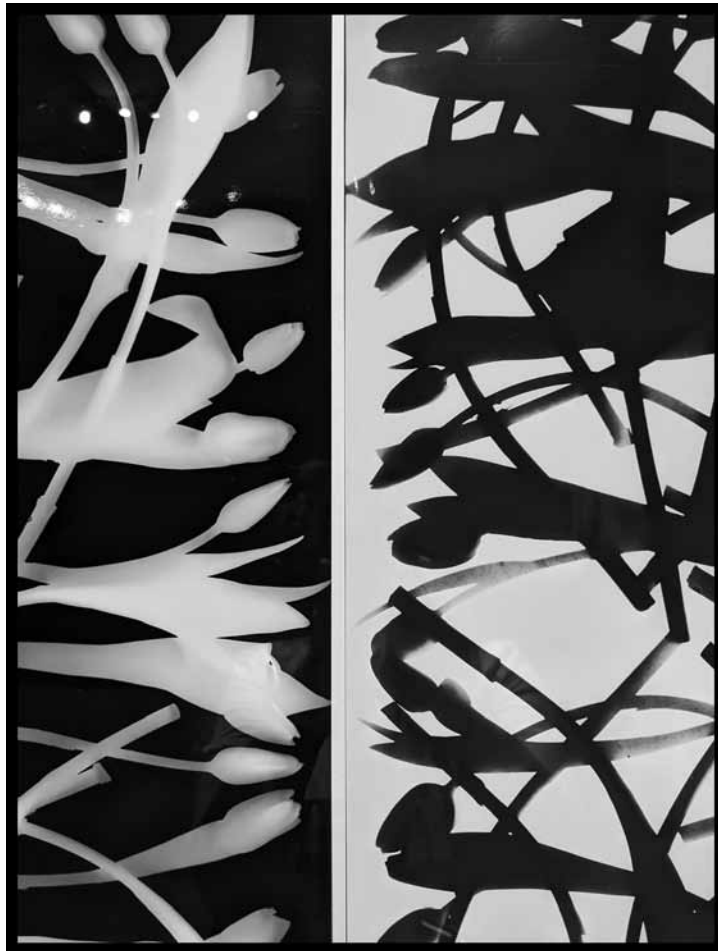
* * *

**Gerard Manley Hopkins Met Emily Dickinson
Just the Once at a Symposium In Vienna**

If you are not going to eat your mash,
slide them discreetly in this direction.

And go easy on the seasoning.
I can't abide a tangent.

* * * * *





Bags End Book #20: Go Into the Sea! Part 2

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

Hello Cenacle readers,

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

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

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

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

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

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

* * * * *

Double Dreaming on the Moonlight Hill!

This current story I have been telling you Dear Readers has involved all sorts of familiar & newer things both, in a strange mix I am still trying mah best to get.

On the one paw, there are the strange & mysterious colored Secret Books. I have writed in the past, especially in Bags End Book #17: The Myth of the 4 Famous Travelers! about how a strange Author guy traveled his many kinds of times & miles to find his satisfactions in residing obscurely in the Creature Common as the itch that inspires that Ramie the Toy Tall Boy cousin CC to tell stories of the Travelers Marie, Joe, Derek the Islander, & Daniel as they & their friends, usually the Creatures, go from strange place to strange place, & have their strange adventures. I was even lucky enough

Bags End News
No 412 November 7, 2015
Editor: Algernon Bagge
King: Sheila Bunnip
Lead Lead Creature: Threshold Puggle
Written Down By: Lori Bunnip

Dubbel Dreaming on the
Moonlit Hill!

This is a
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all sorts of
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Sekrit Kuly
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a Author
travelled h
a mile's top
in residin
Creechur K
thatt inspirs
CC too tale

Bags End News
No 413 November 14, 2015
Editor: Algernon Bagge
King: Sheila Bunnip
Lead Lead Creature: Threshold Puggle
Written Down By: Lori Bunnip

Deep into the Humm!

This part of this long &
strange straree begins in Dreamland.

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dear to
Boop

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pluss
CC & M
whoa iz
iz a n
S
reelly
Bunnip
farming

Bags End News
No 414 November 21, 2015
Editor: Algernon Bagge
King: Sheila Bunnip
Lead Lead Creature: Threshold Puggle
Written Down By: Lori Bunnip

Insid the Sekrit Buks!

I gess thatt titel brst
sums up howe it waz feeling
dubbel deese in ad Dreamland
certay of Dorriess & that now
nis ~~with~~ dreaming to Letty Bunnip
Pilla

To see, deen readers, wee
wee att thee plas & am wee
thee storee in thee first
Sekret Buks began

Inn our group of adventures
waz mee, mah dear friend Princess
Cassia, thos ins Creechurs Matnet
& Holly, & CC whoa iz a kamy
cuz in whoa ins inn thee Creechur
Komon. An, now we jest arrivd
after bein exicted from mah

to hear a story telling live by CC in the Creature Common, itched on by the 4 pictures the Author guy lives &, um, itches in.

Well, so CC invited me to go along with him to try to understand more about those strange colored Secret books. This mah better luck after being crisis driven to come to the Creature Common in the first place after catching a dread case of the Hik-Bumps! in Bags End.

Here's where the more familiar things mix in, Dear Readers. I of course caught mah dread case after taking a Bump lesson with mah silly Bumping brother, Alexander Puppy. Then rushed by the Blondys 3 to see Doctor Greenface, who sent me to specialists. MeZmer the White Bunny by name.

But even this longstanding grudge I have with Alex over what is a real language, like English or El or Grrr, & what is a fake made-up one, like Bump of course, gets tricky.

Did I get Hik-Bumps! out of annoyance or prejudice? What is a real language anyway? I mean, I deeply admire the Hmmm, singed by the Creatures, & once by mah dear friend Princess Crissy & her Emandian kin-folks. But isn't it just one long sound?

So I stuck around Creature Common to learn more, & that's where another old old thing comes into the picture. Person, sort of anyway. Betsy Bunny Pillow, who I've been writing about back into the murky origins of mah beloved newspaper.

Where has she been? She has been working with that genuinely nice Dorris, a yellow Pillow who lives in Creature Common, to learn how to do the work done on the Dream Pillow Farm. Using the very same Hmmm I've been telling you about to com4ort people-folks' dreams. Steer them more hopeful, & more useful too.

Hero Betsy? Well, yes, I do not deny in dreams & the Dream Pillow Farm, yes.

But, by daytime & awakesness, Betsy was still restless of her true purpose in life, & a rival to Farmer Jones as ever 4or who should run the Bunny Pillow Farm.

But that all said longly, Betsy had agreed to come to Imagianna to Double Dream with Dorris & CC & me, & I guess Princess Crissy & Farmer Jones to help understand the Secret Books better. Maybe help with her restless wondering ways, & me with mah questions about the Hmmm, & other alleged languages called Bump. Sorry, old habit.

So then I come again to Creature Common to Cluster-Dream with CC & Dorris, & also those nice guys MeZmer Bunny & Holly Hedgedyhog too. MeZmer & Dorris are both Tenders, so it was good to have them both along to com4ort & calm guys' heartbones.

CC said we were going to see Princess Crissy first, which is always a good idear in mah book. That should be mah book's title: Go See Crissy First. Best-seller to the wise.

CC was carrying Dorris in arm, & me & Holly were hurrying along on short paws, & MeZmer hopped slow & long, as we arrived to the green hills that lead up to Crissy's Castle.

A question occurred to me as I hurried. "Say, CC guy, if we are already cluster-dreaming, what more do we do on the Moonlight Hill with Betsy?"

CC laughed, but nicely. "Well, what Betsy & Dorris came to do is more than even this."

I thinked, & tried 4or smart. "Because of the Hmmm?"

CC nodded. "It's deeper work. But I think Crissy can help you understand too."

So I hushed & hurried to keep up. Soon we were at the front door of

Crissy's Castle, & CC was knocking.

The door opened up, & there was Princess Crissy's servant & bestus buddy Boop, who looks like a Turtle, but isn't one.

Boop was strangely dressed tho. He had on a hat that sort of slouched to one side of his head. And a black sweater that was thick around his neck. Also black trouser pants & sort of sharp little black shoes.

I was gonna ask but then hushed mah own mouth. I guess in Dreamland some guys let their imaginations loose some, & try some things. He looked nice tho. Relaxed.

He acted that way too, just smiled at all of us, & led us right away to Crissy's Secret Room. The one with the strange designed pillows & purple lights & posters, & a shelf of Crissy's books from when she was Christina the Author girl.

We all got comfy after Crissy gaved us hugs all around. I could see she was wearing her long coat with the many pockets 4or Secret Books.

CC dived right into things with mah question.

Crissy looked at me especially as she said, "Be4ore we all came to be like these 4orms we have, we were the Hmmm."

"Like your Emandian kinfolks?" I asked. I won't say I understand that Faerie hoard guy/guys, but I do well remember the Season of Lights visit we had when Crissy found her sister, & learned that Iggy the Inspector is her brother. Hard to 4orget that.

Crissy nodded. "So Betsy & Dorris & the other Dream Pillows know how to unbecome, so they are all Hmmm, maybe even deeper by going together. Then after they become themselves again."

I wanted to ask more but CC pointed out that Betsy & Farmer Jones were waiting 4or us. Dream Pillow or no Dream Pillow, Hmmm or no Hmmm, mah old habit to not keep that crazed Pillow waiting kicked in, & I hurried us along.

Because it was Dreamland, & because she was still Crissy of the trickiest smile in any land, we were all come to the special hill in Imagianna right quick.

And Farmer Jones & Betsy were both there. Their Dreaming selfs were getting along just fine.

I'm not sure if Betsy & Dorris got bigger, or the rest of us shrunk somehow, but in hardly 2 shakes we were all resting com4ortably, & the Hmmming began.

* * * * *

Deeper into the Hmmm!

Everyone was starting to drift when Betsy talked. Nicely.

"What's your question, Algernon?"

I started. "Um?"

"You're not ready to do this. It's OK. Ask your question."

Hm. I guessed she was right somehow. So I quickly thinked 4or something good to ask.

"Do you & Dorris Double Dream a lot?"

Dorris nearby laughed. "No. First time."

Hm. "Do we become the Hmmm too?"

"No," whispered Betsy. "We'll carry you down & protect you. But all of you will stay you."

"Does it hurt?"

"No, Algernon, it's something else," said Dorris. Hm. Well.

Finally I nodded. "OK, I'm ready too. Thank you." Then we all got com4ortable again.

The Hmmm around us started off really quiet. At first, I could tell Betsy's from Dorris's, but then later on I couldn't.

At some point I must have traveled deeper with the others. It was hard to tell. I could not see, but it didn't feel like darkness. I felt all mah friends nearby, but I could not see them.

But easier to say is that we were traveling down a smooth path of Hmmmming. It felt more & more like a hallway, like we have a lot of in Bags End, with floor, ceiling, & walls. But still the Hmmm too.

"Close your eyes, Algernon," said a suddenly arrived & familiar voice in mah mind. It was the Author guy. Now where did he come from?

Well, first take his good advice, then thank him, then scold a little.

I closed mah eyes & saw that we were all there walking down a Glowing Hallway like I had thinked. It was sort of bloo like Betsy, & yellow like Dorris, but blended together. CC was in the lead, MeZmer & Holly together just in front of me, & I looked back & saw Crissy's smiling face looking at me. Guarding, as is her way. She was glowing, like we all were, but her long coat was so bright I could see all the Secret Books tucked into its many pockets.

Back to the invading Author guy. "Thanks. But."

I could feel him smiling at me. I was more charmed than annoyed, I admit.

"You're nearly there," he said. "Talk to you again. I won't be far!" Then he was gone. OK, I admit, I missed him a little.

But he was right. I could see something new just ahead, beyond the Glowing Hallway.

A Dorris voice talked to all of us. "What you see won't see you 4or awhile. Pay attention & keep together 4or now."

Hmm. Well, we came out of the Hallway, & walked together in a group onto a grassy hill. Down below was a pond. Up the hill a-ways away was a sort of house.

CC looked around & looked excited, smiling. "This is where Daniel & Joe & Marie the Famous Travelers live!" I noticed that MeZmer & Holly were sniffing a lot all around, & I wondered why.

Then I saw the girl sleeping down near the pond. She was red-haired, wearing a long dress, & bare-footed. Even I knowed this one.

"That's Marie," I said, pointing.

Crissy looked at CC, who's much taller than her. "Marie is having her dream, the one that starts the first story told in the first Secret Book?" she asked him.

CC nodded. "So right now Daniel is somewhere else from here, traveling with his Tumbleweed friend. And Joe is riding his bike to Marie's school to bring her nuts & fruits 4or her lunch."

"O! Nuts! Yuk! O! Fruits! Yuk!" I cried in terror of this sudden awful turn of talk.

But Crissy hugged me down, & convinced me that Joe wasn't here. No offense, guy, save 4or the food part.

CC was thinking hard about something. "Why didn't Marie go to teach today? Why is she here instead?"

Then I heard the Author guy in mah head again. "This is Imaginal Space. Where stories happen. Of course she's here."

OK, enough. I shooked mah headbone hard back & 4orth. "Out! Out! Out, Author guy! Talk to everyone with words too big 4or just mah simple noggin!"

I don't think he wanted to, or was shy, or something, but I shooked mah

headbone & shouted "Out!" till he was sitting on the grass be4ore us.

The Author guy is definitely a Ramie cousin, at least by tallness & face. But Ramie is way scrawnier. The Author guy is even bigger than CC, & his red hair is longer. He has a beard on his face too.

"He was stuck in mah noggin," I explained nicely enough to everyone.

CC kneeled down to look at him. Smiled. Helded out his hand.

"I am CC."

The Author guy looked up at him. Finally smiled too. "You can call me Raymond."

CC sat beside him on the grassy hill & said, "Since we already work together by waking, should we join up in this Dreaming adventure too?"

Both guys smiled this time, & we all knowed that we had another good adventurer along!

* * * * *

Inside the Secret Books!

MeZmer & Holly each took a lap on these known-to-Creatures guys, & I was lucky enough that when Crissy satted down too, facing those guys, her lap & inclination was free 4or me.

Now CC talked. "We came here because I wanted to understand the early stories in the first Secret Book better. Like we know from The Stories of the Four Pictures Grand Production what happened up till then. But then I would be telling the Creatures Tale most nights thereafter--"

"And the Author guy would be itching you along," I said, trying to help, & keep track too.

CC nodded. "So we're down this deep in Dreamland to see what we can find out. Crissy has the books with her."

Crissy smiled & nodded. The Author guy used to make her blush, but she seems better now.

Selfsame Author guy had been listening close to all this & now looked at me. "This is Imaginal Space, where the stories of the Many Worlds happen. That's why Marie is dreaming down there, & didn't go to teach school today. So that her story can begin. Hers & Joe's."

"So what do we do?" asked CC. "Dorris said we can follow along & watch 4or awhile?"

The Author guy nodded. "Then, when you're ready, you can make adjustments."

"What kind of adjustments?" asked Crissy, nicely skritchng mah headbone while holding me. I was wondering that too.

"We can figger out the confusing or incomplete parts," said the Author guy. "We can figger it out step by step."

"We?" I asked. "But, wait, you're the Author guy. And you itch CC & he tells the stories real good as he can."

He nodded 4or me to go on.

I thinked. "So then Crissy helped you make a Grand Production of how it all came together be4ore CC."

"And you helped, Algernon," the Author guy & Crissy said together.

Now I blushed a little. Oops. But it was true. I nodded too, to keep going. And pushed mah brain-bone all the way this time. "How can we change what happened? That seems like cheating!"

Now CC talked. "I think, with these stories, we can only add to them. Nothing goes away in them. They get deeper, & stranger, & more fun."

I looked up at Crissy, whose lap I was still in. She smiled at me her best, most reassuring smile of all.

"How do we do this? Vote?" I asked. Everyone laughed, thinking I'd told a good joke. Hm. Guess no voting.

Another question occurred to me, & I betted I better hurry it on in. "Is this with all of us only possible because we are Double Dreaming with Betsy & Dorris? And how we went down that *hummming* Glowing Hallway be4ore?"

"That's part of where we do our work, Algernon," said the Author guy. "It's the Hallway where the stories began to be told to the Creatures, & to be written down in the Secret Books."

"So we have to go back into that Hallway?" I asked.

The Author guy nodded.

"Then what do we do?" I asked, feeling like mah barrel of questions would never empty.

"We listen, we fill in the blank parts, we make it better!" said the Author guy with a flourish.

What was wrong with me? Why was I holding back? I had never been invited to do anything like this be4ore. CC looked ready. Crissy was. I could not tell about MeZmer & Holly but I think Creatures are agreeable to most people-folks idears. Like I am with Crissy & Miss Chris, who are mostly all the people-folks I know.

I tooked a big chance now & said, "What if I said I don't know to this idear? Not yes or no but I need to think it over?"

I clenched mah eyes closed, waiting 4or the "No way!" & "You dum Beagle!" & "Let's do it without him!" words to fly at me.

Nothing. Waited. Nothing. Eyes opened & everyone was smiling nicely at me.

"It's OK, Algernon. We all trust you," said the Author guy, & everyone else nodded to agree. Even MeZmer & Holly looked kindly at me.

And that was, strangely, that, Dear Readers, 4or the moment. The trip back was pretty quick, all in all. Which is to say, I woked up &, strangely too, in mah own bed, not slept in 4or awhile.

It was night-time, & it was dark & quiet all around me. In the other bed, I could hear mah brother Alex sleeping. He sometimes mutters Bump words in his sleep. I wondered what he would think about where I had just been in Dreamland . . .

OK, no more sleep 4or me. I very quietly climbed from mah bed, through the window, to the safety of Milne's Porch.

And I sat in mah comfy armchair 4or hours on end, just thinking. About what languages are. About what stories are. No good answers.

But I can say true that by when the sun came up, slowly & surely, I knowed I was gonna be part of this . . . this . . . whatever it was.

Sometimes you gotta go where you ain't been be4ore, just to see what happens.

Um. Anyway.

* * * * *

Back to the Glowing Hallway!

The Myth of the 4 Famous Travelers, also called the Travelers Tales,

Bagg End News
November 28, 2015
Editor: Algernon Beagle
King: Sheila Bunney
Lead Lead Creature: Threshold Puggle
Written Down By: Leni Bunney

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Bagg End News
December 5, 2015
Editor: Algernon Beagle
King: Sheila Bunney
Lead Lead Creature: Threshold Puggle
Written Down By: Leni Bunney

Mareece Joice Donicee Ett Getera!

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Bagg End News
No. 417 December 12, 2015
Editor: Algernon Beagle
King: Sheila Bunney
Lead Lead Creature: Threshold Puggle
Written Down By: Leni Bunney

With three Travelers too Imapiannat!

I amn writin thiss issu of
mah belurvd nuuzpap from
Imapiannat, wich iz a Klos
& quid naybor too mah oune
Homland of Expend, & the ham
of mah deer friend Princess
Crissan, or Crissy if u lik too
dams to, & hery quid bend Boop
whoa looke lik a fette, butt isent!

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Dreaming of Dorriess & Betsey

& the Creatures Tale, is a great big story that I don't know all of. I did help a little with the Stories of the Four Pictures Grand Production, but I knowed that there was a lot of story to come after that. That was just the beginnings of the Myth after all.

What seemed to follow those beginnings was a time of not knowing then how big it would become, how it would go on & on. Eventually, it seemed like the Author guy itching the story, & the CC guy telling the story, figgered out what they had was something special. I have been lucky enough to hear this Myth / Tale / Tales told lately, & it felt kind of the same as if Bags End News was stories told by talking them instead of writing them down.

It's kind of like the early days of Bags End itself. A lot of questions & contradictions & missing parts. The difference is that I keep looking 4or the answers to it all, keep asking new questions, & keep getting a little closer & clearer.

What the Author guy & CC & Princess Crissy too were proposing was that we look at what pieces of the early Myth stories we have, & just fill it in good now, like fixing up a broken wall or something.

And I guess that makes me think: well, is Bags End so different from the Travelers Myth?

I am not sure. I mean, Bags End is real to me. But, then again, isn't the Travelers Myth real to Marie, Joe, Daniel, & the rest it tells about? That's where I stumbled, even tho I wanted to help.

I hope this makes sense because it sums up to what I decided to say to CC, & the Author guy, & Crissy when I next met up with them. And to the Creatures, & I guessed Dorris & Betsy Bunny Pillow & Farmer Jones too.

By mah polite request, we all came to Princess Crissy's Castle in Imagianna. In waking, not Dreamland too.

I came to Imagianna in the usual way, going to the right level in Bags End, & walking through the right door. Crissy's Castle is a climb to get to, up a green & golden hill. It's very nice, & not too fancy-pants, even tho it is a very strange & magickal place inside.

Knocked 3 times, like that old song goes. The door opened & there was Crissy's servant & bestus buddy, Boop, who looks like a Turtle, but isn't one.

Boop is a great fan of, um, protocols, which means long & polite ways of arriving & saying hello. I think he does them because Crissy is a Princess, even if she is really more the bloo-jeans-dancing-to-good-R.E.M.-records kind than the glittery Princess Ozma kind. But the many worlds are big enough 4or all kinds, & Crissy loves Boop the most in the worlds, so I go along with a smile.

"Hi Boop!" I said in mah friendly Algernon way.

Boop bowed low & gestured his paw 4or me to follow him in. But he surprised me by friendly talking too.

"The Princess told me how you wanted to think all about what to do next. We both agreed you were wise," he said, with a friendly paw on mah shoulder even.

I nodded, trying to think of sudden friendly words back. Finally I just talked. "I have a better idear to tell now."

Boop nodded & smiled again, & then we were in Crissy's Throne Room. Weird, not her Secret Room.

Boop whispered me, "It's so Betsy Bunny Pillow & Farmer Jones will be more polite, & not just fight."

I nodded. This sounded like Crissy smarts.

So Crissy of course was in her Throne, slouched down comfy, almost Sheila Bunny-like. Arrayed nearby was a sort of semi-circle of Farmer

Jones, CC, Raymond the Author guy, MeZmer the White Bunny, Holly the grey Hedgedyhog, Dorris the yellow Dream Pillow, & Betsy Bunny Pillow.

Crissy smiled big & motioned me to come up near her to the front of the group. She sneaked in a nice hug, & nodded me to talk to all. So I tried mah best.

"I have thinked all about this project, & I have some idears to share now," I started. I worried that awake Betsy Bunny Pillow would grouch right then, but even she was giving me a chance. So OK then.

"Well, I remembered how you said the Myth of the 4 Famous Travelers came from stories you heard in your travels," I said to the Author guy, who nodded & smiled at me.

"And a lot of times the stories have Creatures in them, like you & Holly," I said, looking friendly at him & MeZmer. They don't talk a lot, but they sniffed friendly at me. So nod enough.

"And you coordinate those guys & tell the stories of the Myth to them," I said to CC, who smiled & nodded at me very nicely.

"And there wouldn't be a Betsy or the other Pillows helping out with dreams or waking if you didn't grow them," I said to Farmer Jones, who looked surprised to get credit, but pleased & nodded.

"And you Pillows working together made us the Glowing Hallway by your Double Dreaming doings," I looked friendly at Dorris, & cringingly at Betsy, but they both sort of murmured yes too.

"And Crissy, you let us all use that magickal hill here in Imagianna 4or this strange project." Crissy's smile was more like a long nice hug to me.

"Who is missing?" I asked finally.

Everyone looked at everyone else, & then at me. Nobody speaked a word.

"Marie. Joe. Daniel. Et cetera," I said very slowly. No talk again.

"We should talk to them about our fixing-&-filling idear. We tell them we want to help, & what are our idears. We see what they think. Who better to help to do this project, right?" I finished. I hoped it wasn't all foolish madness to their ears.

Well, everyone started talking at once, but I figgered out eventually that they all liked the idear, & were excited to start.

Score one 4or your old pal Algernon! I hoped this would work!

* * * * *

Marie . . . Joe . . . Daniel . . . Et Cetera!

I've had to learn some new tricks to survive & prosper in this current story. Usually happens because mah old tricks are woeful failures.

I guessed what I was coming around to was that the Myth of the 4 Famous Travelers was something different from what I had knowed be4ore.

I mean, there's fantasylands like Oz & Wonderland & Narnia & so on, & you can find out about them in their famous storybooks &, if you're lucky, go to them & have a visit yourself.

Even more obscure Bags End has mah newspaper to tell its stories, tho be careful coming to visit here, even tho it's been easier since Bags End became illegal.

But, see, all those Travelers guys got is what's writed down in the Secret Books that I don't even think they knowed about. And, worse, some of the early stories don't make much sense now.

Luckily, mah idear of inviting the Travelers themselves to help figger all this out was liked by everyone gathered in Crissy's Throne Room, & so now

it seemed time to make a plan of action.

Crissy, who had been pretty quiet during this discussion, now talked. "I'm glad we agree that the main Travelers should be asked to help out. And I know we all want to help." She paused & smiled big at me. Ut-o. A Be-brave-Algernon smile. I knowed it without a sniff.

"But I think just Algernon & Raymond the Author guy should use the Double Dreaming of Betsy & Dorris to go back to that Glowing Hallway."

Nobody talked in shock, but then I tried to. "But I don't know the whole Myth, like some of us do! Shouldn't CC & MeZmer & Holly go? And you too, Crissy?"

CC shooked his head. "We can be in the Creature Common, covering the story from that end."

"And I can be watching what's going on in the Glowing Hallway you're in, & on the Hill, & in the Creature Common. All 3," said Crissy, with more of that Be-brave-Algernon smiling.

"And I can be with Crissy 4or if anything goes wrong," said Farmer Jones, & I could tell he was trying to help here too.

I looked at the Author guy. He smiled at me. He's no Crissy 4or persuading smiles, but his is nice enough.

OK. I nodded. But then I helded up mah paw. "I don't know what they will say. None of us do. It's their story."

Everyone nodded. I got us going from talk to action by walking out of the Throne Room then, & to the Castle's front door. Everyone followed after me.

Boop even hurried up to hold the door open 4or me, with a quiet smile. I am a rich guy 4or smiles, I must say.

We walked the grassy way to the Full Moon Hill, which is what I decided I would call it.

It was just me & the Author guy going into the Double Dreaming this time, but everyone still got comfy, hands & paws holding with us close to Betsy & Dorris. A nice send-off on our trip.

"Good luck, Beagle," whispered Betsy as nicely as she had ever talked to me. I nodded so not to ignore or say the wrong thing, & then the Author guy & I got close in a nice hug 4or travel. Then Dorris & Betsy & our friends started *hmmmming*.

Maybe worrying doing the right thing tired me a lot, or something, but I just fell easy right down into the Double Dreaming.

I remembered to keep mah eyes closed, & I could then see how the Glowing Hallway 4ormed around me. And then there next to me was the Author guy! I was glad of his tallness.

"How do we find them, Author guy?"

He smiled. "I think they are coming." He pointed way down the Glowing Hallway. I could see moving figures.

We kept going, & I was quiet, but then I just had to call to them.

"Marie? Joe? Daniel? Are you there?"

They heard me & sort of walked up to us. I can't tell you about fast & far in this strange place. It felt like we got nearer because we saw each other, not just our feets walking.

It was sort of a crowd we came up to. I guessed the tallest of the people-folks was Daniel. And the other guy was Joe. I was glad he had no fruits or nuts in his hands right now. O! Yuk!

And the red-haired girl was Marie, of course. Funny to see her live, not in a picture.

And with them I saw MeZmer the White Bunny & Holly Hedgedyhog, &



recalled about one, none, many. And there was the Tumbleweed, I knowed he is Daniel's bestus buddy. And a pretty Lemur Creature & Lion Creature too. I wasn't sure I knowed them so well, but I like all Creatures, A to Z.

Now I thinked quick & knowed they might wonder at me & the Author guy too. So I jumped in to talking. "Hello, mah name is Algernon Beagle, & I live in a place called Bags End. And this is, um, Raymond the Author guy."

Daniel is I guess their leader, cuz he sorta stepped 4orward to shake our hand & paw.

"What are you the Author of, Raymond?" he asked all friendly.

The Author guy looked at me, & I nodded him to tell it straight & true.

"Well, I am the Author of the many stories in the many little colored Secret Books. They're about, um, all of you."

Daniel looked confused, & Marie & Joe did too. But also almost like they weren't totally surprised too.

Then the Author guy raised a finger, & led us a ways back from where they'd come. On the walls were these pictures.

He said, "That picture is of you, Marie, dreaming in the clearing of Faeries. This next one is of you, Joe, riding your bike to visit Marie at her school, & not finding her. This next one is how Marie dreamed her mountain, but not its reflection, is gone. And that one is where you, Daniel & Tumbleweed, were traveling when all that was happening. These pictures are of how you started your travels together, & in times since."

They all nodded, surprised, but only sorta!

* * * * *

With the Travelers to Imagianna!

We explained to these guys all about these 4 pictures, & they listened very closely. Then Daniel said, "We've been traveling to try & find a way to unite the 6 Islands that broke apart, back where we come from."

I nodded & said, "I heared some of your travels tolded by CC, when I was visiting the Creature Common." They all looked more of that only-sorta-surprised look at me.

I hurried on. "We came here to find you & ask 4or your help."

"Help?" asked Joe. He looked a little skeptical at all this. I could not blame him really, but I nodded & talked on. Used mah Beagle charms in the matter. Yah, right.

"Well, see, we have what was writed in the Secret Books about your early adventures, but some of it doesn't make sense. And I sort of objected to the idear of just making stuff up to fill in your stories, & said we should come & see you. Ask 4or your help."

They nodded, & all 3 were smiling, even Joe a little. Beagle charm. Melts your heartbone.

I thinked 4or a moment, then tooked a chance. "Would you come back to Imagianna where we came here from, to see Princess Crissy? She's one of the smartest & nicest guys I know."

Marie talked now, her finger upon her chin, like she was thinking real hard. "We're not dreaming right now, Algernon. But you are?"

Hm. This Glowing Hallway must have more to it than I already thought?

Now Joe talked like this all interested him more. Less skeptical. "Maybe this Hallway is how we are able to meet like this. It's like all sorts can cross here."

This made sense. But they were nice & agreeable to help, so I guessed

coming back to Dreamland Imagianna was OK by them.

So me & the Author guy led the Travelers & their Creature companions back to regular Dreamland Imagianna, which is what we woked up to at the end of the Glowing Hallway. Full Moon Hill, all of us clustered together on Dorris & Betsy Bunny Pillow.

I led our way down that hill, & then up the next one to where Princess Crissy's Castle was.

Looked up at the Author guy, who smiled & knocked on the Castle's front door.

And there was sharp-dressed Dreamland Boop welcoming more of us in than he had seen off, but a wink to me & he was bringing us to Crissy's Secret Room. We all friendly crowded in to sit together.

And I was starting to try to explain all of this to smiling Crissy when Daniel above me laid his hand gently on mah headbone. "Wait just a moment, Algernon." I waited.

He & Crissy were now looking at each other like shocked, not even sorta like be4ore. "Iris?" he asked.

Who?

Crissy peered at Daniel real close, no words. Then she talked real slow. "You're the Architect. We only talk in dreams."

He nodded.

Tho short & confused, I raised up a fuss. "Who is Iris?"

Crissy smiled. "That's what he calls me."

Daniel smiled at me too. "And this is Dreamland, Algernon."

Fair point. "You didn't know he was Daniel too?" I asked Crissy.

She shooked her head.

I sneaked a look at the Creatures, who were still kind of crowded at the doorway. It's got these long strings of colored rings around it, instead of a door. More friendly to visitors. They were quiet, listening.

Daniel talked again. "Iris & I talk about Alternative History, Algernon. We sit in this room, & I tell her my ideas."

Crissy smiled at me in a way that I knowed without even a sniff was her. "I listen. Sometimes I remember something to help."

"You never tolded me about these dreams, Crissy," I say, not suspiciously, just sort of curious.

"I never remember them very well, & they don't happen very much. I never thought to mention them because you have so many bigger & stranger travels in Dreamland, Algernon." Hm. That sounded like Crissy too.

Well, I guessed that knowing was good enough 4or everyone, because we all kind of settled together on the soft pink cushions with strange designs on them to figger some things out.

I made Crissy bring down her storybooks she wrote when she was Christina. Like The Tangled Gate. Daniel hadn't seen them be4ore, but I guessed Crissy-Iris was more used to talking to him about his idears.

But all of us sat looking through them, & I made Crissy read from them too. That was even more friendly among us. She is a good writer!

But then she brung out a lot of copies of mah newspaper called Bags End News, & I didn't know what to think! Crissy made me read story after story from them, to the horror of mah humble-bone.

They especially liked The Stories of the Four Pictures. I was glad I had not messed it up.

Daniel & Crissy were then sort of quietly talking to each other, & just when I was gonna get bugged, he nodded to her, & all of us got quiet to listen.

"Daniel thinks we should combine all of our efforts, & tell more of those early days as a new Grand Production!"

Wow. Nobody said a word at first, but then everyone talked & liked this new idear.

Crissy then sat near to me. "What do you think, Algernon?"

I thinked a moment, & then said, "We have got a lot of work to do to pull off a good Grand Production!"



To be concluded in *Cenacle* | 121 | October 2022!

* * * * *



Abandon View







Timothy Vilgiate



Rivers of the Mind

[A Novel]

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

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

Chapter 21:

Up. Down. Up. Down.

i.

Up. Down. Up. Down. Up . . . down . . . the oars rise and sink rhythmically into the water, as the fisherman sits behind me, tearing bits of bread and scattering them into the river. Up . . . down. Up . . . down. We inch along the river, a tremendous expanse with a surface like a glass eye. My arms and my shoulders ache. I do not know how long I have been rowing. It seems like it has been daytime for an eternity. Up. Down. Up . . . down. Up . . . Clunk.

I wince in fear of the fisherman's net, that it will again bear down on my back, but he does not move. The bread ceases to drop from between his weathered fingers. The air ceases to move. The sunlight ceases to burn. I stand up.

My name . . . I remember it . . . my name . . . is John. A mouth and eyes tear openings from the sunken, skinned-over pits in my skull. Memories flood back into my brain, and I look up at the sky. The inside of my head suddenly becomes awash with colors and realizations. Voices. My own voices. How long have I labored here? Months? Years? Even longer. I remember my memories being used as playthings, each one being taken and handed back to me used, so that it no longer smelled, felt, or sounded clean and familiar, like if a friend borrowed a jacket and forgot to wash it. The fisherman took them from me. I can remember it all. Yes, I remember everything now. Every single piece . . .

He torpidly hunches over the water, his body locked in place, like the jaw of a rabid dog around the neck of its prey. My body fills with adrenaline as I clutch the oar in my hands, raising it up over my head. He's taken everything from me, everything that I have. I swing the oar as hard as I can, and knock his frozen body out of the boat, and onto the still water. He bounces and slides absently down the frictionless river. As he slides away, his face turns toward me, gaping black pits where his eyes should be, and a ring of hooked teeth around his mouth. I shudder at his true form, before turning my attention to more pressing matters.

ii.

Here I am, alone in an empty, frozen, and lifeless world. All around me, night, beautiful and perfect night, has fallen on the riverbanks, and I am a stranger in own mind. More than anything, I want to get out of here. Out of this boat. Out of this river. Out of my brain. My powers come back in full force . . . I pull against the spaces between my neurons, hearing them bend and screech like breaking steel.

Suddenly, I become conscious of the rest of my brain. I perceive myself as an infinitesimal part of it, and know that, somehow, he has been expelled from where I am. But there are others like him, hidden

elsewhere inside my head. Others like me remain trapped in different parts of space and time. Somewhere else in my brain the fisherman stays alive, conserving his energy around whichever parts of this invasion he deems most critical to his ultimate objective. Around those pieces of brain, there is a stubborn wall, wrapped tight like a python, suffocating my will to resist. It is hopeless to fight against it, being but one, lonely fragment of a personality, and I know if I rattle on the bars of my cages any more, I might draw his attention back to my apparently discarded reality.

Watching the emptiness above my head, I gently step out onto the water. I remember the countless times that I had been thrown into the river, hundreds of them materialize all together in a poison that now presses against my ears, and my veins, drowning out my own heartbeat, as I fall into my imagination, falling again, and again, and again.

But I do not fall this time. I stand, my feet resting on the water gently. I focus on my feet. Left. Right. Left. Right. I carefully creep along the frozen water, which is eerily flat and completely endless. I can hear my footsteps clap back to me against a wall that feels incredibly close, yet which never appears to me, hidden beneath the horizon. Left. Right. Left. Right. I continue on.

Real Life feels like an impossibly far away place, a stupid dream. I know that I am the person I think I am, but I don't believe it. It is like . . . like when I was in kindergarten, and a new teacher named Ms. Grey (she got hired after the last teacher brought some grownup drinks to the school) read me a book about dinosaurs. She told me that, right where we were in California, there used to be dinosaurs that were taller than the ceiling. I tried to picture it, but I never could, even when I grew up and learned more about dinosaurs. I learned to harvest their bones to power cities, in fact. I always tried to picture it, and I knew that they were real once upon a time but, in my mind, I could never make them real.

Just like that, I can never make that person I remember, all that time ago, real to me again. I feel old, older than I could possibly be, as distant from that person as I am from the dinosaurs. Old enough that any happiness I remember becomes irrelevant, that any sadness I have ever felt is outweighed by the repetition of this psychic prison, that any debts I owe no longer matter. There is only this intrusion into my mind, this war that has lasted for what feels like an impossibly long time . . . Left. Right. Left . . .

Walking gives me a certain kind of comfort now. After all, it's half of what I . . . think I remember, and the only thing I know for sure that I really remember. I'd been forced to relive so many of my memories again and again that I don't know for sure which ones are real. Months pass spent reliving the day I first thought about running away at work, for example. Years pass doing nothing but falling down into the mouth of a white flower, its petals wrapping itself around me like a silk blanket until I . . . land.

iii.

My foot touches . . . land . . . I jolt up, almost falling over. I've reached the end of the river. In retrospect, it seems that it happened in the blink of an eye, even if I know that it couldn't have. I look back, and the boat seems to be only a few feet away. But I know intuitively it isn't, somehow. Perhaps I am walking into another trap. But if I am, I suppose I have no choice.

Dense fog hangs between the buildings in a decidedly non-descript town, its streets lined with quaint two-story buildings and enveloped on all sides by forest. Frigid, thick air fills my lungs as I step up to have a closer look. Cars are stopped in the middle of traffic, their headlights peering out through the fog. People are frozen in the midst of crossing roads. An old woman in a shop holds her hand up to turn an Open sign. A younger boy behind her has been caught in the middle of a sneeze. All of it feels real. The boat, and the memory of what exactly the boat looks like, both vanish; the river now seems so tiny it is barely even a stream. My footsteps toss dry echoes against the walls in the city, and quickly become lost in the impenetrable, unreal silence.

Is this another trap? I don't remember seeing a place like this before, and perhaps that is the best sign of one of his traps. What is more, I can read all of these people's minds . . . or, well, I can read whatever vowel or consonant or color they had been thinking of. They are all real people. All of them. I weave through

the crowd, and inspect their faces with pity and concern. None of their . . . um . . . sounds give me any idea where I am, or where I ought to go. Nothing about this place gives me any sense of an answer. Perhaps my tormentor has died, and my rescue has been overlooked. Or perhaps I am so distant from the real world that a second out there feels like a million years in here . . . by the time my rescue is finished, maybe there won't be anything left of me.

But I can't dwell on it, and I can't get my hopes up. That is just what he wants. This town is probably another trap, and I should know by now I'll never escape into any kind of real world. I keep walking, with my head down, but every muscle in my body is ready to jump and run at the slightest sign of danger.

iv.

A pair of marshy, heavy footsteps in the distance catches my attention. Though I recognize the mind they belong to as that of my captor, he does not seem quite like the fisherman I remember. I freeze anyway. The world feels like it is spinning. As the enemy mind comes nearer, shadows fall over the walls of brick buildings and doors of passing cars. I am torn between running away and hiding. Deluding myself into believing that I have a chance, I choose to hide . . . to at least make an attempt at survival, delusion or no delusion . . . and so I dive into a nearby alley way, finding shelter behind a dumpster. His footsteps come closer, perilously close.

For an instant, I catch a glimpse into his thoughts and his memories, with no interference or distortion. His name is . . . Ryan. He creeps along, in a dissociated and delirious haze, worn thin from millennia of pain. Though he seems different from the fisherman, I can tell that the two at least come from the same place, if they are not the same person entirely. I ponder whether I should attack him, or maybe try to speak to him, but I do not want to do anything foolish.

Instead, as he moves further away, I latch onto his mind so that I can track him from a distance, and I try to understand his thoughts. His mind certainly remembers more than I can even fathom . . . it has seen more time, it has been caught in more loops, it has lingered for more years in the same place. There is no bottom or top to his memories; instead they form a numinous and infinite space. He walks along stiltedly, with no purpose or reason entering his mind.

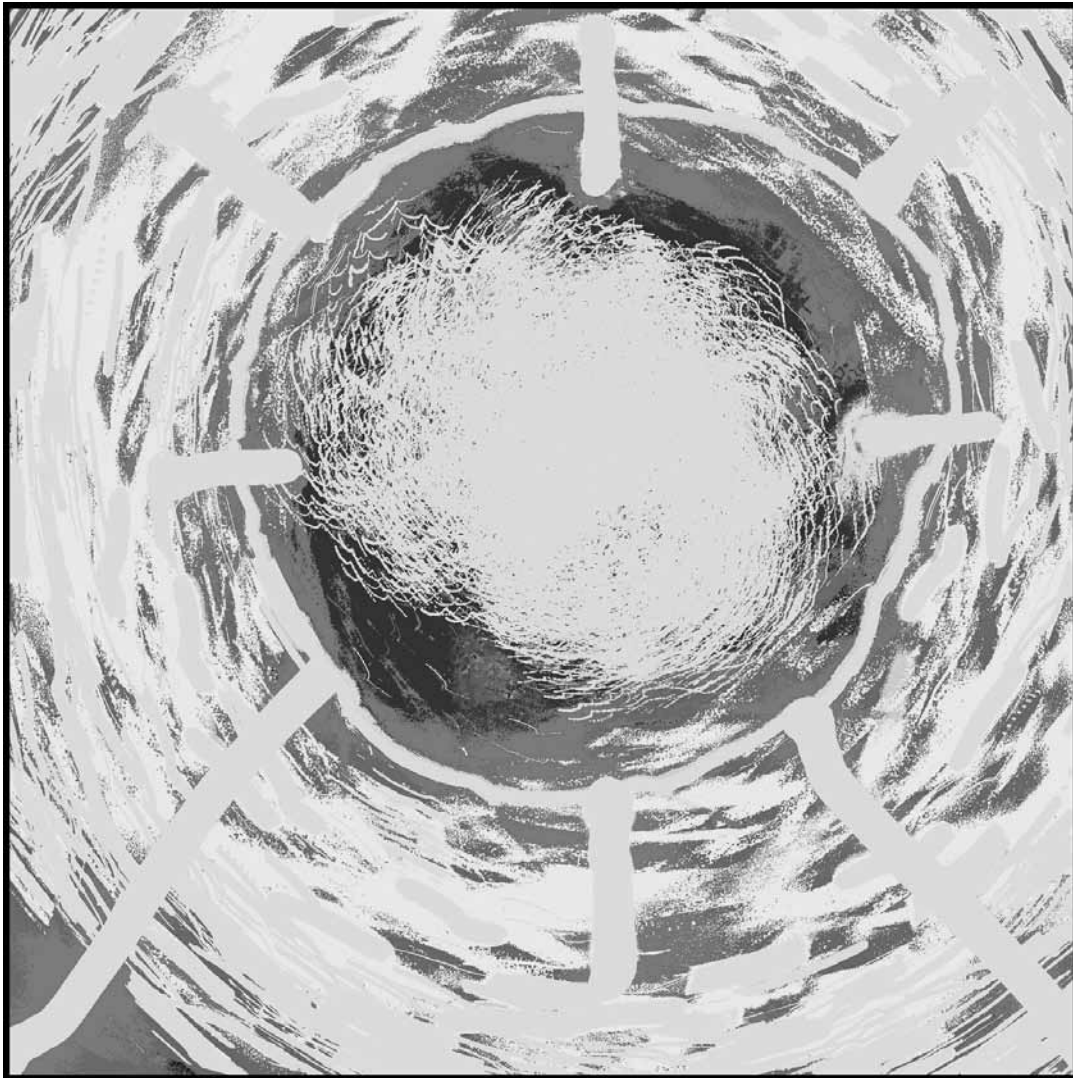
Once I am sure I'll be out of sight, I slide out of the alleyway, and hunch down behind a car that is frozen in the process of parking. Ryan shoots a glance over his shoulder with bloodshot and paranoid eyes, his enormous pupils darting back and forth in search of an unseen attacker. Stifled as it is by years and years of abuse, I feel compassion for him . . . a feeling I thought I had lost a long time ago. After all, he could be the only one in the world who has gone through what I have gone through. I think back to what the fisherman said. "A lonely God," he'd said he was.

And, indeed, he seems a lonely God now that I've seen this other part of him. He is less grandiose, less purposeful; billions upon billions of years of wandering through time, witnessing the passage of various histories across an almost boundless multiverse, has rendered him too apathetic for sadism. But his apathy has never overcome his fear; he is still afraid and I understand why. You never get over your first few times dying, not really, and he's died thousands more times than I have. As I follow along, I almost feel a trust growing for him. But I do not want to feed into it . . . I can't trust him. It is worth it, at the very least, to follow him and see what he does.

v.

He moves more and more frantically as he goes on, winding through alleys and streets, ever more suspicious that he is being followed by a younger and more nefarious version of himself from a different timeline. He lets his mind become dominated, almost willfully it seems, by the remembered image of a blue-grey house, with two stories and a freshly painted white deck. In this memory, a teenager, who looks just like him, sits hunched over a desk adjacent to the window, his eyes glazing over at a sheet of graph paper.

A familiar scene. He cannot count how many times he's relived it. He knows there's been at least a



Timothy Vilgiate

million times where he tries to attack that foolish, stupid teenager snipping seed pods off of a strange, white flower, and he's managed to kill himself in more than half of those attempts, only to wind up back in the same spot, remembering everything, forced to start from scratch. This infinitesimal moment that we now enter 11 years in the past is only a fraction of a split second that has gone by since he'd taken the seeds. It will take another three days of real time for him to die, according to the news reports he's read about his death, and by his count, that means it will take around 400 septillion years for his consciousness to enter death.

But time is only one of seven dimensions he can perceive beyond height, width, and depth. He always checks his last words in the paper to see what kind of reality he is starting out in, since it changes whenever he dies. His last words change too, depending on the timeline. Sometimes the paper says he screamed and screamed, begging for it to stop. Other times, he boasted through maniacal cackles that he was the devil, and that the whole world would soon become his slaves. In some, he whispered dreamy words about angels, universal peace, castles of light. Once, they said he didn't say a thing . . . he just stared and stared at the wall until his heart stopped beating.

This walk down the city street appears linear on the surface, but actually takes place across thousands of timelines as he dodges attacks, makes preparations, and shifts his focus between possible outcomes.

vi.

The blue-grey house he remembers suddenly cowers meekly beneath a half-lit streetlamp trapped in the middle of a flicker. The grass dies back softly as his feet touches it. Leaves clatter to the ground from the bushes. His hand gently grasps the doorknob, preparing to turn it with a morose, dried-out despair. But he pauses for some reason. Like he's forgotten something.

He clears his throat. "Well," he mutters, "aren't you going to come in?" He looks over his shoulder. "Come on. You realized I'm doing this on a constant loop and you didn't figure out I already know you're here? Geez. He must have really done a number on this version of you, huh?"

I emerge from behind the car.

Haphazardly, he waves. "Hey!"

"Hey."

"How's it going?"

Chapter 22: Disinformation

i. Phillip

As Agent Carter hurried down to the tent, Grace pulled me back briefly, and said, "Something's not right here."

"You're telling me. That goddamn squirrely son of a bitch is lying right through his teeth."

ii. Agent Carter

Something was off about that police officer. Phillip, I think his name was. Every so often during our conversation, I felt a piece of my mind slip out of place. I felt destabilized. He seemed to know more than he let on; almost seemed like he could have been some kind of very well-trained foreign agent putting on a southern accent, working to infiltrate our perimeter. I needed to keep an eye on him. Feed him more false information; see if his handlers put it out through their surrogate, the so-called "Dean Heyerdahl" with his so-called "blog" about this so-called "alien conspiracy."

I walked in through the front of the tent, hoping that the others would catch up. A handful of people had already been cleared to leave, given the designated cover story.

I saw Dr. Whitebalm standing next to the entryway to the triage area, taking notes on a clipboard. I asked, "How are things looking? Any updates?"

"We've got six or seven so far exposed to levels above the threshold. Most of them were standing right below the anomaly when it occurred. One seems to have escaped one of the houses that fell into the sinkhole. Another may have been drinking tap water from an irradiated pipe right as the energy contacted the metal. But, so far, no serious health complications.

"You've just got . . . Meagan Courts, I believe her name is, with some faint bruises, and the owner of the Parker Ranch with a broken hip, and last an unidentified man, probably a vagrant, who is evidently in some kind of coma. Both Meagan and the vagrant are registering significant exposure levels. How did things go with the locals?"

"Well, I've got two of them helping with security. Should be here . . . soon . . . There they are. Phillip, Grace, come here. This is Dr. Whitebalm."

iii. Phillip

"Pleasure to meet you," Grace said to Dr. Whitebalm.

"Howdy, Doc," I said as she shook my hand, and then . . . then she started staring at me. Her pupils dilated and shrunk as she studied me, fascinated. A sense of dread came over me. I was her experiment, wasn't I? So were all these people.

"How are you feeling? Both of you." She tried to pretend that she meant both of us, but kept looking at me out of the corner of her eyes.

"Shocked," Grace answered.

"Truly. So what's your capacity here?" I asked.

"Well, I'm . . ."

Agent Carter interrupted. "Dr. Whitebalm works at our data collection center. Her background is in physics. She's here to help advise on the question of radiation."

"Radiation, huh?" I asked.

iv. Dr. Whitebalm

I can tell that Phillip has some kind of ability, and that he feels unsettled by it.

Hoping to imply that he can come to me for help should he need it, I responded, "If you have any questions, feel free to ask."

He asked again, "What kind of radiation, doctor?"

"Well, it's difficult to explain to laypeople, but . . ."

Agent Carter cut in again. "I'm sure Dr. Whitebalm can explain it to you later. We need to get going on security."

"Right. I'd be happy to discuss it with you later," I said to Phillip.

v. Grace

Agent Carter positioned us strategically on patrol around the south and east sides of the tent, looking out for any curiosity seekers. All of us told to make sure no one went past the radiation warning signs. That meant, essentially, that I was supposed to look at some trees for the rest of the afternoon, and try to look busy. My migraine was back.

Eventually, Agent Carter came to check on me. "How's it going? Anyone try to get through?"

"None yet," I answered.

"Thank you for your patience. We should be starting with the press conference soon, and then you'll be free to go."

"Thanks for letting me know."

Agent Carter moved a little closer. "How's that ibuprofen working for you?"

"Head's feeling a little better. Christ, what a day."

"You're telling me." He paused. "Say, listen. You told me Monday you were Navy, right?"

"Yep."

"What's your security clearance, if you don't mind me asking?"

"TS. Why?"

"Alright. Well, I didn't wanna fill your partner in on this since he seems like a bit of a cowboy type. Maybe a little slow. I might be reading him wrong, so forgive me if I sound rude. I just don't know how much I trust him with classified intelligence. But there is something that I need to explain to you, about all this."

"Alright."

vi. Agent Carter

I told her, "There was no dirty bomb. We'd received tips for months about an 'ISIS Sleeper Cell' in the area, but it was actually just a pair of brothers from Pakistan who moved out here to try and work on some kind of web startup. We needed a cover story since the actual cause of the explosion was . . . You . . . you might find this hard to believe."

I tried to think of something. What could I tell her? What might she believe and be willing to spill to her partner? "It was a blast from an unknown weapon. We believe it to be an experimental weapon designed by either the Russians or the Chinese."

"What kind of weapon?" Grace asked.

"We aren't sure. We think it might have been a rail gun of some kind."

Grace was quiet a moment. "Interesting. A rail gun did all this?"

"Very powerful. Far beyond what we thought was technologically feasible."

"You considered it might be aliens?"

I stuttered, "Well . . . I . . ."

Grace laughed and said, "Oh, come on, I'm joking."

I laughed nervously. "Right." Maybe she was in on it too. Connected with this "Dean Heyerdahl" character. Or maybe she herself was Heyerdahl. I'd know once I checked his blog the next morning.

"Thanks for filling me in. So what's with the hospital?"

I scrambled for a moment. "Radiation levels spiked after the weapon was fired."

"Well, thank you for filling me in."

"Of course."

vii. Phillip

I could see the sinkhole from halfway up the hill where I was standing. The sun was growing darker already, as the crowd gathered for the press briefing.

Once I was alone, I took out my phone to read Dusty's texts: "Thanks again for your help. Keep me posted. I'm thinking we should be online before midnight."

"It's been an interesting afternoon," I replied. "We'll have a lot to talk about. Let me know when you have time tomorrow."

I heard footsteps. Dr. Whitebalm appeared and said, "I hope I'm not interrupting anything."

A chill ran up my spine. "Come to tell me about that, uh, radiation?"

"Radiation isn't the right word for it. Here, let's go up the hill."

"Who are you?"

"Dr. Whitebalm."

"You the one who . . . who did this to me?"

"I . . ." She looked over her shoulder, before continuing in a hushed voice. "I'm not sure what you mean. It's a substance or phenomenon that we've called Gamma Triple Prime. If I'm not mistaken, it seems as though you've been exposed to quite a lot of it. Although I'm not sure how. Have you . . . have you noticed anything odd in the past few hours or days? Odd colors? Any glowing from cell phones? That sort of thing?"

"No, am I supposed to?"

"Right, of course not. Maybe it's different for you."

"What's different for me?"

viii. Dr. Whitebalm

Suddenly, I started to feel afraid. Very afraid. I felt like I was about to fall down the hill. My ears rang. For a moment, I felt like I was on the verge of losing my mind.

I tried to answer. "Huh. You . . . you . . ." But I couldn't talk. I couldn't talk. Nothing made sense. I couldn't think. My vision blurred, staggering between frequencies.

ix. Phillip

She started panting, her eyes growing wide, and then she sat down suddenly against the hill. I let her go, trying to calm myself down.

"Don't lie to me. What did you do to me?" I demanded.

"What did *you* do to *me*?"

"Seems like something you should have to answer for, seeing as it happened to me outside of that underground lab of yours."

"What exactly do you mean? When did this happen? Tell me more."

"Monday night."

"Monday night. Not Sunday. Monday . . . that's right . . ."

"You just . . . getting your experiments confused?"

"It wasn't my experiment. I just helped build the . . ." She sighed. "It's extremely difficult to explain to laypeople."

"Try me."

"Alright. How familiar are you with the concept of Einstein's field equations?"

"I . . . am not."

"But you've heard of the idea of a wormhole?"

"Y-yes. I have."

"Right. Well, it's theoretically possible, right, if we solve the Einstein field equation with a Jacobian matrix and a specific determinant. Theoretically, a Schwarzschild black hole will have a corresponding white hole, resulting in what we call an Einstein-Rosen bridge. In 1973, Homer Ellis demonstrated in the *Journal of Mathematical Physics* that . . ."

I stopped her. "I'm afraid I, uh . . . I did not do too well in physics class."

She sighed. "Right. Like I said, it is difficult to explain to laypeople. Essentially, there are lots of particles and magnets, and light, and some Pico scale nuclear fusion, and boom, wormhole. That's the idea."

"So you . . . you what? You shot me through some kind of wormhole?"

"Ha! If only. That's the hope some day. Not you specifically. I'd be happy to shoot anyone through a wormhole. Not malevolently, of course. We could visit Mars like that—" she snapped her fingers "is what I mean. So far the best we can do is send a hundred gram lead weight to Boston,

Massachusetts.”

“So what did you do to me?”

“I didn’t do anything if this goes back to the explosion. That was my colleague, Dr. Martin James, and he died in the accident.” She winced. “It changed me too. That’s what I’ve been wanting to tell you. You must have been affected by a small anomaly that happened the following night. A kind of aftershock.”

“You’re lying to me.”

“Officer, I have no reason to lie to you. Please. If you come in with me, I can . . . make up something very convincing to explain, and we can try to understand what . . .”

“I’m *not* coming with you.”

“Right.” She backed away from me, nervously. “That’s understandable. Just know that what happened to you did not happen intentionally. It was an accident. And I can help you if you need anything. I’ll leave you my business card. If you email me, make sure you say you’re a former student or something.”

Just then, there was a bright flash of light . . . blinding light . . . a brilliant white light that blocked out everything else in the world. I couldn’t even see my own eyelids. I staggered to keep balance.

When I opened my eyes, Dr. Whitebalm had already reached the top of the hill. She watched me with pity, almost amusement, until her image started to blur, and she vanished from sight. The side of the tent rippled as she walked back inside.

* * *

“Just like that. One moment she was there, then she just . . . turned herself invisible, just like that,” I told Grace, as she drove.

Grace was silent so I continued, “I know it sounds crazy. But it really happened.”

“I believe . . . I believe you.”

She winced, clutching her head in her hand for a moment, and looking out the window. Something was weighing on her.

“She said they were trying to make a wormhole, huh?” she said finally.

“That’s what she said.”

“That . . . that doesn’t . . . make any sense.”

“Why?” I asked.

“Agent Carter . . . Agent Carter came up to me, while I was patrolling in the forest. He told me . . . he told me that the government cover story was fake, like that doctor told you . . . but . . . he didn’t say it was because of some . . . some wormhole. He said some . . . some foreign adversary hit us with a rail gun or something.”

“They’re feeding us both different stories. I wonder why.”

“One of them has to be telling the truth, right? They can’t both be lying. You said . . . you said the doctor, she produced a giant flash of light and then she . . . she turned invisible, didn’t you? She sounded like she knew something had happened to you, too.”

“Who’s to say that doctor was even human? Could’ve been an alien, trying to fool me with some advanced technology of some kind.”

“You’re right. God, I feel like I’m going insane if I think you’re right, but you’re right. Even if she’s not an alien, who knows? It could’ve been a ploy at misleading you.”

“Stop the car,” *Ryan says.*

“Did you hear something?” I asked Grace.

“That voice . . . that voice . . . I’ve heard it before.”

“That’s right, Grace. Now stop the car.”

“Do it. Slow . . . slow down,” I said to Grace. Cars up ahead of us had pulled over. The orange



Timothy Vilgiate

light of the sunset cast a gloom over the whole world. The smell of smoke lingered in the air.

“Out of the car,” Ryan demands.

I tried to ask, “What are you . . .” But the people in front of us were out of their cars, shaking. I heard folks in the distance screaming for help. We did as we were told.

“Good.”

Far in the distance, I could see a crowd of translucent people with glowing eyes waiting in the forest, which was burning, filled with the sounds of pain and suffering, torture. The grass started to turn to ash. I reached for my gun.

“I wouldn’t do that if I were you. This is the fast way. I can make this go much, much slower, if you try to—”

He turned to me. The man, who I could now see to be some kind of teenager, froze still. His eye dislodged from its socket and floated out towards me. I stepped out of its way, and watched it drift silently through the air like a blimp. I kept the gun pointed at him.

“Shoot, Phillip! Just shoot!” Grace said.

Everything was suddenly back to normal.

I turned to her and asked, “What were you saying?”

“Stop. This isn’t real.”

“What are you talking about, Grace?”

“No, no, it’s happening again. It’s happening again. Where is he? Where is he?”

“Who? Did you see . . . did you see the . . . the alien?”

“No, not an alien. A . . . Oh my God. I’m . . . I’m forgetting it again. Already. Goddammit. I need . . . shh. I need to write it down. I need to write it down . . .”

* * *

Chapter 23: The Stairway

“Really, I mean it, how are you doing?” the teenager asks me from the doorway.

I stare forward, with a marked deadness in my eyes, hoping that my silence is enough of an answer. He looks back at me, equally dead. He knows the feeling, he seems to tell me with a sympathetic smirk. A smirk, because he is much, much older than me, and has endured much worse.

Walking towards him with suspicion, I stumble slightly up onto the curb. Ryan’s eyes rapidly scan back and forth, uncertain if another version of him from a rival timeline is after him. Or, perhaps, he’s already been killed several times before I can reach the house, and we are in one of the few timelines that he has survived.

He is, after all, the oldest in a long line of others, all with competing objectives. His objective, after all these years, has dwindled down to just one: to find a reality where he can be killed, completely killed. He stares me in the eyes, seriously, waiting to feel the strong pull of gravity inwards, hoping it will suck him down and obliterate him, but it doesn’t come through. Sighing, he rolls his eyes and turns to enter the house.

*Inside, I see a dimly lit room with a yellow rug, and an orange couch with a reddish quilt pattern, inhabited by a lonely brown-haired shaggy dog, whose eyes leer up at the stairway with knowing worry. Ryan goes to the fridge and retrieves a beer. **“This timeline has way better Coors Light than yours. You should try it.”***

I don’t feel like drinking and, quite honestly, I don’t understand. How can we drink? Do we have . . . hands? What will it mean to drink? If I drink seven-dimensional beer, will that have lasting effects on my health? He hands me one anyway. I stare at it, not comprehending. Ryan massages the back of his neck, and takes a long sip of his beer. He lets out a long sigh as he spreads his arms over the side of the couch and sits down, resting his legs, angling so that I am backed somewhat into a corner. The two of us look into the TV,

seeing nothing but a blank screen. Deciding to let myself imagine we are now just two bros hanging out and drinking beer, I open the can and take a slow drink. None of the food I've eaten for the last eternity has had any taste whatsoever. This has a taste, so I suck it down rapidly.

"Yeah, I remember my first time figuring the Coors Light thing out. I just about drank every beer in this stupid house. Doesn't really have too much of an effect, since you're basically just pouring it onto the couch right now. Every time the timeline resets, the beers respawn, and I've probably drank like . . . well, I don't know. The house is . . . probably flooded. I mean, not just with alcohol. Blood probably, too."

I glare at him, warily. I have thousands of questions, but no way to put them to words. Ryan has anticipated this. **"We just watch here. We're fixed in space, but our minds aren't bound by time. That clock up there—"** he points—**"has ticked once. I saw it tick. I just about pissed myself."**

"How did this happen to you?"

"I was being a dumbass. You ever heard of Datura? Jimsonweed? My friend told me it could get you high, so I tried it out, in our backyard and, while I was out there, I saw this big flash of light. I started freaking out. I thought I was being followed by all these people, and everything seemed like it was moving slower, so I went upstairs, and that's when it really hit. The pain. I realized that I took too much, so I started dying."

"I felt my soul start leaving my body, my life flashed before my eyes, and then . . . bloop. I come out of my body, and I just floated away. I went back in time, through years and years of history, until I was watching dinosaurs crawl backwards into salamanders crawling backwards into plankton crawling back into alien-terraforming pods. Just kidding about that last one. Not in this timeline at least. That's why the Coors Light here is so good."

"I . . ." I have more questions than I can count, but go with the most obvious one. **"How many of you are there now?"**

He looks off at the clock, and his eyes glass over with terror. Counting and counting, he eventually can only collapse into hysteric laughter. After all, there are new people every moment. There is no end to them. Pieces of his mind might brush up against each other as they dissolve across time, but they never know one another completely. It was a stupid question for me to ask.

"As many as there are of you now. Maybe more. Your friend, Meagan, the cute one from the Walmart, she's fighting me right now. Is she single now, by the way? Don't give me that look. I mean, she's cute, right? I mean, obviously I'm not gonna like . . . make a move on her. Whatever. She's fighting me, and it's paralyzing me. Well, it's paralyzing part of me. One of me. Douchebag me, aka the fisherman, which may or may not be the name of his emo band, who knows? He's like three trillion years old or something like that. Typical young asshole. Popped up in this universe a little bit ago and now he's getting . . . dangerous."

He sips some of the beer or, rather, pours it onto the couch. **"You're the only thing that can get him out of his mind, and into other minds. That's why he found you. Meagan's throwing a bit of a wrench in that."** His face goes blank, staying still for a few seconds. He looks back and forth, trying to remember the last thing he said. **"That's why he found you. Meagan's throwing a bit of a wrench in that. A wrench? . . . Oh yeah. A . . . wrench. Hmmm."**

"What is she doing?"

"There's not enough time to explain. I mean there is." He becomes gravely serious as he repeats himself, almost horrified at his own words. **"There's plenty of time. There's literally nothing but time. But, I mean, we're cutting it close, and there's an order I have to do this in. I need to get you out."**

"How?"

He sips the last of his imaginary beer which, at this point, has become completely invisible, and tilts the unseen can towards the stairway. **"Stand up."**

Not quite understanding, but not wanting to disobey, I stand and unconsciously raise the beer to my lips. As its cold, non-existent aluminum touches my mouth, I feel the alcohol within come to life, and

transmute into white-hot energy between my teeth, running in between my cells and washing over the cracks in my eyes with a shimmering vibration.

What looks like graph paper . . . endless blue gridlines over a blank white page . . . rolls out like fresh carpet over every surface in the home, except for myself and the stairway, which now stretches miles into the sky. A single door repeats on the stairway every ten or twenty feet.

"I didn't want to let you in on this until I'd explained a little bit. I had to get you here first."

My heart starts pounding, but what can I do? I give in with resignation to the inevitability. Tiny grey dots circle around my feet, leaving faint, ever disappearing pinpricks of light grey. They dance away from me, tracing paths across the floor that look like veins of silver being passed over by a flashlight. Sliding past the edge of the stairway, they seem to go through the monotonous graph paper wall and, right in front of my eyes, the silver dots sketch out another copy of myself, and then the stairway, working like tiny graphite ants. They duplicate the scene again and again, until I cannot see the end of it. I look back and realize that I am only one of thousands of sketches drawn onto a graph paper reality, that bleeds into itself and encompasses me from every side, a world with no definite shape, only blank blue lines of indeterminate distance over a blank white expanse.

A voice presses in against every side of every one of my psyches. **"Chill,"** it says. **"I know it seems like you're hallucinating and shit, but this is like . . . the first time you haven't been hallucinating in a long-ass time. Except those stairs. Those are total bullshit, but I mean, the metaphor's helpful so . . . I don't know. Time travel is hard to understand, and I like visual aids. So, just bear with me, I guess. Here's what you gotta do . . . dammit. Sorry. My memory is blanking again. Gotta retrace my steps. Monarch butterfly . . . Atlantis sinks . . . Hitler lost World War II. Okay! That's right. Okay. I remember. You gotta go up those stairs. Go in the third door on the left. Do not look to the right. And . . . oh! Do not look up the stairs. That would be really bad. Just . . . yeah. Don't look up. Just look at your feet, and count to 33. Eleven steps to each door. I really am not good with counting, so that's pretty much up to you. Like, just count. 1, 2, 3, you know. 33 steps. Do not look up. Do not look to the right. Third door. The third door ON THE LEFT. Ok?"**

I try to walk but, instead of moving, it seems to draw the stairs closer to me, like I've zoomed in with a camera. My muscles croak with an inexplicable agony, shoot with pain and exhaustion, like I've run an entire mile. 33 steps. I move closer to the stairs, so that the rail is almost close enough to touch. I want to look up, to see what lies at the end of the infinite stairway, to see if it is a trap, but I do not. Nervously, I move closer to the stairs, and feel the cold wooden railing touch my hand. The nerves in my body seem to connect with it, a feeling like electricity pulsing through the seams between my flesh and my bone.

The stairway shivers, and the world, almost magically, reverts to the living room, where Ryan still sits cross-legged on the couch, finishing a beer that does not exist in the periphery of my vision. Before I can look at him, I hear the same voice in my head as before. **"Do not look to the right."** My heart fills with dread, and I look down at my feet, taking the first steps up the stairway. 1. 2. 3. I wince, a sharp pain shooting through my legs. Only thirty steps like this left to go. 4. 5. 6.

Suddenly, I catch a glimpse of something I remember . . . my heart fills with an ecstasy. A memory, a real memory, pure, untouched, like new. Like a long lost photograph, it dangles about my mind, teasing me. I reach into it, try to hold on to it, to cherish it . . . 7. 8. 9. It flutters away. The memory, it . . . can't . . . I can't bring it back. I can't even remember what I've forgotten. I grit my teeth with unspeakable loathing, and take the next steps. 10. 11.

"You don't really trust him, do you, John?" a voice whispers to me from behind the first door. A palpable heat comes from behind it; a light becomes visible from under a door to the left. I look towards it.

"Don't you see what he's trying to do?" it asks, almost grinning with amusement. I tremble. I do not. Of course I do not trust him. **"He wants you to keep looking down. He doesn't want you to see what's at the top of the stairs."** My eyes twitch, paranoid and disturbed.

"Shut the fuck up," I spit at the voice under my breath. **"Shut the fuck up."**

12. 13. 14. I can feel something driving its way down my backbone. I can feel the presence of some

invisible steel wedge piercing through the center of my body, not quite numb, but somehow without pain all the same . . . an anti-numbness . . . the presence of feeling.

15. 16. 17. 18. 19. My skin sears with a heat, an energy tries to lurch its way out of my body. My skin feels on the verge of bursting.

20. 21. The world seems impossibly bright. I've forgotten all that has happened to me before. I feel almost like I am falling backwards, but I do not know how I can be. I am standing still on the stairs, a number is in my head, emblazoned, almost branded onto my mind. The next number I have to count. I know what it is . . . I know it . . . 22.

An avalanche of gravity peels itself off of me, and I sink down towards the ground. My body feels light, my skin tears away and bursts with fiery flares and arches that soar over my newly exposed, star-like flesh. I am rising, and rising. Suddenly, rather than shrinking, I convince myself I am growing to incredible size. I do not remember who I am, but I do not need to remember.

I'd been counting, but I don't understand why. I am a smoldering piece of fire at the base of an immense door, alone on an endless, flat wooden plain underneath a white sky, crisscrossed with blue lines. Do I keep walking? Do I keep counting? Ahead of me rises a high wall, striped red and yellow and brown, and tinged with spots of the deepest black I can comprehend.

I wonder at the world around me, feeling a supreme, nearly divine peace. I have always been, and I always will be. As I glow brighter, I pour my light into the darkness of the great, incredible wall that stretches beyond my vision. I hold up my hands so that the light grows brighter still, flames shooting from my body into the heavens. The earth shakes. I become an infinite light.

Tiny white squares with blue edges begin falling from the sky, covered in flames. I look up. A fire begins to spread across the white, seamless sky, carving open what looks like an ever-expanding set of parted lips that conceals an endless and eternal black. Thousands of white flowers streaked with barely perceptible blue grids hang in the sky, like dancing bells, descending slowly. I stare upwards at them, transfixed by their gentle and seductive forms. The sky above engulfs my senses, and my own light feels incredibly dim as I face the infinite and colossal nothingness of something even more eternal than myself.

A sheet of graph paper slides from over the edges of the night sky, taking up the whole horizon for uncountable miles with a hissing sound that seems to blanket the entire universe.

"Run!"

I do not know how. I look down at my feet . . . they are hardly feet at all . . . they look like faded pencil marks . . . oh God . . . I am . . . it has made me . . . and now it has begun to erase me. I run and run towards the distant wall in the horizon. The white flowers merge into one great rectangle high above our heads, and the burnt night sky crumples itself into a ball some distance to the side. The ruined sky, which I know somehow to be friendly, folds inwards, and rotates like a fresh-formed planet, contorting into a fractal vortex, a never-ending swirling snail's shell, surrounded by a growing disk. Paper ripples away from this perplexing, anti-geometric figure in crisscrossing waves, shaped like diamonds to form a saw blade that tears against the edges of the invading sky.

The invaders, meanwhile, regroup to the side . . . the colossal white flowers line their mouths against one another, and swallow each other up, with an effect that looks like a finger passing underneath a mirror. The reflections then reappear about half a mile away from each other, and hurtle back together to repeat this process of collision, dissolution, and remanifestation.

As this pattern repeats and repeats in front of my helpless eyes, the flowers arrange themselves into two immense rectangles that pivot around one another in perfectly executed, yet seemingly impossible, orbits. The diamond saw teeth at the edge of the friendly sky extends into the invading sky, driving it back, as the two colossal rectangles swing towards the massive saw blades . . . this takes place over what seems like eons, a movie taking place outside of my sun like sky.

Eventually, I am removed from the scene entirely, only watching myself watch the sky, watching myself see the two immense rectangles coalesce into strips and coil around each other, like two pythons trying to swallow themselves. A pyramid, rotating, and peeling out from itself to attack the rectangles with endless rows

of neat white squares, cast brilliant, parasol-shaped circles across the sky, like a confusion of monochromatic umbrellas. The two skies grow larger, and larger, until they collide. I watch myself, watching a stranger crouch underneath a massive step in a staircase, staring at a flickering graph paper chaos . . . I walk away from him, towards another stairway, much like the one I've just left, which waits for me at the far side of a blank void.

I open my eyes. Fuck, dude. This is a crazy party. I shake my head. My stomach trembles. What am I seeing? I hear music. I smell beer. I hear food. I mean, I . . . wait. Fuck, man, I must be really fucking high right now. I open my eyes again. Am I tripping? I am lying on the stairs, looking down. Fuck, dude, this is a crazy party. I shake my stomach. My head trembles. I open my eyes. My head shakes. My trembled stomach . . . becomes . . . I open my eyes.

All at once I remember I am a prisoner. The lights from the party become grey. The door at the base of the stairs rattles with the furious wind and pounding rain. The river has started to rise up into the city and cover the floor. I remember what I have to do. I have to keep going.

23. I look down at my feet, or where I know that my feet should be. With no light, after all, I can't quite see myself very clearly. As I move into an immense shadow, my atoms lose their form, my essence loses its being, there is no more sight, no more to be seen. I remember what I have to do.

24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33.

The door. The stairway and the house peel back, and I see the door, alone in the center of a thousand pointed star, printed on never-ending graph paper that flows out of itself, and only outward, so wide that I cannot see the ends of its points. I can only know that they are there, that they flow towards an unseen and distant four-dimensional pyramid of indeterminate size; the deep inevitability of these unseen formations is instinctive, unquestionable. From here, everything looks as though I sit in the base of a valley.

Though tempted to look up, to look away from myself, this body I know to be mine, this self I know to be imperfect, I focus my attention away from the unknowable shape and curvature of that which is, and instead, I focus everything, all my senses, on the door. The door. The Old Door. The Weathered Door. The Door with Keyholes Rusted and Hinges Peeling From Their Arches. The Door That Smells of Sanitized Air and Wet Earth, the Door That Masks Unspeakable and Unknowable Fears.

I touch the handle. The nerves in some distant, massive form line up with my own . . . all across the endless, spherical body . . . I see that I exist only as one tiny cell of something massive . . . I am one of 9,999,999 points in a network that exists here at this door across all times, all universes, all existences . . . I can see myself there at the door, my hand around it, turning it slowly with my wrist. And then . . .

Light.

* * * * *



Jo Monea



Abandonment, or Something . . .

i make small
yet big
moves of progress
and yet
i cannot seem
to shake
the despair

i opened the business bank account
i looked into another publishing house for my first manuscript

but again,
the feeling lingers
like a musty smell in a long-forgotten room
filled with old, unused things
that no one cares for

and no one remembers

* * * * *



“Headpiece vignette to the Second Voyage of Sindbad the Sailor.” Illustrated by Louis Rhead, from *The Arabian nights’ entertainments*, New York, London, 1916.

Translated by Husain Haddawy

The Story of Sindbad the Sailor

from The Arabian Nights

[Classic Fiction]

The Second Voyage of Sindbad

Friends, as I told you yesterday, I lived a most enjoyable life of unalloyed pleasure until it occurred to me one day to travel abroad, and I felt a longing for trading, seeing other countries and islands, and making profit. Having made my resolve, I took out a large sum of money and bought goods and travel gear, packed them up, and went down to the shore. There I found a fine new ship, with sails of good cloth, numerous crewmen, and abundant equipment. I loaded my bales on it, as did a group of other merchants, and we sailed on the same day.

We sailed under fair weather, and journeyed from sea to sea, and from island to island and, wherever we landed, we met merchants, high officials, and sellers and buyers, and we sold, bought, and bartered.

We continued in this fashion until fate brought us to a beautiful island abounding with trees, ripe fruits, fragrant flowers, singing birds, and clear streams, but there was not a single inhabitant nor a breathing soul around. The captain anchored the ship at the island, and the merchants and other passengers landed there, to divert themselves with the sight of the trees and birds, and to glorify the One Omnipotent God and wonder at the power of the Almighty King.

I landed with the rest and sat down by a spring of pure water among the trees. I had with me some food, and I sat there eating what the Almighty God had allotted me. The breeze was cool, and the place was pleasant; so I dozed off and rested there until the sweetness of the breeze and fragrance of the flowers lulled me into a deep sleep.

When I awoke, I did not find a single soul around, neither man nor demon. The ship had sailed with all the passengers and left me behind, none of the merchants or the crew taking any notice of me. I searched right and left, but found no one but myself.

I felt extremely unhappy and outraged, and my spleen was about to burst from the severity of my anxiety, grief, and fatigue, for I was all alone with nothing of worldly goods, and without food or drink. I felt desolate and despaired of life, saying to myself, "Not every time the jar is saved in time. If I escaped safely the first time, by finding someone who took me with him from the shore of that island to the inhabited part, this time I am very far from the prospect of finding someone who will deliver me out of here."

Then I began to weep and wail for myself until I was completely overcome by grief, blaming myself for what I had done, and for having embarked on the hardships of travel, after I had been reposing peacefully in my own house and in my own country, happily enjoying good food and good drink and good clothes, without need for money or goods. I regretted leaving Baghdad on this sea journey, especially after the hardships I had endured on the first, and after my narrow escape from destruction, saying, "We are God's and to God we return." I felt like a madman.

At last, I arose and began to walk on the island, turning right and left, for I was unable to sit still in any one place. Then I climbed a tall tree, and looked to the right and left, but saw nothing but sky and water and trees and birds and islands and sands. Then I looked closely, and saw a large, white

object. I climbed down and walked in its direction until I reached it, and found it to be a huge white dome of great height and circumference. I drew closer and walked around it but found that it had no door and, because of its extreme smoothness, I had neither the power nor the nimbleness to climb it.

I marked the spot where I stood, and went around the dome to measure its circumference, and found it to be a good fifty paces. I stood, thinking of a way to get inside, as the day was about to end and the sun was about to set. Suddenly, the sun disappeared, and it grew dark. I therefore thought that a cloud had come over the sun, but since it was summer, I wondered at that. I raised my head to look at the object, and saw that it was a great bird, with a huge body and outspread wings, flying in the air and veiling the sun from the island. My wonder increased, and I recalled a story I heard from tourists and travelers that there is on certain islands an enormous bird, called the Rukh, which feeds its young on elephants, and I became certain that the dome I saw was one of the Rukh's eggs, and wondered at the works of God the Almighty.

While I was in this state, the bird alighted on the egg, and brooded over it with its wing and, stretching its legs behind on the ground, went to sleep. Glory be to Him who never sleeps! I unwound my turban, twisted it with a rope and, girding my waist with it, tied it fast to the bird's feet, saying to myself, "Perhaps, this bird will carry me to a land where there are cities and people. That will be better than staying on this island." I spent that night without sleep, fearing that the bird might fly with me while I was unaware.

When dawn broke, and it was light, the bird rose from its egg, uttered a loud cry, and flew with me up into the sky. It soared higher and higher until I thought that it had reached the pinnacle of heaven. Then it began to descend gradually until it alighted with me on the ground, resting on a high place. As soon as I reached the ground, I hastened to unbind myself and, loosening my turban from its feet, while shaking with fear, although it was unaware and took no notice of me, I walked away. Then it picked up something with its talons from the ground, and flew high into the sky. When I looked at it carefully, I saw that it was an enormous serpent, which the bird had taken and flown with toward the sea. And I wondered at that.

Then I walked about the place, and found myself on a crest overlooking a large, wide, and deep valley, at the foot of a huge and lofty mountain that was so high no one could see the top nor climb to it, so I blamed myself for what I had done, saying, "I wish that I had stayed on the island, which is better than this desolate place, for there I might at least have eaten of its various fruits and drunk from its streams, whereas this place has neither trees nor fruits nor streams. There is no power and no strength save in God the Almighty, the Magnificent. Every time I escape from a calamity, I fall into one that is greater and more perilous."

Then I arose and, gathering my strength, walked in that valley and saw that its ground was composed of diamonds, with which they perforate minerals and jewels, as well as porcelain and onyx, which is such a hard and dense stone that neither stone nor steel has any effect on it and which nobody can cut or break except with the leadstone. Moreover, the valley was full of serpents and snakes, each as big as a palm tree, indeed so huge that it could swallow an elephant. These serpents came out at night and hid themselves during the day, fearing that the Rukh or eagles might carry them away and cut them in pieces, for a reason of which I was unaware. I stood there, regretting what I had done, and saying to myself, "By God, I have hastened my own destruction."

As the day was waning, I walked in that valley and began looking for a place to spend the night, being afraid of the serpents, forgetting my food and drink and subsistence, and thinking only of saving my life. Soon I saw a cave nearby. It had a narrow entrance and, when I went in, I saw a big stone lying by that entrance. I pushed the stone and closed the entrance from the inside, saying to myself, "I am safe here now and, as soon as it is day, I will go out and see what fate will bring." But when I took a look inside, I saw a huge snake brooding over its eggs. My hair stood on end, and I raised my head, committing myself to fate and divine decree. I spent the entire night without sleep and, as soon as it was dawn, I removed the stone with which I had closed the entrance of the cave and went out, like a

drunken man, feeling dizzy from excessive hunger, sleeplessness, and fear.

I walked in the valley in this condition, when suddenly a big slaughtered sheep fell before me, but when I saw no one else around, I was amazed, and I recalled a story I used to hear a long time ago from some merchants, tourists, and travelers that the mountains of the diamonds are so perilous that no one can gain access to them, but that the merchants who deal in diamonds employ a device to get them. They take a sheep, slaughter it, skin it, cut up the meat, and throw it from the top of the mountain into the valley. When the meat falls, still fresh, the diamonds stick to it. Then they leave it there till midday, when the eagles and vultures swoop down on it, pick it up with their talons, and fly with it to the top of the mountain. The merchants then rush, shouting at them, and scare them away from the meat. Then the merchants come to the meat, take the diamonds sticking to it, and carry them back to their country. No one can obtain diamonds except by this method.

When I saw that slaughtered sheep, and recalled that story, I approached the carcass and began to pick a great number of diamonds, and to put them into my pockets and the folds of my clothes, and I continued to fill my pockets, my clothes, my belt, and my turban. While I was thus engaged, another carcass suddenly fell before me. I bound myself to it with my turban and, lying on my back, placed it on my chest, and held on to it. Thus it was raised above the ground.

Suddenly, an eagle swooped down on it, caught it with his talons, and flew up into the air with it and with me clinging to it. The eagle continued to soar until it reached the top of the mountain and, alighting there, was about to tear off a piece of meat, when suddenly a loud cry and the sound of clattering with a piece of wood came from behind the eagle, who took fright and flew away.

I unbound myself from the carcass, with my clothes stained with its blood, and stood by its side. Suddenly, the merchant, who had shouted at the eagle, approached the carcass and saw me standing there, but he did not utter a word, for he was frightened of me. Then he came closer to the carcass, and when he turned it over and found nothing on it, he uttered a loud cry and said, "What a disappointment! There is no power and no strength, save in God the Almighty, the Magnificent. May God save us from Satan the accursed," and he kept expressing regret, wringing his hands and saying, "What a pity! How did this happen?"

I went to him, and he said to me, "Who are you, and what brings you to this place?" I said to him, "Don't be afraid, for I am a human being, and one of the best men. I was a merchant, and I have a strange and extraordinary tale to tell, and the reason for my coming to this valley and this mountain is marvelous to relate. Don't worry, for you will receive from me what will please you. I have with me a great deal of diamonds, each one better than what you would have gotten, and I will give you a portion that will satisfy you. Don't fear and don't worry." When he heard this, he thanked me and invoked a blessing on me, and we began to converse.

When the other merchants, each of whom had thrown down a slaughtered sheep, heard me conversing with their companion, they came to meet me. They saluted me, congratulated me on my safety, and took me with them. I told them my whole story, relating to them what I had suffered on this voyage, and the cause of my coming to this valley.

Then I gave the merchant, to whose slaughtered sheep I had attached myself, a large portion of diamonds, and that made him happy, and he thanked me and invoked a blessing on me, and the merchants said to me, "By God, you have been granted a new life, for no one has come to this place before and escaped from it, but God be praised for your safety." They spent the night in a pleasant and safe place, and I spent the night with them, extremely happy for my safe escape from the Valley of Serpents, and my arrival in an inhabited place.

When it was morning, we arose and journeyed along the ridge of the high mountain, seeing many snakes in the valley below, and we continued walking until we came to a large and pleasant island with a grove of camphor trees, each of which might provide a hundred men with shade. When someone wishes to obtain some camphor, he makes a perforation in the upper part of the tree with a piercing rod and catches what descends from it. The liquid camphor, which is the juice of that tree, flows and later



"Sinbad the sailor's third voyage. Encounter with a man-eating giant." Illustrated by Henry Justice Ford, from *The Arabian nights' entertainments*, Longmans Green and Co., 1898.

hardens, like gum. Afterwards, the tree dries and becomes firewood.

We also saw in that island, besides cattle, a kind of beast called the rhinoceros, which pastures as cows and buffaloes do in our country, and feeds on the leaves of trees, but the body of that beast is bigger than that of a camel. It is a huge beast, with a single horn in the middle of its head, thick and twenty feet long and resembling the figure of a man. Travelers and tourists on land and in the mountains report that this beast called the rhinoceros carries a huge elephant on its horn and grazes with it in the island and on the shores, without feeling its weight, and when the elephant dies on the horn, its fat melts under the heat of the sun and flows on the head of the rhinoceros and, entering his eyes, blinds it. Then it lies down by the shore, and the Rukh picks it up with its talons and carries it together with the elephant to feed to its young. I also saw in that island a great number of a certain kind of buffalo, the like of which is not seen among us.

The merchants exchanged goods and provisions with me, and paid me money for some of the diamonds I carried in my pockets from the valley. They carried my goods for me, and I journeyed with them, from town to town and from valley to valley, buying and selling and viewing foreign countries and what God has created until we reached Basra, where I stayed for a few days, then headed for Baghdad.

When I reached my quarter and entered my home, with a great quantity of diamonds and a considerable amount of goods and provisions, I met with my family and other relatives, and gave alms and distributed presents to all my relatives and friends. Then I began to eat and drink well, and wear handsome clothes, associating with friends and companions, and forgetting all I had suffered, and I continued to lead a happy, merry, and carefree life of sport and merriment.

And all who heard of my return came to me and inquired about my voyage and the countries I saw, and I told them, relating to them what I had seen and what I had suffered, and they were amazed at the extent of my hardships, and congratulated me on my safety. That was the end of the second voyage. Tomorrow, the Almighty God willing, I will tell you the story of my third voyage.

When Sindbad the Sailor finished telling his story to Sindbad the Porter and the other guests, they all marveled at it. After they had supper, he gave Sindbad the Porter a hundred pieces of gold, which he took and, after thanking Sindbad the Sailor and invoking a blessing on him, went on his way, marveling at what Sindbad had suffered.

The following day, as soon as it was light, the porter arose and, after performing his morning prayer, came to the house of Sindbad, as he had bidden him. The porter went in, wished him good morning, and Sindbad welcomed him and sat with him until the rest of his friends and companions arrived. After they had eaten and drunk and enjoyed themselves, and felt relaxed and merry, Sindbad the Sailor began his story.

* * *

The Third Voyage of Sindbad

Friends, the story of my third voyage is more amazing than the two you have already heard, and God in His wisdom knows best what He keeps hidden. When I returned from my second voyage, I led a life of ease and happiness, rejoicing in my safety, having gained great wealth, for God had compensated me for everything I had lost, as I had related to you yesterday. I lived in Baghdad for some time, in prosperity and peace and happiness, until my soul began to long for travel and sightseeing and commerce and profit, and the soul is naturally prone to evil.

Having made my resolve, I bought a great quantity of goods suited for a sea voyage, packed them up, and journeyed with them from Baghdad to Basra. Then I went to the seashore where I found a large ship in which there were many merchants and other passengers who seemed to be good people—

men of rectitude, piety, and kindness. I embarked with them on that ship, and we sailed, relying on the blessing and aid and favor of the Almighty God, feeling happy in the expectation of a safe and prosperous voyage. We sailed from sea to sea, and from island to island, and from city to city, buying and selling and diverting ourselves with the sights, and feeling exceedingly content and happy until one day we found ourselves in the middle of a roaring, raging sea.

The captain stood at the side of the ship, and examined the sea in all directions. Then he slapped his face, furlled the sails, cast the anchors, plucked his beard, tore his clothes, and uttered a loud cry. When we asked him, "Captain, what is the matter?" he said, "O fellows, may God preserve you. The wind has prevailed against us and forced us into the middle of the sea, and fate and our ill fortune have brought us to the Mountain of the Apes. No one has ever come here and escaped safely."

I was sure that we were all going to perish, and no sooner had the captain finished his speech than the ship was surrounded by ape-like creatures who came in great number, like locusts, and swarmed on the boat and on the shore. We were afraid that if we killed, struck, or chased away any of them, they would easily kill us because of their number, for numbers prevail over courage. We also feared that they would plunder our goods and provisions. They are the ugliest of beasts, with a terrifying appearance, covered with hair like black felt. They have black faces, yellow eyes, and small size, no more than four spans. No one understands their language nor knows who they are, for they shun the society of men.

They climbed up the anchor cables of the ship, on every side, and cut them with their teeth, and they cut likewise all the ropes; so the ship swerved with the wind and stopped on the shore, below the mountain. They seized all the merchants and the other passengers and, landing us on the island, took the ship with everything in it, and disappeared into an unknown place, leaving us behind.

We stayed on the island, eating of its vegetables and fruits and drinking of its streams, until one day we saw a stately mansion, situated in the middle of the island. We walked in its direction and, when we reached it, we found it to be a strong castle, with high walls and a gate of ebony, with two leaves, both of which were open. We entered and found inside a large courtyard, around which there were many high doors, and at the upper end of which there was a large, high bench, on which rested stoves and copper cooking pots hanging above. Around the bench lay many scattered bones. But we saw no one, and were very much surprised.

Then we sat down in the courtyard for a while, and soon fell asleep, and slept from mid-morning till sundown, when suddenly we felt the earth trembling under us, heard a rumbling noise in the air, and saw descending on us from the top of the castle a huge figure in the likeness of a man, black in color and tall in stature, as if he were a huge palm-tree, with eyes like torches; fangs like the tusks of a boar; a big mouth, like the mouth of a whale; lips like the lips of a camel, hanging down on his breast; ears like two barges, hanging down on his shoulders; and nails like the claws of a lion. When we saw him, we fainted, like men stricken dead with anxiety and terror.

When he descended, he sat on the bench for a while, then he got up and, coming to us, grabbed my hand from among my fellow merchants and, lifting me up in the air, turned me over, as I dangled from his hand like a little morsel, and felt my body as a butcher feels a sheep for the slaughter. But finding me feeble from grief, lean from the toil of the journey, and without much meat, he let me go, and picked up one of my companions, turned him over, felt him, as he had done with me, and released him. He kept turning us over and feeling us, one after one, until he came to the captain of our ship, who was a fat, stout, and broad-shouldered man, a man of vigor and vitality.

He was pleased by the captain, and he seized him, as a butcher seizes an animal he is about to slaughter, and, throwing him on the ground, set his foot on his neck and broke it. Then he fetched a long spit and thrust it through the captain's mouth until it came out from his posterior. Then he lit a big fire, and set over it the spit on which the captain was spitted, turning it over the coal, until the flesh was roasted. Then he took the spit off the fire and, placing the body before him, separated the joints, as one separates the joints of a chicken, and proceeded to tear the flesh with his nails and eat it until he devoured all the flesh and gnawed the bones, and nothing was left of the captain except some

bones, which he threw on one side. Then he sat on the bench for a while and fell asleep, snoring like a slaughtered sheep or cow, and slept till morning, when he got up and went on his way.

When we were sure that he was gone, we began to talk with one another, weeping for ourselves and saying, "We wish that we had drowned in the sea, or been eaten by the apes, for that would have been better than being roasted on the coals. By God, this is a vile death, but what God wills comes to pass, and there is no power and no strength save in God the Almighty, the Magnificent. We will die miserably, and no one will know, for there is no escape from this place." We got up and walked in the island to look for a means of escape or a place to hide, feeling that death was lighter to bear than being roasted on the fire. But we failed to find a hiding place, and as the evening overtook us, we returned to the castle, driven by great fear.

No sooner had we sat down than the earth began to tremble under us, and that black creature approached us, and began to turn us over and feel us, one after one, as he had done the first time, until he found one he liked, seized him, and did to him what he had done to the captain, on the first day. Then he roasted him and, after eating him, lay down on the bench and slept, snoring all night, like a slaughtered beast. In the morning, he got up and went on his way, leaving us, as usual.

We drew together and said to one another, "By God, if we throw ourselves into the sea and drown, it will be better than dying by fire, for this is a horrible death."

One of us said, "Listen to me! Let us find a way to kill him and rid ourselves of this affliction and relieve all Muslims of his aggression and tyranny."

I said to them, "Listen, friends! If we have to kill him, let us transport these planks of wood and some of the firewood and make for ourselves a raft and, after we find a way to kill him, embark on the raft and let the sea take us wherever God wishes. Then we will sit there until a ship passes by and picks us up. And if we fail to kill him, we can still embark on the raft and set out in the sea, even though we may drown, in order that we may escape from being slaughtered and roasted on the fire. If we escape, we escape, and if we drown, we die like martyrs."

They all replied, "By God, this is a good plan," and we agreed to carry it out; so we carried the wood out of the castle, built a raft, tied it to the seashore and, after putting some food on it, returned to the castle.

When it was evening, the earth trembled under us, and in came the black creature, like a raging dog. He proceeded to turn us over and to feel us, one after one, until he picked one of us and did to him what he had done to his predecessors. Then he ate him and lay to sleep on the bench, snoring like thunder.

We got up, took two of the iron spits of those set up there, and put them in the blazing fire until they became red-hot, like burning coals. Then, gripping the spits tightly, we went to the black creature, who was fast asleep, snoring, and, pushing the spits with all our united strength and determination, thrust them deep into his eyes. He uttered a great, terrifying cry. Then he got up resolutely from the bench and began to search for us, while we fled from him to the right and left, in unspeakable terror, sure of destruction and despairing of escape.

But being blind, he was unable to see us, and he groped his way to the door, and went out, as his screams made the ground tremble under us, and made us quake with terror. When he went out, we followed him, as he went searching for us. Then he returned with a female, even bigger than he and more hideous in appearance. When we saw him, and saw that his female companion was more horrible than he, we were in utmost terror. When the female saw us, we hurried to the raft, untied it and, embarking on it, pushed it into the sea, while the two stood, throwing big rocks on us until most of us died, except for three, I and two companions.

The raft conveyed us to another island. There, we walked till the end of the day and, when it was night, we went to sleep. We were barely asleep when we were aroused by an enormous serpent with a wide belly. It surrounded us and, approaching one of us, swallowed him to his shoulders, then swallowed the rest of him, and we heard his ribs crack inside its belly.

Then it went on its way, leaving us in utter amazement and grief for our companion and fear for our lives, saying to ourselves, "By God, this is amazing, for each death is more terrible than the preceding one. We rejoiced at our escape from the black creatures, but our joy did not last. There is no power and no strength, save in God. By God, we have escaped from the black creature, and from drowning, but how shall we escape from this accursed monster?"

Then we walked in the island, eating of its fruits and drinking of its streams and, when it was evening, we found a huge, tall tree, climbed it, and went to sleep there, I myself being on the highest branch. As soon as it was dark, the serpent came and, looking right and left, headed for the tree on which we were, and climbed until it reached my companion. Then it swallowed him to his shoulders, coiled with him around the tree, as I heard his bones crack in its belly, then swallowed him whole, while I looked on. Then it slid down from the tree, and went on its way.

I stayed on the tree for the rest of the night and, when it was daylight, I climbed down, like a man stricken dead with terror. I thought of throwing myself into the sea and delivering myself from the world. But I could not bring myself to do it, for life is dear. So I tied a wide piece of wood crosswise to my feet, tied two similar ones to my right side, to my left side, and to my chest, and tied another, very wide and long crosswise to my head. Thus I was in the middle of these pieces of wood which surrounded me and, having fastened them tightly to my body, I threw myself on the ground and lay, with the wood enclosing me like a closet.

When it was dark, the serpent came, as usual, saw me, and headed for me, but it could not swallow me with the wood surrounding me. Then it began to circle around me, while I looked on, like a man stricken dead with terror. Then the serpent began to turn away from me and come back to me and, every time it tried to swallow me, it was prevented by the wood that was tied to me on every side, and it continued in this fashion from sunset to sunrise. When it was light, it went its way, in the utmost vexation and rage. Then I moved my hands and untied myself from the pieces of wood, feeling almost dead from what I had suffered from that serpent.

I then walked in the island until I reached the shore and, happening to look toward the sea, saw a ship on the waves, in the distance. I took a big branch, and began to make signs with it, and call out to the passengers. When they saw me, they said to each other, "We must see what this is, for it may be a man."

They came closer, and when they heard my cries for help, they came to me and took me with them in the ship. Then they inquired about my situation, and I related to them what had happened to me, from beginning to end, and what hardships I had suffered, and they marveled at that. Then they gave me some of their clothes to make myself decent, and offered me some food and some cool sweet water. I ate and drank until I had enough, and I felt refreshed, relaxed, and very comfortable, and my vigor returned. God the Almighty had brought me to life after death, and I thanked Him and praised Him for his abundant blessings, after I had been certain of destruction, thinking that I was in a dream.

We sailed, with God's permission, with a fair wind, until we came to an island called the Salahita Island. The captain cast anchor there, and all the merchants and other passengers landed with their goods to sell and buy. Then the captain turned to me and said, "Listen to me! You are a poor stranger who has, as you told us, suffered many horrors, and I wish to benefit you with something that will help you to return to your country, so that you will pray for me."

I replied, "Very well, you will have my prayers."

He said, "There was a passenger with us whom we lost, and we don't know whether he is alive or dead, for he has left no trace. I would like to give you his goods, and you will take charge of them to sell them in this island, and we will pay you an amount commensurate with your work and trouble and take the rest with us back to Baghdad, find his family, and give it to them, together with the proceeds of the sale. Will you receive the goods and take them to the island to sell them, like the other merchants?"

I replied, "Sir, I hear and obey, with gratitude and thanks," and I invoked a blessing on him and thanked him. He then ordered the porters and sailors to carry the goods to the island and deliver

them to me.

The ship's clerk said to him, "What are those bales that the porters and sailors are carrying out, and in whose merchant's name shall I register them?"

The captain replied, "Register them in the name of Sindbad the Sailor, who was with us on that island and who drowned, without leaving any trace. I wish this stranger to sell these goods, and I will give him an amount commensurate with his work and trouble, and keep the rest of the money with us until we reach Baghdad and, if we find Sindbad, give it to him and, if we don't, give it to his family."

The clerk replied, "This is a good and wise plan."

When I heard the captain mention that the goods were in my name, I said to myself, "By God, I am Sindbad the Sailor who was lost on that island!"

Then I controlled myself and, waited patiently until the merchants came back to the ship, and assembled to chat and consult on the affairs of buying and selling. I approached the captain and said to him, "Sir, do you know anything about the man whose goods you gave me to sell?"

The captain replied, "I know nothing about him, except that he was a man from Baghdad, called Sindbad the Sailor. We cast anchor at one of the islands, and he was lost, and we have not heard anything about him to this day."

I uttered a great cry and said, "O captain, may God preserve you! I am Sindbad the Sailor. When you cast anchor at that island, and the merchants and the rest of the passengers landed, I landed with them. I took with me something to eat, and sat in a place, enjoying myself; then I dozed off and fell into a deep sleep." When the merchants and the other passengers heard my words, they gathered around me, some believing me, some disbelieving.

Soon, one of the merchants, hearing me mention the valley of diamonds approached me and said to them, "Listen to what I have to say, fellows! When I related to you the most extraordinary events that I encountered in my travels, and how the merchants threw the slaughtered sheep into the valley of diamonds, and I threw mine with theirs, as was my habit, and how I found a man attached to my slaughtered sheep, you did not believe me and thought that I was lying."

They said, "Yes, you did tell us that story, and we did not believe you."

The merchant said, "This is the very man who gave me the unmatched expensive diamonds, compensating me with more than I would have gotten from my slaughtered sheep, and who traveled with me as my companion until we reached Basra, where he bade us farewell and headed to his city, while we returned to ours. This is the very man who told us that his name was Sindbad the Sailor, and related to us how the ship had left, while he was sitting in that island. This man has come to us, in order that you may believe my story. All those goods are his property, for he informed us of them when he first met us, and the truth of his words is evident."

When the captain heard the merchant's words, he stood up and, coming up to me, stared at me for a while and asked me, "What is the mark on your bales?" I said, "The mark is such and such," and when I informed him of a matter that had occurred between us when I embarked in the ship, in Basra, he became convinced that I was indeed Sindbad the Sailor, and he embraced me, saluted me, and congratulated me on my safety, saying, "By God, sir, your story is extraordinary and wonderful. God be praised for reuniting you with us, and returning your goods and property to you."

Afterwards, I disposed of my goods, according to the best of my skill, and made a great deal of profit, and I felt exceedingly happy and congratulated myself on my safety and the recovery of my property. We continued to sell and buy in the islands until we reached the Indus Valley, where we likewise sold and bought and enjoyed the sights. I saw in the sea there many wonders and strange things. Among the things I saw was a fish in the form of a cow, and a creature in the form of an ass. I also saw a bird that comes out of a seashell, lays its eggs on the surface of the water, and hatches them there, but never comes up from the sea to the land.

Then we continued our voyage, with God's permission until, with the aid of a fair wind, we reached Basra, where I stayed for a short time and headed for Baghdad. I went to my house, where I

greeted my family and my friends and companions, rejoicing in my safe return to my country and city and home and family.

I gave alms and gifts, and clothed the widows and the orphans. Then I gathered around me my friends and companions, and began to enjoy myself with them, eating well and drinking well, and diverting and entertaining myself, and I forgot all that had happened to me, and all the hardships and perils I had suffered.

On that voyage, I gained what cannot be numbered or calculated. These then were the most extraordinary events of that voyage. Tomorrow, God willing, come to me, and I will tell you the story of the fourth voyage, which is more wonderful than those of the preceding voyages.

Then Sindbad the Sailor gave the porter a hundred pieces of gold, as usual, and ordered that the table be spread. After the table was spread, and the guests dined, still marveling at that story and its events, the porter took the money and went on his way, marveling at what he had heard.

The porter spent the night in his house and, as soon as it was morning, he performed his morning prayer and headed to Sindbad the Sailor. He went in and saluted him, and Sindbad received him with gladness and cheer, and sat with him until the rest of his companions arrived. When food was served, and they ate and drank and felt merry, Sindbad began his story, saying . . .

To be continued in Cenacle | 121 | October 2022

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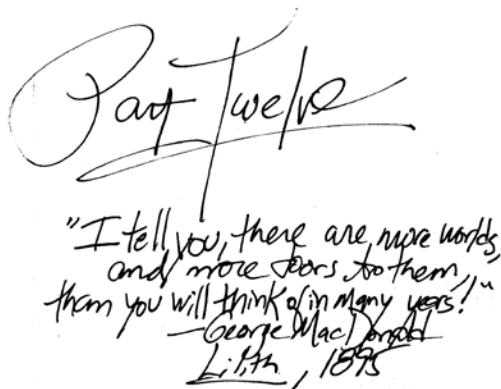


Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Labyrinthine

[a new fixtion]



ix.

Remember some things. How many varieties, endless, of these? How to remember? Which things? No answers to this here, or anywhere else. Aborn, we live along the passing world. We remember. *How?* & *which?* change over time not just for us, but for the lands we dwell. What honored, what forgotten.

Thinking of McKenna saying *nothing lasts but nothing is lost*. This maybe the harder struggle. *Things change*, as one of my past books titles it. *The world moves on*, as King says it often.

But there it is. Time to arrive fully to here-&-now-&-back-there-&-then, & what sweet dirty low down dance they do.

Asoyadonna snorts, reading over my shoulder. "Sorry to interrupt, Raymond," no sorry in her smirk.

"We're waiting."

"For what?"

"That Hut over there?"

"I see it. But why did we stop?"

"The door won't let us in. Go try. I'll wait. And explain when you get back."

She queries me an odd look, then lopes over from the pretty White Birches I'd stopped us by, to scribble, & to tell why.

She examines the door thoroughly. High & low touching, peering as close as the still-rising moonlight will aid. Takes herself around the Hut completely. Wonder if she will try to scramble up the roof, but she returns instead.



"Well?"

"One door. No doorknob. No window. No other way to get in or out. You know the magick words?"

"We wait?"

"Then say them?"

I laugh. "No. We wait for the Full Moon to rise high above. Then, I think, will reveal the way in."

She nods, sighs, sits next to me.

Starts a moment. "I guess we lost that lovely song."

I shake my head. "I think it was leading us here."

Sighs again. "Nice to hear their voices again."

"Your Brothers?"

Nods. "Especially singing. We stopped doing that, toward the end. For all that happened, whatever good we did, if any, I miss the nights we'd break out in song around the fire."

I nod. Wish to ask more but decide to wait. Soon I stand, & walk over to the Hut. Asoyadonna follows. We stand before it quiet a moment. It is now a golden glowing surface. I first point to the words now visible:



Donna smiles. "But how?"

I then point to a kind of rainbow tracing on the edge of the door, & then to a faintly remaining rendering of a door-knob.

"Oh!"

"Are you ready?"

"Yes. If we must move along then, let's go."

I grab the door-knob, tho it is but a faint chalk rendering, & turn, & it *clicks!* & I push in.

Asoyadonna doesn't ask me how I know to do all this. She saw me earlier checking a little Secret Book in my book-bag, as well as scribbling. She's right. We enter, hands clasped now.

The room is empty & silent, & the door *clicks!* closed behind us. We wait a moment, also quiet. While I check. OK. On us. Talk.

"We have come to remember some things. I, as writer of *Labyrinthine*, *Many Musics*, & other works related to the Great Grand Braided Narrative. *Gr. Gr. Br. N.*, for friendly." I smile around at what still seems a dark, empty room. Then nudge Donna to talk.

"O. Um. Alright. I'll try. My name is Asoyadonna. That is the name I was given by my father the Tinker, in the Village we lived in, with my Aunt.

"Later, I discovered that they had found & adopted me when I was very small. I am originally, I think, from a planet called Emandia. But they were my family, & I loved them dearly. My father has passed.

"I travelled many turns with Brothers I later met, with whom we sought an Island, & on it the Tangled Gate, & within that a Cave with a Beast."

She stops. I know she has to finish. Squeeze her hand tight. She catches her breath. Resumes.

"We were shown marvelous things in that Cave, yet somehow we were all separated. I think, Wobbled, hither to yon?"

I think she's done, & will finish for us. But she does instead. "What things must we remember to do

the things we wish to do? Thank you. We are humbly grateful.”

I squeeze Donna’s hand, & close my eyes, & softly *hmmm*. She does too.

Guess I’ll go first. Open my eyes. *I am now somewhere else*. Close them. *Back with Asoyadonna in that Hut*. Oh. Guess I have to follow this through. I can still feel her hand, squeezing my left one, steady, so it’s alright.

Open my eyes. OK. New Britain Public Library. A work table in the stacks, near a window.

Right. So this is where I am sitting right now, writing *Labyrinthine*. What would that mean?

Maybe just being here. I did come down here, to Connecticut, to New Britain, to remember some things. Guess, for me, it has to be *this*.

I used to live hardly miles from here, in an apartment I shared with a good friend, for years. And, also hardly miles from here, is the University I studied at for years. Made many friends there. Read *many* books.

So this was my local library those years ago. And, recent years, I like to come down, once a year, from up in the Boston area, to visit old favorite places, especially those I wrote at.

Remember some things? I prefer the places I wrote at. The people I loved have passed, or moved on. Not hard to find me, or keep track of me from afar, if any wished to still.

Love is hard, spends live, its pain is real; sometimes its deepest beauty becomes a forgiveness; sometimes that is the only closure left.

I loved you all sincerely. I’m sorry where I caused pain.

I wish you all peaceful days, love to fill them, & beauty to bide by always.

Asoyadonna’s hand squeezes my left one, to startle me to resume. If there’s more.

OK. I keep coming down here to remember where I came from. This is where I am from. Not who I am, only a part of it. It’s not a bad place, even with me passing through once a year to evaluate it. In truth, I am now, at most, a kind of statistic, an old photo, memories for those with them.

I come to continue to have a *connection* in the way that I am able. Which means that I stay at the local hotel, yearly save for Pandemic years, & I bring my notebooks, Polly iPod, Gumbee for phone, other things, packed into the Blue Suitcase I have had for many years. No Internet, not a speck. Not on the Greyhound down, not arrived.

Been nearly three years, much farther along the Pandemic, glad I’m back & visiting.

Strangely, did not write more lines there while on that trip. Kept thinking I would, but the rest of the *Gr. Br. N.* took my time & attention. Tis fine. I don’t know what else I could have added. Maybe, simply, I renewed my commitment to *remember some things* simply by insisting on going down again, 2½ years since last time, much farther along the Pandemic.

I squeeze Asoyadonna’s hand to signal *I’m back, her turn*. I think she knew, but just in case.

She waits on something, *a vision? A memory?* Moments pass. Nothing.

Then, of a sudden, something falls out of her knapsack, left near the door.

It's the book Dreamwalker gifted her with.

Asoyadonna lets go my hand & walks over to the book, open on the floor. Funny: I notice the Hut, while still empty, is a little less dark than it was. Touch of the indi-glow around us.

Funny too: seems *bigger* than it was. Her walk over to her knapsack was about the same distance as when we came in, maybe not quite. But her walk back with her book is *much* longer.

She holds it out to me. I receive her book . . . very . . . slowly . . .

"Look . . . see," her voice strolls over to me as though across a small park.

I hold the handmade book opened, gently, in my hands.

The pages facing each other both have holes in them that nearly fill them. I look closer, & it's like the holes seem to go down & down, deeper in than the visible thickness of the book.

Close it for a moment, holding my place with a finger. Covers front & back have no holes, nor do any of the other pages when I peek at them.

Open it up to the holes again. Asoyadonna finally, fully, arrives to my side. We smile . . . slowly . . . at each other.

She gestures the book again. "Look . . . look . . . see!" Gestures me, slowly, to look closer at the pages.

"He . . . told . . . me . . . a story like . . . this once . . ." her voice is speeding up again a bit.

I lean my face into the open book which, as I lean closer, seems to re-size? to fit my face?

I press it closer, like a mask;
try, like she said, to *look, look, see*

x.

I don't know if I'm seeing these words, or writing them down, or feeding of them through my book-mask. Like this, some—

Saturated by the changing number
of the *cardiac blooms*, down below
in that endless field of them.

That's *not* really their name.
They just make my heart *slow*,—
skip—wish—yearn—

Stalked by my changing fears as
 I enter among them, wind & rustle,
 uncertainty becoming song, not quite
 violet, umber, pale blue, colors I do not yet know,
 but low humble my eyes, cram open my ears, to learn.

Barb gets me quick, then another,
 invitation to linger? Or tis
 my new green prison?
 [You tell me, you sent me here,
 along the path to here, to learn
 what you said I did not even
 know how to know.
Linger or prison?]

“Your instruction was simple, maybe
 it guides me now too. *Sing!*
Dance! Silence! Stillness!
 (Touch, lightly.)

“Scribble & scribble & scribble & scribble!”

“No more hiding what you are,
 what you aren’t, throw off
 those blooms & barbs alike!

“Now go see what is left when
 you are just root & stalk,
 lover of the soil, thirsting
 for sun & sky.”

“Raymond?”

“Eh?”

“You OK?”

I sit up groggily, still in the Helping Hut, Asoyadonna hunched over me.

“You were mumbling a lot into my book, & then you sort of slowly collapsed to the floor,” she explains, concern all over her kind & pretty face.

“Did you make out any of the words?” I ask, curious, & strangely greedy for them.

Now she smirks a little. “They sounded more like cackles than words mostly.”

I nod. Figures. Accept her hands to help me up.

Look around this still quite empty Hut. “Are we feeling ‘helped’ enough, Donna?”

Her smile now full on, she nods.

So we get our knapsack & bookbag, me noticing the room has shrunk back to its usual size, & we walk outside.

And up drive the bloo-eyed Kittees & their dear Friend Fish Murmur, in their Famous Boat-Wagon!

We both naturally hop into the back seat, & buckle right in. *Safety first!* The Kittees wait our instructions.

Asoyadonna looks at me too.

I wemble a bit.

“Tell me, Raymond.”

“I want to study my notebooks to figure out what next.”

She nods, unsurprised.

I now look at the Kittees & Friend Fish intently. “Can you bring us to the nearest Attic entrance?”

The Kittees bloo-eyed stare me, friendly I think, & Friend Fish smiles her gorgeous Goldfish smile.

“We’ll be there soon, CC!”

We both laugh at that, & settle back for the ride.

These White Woods ever beautiful to pass through. More kinds of trees than I could imagine to know. Few paths through them, & of course such as Creatures & Thought Fleas do not need paths to travel. I wonder at all I do not know about this wondrous place.

I’m not sure what we’ll come to for my request when we arrive to a clearing with a single, large, beautiful Weeping Willow tree. We pass under its long drooping branches &, within, see upon its trunk a kind of wooden fixture, one that winds round & round it, up & up, toward its unseen height.

The Boat-Wagon rolls right onto what now appears to be a curlicue path that does indeed take us up there. As often occurs in these White Woods, & this *Mythopoeia* as a whole, we all size to fit this event.

Up & up & up, round & round, & round, Asoyadonna & I exchanging many delighted smiles on the way. I am still wondering to where we are arriving, & how it relates to my request, when we arrive, quite suddenly.

Through a familiar curtain, in fact, the one that serves as door to the closet in the Saturday Juice Room of the Bungalow Cee!

We unbuckle & get out. I proudly show Donna my several standing cases of vinyl LPs, the lovely green couch, & rose chair, & long rocking couch. The many charming framed photographs on the wall, took by my Beloved, the Lady Photographer. One of my favorites show a glimpse of a book’s page set against the backdrop of the beach.

Also the Creature Common Liberry of Secret Books, a small wooden cabinet in the corner.

“So many!” she marvels, smiling. I nod.

“Thank you!” I say to the Kittees & Friend Fish, & they stare, & smile, & depart back behind the curtain.

We climb the stairs to the kitchen. My Beloved isn’t home but I show Donna more of her pretty photographs on the wall. The one of Clover-dale’s fallen-down barns is a favorite.

Up another flight of stairs, & onto a landing where, I explain, the *Creatures Tale*, aka *Travelers Tales*, are told most nights. Point out the pictures on the walls of the landing that structure the *Tales*. One of Marie the Famous Traveler in her Fairie grove; one of her brother Joe the Famous Traveler on his bike, bound for Marie’s school; one of a lily pond & its reflection of a mountain; & the last a photograph of a billboard depicting a strange road of strange figures, curving away from the viewer’s eye.

And up to the Attic Study where she has been before. I turn on the Attic Radio Dreamland Jazz station. Miles Davis at Montreux Jazz Fest, 1985. *So fine*.

I gesture to my Beloved’s armchair for her to sit.

“You sure?” she asks.



I nod, smiling. “She would insist.”

Now to work. I unpack my bookbag of its many notebooks.

Secret Books. *Labyrinthine* (third notebook). *Bags End News* (Vol. 18). *Many Musics*. *Dream Raps*. Others too.

“Can I ask . . . how are the others doing?” Donna means her Brothers of course, & her tone indicates both her deep curiosity, yet her hesitancy to ask.

I consider how to answer. “Some further along than others. Everyone at least partway.” She nods. Maybe thinks that’s all I can or will say.

But is it? I study a lingering moment the shifting eyes & red tail of KC Klock, hung above the Attic Radio in the corner near the stairs, & mull the squawk & smooth of Miles’s horn.

“Some are needing to remember more than you do to get there,” I finally say.

“Some?” she quizzes.

“Well, all of them,” I reluctantly confess.

She nods, unsure what else to ask. Then: “Can I help them, Raymond? Am I allowed?”

“I don’t know yet,” I admit.

She nods again. Gestures to my pile-high of notebooks. “Will studying these help?”

I regard my pile. Say nothing. Don’t know.

Then I pull out from a work table shelf my hardback copy of *Celebrated Cases of Sherlock Holmes* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

“Try *Hound of the Baskervilles*,” I say.

She nods at the draft copy of *Cenacle* | 119 | April 2022 next to my pile-high of notebooks. “That too?”

I remember the old motto: “Go long, or go home!” Hand this to her as well.

She smiles, starts with the Doyle volume.

“My old school honored me on graduation with that volume. Never read it till I came up here,” I smile back, & get down to work.

Asoyadonna settles back comfortably in the grey armchair, & is soon lost in fictional pages of Victorian England, a place & time whose inhabitants are long passed from this world, but whose best & worst magicks have long still lingered on.

For a long stretch, I read recent pages of this book, raucous sounds of Miles Davis & his mates tearing it up at the ’86 Montreax Festival, on Polly iPod, through the Attic Radio.

Now Joni Mitchell’s *Court & Spark*, the sweet anarchies of her words & music.

“I think I know what’s next,” I say finally, as Donna is looking up & asking, “Is the hound of this book real or a phantom?”

I nod to both of these. Then smirk & say, “But he’s no Benny.” We both laugh at this.

I stand up from my work table. "Bring it with us," I smile.

"To where?"

"The Festival," I now grin.

Now she's up. Tucking the Holmes volume in her knapsack.

"How?"

I point to the obscure far corner of the Attic by which we'd come & gone to Aunt's Pensionne. "We just need to turn the other way," I explain, somewhat obscurely.

She nods, knowing that if I don't know the way, precisely, I'll write us there, one way or another.

Sure enough, there is an *other way* to turn. A wooden hallway, like often before. Cool, as though air-conditioned. But not, no.

"How all this, Raymond?" she asks, of a sudden, us till now striding quietly side by side where the hallway wide enough.

"All this?"

"How your world, back there," gestures behind us, "And yet here we are." Gestures wooden hallway.

I nod & smile. "Yes, here we are."

"How?" she insists.

I slow, stop for a moment. Slip my bookbag from my shoulder to the floor, up against the wooden wall. Slide down to sit. She joins me. The wall *hmmms* ever so slightly.

"I don't know, for sure. Maybe, when small, when one does not find happiness nearby, one imagines it must be far. And so goes looking."

She nods, tho looks only half-convinced.

"I grew up poor, never travelled anywhere till I was a young adult. Books & TV, movies & records, the morning newspaper, these were my roads away."

"Away?"

I nod, but more words stall. Try more. "How I get from there to this Attic, bound for the Rutabaga Festival & Fleastock, with you, one of the six Brother-Heroes, I don't know."

She's listening close, perchance there's more.

I take a deep breath, in, out, again, relax. Try more. "This matters. I *know* it does. I know I'm *better* for doing this. I make the world a little better for doing this."

She nods. "So we, my Brothers & me, extend this sentiment? This philosophy of Art you pursue?"

I nod. "However fine & flawed you are, in your varied aspects, you are Heroes."

"Your books are bigger than us though?"

I nod.

She thinks a lingering moment, then stands up again. Helps me up as before. We press on again, quietly, but in good spirits.

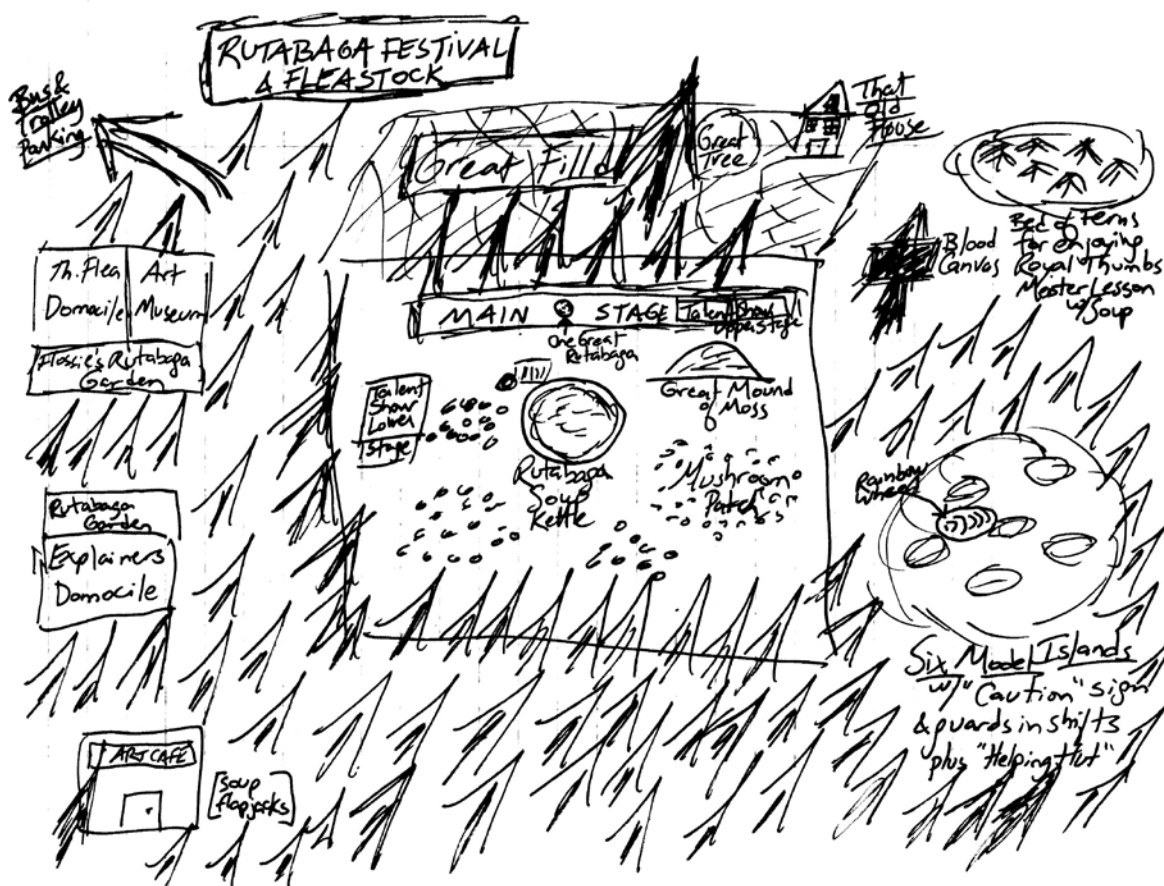
The cool air grows cooler as we walk, until there is daylight up ahead plain to see. The Attic hallway becomes now thick, thick branches, easily wide enough to still walk upon.

Come eventually to the branches' trunk, & there the same kind of curlicue path we'd rid up in the Kittees' & Friend Fish's Boat-Wagon. Find we can, with a little care, slide down this path, Donna first, her Hero's protective spirit strong about me.

White Woods again. So beautiful, & now, even more closely than when we veered away before, come the sounds of Festival shouts & cheers.

Asoyadonna stares me plain. "Yes, this time?"
Not a pause, I nod.

She smiles big as sun, & takes my hand. We hurry along till I suddenly stop us. "We need our map," I say firmly. Scrounge in my bookbag till cry out & pull out a crinkly sheet. Unfold to show.



We crouch close to study. Donna's face struck with smiling wonder.

"Those are the Model Islands we traveled!" she cries & points. Pauses. Looks around. "Travel yet?"
I nod & shake my head. Shrug the difference. She laughs.

"My Brothers have all passed through?" she asks curiously.
I think a moment. Count on my fingers. Seeming calculating a hard one.
Open my eyes, twinkling. "No." Our laughter more raucous.

We attract folk with our noise.

Approaching us are several Thought Fleas, sweet & magickal residents of these White Woods, some of their Guardians in truth.

I sideways glance Asoyadonna to find any expression of familiarity in her face. More smiling wonder. OK then. Start there.

"I guess the White Woods is so sizelessly vast that nobody knows everyone in it," I say aloud. She vaguely nods.

Getting more to the point, I smile at all, & start into my introductions.

But it seems like Asoyadonna the famous Brother-Hero needs no introduction to these Thought Fleas.

Miss Flossie Flea, one of the more well-known Thought Fleas (though not a "leader," as they do not know of such), comes up to Asoyadonna, smiling happy. She is dressed in a long leafy kind of dress, wearing an apron (she is famous far & wide for her special Rutabaga Soup recipes), & a kind of tool belt around her slender waist (worn especially during Festival times when repairs more often needed).

Flossie & Asoyadonna (who is still taller, tho we have all resized for talking ease) hold hands & paws &, smiling closely each other, softly *hmmming* after awhile. I've occasionally thought how it's a pleasure even just to watch folks *hmmming* together.

Up to me come Flossie's companions, the nearly-as-well-known Speed-E-Flea & Slowlee Joe. Dressed in bare feet paws, pantaloons, suspenders, vests, bow ties, & fezzes.

I know what this means.

"Hiya, CC," says Slowlee Joe, friendly, slowly of course.

"Hi, guys," I respond, friendly too. CC another of the names I answer too. "Is the Weekly Production going on in the Great Clearing?"

Speed-E shakes his head, speedily. "It's the Talent Show Lower Stage. Two performers did their amazing known talents, & went through the curtain to the Upper Stage, for hidden talents, but haven't come out yet."

I nod. I also know who Speed-E means. Dreamwalker, one of Asoyadonna's Brother-Heroes, & his dear friend the Gentleman Photographer. Their path from Stage to Stage is taking a long route through Dreamwalker's past. *Remember some things.*

I wonder to tell Asoyadonna when she & Flossie are done *hmmming*, but her smile at me when they finish tells me she knows. *This* is why they *hmmm'd*.

She still looks a little shaky, knowing one of her dear & long-unseen Brothers is so close. But resolute. "He will be OK," she says to me. "We will re-unite & hug at Abe's Beach. I will deliver him Aunt's kiss!"

I nod, & take her hand, & we walk with these kindly & magickal Thought Fleas the rest of the way to the Rutabaga Festival & Fleastock. It's not far. Donna squeezes my hand excitedly again,

Suddenly I call, "Miss Flossie!"

She turns & looks at me quietly. She always feels I should be scribbling more than I do. She's right.

But I think she'll like this. "Would you Thought Fleas kindly show Asoyadonna around the Festival? I have some pens-&-notebooks work to do."

This, Flossie smiles me friendly for, & nods.

"You're not coming with me, Raymond?" Donna looks me half-smirking, half-sincere.

I look at her & the several Thought Fleas, & the beautiful White Woods about us, & shake my head.

“This *Great Grand Braided Narrative* has slowed too much, by my reck. At this moment, two of your Brothers are at Abe’s Beach of Many Worlds. You & three of the others are not. That’s for me to figure out, no more delays.”

“Two have made it?” she smiles delightedly.

I nod. “Time for me to map out for the rest of you.”

She hugs me close. “*Make Art Now*,” she says in my ear.

I nod & wave them along their way.

* * * * *

Interlude

I’ve been writing *Labyrinthing [a new fixtion]* since June 1, 2006, when my Beloved & I lived in Seattle, Washington, 3,000 miles west of here, on the North American continent. I thought of it as the third of a kind of trilogy that included *Things Change? [Six Thresholds][a new fixtion]* (2000-2005) & *Why? [a new fixtion]* (2005-2006).

Did I intend or foresee its path with me from West Coast U.S. to East Coast U.S., several changes of address, 3925 pages & counting, in 16 years & counting?

No. But it did seem like culmination as much as continuance of the writing I’ve been doing now for over 40 years. Why keep writing them, these “new fixtions,” finishing one & then onto the next? Neil Young snarled it best, years ago, “It’s all one song!”

The *Tangled Gate Mythopoeia*, my collective name for all my works, came long after 2006. I can say that all these works—*Labyinthine*, *Many Musics*, *Bags End News*, *Travelers Tales / Creatures Tale*, *Dream Raps*, & the *Great Heroes Adventures*—all came to comprise the *Mythopoeia* with ease.

Now, recently that is, I’ve kicked the stakes higher, conjured up the *Great, Grand, Braided Narrative [Gr. Gr. Br. N. for friendly]*.

Where these various works dwelled closely to one another, so to speak, occasionally crossing narratives, even while coming to share one complex geography & history, now they are each telling one strand of a greater story.

Each still what it, uniquely, is, told how [some written, some orally narrated], & how often it is told [near daily to near annually], but they share one narrative’s drive & goal.

The Claude Monet that painted the “Grainstacks” series in the 1880s *is* & *is not* the Claude Monet who painted the “Water Lilies” canvases from his later years till he passed in 1926. Same brilliant painter at his easel, brushes & paints, not a lot else.

1959’s *Kind of Blue* Miles Davis *is*, & *is not*, 1969’s *Bitches Brew* Miles Davis. Same brilliant musician, blowing his horn, not a lot else.

1977’s *Eraserhead* David Lynch *is*, & *is not*, 2006’s *Inland Empire* David Lynch. Same brilliant filmmaker, writing, directing, filming, not a lot else.

1969’s *Clouds* Joni Mitchell *is*, & *is not*, 1976’s *Hejira* Joni Mitchell. Same brilliant singer-songwriter,

her guitar, piano. Her voice, lyrics. Not a lot else.

Their works got stranger, deeper, made greater demands on any audience to pay *even closer attention*. Accept that those earlier works *did not* predict, & *cannot* fully explain, what came later.

All this said at length to then say *none* of these Artists themselves could have foretold their later works. Art, as life, works forward. The best of it remembers too, of course, but most often (as Emily Dickinson said in another context), “slantly.”

I am telling one narrative right now, “great,” “grand” by its own hyperbole, & “braided” as a hint of its strategy.

The challenge is that each of these projects, as noted, tells in a unique way. Little chance (not *none*, but *little*) that any of the others would have an *Interlude* like this. *Labyrinthine* shakes its tail-feathers as straight or meta as it wills.

So getting Asoyadonna to Abe’s Beach has gone slow. For one thing, I am in it. I am in *Labyrinthine* what might be called “quasi-fictional.” No. Even better. Think of me as “quasi-semi-fictional.” Even less cooperative explanation, per syllable.

It may be she continues along awhile without me. I will be interested to find out.



To be continued in Cenacle | 121 | October 2022

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NEW ENGLAND

Notes on Contributors

AbandonView lives in the American Rust Belt. His artwork appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. Always wondering toward deeper, more radical collaborations with you, brother . . . More of his work can be found at: <http://purigare.tumblr.com>.

Algernon Beagle lives in Bags End. He is the Editor guy for *Bags End News*. Delightful books made from the stories in his delightful newspaper appear regularly in *The Cenacle*.

Arabian Nights is a collection of Middle Eastern folk tales compiled in Arabic during the *Islamic Golden Age*. It is often known in English as the *Arabian Nights*, from the first English-language edition (c. 1706–1721), which rendered the title as *The Arabian Nights' Entertainment* (Source: *Wikipedia*).

Charlie Beyer lives in New Castle, Colorado. His prose appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. His piece in the current issue was written by his father Richard, & edited for this journal by Charlie. He adds: “This was originally published in a crude form in the *Helix*, a hippy street paper in 1969.” More of his writings can be found at <http://therubyeye.blogspot.com>.

Ace Boggess lives in Charleston, West Virginia. His fiction & poetry appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. Seems glad that I do not want to publish every last word of his! His most recent book of poetry, *Escape Envy*, was published in May 2021 by Brick Road Poetry Press.

Michael Couvaras lives in London, England. He is a working film-maker (Strange Interfade Films), but also shares his wonderful photography on Instagram (<http://www.instagram.com/michaelcouvarafilms>).

ElectroLounge Forums is a discussion community for contributors to *The Cenacle*, found at <http://electrolounge.boards.net/>. Writers, artists, photographers, & readers are encouraged to request a membership (no charge) & visit these forums to meet, & perhaps join, those whose works fill the pages of *The Cenacle*.

Judih Weinstein Haggai lives at Kibbutz Nir Oz in Israel. Her haiku & recent longer poems appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. Hoping you & your loved ones are safe tonight after some recent war terrors. Her 2004 poetry RaiBook, *Spirit World Restless*, can be found at: <http://www.scriptorpress.com/raibooks/spiritworldrestless.html>. She also hosts the excellent radio show of the same name on SpiritPlants Radio (spiritplantsradio.com).

Jimmy Heffernan lives in Salt Lake City, Utah. His prose appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. Jimmy’s newest book of poetry, *Ripples on an Infinite Sea*, will be published later in 2022. Jimmy’s “Dialogue” with Sam Knot in this issue was derived from his “Writer’s Notebook” at the *ElectroLounge Forums*.

Nathan D. Horowitz lives in Baltimore, Maryland. Chapters from his epic work-in-progress, *Nighttime Daydreams*, appear regularly in *The Cenacle*. Book 2 of his published quadrilogy of *Nighttime Daydreams* (*Bat Dreams*) was published in 2019. Book 3 will be out soon. He also hosts the excellent radio show “Nighttime Daydreams” on SpiritPlants Radio (spiritplantsradio.com). Makes some crazy good artwork too!

Colin James lives in western Massachusetts. His poetry appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. Smoking the green, taking his walks, conjuring his wonderful weird-ass poetry, day by day . . .

Gregory Kelly lives in England. His poetry regularly appears in *The Cenacle*. Getting back to his writing, getting back to himself, more & more these days . . .

Sam Knot lives in rural France. His poetry, prose, & artwork all appear regularly in *The Cenacle*. When I think of “radical collaboration,” I just think of the variety of Sam’s work in this issue. Visit samknot.com for more of his work.

Tamara Miles lives in Elgin, South Carolina. Her prose & poetry & photographs appear regularly in *The Cenacle*. She also hosts the excellent poetry show, “Where the Most Light Falls,” on SpiritPlants Radio (spiritplantsradio.com). Doing all we can do, sister . . .

Jo Monea lives in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. Jo’s poetry appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. Jo is working on matters of self, Art, & what wonderful ways to help heal this world . . .

Martina Reisz Newberry lives in Hollywood, California. Her poetry appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. Her most recent book of poetry, *Glyphs*, was published in May 2022 by Deerbrook Editions. A genuine pleasure to feature her poetry & thought in every way possible! More of her writings can be found at: <https://martinanewberry.wordpress.com>.

Kenzie Oliver lives in Central Texas. Her work appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. Even though busy with school & other priorities, she still makes a good appearance in this issue . . .

Epi Rogan lives in Cork, Ireland, though she is originally from Alaska. Brilliant photographer, fine spirit. So glad to know her! More of her work can be found at: <https://www.instagram.com/pieorgan/>

Tom Sheehan lives in Saugus, Massachusetts. His poetry & prose appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. His most recent book of short stories, *The Horseman Cometh and Other Stories*, was published by Amazon Digital Services in December 2021. Come out of a recent eye exam with some good news. So glad for you, Tom!

Kassandra Soulard lives in Milkrose, Massachusetts. She has spent her vacation days recently working with me on this issue. Thank you, Beloved.

Raymond Soulard, Jr. lives in Milkrose, Massachusetts. If you ever wondered who I am, whoever ye be who might, just read this issue end to end. Best of it is all there . . .

Louis Staeble lives in Bowling Green, Ohio. His wonderful photography appears regularly in *The Cenacle*. More of his work can be found at: <https://www.instagram.com/louiestaeble/>

Timothy Vilgiate lives in Austin, Texas. His *Rivers of the Mind [A Novel]* is regularly serialized in this journal. Catch him doing his music live down in Austin, & elsewhere! The radio version of *Rivers of the Mind*, an amazing work in any form, can be found online at: <https://riversofthemind.libsyn.com>.

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