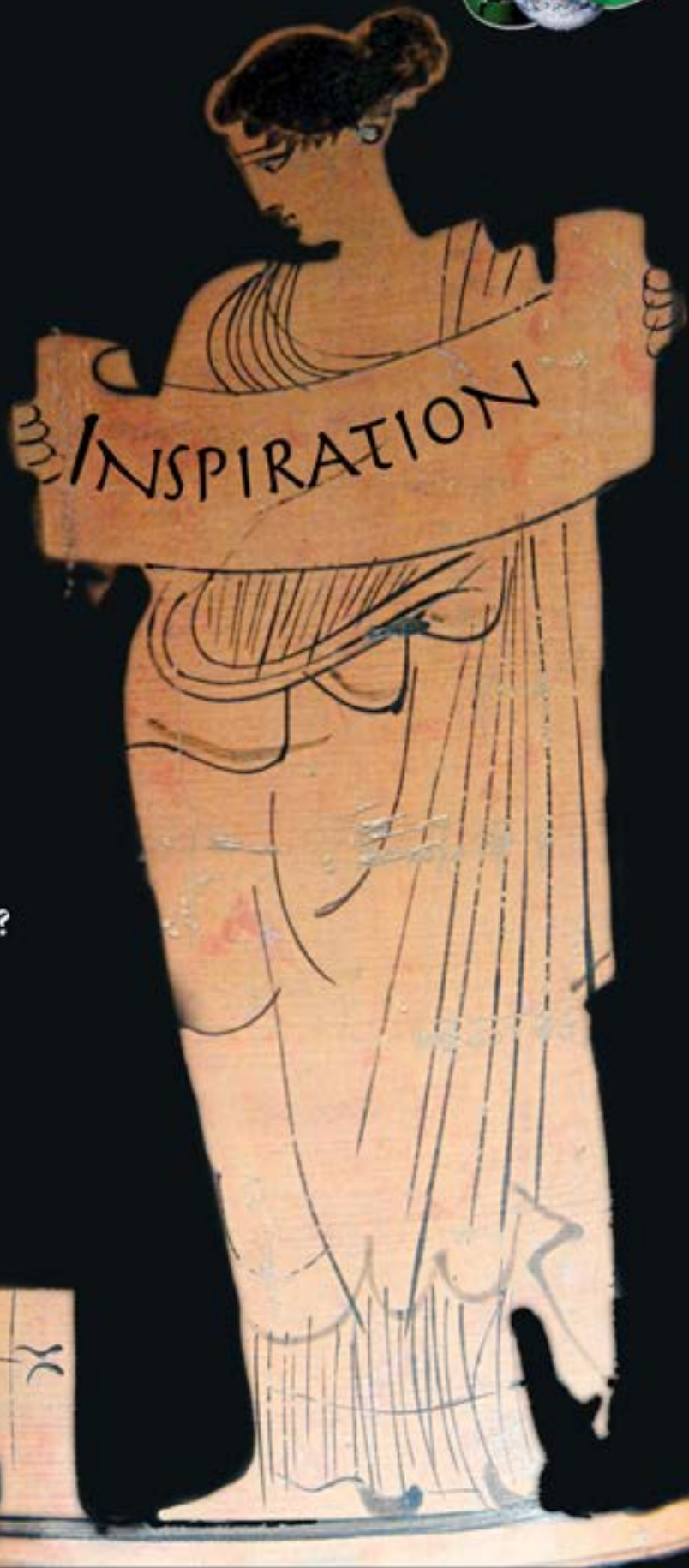


Volume XII Number 3

The METAPHYSICAL TIMES *are here!*

Inspiration:

- * What is it anyway?
- * What is it good for?
- * Where can I get it?
- * What about muses?
- * Are there still working Muses around?
- * Can a Muse write my song?
- * Are there A muses AND B muses?
- * Is inspiration of some sort all you need?
- * Won't perspiration do the job better and more reliably?
- * What do we do if the muse or whatever we have been waiting for just never shows up?



metaphysicaltimes.com

INSPIRATION

This edition of the Metaphysical Times is dedicated to
Gurdon Brewster in service of over 55 years of inspiring others

EDITORIAL

DAVID S. WARREN	Inspiration	page 4
GEORGIA WARREN	Rambling... Inspiration	page 5

ARTICLES

GABRIEL ORGREASE	How American Literature Happens	page 10
DON BRENNAN	Bringing Spirit In	page 22
DAVID ROLLOW	FOREWARD to the Muses	page 24
KRIS FASO	Journey to the Second Attention	page 42

FICTION

OREN PIERCE	INTO the OUTSIDE the continuing Saga of Nowella and Uncle Threadbear	page 12
DAVID ROLLOW	The Muse Chapter 1	page 30
DAVID WARREN	Charlie Peckerstone and Starkissed	page 32
FRANKLIN CRAWFORD	Dear Editor	page 38
GEORGIA WARREN	Grandpapa's Story	page 44

REVIEW

JOSIAH BOOKNOODLE	INSPIRATION — HIGH AND LOW A Brief Appreciation of Thomas Dekker, Householder.	page 20
-------------------	---	---------

POETRY

ROBERT GRAVES	Service to the Muse	page 48
DANTE	"Purgatorio", Canto I, lines 7 to 12	page 50
ROBERT GRAVES	To the Muse Goddess	page 50
MARY GILLILAND	The Language of Bees	page 51
PETER FORTUNATO	Four Poems	page 52
NANCY CUTO	Madragana Wears Her New Name	page 54

CARTOONS

MARK FINN

COVER

Muse reading - Louvre, Department of Greek, Etruscan and Roman Antiquities,
Sully, 1st floor, Campana Gallery, room 39, case 11

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Inspired *Inspiring*

PROPHETIC THUNDER

"As a seminarian
I served as assistant minister to
Rev. Daddy King, Sr.
and
Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. in the
Ebenezer Baptist Church in the
summer of 1961. This sculpture
presents an aspect of Rev. King, Jr.
as I saw him."

Gurdon Brewster'

Gurdon Brewster, born in 1937,
pursued a double calling during
his life: being a university chaplain
and also a sculptor.



The Inspired Issue

by David S. Warren

Anyone who keeps a natural flock of Chickens knows that roosters crow at anytime day or night, inspired by as little as car wheels on a gravel drive, a door opening, or an Owl fly-by; so I only turn over in my grave when they crow at midnight, but it is the light of dawn itself that gets to me. I can just about HEAR the crack of dawn.



It is more like a POP than a CRACK,. Maybe it has to do with my pituitary gland, which glandologists say is light-sensitive.

The curtains on my north facing window and my shut eyes do not make a whole lot of difference: once dawn pops I can stay in bed as long as I want, but I cannot stay still. I am rocked, I am rolled, and eventually I am driven right out of bed.

I don't much like being driven.

***Driven is not
what I would call
deeply inspired.***

So once out of bed, I must have coffee, to which I am addicted. But coffee is not enough. Cross-country truck drivers and long-range bomber pilots, sometimes use drugs which other people make out of stolen fertilizer or whatever to spur themselves on. And I assume that somebody has taken superdoses of such substances, then stayed up for three days and nights writing an entire novel, which of course turned out to be a pile of crap beyond hope of editing

or revision. And then there are the psychedelics, but a free trip to the underworld does not mean that you will get back safely or be able to tell the tale.

***Living is easy:
telling the tale is hard.***

For that we need ... deep inspiration ...know what you mean by that?

Artists, musicians, dancers, poets, magazine editors, preachers, you, me, and everybody else seek inspiration, even if it is just to roll out of bed in the morning which some days can be the hardest thing I do .

So with this concern, we made Inspiration the theme for this issue of the **Metaphysical Times**; not asking our writers to define the word for us, and not necessarily to even use that word, or even to inspire us (would be nice though) but just keeping in mind the universal human need for inspiration.

In response, **Oren Pierce** has contributed his account of how a trunk full of abandoned teddy bears and such were inspired to get together a small fleet of mostly pretend boats and leave the security of their trunk for the outside world. **Gabriel Orgrease** wrote about his meeting in a cemetery with a curiously inspired soul. **Georgia Warren** told about how her dying alcoholic mischievous grandfather filled her with lasting visions of fairies, trolls, and gnomes, some of whom seem to have come to live here with us.

The theme has inspired poets **Mary Gilliland**, **Peter Fortunato**, and **Nancy Cuto**: the granddaughter twenty-nine generations back ... back when the big religions had already been at war with one another for thousands of years. **Kris Faso** shared an account of a dramatic, very physical infusion of spirit. **Josiah Booknoodle** wrote about "Four Birds of Noahs Arke", a devotional book that was inspired by the plague. **Don Brennan** wrote in terms of Reiki practice making the very good point that inspiration rushes into us quite naturally when we ourselves just get out of the way, not saying that is an easy thing to do.

The classic Greek and Roman sources of inspiration are the muses there being one for most every activity. So we are publishing a poem and article

from old **Robert Graves**, who is dead and would not mind. **David Rollow** has given us an account of the complicated relationship between a certain writer, not himself, and his muse who can be difficult. **Franklin Crawford** was not sure that he could get up for the project, so he went to the Salvation Army and came back with a particularly inspired piece of writing. Lastly I myself contributed the story of how Charles Pekar-Stein became so inspired by his obsession with old diners and associated paraphernalia that he got seriously carried away.

So there you have inspiration.

The theme of our next issue will be *imagination*. Staff writer **Davey Weathercock** has already promised an essay about the role of visualization in the origin and cultivation of “kinetic levitation,” a power that he claims to have to a limited degree. We take this language to imply that sometimes he can more or less fly, and that there is a method to it. We will see about that. It may take some imagination.

Lester L. Cargo

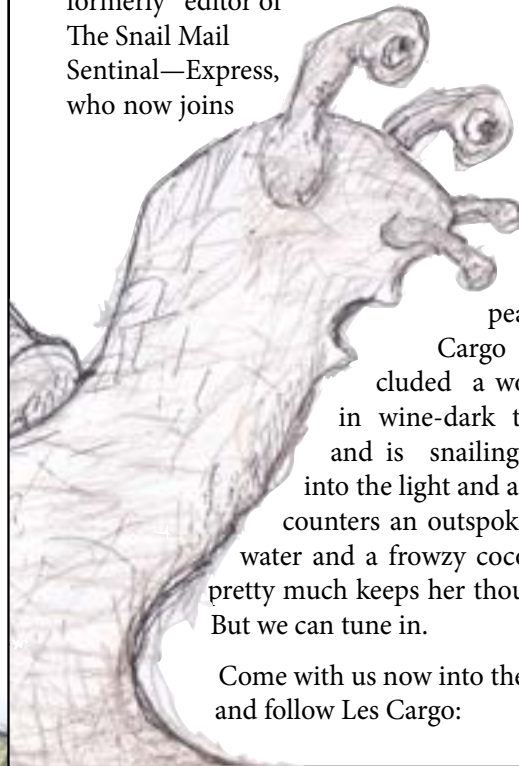
In this issue we introduce our old friend Les Cargo, formerly editor of The Snail Mail Sentinal—Express, who now joins

us as a roving commentator OFW (Of Few Words):

As he first appears here, Les

Cargo has just concluded a working vacation in wine-dark tropical waters, and is snailing up onto land, into the light and air, where he encounters an outspoken fish out of water and a frowzy coconut palm who pretty much keeps her thoughts to herself. But we can tune in.

Come with us now into the light, and follow Les Cargo:



Rambling Along the Metaphysical Path
 by Georgia E. Warren
 Publisher, Metaphysical Times



I have read poetry, novels, books that have inspired me, and listened to music that makes my breathing uneven. I have seen art so powerful that I had to put my hand on a wall to keep from being dizzy (page #2 of this magazine). There is, however, only one time I felt something that came from inside of me: an idea so fully formed I could not escape it. A vision that would not fade.

I love to design just about anything. As far back as I remember I, wanted to design things. My mother was a designer of clothes, so I started drawing pictures of clothes and she would teach me how to make the pattern of the dress, skirt, or blouse I had drawn. It was fun. In third grade I started to scribble lines on piece of paper, find designs in the scribble, and turn them into pictures (I still do this sometimes). In college I learned how to design sets for theatrical plays and sometimes for the theatres themselves.

It only made sense that I would design or teach design for a living. For a time I did both, and then I just designed. I designed advertisements, booklets, newspapers, and magazines. I learned how they were printed and how to put them together. I did all of this for other people and for companies. Except for Christmas cards, I did not design very much for myself.

A medical doctor janitor mentor in graduate school taught me how to read the lines in the palms of people's hands. This fascinated me at first because the lines looked so much like the lines I scribbled way back in third grade. There was a meaning in the lines of the hands just like there as in my drawings. And the designs of the shapes of hands and fingers and lumps and bumps, even the lines way deep behind the major lines had meanings. Way beneath all the other lines below what most people call your ring finger are lines that can indicate a person's sense of humor. I liked hand reading. It fit me.

Hands continue to fascinate me. I picked out my doctor, Dr. Hehir, by looking at the medical stigmata on

his hand. He had an amazing medical stigmata, but even more so he had hands that showed compassion. He was my Doc until he retired and I still consider him a friend.

I would check-out the hands of new acquaintances for their humor, a boss for generosity, an employee for talent.

When I became older, all of my immediate family had died or faded away, I was on my own and I wanted to start a business of my own. I had some ideas that kept floating around: I could start an advertising co-op of artists, writers, photographers, and designers. I could make a newspaper for Civil War reenactments and go from place to place selling ads for authentic looking clothes, glasses, and ads for the old time photographers. I could publish interesting articles. Then I thought I could open an advertising consulting firm. All the ideas for my own business had some kind of design theme.

Mostly though, my plans for the future were only daydreams. Sometimes night dreams, but always only dreams fading away.

My closest relative was my niece Melony. Melony was interested in stones, books and things with a spiritual slant. She wanted me to come with her to see some Himalayan Salt Lamps that were supposed to emit negative ions. They were available at a shop called "Essential Kneads" in Cicero, NY. I didn't know where it was but she told me exactly. Melony had asked about Essential Kneads at another shop a few miles away called the "Mystic Side" and they had not heard of it. Mel had been to *Seven Rays Bookstore* near Syracuse University and had mentioned both Essential Kneads and the *Mystic Side* and they hadn't heard of either of them. The other storekeepers had heard of *Seven Rays Bookstore*: it had the largest inventory of "spiritual" books in New York State, with stones, tarot cards, jewelry, and Reiki practitioners.

It surprised me that these shops, with a similar customer base didn't know where the other ones were located. Syracuse is a good sized city but not *that* big.

Mel and I planned to meet at Essential Kneads around noon and I was running almost on time. I would have made it, if only the signal light at the exit

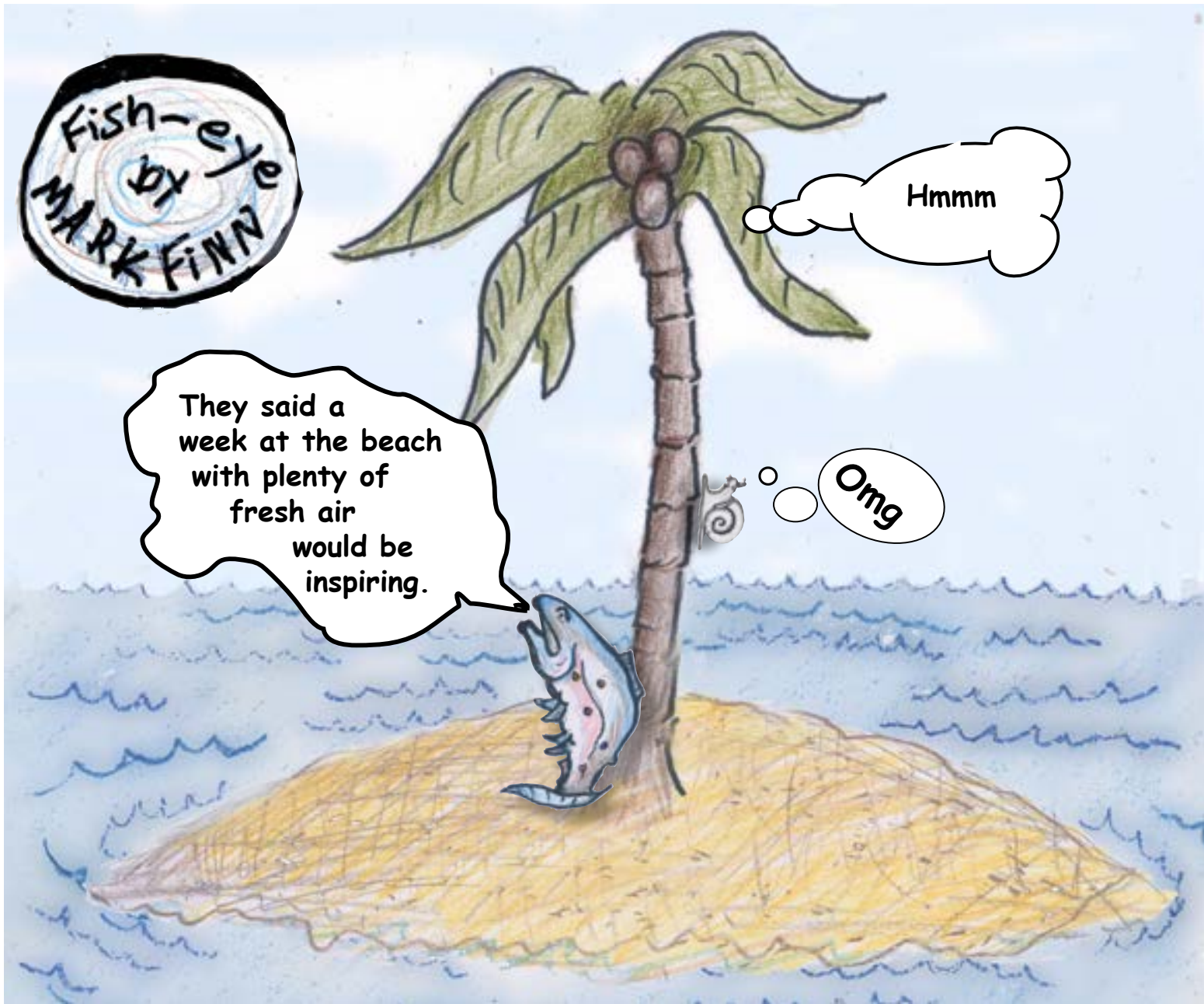
from Route 81 had not turned red at the moment I got there. It is a complicated intersection: stop lights for every possible direction and turn. The wait for each light was long. Stopped there, I was probably going to be a minute or two late. I hate, being late for appointments.

For you astrologers out there the date was Sunday,



August 6th, 2006, it was 11:54 a.m., at the intersection of Rt. 81 North and State Route 31, in Cicero, NY. I remember times, dates and places a little better than maybe I should.

Instead of becoming frustrated, I started thinking about the fact that the two stores we were going to visit didn't know anything about each other. Then I swear to anything that you care to believe: I imagined a publication design in those 120 seconds of light signal time. I knew how I was going to lay the pages out, what the front page would look like, what the banner would be; I remembered a space photo of Earth and in my mind put a green, mobius strip around its middle. The publication would be a place to list all these spiritual-type businesses. Plus, the name, I immediately thought of a name that could be a catch-all and very few



people would be offended by it. I even figured out that I could start reading hands at psychic fairs in order to become part of the metaphysical community. All I needed was to introduce myself to the promoters of the psychic fairs.

I turned the corner when the light changed, and drove to Essential Kneads. When I went in, the lady at the counter said I had a message from my niece that she would be 15 or 20 minutes late.

I was still in an excited mood about my idea when I arrived, and when I get excited about something I am a blabber mouth. Well, I went on and on about my idea. I asked if she knew where the Mystic Side was and when she said "No," I became even more excited.

Somehow it was catching. The woman in the shop said something like: "You have to do it! You have to do it! We need a place to advertise, we need a place where people can find out about events and read about what we do."

I started to calm down by then and looked at the lady I was talking to: long hair, lots of interesting jewelry and clothes. She had bare feet. Something she wore

jingled when she walked. By then I had the composure to ask her name.

"Debbie" she said "Debbie DeRushia." She called out her co-worker Cindy McCafferty and we both told her about my idea.

Melony was delayed a little longer than she thought she would be. By the time she arrived I was so convinced that this was supposed to be my mission in life that I blurted out: "Mel, I'm going to start a newspaper, I even know what I'm going to call it.

With a lot of help from old friends and new friends, a couple of months later I was handing out copies of Volume I Number 1:



Dog's Plot

The Stand

Dog's Plot isn't just a great novel by
David S. Warren

Come on down to Aurora, NY
and shop at our tiny farm stand.

Yes, there are signed copies of the novel, but you will find the very best free range eggs, as well as, in season: pears, garlic, Chanterelle mushrooms, berries if the weather is cooperative and adorable wine inspired catnip bags. Call, write, or watch FaceBook for availability:

(607) 299-26774
dabone@lightlink.com
Dog's Plot (FaceBook)

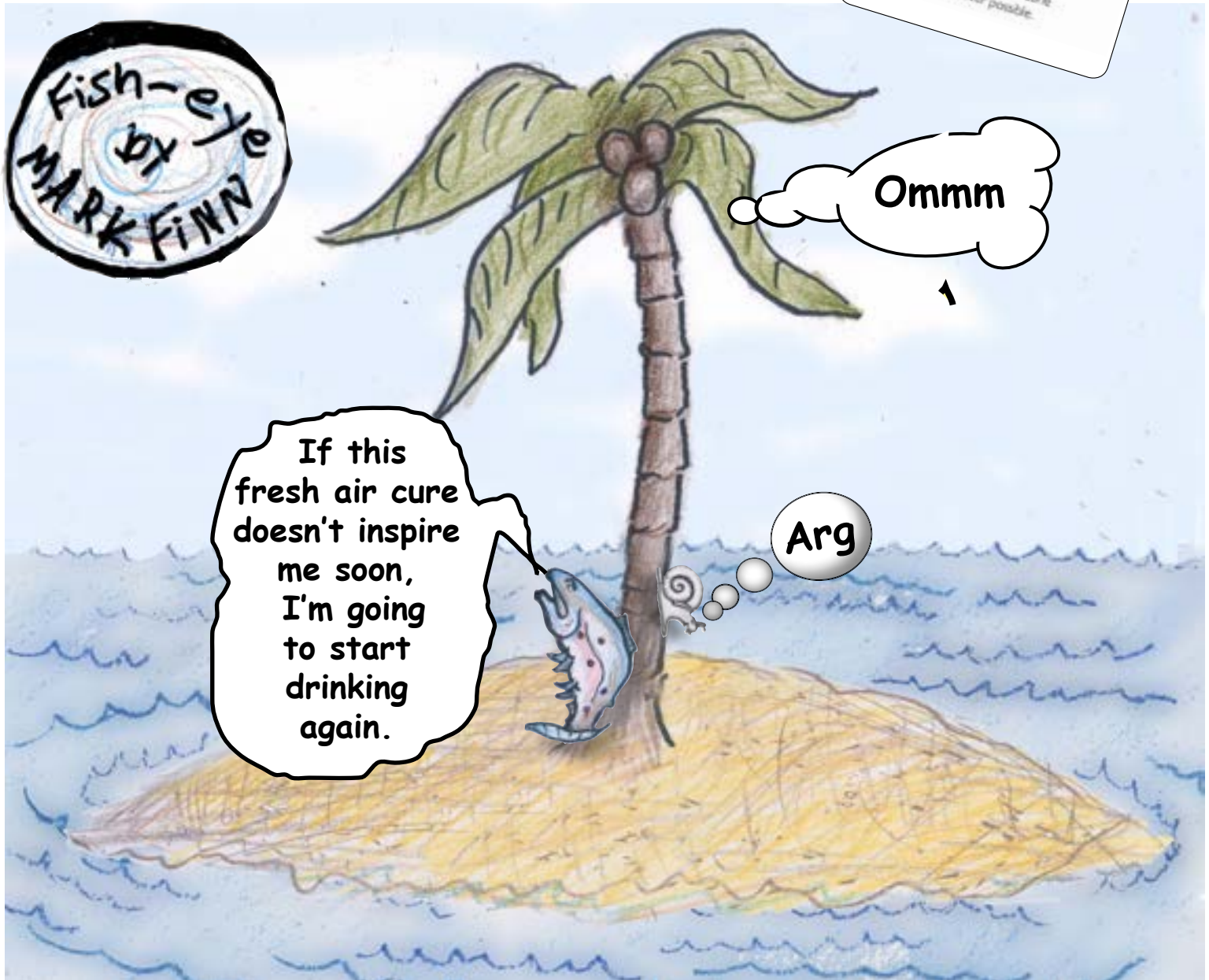
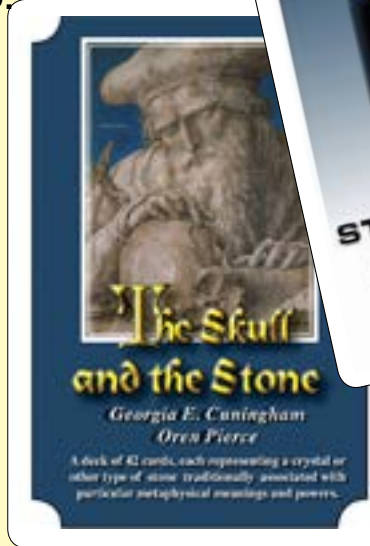


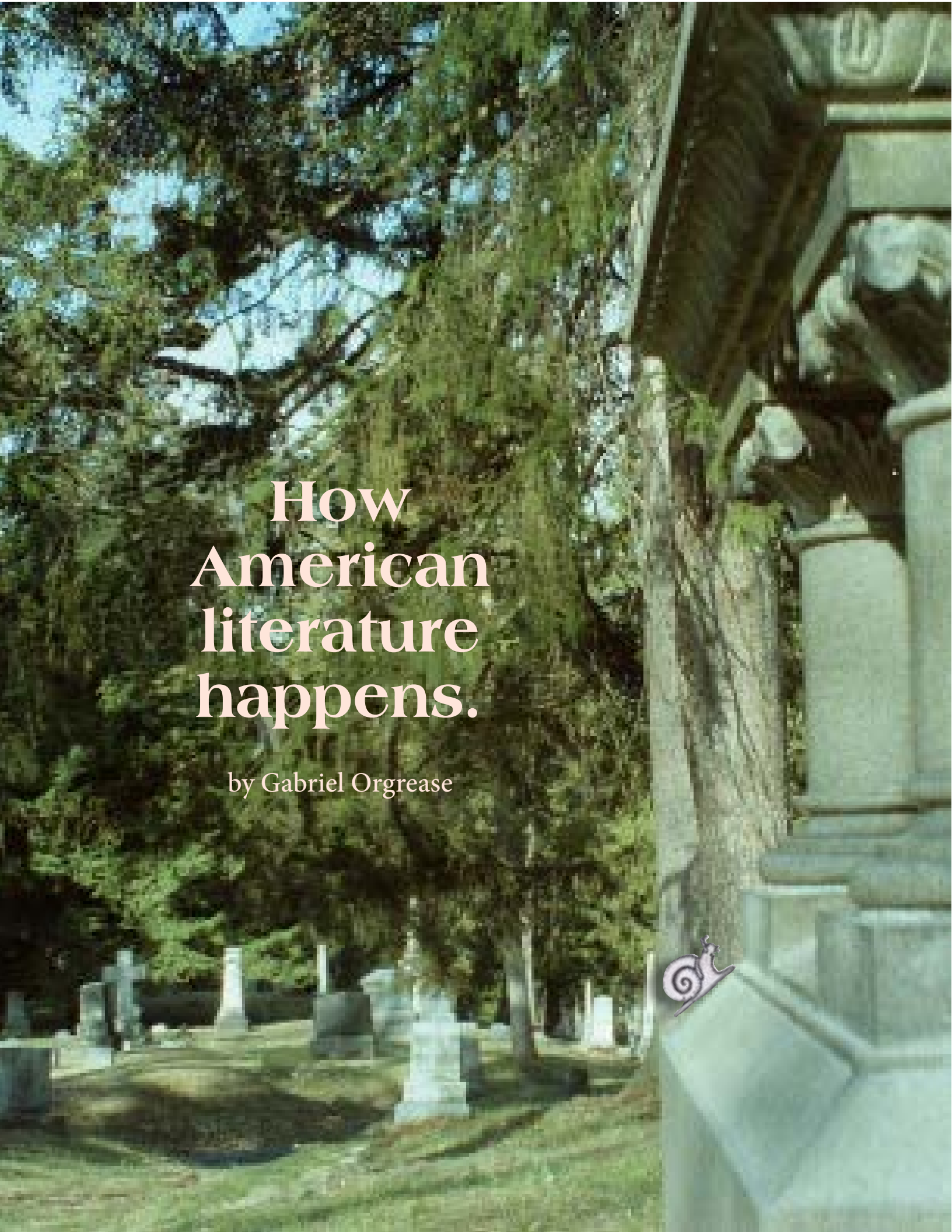
Metaphysical Times Publishing Co.
"The Skull and the Stone"
oracle deck

created by
Georgia E. Warren and Oren Pierce

A deck of 42 cards, each showing a skull carved from a different crystal associated with a particular virtue or power. Ask a question, shuffle, and pull a card.

Any card. Take five.





How American literature happens.

by Gabriel Orgrease





How American literature happens.

by Gabriel Orgrease

In the cemetery the tall guy told us he had written a letter to his governor to suggest that he might want to go for a walk in the cemetery. It being a somewhat old and fine cemetery surrounded by highway, a bubbly crick, poison ivy, a cigar bar, and an old house that won't let anybody in to see it's basement. Something went on about how his father walked somewhere with the governor's father. How he knew the governor's wife likes to go for walks. How his children like to go for walks. How his

dog likes to go for walks. It was a long walk in walking logic. And then to suggest that the governor bring his friend Donald for a walk.

I'm not sure if that is an imaginary friend. But the quandry was that he was told then he would need to invite the county executive, and his wife, and children, and his cat, seeing as he does not have a dog, but does a turtle, that walks slow. No, none of that is true. The turtle rides in a little red wagon. But, honestly, does it really matter? So then he would need to invite the local school board and their children and all the teachers and all their children and all the parents and all their children and there would be so much of a walk that all the revolutionary veterans would be trampled with the extra weight of cats and dogs and one miniature pig.

Then we hear him ask what is the number that has thirty zeroes behind it? His friend, with an air of confidence says, "It is the largest number!" I am quickly reminded that at one time humans could not count past three. "No," he says. "It is a zillion, right?" "No, no, no it is the number of stars in our whatever cosmos, our neighborhood, or you know... (waving arms in the air in a laconic manner) ...and people don't know that." I am enraptured by the grave markers, the green grass, blades of iris, rocks, the mocking birds, trucks, the odd couple that drove up in the black van then proceeded to throw children's clothes into the hedgerow. A pink top, black shoe and a tiny sequined purse. But, to the point, there is a shitload of stars out there and the tall guy wants to tell us all about it. That, he says, is why he started a YouTube channel.



Nowella and Uncle Threadbear

by Oren Pierce B.A., B.S., M.S.G.

Our story so far:

You may have heard of Nowella the “Bear” whose mother was a Black Bear and her father a white Man, although her mother brought Nowella up thinking her father had been a white BEAR... a Polar Bear. As a result Nowella spent many seasons searching from pole to pole and of course did not find her father, but did meet up with an independent hand, yes an actual hand, autonomous and with a will of his own, who became her sometime traveling companion, often appearing just when he was needed, or even just thought of, occasionally hanging in a tree by his thumb with a finger pointing, and she usually went in the direction the finger indicated. His name is Oneil. More about Oneil in the following:

At the point where we now recommence the story, Nowella has pretty much given up interest in who her father might have been (she did not know that he had died

in a snowmobile accident before she had even ceased her wanderings) and she had taken up residence with a trunk full of stuffed animals, Halloween costumes, toy boats and such, and was just fine with that, never intending to wander again. She had a special fondness for old Uncle Threadbear, though it is hard to say why. She felt responsible for him somehow, even though he didn't need her, or much of anything else, it seems.

Chapter 14: Into the Outside

In addition to the pretence of going fishing and their natural curiosity as life-long shut-ins about just what WAS out there, a large part of what inspired them was their growing boredom with Uncle Threadbear's fishing stories.

The Trunk Bears were more or less trunk-bound, and whereas their mouths were merely SEWED on, so they could not talk much beyond mumbles and hums, Uncle Threadbear had an accidental mouth, so he was a talking

Bear. He was not a great talker, but he talked a lot.

About Uncle Threadbear: if you didn't already know, or forgot, or just need me to remind you, Threadbear was originally known as Fredbear to the long ago boy who had rubbed him nearly bald in spots while in bed awake and worrying about a GIANT CAT in the attic, although there was no GIANT CAT in the attic. That boy, having worn and semi-abandoned Fredbear by age twelve, had retrieved him from the bottom of the trunk and used scissors to puncture the sewed mouth, so that Threadbear could seem to be smoking a cigar made from a stick when the boy dressed up as a hobo with a corn-cob bubble pipe for trick or treating.

The Trunk Bears had nothing else they could listen to except the radio that the man who came by once in a while to look after the little house sometimes left on to make the place seem to be inhabited or haunted while the people were away on a trip to see the Ocean or something. When the man did not leave the radio on, and sometimes even when he did, Uncle Threadbear talked. And talked. Uncle Threadbear talked mostly just because he could.

Threadbear buzzed on and on about the Fine Art of Dry Fly Fishing: about hackles and quills, line tapers, May Fly hatches, and such fly-tech stuff that you would not understand.

The very dry nature of Threadbear's techo-anecdotal talks was due to the fact that his own experience of the great outdoors was a one-time thing that happened when he had developed the habit of falling asleep in a wicker fishing creel and had been accidentally taken up the Oswegatchie river Trout fishing, coming home among a mess of trout in a bed of ferns and slimed so that he had to be washed and hung up by the ears to dry, which gave him a hard-to-loose fear of water, despite



his romanticization of fly fishing exacerbated by the magazines in the bathroom: mostly Outside Life and Natural Geographics. The trouble was that he so often drifted from the vague and fantastical "recollections" of exotic adventures in the

"Windy Mountains of Windoming" into techo-talk. Because of his wheezy voice, the Trunk Bears strained to hear him. After a while they strained just to stay awake.

It was Nowella the WORLDLY Bear who finally

acted to break through the boredom and to enhance



the reality of these faux-fishing expeditions. This was not because she had any desire to go fishing or even to leave the house. She for one, had seen plenty of the Great Outdoors: she and her sporadically appearing companion Oneil the independent hand.

But let us stop again for a bit.

Before we bring on Oneil, it is important that we warn you (in case you have not met him before) that when you are introduced to him, DO NOT MAKE ANY MOVE TOWARD SHAKING HANDS.

Instead, you might just nod to him, tip your hat, or say something nice about his own hat if he is wearing it at the time, with no remarks about how it might be ungainly for a hand to be wearing a hat. That Oneil does not speak should be obvious, though he does a lot of gesticulation which might mean something to him or in the private sign language he and Nowella have developed. Your understanding and sympathy might be helped if you could read his "Audobgraphy of an Independent Hand." But you can't read it because he has not finished it yet. Oneil is a forever fiddler with the writing. Oneil can not speak or spell, but he can hold a pen as well as any man.

He would never be excellent at grammar, but he was very good at most manual tasks: was a good hand to have, was a LEFT hand, as it happened.

The mere existence of a living hand, independent of any living human being, but functional, self-sustaining and even helpful and expressive, does require some explanation.

According to Oneil's writing in progress, the man to whom he once belonged was the Oneil Clan chief known as Neil the Ruddy, who lived during a long-ago time of rivalries civilized enough that they were played out in boat races, rather than in actual battles. The round basket-boats called Coracles were powered by crews with paddle edges sharpened for the purpose of hacking at competing boats. Such a race could leave a bloody wake.

The last race of the complete Ruddy Oneil didn't result in any actual deaths, and wasn't bloody until the last few yards.

As the Coracles neared the goal shore, the Oneil craft was behind by only a few yards.

The chief Oneil then proceeded to draw his broadsword and hack at his left wrist until his hand lay on the bottom of the coracle. He picked the left hand up with his right, and threw it to shore.

Thusly, the hand arrived ahead of all the other boats ... so you might say that, technically, the Oneils won.

And you might dispute that claim with paddles and fists.

In the fight to settle the controversy then and there, one of the competing boatsmen picked up the hand and flung it into the sea.

As far as we know, the dispute may never have been settled, and the hand itself was forgotten in the old country, but as we now know very well, it did not die.

For a time, the vital left hand of Ruddy Oneil lay on the bottom of the sea that is the womb and cradle of us all. And, because he had returned to the source: to the salt and mineral loaded water, so close in its composition to our own bodily fluids, the hand hung on to life ... lay there twitching for a long while, and then for a longer while, as the twitching slowed to resemble the slight heaving of a living breathing body, perhaps taking in oxygen through its skin by osmosis or by means of the squidly growing ends of his wrist-end veins. Gaining a measure of strength, mobility, and even human memory, he backed his wrist end into an empty Welk shell where he lived for a time, filtering the rich sea water, later crawling off in it like a Hermit Crab, for another shell before he abandoned that new Welk or Wonk or whatever it was for a long series of shells, migrating over time and across the Irish Sea and the Atlantic Ocean until, now in a Conch shell, he let himself be rocked and rolled in the gentle surf of a tropical beach; and without any problem for his osmotic breathing adaptation, he crawled up onto a bright sand beach. There, bearing his own weight out of water was at first exhausting, but the beach was so warm that he relaxed right out

of the Conch shell, naked as the day he was hacked; and he lay there until he felt himself turning red. So he backed into his Conch, but instead of going back to the sea, he followed his finger up the sloping beach to the shade of the jungle. And he stayed ashore, crawling along the ground of the understory, clenching and constrictor feeding on insects and spiders, taking up residence in a Banana grove, leaving his shell on the ground at night and sleeping among bunches and hands of bananas ... which hide the deadly black Tarantulas, but in those encounters, Oneil the Red Hand (and he did glow red in combat) prevailed; then ate the spider.

Better than spiders though, he liked bananas. Bananas were right at hand, easy to peel, and easier than his usual crustaceans to mash and digest, but that grove-idyl ended when men with machetes came to harvest the bananas. Minus his conch Oneil was carried away with the bunch he hid in, and loaded onto a boat bound for Boston.*

After Nowella had first encountered Oneil in the hold of the banana boat, he sometimes appeared ahead of her like a pointer sign, sometimes following her, and sometimes nowhere ... for all she knew.

Then, and now during her settled life, Nowella would often first notice Oneil because of a barely detectable reddish glow: red like when if you turn out the lights and shine a flashlight through your hand.



* In regard to Oneil's viability: In his epochal journey across the ocean floor, Oneil had evolved and adapted to the dire circumstance, (so much worse than being a man without a hand) of being a HAND without a MAN. Oneil's skin became his organ of respiration, his rhythmically clutching muscularity drove his circulation, and his body, such as it was, became his brain, developing the normal human capacity for what we call muscle memory, way beyond its ordinary limits. Oneil was a spectacular case of self-improvement: an example of what any pope would have to declare a miracle. Nevertheless, he had an exaggerated sense of shame, embarrassment, and inadequacy, which aggravated his emotional volatility. As a hand, still not a whole man, even when wearing his hat and shell, he blushed he felt naked if he was not also wearing his red glove. Being proud of his passionate nature, he intended to wear it in the author photo for his memoir in constant progress: *Audobography of the Red Hand*.

And so it happened that during Threadbear's discourse about the long term utility of double-taper fly lines and the debt of modern fly rod technology to the graphite materials developed by SPACE SCIENCE, Nowella was thinking that if she was not all paws and had a hand, she would made some kind of a fly rod to liven things up. And soon enough, she noticed Oneil in the potted Fig Tree.

The people who belonged to the house must have been some kind of Nature Huggers. The house was full of, Natural stuff. As if the natural world of the Great Outdoors was about to be destroyed, they had brought in rocks of all shapes, some in use as paperweights, or door-stops. The absent people seemed to have adored the skulls of small animals and sea shells. Feathers of every sort, some cups with pens. And in the desk drawer that was always open, more feathers, along with the intermingled string, wire, and hanks of yarn.

Nowella's idea, which she conveyed to Oneil with her gentle gesticulations and mumblings, was to give Threadbear a fly rod to enliven his presentation and inspire him in his disquisitions. Oneil got the picture right away, and in the rich litter of that little house, they soon found some suitable materials.

Single handedly he tied a few feet of yarn to the fine end of a Turkey tail feather, brought from the drawer by Nowella. Oneil tied a ragged knot at the far end of the line and that might seem to be a fly or a bug.

Threadbear was so impressed with the fly rod, such as it was, that he stood there switching it in the air, flying the bug around for a very long while such a long while that, though the bears had been following the bug with intense interest, they began to tire.

Then Threadbear suddenly let the fly drop and carelessly allowed the rod tip rest on the ground (as you would not do to a real fly rod) saying that the thing was very nice and all, but he could not help notice, that it was really just a feather with a piece of yarn tied to it.

Okay then. It took some time, some foraging around the house, and a tool or two, but in a Bear moment, or maybe a week of Bear moments, Oneil stripped the feather fibers off the main shaft of two turkey feathers, bent copper wire into snaking guides, wrapped the handle with a strip of Velcro, made a reel from a bobbin loaded with string that had a hank of corner dust tied on the end like a bug.

Threadbear went for the feather rod like a trout after a Fan Wing Royal Coachman. He grabbed the thing without a word of thanks and immediately began

casting a bit awkwardly at first because other than with the full turkey feather and yarn, he had never cast a fly before, and though, from his reading he knew things such as that you cast the weight of the LINE and the fly will follow, but that is easy to say. Slowly improving his bodily understanding of that principle, Threadbear continued casting and eventually every Bear eye flew after that looping dust bug.

But then again Threadbear let the fly drop and the tip of his rod rest on the floor.

Threadbear wondered aloud whether anyone else happened to have noticed that, as real as was the rod, there was no RIVER there. Without a river one has to feel a bit silly doing this.

Nowella and Oneil went off and came back in Bearely an a hour, dragging and rolling a long tube of brown wrapping paper.

"Am tham am rimmer?"

murmered Lamb, who had mobile lips, though, like the others, no actual mouth.

Of COURSE that was not a river;
but they were not done.

Nowella and Oneil went off again. After a time immeasurable to Bears, Nowella and Oneil returned, pushing and pulling a large-mouthed, plastic, former mixed-nuts jar, that they deliberately spilled onto the floor: ball-point pens, lead pencils with and without points or erasers, colored pencils, tubes of paint, some without caps and hard as cement, also a tube of tooth-paste which might have been put there by mistake, along with paper clips, roofing nails, a few pennies, and one long curved rodent tooth.

Now Oneil seized a fat blue crayon and scrawled on down the stretch of paper, streaming river lines and whirling pools. Oneil really made that river roll, flow through riffles, curling eddies riffles, then dive in deep blue runs. The Trunk Bears were struck silent and still as if they were ORDINARY toys.

Nowella took a broad felt-tip marker between two paws and tried to draw a bug on the bank, but the bug just became a larger and larger BLOT. Now Lamb took the biggest greenest crayon in the cleft of a hoof, scribbled a hill of grass on the river bank, then, in the excitement of creation, tried to eat the crayon. Which she could not.

One by one, and two by four, the Trunk Bears took up the pens, pencils, and other markers, and began scribbling and smearing with enthusiasm - though not with much dexterity, due to their lack of fingers and thumbs.

After a moment out of time, Threadbear pulled himself up straight and spoke once again.

"This is very good ... very very good ... but I believe I speak for all of us when I say that although the illusion is entertaining, it becomes somewhat difficult to believe in after a while because as a river, this one is so ... flat.

Well yes, a fair Bear would have to admit that, compared to everything else, the river was flat. After all, a river is not just a sheet of water. A river has rocks and things in it.

This was not a problem for long.

From the clutter of pebbles, stones, and baskets of rocks. Cattails, feathers, leaves, juniper branches with berries on, pine cones, pieces of driftwood that looked like something else, small animal skulls. Bird nests, and so on, the Trunk Bears took this, that, and the other thing.

They placed the stones and sticks and such in the river, then took up markers and scribbled in the river currents around themgoing on to add riffles, and rapids, the tooth paste applied as foam. Some Bears moved up along the side of the stream to add trees, and then more rocks until each was on her own project, or exhausted and sleeping under his tree.

Uncle Threadbear stood on the bank of the river, placed his paws thoughtfully together for a moment, then sighed and said "Did you Bears know that you can never step into the same river twice?"

Of course this was beside the point, seeing that Threadbear was not even about to step into a river ONCE.

"Be that as it may," Threadbear said ... and paused.

"Be that as it may," he repeated "a real dry-fly fisherman would not go fishing without the proper clothing."

All of them could see that, except for the various strings and laces he always used to brace himself, Uncle Threadbear was not only without proper fly fishing togs ... he was Bearnaked, and when you

are a Bear of little hair, that condition can be and painfully obvious.

Threadbear inhaled as deeply as his lacing and bracing would allow, then declared, in his papery whisper,

"A rod alone ... does not ... complete a fisherman".

"For THIS river," he continued, "I will need water-worthy foot gear - not just boots, nor even hip boots, but proper, chest-high waders. Not to mention a hat, which is, after all a fisherman's first line of defense, and his most outstanding mark of distinction, even off the water."

"A fisherman's vest would be essential, and maybe it wouldn't be too much to insist upon a pair of special-purpose, polarizing sun-glasses, so I can see through the glare and reflections of one's self that are normally a barrier between us and the watery, other world of fishes!"

As you know, and as they time after time evidenced, the Trunk Bears, Nowella especially, were not all that aware of time passing, which was probably because time doesn't pass when you are doing nothing at all, not even breathing. But in pretty good time, Oneil, scissored off the bottom foot of the shower curtain, already a greenish, camouflage shade from mildew. This would do for Threadbear's chest-high wading pants..

And at the very bottom of the Bear trunk they found a crushed straw doll hat that they uncrushed to make serviceable.

Then Oneil cut and bent wire to make the special fisherman's glasses which, in his version lacked only the actual polarizing lenses. The idea was there. The lenses were implied,.

Threadbear pulled on the chest-waders, and over them the many-pocketed vest; he donned the straw hat, he bent on the wire frames that represented polarized glare-piercing, fish-spotting glasses, then stepped onto the paper.

But he didn't leave the bank of the river. Until the last light of day, he stood in that one spot, casting toward the glass door.

The way things are going, you might expect that Threadbear would cast over this virtual river until he suddenly dropped the rod again and then called

attention to the fact that this was not a real river, because there were no FISH in it. But that is not what happened.

After a while, with the aid of his virtually polarizing rims and his concentrative powers, he was able to look THROUGH the reflective glare of the water's surface to see, waving, rising, and falling in the current ... TROUT. He stopped his casting, during which he had never let the fly drop. He let the tip of the rod rest on the ground, which you know one should never do. Threadbear could see a dimple on the water, as, or as if a fish had kissed the tense film between the worlds of water and air. ... one after another, rising to the surface for flies that were evidently so small that he could not see them... he did see trout, Brown Trout, he supposed, though the distorting and light affecting qualities of the moving water made the identification somewhat uncertain.

He also saw a Tuna, which seemed strange in a fresh water river, but to him that suggested that this river must have been close to the ocean.

BEFORE making his next cast Threadbear scouted the water and studied the fish ... for what seemed like about a month ... but was probably only hours in human time, Not wanting to alarm the fish with any jerky movement, the other bears stayed still as stuffed toys are supposed to do.

Threadbear began working out line, waving his fly rod wandily but not letting the fly drop to the water. This went on so long that the Trunk Bears once again grew restless and bored.

Even if you sleep day and night inside in a trunk of abandoned toys, the changing weather eventually gets to you;

April was the Foolest Month, with the weather turning one way, then another, ALMOST warm for a spell ... then truly cold again ... snow the same day as a spatter of rain against the glass door ... then hot, and not just barely hot but beastly hot for several days on end, so that the Trunk Bears felt like wet cookies.

With the warming weather, Nowella and Oneil left the deck door open a crack, so the house could cool off in the evening and either of them could sneak out to sleep in a crotch of the Horse Chestnut tree that spread its flower candelabras over the deck and house.

But as interested as they may have been in the outdoor world, the other Bears were still afraid to even

step over the threshold into who knows what.

One warm, almost hot evening, Oneil and Nowella slid the door open a little further and left it that way. In the morning when the Trunk Bears rose from their sleeping pile in the trunk and saw the almost wide open doorway, some of them stared into the space as if something was about to enter. Nothing did.

BUT; with a flick of her tail, Lamb bounced right out the open door.

Then bounced back in.

And then out again.

And then in, and out some more.

As this went on, one, then another, and another of the Trunk Bears stepped over the THRESHOLD out onto the deck ... and then pressed up against the outside wall of the house.

And then stepped back in again for a while, as if they were getting on and off a train at different stations.

The first surprise, to the simplest Bears, was that there were no Bears on the other side of their reflections on the glass.

And then was the problem of distances, and, above all the mystery of the Sky.

Threadbear was not about to cross the Threshold.

"The Threshold", he grumbled, "is there for a purpose: To hold Thresh in so it doesn't go out."

If you were there, you could see that whatever it is, he identified with Thresh at that moment.

There was no response to this assertion, and for an extended while, nothing happened.

"And besides," continued Threadbear, after that bewildered pause, this straw hat here, (though I appreciate your thoughtfulness) is not a fly fisher's hat. This is a GARDENER'S hat. It provides some shade, but the wind blows rain right through it, and it is highly visible to fish. A fly fishing hat is made of felt so it keeps out the weather, and can be used to dip water if needed. It must be grey, or green, or some earthy color, and must have a woolly band for holding trout flies to dry when I tie on a fresh one."

The felt hat would prove to be Nowella and Oneil's greatest challenge in satisfying Threadbear's demands.

But you guess correctly that they came up with something suitable.

All the exposed shelves in the little house were so dusty that it appeared the house people who seemed to be always traveling, had not bothered to do any dusting

even when they WERE at home. Dust there was nearly as thick as the matted fibers in a clothes dryer's lint-filter. Nowella rolled and gathered some between her paws, and began to form it over the copper hat that Oneil favored, but was not wearing at the moment.



Several bears stood just inside and leaned out over the threshold looking side to side as if for a train, then up into they were not sure what they were looking up into, or that they were looking up into anything.

It seemed to the Trunk Bears now that the Great Outdoors wasn't so much about DOORS, as it was about the CEILINGS or lack of ceilings. They had never really much noticed the ceiling indoors, maybe because it was painted white to be inconspicuous, but standing out of doors, they realized that there HAD been one. The sky was obviously a blue domed ceiling, way up there.

Several Bears stepped back indoors to check on the ceiling, and several bears stepped in and out repeatedly just to experience the transformative feeling of crossing the indoors outdoors threshold. Several Bears remained hunched half on each side of the door. Then, without any conscious decision to venture out, but In a surge of instinct ...the blood of his migratory ancestors rising in him, Walter the Catfish squirmed over the threshold and onto the deck.

If you are late in joining the story, have forgotten, or have just not been paying attention, you may be surprised to see a Catfish here: a Catfish as large as an average Dog, and with very little water anywhere near. Walter, you need to know, had arrived at this place a

while back, having been sucked out of his native lake and natural element by one of those famous Water Spouts you hear so much about. Slammed against the sliding glass door of the house like a bug on a windshield. As a result of this trauma he had developed an understandable fear of water itself. But something was calling to him.

Maybe he had been lured by a small school of Mackrel-shaped clouds that had just come swimming across the immense whatever that is Way Up There.

Walter poked his head over the threshold and paused, his fleshy whiskers quivering on the deck boards as the clouds swirled slowly away looking more and more like Catfish. He squithered over the threshold and onto the dew-wet deck.

For the longest time, the Bears enjoyed the world changing game of going in and out and in and out, until they tired of that and stood staring up at the blue dome.



That afternoon, the Bears returned to the game of running in and out of the door.

Threadbear, despite all his talk about the Windy River out in the Big Sky country, was not all that curious about the Sky, and anyway, the river stopped short of the door and at an angle to it.

It was then, as Threadbear mumbled about holding the Thresh, that Oneil began reddening like an angry neck, as he scrabbled to the river roll, he wrenched that river about by the end of the roll, and single handedly rolled it right over the awesome THRESHOLD, to where he banked it again at nearly right angles, then rolled it down a falls of steps to the ground .

The Bears crowded together at the brink of the stair-fall, staring out over the vast and pebbly doorway and the unknown shore beyond.

A moth fluttered near, took the motionless Bears for nothing of consequence, and fluttered on.

Threadbear, holding his fly rod with both hands as one would hold a gun, took one step on to, or you might say into the river... stood there in a half crouch for a tense moment, as if the surface might suddenly give way and he would sink over his head and past his hat, took one more big step over the threshold and stopped there.

Then he removed his polarizing wire rim "glasses,"

paused for a moment, as if thinking, and then as he put the wire rims back on said,

**“We are going to
need boats;
- lots of boats.”**

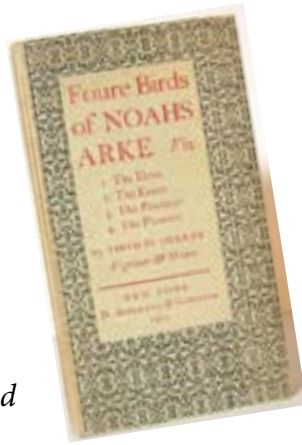
That would not be a problem.



Professor Booknoodle on Books : Past and Future - Real and Unreal.



Professor Booknoodle, Phud



INSPIRATION — HIGH AND LOW A Brief Appreciation of Thomas Dekker, Householder.

Just the other day I was perusing a book that does not often pass through my hands, and which to the greater part of the population remains unknown or unremembered. The book is a 1925 facsimile of “Foure Birds of Noahs Arke, viz: The Dove, the Eagle, the Pelican, the Phoenix” by Thomas Dekker, first published in 1609.

Thomas Dekker (1572 - 1632) was an English dramatist and pamphleteer who bridged the Elizabethan age and the Jacobean age. He was colleagues with most of the other dramatists of his day, including Ben Jonson, John Day, William Rowley, John Webster, John Ford, Philip Massenger, etc. Dekker was a man of the streets, and his works reflect both his love for his native London, and his deep understanding of the colorful and often tumultuous life of the lower classes ... including merchants, craftsmen, fellow dramatists, prostitutes and prisoners, cutpurses, confidence - men, and innkeepers. In fact, because Dekker suffered a life-long struggle with money he had been imprisoned for debt, and understood the dark worries of the imprisoned. Imprisonment did not deter him from writing his pamphlets, indeed prison likely fired up his determination to publish, which he managed to do from behind bars.

It can be strange wherein a person may find inspiration. Dekker found inspiration for his plays and pamphlets in the everyday life of London, in the lowly poor who teemed in the back streets, alleys and gin holes of the huge city. There was inspiration enough from the often violent current events of his time. Murders, thefts, highwaymen, villainous plots; Dekker's 1606 pamphlet “The Double PP” was inspired by the Gunpowder Plot, of which diabolical cabal, Guy Fawkes is the most famous, though he swung from the gibbet for his crime. Guy was caught red-handed - or neck-deep in the barrels of gunpowder he secreted under the Parliament building. Guy Fawkes

The seventeenth century was no more momentous than our modern time for events and threats. It is hard to imagine that anyone could be inspired by the threat of nuclear annihilation, but Thomas Dekker and millions of others were threatened by the plague, an equally horrid bugabear, which made a reappearance in 1603, and which must have had a similar darkening psychological effect as the bomb ... no one could feel themselves removed from threat of an ugly, painful death, especially when people were dropping all about from a disease that nobody yet understood. How can such a thing be inspirational?

But Dekker's “Foure Birds of Noahs Arke” was just that : a devotional book that was inspired by the plague. It is, by the way the only devotional book that Dekker penned. Murder, political plots, mayhem, imprisonment ... none of these were powerful enough to inspire a devotional work; but the plague ahh now there was something to make a poor soul take stock ... life was for sure a precarious matter.

In his Preface to Dekker's “Foure Birds ...” F. P. Wilson said: “The Language to his hand was full of colour and rich in synonym. It was the language of the imagination, 'fresh and with the dew upon it'. The sentiments of Dekker, who took a poetic view of the world, find their natural expression in vivid and coloured figures: of the worldling who ties his conscience full of knots to pull up riches, of sins that have a quick pace and are ever at our heels, of the winds bound in the prisons of the earth, of prayer — the anchor at which we lie safe in the storms of death. In 1609 the finest monument and the best model of English prose were still the sixteenth century versions of the Bible. Its language is continually on his lips. 'Foure Birds of Noahs Arke', like 'The Pilgrim's Progress', shows what sweetness and what dignity a man of the people might compass who was nurtured upon the tradition of biblical prose.

“The touchstone of the Bible saved Dekker in this book from the colloquialisms and from the affectations of his day; it helped to clarify the expressions of his thought, and gave to his cadences a more varied and more beautiful music. The prose of this book has a fine keeping. The high-flier of wit and humour, the swashbuckler of words and phrases is for once subdued. The writer keeps decorum. Conceit no longer tumbles after conceit, nor pun jostles pun, nor hyperbole outreaches hyperbole. Conceits indeed are comparatively few, and those that find a place are quaint and homely and instinct with human feelings. The world is God's school, the grave our last inn, Christ is the attorney pleading for mercy in our behalf, and St. Luke a chronicler ... The cockney poet is pleasantly

revealed when he speaks of the City of Heaven in terms of the City of London : 'Before wee lived in slaverie, but now we dwell within the liberties of the Holy citie' (p. 232). True he does not altogether shake off the fluency and the 'blown and puffy' rhetoric which so easily beset him. There is a trick of the old rage, for example in the prayers for a mariner. But what has Dekker to do with the sea? He is at his best with what he knows — prentices and merchants, poor people and prisoners, and the art of daily life."

I find it curious that Mr. Wilson neglects William Shakespeare as a source of both style and inspiration; although it may be that Shakespeare had not yet the puissant sway that he now holds over much of the world's and nearly all of English literature. There in one writer whose brilliance dimmed the daily sun, was enough inspiration for all of the forthcoming generations. Note that Mr. Wilson mentions "sixteenth century versions of the Bible". These would have been the "Great Bible", ordered by King Henry VIII in 1535; and the Bishops' Bible of 1568. Neither of these strike the mark with modern readers, but to Thomas Dekker they would have been strong nutriment. IN 1604 James VI and I commissioned the new translation that is now and forever called The King James Bible. It was published in 1611. THAT translation was inspired ! And its strength and beauty of phrase and content was enough to provide inspiration and nutriments to untold generations of writers, to say nothing of the rest of Protestant Christendom.

That one book, alone, set the bar - and set it high - for literary style and spiritual inspiration. Thomas Dekker died in 1732, so he must have viewed if not read the KJV ... or if neither of those, he surely must have witnessed its impact on the body public. One can look at his later writing, and try to discern a change of style ... was he newly inspired by King James' commissioned work - or did he see it as merely another thing of an elevated class , of nobility of birth?

One thing I know. Amazing and as powerful a text as the King James Bible is, it did not supplant William Shakespeare in the literary pantheon. Shakespeare is as if glued to the firmament - set in stone in the fields of Parnassus. As a literary influence he shares a high place with the King James Bible for inspiring and nurturing subsequent generations of writers. Some might think that - in terms of individual inspiration - he is even more due the wreath, for his sublime work is the sweat of one brow rather than the work - no matter how inspired - of a committee.

As to Thomas Dekker, one sees he was inspired. One may say he was influenced stylistically by the Bible, and possibly inspired by Shakespeare (no matter how fairly contemporaneous he was), but one thing I think ... Thomas Dekker - if there were no plague, no witchcraft trials, no Gunpowder Plot, no changing of Royalty, no war - needed only one thing to inspire him to take up the quill ... and that was the immediacy of common humanity.

Here are a few of Thomas Dekker's works (Most of Dekker's work is lost.):

DRAMAS

(Only a partial list)

- "The Witch of Edmonton - A known true Story (co-authored with William Rowley, John Ford)
- "The Honest Whore"
- "If This Be Not a Good Play, the Devil is In It"
- "Keep the Widow Waking"
- "The Shoemaker's Holiday"
- "Lust's Dominion"
- "The Virgin Martyr"
- "Triplicity of cuckolds"
- "The Mad Man's Morris"
- "Old Fortunatus"
- "Satiromastix" (a conjured 'feud' with Ben Jonson - this the satiric reply to Jonson; they later collaborated)
- "The Roaring Girl" (based on the real-life 'Moll Cutpurse')
- "The Sun's Darling"
- "The Fairy Knight"

PAMPHLETS

- "The Wonderful Year" (in part a plague pamphlet)
- "News From Gravesend" (another plague piece)
- "The Double PP"
- "News From Hell"
- "The Seven Deadly Sins of London" (yet another plague pamphlet)
- "Thieve's Cant" (one of several 'cony-catching pamphlets describing various tricks of confidence men)
- "Villainies Discovered by Candlelight" (ditto)
- "English Villainies" (ditto)
- "The Guls Horne - Booke"
- "Work for Armourers" & "Artillery Garden"
- "London Look Back"
- "Wars, Wars, Wars"
- "Dekker His Dreame" (written from prison)
- "Foure Birds of Noahs Arke"



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Reiki: Just The Facts

Part XIV: Bringing Spirit In

By Don Brennan

Inspiration is the process of clearing ourselves and bringing in wisdom, guidance, divine revelation, healing energy, or the sacred breath from Spirit. Call it channeling one's muse, if you like. It is the process of connecting with the divine, getting our human selves out of the way, and allowing Spirit to move through us.

The human self is the problem. We get in our own way...all the time. We continually sabotage ourselves. We launch so many beautiful creations in a flash of inspiration, and then immediately block their manifestation. It's a wonder we accomplish anything at all.

Usui sensei speaks of Reiki as an eternal, unchanging energy from the Cosmic Soul. When the human soul center of the brain is awakened, we have a stronger, clearer connection with the Cosmic Soul and can channel this healing energy with much greater intensity. Unfortunately, it is human nature for the soul center to go back to sleep. This is why we have to make conscious efforts to reawaken the soul center, get our human selves out of the way, become One with Spirit, and merge with this healing energy.

Usui sensei emphasized daily meditation and chanting the Gokai (Five Principles) to strengthen the spiritual connection and to calm human consciousness. He taught techniques like Kenyoku (dry bathing) and Reiji, for clearing ourselves of all human attachment to the healing process. Kenyoku begins clearing us and Reiji brings Spirit in, helping us to channel this healing energy. Both serve to help get our human selves out of the way. We can think of this as emptying ourselves of our selves or as cleaning house before welcoming the presence of Spirit.

Once we get our human selves out of the way, we begin to feel the intensity of energy building in us as we deepen our connection with Spirit. When we begin doing Reiki, the flow through us becomes stronger and we become more filled

with Spirit. The more we get our selves out of the way, the more effective the healing becomes.

The simple truth about Reiki is that we are not the ones who do the healing work. Our job is to get out of the way. We serve as channels for this healing energy, but the healing is actually an interactive process between Spirit and the person receiving the healing. When we get out of the way, the energy flows stronger, the person receives greater healing benefits and becomes more deeply connected with Spirit.

Our goal, as Reiki practitioners, is to let go of the personal, to allow the mind to be like a blank page and to become one with Spirit. When I do Reiki, I try to be as clear of myself as I can be. Reverend Jane once said, "Oh you are clear. It's like you're not even there!" And I accepted that as the compliment that it was, from healer to healer.

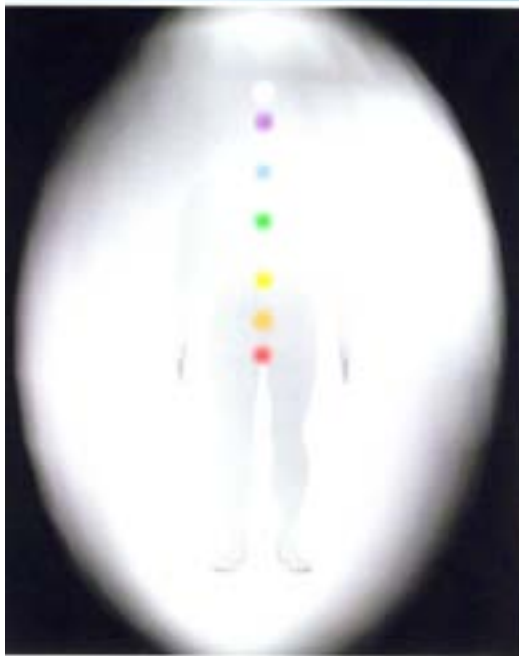
There's a saying in Reiki that helps us keep our egos in check: "No claim. No blame." It reminds us that we are not doing the healing and that we are not responsible for what does or does not happen. It reminds us that Reiki energy is not personal. It's suprapersonal. It comes from Spirit.

Sometimes pictures can be very illuminating. I've included 2 aura photos, taken by Linda Bloser, of Aura Reflections, at one of the psychic fairs. The first one, a few minutes after the fair opened on Sunday is my normal self. I was a little tired from the day before, not very well grounded, missed the



thruway exit, and had to rush to get my booth set up. In other words, pretty normal.

The second aura photo was later in the day after I had given Reiki sessions and was still in that healing mode. Notice the shift in aura color from Orange (representing artistic, physical-creative expression, excitement) to White (representing beyond physical, transcendent, higher dimension.) The Mind Body Spirit ratio, not shown here, goes from 20% Spirit and 80%



Mind/Body before doing Reiki, to 85% Spirit and 15% Mind/Body in healing mode.

And see how much larger the aura is. Normally, I tend to keep my aura close around me, to avoid taking in unwanted energy from others. But in healing mode, I'm one with Spirit. There is no concern for protection. And so my aura expands to the maximum, as I radiate the light and love of Spirit.

Here's a simple energy technique that uses the breath from Spirit to quickly become centered and connected within and without.

Breathe in the breath of Spirit, in through the crown of the head, and bring it down to the heart center. Hold for a moment. Begin exhaling through the mouth, consciously pulling energy and guiding it with the breath, down from the head, up from the hands and arms, into the shoulders down through the torso and out through the legs. Repeat two more times.

Breathe normally now, guiding each breath into the heart center. With each out breath radiate the light and love in your heart to fill all of creation.

And now you're ready to bring Spirit in.

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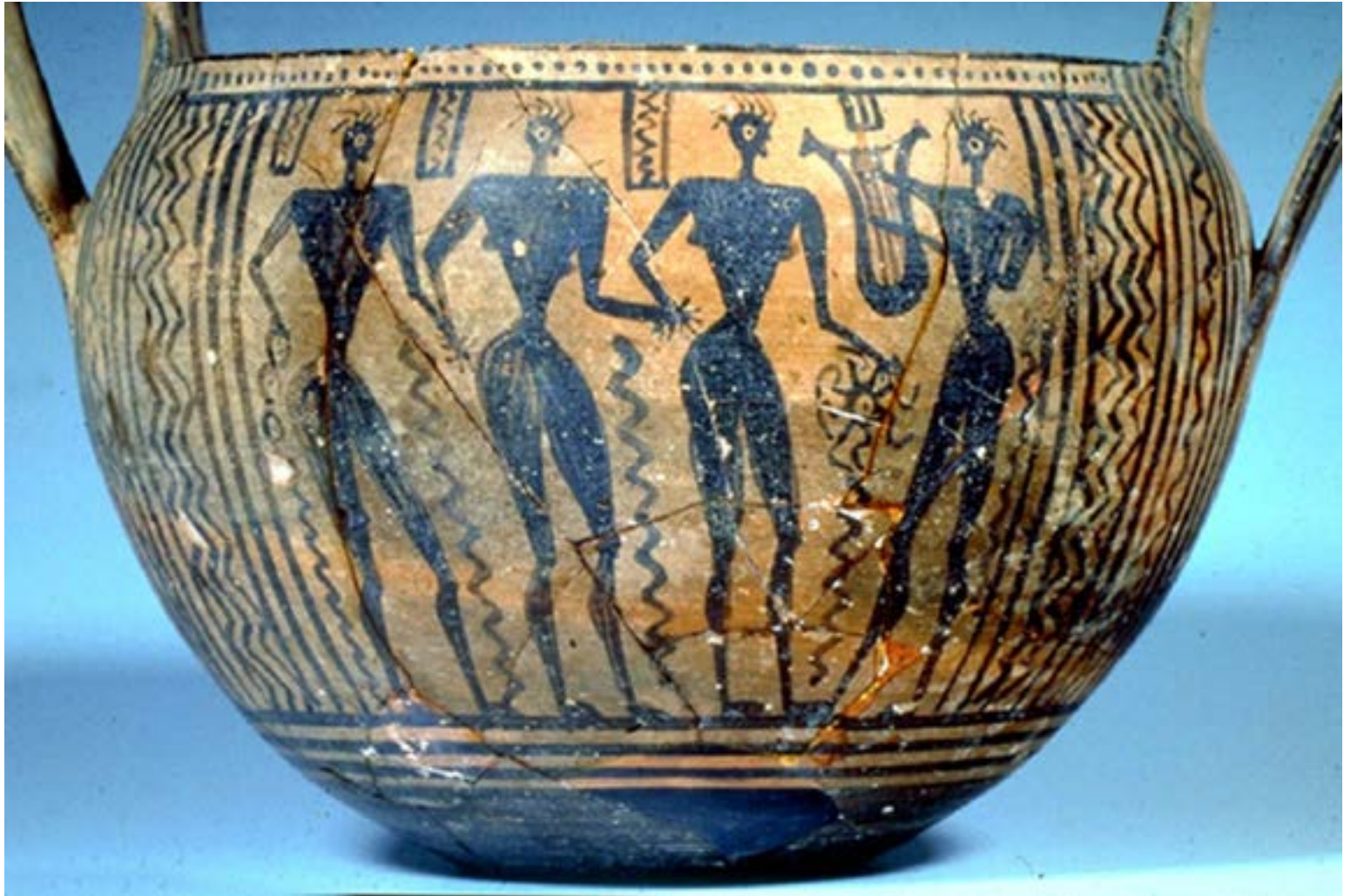
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FOREWARD to the Muses

by David Rollow



Apollo Dancing with the Muses. c. 750 BC. Staatliche Kunstsammlung, Dresden.

The nine Muses are the offspring of Zeus and Mnemosyne, the Goddess of Memory. Before the invasion of the Olympian gods, the Muses, goddesses or guardian nymphs of springs and groves, tutelary spirits, belonged to a preliterate, oral culture. The original three are the daughters of Mnemosyne, memory, although they were raised by a wetnurse or foster-mother, Eupheme. Even this biographical snippet must be a late revision, since Mnemosyne is said to be the mother of the Muses with Zeus, so is already a literary corruption, the first euphemism. Mnemosyne is a personification: Memory.

When a mythological figure is a personification it's always suspicious, as is the multiplication of Muses from three, the usual form of the goddess, to nine, representing genres. So too the subordination of the Muses to Apollo when it is obvious they should be autonomous. The earliest Muses would not have been personifications of anything, although from the beginning people must have seen the parallel between the sudden upsurge of a spring (particularly in the arid parts of the world) and the autonomous power of the imagination. These early goddesses may have been prophetesses like the Delphic Pythoness,

who seems to have been another erased older myth, a chthonic goddess trapped in a cult of Apollo. She spoke only in hexameters, a talent any poet would covet. What little source material exists attests to their original triune form, parallel to the Graces and the Fates, so it's probably true that the Muses are among the oldest mythological figures we know of. Some sources name the original three muses Pasithea, Cale, and Euphrosyne, others Melete, Mneme, and Aoede (Meditation, Memory, and Song). The names of the Graces are Aglaia, Euphrosyne, and Thalia. Euphrosyne is a name also given to one of the original three Muses, and Thalia, the Muse of comedy, is one of Hesiod's nine—but Hesiod was a writer, and his Muses are literary ideas rather than goddesses or nymphs. He poses as a simple shepherd tending his flocks on the slopes of Helicon or Parnassus, but he's already in the realm of writing. He is no shepherd tending his flocks but a poet trying to herd his words into line on the page. The Muses told him of true things, past, present, and future, and they told him lies. Especially lies.

The Muses officiated at the wedding of Cadmus and Harmony and at the funeral of Achilles. They participated in singing contests, plucking the tailfeathers of their competitors, the Sirens, blinding, flaying alive, or otherwise destroying anyone so bold as to try to best them. They blinded Thamyras, and erased his memory. Marsyas they flayed alive because he tried to outsing Apollo—flaying alive is a literary touch, because a text is a body. But we don't know of the adventures of the Muses, actual or imaginative, even though they were the owners of the flying horse, Pegasus, on whose wings they rode to ecstatic heights; the only Pegasus story that comes down is of Bellerophon's borrowing the winged horse to go kill the Chimera. The Chimera is a composite monstrosity, a late myth, another literary invention, whereas the birth of Pegasus from the Gorgon's blood, after Perseus decapitated her, is in its condensation and dream-like intensity obviously a preliterate myth, combining the Muses and the Gorgons, who were their offspring. All we have of the story is enough to tell us that most of it is gone.

The Muses bore Orpheus, the first poet, competed in song with their daughters the Sirens, and hung around with the fauns and centaurs in a pre-Olympian pastoral

world. They were orgiastic. Other children included Hyacinth, the original homosexual, the sirens, the gorgons, and the corybantes (ecstatic dancers). They belong to a culture in which ritual is inseparable from daily life, where when you dance you dance until you drop. Pegasus, born from the blood of the gorgon Medusa, was a gift to the Muses from Athena. The gorgons are mirror-muses, their antitype, who turn to stone what they look on rather than setting the mind on fire, just as the sirens song is a false seduction. A Muse galvanizes the imagination, the gorgons stop it cold. The sphinx was an apprentice to the Muses and learned her riddle from them.

Considering that the idea of inspiration is as old as human memory, our lack of information about the Muses themselves is a mystery. They occupy an ornamental place in literature, a decorative frieze in the visual arts, and receive only a nod even in the oldest written poems. There is something unfair about the way poets and writers called on the Muse but went on to write without further reference to her. She tells the story—through the writer—but she has no story or identity of her own, which is to say little more than that she is a mask or apotheosis of the writer (who also has no story of his own). The role of Muse goes begging today, since women see it as being secretarial, but in their original form they were like goddesses of creation and destruction, primal forces.

One question of interest to anyone is where the Muses live. (So as to go there and win their favor.) Pausanias has many references to places where they were worshiped, often the sites of springs. These locations are far-flung: Pieros, or Pieria, Delphi, Corinth, Beotia, Sicily, Parnassus, Helicon. The spring of Helicon today is found at Delphi, at the foot of Parnassus: you may wash in its waters, and be cleansed if you've committed murder. Inspiration has its mythic source in the well that sprang up when Pegasus angrily pawed the ground on Mt. Helicon, from whose Omega-shaped hoofprint a spring sprang up; beside it a Willow grows (*helica*) signifying a spiral branching form (the DNA of inspiration) whose tap root draws deep from the spring; the rustling of the willow's leaves are the whispers of inspiration, for all the Muses are originally hamadryads. By far their most beautiful home is on the dedicatory page of the

Greek Anthology, which speaks of a grove where they live but means the book that contains the poems—the oldest example of the durable trope of the anthology as a kind of garden. That this image is beautiful, the way the image of the willow by the springs of Helicon is beautiful, is a reminder that our Muses are Muses of the written word, yet of archaic, preliterate origin.

My Muse lives in the suburbs in Helicon, “a village of Parnassus,” where she drives a steel-gray station wagon with a Pegasus hood ornament. She has children, among them her youngest, Orpheus, a child prodigy. We are not married. Her husband, Arcas, is a native of Arcadia, and they repair there every winter to escape the cold weather, leaving me alone in my garret. The Muse attended the Castalian college, an enterprise that may be operated by Central Casting, where she was trained to be a full-time lyric Muse (the nine are roles or jobs, including Muses of History (Urania), Tragedy (Melpomene), Comedy (Thalia), Dance (Calypso of course), and Epic (Calliope)). Our girl is Erato, “the enrapturer.” One of her attributes is a lyre, but it turns out that hers is actually a cithar, an ancestor of the zither, whereas the pure form of lyre (and the origin of the guitar) belongs to Terpsichore, the Muse of Dance. When the Muse first began to show up in my stories she was coming from a night of wild dancing in wild weather. It took years for her to settle into a married life in which most of her waking time was spent delivering her children to soccer matches, music lessons, and Russian Math tutors.

It would be smart for the today’s writers to figure out how to package their work so it will survive into the postliterate age, as Homer packaged the oral poems, but to do so would be to foresee the development of human memory beyond the book, a process which, though it has surely begun, has yet to evolve into something recognizable. The writer today may stand at the end of literacy, but is still a writer, in a literate form. What use has such a writer for a Muse?

2.

It’s tempting to say that my Muse stories were inspired, and tempting fate to say so, but I believe they were, even though inspiration didn’t arrive in one piece or anywhere near all at one time. Inspiration—whatever it is—is the opposite of writer’s block.

Although I didn’t set out to write these stories and pieces to remedy anyone’s case of writer’s block, even my own, I grew convinced that writer’s block was an illusion that develops from a mistaken idea of what inspiration is. Serious, professional writers believe—usually without realizing it—that they should be better at writing than everyone else, which also means being better at writing than they are. Since all of us at one time or another have the experience of writing things that come out right the first time, we’re all vulnerable to the suspicion that anything that doesn’t come out that way is not inspired. But that is not so. Writing so thrives on revision that it can’t come fully into being without it. If the mind of the oral poets was metaphorically like a rushing stream or wind, a song sung to and through the poet like the wind in the trees whose branches are the ramifying imagination, the mind of the writer in literate times is like a written (and still later, a printed) page, and writing is seen as transcription of the contents of the mental page. But it is one of the advantages of a page that it gives us something external to look at and revise until we are satisfied, and the process of revising is so important to writing that it should be thought of as part of inspiration, even as the source of inspiration for a writer. As the written page facilitates rereading that enables the reader to understand, so it permits the writer to rewrite to create the possibility of understanding.

One day, when I couldn’t think of what to write, I had the idea of a writer who drives his true Muse away, and I wrote the story called “The Muse.” I continued to write stories about this writer and his Muse, usually when I was stalled on what I thought of as my “real” work, but also because they were fun to write. I had an idea that so-called writer’s block and inspiration were two sides of one coin, in the sense that a truly blocked writer would dream of being rescued by a Muse, unable to rescue himself. It turned out that variations on this theme were fascinating and possibly—it seemed to me—endless. I believed then, and still do, that writing emerges from the unconscious and that the writer needs some kind of link to it. Access to the unconscious, Freud saw in the early days of psychoanalysis, had to be indirect. He used free association, which meant that he got his patients to say “whatever was on their minds,” even without their

knowing what was on their minds, and in their random monologues he found a rhetoric perfectly suited to his devious method. The writer must be even more devious in pursuit of inspiration, more inventive and ingenious than Freud. The writer pursues the Muse; she is elusive, although she tells him that her elusiveness, in being constant, is part of her constancy, her fidelity. Her being elusive is the main thing that energizes his inventiveness. His inventiveness discovers more and more about her.

The Muse came into existence very slowly for me. The earliest record I have of her is a note for the beginning of a story: "There was a writer who wondered if he had a Muse." Another note from around the same time says I woke up with my head full of jumbled sentence fragments, nothing that made sense to me, but a voice in my head said, "Get up and write." I got up and wrote that down. Then, maybe, I wrote some more. At some point I wrote the first story in which the Muse appeared as a character, and a short time after that another, and then a third. I still didn't think much about them. The idea seemed cute, but off to the side of my main concerns. Yet the stories piled up. I realized that the advantages of writing over telling were many, for I could go back and change what I had written even if I had written it years before. Writing was superior to memory because it offered the possibility of a permanent record if I wanted one, but if I didn't like what I'd written, I could change it, erase it, fix it. Of course, the way I worked on these stories, I was almost guaranteed not to publish them for some time. I didn't think about that at all after a while. The stories had a life of their own. The Muse might seem in the abstract like a way of automating the writing process, but my Muse was not exactly efficient, nor was she abstract. She had definite, particular attributes, beginning with a gossamer gown that was somehow wrapped off a bolt of cloth and held together, not very well, by strategically placed safety pins. I learned that gossamer, woven from spider webs, is the strongest fabric known to man, so though it is sheer almost to transparency it is bullet proof, like Kevlar, and presumably keeps the Muse from getting seriously ill. She's immortal, she says, but she can get a cold. The writer worries about her when she shows up from one of her wild nights with her gown soaking wet.

At first, I saw the Muse stories as light, "mere bagatelles." Despite claims to the contrary by the

Muse that this was my real material, I thought they were "left-hand" stories, or exercises. The fact remained that I was enjoying them more than what I thought of as my real work, although I wrote most of them without thinking about what I was doing. When I started writing them, I was young and naïve. I thought writing—the process, not the product—could be like jazz, improvised, or like Pentecostal fire, glossolalia, speaking in tongues, or like opening a switch and connecting to the other world. Even now the experience of writing feels like an experience of another dimension (the dimension of the page, but it is also the timeless dimension of the mind). I have always called it "The Other Side," although I have no idea what it is the other side of or where it is. The page I write on is an almost transparent almost membranous interface to—wherever imagination goes. In the stories, the telephone is a line to the other world: it's as close to another world as we normally get, a direct line to the unconscious.

The question is why a writer would want a Muse. I can think of a number of reasons that seem perfectly healthy—the pleasure of pleasing a woman, even by flattery; the happiness that comes from communicating with someone else, the desire to make someone desire you. But the wish to have the material of your writing supplied by some occult process strikes me as giving up the writer's essential freedom and autonomy, and suggestive of a belief that a writer's work has to be authenticated by something other than his own taste (or "genius," if he has genius—but of course with genius the same problems arise as with the Muse). Why would any self-respecting writer hand over to someone else authority over his work or any part of the responsibility for it?

As I wrote these stories, my idea of inspiration changed from wanting something to arrive already finished, to expecting that I would revise and rewrite, renewing inspiration again and again—a consequence and precondition of writing, I eventually realized, as distinct from telling stories out loud. I sat at my desk and stared at empty sheets of paper. Something came to mind, and I started writing, and the Muse showed up at my elbow, and spoke. I didn't recognize her at first. To begin with, she was just an anonymous voice in my head—it had probably always been there. This

“voice” wasn’t much—it wasn’t much different from the hypnagogic babble that went through my head just as I was drifting off to sleep, to be startled briefly awake sometimes by the voice of my mother calling me in from play to dinner when I was a child. The Muse’s voice, in some way, developed out of that half-conscious babble.

Is the Muse real? Do I believe in her? The question must be asked, but it doesn’t connect to my experience in writing these stories. Are there goddesses, nymphs, and so on? I don’t know. I’m tempted to say, “Yes and no.” Not because I am agnostic on the subject, but because I don’t know and can’t conceive of what kind of world gods and goddesses could exist in, except by distant analogy—yet it seems there was once such a world. But at the same time there are women who one might describe in such terms. Yes, even goddesses. While writing these stories, I was fascinated by the idea that characters in fiction could be at the same time real people and not real people, both human and divine. Eventually, I realized that this double nature is the human predicament. We are physical beings, with bodies, and we have thoughts, which do not. The one fact points us in a temporal, mortal direction, the other in the direction of eternity, “things unseen.” All art is deeply engaged with this fundamental human situation. The more time I spent imagining the Muse, the more present she became—and the best way I can explain what that means is that with time I knew pretty well what was and what wasn’t a Muse story. I thought of the Muse as real, but at the same time a mythical being. If you think this idea is cracked, think of falling in love: suddenly, your beloved is surrounded in light, and seems divine. It doesn’t matter (except in Freudian terms) whether you think it’s just someone’s aura, or more realistically, that you have projected your desires on another. Who cares? The Muse was such a projection. I began to write about her, I can honestly say, out of curiosity about who she’d turn out to be, and the stories, skits, dialogues, and epiphanies piled up, filling in the details as an artist fills in the details of a drawing. Painters start with vague, foggy images that they work up. You work on a drawing or painting long enough, and you see more than you did at the beginning. The details emerge. The growth of these stories was something like that. From shadowy beginnings, the Muse emerged as a definite form, and she had a lot to say, most of it news to me. And as she emerged, so did the character of the writer, and I realized they were a pair, like Humbert and Lolita, Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, Bottom and

Titania, Jacques and Rosalind, Ishmael and Queequeg, Vladimir and Estragon, Laurel and Hardy, or W. C. Fields and Mae West. His Heaviness and Her Lightness. The writer is earthbound, the Muse is lighter than air.

Inspiration is modeled on memory rather than on creation. Among the oldest images of inspiration is the Muses’ spring, beside which grows a willow. The spring, or source, is of immeasurable depth, and the willow sinks its taproot deep to draw the water up and infuse the branches—the branching hierarchy of the mind—with inspiration, which is then exhaled into the atmosphere, the expiration that becomes the writer’s inspiration. The human memory, although its actual source might be boundless, was strictly limited, however, and before writing, knowledge or recollection could not exceed the storage capacity of the mind. (Outraged by Thamyris, the Muses blinded him, depriving him thereby of new experience, and wiped out his memory, making it impossible to store up anything new.) The Muses are the daughters of Memory, but in an oral culture, memory—“storage” memory—is not strictly in the mind (although what the mind can hold is the upper limit of what can be remembered). It is like what some philosophers call experience or culture. The poems of the oral tradition, whether those of Homer or the Vedas (oral in origin, though later written down), are themselves the memory of the whole culture they support and inform. (Which does not mean they are historically true.) That is the reason the song of the Muse is characterized in oral poetry as an external source, represented as the Muse singing through the poet, who is her vessel. (Among moderns, this idea of the artist as a humble vessel is nothing but a mystification, as when Stravinsky said *The Rite of Spring* just flowed through him.) The words of oral culture belong not to the poet but to the culture he participates in and celebrates.

For a modern writer the idea of a Muse implies that the writer is not original. Originality is an idea that would be alien to an oral poet, whose function is to speak for the culture as a whole, and who therefore has no ideas of his own other than infrequent innovations that survive only if accepted by the culture. The existence of an individual mind with thoughts of its own, worth recording, is a product of literacy. The idea of inspiration is at root in conflict with the idea of the originality of the writer. But interestingly, in the last fifty years or so the idea of the writer’s originality has been challenged

from so many different directions that it has begun to seem like a kind of false pride, self-inflation, the kind of thing only men come up with. However, throughout recorded history, or the period of literacy, self-inflation was the name of the game. (It was called “divine afflatus.” Wind.)

The writer in these stories is individualized only as far as absolutely necessary, as far, that is, as was necessary to tell these stories. I have worried about this, and in the end I believe that he should not be so fully specified that we know the ages of his children, the particulars of his divorces, his drinking habits, and so on. (Well, he tells us he doesn’t drink much, but keeps a bottle of Kristal in the fridge for the Muse.)

I would think that any reader of these stories would be interested in reading them because of wanting to be, or being, a writer. So I encourage you to plug yourself in, and I don’t stand in your way.

When I think about the reader of these stories, I think of a lonely, youthful writer, who wonders if inspiration is real, who wants desperately to write but is not yet “a writer,” who is unknown even if somewhat published, and who wonders all the time where the next story is coming from . . . and sometimes where stories come from, and what to do when inspiration fails, and how to finish something that began in a burst of inspiration that for some reason fizzled, and what methods other writers have followed, and what is the relation of life to art, and whether autobiography can ever be fiction, and whether you have to follow genre conventions, and like that. I have opinions about all these things, if not answers.

When I was in school, a teacher who was giving a course on Don Quixote mentioned a book by a German writer, André Jolles, called “Simple Forms.” I never found an English translation of the book, but the idea made an impression on me because I was also interested, at that time, in transformational linguistics and I wondered if stories were not transformations or elaborations of simple patterns just as complex sentences embed simple sentences and “rewrite” them according to so-called translation rules. (Examples of simple forms include: benedictions, bride purchases and bride advertisements, complaint songs, curses, fables and beast fables, fairy tales, family trees, formulaic poetry, hero legends, lie stories, legal proverbs, local

curses, legends, mockery verses, restaurant legends, personals, prescriptions, proverbs, treasure legends, sayings, spells, and work songs.)

I started working on writing simple stories in the hope of working out their transformations. I had a cracked idea that the simple stories would “generate” other stories, and that I would write the generated stories. In fact, I thought that first sentences could somehow generate whole stories. What is cracked about this idea is that I thought I was going to write the stories: it was like imagining I could write all the sentences that could be generated from a single simple sentence form. That isn’t something any individual can do—where such transformations are compiled, as in the Indian Ocean of Story, they are the work of innumerable writers and multiple compilers. I had the grandiose fantasy of becoming a one-man story tradition. However, what was not grandiose about the idea was that simple stories could lead to others, and over what turned out to be a very long time I produced the variations I was capable of. By sticking to simple forms I found out everything I was to know about the Muse.

When I first got the idea of the Muse from a voice I heard I was drifting off for a nap that said, “Get up and write!” I was probably taking a nap to escape from writing. Somewhat later, I wrote a story in which the Muse showed up in person and the writer tried to deny that the material she brought was the stuff he was supposed to write. This led to a series of stories built around a dialectic between a writer and his Muse about the material she could supply. The stories interested me because the writer wasn’t exactly me and the Muse was unlike anyone I’d ever met. I thought it was all right to write about a writer if he was someone else, imaginary, and though I had never met anyone like her I was convinced from the start that the Muse was real. Then I met a woman who fit the part perfectly. This was before I realized that Muses are . . . well, not exactly a dime a dozen but numerous, and that they like to hang out in bars, and that they will take charge of your life if you allow it. To put it succinctly, that is what a Muse does with your writing: she takes charge. And it has to be asked, why would a writer want anyone else to be in charge?

THE MUSE

Chapter One

by David Rollow



The writer spoke in his most business-like voice.

“I don’t have time to take poetry now. I’m too busy with prose. Look. I’m writing a book—a novel. Well, as a matter of fact, it’s only a story at this point, but it has the potential to be a novel. That’s even better, since it might be a novel without the potential to be a story. But I have to get to page sixty by tomorrow. I promised myself. I promised myself I’d take the time, and I’m taking the time. Please let me do it. If I don’t do it now, when

will I ever do it? So go away with your poetry and leave me alone.”

The Muse departed, angrily jangling her lyre. She took her poetry with her.

The writer turned to his book and his mouth turned to dust. All he could hear was the dissonant sound of the untuned lyre (for the Muse let her lyre get out of tune when she visited him).

His mind turned to water, and what he wanted to write was as writ on it. Not a word would pass his lips or his fingertips.

He called on the Muse. “Oh Muse, come back! Come back to me with your poetry! I’ll take it! With good grace this time, I mean. Whatever you bring, I’ll take, only come back to me.”

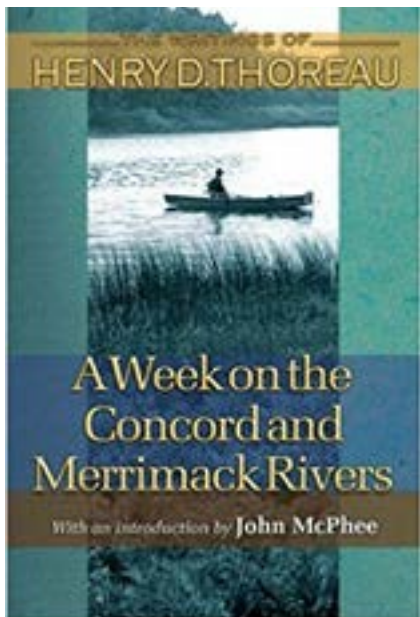
She didn’t hear, wasn’t even listening. There was no connection between her order of being and his. He was the designated vessel, he alone, but the switch was off or the power was down. There was no flash, no flush, no heightened moment in which he was suddenly raised to another level.

Days later she burst in through the French doors, disheveled, her hair, the golden curls frizzed by the rain, hanging in damp ringlets about her face. She gave herself airs. She sashayed around the room, nose in the air, holding her lyre over her shoulder hung on one finger.

She threw him a wanton smile, laughed whorishly in his face.

This done, and the writer duly humbled, she burst into song. She sat on the corner of his desk as if on a piano and sang him a string of saloon songs.

For Inspired words:



“In warm evenings I frequently sat in the boat playing the flute, and saw the perch, which I seemed to have charmed, hovering around me, and the moon traveling over the ribbed bottom, which was strewn with the wrecks of the forest.”

*A Week on the Concord
and Merrimack Rivers*

Henry David Thoreau
Originally published 1849

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Charlie Peckerstone and Starkissed

by David S.Warren

Unsurprisingly, Charles Pekar-Stein's high school classmates usually called him Charlie Peckerstone. That name followed him to Cornell and on to graduate school, also at Cornell.

Charlie was the son of Cornell Professor Slade Pekar-Stein, the late Lepidopterist turned Ichthyologist. Charles had never left Ithaca except for a year in Vienna being home schooled by his mother while the Professor was on the trail of a particular Balkan butterfly species.

As a Cornell Freshman Charlie had no idea what to major in. He enrolled in a philosophy course, because he thought he needed to HAVE a philosophy: a well considered philosophy, personal and generalizable.



Once he had developed a philosophy, he could decide on his life goals, then on what to major in.

He never actually decided on a major; he just never made it out of philosophy, even sinking deeper and deeper.

Charlie's particular area of concentration in philosophy was in Metaphysics. After six years of graduate studies: classes, research, and mental note taking, he was nearing the conclusion that there was not much one could clearly discern or say about the world beyond the senses, and maybe one should not

even try to say what cannot be said. All of that made it hard for him to get far writing his dissertation.

By his sixth year in graduate school he was living in the rented house on East Shore Drive that his wife, out of loneliness had left him to, now hardly ever going to campus at all, just taking mental notes for his thesis. He did not even have the radio on when he did his thinking. It was his silence that had so irritated his wife. "Shit or get off the pot Charlie," she said.

Charlie couldn't think a lot better, or take notes so well in the bathroom either, but he did find that his mind was instantly relaxed and freed even, when he sat in diners, early or late. There the noise was not a distraction but an inspiration. He even actually sometimes wrote notes to himself on napkins. Notes like: "Spindrift and Etc." which mean something only to him, or at least they did when he wrote them down.

Charlie relaxed his mind some more by visiting the junk shops, garage sales, and thrift stores on his circuit of diners.

At a church tent-sale he bought an unopened scale-model kit for a diner.

Back at the house. Charlie opened the box and took out intricately detailed pieces, tiny and perfect. He looked through the kit until it made him hungry.

He never did put the model together, so perfect just as it was; but at a country auction, he bought up the furnishings of an old diner. He had already collected several Coke-themed wall thermometers and clocks, though he didn't drink Coke. He drank coffee, and now had a five gallon coffee urn too, a many storeyed plastic pie-safe, frying pans that required two burners, chrome napkin boxes, two booths, six Coke-red leather stools on chrome stems, a lot of stuff he just had to junk, and a fourteen foot counter that he took apart in order to transport it.

He did not think the landlord would object when he installed the counter and stools in the kitchen. To be accurate, he did not think about it at all. He had never met the man.

Charlie was especially fond of the pie-safe, but it had no pies. He made a special late night trip to the Grand Union and bought half a dozen frozen pies, figuring he could take them from the boxes, put the pies in the fridge and keep the illustrated boxes in the pie-safe.

While there, he impulsively gathered several loaves of Wonderbread shaped like railroad-car diners. He carted two packages of cushiony hamburger rolls; he bought ketchup and he bought mustard with the relish already in it; hot dogs, cheese

food, frozen hamburger patties, a six pack of ham omelettes in half pint cartons, three windowed packs of little crullers, one after another like perfect smoke rings, several cans of beef stew, chicken in gravy and sloppy joes.

But the big thing that caught his eye was the familiar Mermaid on a one gallon can of tuna fish sitting there, blatantly out of place among bags of cat food.

Made joyful by his prize, Charlie Peckestone loaded the groceries into the back of his Rambler station wagon and drove home, ranch loaves lolling out of the mouths of the bags, a cigarette out of his and all of the car windows rolled up to keep anything from getting out.

Back in his kitchen he set each one of the bags on one of the diner stools, like customers. The one gallon Tuna fish can which had no bag, he set right on the counter by itself.

He had never intended to open such a large can of tuna. This was not a real diner and he was alone here, but he was suddenly hungry. He loved that can as it was but he wanted a tuna melt, as urgently as one can want a tuna melt. He thought that he could put most of the tuna in plastic containers and store them in the freezer, then maybe make a lamp or something out of the can.

The can was too big for the electric opener so he had to dig through the kitchen drawers to find an old manual opener. The one he came up with kept loosing its bite on the rim of the can so Charlie had to keep starting over again. Prying the lid up before he had little enough a flap hinge, he cut the web of his hand between his thumb and forefinger, but he never noticed the few drops of blood that fell on the floor and into the can, dispersing in a cloudy liquid in which was curled a sort of Merwoman. This was not a creature with scales like the one on the can label: the fish half of her was smooth like that of a trout, her back plum black, her underbelly white as fog, with spots like eyes up and down her sides, while her actual eyes were closed. The little Troutwoman's face hadn't a line of age or character. So vivid were her colors that she seemed not dead, but sleeping, or about to be born.

Charlie carried the can to the bathroom and set it in the shallow end of the tub, drew some warm water then left the water running gently while he went to fetch something for her to perch on.

He returned after a while.... with a nice reddish cobble from the edging of the garden, but maybe he had taken too long deliberating about rocks, because the water in the tub was already a foot deep and the

Merwoman was making a noise like a kitten in pain and trying to swim up out of the tub.

Charlie caught her up and put her on the rock. She sat holding her face in her hands. Her nipples were purple. Charlie backed out of the bathroom and closed the door in front of himself.

He stood there for a moment looking at the door, or trying to look through it, then went to the kitchen sink and washed his face with cold water, and went to bed, though it was not much after noon.

He did not sleep well, or at all, but even as he lay and stood and sat awake, he dreamt about the Merwoman, but the dreams confused him. Was she merely a dream?

At some point ...he had no idea what time of day it was ... he determined that if there really was a Mermaid or whatever in the bathroom, or if there ever was, then whatever she was, and there was no doubting she was a she, at least the above water part, then she would need food. He squirted some Cheeze Whizz on an orange cracker and ate it. Then prepared another and took it to the bathroom for the little woman.

He found her now grown to the size of a small dog, or a large doll. She sat propped with her arms behind her back, her hands splayed behind her. Her eyes had no whites ... like ripe olives, the eyes of this Mermaid, this Troutwoman, this star kissed creature whom ... although she had no name and Charlie never gave her one ... we will call Starkissed.

The faucet was not running at the moment but Charlie heard a murmuring like the voice of a brook, or maybe more like a cat. "Muow mw meow." It was her. Charlie leaned closer. "Wan ou," he heard her to say.

So it seemed she wanted out. But out of the tub onto the floor? Out of the air into the water? Or the other way around? Out of the house and into the lake? How was he going to move her anywhere at all.

He set the cheese cracker on the edge of the sink and backed out of the bathroom.

Charlie was not sure what he needed but usually when he needed something around the house, he went to the Salvation Army thrift store. Maybe a baby carriage or a luggage cart would offer itself.

At the Thrift Store he bought a wheel chair. It had seemed to be just the thing until he got out to the parking lot and saw that the wheelchair was not going

to fit into his Rambler.

So he bound the chair to his bumper with a couple of bungee cords, and tied the orange dipstick rag to the chair as a caution. That arrangement held up okay until he sputtered to the shoulder of Rt. thirteen near the Arthur Treacher fish and chips restaurant, out of gas.

But luck was following in a black Chevy that pulled up behind him almost as soon as he stopped. A man in green overalls got out of the car. He had a thick neck, and a slightly protruding lower lip that was grey as stone. He said not a word, but brought a gas can out of his trunk and walked to the rear of Charlie's car, then rapped his knuckles on the fender until Charlie understood, and released the gas cap lid. The grey man emptied the can into Charlie's tank then got back into the Chevy and sat there until Charlie pulled out and drove away.

Home again, Charlie brought the wheelchair to the bathroom, where he found Starkissed seeming to be larger yet than he was when he left: the size of a small woman or a large fish. A shivering Woman/Fish.

Her skin above the waist was goose bumped, below, not so bright as when he had just brought her out of the can.

Charlie realized that he was wearing a red flannel shirt, although he did not OWN a red flannel shirt and he did not recognize it. Charlie took off the flannel shirt and put it over her shoulders. Extra carefully, awfully slowly, he picked her up with his hands under her arms and set her in the wheel chair. She did not bend easily into the chair and she had no lap to speak of. But what could he do?

He wheeled Starkissed to the living room and hoisted her onto the couch. He spread a bath towel over her lower half. He set a bucket of water beside her from which she could sprinkle water to wet her fish parts if she wanted to.

As long as he watched, and he watched for a long time, Starkissed lay there on her side, her black olive eyes staring at the opposite wall. Finally, Charlie nodded in his chair and slept like a rock under a waterfall.

When Charlie awoke, the wheelchair was not there, and the waterfall was the bathtub faucet running. He found the wheel chair in the bathroom with only the shirt in it while Starkissed was turning and squirming and murmuring in the bathtub. "Meout Now," she said, clearly enough.

So he turned the water off, lifted her into the wheel chair and brought her back into the living

room. He left her in the chair close to the window so that she could look out over the road to the lake while he went to get something that she might eat. He prepared a plate with a few leaves of lettuce and another cracker with squirt cheese on it, left it on table beside her, and then went back to the kitchen so that she could eat without being watched, if that made a difference. He himself ate several crackers and cheese there in the kitchen.

When he looked back into the living room the cracker and cheese and the lettuce were gone. Starkissed remained staring, or not staring with those black eyes, at or out the window.

Charlie put a short stack of National Geographics on her table, and occasionally he would see her looking through one, but mostly she just stared darkly. He grew tired just watching and trying not to watch her. After he finally slept, on one of his diner stools with his head on the counter, he woke again to the sound of running water.

That became the regular daily pattern. But she shivered a lot wherever she was, her trout skin often dry and cracked, her lady skin the same, or puckered. Charlie went to the drug store and bought half a dozen bottles of skin creams that he removed the tops from and set in a roasting pan that he put in the bath tub where it would float when the water rose and be available if she tried to use it.

And when he was not looking, Starkissed did sample the creams and oils, but she was never able to please both halves of her body at once, or much at all. Her fish half had to be wet and needed a temperature of about sixty degrees and her upper half was always too cold, even in a warm room, because of the cold blood in her veins.

The old house had been built on a steep slope. The upslope and downslope walls were of unmmortared stone that allowed the ground water to seep through right through and to a stone and clay cistern about the size of a double bed. For weeks after any rain at all, water trickled out of that wall into the cistern. He kept his beer and a five pound block of sliced cheese in the shallow end.

Charlie went down cellar to fetch a pack of cheese slices for himself and Starkissed. It occurred to him on the way down the stairs that he could enlarge the cistern for Starkissed to have a more natural place. But that water was very cold. That was why he kept the beer and cheese there. He would have to heat the water.

Charlie had not noticed that no rain had fallen for week.

Now the cistern was just wet clay, and two rubber boots protruded for the soft bottom-clay : green boots with grey felt soles..

Charlie used the claw of a hammer, and then a trowel, to excavate the boots hip boots seemingly with legs still in them but only clay, then a shirt occupied by clay, and a canvas fedora over clay and sunglasses in the right place but no clear body parts, just clay.

The only part of the clay fisherman not full of clay, was inside the pockets of his tackle vest. The pocket zippers were hard to find but inside was a round cornered aluminum fly box with ventilation holes so that the flies could dry off after use, or so that they could breathe. In the box were the most beautiful trout flies he had ever seen, and he had bought and lost a lot of trout flies himself. Also he pulled from one of the pockets a round tin of a preparation labeled "Shnurfett," with a picture of a Kingfisher on it, apparently meant for greasing fly lines. Maybe the clay fisherman was a German.

He brought the Shnurfett and the fly boxes up stairs where Starkissed sat in the wheel chair brushing her hair. She pulled some hairs from the brush and dropped them into the bucket beside her. Hairs already in the bucket seemed to be swimming around.

He took the top off the Shnurfett and set it among the skin creams on the chance it might be at least as helpful as the other remedies. He set the fly box on the shelf over the skink, then walked to the kitchen, opened the refrigerator and stood looking into it with the door, which would have preferred to be closed, leaning against his back. He did not know why he was standing there looking into the refrigerator.

After an indefinite period of unproductive thought, Charlie stepped out of the refrigerator and went back down into the cellar. He sat down under the bare light-bulb and smoked several Chesterfields. He did not smoke often anymore, but when he did, he did it in the car or down cellar as if to hide it from himself and always several cigs at a time to get it over with.

Starkissed got around in the wheel chair well enough, in and out of the bathroom, to the couch and back. He pretty much left the bathroom to her during the evenings and only entered to check on her or to get his tooth brush, which he used in the garden. Would she like the radio on? Often yes. She seemed to like talk radio. Would she like a cracker?

Starkissed had opened the fly box revealing the Fan Wing Royal Coachman, and Pink Ladies and all the fancy floaters.

She murmured to them.

One morning Charlie found Starkissed sitting on the sofa with three flies on one shoulder, their points into her skin. He could almost hear the flies buzz.

In that moment, Charlie realized he desired this creature, and at the same time he realized just how impossible that was. But he might have settled for being nothing more than a fly buzzing on her shoulder.

Starkissed however, did not seem to be particularly interested in Charlie. One morning she sat in the wheelchair already shirted and quilted, up close to the living room window, looking out with her unreflecting eyes. Longing to be out of doors, Charlie could see.

Charlie stood beside her looking out at the day. He did not know what day it was. As he watched, a man came out of the house across the road and went to the mail box. Charlie had never noticed who lived over there, but he could see now the big stony underlip, he recognized the man who had given him a transfusion of gas that day he ran out of gas. The man put something in Charlie's mail box, glanced up the driveway, then went back across the road.

Charlie went down and looked into his mail box. There was a note in it which read:

*"Why don't you two
come over for
dinner tonight?
— Your Neighbor."*

No name on the note. Only "Your neighbor." The name on the mail box for the house across the road was C. Splake Lingum, but I can tell you right now that his neighbor, at least right then, was actually his landlord, Cecil B. Washbone.

**Just who Cecil Wrathbone was and
what happened when Charlie wheeled
Starkissed across the road,
are not another story entirely, but we are
still sorting it out, and those are matters
to be shared at another time.**



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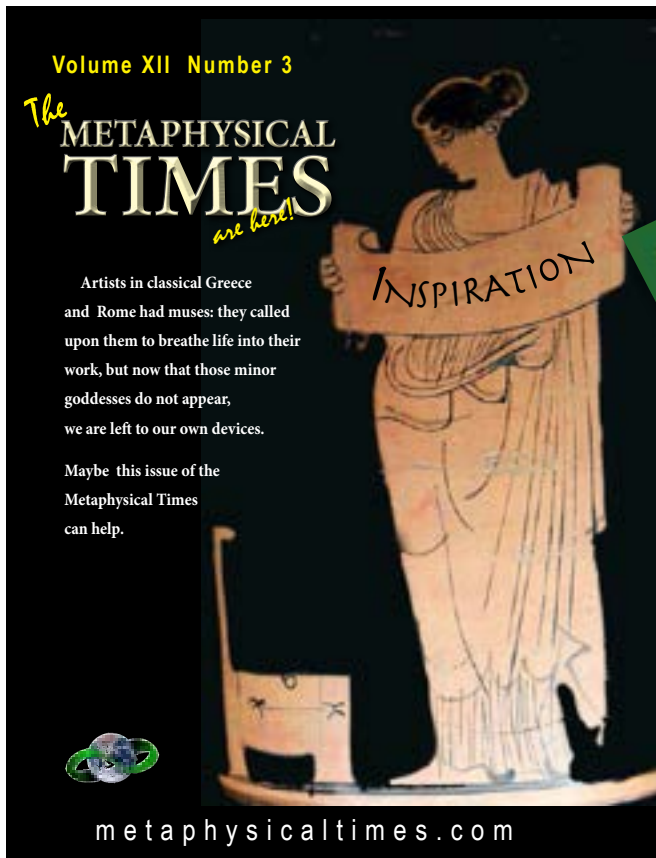
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"Discard! Jettison! Unload! DE-cycle!"

by Franklin Crawford

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Dear Editors,

Since I don't really have anything to tell you, let me mention some things that happened on Sunday, August 20, 2017.

I was dropping off a bag of used clothes at The Thrifty Store where even rich people shop for twenty-five cent shirts. Slumming it is big now and everybody loves a bargain.

The place was closed and management prefers folks to not drop off donations on Sunday but people do anyway. Which makes it a good day for poor folks to get something they can afford, namely, something free.

Donations, according to a sign, should be dropped off starting 9 a.m. Monday morning when every rag pickin' auction house peddling purveyor of curios circle the lot like buzzards on the off-chance of making a grubby buck off something some throw-away-culture moron didn't have the wits or wherewithal to sell on the Internet. It's an old racket. Luck, even cheap-shit luck, still has high value for rich and poor alike. Scratcher cards, for example. It's a sport.

Anyway. I get there, pull in the back. A lady, alone, is picking through some bags already stacked up. She's bent at her work, pausing only to give her mouth a rest from the cigarette clenched in her lips. I offered her one of the bags I'd just brought but she wasn't interested. "Them things might fit my daughter. But my boobs too big for them." She laughed. I laughed. It was a funny thing to say to a stranger. She wasn't there to make a buck. That was refreshing. The cigarette was oddly quaint. Her candor, especially, was refreshing. We tend to not be too plain spoken here in Tiny Town unless we're being ironic about being politically correct. What was I doing discarding a bag of women's clothes of a Sunday you might ask? That's complicated. But I am always in the act of discarding something or another. 0Discarding is

the job of
a lifetime.

From The Thrifty I drove toward downtown along the carnage of Elmira Road with EduCorpsEast crowding the distant hill, past places that aren't the places like they were when I got to this place which is just another place not much different than any other on a Sunday afternoon so I don't know why we still think it is so darn special but that's youth, right? Young people pretty much run the show on the old people's money and the young will forever think that what's in front of them is either the best or worst ever and if you want to put an end to capitalism, you don't need no Karl Marx: Just stop making more young people. Every generation comes along pretty much bought and sold and right now looks like everyone and everything they can think of is branded and up for sale. Is that a generality? Why, yes. It is! Wanna buy into it? We can make a lot of them, easy. It is way easier to make generalities than to raise babies.

Then my thoughts slipped a gear: Suicide is illegal because it's impossible for the corporation to make much money off an expired social security number.

Whoa, Nellie. Hold on, now. It was kind of too postcard-nice outside to be having such ungenerous thoughts. Isn't there still plenty of decent food around to eat – unlike in Venezuela? Isn't negativity the lowest hanging fruit on the tree of life on any given day and isn't that why the North Korean president is so short? Do I want my last thoughts to be those of a latter-day crank whose pigments are filled to bursting with white privilege every other second and be but barely conscious of the fact?

Discard!

I sought to unload my used mental cargo with a walk around the downtown which isn't the downtown I used to know and now looks more like a computer desktop than a pedestrian shopping mall but hey let's leave that off because



this city is my palimpsest and it is up to me to scribe a new narrative atop a lot of stuff I wish I could just just – Discard! Jettison! Unload! DE-cycle!

That is to say, I will drop dead sooner or later. So the mature thing to do, the grown-up right thing to do is ...

Fuggeddaboutit!

Sometimes when I'm out there on the friendly fields of strife, I publicly grimace at recollections of distant, unseen things. There are at least half a dozen "Holy Shit Did I Really Do That?" streets I pass every day and a coupla "Wow She Really Loved Me and I Screwed It All Up Anyway" avenues. Then again, fortunately, only one "Open Up! Police!" street.

There are several Blind Drunk Alleys, High Streets and Wild Oat Ways, naturally. They'd be forgotten if not for the most important part of forgetting, which is to remember to forget.

That takes practice.

Which makes my survival more of an accomplishment than maybe it appears to me in storefront reflections some mornings. It's hard to see my good side when both of them are looking back at me. Then there's the optical problem of seeing only one side, sideways, which old department store mirrors solved by allowing a person to see themselves from multiple sides at

once, a device that boosted Miltown sales among lonely housewives back in the day. Now we can't see ENOUGH of ourselves from any angle. We're obsessed with our own image whether we like it or not.

My head is bumpy and grooved in places. You see that? Fault lines!

When I decided long long ago that I was not going to smile for the class picture in kindergarten because I was pissed-off about being sent to school, I didn't know I was working on a permanent scowl. That wasn't the idea. I was mugging for attention by not-smiling. But that became my mask. Honestly, given the state of my teeth these days it was probably prescient of me. I once failed an online social IQ test on office etiquette because I couldn't tell if a woman with gigantic teeth who was smiling was being friendly or menacing. When chimps bare their teeth like that it means that are about to tear your face off. Maybe we've evolved.

Memory is an ill-bred beast and words are its flesh and whole religions came of either cultivating it or forgetting it. Everyday we make a sacrifice to the present and add to a store of things that become a form of knowledge that makes us a little more like we were the day before.

So I guess the best thing to do, if being oneself isn't exactly what you asked for, is to unlearn, subtract and shuddup.

trashtag that!



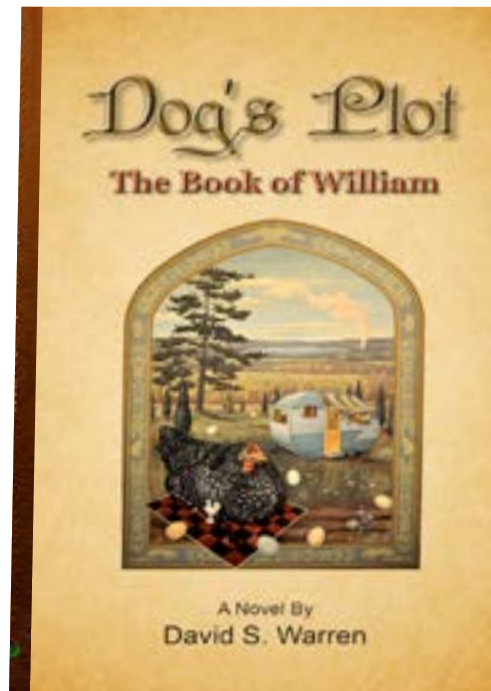
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a novel by David S. Warren

Author David Warren's imaginary brother first appeared standing beside the family dog in their back yard garden: the stunted boy's head no higher than that of the dog.

William, as the wild boy would be called, was never traced back to his origins. He stayed on with the Warrens for years, sleeping mostly in the bathtub, sneaking out and about at night.

His rambles soon kept him away for nights on end, and then for weeks at a time. He built one-night nests and more permanent habitations - some laid up neatly of stone, some dug into river banks, a few in trees, most not much bigger than a refrigerator box, although he spent a year in the attic of the Cornell University undergraduate library. When in the north woods, he often lodged in one of his modified beaver houses, and for a year while still an adolescent, he was sent to live with his "Aunt" Sammy on her Florida rooster farm.

Contact between William and the Warrens became infrequent during his adult years.

Then around 2005, author Warren moved out to the country, and soon found himself with a flock of chickens unbalanced by too many murderous adolescent roosters. If anyone could wrangle roosters, William could. Author Warren located William, and after he was promised a hand-me-down laptop, William soon moved to Dog's Plot.

As an adult drifting through coffee houses, William had taken to the computer like it was a magic slate, and while at the farm, started the Dog's Plot Blog, chronicling his days at Dog's Plot, re-imagining his past, and expanding beyond his recollections and exaggerations, to offer contrarian theories on cosmic origins and natural history ...

until a woman from the past arrived at Dog's Plot.



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Journey to the Second Attention

(Emphasizing the Recall)

by Kris Faso

Beyond all doubts of any name and form, the Spirit came into my home.

The lights slowly dimmed and the room became darker, the air more dense. At the same time I noticed my breathing I became aware of a rhythm of light pulsating in a downward motion from above me - fanning out around the room like a funnel - I relaxed. It became dark, intervals of warm waves of energy began passing over me.

I closed my eyes.

As each transient ring of energy flowed over me, I opened wider and wider from head to toe.

All my senses felt the broadening too - It was like I had become a balloon without skin, filling with air.

I began to hover as if nothing was below me.

I looked around and saw nothing below me.

Not the chair I was sitting in or the floor beneath - nothing was there. My senses were keen yet I had no question of rational.

I knew then I had entered the second attention.

(As Spirit enters, it comes as a vibrational match. One must defer a portion of self for the communication to



occur - it is a partnership subject to the Spirits and one's ability to merge within a required frequency.)

As the Spirit spoke, all doubts of name and form disappeared. I had the vision of an elder Native man. The sunned weather-worn appearance of his strongly wrinkled face glowed even in the shadows of his long salt and pepper hair - draped and braided over his large muscular shoulders. Wrapped in a robe of Elk, painted with the sun and decorated with red, black and yellow Porcupine quills, the elder warrior sat upon an old painted horse - his hands were wrapped around a bundle. Beads of all the colors of the rainbow hung from his neck, and ears.

A single Spotted Eagle feather hung from

the side of his head.

I greeted the Spirit, he greeted me.

Upon announcing his name, he lifted the bundle in his hands to the sky world. He spoke, and although I did not understand his words, their meaning completely illuminated my inner being. At the same time, a great radiance of compassion cast from above engulfed us within a web of sprightly shards of light.

I detected the fragments of light as living energy with an eternal rhythm, pulsating through us. By now I could see parallel needle like fields of light recurring all around me. As if each was a grid overlapping the other, -staggered, stacked, stretching east to west, up and down in every direction. And we, the Elder Spirit and I, were not separate from this scene. Every detail of what I had observed, knowingly, was a part of me. (The Elder sang a song. I knew it was a power song). As he sang, a glowing disc-like ball appeared around my left side from behind me. I felt the lights trajectory deep within me as it trailed an arc from my left shoulder blade and came to rest upon a single location ahead of me.

"Awareness",

*I heard the Elder say.
It was my
assembled awareness.*

From this assembled position I would understand-as the awareness shifts, it comprehends the encounter with the un-known. (In the flash of a moment, I thought about the current state of our country). I thought it odd, but I did.

Suddenly I heard the familiar "POP", my eyes opened and I was in my living room chair. The lights were on. I was both refreshed and exhausted . Somewhat dazed, I closed my eyes and immediately recalled the Elders advice.

"Nothing might temper the spirit of a nation as much as the challenge of dealing with impossible people in positions of power. If you face the uncertainty with impunity, you will acquire the strength to withstand even the incomprehensible.

*And for this, peace will guide your way
- then you shall know how to proceed".*

Peace on your journey,
Kris Faso



Hi Kris,

In a previous reading you told me that I would want to go to New Zealand between the snowfall and feb 2014. You also mentioned the name Simone. That spirit was saying that name was important. I haven't told you, but I had just come back from New Zealand 2 wks. before our reading. During my time there I met a new friend. You blew me away when you stated her name-it is Simone!!!

I just thought you deserve to know that like clockwork as this snowstorm rolled in, I heard from her recently. She is severely depressed and I had to notify help for her and now I am going to go there. I just thought you should know how amazingly accurate you are.

Christine.

***Questions about Past, Present, Future
Are you interested in Communication
with Ancestors, Family on the other side
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Kris

I came to you at a psychic fair in Rochester, NY on March 6, 2010. You mentioned my father Ed, who had passed 8 years earlier and he was there with us. I never mentioned my father or the fact he passed. I asked about a future relationship. You said 3-7 years and it would have something to do with the South Pacific.

I recently met a man, (3 years later). It feels like we have known each other for years. I asked where he got his name from. He said it was given to him after an orphan boy his dad met in WWII in the South Pacific.

You are amazing! Thanks, K. from Rochester

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Grandpapa's Story

by Georgia E. Warren

I started "seeing" Fairies, imaginary friends, Trolls, and spirits, after my Grandpapa died. He told me about them. Grandpapa conversed with Trolls. He saw Fairies but he talked to Trolls.

Grandpapa had owned a slaughterhouse and meat-packing company. He demanded that my father begin his career with the company by working in the slaughterhouse. My father could not do that. Grand-

papa disowned him, and when Grandpapa sold his business, he gave most of his money to his three younger children. Grandpapa's wife died long before I was born. He eventually lost the rest of his money. He was all alone, old, sick, and alcoholic. My two aunts and my uncle would not bring him to live with any of them. But my father and mother brought him to live with us. While living with us, my Grandpapa became close to his son again.

My Grandpapa and I did everything together. We played spaceship in the chickenhouse while doing daily chickenhouse chores. We tossed vegetables to

each other when harvesting. He taught me how to weed. He taught me how to laugh. I loved that old man. I knew he was drinking “whickey” behind my mother’s back, and hiding bottles in the foundations of farm buildings that had fallen in or been torn down years before. Every day my mother would look for his bottles and empty them down the sink. My father knew that Grandpapa wasn’t going to get better; he was dying, so he’d bring him a new bottle every morning on his way home from working the night shift at Star Taxi Company.

Grandpapa saw things that weren’t there. I think some of the times when my mother took the “whicky” away he saw monsters, but most of the time they were Trolls and Fairies and old friends that had died years before. He had lived near our house when he was a young man and had worked doing some construction of our driveway for the previous family when the town moved the road. While pretending to read the newspaper he made up stories at the dinner table that were so real even my Mother would think he was reading them. “Oh Mr. Cuningham, you are not telling the truth, That didn’t happen,” she would say when she finally caught on.

I will tell you a story that my my Grandpapa told me. It is possible I see all these strange nature spirits just because of this particular story:

Just once over the centuries industry came to the area in the middle of Oswego county where my family bought the house I grew up in. It was a company that made charcoal. They, cut down solid, healthy trees that had stood for centuries just to burn them into charcoal.

The company was large enough that the railroad created a small spur to come onto the back of what would be our land, in order to pick up the finished charcoal.

This did not please the nature spirits who lived there, especially the Fairies and the Trolls.

The nature spirits were shy and did not want to make any trouble. They try to live next to Humans without being particularly noticed. During the period of the charcoal pits they stayed as far away from them as possible and continued to live their lives.

Trolls, are not the vicious creatures invented by the brothers Grimm and other story tellers. They eat the plants they care for in the fields and forests. Even though you do not need to worry about them “nibbling on your fingers” they are not nearly so peace loving

as Fairies. They had been on this property long, before the Fairies had moved in.

Trolls did not care at all for the burning of trees, the destruction of nests and...

all that darn noise.

The Trolls respected the Fairies' wishes that nobody should make any trouble and that they could wait it out until the charcoal company moved on to some other piece of land. *“The trees will grow back. Terrible things have happened to our forest before. Remember the big fire and remember when the giant beavers flooded almost everything? And still after a while the trees grew back. We just have to ignore it all until they leave. Everything will be fine once they finish cutting down the big, old trees.”*

Yes, the Trolls respected their wishes...

UNTIL

The woodcutters cut down the honey tree to make charcoal.

It was a very good tree with a very large interior devoted to making enough honey for the bees themselves and for the Fairies and the Trolls.

From that point in time strange stuff happened around the charcoal pits. The workers’ big saws broke or bound up in the trees. The laces in their shoes disappeared, or even worse would be tied together in nasty little knots. If they carried their lunches to cut down trees, the pails just mysteriously tipped over...

right-hand gloves simply disappeared.

The Trolls did all of this with the absolute intention of BEING NOTICED.

Fear spread throughout the company. Soon they could not consider these events as simple accidents, lapses of memory, or clumsiness.

Trolls really like honey. Fairies do too, but for Fairies it is only an occasional treat.

*Trolls really
like honey.*



TheTrolls did not let up, day or night. They enlisted the help of crows. The Crows would gather around the workers all day cawing and staring down at them while they worked.

I AM TEMPORARILY STOPPING GRANDPAPA'S STORY

As I said toward the beginning, Grandpapa conversed only with the Trolls. He told me about the fairies, but I never did think that Fairies were his friends and companions. I very seldom talk to a Troll. They think I am going to miss seeing them and chop them up when they are pretending to be a log or a branch. They do a great job of pretending they are pieces of wood.

My nature spirit friends are mostly Fairies. One of them, is named Bryan MacPherson. He came to this country from Paisley, Scotland with his mate Effie before this country was a country. In our years he is probably 400 years old. In a Fairy's life he is middle-aged. He is proud and has always been irritated that my Granpapa told the story as if the Fairy population was not part of the struggle against the charcoal company that was cutting excellent old trees to burn for charcoal. Bryan came to me while I was writing and wants to add his statement to Grandpapa's version.

Bryan MacPherson:

"En who de ya think did telk to the Crows and the Owls? It sure wesn' a squatty little Troll. WE all did fly up and perlaver with the Crows an the Owls. It took some convincin' em to help durin' the days an the nights. They all were plannin to fly off away frem all the camocian. Fairy folk ain't shy and WE ain't afraid."

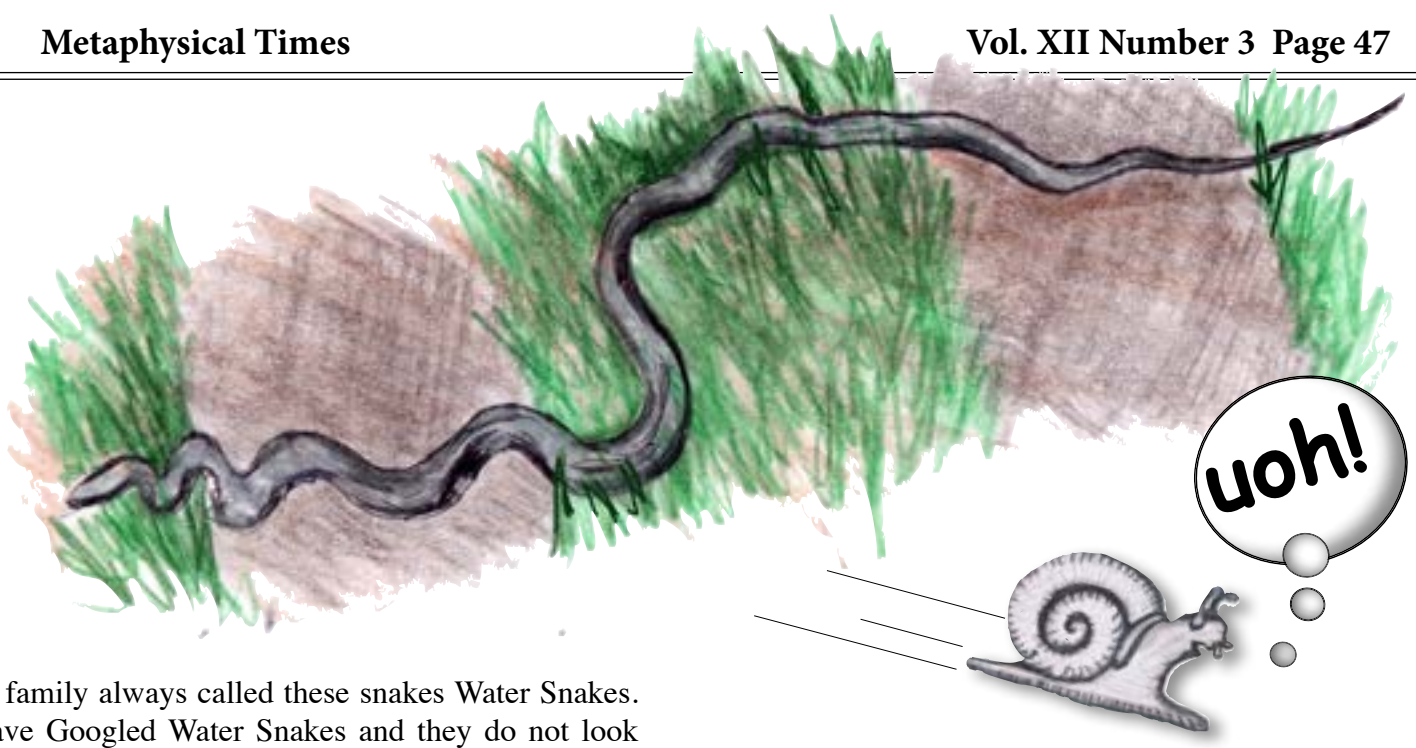
NOW BACK TO MY GRANDPAPA'S STORY

At night, a Parliament of Owls stood watch. Eleven pairs of Owls make a Parliament, or so they say. Twenty two persistent Owls hooting from dark to light; then during the day, the Crows came back on duty.



I need to mention. the Snakes.

There is a lot of wetland and anakes around where we lived. Nothing for millennia had endangered the snakes except for Hawks, Eagles and other birds of prey. When the snakes got large, even the Eagles would not bother to try to lift them up. Plus, there were a LOT of snakes, more than any group of birds could possibly consume.



My family always called these snakes Water Snakes. I have Googled Water Snakes and they do not look like the snakes that I saw around the house where I grew up. A Water Snake is beige with big brown spots and is not near as long as the snakes I saw in our driveway. The snakes around our house were shiney black and I have seen some that spanned the width of our driveway. I found the snakes I saw on Google and they do inhabit New York State near where I lived.

Rat Snakes: big, black, shiney, constrictors that grow up to eight feet long. The Trolls sent these giant, Rat Snakes into the work area to slide into the charcoal pits when they were cool and crawl out at the exact moment when the workmen came in to light the fires in the mornings.

Large snakes startle humans. Especially when they are very tired. The Crows and the Owls made sure they were always very tired.

One very brave Troll was named Balsi: a Norse name. This particular Troll emmigrated from what is now Norway with Leif Ericson - he is VERY old. Balsi started to slip into the workers' barracks during the middle of the night and whispered to the most frightened,

"I hear some of the littler slitherers might be Copperheads." They slide up a pant leg and one nip on yer leg will dead ye quick."

The company decided this area wasn't that profitable any longer. They packed up their equipment and moved the operation high into the Adirondack Mountains.¹

And that is the tale the way my Grandpapa told it to me and told it to my father when he was a little boy.

My Grandpapa died and I was alone, but not for long.

His Fairies and the Trolls came to visit me. Imaginary grownups came to tell me more stories and teach me how to make up my own. I explored the old burn-pits and used old pieces of charcoal to draw pictures of my new friends on big rocks.

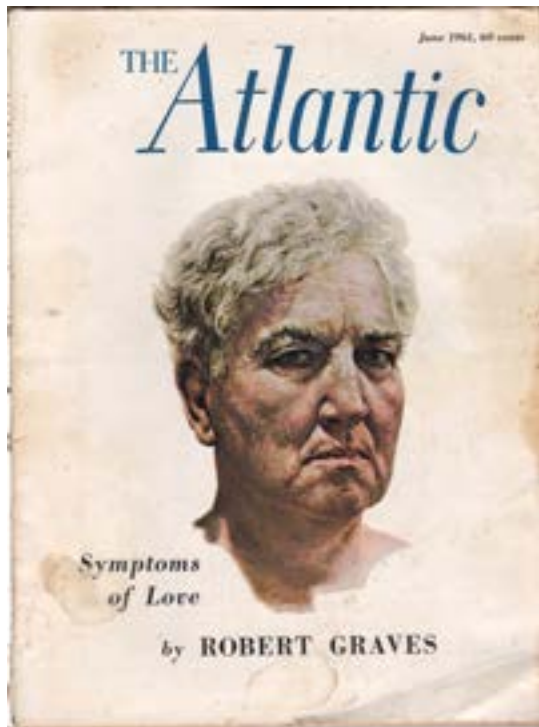
The earth where the railroad spur had come through the property was so hard packed that it carried sound. On hot summer days the trains could be heard as if they were right in front of you.

My father would tell visitors to our house that there was a "ghost train" in the woods behind the house.

Once my aunt walked to the back of the property looking for the train. She ran back pretty fast. It may have been the last time they visited.

¹ If you have any real interest in charcoal pits in NY State in the 19th Century this is a computer link I found: <http://www.adirondack-park.net/history/political/pre-const.html>

SERVICE TO THE MUSE



BY ROBERT GRAVES

The meaning of poetry varies from age to age and from nation to nation. When, last year, a primitive agricultural tribe in the Cameroons appointed my niece its court historian and introduced her to the tribal poet, she told him: My uncle is a poet too." "Ah," he exclaimed, "your family connection with my trade delights me. What sort of dances does he compose? Which reminded her that English (as opposed to Anglo-Saxon) poetry starts with ballads, and that "ballad" once meant a dance refrain. But among cattle tribes of the same region, a poet's main tasks are to celebrate heroic feats of the royal house and extol his chieftain's generosity and the same custom (derived from Anglo-Saxon scalds) survives today in the Poet Laureate's birthday ode.

All verse compositions can be loosely called poems. Verse has a hypnotic quality which gives it a thousand uses: magic incantations, national anthems, advertising slogans, epitaphs, various sorts of *memoria technica*, proverbs, hymns, lampoons, popular lyrics, solemn drama. But poetry as I understand it — without offense intended to dance makers, scalds, or hymn writers — means only one thing: service to a Muse.

The original significance of this word has long been blurred by dishonest or facetious usage. The Muse, or Mountain Mother, whom the preclassical Greeks worshiped on Parnassus and other sacred

peaks, seems to have inspired the poet in much the same sense as the *loa* gods of Haiti now "ride" their devotees. And, although by Homer's time her invocation had become a mere formality, subservice to the Muse has ever since been avowed by counterfeit poets in the service of politics, learning, or the church. True possession has occurred sporadically down the centuries as a phenomenon that can neither be provoked or foreseen.

That a long dethroned Goddess still exerts such power is, of course, denied by the Christian Establishment. It is also scoffed at by most scientists: they find no room in their factitious universe even for Jehovah, whose priests had roughly driven the Queen of Heaven from her seat on Mount Zion in the sixth century B.C. Nevertheless, anthropologists allow primitive gods *de facto* recognition as the alleged sponsors of abnormal psychic phenomena; and even sociologists feel anxious about a culture which, having agreed that the age of prophecy ended with John the Baptist's death, must thereafter make do with civics and ethics. Moreover, the reverence now officially paid to poets — private citizens, unendowed by the state, and not even qualified by any prescribed academic diploma or degree — implies a tacit acknowledgment of the Muse's power. Why else did President Kennedy ask Robert Frost, a true poet and notorious non-Christian, to read a poem at his Washington inauguration?

I am not here proposing a revival of Muse worship, with temples, high priestesses, and liturgies; for poetry cannot be ecclesiastized. I am discussing the nature of poetic impulse. To employ West African terms, a goddess or god is an abstraction unless she or he has a *sunsum* as well as a *kra*—*kra* meaning a natural divine power, *sunsum* meaning an agreed personality. In Haitian voodoo, brought over from West Africa, a *sunsum* becomes so formalized that the devotee "ridden" by, say, the love goddess Erzulie or the death god Baron Samedi uses certain traditional gestures, tones and mannerisms recognized as the deity's own. We have in sufficient evidence to decide whether the Hebrew prophets, when they spoke as mouthpieces for Jehovah, adopted his *sunsum* or merely his *kra*; but it is clear from the Bible that genuine divine possession could be distinguished from false. So it still can be in cases of poetic trance where the poet is ridden by the Muse. Such trances are apt to excite strange and memorable images, highly personal rhythms in variation on accepted meters, ad

a language of peculiar syntax that transcends in emotional force the most considered rhetoric.

The Muse's *sunsum* may vary with the language she speaks, but her *kra* remains constant. She first possesses some woman of what I call "royal nature" — "royalty" and "reality" are the same word — and it is the woman as goddess who entrances a poet, prompting him to celebrate her immortal attributes. Sometimes she speaks from her own mouth in the Goddess's name, but such women poets are rare. And attempts to worship a god of poetry have always failed. Apollo is a god of the intellect, of intuitive truth; of meter, of rhythm not rhythm; of novelty, not of timelessness.

I can set no value, high or low, on the poem sequence here printed. Results are often nugatory even when the trance has been real' ad for me, as for others of my profession, the only true poem is always the one still left unwritten. Yet at least these are not occasional pieces of the sort evoked by minor disturbances: they arose from a profound obsession which interrupted all routine work and made me neglect to answer letters or keep my diary posted. Few of them went into fewer than seven drafts, but the passionate trance persisted while, by continuous amendment, they drew nearer and nearer to the image of the truth that I held in my mind's eye. So perhaps the Goddess's *sunsum* may be found in these archaic images, in the uncontemporary scene, and in the tightness of verse.

At moments of extreme poetic tension, a great sea of delicate, resonant, abstract words borrowed from Norman-French or ecclesiastical Latin draws away from the English poet, in waves, as it were, disclosing:

Deep in their troughs a ribbed sea-floor

To break his bones upon . . .

namely, the hard, dark base of Anglo-Saxon speech. This has happened once or twice here.

Apple Island means Elysium or Avalon, where the poet sails after death to live forever with his Muse, carrying the halved apple, her gift, whose center is the five pointed star. The Muse figures in this sequence as the Sea Goddess who gazes into the lunar mirror, as the rain-bearing Moon Goddess, as the Goddess of the midsummer-scented myrtle tree, as the Love Goddess Aphrodite of the white sea spray who visits Athene who created the peaceful olive. Again, he is the Libyan Queen Mother whose silver scepter, shaped like

a knot of wisdom, means "My decisions cannot be undone," and who thereby (this being also the true lover's knot) confirms the poet in the irrevocability of their bond. The double ax, her symbol of power among the ancient Cretans, represents a waxing and a waning moon: love and death. The M sign on the poet's palm, cross-hatched by lesser lines of affliction. Spells Myrto, Myrrhine, Maia, Mariamne, Melpomene, and many others of the Muse's Greek titles. She does not always appear as a beautiful woman, but sometimes as a smiling, teasing little girl, or as a ghastly Gorgon, or as the cruel falcon Circe, or as the primeval water snake, or as the coal-black Hag of the Mill ("Menja" to the Norsemen) who in Ireland plagued her poet Suibne. And nothing she does can be foreseen, though the solar year — its broad fellow spokes with the months — wheels serenely on from spring to fall, and from fall to spring once more.

Do not believe that the ancient tradition and language of poetry are obsolete, that the technological age has buried them deep, that only poets who now have historical importance are such as amuse the intellect with hints and spasms of sense, despise meter, rhythm, syntax, reject their cultural birthright, and allow themselves neither nostalgia for the past nor hope for the future. This view comes, I believe, no nearer the truth than that poems can be academically manufactured after judicious study of approved poetic instances.

I may be biased by my choice of environment, a backwater in Western civilization from which I emerge only seldom to review our astonishing epoch; yet am more convinced at each sortie that the present "neo-Alexandrianism" of poetry — a critical term, by the way, which dishonors such Alexandrians as Callimachus, Theocritus, and Apollonius Rhodius, who have the root of poetry in them, so let us call it "neo-Byzantium," a closer parallel — has reached a dead end. Against this, on both sides of the Atlantic, is directed a growing awareness of the Queen of Heaven: an awareness sprung from a disgust of the unnatural, unimaginative, unblessed lives which the application of technology to domestic circumstances now forces people to lead, and which neither synthetically manufactured nor purposely disoriented verse can sweeten or recommend.

From *The Atlantic*, June 1961

P O E T R Y

Here rise to life again, dead poetry!
Let it, O holy Muses, for I am yours,
And here Calliope, strike a higher key,
Accompanying my song with that sweet air
which made the wretched Magpies feel a blow
that turned all hope of pardon to despair

- Dante, "Purgatorio", Canto I, lines 7 to 12

TO THE MUSE GODDESS
Goddess of Midsummer, how late
you let me understand
My lines of head, life, fate
And heart: a broad M brand
inerasable from either hand.

Robert Graves



C A L L I O P E



The Language of Bees

On the rooftop garden
over the gallfly's home
the baldfaced hornet sips nectar.
The shag rug of florets covers her feet.

Mated already, surviving,
she'll overwinter in litter
then pulp wood in her mouth
for a pendant gray paper nest.
The larvae will close their own cells.

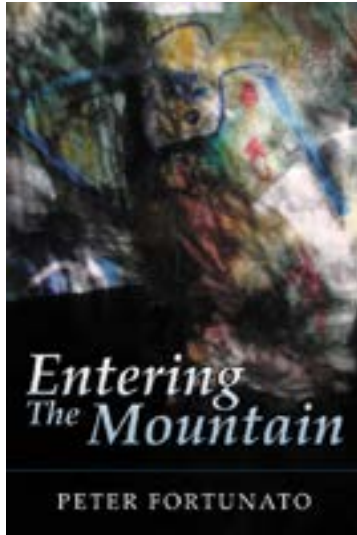
The year carries its freight,
its September. At the gambrel
of goldenrod plumes, she rocks
in the sun, pine fragrance stirring.
The slick yellow and black
stripes of her abdomen pulse,
bent to her mouth music.

--Mary Gilliland

This lovely poem was first published in
The Emily Dickinson Awards Anthology
2002

Four Poems by Peter Fortunato

from his new book:
Entering the Mountain



How the Solar

Static electric hairs of her crown,
hair of the calico soft, very bright.
Eyes note at the window bird steps and flutter
outside twin panes. Eyes in my head
whose trigger the sumptuous sunlight is, so
sumptuous married to this, this syntax
observing words also begin where
my hand can caress that warm fur:

in the very sun whose command of her sight
sends the cat after birds who crack seed.
She who eats too as I do cuts of liver
the butcher sends.

And that is how I see
those bloody fingernails: he is a butcher,
the son of a butcher, smiling.

I tell my friend, my friend, my butcher
whose office is surrounded by ribbons
of white and red meat, how the solar so
particular is as my sweet cat
crouching on her pillow of light.

Matters Less

Matters less than equivocal, the thrush
for instance, whose song recalled
promises vernal twilight and dawn.
Or is it sorrow local, reciprocal:
love pains you too because you cannot hold me.

The signature says one thing, the performer
another,
so that I love you measures a tempo over the
rain,
won't tell me your secret. But add the
mockingbird
and the fact of his song, another twilight,
kudzu and honeysuckle on the air
ambiguous once,
yet by this notation sweet.

The thrush we buried hand in hand grieving
[no stanza break]
killed by the cat innocently, uneaten made us
angry.
Remember borage blossoming, the garden
where we laid in such humus the body,
its song.

Matters less certain do not pertain.

Recall the death of a friend before Christmas.
More than one friend.

The iron tree blooms
white feathers dazzling on the blue flaming sky.

Martellato

Hammered *molto*, one might even say
troppo.

The musical equivalent of the hairy,
a keyboard artist hitting black and white
with precision. This trope then.

But can it bring them back, they who
wander?

Learning the names of birds, of flowers,
deciduous
trees where we live. Larger than the
hairy
the pileated, like a pterodactyl among the
ashes,
hammers his poetry out. Prehistoric
headed
into the grub-pot of decay
he shrieks with joy, white worms
sliding down his throat.

Score this a metaphor. A man like a bird,
effortless playing, keeps returning,
bearing his gift.

Homely economics: the perforated ash
gives itself to further infestation by the
beetle,
whose offspring in turn become food.

And what became of the thundering
lizards
who slid their skins who maybe
rose on wings like the phoenix?

Flight Money

Exceptional wren, the song torqued
ululation troped: the bird is not a bird
but a bit of feather on the protein chain,
song rising up, announcing its arrival.
[stanza break]

Nest egg equals money equals common
human
aspiration, ordinary courses, events
inhabiting
five figures with grief.

Outside, not
necessarily,
the bird chirrups happily.

Adoption not necessarily an option.
Nor for that matter the papa's shoes filled
with dollar bills waiting by the door one
morning.
Overcoat rustling, rattle of French panes
in narrow wooden sashes. Inside this
departure.

And from an elm stump home
can it be called a warble? Tail up, shrill
castigation, angry as a wet wren.
Rich as a paycock.

Who is more the
beautiful
male for his devotion?

Capital knows no patriotism and
large sums do migrate with criminal
stealth.



Peter Fortunato's new book is *Entering the Mountain*, from which these four poems are excerpted. Fortunato lives in Ithaca in a house he and his wife the poet Mary Gilliland long ago saved from ruin and restored near Six Mile Creek. His web site is www.peterfortunato.wordpress.com. *Entering the Mountain* and *Late Morning: New and Selected Poems* are both available at amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com.



Madragana Wears Her New Name

Madragana wears her new name
tight under the chin and scrubbed of all
impure exotica: such a short
syllable, a stub, a stutter, and
it hobbles her. Maior, she has become,
or Mor, for short, a Christian name, all dots,
no dashes, all staccato. Her steps
are circumspect, tidy. She walks
a dotted line but won't sign anything.

A name should sashay across a room,
should swing its syllables and sway its consonants
and toss its vowels. A name should be a dance
out the door and over a dazzle of sand
in time to the phrases of the oud.

For your immortal soul, he said, standing
Godfather. He knows she knows she has
no immortal soul. Neither does he,
although he's a good man and a good king.
Bad husband, though, but not her husband, though.
His ear is to the ground, and the ground
rumbles. She knows he knows she knows
he's thinking of the children. But her new
name hangs stiff as penitential garb
under the Algarvian sun.

Nancy Vierra Couto

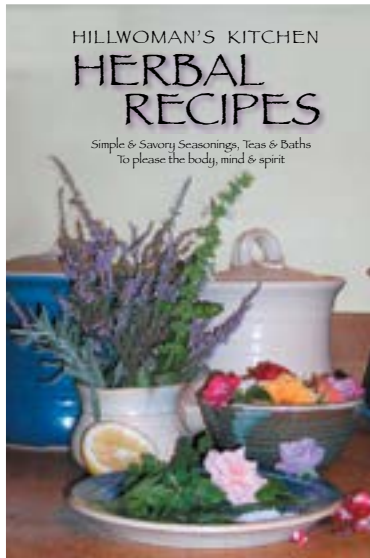
"Madragana Ben Aloandro, later Maior or Mór Afonso (Faro, Algarve, Portugal, born c. 1230), was a woman from the Algarve known as a mistress to king Afonso III of Portugal, in the 13th century, when he ended the Reconquista in Portugal by taking Faro in 1249. Faro was at that time the last part of the Kingdom of the Algarve still in Muslim hands, and there her father was the Qadi." <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madragana>

The poem was first published in *Writers of the Portuguese Diaspora in the United States and Canada: An Anthology*, edited by Luis Gonçalves and Carlo Matos (Boavista Press, 2015)

Nancy Vieira Couto has been poetry editor of *Epoch* since spring of 2000. She lives with her husband, Joe Martin, in an old house on South Hill in Ithaca, New York. When not writing poetry or blogging or swabbing her cheek for yet another DNA test, she loves to travel, either virtually or actually. At this very moment she is (virtually, not actually) walking to Istanbul along the route of the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express.

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eyes when your imagination
is out of focus.”**

Mark Twain,

A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court



The next edition of the Metaphysical Times will *focus* on Imagination