



the fragrance of ruin

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voluptuous discards from
the moronic amusement park of 2014
swept into a plush pile by Don Shewey

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MEDICINE MEN MOTHERS AND SONS
NAMES NECKTIES NEW YORK
OLD OPTIMISM ORCHIDS OVERSOLD
PASSION PLEASURE POO POP CULTURE PRAYER PURPLE PUTIN
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WHOLEHEARTEDNESS WORDS WORK WRITING
XQUISITE CORPSE
YEAR IN REVIEW
ZOMBIES

Front cover: Benny Andrews, *No More Games* (1970)

Back cover: photos by Don Shewey

ACTIVISM

Our thoughts limit what we're capable of doing. There are external forces arrayed against us, but there are also internal forces that sabotage us before we even get started. Our mind is good at setting us up for failure and getting us to think small. But I have found that we will do for love that which we don't think is possible. So the question to ask ourselves is "What do I love?"

-- Julia Butterfly Hill

AGGRESSION

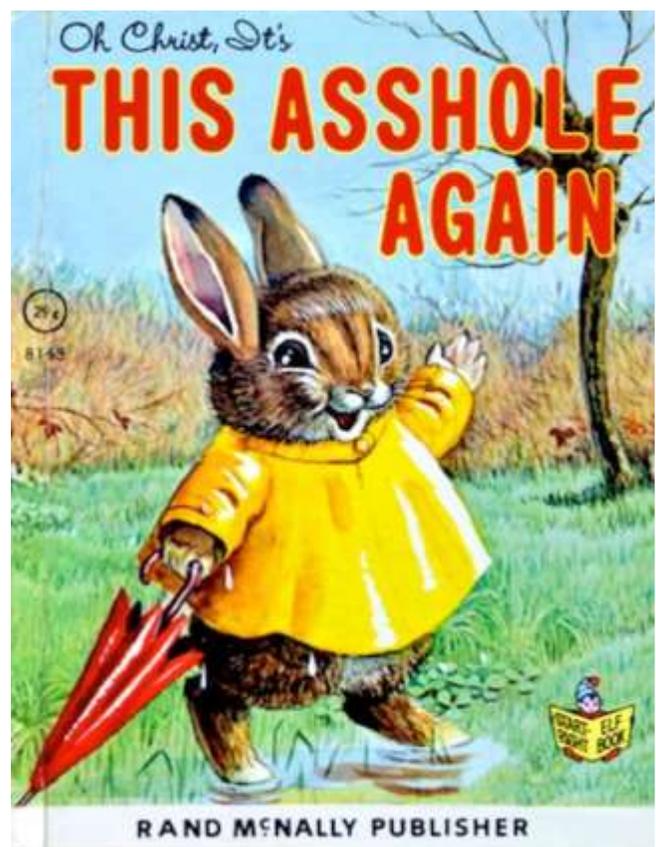
Someone at a Quaker meeting talks about greed and aggression
And I think about the way I lay the massive
weight of my body down on you
like a tiger lying down in gluttony and pleasure on the
elegant heavy body of the eland it eats,
the spiral horn pointing to the sky like heaven.
Ecstasy has been given to the tiger
forced into its nature the way the
forcemeat is cranked down the throat of the held goose,
it cannot help it, hunger and the glory of
eating packed at the center of each
tiger cell, for the life of the tiger and the
making of new tigers so there will
always be tigers on the earth, their stripes like
the stripes of night and the stripes of fire-light ---
so if they had a God it would be striped,
burnt-gold and black, the way if
I had a God it would renew itself the
way you live and live while I take you as if
consuming you while you take me as if
consuming me, it would be a God of
love as complete satiety,
greed and fullness, aggression and fullness, the
way we once drank at the body of an animal
until we were so happy we could only
faint, our mouths running into sleep.

-- Sharon Olds, "On Greed and Aggression"

ANGER

The best remedy for anger is delay.

-- Seneca



ANIMALS

I like pigs. Dogs look up to us. Cats look down on us. Pigs treat us as equals.

-- Winston Churchill

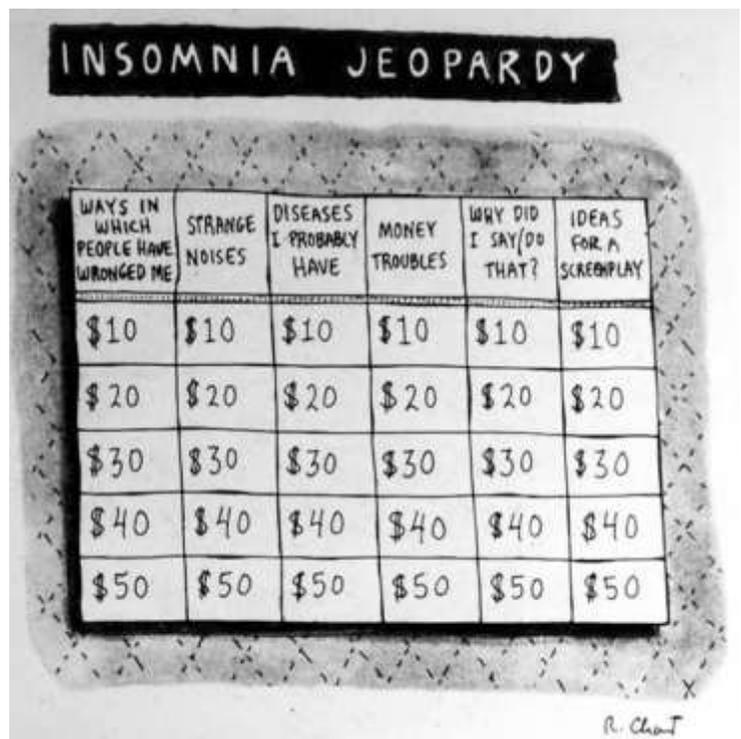


"I have an enormous favor to ask you."

ANXIETY

At work, [young-adult novelist John] Green has surrounded himself with people who are approximately as smart as he is, but a lot calmer. When I asked [his wife] Sarah how anxious John was, she laughed and said, "The word 'very' comes to mind." But, she said, "it's part of his identity and the way he experiences the world, and it's not a wholly inward-focused anxiety. It also helps him to be empathetic." Green told me that he had been prone to "obsessive thought spirals for as long as I could remember"—but he'd had good therapy, starting when he was a teen-ager, and felt that his emotions were "fairly well managed." Besides, "from a novelist's perspective, the ability to cycle through all the possibilities and choose the worst is very helpful."

-- Margaret Talbot in *The New Yorker*



ART

In secondary school [British painter Chris Ofili] stopped going to church, and concentrated on getting good grades and playing soccer—he was a left-wing striker on the school team. Art didn't register in his thinking—he had never been to a museum—but as graduation approached he decided he might like to study furniture design. He was told he should first take a one-year art foundation course, where he would be exposed to many different disciplines. He applied to Tameside College, on the outskirts of Manchester, and was accepted.

"We had two weeks of everything at Tameside," he said. "There was a painting teacher, Bill Clark, who had a completely different approach from the others. At the start of the class, he'd have all of us lie down and meditate, listen to our thoughts. The other guys were teaching technique. If you're going to make a print, this is the way you do it." Clark liked to confuse his students by telling them to divide what they were working on into four parts, chuck three of them away, and enlarge the scale of the piece remaining. "Chris not only embraced this—he took it on, as though he understood what I was trying to do," Clark told me. "Of course, he came with a completely clean slate. I didn't have to delete past experience, which is what I'm doing with most of my teaching. What comes over with Chris is sheer intelligence." Ofili found Clark's teaching immensely liberating. In art, he realized, there was no right and wrong. Halfway through the foundation year, he decided to specialize in painting.

-- Calvin Tomkins in *The New Yorker*



Chris Ofili photographed by Malick Sidibe

It's an artist's responsibility to reflect the love of the universe back to the audience.

--Sandra Bernhard

AUTISM

When you read as much as I have about autism, everyone after a while begins to look autistic; everyone fits somewhere along the “autism spectrum,” just as it was a few years ago when it was discovered that we are all gay, that we all fit somewhere along the homosexual spectrum. (I suppose, consistent with this argument, we all fit somewhere along the heterosexual spectrum, as well.) It was interesting to see how many traits Cristina shared with our son, traits that in his case were numbered as symptoms under the broad canopy of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): literal-mindedness, awkward personal interaction, dearth of social interest (except with family members), hypersensitivity to stimuli, wandering attention, lack of empathy, rages when rituals were disrupted. Some of these traits, in Cristina’s case, could be chalked up to her having been struck senseless by a drunk driver in Zacatecas, but she admits that she’s always been spacey and not too social, that her personality hasn’t changed markedly since it was formed.

That makes me reflect on what a friend told me after I’d remarked about the preponderance of mathematicians bunched along the autism spectrum: He’d known a number of high-functioning autistics at NASA. One in particular, an eccentric experimental physicist named Bunthram, insisted, “I’m not autistic. I’m Bunthram.” Bunthram didn’t believe in autism. What most people considered autism, Bunthram considered part and parcel of the genetic bundle that came with a logical mind. Furthermore, Bunthram didn’t want to be social or to be touched or to play volleyball or square-dance or sit around a bonfire singing, “Kookaburra sits in the old gum tree.” He wanted to work and to be left alone. He liked his one-dimensional life and his job and his apartment, his cats and the TV shows *Battlestar Galactica*, *Airwolf*, and *Charmed*. He thought most people were oversocialized, but that was their business. His hero was Nikola Tesla, one of the landmark intellects of all time, who wouldn’t have achieved greatness without his ASD tendencies toward isolation, celibacy, pattern obsession, ritualism, and the rest of that prototypical geek package.

I am always relieved to come across optimistic views on autism. I suspect that autism is a natural intellectual function correlating to our increasing need for specialized, nonlinear, and advanced “thinking styles” and not a disease or a “developmental disorder.” The work of Simon Baron-Cohen — not the comedian but the psychopathologist at Cambridge University (do they call you a “psychopath” for short, Simon?) — illustrates this view. Baron-Cohen has been doing genetic research on autism for years and has theorized that most autistics have a drive to systematize. Mathematicians, physicists, engineers, logicians, number theorists, software programmers, and quantum cryptographers are all good examples of systematizers, and in each of these fields you’ll find higher rates of autism.

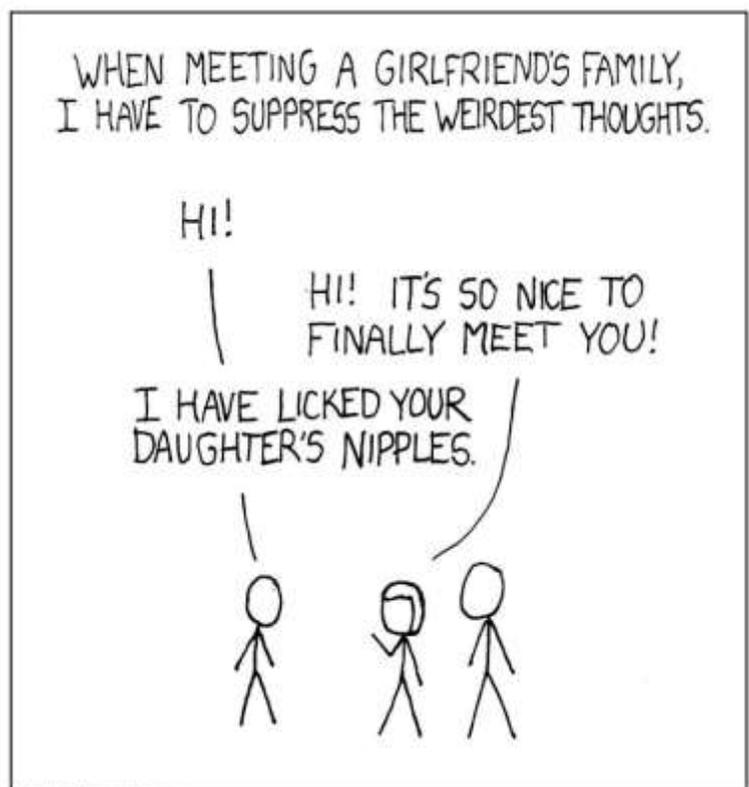
Systematizers are much more likely to be male as well as autistic. About 80 percent of all autistics are male. Baron-Cohen proposes that autism is therefore an extreme male-brained profile. But this doesn’t make it inherently psychopathological. In fact, autistics, by their asocial predispositions, narrow preoccupations, tendencies toward ritual and repetition, sensory filtering, and so on, are able to work long periods without distractions on deep projects that might bore other people to death. Think space travel and the overall management of a cyber-connected universe.

At the end of any spectrum is dysfunction, chaos, madness, disease, and snack machines getting pushed over. On the political continuum both the Left and the Right, when unimpeded, lead to totalitarianism. And I wouldn’t want to rely too heavily on psychology or go all New Age on you and declare that autism is a gift. It does, however, seem possible that, with its considerable claim on the population, its numerous talented representatives, its frequent association with rapid brain growth, and its continued ability despite exhaustive research to evade cause or cure, what we’re calling “autism” (and the heavy psychological inference of “abnormality” or “disorder”) might well instead be cerebral evolution.

Cristina is a systematizer, too. She gravitated to a profession — dentistry — that demands close attention to detail, along with emotional distance from pain and patients she is literally inside of. Often on Saturdays when we were courting in Mexico, she couldn't go out because she had to "organize" her room. Everything in our house has a place. I don't get to put anything where I like. I find my books in a neat stack on the end table each time I sit down to read. Whenever she works with me, whether cooking in the Olde Main kitchen or on a side job I pick up, we end up arguing before we do things her way. I am constantly startling her as I come around a corner or out of a room, even though she knows I am in the house. Faithfully, like a prisoner in solitary, she'll put an X through each day on the calendar with a black ink pen. Staring at me as I explain something to her, she'll say when I am through, "You need to trim your eyebrows." She'll check the dishes after I've washed them, remake the bed the way she likes it, refold the clothes after I've done laundry, and tell me what shoes to wear, which used to lead to an argument, since it seemed to me more like nagging than a drive to systematize. Her job as a dental assistant is extremely important to her, and she puts so much into her work (she's the best worker I've ever known) that now she barely has the energy to quarrel when she gets home in the evenings.

Most noteworthy in all of this is that, at the other end of Baron-Cohen's systematization spectrum, as we part from masculine science and sine-cosine-tangent, we find the feminine empathizers, those who have the ability to identify with others, imagine how they feel, read facial expressions, make a crawfish étouffée with steamed asparagus and jasmine rice, give change to panhandlers, and not intentionally say hurtful or antagonistic things. As a rule, systematizing and empathizing are opposed. If you're strong on systematizing, then you don't want some goober to come along and mess it all up. If you're long on empathizing, then it isn't likely that you'll stare willingly into an electron microscope for twelve hours or obsess about how the pillows are arranged on the couch. Systematizers are rule-based, less flexible, and more inclined to stick to patterns and positions. Empathizers are more emotionally oriented and free-form in approach, care less about rules than about getting along, and usually give in when the argument starts because, really, what difference does it make what shoes I wear if I'm driving you all the way to Omaha?

-- Poe Ballantine, "Rowboating with Hobos"



BAD NEWS

“What the Doctor Said”

He said it doesn't look good
he said it looks bad in fact real bad
he said I counted thirty-two of them on one lung before
I quit counting them
I said I'm glad I wouldn't want to know
about any more being there than that
he said are you a religious man do you kneel down
in forest groves and let yourself ask for help
when you come to a waterfall
mist blowing against your face and arms
do you stop and ask for understanding at those moments
I said not yet but I intend to start today
he said I'm real sorry he said
I wish I had some other kind of news to give you
I said Amen and he said something else
I didn't catch and not knowing what else to do
and not wanting him to have to repeat it
and me to have to fully digest it
I just looked at him
for a minute and he looked back it was then
I jumped up and shook hands with this man who'd just given me
Something no one else on earth had ever given me
I may have even thanked him habit being so strong

-- Raymond Carver



BIRTHDAY

Blessed be the mind that dreamed the day
The blueprint of your life
Would begin to glow on earth,
Illuminating all the faces and voices
That would arrive to invite
Your soul to growth.

Praised be your father and mother,
Who loved you before you were,
And trusted to call you here
With no idea who you would be.

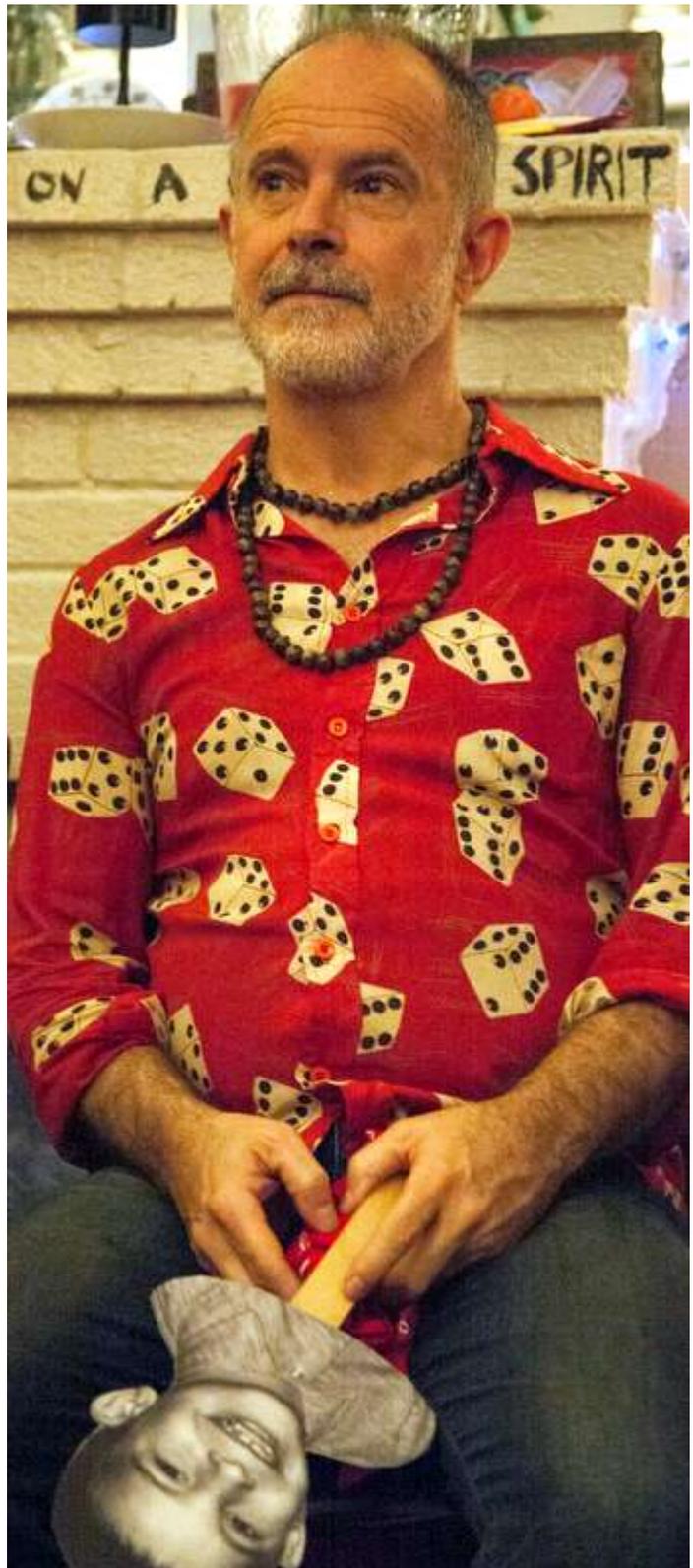
Blessed be those who have loved you
Into becoming who you were meant to be,
Blessed be those who crossed your life
With dark gifts of hurt and loss
That have helped to school your mind
In the art of disappointment.

When desolation surrounded you,
Blessed be those who looked for you
And found you, their kind hands
Urgent to open a blue window
In the gray wall formed around you.

Blessed be the gifts you never notice,
Your health, eyes to behold the world,
Thoughts to countenance the unknown,
Memory to harvest vanished days,
Your heart to feel the world's waves.
Your breath to breathe the nourishment
Of distance made intimate by earth.

On this echoing-day of your birth,
May you open the gift of solitude
In order to receive your soul;
To hear your hidden heart;
Know the serenity of stillness
To be enfolded anew
By the miracle of your being.

-- John O'Donohue



BOOKS

I arrived in the first grade, literate, with a curious cultural assimilation of American history, romance, the Rover Boys, Rapunzel, and The Mobile Press. Early signs of genius? Far from it. Reading was an accomplishment I shared with several local contemporaries. Why this endemic precocity? Because in my hometown, a remote village in the early 1930s, youngsters had little to do but read. A movie? Not often — movies weren't for small children. A park for games? Not a hope. We're talking unpaved streets here, and the Depression. [...] Now, 75 years later in an abundant society where people have laptops, cell phones, iPods, and minds like empty rooms, I still plod along with books. Instant information is not for me. I prefer to search library stacks because when I work to learn something, I remember it.

-- Harper Lee



BROOKLYN

At some point in the past several years, maybe late one night – dogs whimpering in their sleep, cats snapping alert – the tectonic plates of youthful creativity in New York City shifted, and Manhattan became a suburb of Brooklyn.

--Peter Schjeldahl

CAMP

Camp is now for the masses. It's a sensibility that has been appropriated by the mainstream, fetishized, commoditized, turned into a commodity fetish, and exploited by a hypercapitalist system, as Adorno warned. It still has many of the earmarks of "classic camp" – an emphasis on artifice and exaggeration and the unnatural, a spirit of extravagance, a kind of grand theatricality. It's still based on a certain aestheticism and stylization. But what's lacking is the sophistication, and especially the notion of esotericism, something shared by a group of insiders, or rather, outsiders, a secret code shared among a certain "campiscenti". Sadly, most of it falls under the category of "Bad Straight Camp."

What is Bad Straight Camp? Examples would include the exaggerated and stylized streetwalker/stripper style co-opted by many contemporary pop music celebrities, from Rihanna to Britney and Christina on down, a performative femininity by females filtered through drag queens that has transmogrified into an arguably more "avant-garde" style (Lady Gaga, Nikki Minaj) characterized by hyper-referentiality, extreme hyperbole, a crudely obvious, unnuanced female sexuality, and even a vaguely pornographic sensibility which, unhappily, is post-feminist to the point of misogyny: a capitulation to the male gaze and classic tropes of objectification. (Let it be clear that I am obviously opposed neither to pornography nor to male spectatorship per se, but rather to the continued attempt to erase all autonomy of women to control their own destinies outside of their participation in these played out patriarchal institutions.) Obviously it's not the form itself that is reactionary: strippers, street-smart drag queens, female porn stars and hookers have often evinced a radically exaggerated appearance that transcends and deflects patriarchal co-optation. The problem is its utter and complete normalization and de-contextualization away from subversive or transgressive, countercultural impulses in the service of capitalist exploitation, utterly heteronormative in practice and corporate in tone....

This new annexation and corruption of the camp sensibility now exists largely without the qualities of sophistication and secret signification that were developed out of necessity by the underground or outsider gay world, which originally created camp as a kind of gay signifying practice not unrelated to black signifying, or even black minstrelsy. It was developed as a secret language in order to identify oneself to like-minded or similarly closeted homosexuals, a shorthand of arcane and coded, almost kabbalistic references and practices developed in order to operate safely apart and without fear of detection from a conservative and conventional world that could be aggressively hostile towards homosexuals, particularly effeminate males and masculine females. In the contemporary world, in which gays have largely assimilated into the dominant order, such signifying practices have become somewhat obsolete, and the previous forms of camping and camp identification have long since been emptied of camp or gay significance, rendering them easily co-opted, commercialized, and trivialized.



This phenomenon has also led to the rise of what I call “conservative camp.” For what are Sarah Palin, Newt Gingrich, Bill O’Reilly, Donald Trump and Herman Cain other than conservative camp icons enacting a kind of reactionary burlesque on the American political stage? Wholly without substance, their views exaggerated and extremely stylized, and evincing a carefully contrived posture of “compassionate conservatism”, they function merely as a crude spectacle that mocks the unwashed masses by pretending to be one of them while simultaneously offering them policies that are directly antithetical to their authentic needs. Conservative camp has always been around – William F. Buckley, Jr. is a prime example – but it has now become an entire genre, thoroughly entrenched and consumed by the American public....

If I have expressed a rather depressing and unhelpful analysis of camp, or perhaps what might now reasonably be termed “anti-camp”, I can only offer by way of an antidote an express wish to radicalize camp once again, to harness its aesthetic and political potentialities in order to make it once more a tool of subversion and revolution. Camp itself should almost be defined as a kind of madness, a rip in the fabric of reality that we need to reclaim in order to defeat the truly inauthentic, cynical and deeply reactionary camp – or anti-camp - tendencies of the new world order.

-- Bruce LaBruce, “Notes on Camp – and Anti-Camp”

CARE

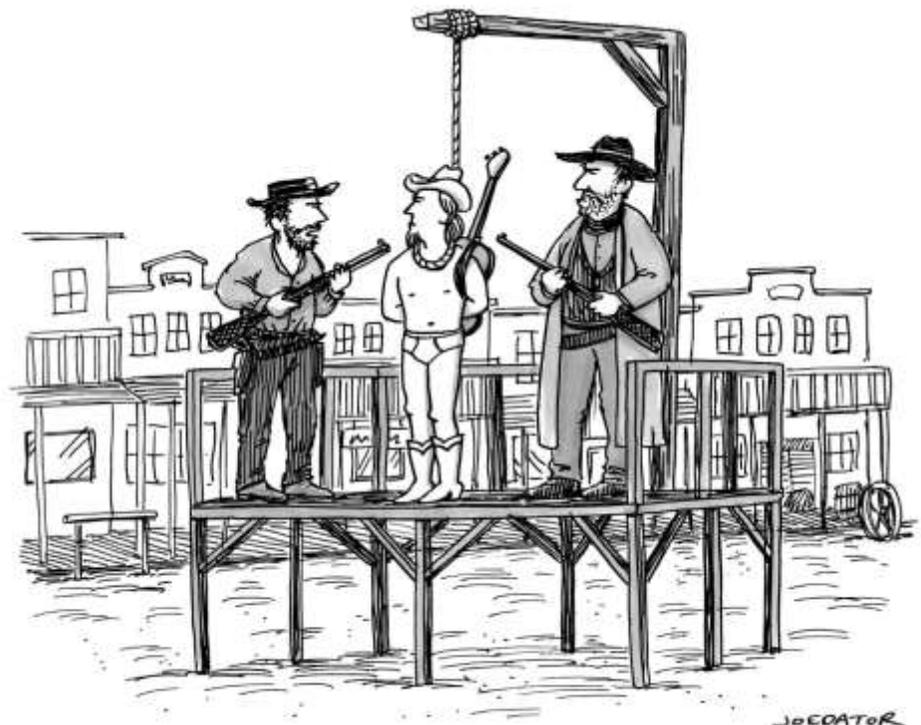
Cure without care is as dehumanizing as a gift given with a cold heart.

--Henri J.M. Nouwen

COMPARISON

Comparison is the thief of joy.

-- Teddy Roosevelt



"Because you're not naked, and you're not a cowboy, that's why!"

CORRUPTION

“The big people think that because we are poor we don’t understand much,” she said to her children. Asha understood plenty. She was a chit in a national game of make-believe, in which many of India’s old problems – poverty, disease, illiteracy, child labor – were being aggressively addressed. Meanwhile the other old problems, corruption and exploitation of the weak by the less weak, continued with minimal interference. In the West, and among some in the Indian elite, this word, *corruption*, had purely negative connotations; it was seen as blocking India’s modern, global ambitions. But for the poor of a country where corruption thieved a great deal of opportunity, corruption was one of the genuine opportunities that remained.

-- Katherine Boo, *Behind the Beautiful Forevers*

Indonesia’s political development has had other unexpected outcomes. In a country where once only an élite few could benefit from corruption, many more people are now on the take. Pisani argues that it’s possible to see widespread corruption as a kind of “social equalizer.” In Indonesia’s long-standing system of clan patronage, people look out for members of their extended family or village, awarding them money, contracts, or jobs. Decentralization has empowered many more people to do favors than was previously the case, which in turn gives them a greater investment in maintaining the political status quo. Thus, corruption plays a crucial role “in tying the archipelago’s mosaic of islands and disparate peoples into a nation,” Pisani writes. “Patronage is the price of unity.”

-- Pankaj Mishra, reviewing Elizabeth Pisani’s *Indonesia Etc.* in the New Yorker

Our tradition is corruption.

-- Fela Kuti

COUSINS



CUBA AS MATRIARCHY

In the world in which I lived, the mother had a patriarchal role. The father was an adventurer who would simply conceive you and disappear (as happened in my case) but the mother was always a constant: the one who kept watch over you, rocked you, nursed you, punished you, criticized you, praised you...in sum, the one who would forgive you or condemn you. And that is evident in what I have written. I also believe that there is an oedipal character...between Cubans in general and their mothers. The mother embodies, in the end, absolute power. In the various forms that dictatorships have had in Cuba, the dictator partly takes on the role of the mother of the people. There is, as a result, a kind of sentimental blackmail: an authority almost maternal. That is what we see at present: how the dictatorship becomes a maternal power that manages us, guides us, organizes us, tells us how we must comb our hair, how we must dress, how we must speak, what we must do, what we must not do.

-- Reinaldo Arenas

DARING GREATLY

It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails at least fails while daring greatly.

--Theodore Roosevelt

DEATH

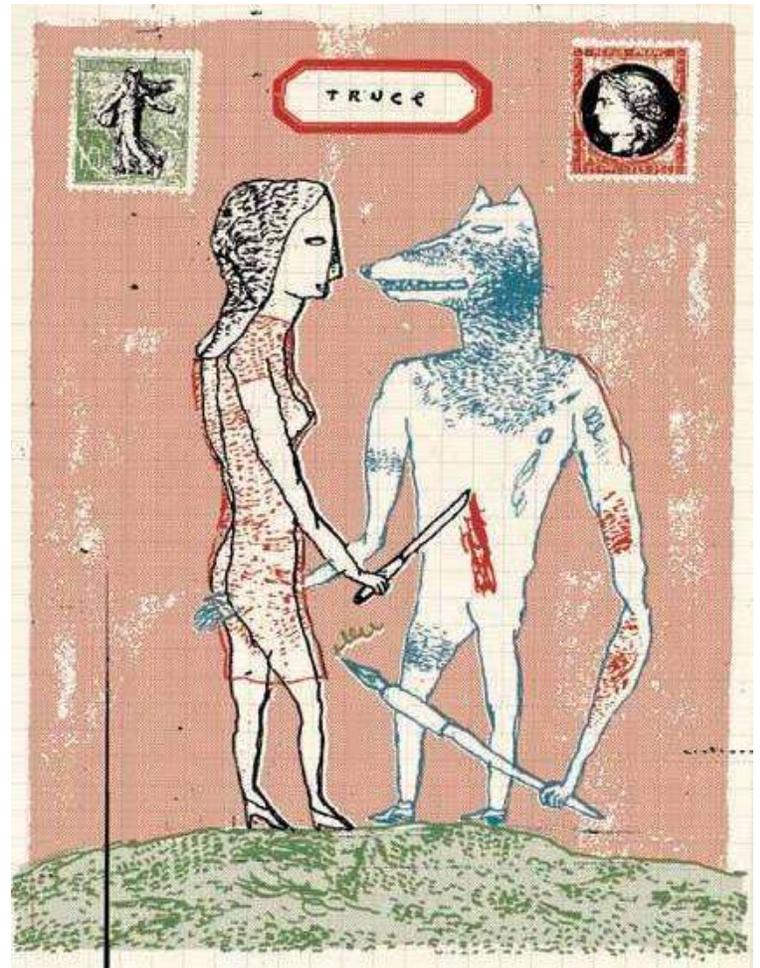
A weariness about death exists in me and in us all, though we scarcely notice it. We have become tireless voyeurs of death: he is on the morning news and the evening news and on the breaking, middle-of-the-day news as well – not the celebrity death, I mean, but the everyone-else death. A roadside-accident figure, covered with a sheet. A dead family, removed from a ramshackle faraway building pocked and torn by bullets. The transportation dead. The dead in floods and hurricanes and tsunamis, in numbers called “tolls.” The military dead, presented in silence on your home screen, looking youthful and well combed. The enemy war dead or rediscovered war dead, in higher figures. Appalling and dulling totals not just from this year’s war but from the ones before that, and the one ways back that some of us still around may have also attended. All the dead from wars and natural events and school shootings and street crimes and domestic crimes that each of us has once again escaped and felt terrible about and plans to go and leave wreaths or paper flowers at the site of. There’s never anything new about death, to be sure, except its improved publicity. At second hand, we have become death’s expert witnesses; we know more about death than morticians, feel as much at home with it as those poor bygone schlunks trying to survive a continent-ravaging, low-digit-century epidemic. Death sucks but, enh – click the channel.

-- Roger Angell

DIVINE

I am the one always near. There are so many ways to touch me now. If you sing, your sounds will press against my cheek in a way I desire. If you dance I will become the ground you bless, as happiness does this world. And if you make love with another form and can satisfy it, any sighs of respite – *any congratulating noises* – are also mine.

-- Hafiz (translated by Daniel Ladinsky)



DREAMS

Dreams must be thought of as an *internal* drama. They don't relate to the outer world, but picture states and conditions of your inner world, using images from the outer world because they are fresh in the mind... We may understand our resistance to dreaming as a resistance in our "natural" state to Hades. We "can't remember," go vague, forget to jot it down, or scribble it beyond deciphering, and excuse ourselves by pointing to the obvious slipperiness of dreams. Yet if each dream is a step into the underworld, then remembering a dream is a recollection of death and opens a frightening crevice under our foot.

--James Hillman

DYING

What are some of the barriers in our culture to talking openly about death?

Number one is that Americans love technology and have too much faith in it. We live with the illusion that our technologies will always save us.

Number two is that we're unfamiliar with death. There was a time when it would have been rare for a person in middle age not to have lost a child, a parent, or a sibling. People are unpracticed at seeing death and coping with death, because we've pushed it to extreme old age and hidden it away in the hospital.

Number three is that we're just embarrassed to talk about death, even more so than we are to talk about sex. An eighty-five-year-old might say to her kids, "I probably don't have more than another five years," and the kids will say, "Oh, Mom, don't be morbid. You've got lots of time. You're healthy." We act as though it's unloving to talk about the reality of death, as if it means we are trying to throw our parents under the bus. We think that we're being loving when we're optimistic, but optimism is one of our problems. Americans have a misguided sense of how much, or what sort of, hope is appropriate.

What do you mean?

I mean it's honest to hope that you might heal your relationships before you die. It's dishonest to say to a dying person, "We have very good results from this treatment," when it might mean a 17 percent chance of surviving an extra three months.

In this culture everybody's trying to put the best spin on reality all the time. Americans feel like failures if they can't control and manage everything, but death is uncontrollable and unmanageable.

How can we have end-of-life discussions? What should they consist of?

We need to start the discussion way upstream. You have one discussion when you're totally healthy and the only thing you're worried about is an accident that leaves you with major brain damage. When you're in your seventies and eighties and you have multiple chronic illnesses, you have a different conversation with your healthcare provider. At that point you might welcome a relatively peaceful and sudden death and obtain a Do Not Resuscitate bracelet, since your odds of surviving CPR intact are slim anyway. You might want to refuse dialysis or open-heart surgery.

When you're within a year of dying or you have terminal dementia and have to be locked up, the conversation changes again. Maybe you want comfort care only. Maybe you want to refuse antibiotics or a feeding tube – anything that causes you stress and prolongs your life. You may have come to the point where you see pneumonia as the "old person's friend," as doctors used to call it. So long as your pain is addressed, you're ready to die.

In my family we were blunt. I could ask my dad in the months following his stroke, "Is your life still worth living?" and he didn't take offense. I could say to my mother, "I think we're grasping at straws." Not all families are like this. One good way to start is to ask, "Have you thought about who you want to make medical decisions for you when you can't make your own?" and "What do you want that person to know?" I can think of no better legacy to leave the next generation than to give them clarity on this. "Just take me out to the field and shoot me" is not an end-of-life plan. Nor is "You'll know what to do when the time comes," because loved ones often don't. Older people should have clear directives in place so they don't leave their children conflicted and heartbroken and guilty about, say, discontinuing life support.

Likewise, I can think of no greater gift to give a dying parent or spouse than to put him or her on the pathway to a peaceful and timely death free of unnecessary suffering, even if this means opposing the advice of doctors or having intense discussions with other family members. For many people the best death is still a home death. And getting on the pathway to a home death means facing the fact that death is coming long before it knocks on the door. It means bringing in palliative care and then hospice. Otherwise you may find yourself calling 911 in a panic, which means a trip to the ER and often the ICU.

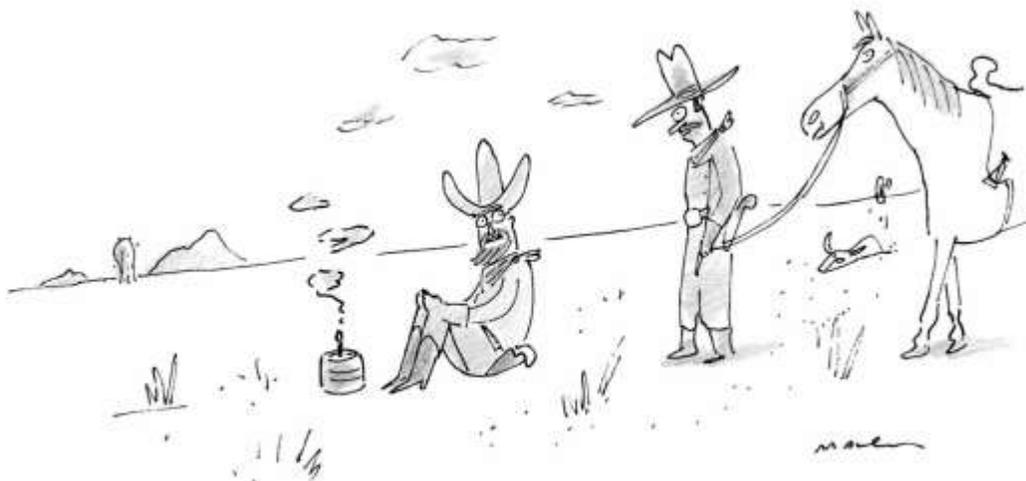
I don't think we should see these discussions as strictly medical or legal. They're not just pieces of paper. They are discussions about your deepest values. Whom do I love and trust? What makes my life worth living? Do I have a right to say, "Enough"? How do I want to die? What do I owe my descendants? When is it OK to let go?

--Katy Butler, interviewed by Sam Mowe in The Sun Magazine, April 2014

EATING AND READING



"You're in for a treat—Gregor awoke this morning from uneasy dreams to find himself transformed into a killer tapas chef."



"I ain't cookin' nuthin'—that's my pork-and-beans-scented candle you smell."



"I've only been gluten-free for a week, but I'm already really annoying."



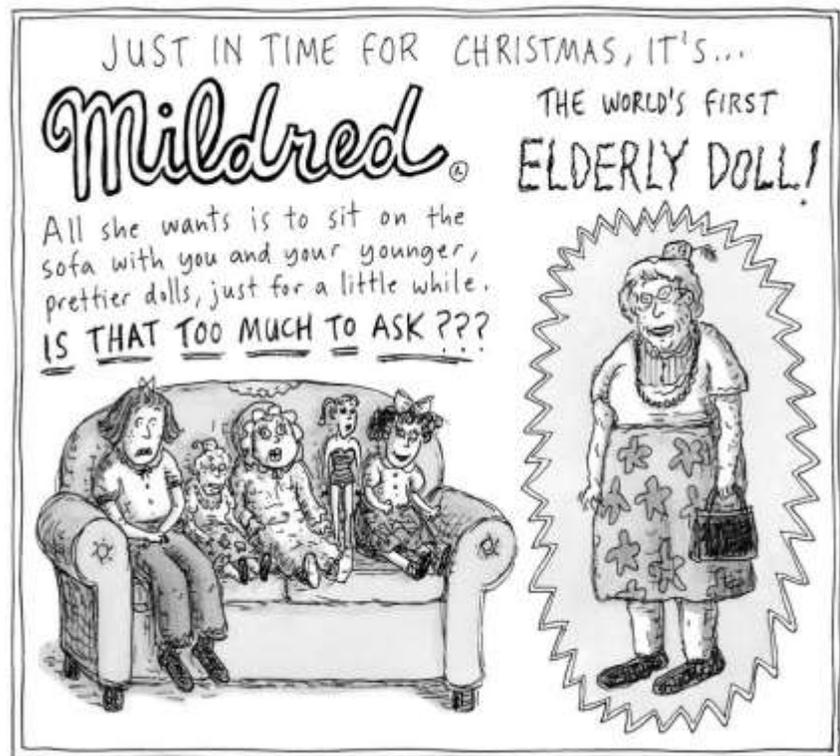
"I'll have the misspelled 'Ceaser' salad and the improperly hypbenated veal osso-buco."

EFFICIENCY

Two insanely dangerous consequences result from raising efficiency to the level of an independent principle. First, it favors short-term thinking – no looking ahead, down the line; and it produces insensitive feeling – no looking around at the life values being lived so efficiently. Second, means become ends; that is, doing something becomes the full justification of doing regardless of what you do. Operational phrases in business life such as “just do it,” “get it done,” “don’t ask questions,” “not excuses, results!” are telltale signs of the efficiency principle beginning to separate from its cohorts and set off on its own.

The ethical confusions now plaguing business, government, and the professions, although having many varied sources, result in part from the pressures of efficiency as a value in and for itself. Then, curiously, Aristotle’s other principles seem to return from repressive exclusion only to sabotage efficiency. Inefficiency becomes a favorite mode of rebellion against the tyranny of efficiency: slowdown, work-to-rule, buck-passing, absenteeism, delayed responses, mislaid documents, unreturned phone calls. Ethical protest against the tyranny of efficiency employ these modes of inefficiency. It is as if in the name of being a good citizen with concern for the wider implications of a job, one must become a “bad” worker.

-- James Hillman, *Kinds of Power*



ELDERS

It is often the elders among us who understand the value of rituals and who help to anchor them. Older people who understand how to be elders, who are able to pass on encouragement and strength rather than despair and judgment, are gifts to society. Elders who have worked through their own failures and inadequacies and come to terms with their lives are able to mentor without controlling, give advice without criticizing, and help people who are younger to get in touch with their own strength, their own soul. They provide encouragement to go on with life and to face our challenges with love and courage. Generations are connected to one another seamlessly, each leading naturally into the next. The old receive the vitality of youth, the youth the stability of the old... and those in the middle are supported and nurtured in their life's duties.

-- Bill Plotkin



EROTIC

Some underestimate how erotic it is to be understood.

— Mary Rakow

FAILURE

I think people don't put enough weight on failure and how amazing it is. I try to teach my sons that. To keep trying. You need to fall down twenty times on your bike before you actually ride it. The idea that you can go out and try something new and excel at it in a second is just not going to happen.

--Frank Ockenfels 3

FEAR

Fear is the cheapest room in the house ...
I would like to see you in better living conditions!

-- Hafiz

GOD

Nothing in the universe
resembles God more than
silence.

--Meister Eckhart



"Godot says, 'Running late, frowny face, winky face.'"

GOOGLE

Google doesn't publish its own material, but the [European Court of Justice] decision [granting citizens the right to demand that Google remove links related to their names] recognized that the results of a Google search often matter more than the information on any individual Web site. The private sector made this discovery several years ago. Michael Fertik, the founder of Reputation.com, also supports the existence of a right to be forgotten that is enforceable against Google. "This is not about free speech; it's about privacy and dignity," he told me. "For the first time, dignity will get the same treatment in law as copyright and trademark do in America. If Sony or Disney wants fifty thousand videos removed from YouTube, Google removes them with no questions asked. If your daughter is caught kissing someone on a cell-phone home video, you have no option of getting it down. That's wrong. The priorities are backward."

--Jeffrey Toobin, "The Solace of Oblivion," *The New Yorker*

GRIEF

As mourning came to Newtown, CT, so did an outpouring of sympathy and money. Which has sometimes made the mourning even harder...It was ten days before Christmas; the gift-giving season was in full swing. And so the outpouring began. The governor and the news crews came at once; the president arrived on Sunday. By the following Thursday, the town assessor, Christopher Kelsey, had an additional job, which was to sort, catalogue, and store all the stuff that well-wishers were sending, unbidden. The quantity was astonishing: 63,780 teddy bears by Good Friday; 636 boxes of toys; 2,200 boxes of school supplies. Backpacks, bicycles, and paper products, much of it tissues from Walmart. "Tissues seemed to be popular. There was a lot of crying going on. Tissues made sense." Kelsey found a spare warehouse and, with the help of a crew from the Seventh-day Adventist church, led an army of sifters and sorters. Five hundred and eighty volunteers spent hour upon hour separating iTunes gift cards from Starbucks cards. Every item earmarked for the families went into huge, pallet-size boxes upon which victims' family names were printed. Soto, Lewis, Barden, Hubbard. Books, cards, angels, Christmas-tree ornaments. Charm bracelets bearing a particular name...

As grief settled on the town, so did money. Cash poured in from everywhere, arriving in envelopes addressed to no one. To Newtown. The town of Newtown. The families of Newtown. There were stories of cheerleaders, having sponsored fund-raisers, walking around with \$30,000 in their pockets. A guidance counselor at Newtown High School reportedly opened the mail to find \$1,000 in cash. Around the country, people sold ribbons, bracelets, cupcakes, and sent in the proceeds, five and ten dollars at a time. The Davenport West honor society in Iowa sent in a check for \$226.69, and the parents of a 3-year-old named Lillian sent \$290.94, donations from her birthday party. According to the Connecticut attorney general, about \$22 million has flooded the town since December 14, 2012, finding its way into about 70 different charities set up in the wake of the massacre. The biggest fund by far was the one set up by 9 p.m. the day of the attack, under the auspices of the United Way of Western Connecticut. By April, it held \$11 million. Very quickly, the matter of disbursing these funds became something else, a proxy fight over how to evaluate grief.

-- Lisa Miller, *New York* magazine

Grief is a primal emotion, one which modern people—at least in Western countries—handle rather poorly. Yet grief is highly important, because it is the process through which one survives loss. Without the tears of grief, one is much more prone to depression, detachment, numbness and the self-destructive underground fires of unconscious anger and rage.

-- Robert Simmons

HAPPINESS

Everyone should be born into this world happy and loving everything.
But in truth it rarely works that way.
For myself, I have spent my life clamoring toward it.
Halleluiah, anyway I'm not where I started!

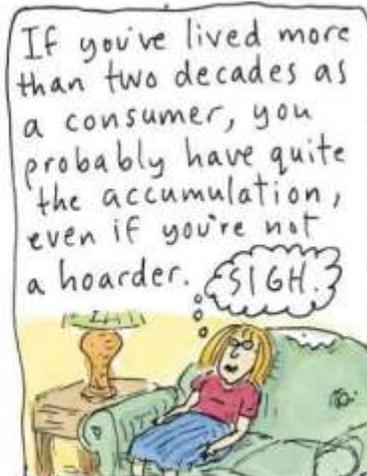
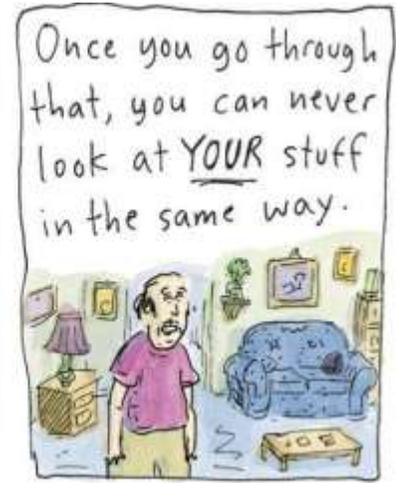
And have you too been trudging like that, sometimes almost forgetting how wondrous the world is and how miraculously kind some people can be?
And have you too decided that probably nothing important is ever easy?
Not, say, for the first sixty years.

Halleluiah, I'm sixty now, and even a little more, and some days I feel I have wings.

--Mary Oliver



HOARDING

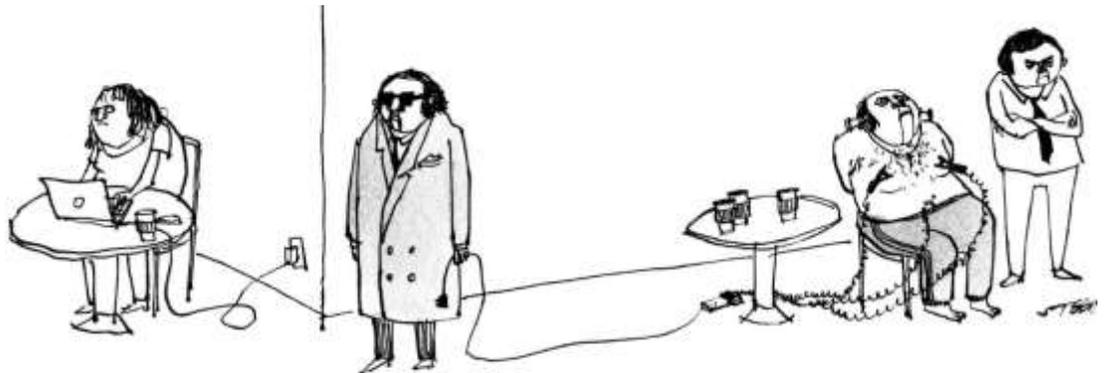


An ergonomic garlic press and throw pillows and those stupid sunflower dessert plates and seven travel alarm clocks and eight nail clippers and a colander and a flat iron and three old laptops and barbells and a set of FUCKING BOCCÉ BALLS, and patio furniture and an autoharp, for God's sake, and your old flute from high school and a zillion books and towels and sheets and a wok you never used...

IDEAS

For ideas to be born and stay alive through their precarious infancy they must be welcomed warmly so that their native power can come fully to mind. Skepticism and irony don't belong at the start. At first, better the wacky and the weird than ideas whittled down to fit preconceived slots. Here we need courage to face their destructive force, for ideas also can lay waste to cherished habits of mind. We now call this destruction of old ideas, politely, a "paradigm shift." "Catastrophe theory" would be more appropriate. The vitality of a culture depends less on its hopes and its history than on its capacity to entertain willingly the divine and daimonic force of ideas.

-- James Hillman



"Are you still using that outlet?"

INFIDELITY

I don't abide by the perpetrator-victim model of infidelity, in which the cheater is criminalized and the victim is given all the empathy. I also don't believe an affair automatically means the relationship is bad. Here's the usual view: If we, as a couple, have everything we want from each other, there's no reason for either of us to go elsewhere. Hence, if one of us goes elsewhere, there's something missing between us; infidelity is a symptom of a problem in the relationship.

That's sometimes the case, but affairs often have more to do with the unfaithful individual than with the couple. People go elsewhere for sex not so much because they want to leave their partners but because they want to escape who they themselves have become. They are looking for parts of themselves that they've lost because of the relationship. But many adulterers are reasonably content in their marriage and monogamous in their beliefs. In my experience most have been faithful for ten or fifteen years before they've cheated.

If you see adultery only as a symptom, you sometimes take good relationships that have worked well for decades and make them look like failures. I don't think that's right...

I've seen couples in which I'm convinced there's an affair going on but no one wants to talk about it. I've seen couples in which one person keeps asking the question and the other keeps denying it, or one keeps dropping hints and the other doesn't want to pick up on them. I've had clients who are resisting having an affair, and others who can't talk clearly about their marriage because they are intoxicated by an ongoing affair and everything else pales in comparison. Or they are irritable and don't want to go home because of their guilt or because they don't like their partner at the moment. Other clients might want to be in the relationship, but their partner has Alzheimer's and can't recognize them, and they need a way to rejuvenate themselves so they can spend an hour every day with their partner at the nursing home. I hear about kinds of infidelities that never existed before now, but infidelity itself is timeless. At all four corners of the world, at any moment, someone is either betraying a beloved or being betrayed. Infidelity: historically condemned, universally practiced.

-- Esther Perel, interviewed in *The Sun*

INTELLIGENCE

Albert had a very precise manner – the product of a good French Catholic education. He loved to clarify his terms, nail down a fact, take notes in the hour after an encounter, annotate his reading. At the same time he was quick to see his own absurdities and those of others. And he was affectionate. I guess I define intelligence as the power to make new, surprising, wide-ranging associations and never to rely on automatic, untested generalities. With Albert I felt that I was in the presence of someone like Wittgenstein who was actually thinking out loud, thinking right in front of you, thinking a thought for the first time.

-- Edmund White, *Inside a Pearl*

INVISIBLE

We elders have learned a thing or two, including invisibility. Here I am in a conversation with some trusty friends – old friends but actually not all that old: they're in their sixties – and we're finishing the wine and in serious converse about global warming in Nyack or Virginia Woolf the cross-dresser. There's a pause, and I chime in with a couple of sentences. The others look at me politely, then resume the talk exactly at the point where they've just left it. What? Hello? Didn't I just say something? Have I left the room? Have I experienced what neurologists call a TIA – a transient ischemic attack? I didn't expect to take over the chat but did await a word or two of response. Not tonight, though. (Women I know say that this began to happen to them when they passed fifty.) When I mention the phenomenon to anyone around my age, I get back nods and smiles. Yes, we're invisible. Honored, respected, even loved, but not quite worth listening to anymore. You've had your turn, Pops; now it's ours.

-- Roger Angell

JOBS

"We must do away with the absolutely specious notion that everybody has to earn a living. It is a fact today that one in ten thousand of us can make a technological breakthrough capable of supporting all the rest. We keep inventing jobs because of this false idea that everybody has to be employed at some kind of drudgery because, according to Malthusian-Darwinian theory, we must justify our right to exist."

Buckminster Fuller

JONI

[Joni Mitchell played a small club gig at Fez in NYC November 6, 1995.] Though the audience was enthusiastic, they remained rapt and attentive – the exception being a somewhat tired and emotional Chrissie Hynde who punctuated the proceedings with cries of “We love you Joni!”, “Joni, you rock!” and other yells of admiration until Carly Simon, tired of the hooting interjections, suggested Chrissie sit down and put a sock in it. [nb: “tired and emotional” is a British euphemism for “drunk”]

Then, according to eyewitnesses, Hynde grabbed Simon around the neck and began to pummel her, while Mitchell continued unperturbed with her programme through to the final song, thanking all who’d listened.

“What a nice experience,” Joni said. “I thank you for this.”

After, there was much discussion regarding Hynde’s and Simon’s alleged contretemps. But what really did happen? Carly Simon eventually gave her version of events on her official website. “Chrissie was a bit intoxicated and was yelling out during Joni’s performance which, needless to say, everybody wanted to hear. Chrissie was sitting right next to me and I asked her to be a little quieter. No one else would have dared say that to her except me, stupid me. She started choking me in a loving way saying, ‘You’re great too, Carly, get up there, you need to do this.’ Very nice, the only problem being that it was in the middle of Joni’s song and people were looking at us. So I moved seats. That’s all it was about. I must say that her choking me in fun intoxication looked to a lot of the audience like a fight. It was not. It was just one of those things.”

-- Fred Dellar, *Mojo Magazine*, December 2013

Repetition has a numbing effect on me. If you tell me the same story over and over again, I start erasing my memory of it, because I believe you don’t expect me to remember. “Help Me,” Joni Mitchell’s one big certifiable Top 40 smash hit, was so ubiquitous when it came out in 1974 that I quickly stopped listening closely to the words. Only lately, and again watching Jessica Molaskey sing “Help Me” in her American Songbook show “Portraits of Joni,” have I come to appreciate the crazy originality of the lyric and how it uses repetition for epicurean insistence:

*Didn't it feel good
We were sitting there talking
Or lying there not talking
Didn't it feel good
You dance with the lady
With the hole in her stocking
Didn't it feel good
Didn't it feel goooooood*

And just in case you didn’t get the point, the backup singers add:

*Didn't it feel good?
Didn't it feel good?
Didn't it feel good?
Didn't it feel good?*

-- Don Shewey

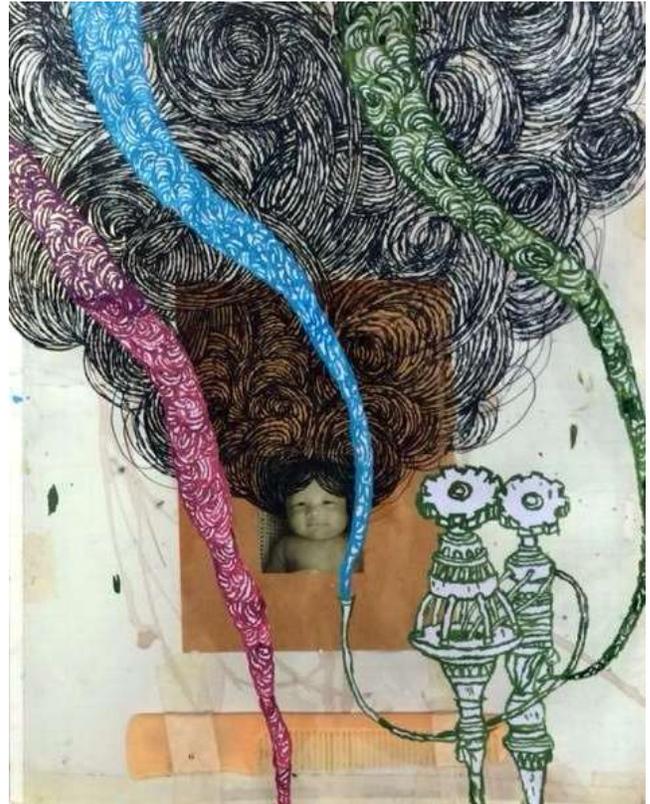


JOURNAL

“What’s In My Journal”

Odd things, like a button drawer. Mean Things, fishhooks, barbs in your hand. But marbles too. A genius for being agreeable. Junkyard crucifixes, voluptuous discards. Space for knickknacks, and for Alaska. Evidence to hang me, or to beatify. Clues that lead nowhere, that never connected anyway. Deliberate obfuscation, the kind that takes genius. Chasms in character. Loud omissions. Mornings that yawn above a new grave. Pages you know exist but you can't find them. Someone's terribly inevitable life story, maybe mine.

-- William Stafford



JUNG

Jung alone among the great psychologists refused to classify people into groups according to their sufferings. He has been charged with failing to provide a detailed and systematic theory of neurosis along with etiology [the cause of an abnormal condition] and treatment. Is this really a failing? Perhaps it is his virtue to have alone recognized the gross inadequacy of only outside descriptions.

--James Hillman

KIDS

There’s something I have said so often to my children that now they chant it back to me: “You can do hard things.” I sent my kids to a Montessori preschool, and thank heavens I did, because most of what I learned about parenting came from those wonderful Montessori teachers. They straightened me out about self-esteem. There’s this myth that self-esteem comes from making everything easy for your children and making sure they never fail. If they never encounter hardship or conflict, the logic goes, they’ll never feel bad about themselves. Well, that’s ridiculous. That’s not even a human life.

Kids learn self-esteem from mastering difficult tasks. It’s as simple as that. The Montessori teachers told me to put my two-year-old on a stool and give her the bread, give her the peanut butter, give her the knife – a *blunt* knife – and let her make that sandwich and get peanut butter all over the place, because when she’s done, she’ll feel like a million bucks. I thought that was brilliant. Raising children became mostly a matter of enabling them and then standing back and watching. When a task was difficult, that’s when I would tell them, “You can do hard things.” Both of them have told me they still say to themselves, “I can do hard things. It helps them feel good about who they are, not just after they’ve finished, but while they’re engaged in the process.

-- Barbara Kingsolver, interviewed in *The Sun*

KOCH BROTHERS

Charles and David Koch channeled one of their father's early insights: There's big money in dirty oil...By 1995, the EPA had seen enough. It sued Koch for gross violations of the Clean Water Act. From 1988 through 1996, the company's pipelines spilled 11.6 million gallons of crude and petroleum products. Internal Koch records showed that its pipelines were in such poor condition that it would require \$98 million in repairs to bring them up to industry standard.

Ultimately, state and federal agencies forced Koch to pay a \$30 million civil penalty – then the largest in the history of U.S. environmental law – for 312 spills across six states. Carol Browner, the former EPA administrator, said of Koch, "They simply did not believe the law applied to them." This was not just partisan rancor. Texas Attorney General John Cornyn, the future Republican senator, had joined the EPA in bringing suit against Koch. "This settlement and penalty warn polluters that they cannot treat oil spills simply as the cost of doing business," Cornyn said. (The Kochs seem to have no hard feelings toward their one-time tormentor; a lobbyist for Koch was the number-two bundler for Cornyn's primary campaign this year.)

Koch wasn't just cutting corners on its pipelines. It was also violating federal environmental law in other corners of the empire. Through much of the 1990s at its Pine Bend refinery in Minnesota, Koch spilled up to 600,000 gallons of jet fuel into wetlands near the Mississippi River. Indeed, the company was treating the Mississippi as a sewer, illegally dumping ammonia-laced wastewater into the river – even increasing its discharges on weekends when it knew it wasn't being monitored. Koch Petroleum Group eventually pleaded guilty to "negligent discharge of a harmful quantity of oil" and "negligent violation of the Clean Water Act," was ordered to pay a \$6 million fine and \$2 million in remediation costs, and received three years' probation. This facility had already been declared a Superfund site in 1984.

In 2000, Koch was hit with a 97-count indictment over claims it violated the Clean Air Act by venting massive quantities of benzene at a refinery in Corpus Christi – and then attempted to cover it up. According to the indictment, Koch filed documents with Texas regulators indicating releases of just 0.61 metric tons of benzene for 1995 – one-tenth of what was allowed under the law. But the government alleged that Koch had been informed its true emissions that year measured 91 metric tons, or 15 times the legal limit.

By the time the case came to trial, however, George W. Bush was in office and the indictment had been significantly pared down – Koch faced charges on only seven counts. The Justice Department settled in what many perceived to be a sweetheart deal, and Koch pleaded guilty to a single felony count for covering up the fact that it had disconnected a key pollution-control device and did not measure the resulting benzene emissions – receiving five years' probation. Despite skirting stiffer criminal prosecution, Koch was handed \$20 million in fines and reparations – another historic judgment.

--Tim Dickinson, "Inside the Koch Brothers' Toxic Empire," *Rolling Stone*



KOONS



LEATHERMEN

Jarhead was lying on the bare mattress, its buttons like so many navels. He was dressed in an amalgam of denim, leather, and socks: the sort of unindividuated clothes favored by the entire herd of leather men who had come to fascinate Sean, perhaps mostly because they were sheep in wolves' clothing. He loved their marginality, the hopeless comedy of their tragedy, but he had always felt himself to be a curious flower as well.

-- Brad Gooch, *The Golden Age of Promiscuity*

LIBERATION THEOLOGY

When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a Communist.

-- Brazilian Archbishop Hélder Câmara

LOVE

My splendid colleague Bob Bingham, dying in his late fifties, was asked by a friend what he'd missed or would do differently if given the chance. He thought for an instant, and said, "More venery."

More venery. More love; more closeness; more sex and romance. Bring it back, no matter what, no matter how old we are. This fervent cry of ours has been certified by Simone de Beauvoir and Alice Munro and Laurence Olivier and any number of remarried or recoupled ancient classmates of ours. Laurence Olivier? I'm thinking of what he says somewhere in an interview: "Inside, we're all seventeen, with red lips."

This is a dodgy subject, coming as it does here from a recent widower, and I will risk a further breach of code and add that this was something that Carol and I now and then idly discussed. We didn't quite see the point of memorial fidelity. In our view, the departed spouse – we always thought it would be me – wouldn't be around anymore but knew or had known that he or she was loved forever. Please go ahead, then, sweetheart – don't miss a moment. Carol said this last: "If you haven't found someone else by a year after I'm gone I'll come back and haunt you."

Getting old is the second-biggest surprise of my life, but the first, by a mile, is our unceasing need for deep attachment and intimate love. We oldies yearn daily and hourly for conversation and a renewed domesticity, for company at the movies or while visiting a museum, for someone close by in the car when coming home at night. This is why we throng Match.com and OkCupid in such numbers – but not just for this, surely. Rowing in Eden (in Emily Dickinson's words: "Rowing in Eden--/Ah—the sea") isn't reserved for the lithe and young, the dating or the hooked-up or the just lavishly married, or even for couples in the middle-aged mixed-doubles semifinals, thank God. No personal confession or revelation impends here, but these feelings in old folks are widely treated like a raunchy secret. The invisibility factor – you've had your turn – is back at it again. But I believe that everyone in the world wants to be with someone else tonight, together in the dark, with the sweet warmth of a hip or a foot or a bare expanse of shoulder within reach. Those of us who have lost that, whatever our age, never lose the longing: just look at our faces. If it returns, we seize upon it avidly, stunned and altered again.

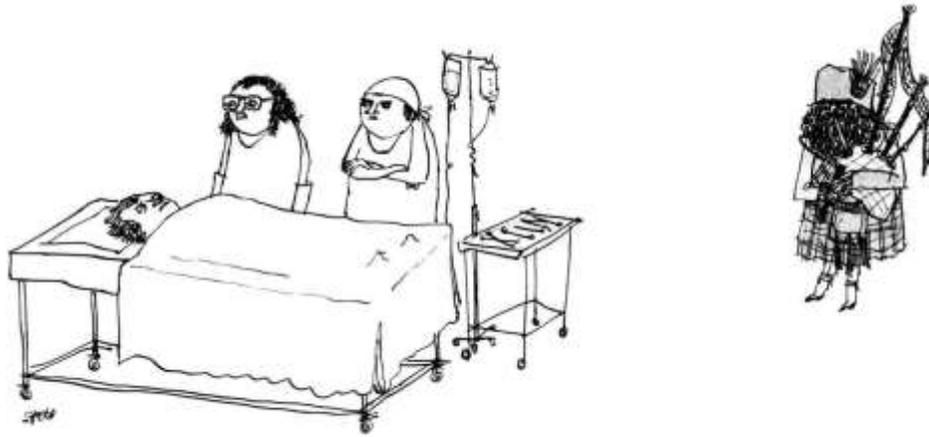
-- Roger Angell, "This Old Man"

For a relationship to stay alive, love alone is not enough. Without imagination, love stales into sentiment, duty, boredom. Relationships fail not because we have stopped loving but because we first stopped imagining.

-- James Hillman

I have again and again been faced with the mystery of love, and have never been able to explain what it is...For we are in the deepest sense the victims and instruments of cosmogonic "love"...A man is at its mercy. He may assent to it, or rebel against it, but he is always caught up by it and enclosed within it. He is dependent upon it and is sustained by it. Love is his light and his darkness, whose end he cannot see.

--Carl Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*



"You'll be kept awake throughout the operation."

MEDICINE

Treatment originates outside you; healing comes from within.

--Andrew Weil

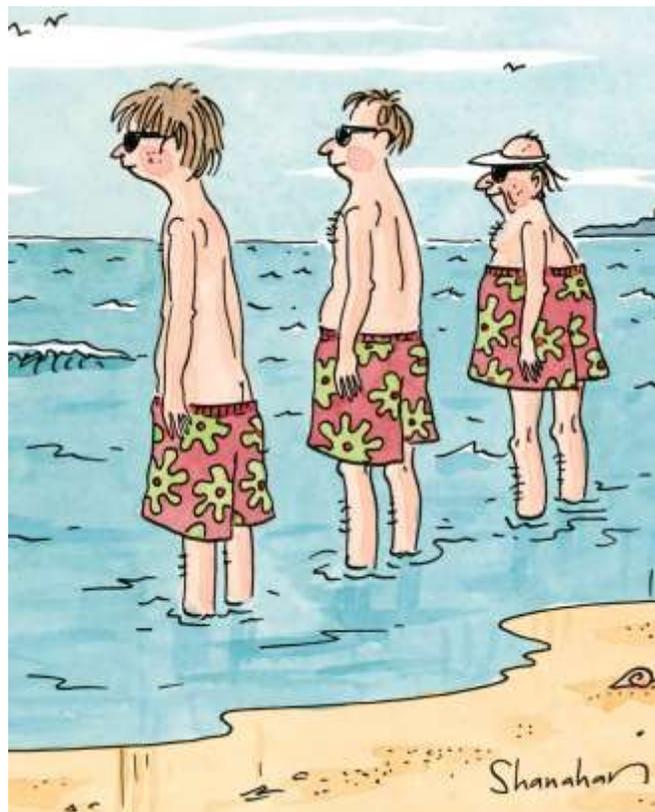
Though the doctors treated him, let his blood, and gave him medications to drink, he nevertheless recovered.

--Leo Tolstoy

MEN

Men do not unite by moving toward each other directly but only by losing themselves in the same god.

--Antoine de Saint-Exupéry



MOTHERS AND SONS

One day in my mid-40s I called my mother and very gently and compassionately said, “Mom, you’re fired! I don’t need you to be mothering me anymore.” In midlife, I had been a college teacher for 12 years and an itinerant lecturer and speaker for a dozen years. “What I need is to create a new adult-to-adult relationship with you, if it is at all possible.”

My mother was silent for a few moments. “I’m not sure what you mean.”

“I mean the time for you to be mothering me is over, and the time for me to be ‘sonning’ you is over. I have to stop ‘sonning’ – acting, talking, thinking, and behaving like a boy/son – and treat you with respect, and you have to talk and interact with me like an adult.”

A key to breaking the Mother-Son Dynamic is to stop being a “son” to anyone... “Sonning” is a term Dr. Joseph Cruse taught me to describe how men perform the role of a son without even realizing it; it’s a role that turns men into little boys. When men act like sons, their parents act in kind, and men get pissed off, frustrated, and end up feeling small. Perhaps more importantly, if men are still “sonning” with their parents, they’re sure to be doing the same with wives or lovers, leading to dysfunction that can rival that of their childhood.

A man’s letting his wife, girlfriend, or lover treat him and talk to him like he is a boy will have serious ramifications. If he is her boy and she is his mom, one of those ramifications could be, as I have often seen, that he takes on a mistress – sometimes it is a woman, sometimes it is work, golf, making money, pornography – but he can’t make love to a mother.

--John Lee, *Breaking the Mother-Son Dynamic*

NAMES

Research suggests that “having a weird name makes you more likely to have impulse control,” and that impulse control is “even more important than I.Q. in predicting socioeconomic success, marital stability, and even staying out of prison.” So [Dalton] Conley [and his wife Natalie Jeremijenko] names his firstborn daughter E and his younger son Yo Xing Heyno Augustus Eisner Alexander Weiser Knuckles.

-- Rebecca Traister, reviewing Conley’s *Parentology*



NECKTIES

If men can run the world, why can’t they stop wearing neckties? How intelligent is it to start the day by tying a little noose around your neck?

-- Linda Ellerbee

NEW YORK

There are roughly three New Yorks. There is, first, the New York of the man or woman who was born here, who takes the city for granted and accepts its size and its turbulence as natural and inevitable. Second, there is the New York of the commuter – the city that is devoured by locusts each day and spat out each night. Third, there is the New York of the person who was born somewhere else and came to New York in quest of something. Of these three trembling cities the greatest is the last – the city of final destination, the city that is a goal. It is this third city that accounts for New York's high-strung disposition, its poetical deportment, its dedication to the arts, and its incomparable achievements. Commuters give the city its tidal restlessness; natives give it solidity and continuity; but the settlers give it passion. And whether it is a farmer arriving from Italy to set up a small grocery store in a slum, or a young girl arriving from a small town in Mississippi to escape the indignity of being observed by her neighbors, or a boy arriving from the Corn Belt with a manuscript in his suitcase and a pain in his heart, it makes no difference: each embraces New York with the intense excitement of first love, each absorbs New York with the fresh eyes of an adventurer, each generates heat and light to dwarf the Consolidated Edison Company.

-- E. B. White, "Here Is New York"



OLD

"When I Am Old"

I'll have dewlaps and a hump and say *what* all the time in a cross voice: on every one of my bony crony fingers a ring. My lips painted with a slash of bright fuchsia, I'll drink margaritas by the tumbler full and if my dealer dies before I do, I'll just have to look for younger suppliers. I can't imagine not being interested in sex, but if it happens, so be it, really I could do with a rest, complete hormonelessness. I may forget who I am and how to find my way home, but be patient, remember I've always been more than a little confused and never did have much of a sense of direction. If I'm completely demented, I'm depending on friends: you know who you are.

--Moyra Donaldson

OPTIMISM

The system isn't nearly as powerful as it wants you to believe. It is, in fact, far more feeble, fallible, terrified (just ask the GOP). It's also changing by the minute. It can change again in a single act, law, cultural tipping point. Happens all the time. For better, for worse. It's happening right now. This is why the Ferguson protests, or Cosby's belated takedown, the #YesAllWomen phenom, the onrush of legal gay marriage or even Obama's China environmental agreement, health care battle or immigration plan, are all so vital. They snap us back to attention. They nudge the disruptive energy awake. And they remind us of the most important takeaway of all: Want to help keep the system as it is? Believe all is lost. Want to ensure the system's eventual, perpetual, ongoing annihilation? Believe the exact opposite.

--Mark Morford

Optimism is a strategy for making a better future. Because unless you believe that the future can be better, you are unlikely to step up and take responsibility for making it so. If you assume there is no hope, you guarantee there will be no hope.

--Noam Chomsky

Consider the remarkable transformation, in just a few decades, in people's consciousness of racism, in the bold presence of women demanding their rightful place, in a growing public awareness that gays are not curiosities but sensate human beings, in the long-term growing skepticism about military intervention despite brief surges of military madness.

It is that long-term change that I think we must see if we are not to lose hope. Pessimism becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy; it reproduces itself by crippling our willingness to act. Revolutionary change does not come as one cataclysmic moment (beware of such moments!) but as an endless succession of surprises, moving zigzag toward a more decent society.

We don't have to engage in grand, heroic actions to participate in the process of change. Small acts, when multiplied by millions of people, can transform the world. Even when we don't 'win,' there is fun and fulfillment in the fact that we have been involved, with other good people, in something worthwhile.

We need hope. An optimist isn't necessarily a blithe, slightly sappy whistler in the dark of our time. To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness.

What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places -- and there are so many -- where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction. And if we do act, in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future.

The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory.

--Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*

ORCHIDS

Legend has it that witches used the tuberous roots of orchids which resemble human testicles to prepare magic potions: fresh ones to promote love, and dried ones to provoke passion. Seventeenth-century herbalists called them *Satyrias*, in reference to the Greek mythology god Satyros, who lived in forests and had short horns and goat legs and feet. In Portuguese, the word *satiro* is also a synonym for debauched and libidinous. According to a legend, Orchis, son of a satyr and a nymph, was murdered by the Bacchantes, the priestess of Bacchus, god of wine. In answer to his father's prayers, Orchis was changed into a flower that now bears his name, the orchid. Since the Middle Ages, orchids are popular for their supposed aphrodisiac properties. Special concoctions of the tuberous roots and fleshy leaves of some species were considered as sexual stimulants and even as helping to produce male babies. That is how they became a synonym of fertility and vitality.

-- "Orchid, Sex and Magic," informational placard in the Jardim Botânico in Rio de Janeiro

OVERSOLD

On Wednesday the high school kids gathered out on the parking lot and watched Venus cross over the sun. They wore paper eye protectors, and as usual when grown-ups are involved, the thrill of the moment was oversold. Kids were expecting some sort of galactic explosion and instead there was a tiny speck of shadow that some of them saw and others thought they saw and others weren't sure. It made you wonder what else has been oversold. The joy of seeing Paris, France. The joy of seeing someone's underpants. Maybe marriage is like this. You stand around with paper over your eyes and then it's over and she says, Did you see it? And you say, I think so, I don't know.

-- Garrison Keillor

PASSION

I can't end a day without checking that I still know my favorite passages of *Passions of the Soul* by Descartes by heart. Why? It works. The whole point is that you cannot fight your passions. If you are scared, you cannot pretend you're not scared. If you are in love, you can't pretend you are not in love. But if you are scared, you can use the passion of courage to fight fear. The main important thing in Descartes is about generosity. He says generosity is the decision to use your mind and reason as well as you can in each situation.

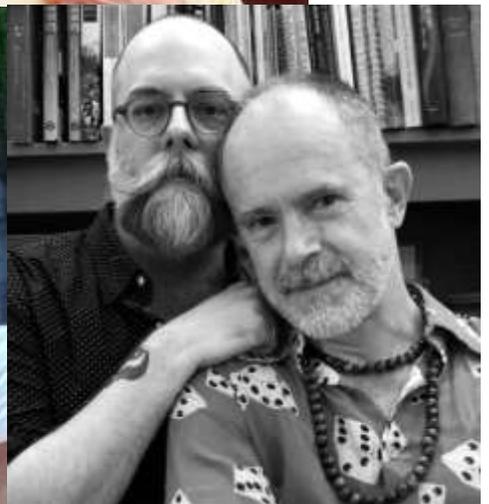
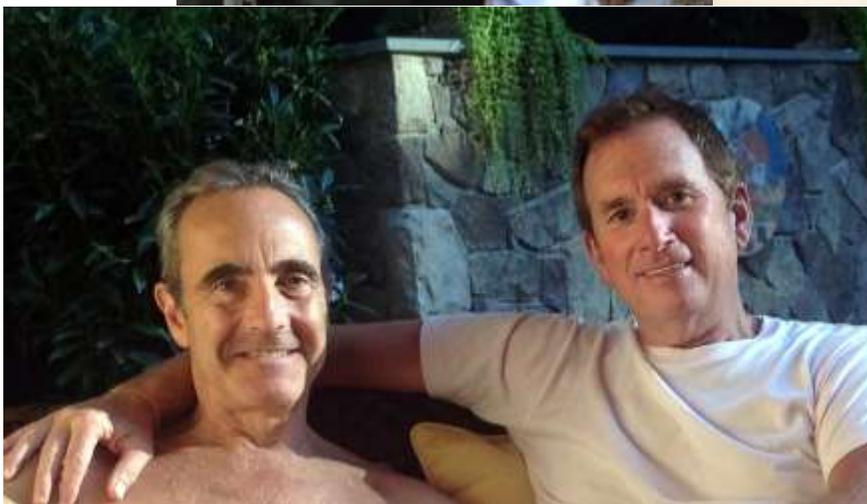
-- Antonin Baudry

PLEASURE

Pleasure, like beauty and order, is one of the few great powers that move the cosmos. By recognizing the *Lustprinzip* or pleasure principle that seeks to bring erotic joy to every act to be a force at the root of the soul, Freud ennobled pleasure as a prince of power, not as the Prince of Darkness. That the pleasure principle has been opposed to the work ethic degrades work into slavery and pleasure into childish truantries, causing us to regard pleasure as a decadent parasite sapping the strength of power.

--James Hillman







POO

No one knows how many people have undergone fecal transplants—the official term is fecal microbiota transplantation, or FMT—but the number is thought to be at least ten thousand and climbing rapidly. New research suggests that the microbes in our guts—and, consequently, in our stool—may play a role in conditions ranging from autoimmune disorders to allergies and obesity, and reports of recoveries by patients who, with or without the help of doctors, have received these bacteria-rich infusions have spurred demand for the procedure. A year and a half ago, a few dozen physicians in the United States offered FMT. Today, hundreds do, and OpenBiome, a nonprofit stool bank founded last year by graduate students at M.I.T., ships more than fifty specimens each week to hospitals in thirty-six states. The Cleveland Clinic named fecal transplantation one of the top ten medical innovations for 2014, and biotech companies are competing to put stool-based therapies through clinical trials and onto the market. In medicine, at any rate, human excrement has become a precious commodity. Science writers love to cite the freakish fact that for every one of our cells we are hosts to ten microbial ones, and nowhere are there as many as in our digestive tracts, which house about a hundred trillion bacteria, fungi, viruses, and other tiny creatures. (As one gastroenterologist put it to me, with only mild exaggeration, “We’re ten per cent human and ninety per cent poo.”)

--Emily Eakin, “The Excrement Experiment,” *The New Yorker*

POP CULTURE

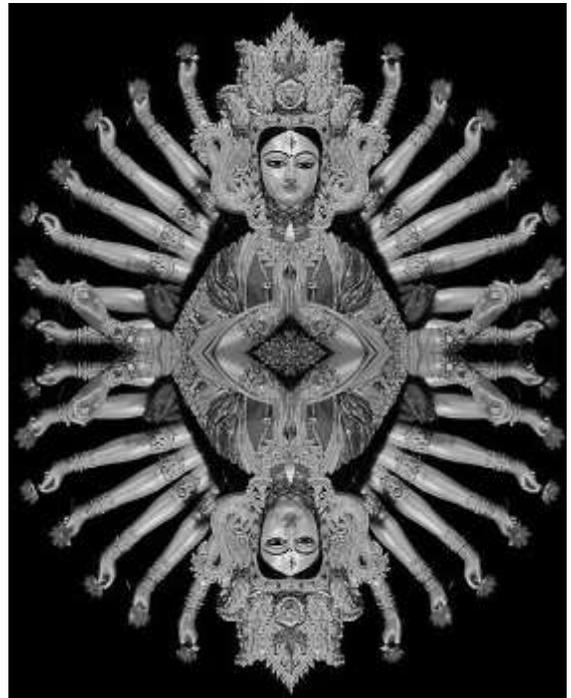
Do you feel that there is a preoccupation in Europe with American popular culture?

The power in any society is with those who get to impose the fantasy. It is no longer, as it was for centuries throughout Europe, the church that imposes its fantasy on the populace, nor is it the totalitarian superstate that imposes the fantasy, as it did for 12 years in Nazi Germany and for 69 years in the Soviet Union. Now the fantasy that prevails is the all-consuming, voraciously consumed popular culture, seemingly spawned by, of all things, freedom. The young especially live according to beliefs that are thought up for them by the society’s most unthinking people and by the businesses least impeded by innocent ends. Ingeniously as their parents and teachers may attempt to protect the young from being drawn, to their detriment, into the moronic amusement park that is now universal, the preponderance of the power is not with them.

-- Philip Roth, interviewed by Daniel Sandstrom

PRAYER

I don't know where prayers go,
or what they do.
Do cats pray, while they sleep
half-asleep in the sun?
Does the opossum pray as it
crosses the street?
The sunflowers? The old black oak
growing older every year?
I know I can walk through the world,
along the shore or under the trees,
with my mind filled with things
of little importance, in full
self-attendance. A condition I can't really
call being alive.
Is a prayer a gift, or a petition,
or does it matter?
The sunflowers blaze, maybe that's their way.
Maybe the cats are sound asleep. Maybe not.



While I was thinking this I happened to be standing
just outside my door, with my notebook open,
which is the way I begin every morning.
Then a wren in the privet began to sing.
He was positively drenched in enthusiasm,
I don't know why. And yet, why not.
I wouldn't persuade you from whatever you believe
or whatever you don't. That's your business.
But I thought, of the wren's singing, what could this be
if it isn't a prayer?
So I just listened, my pen in the air.

-- Mary Oliver

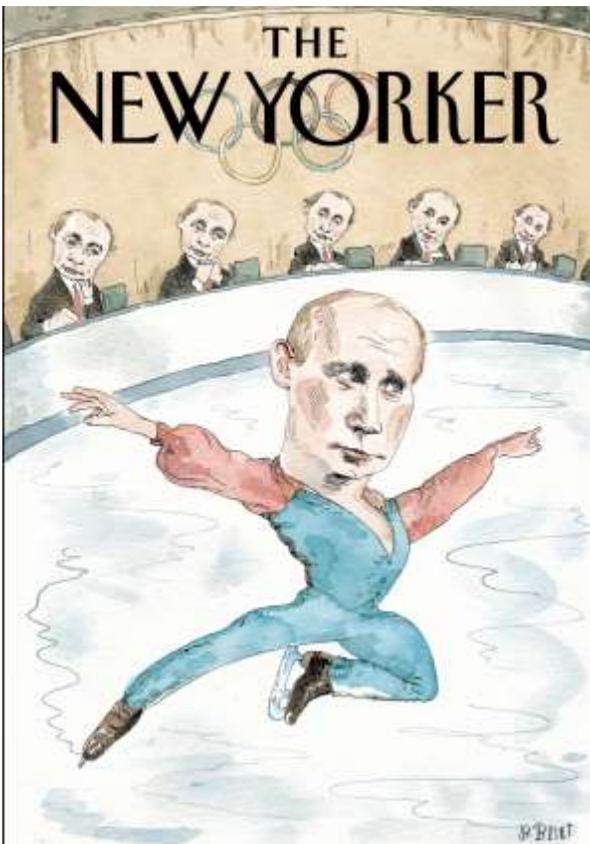


"Quick, Lassie, go get I.T.!"

PURPLE

I remember Fleetwood Mac were in Minneapolis on tour one time and Prince came and got me right after the show. I'm still in my chiffon stage outfit and he's in his purple stage outfit. We get in his purple Camaro and bomb out onto the freeway at 100 mph. I'm terrified, but kind of excited, too: "Shit, were gonna get pulled over!" So we get to his purple house and he has a studio downstairs and we try to write a song together. But I've just done a show and I'm tired, so I go upstairs and sleep on the floor of his purple kitchen. In the morning he wakes me up and I have some coffee and I sing a little part on the song ["Purple Rain"]. But I've got to be at the airport by 2 pm to take off with Fleetwood Mac, and you do not miss that plane. We get into the purple Camaro again, Prince bombs it down the freeway and right out on to the tarmac alongside our private jet. He comes around to open my door and we hug goodbye, but we both look like crazy people. I get on the plane and the rest of the band are like (*drums fingers, rolls eyes*). I'm like "What? Nothing happened!"

-- Stevie Nicks



PUTIN

To illustrate his emphasis on personality as a factor in foreign affairs, [Vice President Joe] Biden recalled visiting Putin at the Kremlin in 2011: "I had an interpreter, and when he was showing me his office I said, 'It's amazing what capitalism will do, won't it? A magnificent office!' And he laughed. As I turned, I was this close to him." Biden held his hand a few inches from his nose. "I said, 'Mr. Prime Minister, I'm looking into your eyes, and I don't think you have a soul.' "

"You said that?" I asked. It sounded like a movie line.

"Absolutely, positively," Biden said, and continued, "And he looked back at me, and he smiled, and he said, 'We understand one another.' "

-- Evan Osnos in the *New Yorker*

QUALITY TIME

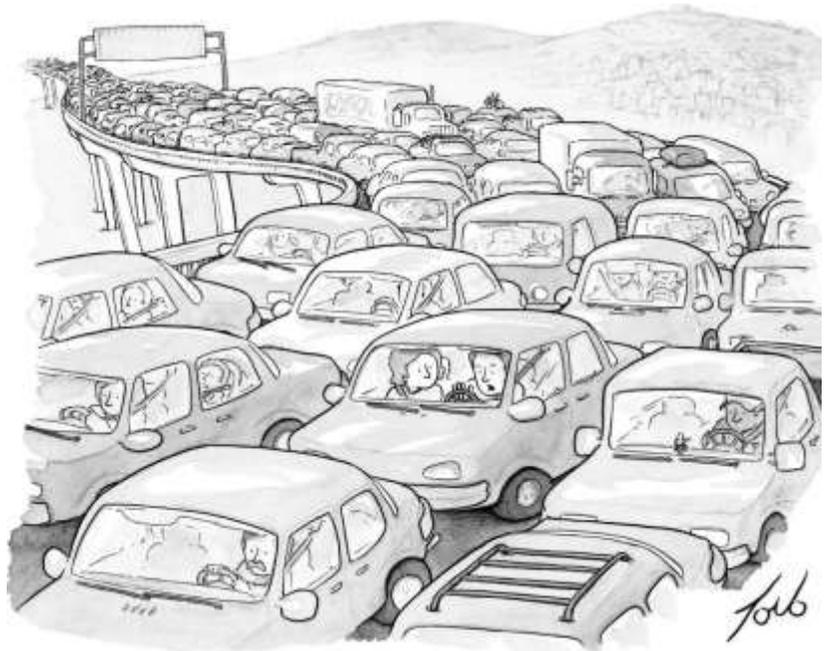
Mom lit a fire in the fireplace at 4:30 every weekday afternoon so that our small house would be filled with light and warmth when Dad arrived home at precisely 4:45. At the sound of the back door creaking open, signaling Dad's arrival, my brother and I would come running. In the kitchen we'd find our father kissing our mother. Their kiss probably lasted only a few seconds, but it seemed longer to my curious little-girl eyes. Then Dad would pull us into an embrace, his polyester trousers brushing against my cheek. Next Mom would pour my brother and me each a soda, and we'd scurry to the dining-room table to drink it. Meanwhile Dad made his way to their bedroom to change, and Mom poured two glasses of sparkling wine and eased into her navy recliner by the crackling fire to wait for him. She wouldn't take her first sip until he returned.

Dad would come back in bright slacks and a plaid shirt, and he'd stop at my chair and say, "Better head downstairs. It's our time now." I'd nod but stay a moment longer to watch as he lowered himself into his own recliner. Then he and my mother would talk while my brother and I went back to the shag-carpeted basement until we were called for dinner at 5:30. Mom and Dad treasured those 45 minutes and guarded them carefully. We were allowed to interrupt only if the house was on fire. I don't know what they talked about week after week, month after month, but somehow they always had something to say to each other for 25 years.

Until my own married life became crowded by the demands of work and babies, I never understood what it took for my parents to set aside that time for themselves. My home lacks a fireplace, and with seven children and our ever-changing schedules, my husband and I can't create the daily consistency I thrived on as a child, but we are trying. We sneak in moments before the sun and the baby are up. We steal minutes in the kitchen while the soup heats. And on warm summer nights we slip outside with our wine-glasses to sit in our wicker porch chairs and drink Syrah by the light of flickering candles. The kids know we are to be interrupted only if the house is on fire.

--Laura Jennison, "Readers Write," *The Sun* magazine





"Why isn't my car horn magically fixing everything?"

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How much poison are you willing to eat for the success of the free market and global trade? Please name your preferred poisons.
2. For the sake of goodness, how much evil are you willing to do?
Fill in the following blanks with the names of your favorite evils and acts of hatred.
3. What sacrifices are you prepared to make for culture and civilization?
Please list the monuments, shrines, and works of art you would most willingly destroy
4. In the name of patriotism and the flag, how much of our beloved land are you willing to desecrate?
List in the following spaces the mountains, rivers, towns, farms you could most readily do without.
6. State briefly the ideas, ideals, or hopes, the energy sources, the kinds of security, for which you would kill a child.
Name, please, the children whom you would be willing to kill.

-- Wendell Berry

RACISM

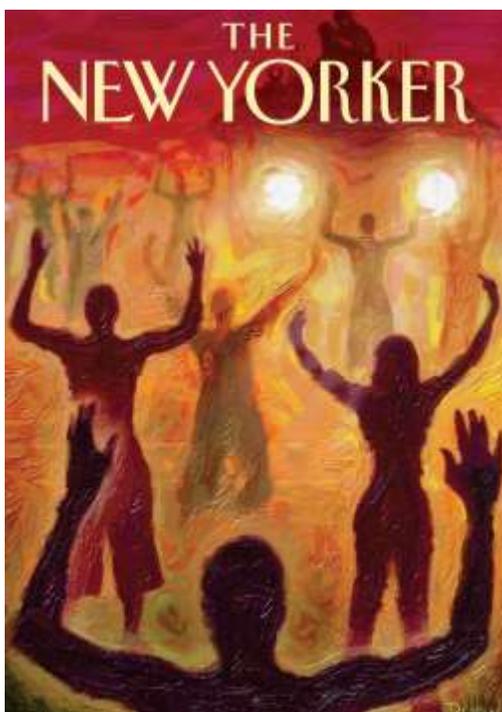
There really are no words to describe the anger, frustration, and rage at the two grand jury decisions in Ferguson, MO and Staten Island, NY. Grand juries, which indict 99 out of 100 times, and only need to establish probable cause, have failed to indict the cop who shot and killed unarmed 18-year old Michael Brown from 150 feet away with his hands in the air, or the cop who choked Eric Garner to death, a young father of four, also with his hands in the air, for selling loose cigarettes. The murder of Eric Garner, ruled a homicide by the coroner, was caught on camera! The fact that one horror unfolded in suburban Ferguson, MO and the other in New York City reflects how racist police brutality has become the norm, that black lives are cheap, not just to the police, but to prosecutors and many who serve on the grand juries.

In 2013, there were 461 “justifiable homicides” by police, the highest number in more than two decades. Since Eric Garner was killed in July and Mike Brown in August, a partial list of those killed covers Brooklyn, LA, St. Louis, and 12-year old Tamir Rice in Cleveland, OH. In the past two years, the NYPD killed teenager Rahmarley Graham in the Bronx, and Shantel Davis, Kimani Williams, and Kyam Livingston in Brooklyn. Not a single cop has been charged with a crime. And of course, there was Trayvon Martin.

Recently, I attended the 2nd World Human Rights Forum with the International Federation of Journalists. Our delegation held three panels on impunity against journalists. I talked about the brutal murders of freelancers Foley and Sotloff in Syria, the bugging of the AP Washington bureau phones and the case of NY Times reporter James Risen, facing jail in a federal leak investigation, even though he is not part of a criminal investigation. I also said that I couldn’t talk about impunity and human rights without talking about the Michael Brown decision and the rebellion that erupted in its wake. When I said, “Our union stands with all the victims of racist police terror,” the room of international journalists burst into applause.

The struggle against racism, from the abolitionists to the Civil War to the Civil Rights movement, has always brought out the best in us. And it has been a tide that raised all boats. While racism hits black people first and hardest, it is an attack on all of us, and must be ended by all of us, together.

--Larry Goldbetter, president of the National Writers Union



The Republican primary [in 1996] had tested Paul’s ability to win a debate over foreign policy. But in the general election his Democratic opponent, Charles (Lefty) Morris, attacked him as a racist. For years, Paul had been selling newsletters—“The Ron Paul Survival Report,” “The Ron Paul Political Report,” “The Ron Paul Investment Letter”—that mixed Austrian economics and right-wing populism. The venture eventually earned him hundreds of thousands of dollars a year. In May, 1996, Morris released copies of Paul newsletters from 1992 that were overtly racist. “We are constantly told that it is evil to be afraid of black men,” one article said, but “it is hardly irrational. Black men commit murders, rapes, robberies, muggings and burglaries all out of proportion to their numbers.” The article went on, “We don’t think a child of thirteen should be held responsible as a man of twenty-three. That’s true for most people, but black males age thirteen who have been raised on the streets and who have joined criminal gangs are as big, strong, tough, scary and culpable as any adult and should be treated as such.” In another commentary, he wrote that most black males in Washington, D.C., were “semi-criminal or entirely criminal,” and that “only about five percent of blacks have sensible political opinions.” At the time, Ron Paul did not dispute that he wrote the articles, though many years later he insisted that they were ghostwritten.

-- Ryan Lizza in *The New Yorker*



READING

For many young people today, reading is not an act of private communion with an author whom they imagine vaguely, if at all, but a prelude to a social experience—following the author on Twitter, meeting other readers, collaborating with them on projects, writing fan fiction. In our connected age, even books have become interactive phenomena.

-- Margaret Talbot in *The New Yorker*

REDEMPTION

I don’t want to be saved -- I want to be spent!

-- Fritz Perls

SAFETY

The norms for eye contact vary all over the world. Eye contact isn't always a positive thing. It can be threatening, too. When you're feeling safe, eye contact can seem friendly, but without a sense of safety, it can be perceived as aggressive. There's good evidence that people who are depressed, anxious, or lonely experience fewer feelings of safety around others, and that starts a downward spiral in which they cut themselves off because any interaction, to them, seems threatening. They may want to connect, but their actions don't support that desire, which reinforces their loneliness. Mindfulness meditation – in which the meditator is simply present in the moment without judgment – may help you begin to see a safe situation for what it is, instead of projecting your negativity onto it. After you've dealt with some of that initial negativity and are feeling safer, lovingkindness meditation might help you experience more warmheartedness.

-- Barbara Frederickson interviewed in *The Sun*



I got made fun of at school, I got made fun of at home too, my older brother hated me, my dad just didn't understand me, and my mom, who had been a fat girl at my age herself, understood me perfectly ... but she berated me because she was so afraid of what she knew was to come for me. So I never felt safe when I was at home. And my response was always to eat more, because nothing says, "You hurt my feelings. Fuck you!" like eating a delicious cookie. Cookies never hurt me.

--Gabourey Sidibe

SEX

Sex is not always about reproduction or about love or about tenderness. All too easily sex derails from its species errand and becomes entwined with anger or guilt or fear, and thus the vast spectrum of human fantasies arise. This man needs to think of shoes in order to perform, and this woman dreams of spankings, and that man wants to wear a dress so his penis can engorge, and that woman thinks of whips and chains. In the darkness of his soul, this man wants little girls and that man wants little boys, and this woman needs an imaginary crowd to watch her movements and that one finds her satisfaction in piercings of the private parts. Urine, feces, animal costumes may all play a part in our fantasy lives.

Each sexual story has its origins in early years, in memories and wirings that we can hardly fathom, in our genes or in our nurseries or in our first experiences of our bodies, our own and those of others. We understand some things but just a few. Sexual preferences, some infused with hate or guilt, remain a mysterious continent open to exploration, open to spelunkers brave enough to follow the clues downward into our blackest hearts and our earliest memories. How good it would be to better understand the roles of shame and curiosity and pain and what part they play in our sexual lives. We have just begun to map our own complex minds.

But this list of sexual wishes, odd practices, less-than-dignified desires, compulsions is not confined to one sex or the other. It is a feature of sexuality that affects many human exchanges, and even more private dreams. Perhaps these rise from the efforts we make to control our lusts, or perhaps they rise from strange coincidences, stray moments that became electrified in our memories, or perhaps they are the result of the controls we must exercise as human animals who can restrain impulses but pay the price for that restraint.

Maybe as we think more about our sexual lives we will find better ways to enjoy them, to fuse them with love and release them from hate. Or maybe not. But, either way, the species needs the sexual life of both male and female in order to reach out into time, enduring civilization while dragging its discontents behind it.

--Anne Roiphe, "Order and Desire"



SEX EDUCATION

“Birds and Bees”

When my daughter starts asking I realize
I don't know which, if any, birds
have penises. I can't picture how swans

do it. I'm even confused about bees:
that fat queen and her neurotic workers,
her children grown in cells. I'm worried

by turtles and snakes: their parts hidden
in places I have never seen. How do they
undress? Long ago, awash in college

boyfriends, I knew a little about sex.
I understood the dances and calls,
the pretty plumage. Now, I am as ignorant

as a child. We have gone to the library
to find books though I know sex
is too wild for words. The desire to be

kissed is the desire to live forever
in the mouth of pleasure. My God
I can never tell my daughter the truth.

It is a secret the way spring is a secret,
buried in February's fields. It is a secret
the way babies are a secret: hidden

by skin or egg, their bodies made of darkness.

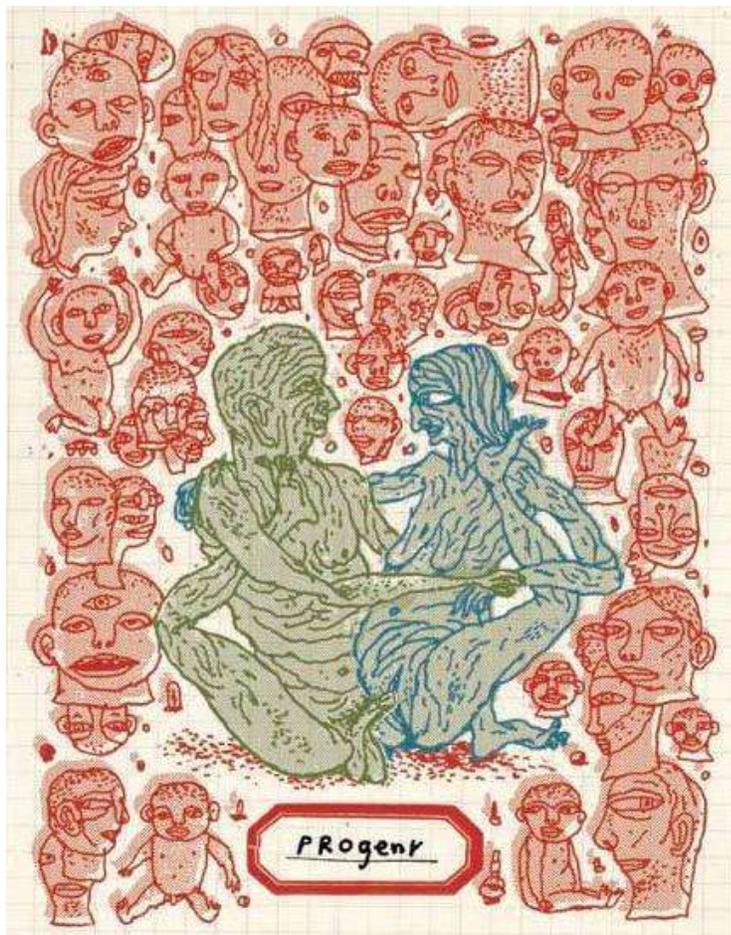
-- Faith Shearin

*

Q: Traditionalists also complain that investigations such as yours destroy the mystery of sex. Do you think that's true?

A: We happen to think that the realistic, honest aspects of sexuality are a lot more exciting than the so-called mystery. The mystery to which the traditionalists usually refer has to do with superstition and myth. A knowledge of sex doesn't impair but *enhances* it.

-- Virginia Johnson, interviewed in *Playboy* in 1968



SEX RESEARCH

[William] Masters visited the medical school library [at Washington University in St. Louis], looking for any book, medical article, or dissertation he could adapt to his plan [of conducting a medical study of human sexuality, so long overdue in America]. “I realized that there was really nothing that had been written or researched that was going to be of any help in working out the physiology of human sexual response,” he later observed.

At Washington University, Masters found just one title about sexual functioning to shed some light. The textbook had been written by a former University of Illinois department chairman of obstetrics and gynecology who, as Masters learned, waited until retirement to publish it. Washington University kept this book on the reserve shelf. When Masters asked to see it, the librarian refused.

“I’m sorry, Dr. Masters, I cannot do that,” she told him.

Puzzled, Masters thought she had misunderstood him. “I do not want to take it out,” he explained. “I just want to look at it.”

The librarian wouldn’t budge. The textbook contained sketches – thin line drawings – of male and female genitalia, which the library superiors worried might be pornographic. As an associate professor, Masters wasn’t eligible to see it. Only full professors, heads of departments, and librarians could remove this book from the reserve shelf, he was told. He promptly marched over to Willard Allen’s office and asked him to borrow the library book on his behalf. This small incident, Masters later reflected, “represented all too well medicine’s fearful approach to the subject of sex.”

*

With the police commissioner, the archbishop, and the Washington University chancellor on board – each in his own way a believer in medicine – Masters finally felt comfortable relying on prostitutes as his experimental subjects...

By the 1950s, most doctors in St. Louis still wouldn’t dream of dealing with prostitutes. But the world of streetwalkers, whorehouses, and anonymous men craving sex soon became Masters’s lab. During his first twenty months of research, he interviewed 118 female and 27 male prostitutes, from St. Louis and other cities. He carefully noted their encounters and their medical histories. Masters said he never paid for their cooperation, though doctors assisting him say prostitutes received compensation for their time as research subjects. From this group, he selected eight women and three men for “anatomic and physiologic study” – watching various sexual acts. Even though he was a senior faculty member at a leading medical school, Masters realized how much he didn’t know about the complexities of



copulation. Their streetwise frankness was far different than the stiff anxiety of his upper-middle-class patients who visited his office for a pelvic exam. These prostitutes, conscripted with the vice squad's help, knew exactly what aroused a flaccid penis and stimulated a dry vagina, and how the two might come together with maximum efficiency. "They described many methods for elevating and controlling sexual tensions and demonstrated innumerable variations in stimulative technique," Masters wrote...

Direct observation in the bordellos gave Masters a ringside seat into the world of paid sex, a view that no interview session could offer. Initially, the vice squad donated some pornographic "stag" films confiscated during raids, depicting sex both graphic and rather joyless. But Masters explained he needed "to observe sexual function in order to develop a significant degree of objectivity." Masters's ability to convince pimps and prostitutes to go along with such a request – and not reject him as some pervert – was testament to his evident sincerity and the clout of his powerful supporters.

-- Thomas Maier, *Masters of Sex*



"I wish you wouldn't refer to the candles as task lighting."

SHADOW

Like plants, so men also grow, some in the light, others in the shadows. There are many who need the shadows and not the light.

-- Carl Jung, *The Red Book (Liber Novus)*

SHAME

What is shame and why is it so hard to talk about? 1) We all have it. 2) We're all afraid to talk about shame. 3) The less we talk about shame, the more control it has over our lives.

There are a couple of very helpful ways to think about shame. First, shame is the fear of disconnection. We are psychologically, emotionally, cognitively, and spiritually hard-wired for connection, love, and belonging. Connection, along with love and belonging (two expressions of connection), is why we are here, and it is what gives purpose and meaning to our lives. Shame is the fear of disconnection – it's the fear that something we've done or failed to do, an ideal that we've not lived up to, or a goal that we've not accomplished makes us unworthy of connection...

When it comes to understanding how we defend ourselves against shame, I turn to research by Dr. Linda Hartling at Wellesley. According to Dr. Hartling, in order to deal with shame, some of us *move away* by withdrawing, hiding, silencing ourselves, and keeping secrets. Some of us *move toward* by seeking to appease and please. And some of us *move against* by trying to gain power over others, by being aggressive, and by using shame to fight shame (like sending really mean e-mails). Most of us use all of these – at different times with different folks for different reasons. Yet all of these strategies move us away from connection – they are strategies for disconnecting from the pain of shame....

So what do we do about it? The answer is shame resilience. What I mean by shame reliance is the ability to practice authenticity when we experience shame, to move through the experience without sacrificing our values, and to come out on the other side of the shame experience with more courage, compassion, and connection than we had going into it. Shame resilience is about moving from shame to empathy – the real antidote to shame.

If we can share our story with someone who responds with empathy and understanding, shame can't survive. Self-compassion is also critically important, but because shame is a social concept – it happens between people – it also heals best between people. A social wound needs a social balm, and empathy is that balm. Self-compassion is key because when we're able to be gentle with ourselves in the midst of shame, we're more likely to reach out, connect, and experience empathy.

To get to empathy, we have to first know what we're dealing with. Here are the four elements of shame resilience – the steps don't always happen in this order, but they always ultimately lead us to empathy and healing:

1. Recognizing Shame and Understanding Its Triggers. Shame is biology and biography. Can you physically recognize when you're in the grips of shame, feel your way through it, and figure out what messages and expectations triggered it?
2. Practicing Critical Awareness. Can you reality-check the messages and expectations that are driving your shame? Are they realistic? Attainable? Are they what you want to be or what you think others need/want from you?
3. Reaching Out. Are you owning and sharing your story? We can't experience empathy if we're not connecting.
4. Speaking Shame. Are you talking about how you feel and asking for what you need when you feel shame?

--Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly*

SHARIA

In Islamic Sharia, the woman is like an egg. Let's say you have ten eggs. Where would you put them? Would you just leave them lying around? No, you'd put them in the proper place, in the refrigerator. Women belong at home. They can go out of the house with their husband's permission, but that's it.

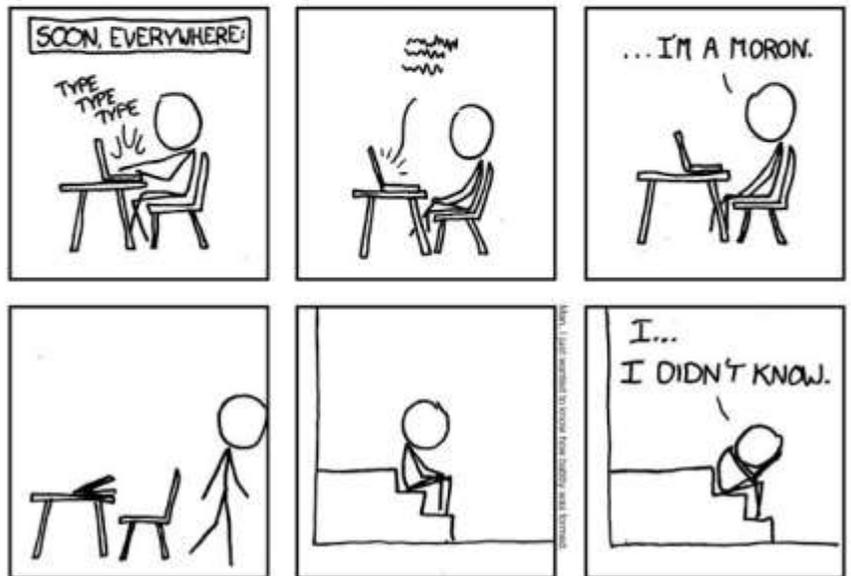
--Egyptian lawyer quoted by Peter Hessler in the New Yorker



SOCIAL MEDIA

I don't tweet for a very simple reason, which is that I drink.

-- Lorne Michaels



SORROW

I walked a mile with Pleasure
She chattered all the way
But left me none the wiser
For all she had to say.
I walked a mile with Sorrow,
And ne'er a word said she,
But oh, the things I learned from her
When Sorrow walked with me.

-- L. B. Cowman, *Streams in the Desert*

SOUL WORK

Every step closer to my soul excites the scornful laughter of my devils, those cowardly ear-whisperers and poison-mixers. It was easy for them to laugh, since I had to do strange things.

-- Carl Jung, *The Red Book (Liber Novus)*



SPRING

In spring, cherry trees toss extravagant flounces of blossom. When the wind strips the petals, they flurry in pink drifts and carpet the pavements, as if giants have held a wedding in the street.

--Hilary Mantel, "The Assassination of Margaret Thatcher"



TEA

"At the Tea Garden"

My friend and I mull over the teas
displayed in square jars
with beveled glass labeled by type.
Each name seems part of a haiku:
"After the Snow Sprouting." "Moon Palace."
"Mist Over the Gorges."
I'm drawn to green teas
with unoxidized leaves that don't wither,
hold their grassy fragrance
like willow under snow in winter.

The proprietor offers real china for the Chinese tea.
Animal bones, fine ground, give whiteness,
translucency and strength
to the porcelain that appears delicate,
resists chipping.
The rim of the cup is warm and thin.

My friend's lips are plush: her lovely
mouth opens to give advice I ask for.
We talk about memory of threshold events,
like a first kiss or a poem published.
She can't remember...

I tell her about my brother-in-law's
chemotherapy—his third bout of cancer.
He wants his family to put a pinch
of his ashes in things he liked:
his banjo, the top drawer of his desk, the garden.

I wouldn't mind becoming part
of a set of bone china that serves tea
in a cozy teahouse smelling of incense,
cinnamon, musk, and carved teak.
I'd like to be brought to a small table,
sit between friends' quiet words,
held in hands so close that breath
on the surface of warm drink
makes mist rise over their faces.

-- Margaret Hasse



THERAPY

Therapy is love itself, the whole of it, not a special part of it. The whole of it includes my *Himeros*, my desire towards you, and my wanting something for you, and my foolish idealizations and longings that you get better, grow, transform, find your wings; it includes too my *Pathos*, that yearning, needing, suffering on your account, and my need for your *Anteros*, your answering love in return – all these things that embarrass me to admit that I am so involved with you, the other person, or with myself and my own soul.

--James Hillman

THERATRIX



"And did that make you feel like a little bitch?"

TOADS

Toads are smarter than frogs. Like all of us who are not good-looking they have to rely on their wits. A woman around the beginning of the last century who was in love with frogs wrote a wonderful book on frogs and toads. In it she says if you place a frog and a toad on a table they will both hop. The toad will stop just at the table's edge, but the frog with its smooth skin and pretty eyes will leap with all its beauty out into nothingness. I tried it out on my kitchen table and it is true. That may explain why toads live twice as long as frogs. Frogs are better at romance though. A pair of spring peepers were once observed whispering sweet nothings for thirty-four hours. Not by me. The toad and I have not moved.

-- Tom Hennen, "Plains Spadefoot Toad"

TROLLS

There is an injunction among users of social media that one should not pay attention to online detractors. There is even a Twitter account, @AvoidComments, which issues monitory statements: "You wouldn't listen to someone named Bonerman26 in real life. Don't read the comments." [Mary] Beard argues, instead, that comments sections expose attitudes that have long remained concealed in places like locker rooms and bars. Bonerman26 exists; his vileness should be contended with. In this spirit, she posted the image of herself-as-genitalia on her blog—it was surely the first time that the *T.L.S.* site might have needed a Not Safe for Work warning—and suggested possible responses for her supporters to take, such as flooding the offending message board with Latin poetry. The story made international news, and the message board soon shut down...

In another highly publicized incident, Beard retweeted a message that she had received from a twenty-year-old university student: "You filthy old slut. I bet your vagina is disgusting." One of Beard's followers offered to inform the student's mother of his online behavior; meanwhile, he apologized. Beard's object is not simply to embarrass offenders; it is to educate women. Before social media, she argues, it was possible for young women like those she teaches at Cambridge to enjoy the benefits of feminist advances without even being aware of the battles fought on their behalf, and to imagine that such attitudes are a thing of the past. Beard says, "Most of my students would have denied, I think, that there was still a major current of misogyny in Western culture."

The university student, after apologizing online, came to Cambridge and took Beard out to lunch; she has remained in touch with him, and is even writing letters of reference for him. "He is going to find it hard to get a job, because as soon as you Google his name that is what comes up," she said. "And although he was a very silly, injudicious, and at that moment not very pleasant young guy, I don't actually think one tweet should ruin your job prospects."

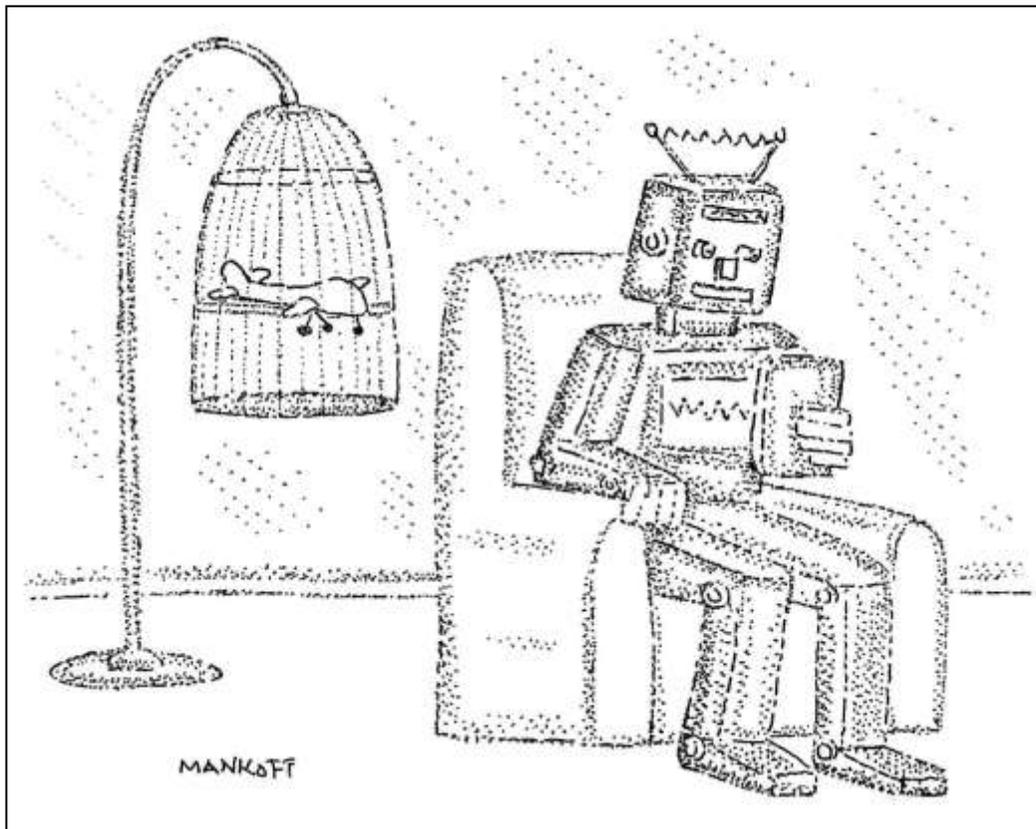
--Rebecca Mead, profiling classics scholar Mary Beard for *The New Yorker*

TRUTH

It's no wonder that truth's stranger than fiction. Fiction has to stick to the possibilities. Truth doesn't.

--Mark Twain





UNIVAC

There's an old joke that goes like this: A bunch of scientists created a huge machine capable of complex calculations and called it UNIVAC. Eager to test their invention, they asked it, "Is there a God?" The vacuum tubes hummed and the tape spools spun for several minutes. Finally, the machine spit out a little card, on which was written, "THERE IS NOW." On March 31, 1951, the Remington Rand Corporation signed a contract to deliver the first UNIVAC computer to the U.S. Census Bureau. UNIVAC I (which stands for Universal Automatic Computer) took up 350 square feet of floor space — about the size of a one-car garage — and was the first American commercial computer. It was designed for the rapid and relatively simple arithmetic calculation of numbers needed by businesses, rather than the complex calculations required of the sciences. It was intended to compete against IBM's punch card-reading computers, but UNIVAC read magnetic tapes, not punch cards, so a special "card to tape converter" had to be designed.

Though the government contract was signed, and a ceremony held, on March 31, the computer wasn't actually delivered until the following December; this was because there was only one UNIVAC I, and Remington Rand wanted to use it for demonstration purposes. So they asked for and received time to build a second computer.

The government was the first big customer of the UNIVACs, with subsequent models going to the Air Force, the Army Map Service, the Atomic Energy Commission, and the Navy. The first commercial sale was to General Electric, for their Appliance Division, followed soon after by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, in 1954. There were 46 UNIVAC I's built and delivered, in all.

The computer first came to the notice of the general public in 1952, when CBS used one to predict the outcome of the presidential election. UNIVAC correctly picked Eisenhower and predicted his electoral count within 1 percent, but the network didn't release the results until after the election was called, so as not to affect the outcome.

VETO

This singular kind of power demonstrates agency dedicated wholly to negation. Its sole strength lies in its ability to frustrate the will of the many. Although granted by the many to the one, by the collective to the individual as a protective guarantee, the veto asserts an equality between the one and the group. The fact that the majority will of Congress can be annulled by the veto of a single President increases the power of the one equal to that of the many. The veto thus forms part of what the American system of constitutional government calls “the balance of powers.”

The veto offers no positive alternatives, no compromise, and it is not subject to conditions. It can only be overridden by the power of an even greater majority. Its power is wholly prohibitive, as the word from the Latin means: “I forbid.”

That the veto is built into systems of government at the highest level – United Nations Security Council, the American presidency – shows a profound recognition of the importance of negativity and suggests that negation is fundamental to the power of power.

Negation, said Freud, is repression. “A negative judgment is the intellectual substitution for repression; the ‘no’ in which it is expressed is the hallmark of repression.” What huge power resides in that little word “no”! It severs relations, refuses cooperation and declares rejection. Anyone who has suffered even the gentlest “no” comes away from the encounter crushed, whether at a business meeting, a dance or in bed. A child of two on first discovering his or her veto power can use it to thwart the will of an entire family and throw its organization into wild disorder. The single syllable offers ultimate control repressing the intentions of the community, bringing the wheel to a stop.

This amazing strength in the tiny body of the two-year-old attests to sources beyond the human will, and therefore the capacity to say “no” belongs among our congenital traits, a gift or instinct given with nature and innate to all. “Ere the child has seen the light, the principle of beard and gray hairs is innate. Albeit small and hidden, all the functions of the whole body and of every succeeding period of life are there.” Here, the Roman writer and philosopher Seneca is referring to the archetypal influences of the Gods, in this case old Saturn, the great frustrater, negator and lord of repression. If the veto does refer to more than human will, the forbidding “no” speaks with the voice of an immense and eternal mythical figure. Indeed, it can give to the single individual weight that balances out the will of the majority. Perhaps because of its Saturnian negativity, many Presidents hesitate to use the veto as an active measure, preferring to bypass the decisive negative force by means of the “pocket veto.”

Veto power cripples. The old Polish parliament, for example, gave the power of individual veto to every member of the nobility, who, each for his own arbitrary reason or unreason, was able to block measures of the elected government for years and years.

If the most condensed notion of power is “agency that subordinates,” then the veto most boldly and clearly exemplifies this power. Subordination, or holding down and back, is precisely what the veto is able to do so well. That same “no” which forbids, however, may also have in sight a long-range positive outcome. For what begins as the last bitter holdout of a declining leader, administration or social class may also be the only course open to a visionary leader who sees but is too far ahead of the pack. Instead of bringing up the rear guard, visionaries ride point into unknown territory. The last remaining option – influence, persuasion, authority all gone – may be to veto the ill-conceived plans of others. The negative judgment expressed by the veto follows Immanuel Kant’s insight: “The peculiar province of negative judgments is solely to prevent error.” In other words, negation may be motivated by an ideal vision, a purity of purpose in dedication to ideals.

--James Hillman, *Kinds of Power*

VOGUE

He said he was dyslexic, the vogue word of that decade for lack of literary curiosity, just as attention deficit disorder is the term now.

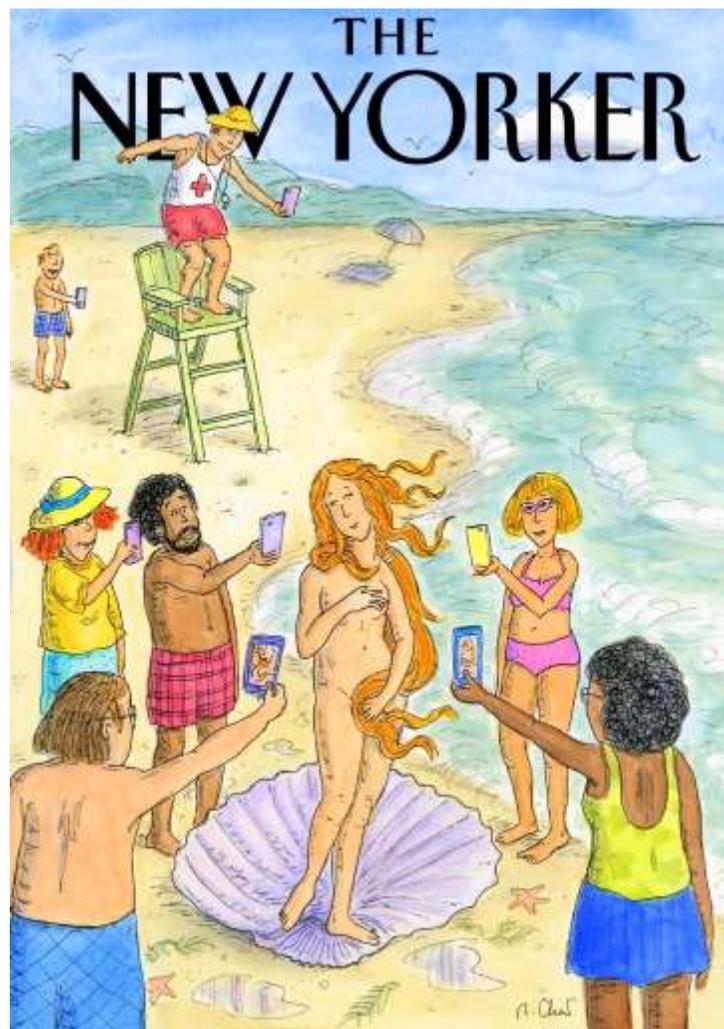
-- Edmund White, *Inside a Pearl*

WHOLEHEARTEDNESS

“10 Guideposts for Wholehearted Living”

1. Cultivate Authenticity – Let go of what people think about you
2. Cultivate Self-Compassion – Let go of perfectionism
3. Cultivate a Resilient Spirit – Let go of numbing and powerlessness
4. Cultivate Gratitude and Joy – Let go of scarcity
5. Cultivate Intuition and Trusting Faith – Let go of the need for certainty
6. Cultivate Creativity – Let go of comparison
7. Cultivate Play and Rest – Let go of exhaustion as a status symbol and productivity as self-worth
8. Cultivate Calm and Stillness – Let go of anxiety as a lifestyle
9. Cultivate Meaningful Work – Let go of self-doubt and “supposed to”
10. Cultivate Laughter, Song, and Dance – Let go of being cool and “always in control”

--Brene Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection*



WORDS

The world does not need words. It articulates itself in sunlight, leaves, and shadows. The stones on the path are no less real for lying uncatalogued and uncounted. The fluent leaves speak only the dialect of pure being. The kiss is still fully itself though no words were spoken.

And one word transforms it into something less or other—*illicit, chaste, perfunctory, conjugal, covert.*

Even calling it a kiss betrays the fluster of hands glancing the skin or gripping a shoulder, the slow arching of neck or knee, the silent touching of tongues.

Yet the stones remain less real to those who cannot name them, or read the mute syllables graven in silica. To see a red stone is less than seeing it as jasper—metamorphic quartz, cousin to the flint the Kiowa carved as arrowheads. To name is to know and remember.

The sunlight needs no praise piercing the rainclouds, painting the rocks and leaves with light, then dissolving each lucent droplet back into the clouds that engendered it. The daylight needs no praise, and so we praise it always—greater than ourselves and all the airy words we summon.

-- Dana Gioia



WORK

Anyone can do any amount of work, provided it isn't the work he is supposed to be doing at the moment.

--Robert Benchley



WRITING

I've never wanted to be famous. I'm just not wired that way. I write because I love it. When struggling writers ask me for a few words of encouragement to help them stick with it, I want to say, "If you don't love it at this point, you should move on to something else." There are so many things to do in this world. Dolly Parton once said if she ever got to where she didn't love singing, she'd just do hair.

If I didn't love this, I wouldn't do it. We're not going to run out of writers or books because one person quits. I hope that doesn't sound discouraging. And I do have days when I struggle with it myself, when that beautiful DELETE key is my friend. But I know by now, because I've done it long enough, that the bad writing is getting me to the good writing. Think of it as mining: you've got to move all this dirt before you get to the sparkly parts. You can't just walk right in and expect sparkles.

-- Barbara Kingsolver, interviewed by Jeanne Supin in *The Sun*

My advice to writers: First, keep a low overhead. Second, make sure your lovers have some regard for your work. The next thing you have to do is tell the truth all the time.

-- Grace Paley

"Five Difficulties When Writing the Truth"

1) The COURAGE to write the truth; 2) the KEENNESS to recognize it; 3) the SKILL to wield it as a weapon; 4) the JUDGMENT to select those in whose hands truth will be effective; and 5) the CUNNING to spread the truth among the many.

-- Bertolt Brecht

Why write, if this too easy activity of pushing a pen across paper is not given a certain bull-fighting risk and we do not approach dangerous, agile, and two-horned topics?

-- Ortega y Gasset

Eight rules for writing fiction:

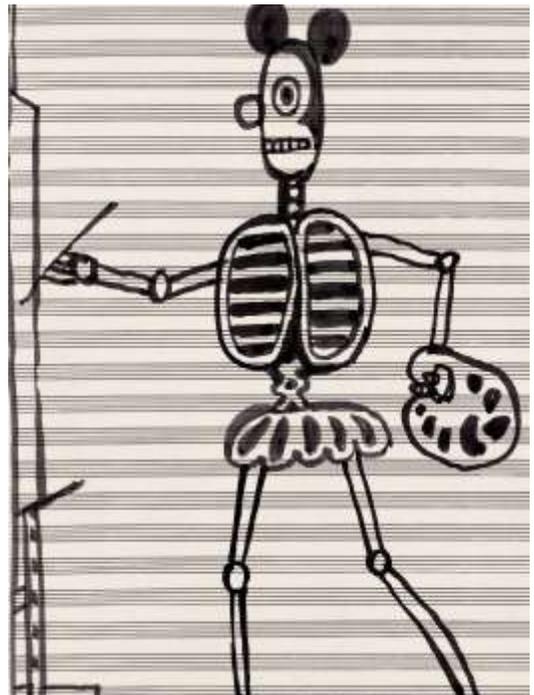
1. Use the time of a total stranger in such a way that he or she will not feel the time was wasted.
2. Give the reader at least one character he or she can root for.
3. Every character should want something, even if it is only a glass of water.
4. Every sentence must do one of two things — reveal character or advance the action.
5. Start as close to the end as possible.
6. Be a sadist. No matter how sweet and innocent your leading characters, make awful things happen to them — in order that the reader may see what they are made of.
7. Write to please just one person. If you open a window and make love to the world, so to speak, your story will get pneumonia.
8. Give your readers as much information as possible as soon as possible. To heck with suspense. Readers should have such complete understanding of what is going on, where and why, that they could finish the story themselves, should cockroaches eat the last few pages.

– Kurt Vonnegut

(E)XQUISITE CORPSE

Colors tickle my ear as the temple ticks with woodfire.
In the awakening mud, at the feet of the reeds,
Mad kisses! Blue window!
The raucous lawnmower song and
Judy forgot to tell time.
His eyes and socks mismatched, his teeth pointed and glittering.
I part your butt-hairs with my tongue. I'm at the center of the world.
Show me the skin in your dark places.
Multiple ladybugs
Of windows, of bricks, of bread, of secrets,
Monkey monkey monkey money monk moo monkey monkey
Let my breath map the contours of your body, and
Was I supposed to be telling a story? The same story?
The old song that only the walls remember;
Deep in the jungle I dream of you.
The ivy has grown over your Facebook profile.
You're laughing! What are you laughing about? Tell me!
We put down coils of rope and jars of preserves, for later.
I know! Let's ask Beijing Charlie to read this aloud.
Flying north, like geese.

-- Andrew Willett and Don Shewey, April 25, 2014



YEAR IN REVIEW

Best Theater:

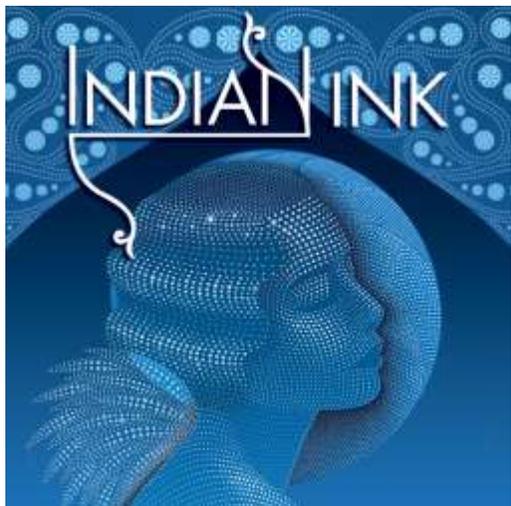


1. *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* – I dragged my heels about seeing Simon Stephens' adaptation of Mark Haddon's best-selling novel about an autistic kid with high math skills and low social skills but Marianne Elliott's staging dazzled me with major contributions from Bunny Christie's visual design, Steven Hoggett and Scott Graham's choreography, the superbly contained lead performance by Alex Sharp, and Ian Barford's deep, moving work as his loving, imperfect father.

2. *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* – Director Michael Mayer did a fantastic job of blowing up John Cameron Mitchell and Stephen Trask's beloved up-from-Squeezebox rock musical to fit a Broadway house and helping Neil Patrick Harris more than fill Hedwig's stacked heels. Special kudos to Mike Albo and Amanda Duarte for the faux-Playbill framing the show as the aftermath of *Hurt Locker The Musical*.

3. *Intimacy* – The New Group's Scott Elliott staged Thomas Bradshaw's outrageous suburban family play, a smart and shocking comic book about the prevalence of pornography in American culture, with brave performances by game actors, none more than David Anzuelo in a role requiring him to be naked and erect every night.

4. *Indian Ink* – The long-delayed New York debut of Tom Stoppard's 1995 play about sisters, art, and the ownership of memory got a splendid production at the Roundabout by Carey Perloff with a luminous leading performance by Romola Garai with help from Firdous Bamji and the great Rosemary Harris.



- 5. This Is Our Youth** – The terrific cast (Michael Cera, Kieran Culkin, and Tavi Gevinson) made Kenneth Lonergan’s play about overprivileged lost white kids compelling, in Anna D. Shapiro’s Broadway staging.
- 6. Scenes from a Marriage** – the great Flemish director Ivo van Hove exerted his usual inventiveness in transferring Bergman’s film to the stage at New York Theater Workshop with an immersive set design by Jan Versweyveld and excellent performances by Arliss Howard, Tina Benko, Susannah Flood, Alex Hurt, and Mia Katigbak.
- 7. Cry, Trojans!** – The Wooster Group managed to go even deeper, weirder, and more complicated than ever with this adaptation of *Troilus and Cressida* with eerie costumes by Folkert de Jong – hard to love, impossible to forget.
- 8. St. Matthew Passion** – Peter Sellars’ grave, exquisite production of Bach’s oratorio at the Park Avenue Armory showcased the Berlin Philharmonic under Simon Rattle’s direction with several great performances, especially by Mark Padmore as The Evangelist.
- 9. Red-eye to Havre de Grace** – This intimate musical spectacle at New York Theater Workshop about the last days of Edgar Allen Poe was a welcome introduction to the quirky talents of writer-director-designer Thaddeus Phillips and composer-performers David and Jeremy Wilhelm.
- 10. The Ambassador** – John Tiffany’s theatrical staging at BAM of a suite of songs about Los Angeles written and performed by Gabriel Kahane, the most interesting singer-songwriter I’ve encountered in recent years (Adam Guettel meets Ben Folds, brainy dense lyrics with high conceptual vision and pop friendliness).



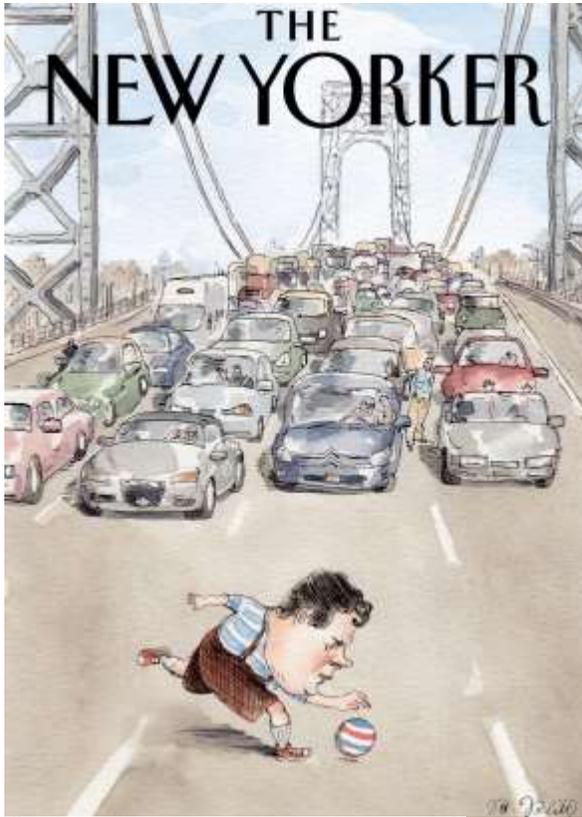
Other pleasures:

Audra McDonald’s fierce turn as Billie Holiday in *Lady Day at Emerson’s Bar and Grill*
 Sting’s tuneful original score and David Zinn’s monumental set for *The Last Ship*
 Tyne Daly in Terrence McNally’s *Mothers and Sons*
 Anna Teresa de Keersmaker’s season within the Lincoln Center Festival
Landfall, Laurie Anderson’s collaboration with Kronos Quartet at BAM
 The original cast recording of *Dogfight*, which made me wish I’d seen the show at Second Stage

Film favorites (partial list):

Citizenfour, Laura Poitras’s must-see documentary about Edward Snowden
 Ryan Murphy’s surprisingly good film version of Larry Kramer’s *The Normal Heart*
Olive Kitteridge, Lisa Cholodenko’s HBO series with Frances McDormand in the title role
Days and Nights, Christian Camargo’s smart, beautifully cast adaptation of Chekhov’s *The Seagull*
Stranger by the Lake, Alain Guiraudie’s sexy/upsetting French gay thriller
High Maintenance, the smart and funny web series centered on a NYC pot dealer

I Read the News Today...Oh Boy:



ZOMBIES

The way your body needs the exercise, your brain needs to be exposed to the flight-and-fight instincts. And you seek it through a roller coaster, or some people seek it through extreme sports, or you can seek it in genres like noir, crime, horror.

-- Guillermo del Toro



2014 THANKS TO

DAVE ALLEN * JONATHAN ARNOLD * JEFF AUTORE * GLENN BERGER * HERBIE BERGER * MISHA BERSON * VENA BLANCHARD * COLLIN BROWN * MICHAEL COHEN * STEPHEN COWART * PAUL DENNETT * TOM DENNISON * ERIC DIAMOND * MATT DREYFUSS * KENN ELCHERT * DIA EMMONS * FACEBOOK * GAMELAN KUSUMA LARAS * KEITH HENNESSY * FRANK HERNANDEZ * WAYNE HOFFMAN * STEPHEN HOLDEN * ANDY HOLTZMAN * BARBARA HUSCHER * WENDELL KEATING * JEAN KEENER * JEFF KENNEDY * GREG KELLER * GIL KESSLER * DAVE KING * GARY KOSLOSKI * MICHAEL MELE * KILLIAN MOLLOY * MARIANNE MOORE * CRAIG MURRAY * THE NEW YORKER * DAVE NIMMONS * DANIELLE OTERI * PAUL PINKMAN * DARREN POLITO * JALLEN RIX * GEORGE RUSSELL * SEBASTIAN SCHWERDTFEGER * BEN SEAMAN * MARVIN SHABUS * JIM SHALLAL * JOANNE SHEWEY * ALLEN SIEWERT * STEPHEN SOBA * MARK SULLIVAN * KEN SYMINGTON * ROGER TOLLE * GEOFF TRIMPOL * JEFF VILENSKY * ANDY WILLETT * JONATHAN WOOD * WORDPRESS * DAVID ZINN

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Some gamblers abandon carefully built houses
In order to live near water. It's all right. One day
On the river is worth a thousand nights on land.

It is our attraction to ruin that saves us;
And disaster, friends, brings us health. Chekhov
Shocks the heavens with his dark cabbages.

William Blake knew that fierce old man,
Irritable, chained and majestic, who bends over
To measure with his calipers the ruin of the world.

It takes so little to make me happy tonight!
Four hours of singing will do it, if we remember
How much of our life is a ruin, and agree to that.

Butterflies spend all afternoon concentrating
On the buddleia bush; human beings take in
The fragrance of a thousand nights of ruin.

We planted fields of sorrow near the Tigris.
The Harvesters will come in at the end of time
And tell us that the crop of ruin has been great.

--Robert Bly, "The Cabbages of Chekhov"

