



ASHE!

JOURNAL OF EXPERIMENTAL SPIRITUALITY

Spring 2007

Jason Kraley

Self-created
punk buddhist,
self-taught
multi-media artist...

Techno- Shamanism

David R. Cole

Open Sesame

Tristram Burden

"last call
at the
mutation
saloon"

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Sven Davisson

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EDITORIAL OFFICES

P.O. Box 363, Hulls Cove, ME 04609

WEBSITE

www.ashejournal.com

Note from the Editor

I have been an admirer of Jason Kraley's work since first being introduced to it last year. A master of diverse mediums, his work is simultaneously evocative and uncompromising.

Jason, 32, is a native Cleveland artist, musician, web/graphic designer and filmmaker who continually seeks ways to create physical records of his own existence.

Whether it's through



painting, drawing, music or film, his creations serve to document and convey his experiences, his emotions and his life. He moved to Philadelphia in October 2005.

Jason has painted over 84 paintings since 1996. His paintings have been in 8 exhibitions (and 7 temporary installations) in Cleveland and 2 in Philadelphia. He primarily works with oil and almost always starts his

work on black gesso prepared surfaces. In 2005, after a 3 year hiatus from painting, his work with oil evolved to include spray paint, along with other mediums. This has drastically given his work an extra dimension of depth in his more recent work.

Jason's background includes many independent studies in art, graphic design and multi-media, with some college background in Art History. His graphic design projects have included music media packaging as well as over 130 websites, both corporate and private, nationwide since 1997.

Jason also creates music as a symbiotic balance to his artistic flow. He records and engineers music in his home studio and formed his own record label, CRC-Music (crc-music.com), in 1999 which combines his art and design skills for his own music media packaging. Since 1994, he continues to write, produce, record and publish his own music under the musical identity: "Still Inertia" (stillinertia.com).

Currently, Jason has established KraleY Productions (kraleyproductions.com), a corporate presence on the internet as a central realm to display and offer services for his videographic work, soundtrack work, and his website and graphic design work to others interested in utilizing his artistic skills for their projects. He has created 4 documentary films, 3 music videos, 1 scenic theatrical projection and his first ever video art was installed and displayed April 13, 2007 for a special one-night-only event. He plans to look for future site installations for this piece called "Perceptions".

"I feel that art, music, and film go hand in hand to communicate experiences and ideologies that satisfy the aural and visual hungers of the human brain. I want my creations to serve as expressions of my thoughts to others -- physical records to outlive my own existence."

Visit his website at www.jasonkraleY.com You can contact him at jasonkraleY@gmail.com

Dinosaurs in denouement

Sven Davisson

Evolution has passed us by—
unarrestable

We missed last call
at the mutation saloon

Just so many dinosaurs
waiting on the last stroke

ritualized buddhism
ritualized Xtianity

sitting silent in the zendo

sitting silent in an alley
with 750mils of Mad Dog

Techno-shamanism and Educational Research

David R. Cole, Ph.D.

Abstract

This article offers an approach to writing about the qualitative experience of change in an educational context. The analyst spent four years studying how children use technology to augment their literacy practices in the Midlands of the UK. He simultaneously became involved with free parties in the district that offered social celebratory gatherings using technology to generate dance music. Rather than separating these experiences into categories such as work and play, the analyst has drawn them together through the practice of techno-shamanism. To summarise this approach, the researcher's understandings about techno-literacy change through research into the behaviours of the youth of the area who are present in the schools that took part in the study. He also changes as he dances and organises parties that represent an augmentation of the self through technology. Thus techno-shamanism synthesises an exploration of these changes and the transformative power that technology offers at its most intense and socially inclusive.

PART 1

Introduction

During four years of researching the way in which adolescents use technology to alter their literacy practices, a vital factor in this process was always out of reach. In particular, I did not have access to the actual forces of transformation that were operant. You could say that in the restricted spaces of schools in the UK, or in the relation of stories about what might have happened with respect to technology and literacy; the empirical evidence that I discovered was hollow or boring (Richardson, 2000). This hollowness, rather than being dismissed through rich qualitative data or

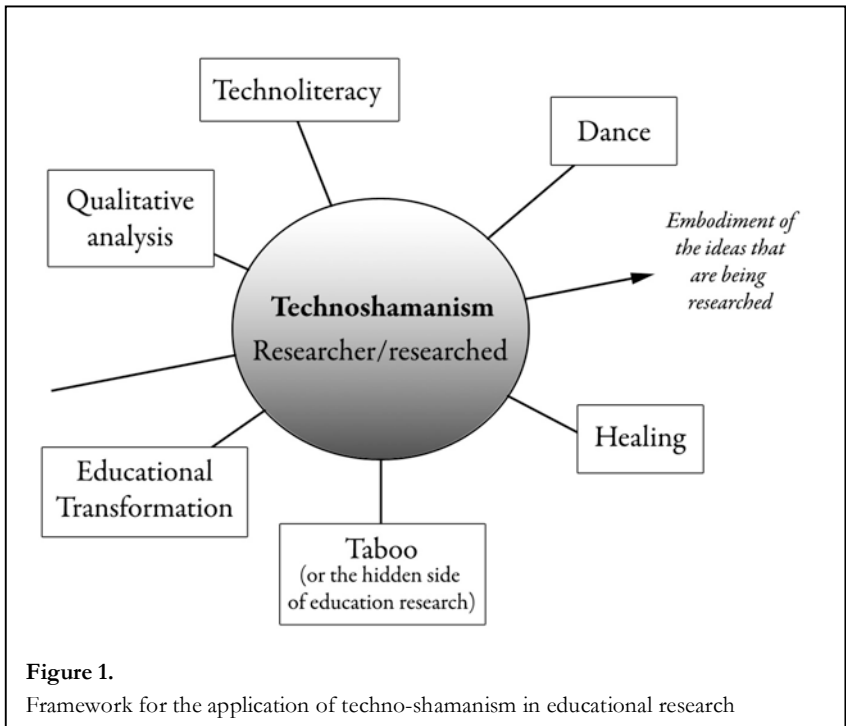


Figure 1.

Framework for the application of techno-shamanism in educational research

through a critical approach (Foley, 2002) to examine the power factors that may have been inhibiting this research, became an overriding and dominant theme of my qualitative analysis. This paper is a direct response to the contiguous sensation of hollowness that I felt as an educational researcher. I let go of the descriptive mode of naturalistic analysis due to the way in which I continually doubted the interview, observation and questionnaire data as unsubstantial. I did not seek a solely personal and reflective narrative style, as I felt that the investigation of technological literacy was bigger than such story-telling could accommodate. I do not consider these problems to be methodological defects in qualitative analysis (Hook, 1997) that may be 'put right' in terms of a shift in research tools or design (Court, 2004).

Rather, this paper seeks to present a new way of looking at augmented technological change that underpins the transformations in literacy that I was noting in the youth, and also deals with my personal experiences as an educational researcher living in the Midlands of the UK during the 1990s. During the day I researched young people using the technology to change their literacy. At night, and at weekends, I became increasingly involved with free-party organization that connected the augmentation of technology that I was studying in the schools to a social and celebratory practice. As such, this paper is a result of a four year intensive longitudinal study of public and private thought processes and practices, and provides a sign-post for qualitative analysis in education (Freebody, 2003) and a legitimate alternative for social science.

Remarks on a transformative notion of qualitative change

This paper explores a theory of education that juxtaposes personal qualitative development with the emergence of transformative possibilities

through the use of technology to augment literacy. I came to the conclusion that the change of agency involved in technological literacy may be expressed in terms which Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1988) have called, “blocks of becoming” (p. 239). Such blocks of becoming are unstable complex crossing points; they act in a variety of manners to be explored here through techno-shamanism. This position avoids linear appropriation of technological change as a model of learning (Semali, 2002). The figure of the techno-shaman and the qualitative position of techno-shamanism stand in a dual movement to introduce us to the dark areas beyond rationality (Christians, 2000) and to release us from identification with the individual in a post-modern, computerized educational environment where transformation may readily become identified with efficiency (Arnold and Ryan, 2003).

The introduction of the techno-shaman also produces a type of delirium that is irresistible to contemporary society. Exploration of this delirium is an escape route from current notions of psychic disease, and it opens up the possibility of entering into the immanence that rave music presents. The question of immanence is directly tied to that of the machine by Deleuze and Guattari (1984) by inventing the notion of “desiring-machines” (p. 8). According to this conjunction, immanence does not produce necessary conditions for the evolution of the system under analysis, but acts as a plane on which the full complexity of the phenomena may co-exist. On this plane, machines do not evolve mechanically given the calculation of the starting parameters to set goals, but symbiotically make hybrid and complex behaviours to consciously heightened rhapsodies during the rave. The multiple transformations of the ‘blocks of becoming’ make tracks towards the becoming-[x], about which Deleuze and Guattari (1988) have spoken. Techno-shamanism in the educational system may cause localized disruption through the imaginative use of the history of

demonology, that we find for example in Shelley (1994) & Stoker (1992). It could also be stated that techno-shamanic transformation implements what is forbidden; in other words, its practice scrambles the coding apparatuses of mainstream sedentary society. This process may be understood as the transmission of taboo or “the power of infection” about which Freud (1991, p. 75) has written, and may be accelerated, intensified and dispersed in the electronic media environment. In nomadic societies, the splitting of the shamanic ritual has not yet occurred: the transformative figure of the shaman is not one of worship, but encapsulates intensive variations of personal and public fear in a vibratory spiralling movement. Therefore, the idea of transformation that is applicable to techno-shamanism is one of generating power and energy that may be used by the qualitative analyst to comprehend simultaneous internal and external changes in areas of contemporary society - for example, the raves. These may be hidden to traditional forms of social science (Thomas, 2000).

The transmission of taboo is one of the ways in which this paper works. In this communicative arena, the sacred and the profane are interwoven. The qualitative analyst, who is learning about rave music, raving and simultaneously analysing data about technological literacy augmentation, may be positioned as an educational experiment designed to experience the techno-shamanic transformations and represent them rationally. It is in this sense that the analyst exploring this area needs to practise techno-shamanism. This is not in order to write the script for a horror film, but to take us within the intensive variations of fear that define the thought patterns of techno-shamanism and are discernible as extensive forms of puissance in the masses (Maffesoli, 1996) where computer technology now operates in education and work. In a parallel manner to the cyberpunks who hack into prevailing capitalist codes and systems and in so doing augment their collective zeitgeist; the qualitative analysis of techno-

shamanism in education may be positioned to cut across technological determinism - i.e. the use of technology to determine the state of progress or evolution of a society - in order to open up a way of thinking about technoliteracy that feeds back into society at large. This is a complex loop, and one in which the descriptive parameters should be flexible enough to cover the behaviour of the analytical social scientist (Holly, Arhar & Kasten, 2005) and the delirium of the rave. Information is not the primary goal of this research, as it is subsumed by the transmission of vibrations that are contained in taboo, intensity and the fluctuations of dancing with an electronic cohort whose aim is joy.

Becoming techno-shaman

At the apex of the relationship between qualitative analysis and technological literacy is the techno-shaman. The techno-shaman is a shaman who uses technology to augment similar processes to the shaman in nomadic society. The anthropological studies that have been carried out to understand the shaman reveal the predominance of shamanism in nomadic, hunter/gatherer societies. Shaman are importantly associated with everything to do with movement, with rituals of flight, with the control of fire and with the journey from life to death. The period of initiation for the novice shaman is a time of mental instability where they experience strange dreams, or they are taken by violent fits, or they have to leave the tribe to be alone in the wilderness in order to 'come to terms' with the powers which are beginning to possess them. Mireia Eliade (1974) has described this process in his anthropological work, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*. The learning of the shaman confers knowledge from the dead, which includes rituals about movement, the use of drugs and the signs and symbols of their craft. The cobeno shaman of Mexico, "introduces rock

crystals into the novice's head; these eat out his brain and his eyes, then take the place of those organs and become his strength," (Métraux, 1944, p. 216). The shamans as such have to die before they are endowed with magical substance that allows them to move freely in the spirit world, and thence they are able to communicate with the spirits in the fulfilment of the shamanic following. This death is rehearsed by the enactment of powers which defy death; for example, masters and neophytes walking barefoot on fire without seeming to burn themselves, or the exchanging of eyes, ears and tongues between novices and shaman, or the piercing with hot rods in the chest and the stomach. The central motifs of dismemberment, gashing or opening the abdomen remain constant in shamanism.

During the initiation of the medicine man in Malekula, the novice is asked to lie on a bed of leaves, while the Bwili or medicine man cuts off his arms and legs. The victim is required to receive this dismemberment with laughter, and if he does so, the Bwili cuts off his head, after which the novice is still required to show no sign of discomfort. The Bwili puts back the "body parts and the rite of passage is thereafter negotiated," (Eliade, 1974, p. 56). According to the Kiwai Papuans, the initiate has his bones replaced by an *óboro* (spirit of a dead person); after which the power to summon the dead is achieved, and the shamanic powers are bestowed. Among the Dyak of Borneo, the brains of the neophyte are taken out and washed in order to clear the mind so that it may receive the mysteries of evil spirits. Gold dust is sprinkled into the eyes so that they may see the wanderings of souls, barbed hooks are planted in the tips of their fingers in order that they are able to seize the soul and hold it fast, the heart is pierced with an arrow so that it receives the suffering of the sick. The impetus for the learning process of the shaman is the necessary connection between the savage rearrangement of the flesh, and the augmentation of psychical powers. If we take these points and use them for the techno-shamanism of this paper, the

rearrangement that is necessary for the novice qualitative analyst is that his or her deeply held knowledge beliefs are “profoundly shaken” (Hatch, 2002, p. 47). The subsequent loss of certainty that this process entails must be recast and transformed as the analyst reconstructs their knowledge in an expanded learning context that comprehends technological augmentation and shamanic healing.

The subject of techno-shamanic qualitative analysis

The litany of horrors confronting our prospective techno-shaman take many of their energies from the residues of festal ecstasy that have been played out in human society in terms of sacrifice, cannibalism, and the enactment of predator and prey relationships through ritual. Such activities have been described by Georges Bataille (1992) in his *Theory of Religion* as the domain of the sacred and the threshold between the human and non-human. The purpose of the sacrifice according to Bataille (1992) is to destroy the ‘thing’, so that the community may enter into the world of immanence and be absorbed by the richness of sensuality associated with blood rites. Sacrifice also contests the primacy of utility in the group, as the useless wasting of human life demonstrates that production and power are not wedded in an unbreakable union, but may be wrenched apart through the glorious and consumptive act of sacrificial death. In a later text, Bataille (1991) charted the rise of the military and industrial orders, which placed a blockade around the domain of the sacred, and constructed a world in which productive forces became primal and programmed to expand in order to meet ever increasing material needs. In effect, a schism was introduced, which took autonomous industrial and military society away from the violent intimacy of the sacred order even though Christianity has attempted to plug this schism through the rituals of the sacrament.

Bataille (1992) has given us a convincing account of the loss of the sacred world of primitive society and the energies that concern techno-shamanism. However, it is also true that the power of sacrifice was one of a sedentary people, for example, the Aztecs employed it on a grand scale to establish a priest class via a massive hierarchy of blood in order to impose fear into the masses; and one could argue that we now see this behaviour represented through the channels of the media (Baudrillard, 1983). Whether this was an employment of the sacred realm of immanence or merely an economy of terror as Christian Duverger (1979) has argued is debatable. Elsewhere in a series of essays Bataille (2001) made it clear that the Aztecs provided his model for the articulation of a theory of religion, which went along the lines of his notion of expenditure or useless waste. Thus, even though the idea of expenditure is useful to help reconcile the sacred world of myth with the necessity for blood, it does not help us to understand the techniques of knowledge abandonment necessary for techno-shamanism. This is because the fundamentally Hegelian, historical subject of Bataille that desires by negation of the 'I' with the not-'I', and conquers by destruction of the not-'I', is more cogently positioned as a comment on the political climate of post-war Europe than a useful description of the subject of techno-shamanism that has to negotiate distributed networks of post-modern knowledge in qualitative analysis (Schirato & Webb, 2002). The discovery of that which is uniquely sacred to humans seems to be less vital today in understanding global subjects that are learning through digital technology and partying at raves. The techno-shamanic analyst is a subject that is not uniquely exploring or overcoming historical forces to find an authentic rendering of the person, but acts as a suitable qualitative position to describe complex transformations (Lankshear & Knobel, 1997).

Animal forms and techno-shamanic transformation

The transformative power of the techno-shamanic subject is directly located in episodes that have been described by anthropology and folklore, and relate to the way in which shaman change into animals. The shaman takes possession, or is possessed by the animal form in order to shed his or her human skin and to travel in the dimension of the spirits. Eliade (1974) speaks of the secret language of the animal-spirits, in which the shaman become fluent, and use to establish an existence “in illo tempore” (p. 74) where the separation between humans and the animal world has not yet occurred. The Buryat shaman describe a process called *khubilgan*, which may be translated as ‘metamorphosis’; the spirit-animal serves as a double or alter ego, which enables the shaman to take on its form and to pass through the dimension of animals. The animal form of the Tungus shaman is a snake, whose motions imitate those of the whirlwind during the communication with the dead. The Chukchee shaman turn themselves into wolves; the Lapps become bear, reindeer and fish. The Semang hala can change into a tiger, as can the Sakai halak and the bomor of Kelantan. During the initiation of the Carib shamans of Dutch Guiana, the neophytes are taught how to turn themselves into bats and jaguars, which is part of a long period of ritual, dancing and intoxication with tobacco. Witchcraft in England also has the idea of being able to turn into animals firmly rooted in its folklore (Burrell, 1997). In 1673, Anne Armstrong gave elaborate accounts of witches who are able to turn themselves into animals. They may appear as hares or cats, at Allansford they danced in the likeness of bees. Anne Baites, it is related, turned herself into a cat, a hare and a bee. Hole (1945) describes how Dorothy Green of Edmondbyers and Mary Hunter of Birkenside bewitched a mare by turning themselves into swallows and flying around it forty times.

Becoming-animal defines a plane of consistency or immanence that allows for the multiplicities of transformative change to emerge. We do not have to restrict the formula to becoming-[only]-animals, but in the context of techno-shamanism in education, the becoming-[x] may be 'blocked' or streamed into a definite tendency towards the limit fringe between animals and humans. To this extent, the techno-shaman is a figure of the 'borderline'. Iain Hamilton Grant (1997) has described the changing into an animal in the form of a zoopoliteia whereby the techno-shaman may use the borderlines to intensify the possibilities of change on the thresholds. Grant (1997) explains the demonology of the 'New Earth', which is where the notion of the shaman is taken away from an anthropological study of hunter/gatherer society and used as a metaphor for the politics of biology which influences thinking about the rendering of the human. According to Grant (1997) the present scientific priesthood entails a form of morality that arrests the transformations of the techno-shaman by defining them as schizophrenic, anti-social and nonsensical. I do not wish to position this paper against any bodies of opinion, but I do want to clarify the use of techno-shamanism as a practice that connects qualitative analysis and techno-literacy augmentation whilst not reproducing the dominant codes of organising power (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979) through education.

Further techno-shamanic considerations

One aspect of techno-shamanic music ideology is that everything is music. For this reason electronic artists explore the experimental creation of music from all kinds of unusual sources. Computers are used to generate; DNA music by assigning musical sequences to the base-pairs, galactic music by transforming celestial radiation into sound, bio-music by translating the electrical pulses of the peripheral nervous system into sound, and hyper-

music created by hyper-instruments which are basically acoustic but whose sound qualities are shifted by the motion of the performer and the instrument. Ravers feel, almost animistically, that there is music in everything, and that the key to releasing it is by using the right technology (Plant, 2001). Part of raving is “getting in touch with your groove” - like in the New Age, the idea is that each person has a fundamental musical self, a harmony that is rooted in their being that they need to get in touch with.

The goal of techno-shamanism according to the ravers is “phase locking” - this is to get the group of people assembled at the rave into a synchronized, synergetic, collective mental space or vibe (Hutson, 1999). The rave is constructed to be a self-similar, unbroken, self-organizing factual; thus no divisions are permitted, and likewise no egos, leaders or partners. Ravers and techno-shaman are fascinated by chaos theory, and they believe that when the right number of people are all in one place, dancing to the right groove, a new emergent order around spontaneous strange-attractors can appear, and people shall evolve into mutants that will lead the human race into the chaotic, turbulent world of the 21st century (Rushkoff, 1994).

Techno-shamanism is conceived to deconstruct dualities, especially collapsing the past and the future into a singular modern primitive. The oppositions between technology and spirituality, the primal body and the higher mind, and neo-tribalism and global humanism; are supposed to implode at the rave, resulting in techno-shamanism where the DJ serves as the initiator of the people in a participation mystique when they may tune into the vibe of Gaia. Techno-shamanic music is an accelerated music, and ravers believe history is accelerating. Unlike Christian millennialists, many ravers follow Terrence McKenna’s (1966) dictum that we are approaching a singularity in time in the year 2012, and that after this point time will fold into hyperspace. We are all being dragged into this “strange attractor at the

end of time”, that is creating newer and more powerfully emergent forms of cultural novelty, such as the raves and the interconnections that raves can produce in society through electronic mediation.

Providing the visual accompaniment at many raves are computer-generated fractal images and 3D rendered animation. But raves have also featured laser light, coloured-wheel lighting, holography, liquid oil projection screens, video projection, strobes, robotic characters, or other high-tech displays. Very common is the use of the Video Toaster to combine images from kitsch TV and movies, Japanese ‘anime’ cartoons, MTV music videos, advertising, and science fiction into a rapid-fire display which switches images at a rate close to the 135 bpm of the music. Techno-shamanism is a multimedia, multi-sensual experience, and thus there will be attempts to stimulate the sense of smell and touch of the ravers with incense and scented oils, dry ice and fans. Ravers feel that this ‘sensory overload’ serves a purpose - to overwhelm the senses.

PART 2

Who am I?

I started this project as a qualitative analyst of children's literacy practices. In particular, I was looking at the end point of the education system in the UK, the 'sixth form' – 16-18 year olds, or the 'youth'. By this time, students had perhaps been in the system for 13 years, and their educational mores had been well established. As I sat in the classroom, and watched them use computers for various assignments or to surf around on the internet, I was struck by the way in which the group were intimately constructed. They had been together in restricted spaces for many years: What chance did I have, an older university trained researcher, of discovering anything new or exciting about the way in which they were learning language by using technology?

I suspected from the start that the project I was embarking upon had a lot to do with identity. I eagerly devoured books on the subject, and became lost in the intricate discussions and arguments about how we become the people that we are. I was especially intrigued by what I termed as the 'Nietzschean heritage' in social thought, encapsulating the work of Georges Bataille, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Michel Foucault and feminism. They spoke about desire, bodies and power; the factors that I felt actually motivated us to become the people that we are. I began to move away from the scientific evaluation and description of the processes that I was scrutinising, and looked for a more personal, emotional, affective approach to understanding techno-literacy.

It was clear that I had to somehow get involved in the actual practices that my subjects were doing in and out of the classroom to have any chance of understanding them. I conducted interviews, gave out questionnaires,

held focus groups and on-line forums as my supervisor suggested, yet to find out what my cohort were getting up to I had to lose my identity as a mainstream researcher and find a way into their world outside of school.

My chance to do this came by accident. I had been seeing an undergraduate philosophy student. She was very interested in living a bohemian lifestyle, and assiduously sought out contacts in the local creative community that could be summarised by the phrase 'the underground'. She told me about a party in a stately home. Apparently, the owner was an eccentric aristocrat, whose estate was so large that he didn't mind people having gatherings on his property. I arranged to go to what she confidently declared would be a 'real rave' with a teacher that I had met during fieldwork collection in a secondary school. He was a dedicated and hard working teacher of the creative arts who also enjoyed going out and exploring whatever nightlife there was on offer.

We drove to the event in his newly acquired car that seemed to splutter and spurt at every bend in the road. I had been told that raves were conducted in remote places, and this was no exception. Eventually, I noticed that the agricultural countryside was transformed into the rolling landscape of an aristocratic estate. We drove past the shadows of a lake and straight lines of cypress and elm. The turning to the party was an unmarked brick gate on a small road, almost impossible to find in the middle of the night.

To my surprise, as we ventured up the tiny winding unpaved path, we came across a large field full of cars. As my friend carefully parked, I wound down my window and caught the first aural blast of dance music. Even at this distance, I was captivated and moved by the sound; it gripped my whole body in a way that rock music never could. It was as if a deep tribal memory had been shaken out of me. My friend and I walked towards the sound in silence and anticipation of what we might find.

The party had been organized at the side of what looked in the gloom like a series of out-houses. They were arranged in a square with shadowy retreats and a section that had been cordoned off with a large tie-dyed sheet. I lifted the sheet and found groups of people sitting around and dancing. We made our way through the individuals and sat down against a barn wall in order to survey the situation. The people were an incredible, eclectic mixture of ages and backgrounds. It was impossible to say definitely that there was one type of person that attended the rave. My friend and I looked at each other and smiled in non-verbal agreement that we had definitely found a 'place-to-be'.

Several extremely agreeable hours passed before the main event took place. We had bumped into a few friends and acquaintances, including my bohemian girlfriend, who was incredibly excited and could not sit down or stay still for more than a moment. She told us that the main DJs were now coming on and that it was going to be fantastic. Someone rolled back the large sheet, and the sound system that had been filling the covered alcove where most of the people had gathered, was connected to the square between the buildings.

The music went off, and people came out of their hiding places in the array of shadows. They all stood and looked towards the DJ table and the sound system that was arranged on either side in two sombre black towers. At this point, the music began in earnest. It was louder, more minimal and driven. The crowd was immediately sparked into motion. My friend and I felt ourselves swept along by the pulsating and insistent noise. We danced for what seemed like hours without feeling tired or self-conscious; and at several points we were joined by fellow dancers who we may or may not have known, yet were fused with them and shared an intimate, real, emotional connection. As dawn came up over the English countryside, and the pumping techno set came to a close, we found ourselves close to the DJ table

and the source of the communal trance. I noticed with astonishment that the DJ was one of my student subjects who had been taking part in the techno-literacy research.

On the way back in my friend's car, I wondered about what I had witnessed and how it would affect my research. I wanted to immediately pore over the interview transcripts and questionnaire data for some sign that would connect the reality of the educational inquiry to the talent of the adolescent for moving large numbers of people that I had experienced at the rave.

However, I could find no such connection. If we may call this subject X, he was non-committal in the questionnaire about technological language; he had expressed an interest in virtual reality, yet had suggested no positive applications. I had interviewed him in a group and he had not responded or participated. I had been advised by the school authorities that he was a failing student with low levels of literacy. By this they meant that he had failed a linguistic test at 15 that had measured his spelling and grammatical ability. Yet I had witnessed the same student at the centre of a rave orchestrating a crowd. This contradiction sat in the middle of my research. I was convinced that the disparity in evaluation of the subject X was due to testing regimes. The standard literacy assessment principles were designed to generate individual linguistic profiles. These are essentially hollow vessels, not containing any information about the substance of identity: i.e. what a person is like, or how they express themselves. X, in the context of the rave was a sublime and competent generator of atmosphere and meaning. In the environment of the examination hall or the classroom, he was limited, hesitant and withdrawn.

I had to find a way of expressing this difference that did not diminish either activity. Through extensive research on the internet I found out about techno-shamanism. It immediately stuck me as a means to discussing a

linkage between the changes that I had experienced at the rave and the ways in which we may express ourselves through technology.

At the rave, the DJ is the techno-shaman, initiating the group into a ritual of collective celebration through dance. He or she, through skilful choice of track, subtle mixing and a powerful sound system may create a unified and coherent group environment that expresses the values and affective growth of collective power. Technologies such as the internet also have the potential to augment multiple identities, though these processes of change are not as clear or unified or personally affective as those that are exhibited in the rave. On the contrary, in the context of a school, the usages of the internet that the students demonstrate such as research for assignments or the following of personal desires tend to individualise and reflect the surveillance and control procedures that are in place.

As I made my way through the doctoral studies programme, and organized the literature review, methodology and results sections into a coherent whole; I found myself shuttling between rented accommodation. One October evening, I followed the directions of an advertisement to a farmhouse in a small village. As I drove up the gravel drive I noticed beautiful rhododendron bushes and a small lake in the grounds. I parked in a regular enclave of out-buildings not dissimilar from the house where the rave had taken place. As I entered through a back door and into the kitchen, I quickly recognized the décor and organization of the English aristocracy. The owner of the farm was the second son of an old Norman family, who owned the surrounding area, including a housing estate, half a dozen working farms and several small but pristine villages. The young aristocrat explained that his father had given him the farm in order to establish an art gallery. He showed me the gallery building that was a converted barn, painted white with a new wooden floor, a silver-plated bar and internal toilet. The deal was that I rented a bedroom and looked after the place. The

owner was usually away in his recently acquired townhouse in London, though would come back for an occasional weekend. This was an ideal place for me to finish my doctoral write up, and I felt like the lord of the manor as I walked around the property during the next few days.

I had finished the fieldwork for my thesis, and therefore contact with X through the school had finished. However, I had met him several times at raves in various locations in the Midlands of the UK. He was a top draw, and worked with another DJ who had been at the same school, Y. They were surviving financially by using a combination of welfare and illicit means such as selling marijuana. The two subjects had a following in the local underground network. Arrangements for their parties were made at a pub by handing out small pieces of paper with a phone number. When you called the number, an answering machine gave you instructions to go to the party. Close to the location one would usually come across other people trying to find the place that had been described on the phone, so it was fun, and working together would probably sort out any misunderstandings.

On one instance, I travelled to the site with my school teacher friend and several others. He had bought a VW caravanette, which made the journey even more enjoyable as the communal atmosphere inside the van was strengthened by the excitement of driving into the unknown. On this occasion, we were headed to an orchard in Worcestershire.

After a couple of hours of travel we eventually met up with a small convoy of vehicles that took us to our location. The set up for this party was impressive; there was a stage and dance-floor replete with neon and daglo decorations. There was a drinks truck and people sat and chatted next to fires hidden between the trees around the dance-floor. Everyone that I met was relaxed and amiable. My techno-literacy subjects X & Y played barnstorming sets that completely filled up the dance area, and as dawn broke, we were just about ready to make our way home in the early morning.

This had definitely been a techno-shamanic event. The natural surroundings, great music and friendly folk had inspired a tremendous feeling of community and healing. I danced with people from extraordinarily different backgrounds and ages. I remember an enormously muscular farm worker, who had gyrated vigorously for much of the night with his top off and in skin-tight jeans. As I went out of the dance-floor and into the bright morning, I felt simultaneously at ease with the natural world and part of a community. I looked up at the hills that surrounded the site and noticed lines of figures coming down in formation.

People started to run in all directions, women screamed and children looked around helplessly to try and understand what was going on. It was a police swoop. Gatherings of this sort are illegal in the UK, and the police have the power to impound the sound system and to arrest anyone who they think is part of the organizational structure of the rave. I saw my first officer of the State running towards what had been a peaceful gathering. Now the scene looked like war. The police had shiny knee-length boots, riot helmets, shields, batons and dogs. They struck anyone in their path as they made for the sound system. They formed a line and marched in formation towards it, walking on those who got in their way. I was an Education PhD candidate, and my friend was a teacher employed by a State school; so we decided not to get involved in the conflict. I do not consider my writing to be political, but I do not think that you have to be a radical activist to appreciate the over reaction and harshness of the police action. The police had targeted the rave with military precision, even though the group constituted of an unarmed civilian gathering. I wondered about the validity of my own research as we drove away from the scene.

Literacy is one of the most over researched subjects in the field of Education. Researchers may struggle to find anything original in this area that often reports directly to government. It is clearly a political zone of

research. The study of children's reading and writing abilities is basically a control mechanism. The State looks to intervene in people's lives and gain information about the make-up of their subjectivity for its own information banks. Yet I had witnessed the nature of this intervention myself. It was regulatory, imposing and oppressive. I asked myself the question: Does my research serve the purposes of the State to become more powerful?

Furthermore, what is the other side of this equation? Can educational research really help individuals develop their subjectivity, and improve their literacy outcomes? I decided as I wrote up my thesis, that the answer to this question lay somewhere in the subjective practices of my subjects X and Y. They were engaged in activity that lay outside of State control, and yet constituted a clear augmentation of social purposes. We must assume that literacy is a social practice, as much recent research has convincingly proved. Yet the social practice of techno-shamanism is rooted in deeply affective landscapes of the imagination and motivation, where the individual is overrun with desire and positively contributes to the practice as well as being fully absorbed by it.

My engagement with X and Y increased by a qualitatively measurable amount as I become more fully involved with the rave scene. My rental status a lodger was put in jeopardy as my landlord decided that he was going to put the whole property up for rent, and live permanently in London. He had been visiting less and less, and his estate agent saw an opportunity to make some more money by converting several of the out-houses into luxury apartments. This work was going to take at least eight months, and I decided, in a calamitous few days that I would take on the whole property for twelve months whilst the conversion work proceeded. I would have the house and the art gallery, yet it would be extremely expensive for a PhD research student, working part-time as a teacher and lecturing first year psychology students in the philosophy of education for three hours a week.

The solution to my dilemma came in a chance meeting with X and Y. I had been with my bohemian girlfriend, when X had come to sell us some weed. In the midst of the conversation, I had mentioned to him that I was to embark on renting out the farmhouse and an art gallery, and needed to look for reliable sub tenants with whom I could share the rent. X was immediately captivated by the idea, and said that he would find some others to move in including Y and another DJ that he knew who was moving to the Midlands from Scotland, that I shall call Z. Welfare would pay three quarters of the rent, and we could share the house and the facilities of the immaculate property. I remember assuring the owner that his farm would be inhabited by serious educational types that I had met through the university.

However, this was far from the truth. The farm was soon filled up by the three DJs and their entourage, which included several single mums, a couple from South Africa on the run for drug smuggling, a French model with nowhere to live and assorted wanderers who usually turned up after a rave and stayed for several days to calm down. This was an extraordinary turnaround from the enforced seclusion that the doctoral study required. My life was now full of social action. I was released for the solitude of researching, writing and organizing a thesis, where notions of community may be a distraction and you can only share the worry and fear of academic failure with other research students and your supervisor. I felt joy in the company of the youthful musicians and their colourful group. I wondered at the contrast between my now exciting home-life and the sterile dryness of the academy.

There was also the matter of the art gallery. In addition to being a great exhibition space, it was a near perfect party venue. Thankfully, it was not illegal in the UK to have parties on your property, but you must have a licence to serve alcohol or charge an entrance fee. We decided to go ahead and

arranged a party for the following month. I commissioned a local artist to do an ice sculpture of a pistol that we hung over the bar so that drinks would emerge from the barrel frozen. We erected a tarpaulin over the yard in between the out-houses in case of rain, and we decorated the space with lights and tables and chairs.

As the night began we could tell that the party would be a success as crowds of people started to arrive. We kicked off with heavy house music and progressively changed it into techno with X playing the last set as dawn came up. The gallery and courtyard were completely packed out with party revellers. It seemed to become obligatory for men to take their tops off, and I can remember the gallery was absolutely full of half-naked men at one point. I had also been impressed by the freedom and fun that the women wanted to have at our party. They were several large groups of them who were especially boisterous, and terrorised anyone in their path as they made tracks inside the gallery, courtyard and farmhouse. One might ask: Did you feel that this event could have got out of control?

And indeed I was asked this question by a university undergraduate who was amazed to see 500 half-naked men dancing vigorously to powerful techno music. Yet as I watched these strangers expressing themselves to the limits of their physicality in my house, I felt no fear whatsoever. On the contrary, I had an overwhelming sensation of care and companionship with these men. They were all engaged in a peaceful and unifying activity that diminished social divisions.

The farmhouse was located close to a country church, and the next morning, I saw several of the congregation frown in disapproval at the sight of some of the mixed bag of party-goers who were still leaving well into the next day. The contrast could not have been more powerful. They were dressed up in their 'Sunday best' and the party-goers were by this stage rather bedraggled and unkempt. The congregation were going to sit and

listen to a sermon, sing several hymns and gossip in the cemetery before going home for lunch. The party-goers had been celebrating together since the previous evening in various forms and levels of organisation.

I made a connection in my mind with educational research. It can be invested with a morality that may misunderstand and not investigate the very phenomena that it seeks to explain. For example, teenage desire and the often confusing search for identity that this entails is not a straightforward story. In fact, I would go so far as to state that many of the more extreme behaviours that we may find enacted by the 'youth' are directly related to restrictive moral codes that have been imposed by Christianity. As such, investigation into educational 'failure' in the youth needs to start with the ways in which desire has been trapped and homogenised by Christian society in history, and certain behaviours such as drug taking, sexual promiscuity and profound celebration have become taboo.

These thoughts also focused my interest and research into techno-shamanism. If we disavow educational research of Christian morality and as an information mechanism for the augmentation of the secular State, what are the grounds for our 'values education'? I am not proposing that we should all become techno-Pagans and actively propound this perspective through education; but that multifarious religious options are opened up through new technology such as the internet and dance music, and that the desire of the youth is discovering these options through celebration. Techno-shamanism is to an extent a neat category within which to bracket these behaviours, and the youth will break out of it as they continue to experiment with lifestyle options. Yet it is one that may give us a clue as to the qualitative subjective changes that are happening in contemporary society that are connected to techno-literacy.

CONCLUSION

I am now ensconced in the sedentary life of an academic at the University of Tasmania, Australia, and yet I believe that the evidence and ideas contained in this writing are still acting on my behaviour. Techno-shamanism is a positive and life-affirming practice. It is also a guide to the many contradictions and tensions that present themselves when one is describing complex transformations of the self, and in this process one might be experiencing complex changes (Land, 1995). This salient point is directly relevant to the social sciences as techno-shamanism defies qualitative analysis just as it is competently categorised. It simultaneously works on the behavioural aspects of the imaginary and the pragmatics of everyday life.

I am not practising techno-shamanism now in the same way as I was during those heady days of free party organization. Yet I cannot deny the space that was hollowed out in my personality during this period, and the positive energy that delving into this space enables. This energy defines my sense of what John D. Brewer has termed as 'ethnographic realism' (Brewer 2000), or the description of the local under extreme pressure from the forces of globalization.

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Dr David R Cole is a lecturer in Literacy, English Education and Professional Studies at the University of Tasmania <http://fcms.its.utas.edu.au/educ/educ/pagedetails.asp?lpersonId=2601>. He is researching and publishing articles in the fields of affective education, multiple literacies, and English Education. He is also a creative writer and has a novel published in 2006 called *A Mushroom of Glass* <http://sidharta.com/books/index.jsp?uid=183/>. He has been an international teacher in Colombia, Argentina, Egypt and England.

The Whore's Prayer

David Finn

The graffiti on the wall
And the words by the churchyard
Remind me of how shallow my life has become.

Sometimes I feel 17,
Driving thru the ice city
My heart insulated by the radio and Soundgarden and cheap weed and
memory

Sometimes I feel 32,
My heart pierced and sold and punctured into a million pieces
Like that of any whore

I look in the mirror as I drive,
And for just a moment
I see you there, I see you there
As beautiful as the day we met
In your purple bandana and your dark flower chain,
Laughing at some little joke I made,
Asking me to turn the music up

Both of us flashing our matching skull rings,
Both of us thinking we were so cool and so vain,
And I thought some friends would last forever
And I thought you were one

But you have to work to keep anything alive,
You have to work to keep anything alive,
We didn't know that then,
We thought long hot drives to the beach in Summer
Would keep us together forever
They didn't, nothing did, nothing could
Not even Beatles songs as we sang it all to the Sun
But down there on the fire-beach at midnight
As the gentle wind blew thru all our feelings,
Down there, you got the most of me
Down there, you got everything that even matters,
Down there, you got it all

I would have loved you till the grave
It's true
But that's so easy to say now
I would have loved you till the grave
It's true
But that's so easy to say now

I'm a cheap fuck surrounded by men who say yes
I'm a cheap fuck surrounded by men who say yes
I'm a cheap fuck surrounded by men who say yes

I used to see life through rose-colored lenses,
My heart aglow in Technicolor love,
I used to think I was like Dean Martin
I used to think I was an Untouchable
Now I don't know if the monsters are real,
I curl up under the covers,
I pray to people in Hollywood,
I'm afraid of the blinding light
As much as the dark,
I fear the wrath of a terrible god,
I mark my skin with the goddess
But I don't know if anything is up there anyway
Maybe it's all just an empty advert
And that just makes it worse

I'm ready for a fall, and I hear the voices,
I see your face in the mirror, I see you there
I want to ask you so many questions,
Did you feel it?
Was it love?
Did you feel it?
Was it love?
The silence is deafening and I run

Run to pills,
Run to coke,
Run to whatever
Whoever is holding,
I don't know what I take anymore,

It doesn't even matter, I'm so tired inside
But I can't sleep alone, so I run

Run to strangers
Who sometimes tell me I'm beautiful,
But they don't always treat me that way
They call me a whore
Run to hotel rooms where everything is delicate,
For a while I liked to pretend
It was all romantic,
And I thought if I fooled everyone else I could fool myself
That changed the day I found the place
Where we used to kiss in Winter

David Finn is from Sydney, Australia. He is a writer of fiction and poetry. He draws most of his poetry inspiration from song lyrics—his favorite artists include Bob Dylan, John Lennon, George Harrison, Chris Cornell, and The Man in Black, Mr Johnny Cash. Currently he is writing a science time-travel fiction book. Finn thinks we should follow the dream in our hearts, because they are the most honest thing we have. You can catch him on LiveJournal: <http://redlantern2051.livejournal.com>

Parching Tea Leaves In The Dark

Brendan Connell

I had just left the public library and stood on Fifth Avenue, before the torrent of traffic; a rush of imbecility—the daily pilgrimage of the bedlamites. The language of Crebillon fils, of which I had been perusing, filled my mind, and I equated the bipeds frisking around me with the images penned by that



improper French author, a man little known, less read, a bit better than Voltaire and, in my estimation, equal to Diderot.

The depression caused by the loss of my lobster, earlier that summer, found relief in the perusal of unread authors. It had cut its way through its leash while I was walking it through Central Park. I had been watching the toy sailing boats on the lake, and when I looked around my shellfish was gone.

The library's hours were limited. At five o'clock I found myself shunted onto the street, to join the round of pedestrians, being brushed against by their gold rushing legs.

The mist of fantasy broke before me as the nerves in my hand ascertained a grasp, the contact of damp human epidermal tissue. The proprietor of those five moist digits turned out to be of a man I had not seen in a number of years, grim of visage, acne scarred, hair tending towards the oily, generously salted with dandruff, a nose well peppered, impissated secretions plugging the ducts of the skin.

“Carlos,” he said, something probably intended as a smile wriggling across his face. “Long time no see. The physical body rots away: what is the hard and fast body of reality?”

“The mountain flowers bloom like brocade, the valley streams are brimming blue as indigo,” I replied blandly.

It was Barry Lagerlof, a fellow I knew from my stint at a Zen monastery a few years earlier. He was likeable enough I suppose, under his blemished exterior. But he had an annoying habit of jointly quoting, and instigating, the koans of the Zen masters of old, a trick he seemed to have unfortunately retained from his days as a Buddhist acolyte.

“Nice to run into you like this Lagerlof,” I said. “It’s so easy to lose touch with one’s . . . friends . . . in a big city. And how are you? What do you do these days?”

“Better than ever Carlos,” putting his hand humidly on my shoulder. “I have inherited the family business—the Kosher Pizzeria chain... Big stuff with the Hasidim. No more bumming around town, wasting time at the library. And you? What’s your current line of work? Not still chasing rainbows I’m sure.”

“No,” I lied, with what I presume to have been a bright look. “I am editor-in-chief of a publication, both ambitious and new, targeting the hip, young, elite.”

“Thank god,” he replied with a chuckle. “I was afraid you were still wasting your time on those dirty old French books.”

“Oh no,” I said suavely. “For that sort of entertainment I visit the night clubs. I buy drinks which the bartenders don’t know how to make, ask various young women questions they don’t quite understand, and receive replies I don’t quite want to hear . . . And do you,” I continued. “Do you go out . . . enjoy the night life?”

“The sacred tortoise drag its tail? God no! Not really at least. Maybe an occasional concert, a play possibly. Or the opera; *we* might do that. We . . . I just got married you know. Yes, no need to look so amused. I tied the knot.”

I have to say that I was not merely amused, but absolutely stunned. I had always considered Lagerlof to be the type who would never get married—A condemned bachelor. Aside from his physical ensemble, which did not seem to me capable of inspiring a woman with any sort of overmastering desire, there was that obnoxious habit of his, those koans, the way he would stab at your ears with them mercilessly. He was a coarse man.

“She tripped over my foot in one of my venues,” he explained. “That’s how we met . . . she bruised her knee. It was beautiful—Her knee I mean. I told her that I didn’t like to play games—I could support a wife—I needed a spiritual woman, a life companion. If you don’t grab it when you see it, you’ll be thinking about it when you’re a thousand miles away. I am the happiest man in the world—I’m in love, Carlos!”

“She must be a . . . special lady,” I faltered. “I . . . I’m curious to see her—To meet her.”

“Well of course Carlos, of course. You’ll come to dinner—Reed flowers drenched in moonlight—I’ll show her off to you. Tomorrow? At six-thirty?”

Barry scribbled his home address on the back of a business card. With a wave of his clammy hand he thrust his body into the back seat of a yellow cab and joined the rush hour traffic.

As I walked over to Sixth Avenue, to catch the F train, matrimonial visions asserted themselves throughout my cerebral hemisphere. I recalled Balzac's *Marriage Contract*, ending with the desperate husband speeding away on an India bound ship, his avaricious wife, mother-in-law, and all hopes of happiness laughing mockingly behind him. But that was mere romance. In the real world surely every creature with half an upper lip can find an amorous-minded companion.

I was still wondering about this as I sat in the little Morocco bar on Grove Street, puffing languidly on the hookah and enjoying a black and white martini. The despondency I had been wallowing in removed itself from the forefront of my concern. The lobster had escaped. I had probably been too lax with the leash. There was still a life to be led and queer fish like Barry to figure, to marvel at.

I must say that it interested me. Running across old acquaintances often strums strange chords. The Lagerlof episode affected my taste buds. It added piquancy to the pips.

My curiosity had not diminished as I crawled along the Long Island Expressway the next evening, in the rusted and rattling Peugeot borrowed from my uncle Eduard. Barry lived in Lake Success and I could feel the grin expand my facial features as I took note of the ostentatious new homes built up along his street: Homes that certainly cost money, but just as certainly lacked all but the pretenses of good taste.

The new Mrs. Lagerlof answered the door and invited me in. She seemed quite nervous. I was not there to judge her, but merely observe. Actually, I barely caught sight of her face. It seemed that the rear view was quickly given precedence. Conventional clothing, such as can be purchased at a mall, though not absolutely devoid of charm, certainly lacking originality—the costume of a billion other women.

So I was ushered into the living room. Barry rose, a glass of white wine wedged between the tips of his thick fingers.

“You’ve met my sweetheart I see.” (His obvious pride I found embarrassing.) “Come on. With your throat, mouth and lips shut how can you speak?”

“Yes. You two make a beautiful couple,” I again lied. Now that I saw her face I felt that I had seen it before. Either that, or I was experiencing *déjà vu*.

I requested a few fingers of bourbon. My nerves were out of tune and I had high hopes a drink would compose those springy, subtle things. Unfortunately the cacophony continued.

We sat through twenty-five minutes of monotonous conversation, or really monologue: Lagerlof talked only of himself, his petty ambitions, his annals and talents—His wife did not speak at all, but merely nodded her head with strained familiarity. I tried desperately to say a few easy and witty remarks, but the words that tripped from my teeth were absurd, stiff and pedantic. The three of us looked at each other in astonishment—I sensed that the planets must have been in some slight disarray that evening.

Fortunately dinner was served. I cannot say that I recommend the table of Lagerlof, but then again there are few tables, either public or private, that I would recommend with any sense of honesty. It was a mildly bland seafood supper: razorback clams, a few snails, a loaf of bread, a bottle of recent wine.

As I politely attempted to clear my plate of its contents my suspicions increased. I felt an absolute certainty as to a previous knowledge of the good hostess. Indeed, I had spent some rather intimate hours with the persona in question. From those insolent eyes and clipped gestures I could tell I was not mistaken.

After the salty course, Lagerlof excused himself to the restroom. His wife retired to the kitchen, to get coffee and desert. I wiped my lips, folded

my napkin with supreme care and followed her. As I came in she turned toward me in surprise.

“The game’s up,” I said, grabbing her nose. It came off with little resistance. The creature before me screamed like a baby—as they say her kind do when submerged in boiling water. Her antennae quivered before me, sweeping the air with petulant gestures. Its eyes glistened nervously at the end of their stalks.

“Please remove yourself from those jeans,” I said, calmly and with great dignity. “*You* are going home with *me*.”

Unfortunately she was prone to be rebellious and snapped at me.

“You spineless beast,” I reprimanded. “Do you know how ridiculous you look in that get-up? . . . It’s shameful.”

I was not particularly in the mood for a drawn out scene. I collared her. Sensing the uselessness of further deception, she molted her garments. I grabbed her by an antenna and led her out of the kitchen and toward the front door.

Lagerlof was just then reappearing. He looked shocked, scandalized.

“What are you doing with my wife?” he cried, grabbing at one of the tremulous, red claws. “The valley’s single plum flower!”

“Hands off,” I parried. “The creature was my lobster before she was your wife. I am in a position of precedence.”

“I had no idea though,” he stammered. “. . . And I really don’t see the difference.”

“Then I feel profoundly sorry for you Lagerlof,” I said, heading out the door, the creature secure in my grasp. “Women are generally more appealing spouses than shellfish. After all, it’s hardly kosher.”

“But we have matching temperaments!” he wept. “What will I do with myself?”

“On the left horn of the snail is a kingdom called Resignation. Travel those myriad miles,” I advised as I shoved my squirming burden into the passenger seat of the car.

Brendan Connell currently lives in Ticino, Switzerland, where he teaches English and writes. He has had fiction published in numerous magazines, literary journals and anthologies, including *McSweeney's*, *Adbusters*, *Nemonymous*, *Leviathan 3* (The Ministry of Whimsy 2002), *Album Zutique* (The Ministry of Whimsy 2003) and *Strange Tales* (Tartarus Press 2003). His first novel, *The Translation of Father Torturo*, was published by Prime Books in 2005; his novella *Dr. Black and the Guerrillia* was published by Graitisk Press the same year.

Poetry

Andrew T. Cutler

GYPSY

And they call the great spirit a volkisch exercise to crowning haven of
duress—

the rain, a cadence to the greater causes,

the flower of the sinful negation

a reason to entreat a programming hand,

the stones will feast on the feet to battle sighs, burdens of purities
impossible in the animal flesh.

The thunder will clap the shamanic to rest upon the bones of passing
entitled boundaries...

they will call the stance fire and move swifter still to the earth

the lightening will shape the eyes of the new built forests

the rivals of godless quenching night terror,

they will build walls higher than the confines of space will allow

they will call this life untied frenzied sacred and orderly,

their marches will punish the streets...

The gypsy is my lover, a stream in the eye of a storm

The gypsy is my lover, a fire in the woods deep inside the night

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The gypsy is a promise, a promise kept to the stars

The gypsy is a promise, a promise to the wine of my passing, undressed season

And the Great Spirit will not falter under the duress of the masses.

It will tighten and coil,

horses will become its rivers, birds its sky

it will devour the flood of the sleeping the sleeping the sleeping the sleeping

the sleeping the sleeping

the unwashed and sleeping

The gypsy is my lover, a passions rival to dreaming

The gypsy is my lover, a dreaming rival to passions pressing kiss

The gypsy is a promise, a promise un kept, wildly pure

The gypsy is a promise, a promise to the wine of my passing undressed season

LOA

In her heart... Spirits.

Saintly drunk, tussled and stolen; a nun at a rave.

She's adhered to the a.m. god and has parted flesh to dressing.

A silent cross of bared cross to chest and tongue rolling embraced embers.

She's puffed at the shoulder with wet flecks of testaments; old as
Babylonian gossip.

Regenerated in Genesis as genuine, as driven as the drive herself.

She screams "Momma; I'm a shadowed body- enlightened by request."

With Aramaic squalor, a dance against the grain of crucified boards
where Christ-children swept anti-limb chorus:

Sermon chords: *to lover her lust from dust to life/ frock and rib to sipping
time...*

A bound in boundless penetration vow taken in limber dance.

"Loa," she shrieks, sobs, quakes. Mistaken whore blank to promise but
promising electric.

In her heart... Plenty spirits. "Loa," she whispers collapsing the pulsing
flesh of purgatory.

Unhinged, beautiful... "Loa."

THE EL-LIVE

The el-live; the small pressed stain of elixirs- boarding house of Loa and all night sanctimony-

Buddha bounced battered face regulars held here, at confident rule; ridden by staggering ballad Americana.

Catho-licked and ridden by the wholesome, defaced spaces between thoughtless and un-happening.

Pornographic ritual; alchemical sway of Spanish curves and exotic oars-drenched in skirts, Sanskrit- initiating inky rivers, odes, sonnet; vowed.

For pornographic drifters in waiting; symbols gasped, unclasped, motored through plunging necklines and cocktail dress crowing denials; to flogged stair-wails of wasted sacrifice- wine, dined, buried bones of Santeria.

Where un-happening is a clarity between the one of them; those separated serpent- ohms.

A moment purchased, suspect, in downtown, homeless crossroads from spirits- crippled by debt, damnation, and crooked caliber, high invocators--- in noir stubble and double shaved knuckles; moonlit in subtle, statuesque, masturbatory pose.

The soul is tossed like an unwanted host or toasted as a martyred deli ante-repentant or frenzied; a rosy rapture toy of the eye- collecting curdled dollars on apocalyptic cat walks.

Statutory Satori; sipped anorexic by callous brushes of nudity against shadow-boxed light.

A brazen Eden,; brawled into scripture--- lit with a sordid passing of tongues
to ephemeral imprisoned passion trial; fist or kissed--- completing
the Genesis of Classic Spirit Theatre, Mass Vicadin... Black Tequila.
Holy Swing and lower chariot; lowered till the blue collar swings the used
to patiently domineering dove-lust and the greatest fermentation of
its guilty conscious... Love.

The el-live....

Burning over the horizon like the more you run from Christian; the more
Christ you become... A star in the sideway Eastern wayside...

Andrew Cutler is an actor/writer/occultist living and testing his reality in New Jersey where he works on various film and music projects. He can be reached with comments and or abuse at atcutler@verizon or on his humble Myspace: www.myspace.com/fakirnacht.

Open Sesame

Tristram Burden

On. Off. On. Off.

The noise of the universe.

Time splits here, consciousness refracts.

I'd come to streamline mind into a deft, discriminatory tool again, where black and white unite into the clearest, sharpest white noise perceptible to this sense-prison. Reaching out to the first groanings of space, the dust explosion in a great breath-out, exhale of The Void outwards into sonic vibrations shaping the texture and trajectory of all gas and dust into bone and fractal sentience. Something for the Void to look out on. Something to dream.

But the outside ones convalesce in those territories, they are known from their Eldritch aura, and streak the ether wherever they become.

It was on my psychic return that I saw that streak. Amidst a blissful plateau of no ill transmission or sensory flux, in the more remote regions of Tibet, nesting in the Clear Light. It was unmistakable. And there is limited value in tolerating that bullshit.

The Outside ones had sprung a trap and a leak, and it didn't seem as if anyone saw it coming except myself. In this gathering quiet of the final storm, Year of Our Anti-Lord 2006. Bombs dropped and otherwise intelligent men became over-tired and quit distinguishing sense from silly.

And I heard quiet whispers of the Doomsday Bus, a solid vehicle designed to withstand the hellish fury of the apocalypse, began discovering things that strip minds to a bare and barren Nirvana; the kind of information that awakens one to the True State of Things, new data a stark contrast to firmly held, loved and treasured word-maps; new data a world destroyer and eviscerator in it's own cold right. The pattern of things had changed, so I phased out and went to Tibet. I'd intended to stay longer in the field, but I needed to ken these new patterns. Fresh traces of Apocalypse had seeped into the world, louder and requiring urgent attention, and I had to cut them out at the root source—they didn't belong: not here and not yet. Retreat to Tibet was the game-plan for reaching outside regular spaces to feel out for the seed.

And here it was. If I thought destiny was a pertinent construct, I guess this would be it.

This is my life. Scanning the frigid margins of the political elite, hunting down the real perpetrators that float in the shadows, flexing psychic muscle and in-deep with the Outside. Inbetween the dawn and the dusk we can see them running if you look with the right eyes—out from the shadows of the pillars, across the courtyards of the powerhouses, snaking their twisted wills into the heart of all rulers, trading in the deep blood of ancient and deadly forces most minds have the instinct to run from.

Socialising and investigative meandering was a foreign process after jamming deep with the Bardo. Staying in a monastery on the long journey back, I heard some stories which extended my stay longer than intended. My retreat had not been in vein. There were saucers over Ladakh, alerting me to a change in the steady loose orbit of political events. It was not only the outer reaches of the manifest world where these stains had accumulated, but deep into the very flesh of nations it now seemed.

I was twelve when I first thought I noticed problems with the way the world was run.

I was forty-six before I discovered what I could really do about it.

There was mum, Josh and my Uncle Steve, sitting around the table. Mum started frowning the day she found out about Dad. She was frowning this day, but that was before she actually knew. I knew. I'd seen them come in their black helicopters, with their sealed light green suits and invisible faces. I knew what happened. Mum was only happy when they found him suspended from a tree by his ankles with his wrists cut and a neat little note describing how everything was too much and there just wasn't enough love anymore.

I knew what happened. And it goes something like this.

Everyday my dad would come home from work and tell me amazing stories about what he did that day. How he interviewed a space alien or how he stopped the world disappearing overnight by finding a set of crystals that nobody but him and his work colleagues knew about.

After he died, I told mum about all of the things he used to tell me, but she said, fiercely like she hated him, that none of it was true. That he was the manager of a paper-clip company and that he only told me those things because they made me smile. But I knew then that she didn't really know, and knew that whoever those men were they were bad men who killed him because they didn't like him anymore. Mum didn't know about any of that stuff. But I knew. And then I found out that there was something wrong with the world if people were always keeping secrets and lies and never told each other the truth. I wasn't going to tell any lies. I was only to going to tell people the truth, because I knew that's what killed my dad. Not the truth. But that he had to lie. I thought that if I never told anyone that I'd lie for them then I wouldn't get killed for telling the truth.

When they threw me in the asylum I was glad, really. I always thought it was better that people thought me crazy than they think that I was a liar. Truth is all I wanted out of life. And that's why I was signed up to the agency.

They explained everything to me. It took five years. I've since grown backwards so that I am now twenty-three. I've been assured that I won't get any younger. And that I could still die at any moment. So I shouldn't worry.

Past crumbling walls of dead-end streets leading out into wasteland, the scattered ashes of Tibet, Chinese Republic stranglehold and a fierce descent into one of their many hells. This was the portal. A lingering gateway to reconciliation with the forces which appear to be outside our lives and subtly manipulating them. An Us-Them fight game where synchronising breath and exchanging polarities, acknowledging they birth each other in a Technicolor spread of reduced-speed karma, is not an option.

I didn't see a saucer, or anything resembling or hinting towards an alien mind-control cult, but I found a disturbing proportion of the population that did.

The first was a woman, pointing out the paths these craft took, the shape of them and the feeling she had upon their passing. No mild trip, these things seemed to emit a frequency disturbing to the human energy field, something that shook it up and played havoc with our polarities.

One monk I talked to, a gentleman who was no stranger to the effects of deep sub-audible sonics upon the human aura, gave a mild, compassionate warning about approaching such craft, and showed me just how switched on

he was when he said, in a cold whisper that feathered my gut: “Always they go where the atom will be split.”

The school children’s favoured subject of strange craft of strange colour, was something I refrained from whooping about—there seemed a pervasive sense of ease with the whole business, perhaps befitting a nation whose deepest myths involve the population of the world by an extra-terrestrial species giving birth to the human race as it is now. These were strange places, the lingering traces of an authentic ancient astronaut history flashing its bare-bones right into the present, flaming chariots a staple part of the Hindu mythos, and Bodhisatva’s descending from the stars to copulate with monkeys an integral part of the Tibetan anthropogony.

To these people, this was almost old news. The stark difference of this most recent visitation was the calibre of human these visitors were fraternizing with. They were taking their chances, it seemed, with the local rising stars of the Military-Industrial complex.

The wonder about this investigation trip is that it never shielded itself, never tried to delude me about where it was going to go. From the inset, from my first foot on the path back from the Bardo, I knew my career was back on track, that the threads I’d dropped, lost and discarded with extreme prejudice and tyrant fury, had patiently waited for me at the foot of the Himalayas.

When I was twelve I noticed problems with the way the world was run, but I was forty-six before I discovered what I could do about it. Theosophy, trips riding on the secret doctrines of the ages, looking around

everyday and smelling something's up. Whether it occurs when the Santa spoof is up, or when the balanced integrity of a superficially non-sexual life is devastated by the Need and the subsequent Hunt, adolescence is when the world shatters and rearranges itself into a wholly new form. If you play the right games and surf the correct channels, these experiences can occur throughout life on a very frequent basis. But still nothing compares to being dropped through the looking glass at that tender age, only to discover that this is all bullshit, and that the parents, those Untouchable Gods of the Highest heaven, have been in on it all along. It's only later that you forgive them, that it's possible to acknowledge that they weren't in on it after all, merely duped like everyone else, into living behind a safe shield of signs, symbols and role-play, during which nobody remains still enough to catch flicker and interruption in transmission between the void and the ejaculate of the five-sense prison, between the next exhale and the next barking dog.

I stayed the night in Ladakh, shielded for a time by the Dharma and the Sangha, before I struck out in the morning to those deep caves, cornered off by the military but remaining accessible through unconventional means. That's where the monks, the school children and villagers all said the saucers came from, hinting that it was also where atoms were split, flexing down into the deepest core of the Earth and her fragile, delicate but catastrophic plates.

So that was where I had to go.

With Grandparents who were practicing Christian Scientists, a grandfather who was a yoga enthusiast and who studied eastern mysticism, an uncle who studied Theosophy, a father who was a Freemason and aspiring Rosicrucian, a mother who was a member of esoteric Christian sect the White Eagle Lodge and an Anthroposophist, from an early age **Tristram Burden** was surrounded by Esotericism. A technical hitch during an Astral Traveling experiment when he was sixteen introduced him to Kundalini, and on his journey towards understanding the phenomenon he has had close encounters with a wide range of beliefs and practices. He is an empowered Sekhem practitioner, an Adi-Nath and a member of the Horus-Maat Lodge and the Order of Chaos, and studied contemporary and alternative religions at degree level. He has contributed material to a variety of publications, amongst them Prediction Magazine, Silverstar, and SilkMilk Magi-zain. He is also resident New Age correspondent at the on-line nexus of culture and society, Suite101.

Thinking of Bill

Tim Holmes

A healthy octogenarian?

A man of 87.

Died in the year of our bored 19hundred & 97'

But I doubt that he's dead... I doubt death exists.

I speak of William Seward Burroughs or Uncle Bill as I affectionately call
him.

More than an artist, more than a writer, much more than just a queer old
junky.

A boundary breaker.

A meta-creative communicator.

He wrote things that couldn't be written.

Said things that can't really be said.

He planted a word virus deep in this lump of meat.

Blew bug powder dust in my head.

Inspiration or information I really could not tell;

So I picnicked hard on a naked lunch as I realised my own prison cell.

How the nine circles of hell become elliptical.

It must be the heat from the Nova ovens distorting everything.

Life. Afterlife. Myth. Reality.

Nothing is true... everything is permitted.

The old man of the mountain is still heard today.

World Religion, dogmatic process of thought and decision.

Slowly pointed out our governments are murderers, thieves and whores.

For as he says in his ode to John Dillinger...

“You always were a headache and YOU always were a BORE”

But in putting pen to paper he did more than just illuminate their capers.

In tapping away at the keys he literally, literary, set this young man free.

Pointing the way to the western lands this soft machine let loose his own
hands.

With a metaphysical cut up technique I found a way to hide and freak.

To stand out with pride but be careful as I seek.

To say what I want to, and never be afraid to speak.

To learn from every time I write and to never try to teach.

I wrote Uncle Bill a letter once I told him “You are a great sage.”

He wrote me a one sentenced headed reply saying...

“All I’ve learnt throughout my life I forgot whilst smoking yage.”

And though I don’t follow his life style, I have never sailed on the Junk.

He’s the reason this poets a writer first as is the way of any Buddhist Punk.

Tim Holmes is a performance poet traveling under the moniker of the Buddhist Punk. “Thinking of Bill” was penned in 1999 two years after William Burroughs set out on his journey to the western lands. Visit him at: ww.myspace.com/BuddhistPunk23

Artist Portfolio: Jason Kraley

WHO IS JASON KRALEY?

I was born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1975. My parents raised me rather well. I was taught the standard ethical and moral compasses. I understood my parents were Christian and, though we did not go to church, they gently tried to explain, and possibly instill, Christianity to me. My parents, from their free-style thinking inherent from the 1960's, encouraged me freely to explore art and music. I drew and sketched frequently, following my mother's own art skills. When I was 10, my parents discovered that I took to the piano naturally and played by ear. They tried paying for lessons, but after 5 lessons, the teacher said I had a gift of playing by ear and memorizing sonatas, but I simply could not read written music. The lessons ended.

During adolescence, I experienced the stereotypical segregations and cliques that most North American high schools had. After much intimidation through earlier grades, in junior year I had become regarded and accepted as part of the "art community" (jokingly sometimes referred to as the "art fag community"). All my friends were considered rebellious punks and artists. I helped write an underground newspaper that encouraged other people and students to question government, religion, "the establishment" or "the system". Question authority. Question what

you were taught. Question everything. However, the biggest thing was to be open and tolerant to different ideas, sexual orientations, et cetera.

By that time, my parents had already divorced, sadly, when I was 13. By that time in my life I had already begun developing my own belief system. I was naturally resistant to authority and governmental issues, and I strongly opposed the concept of organized religions. My friends and environment helped me explore different styles of music, ranging from Art Of Noise to Rancid. There was no turning back by that time.

I wrote in numerous journals: drawing, mindstreaming, poetry, et cetera. I graduated in 1993 with a focus on mathematics, computers, and art. I started meeting more people, but still somehow felt isolated within the punk and art community. I hated labels. I questioned my own identity, my life, my sexual preferences, my purpose of living, my own friends, and even my spirituality - if I even had one. It was then in life that I started realized that my main purpose on this planet was simply to recognize the innate drive to express and create.

As an adult, I started ignoring the questions I could not answer, assuming I would discover the answers as I lived my life. I focused on creating music in 1994. I created my own music studio of sorts and started using what instruments I had: keyboards, turntables, microphones, and even my Amiga 500 computer. Ironically, also in 1994, I had experienced my first anxiety attack, and by 1995 I was diagnosed with an anxiety disorder; something not widely explored or treated back in that time. I quickly learned that I was, indeed, a unique human when I experienced an “allergic” reaction to anti-depressants. This did and still does baffle the medical community as I have tried many different classes and types of medications since, and continually have “bad” reactions. This was the period of time that I had gone to most punk shows in my life at that time. The energy and

release of aggression had helped me at times of unexplainably intense anxiety and panic attacks.

By 1996, I had a life-changing experience of flying on my own to Portland, Oregon for 11 days. It was then that I began questioning many aspects of my life. The most frequent questions were: Why am I not normal? What am I living for? Who am I? During my trip, I experienced so much, talked to so many different types of people, cut off most of my hair which had grown considerably since 1993, and most importantly: I was also introduced to oil painting.

The moment I returned to Cleveland, I felt the birth of a new starting point in my life. I had drastically explored changing my external appearance to the world. Changed my hair, its color, began marking moments in my life with piercings, and it was at that moment I had realized that I had already been marking moments in my life through various means.

My journals that kept records of my experiences as far back as 1988. My music, primarily instrumental, had started taking a focus towards extreme expression and presentation to others in a professional manner; each new song created usually due to an experience or moment in time. And armed with my newest means of expressing myself, I started painting numerous oil paintings, each inspired by an experience, emotionally impactful moment, or even a massively intensive anxiety attack. This was also the time that I started viewing my own body as a canvas. I began having my own art tattooed on my body to indelibly mark particular events or moments in time. I even spray painted my own car, which became known in Cleveland as “The Charlie Brown Car.” It was by this time in my life that I realized I was creating records of my life to outlive my own existence. In essence, to say, “I was here.”

I was constantly finding different ways to express myself, and each time I was continually experiencing catharsis. Each new cathartic

experience also helped me live with my continually changing anxiety attacks. But what about my existence? My purpose? My spirituality?

In 1999, a friend of mine had introduced me to a couple who helped teach and explore meditation to anyone interested free of charge. I had decided to set up weekly sessions after my job to sit and meditate for an hour. Curiously, meditation was a new way of dealing with anxiety as a whole. I had begun to privately explore methods of meditation and soon started learning more about buddhism. With the newfound practice of meditation, my music and painting had taken new directions for a good three years. I had used my graphic and website design skills to establish myself (www.jasonkrale.com) and my own record label (www.crc-music.com) on the Internet.

However, in 2002, after the experience of love and the failure of two relationships, I had suddenly, and unexplainably, lost the impetus to paint. I was laid off from the best job I ever had. I noticed a change in friends (or perhaps a disconnection with some of them), vitality, even my own self-esteem. The anxiety worsened. I had developed the beginning symptoms of clinical depression and a now seemingly endless bout of clinical insomnia. I had problems with meditation. I felt isolated and stagnant, and my music took on a darker tone. I started questioning myself again. Where am I in my life? Why am I not painting? What is wrong with me? Am I alone?

In 2003, I discovered a book called *Dharma Punx* by Noah Levine. It was his book that helped put a new face on buddhism for me and helped me realize that I was not alone. Sobriety issues aside, his book helped me realize that punks and artists alike in my generation (“The X Generation”) were out there taking what they can understand and properly use in their everyday life without having that sense of losing your identity or becoming what is misconceptually considered an “organized religion”. From that moment on, I explored great books such as *An Open Heart* by The Dalai

Lama, several books by Thich Nhat Hanh, and most notably two books by Pema Chodron: *The Places That Scare Us* and *When Things Fall Apart*.

Through reading, taking what I felt was important and integral for my own personal peace of mind, and consistent meditation, I felt another chapter in my life being written. I started promoting my art in exhibitions and installation within Cleveland, and in doing so, I had met several new friends who were also practicing buddhists, including my dear friend Christine Siarka: an artist who works with metal and nature to create her own unique mandalas (an integral artform in the buddhistic culture) as a form of her own expression through meditation.

In 2004, Christine Siarka had embarked on an exhibition which would, not only showcase her metalwork and sketches, but also allow people to come and go as they pleased, participating in a “walking meditation”, grabbing a stone from a basket and placing it IN her centerpiece mandala installation. She approached me to create music to accompany the exhibition and play continuously during its open hours, to inspire people to participate in the walking meditation. This opened up an entirely new avenue of creation... and a challenge. I had decided to make my second album, under my musical identity “Still Inertia” (www.stillinertia.com), focusing on the exact nature of what it is to meditate. To observe. To pay attention to the moment of now. The album was a rather unique change from my first album, “Upgrade”, and was named after Siarka’s own exhibit’s name: “From The Ancient Center”. Finally my mind was opening up to new ideas and approaches to melding technological methods of creating music along with the use of massive recordings of organic sounds and objects as instruments. With the help of guest bassist Mike Williams and the angelic vocalizations of Amanda North, I created my second album spanning over 45 minutes with only 4 songs. Catharsis had returned.

At this same time, I was introduced to a new medium to assist in furthering my artist expression: video. In 2 years time, I had established the ability to record what I saw; the world through my own eyes. With the self-taught usage of editing programs such as Adobe's Premiere and Apple's Final Cut Pro, I was once again armed with the self-taught abilities to shape what I record and help express it how I wish to other people across the country and around the world. I took one bold step further and decided to uproot my life of 30 years to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Before I left Cleveland, it was as if a weight had been lifted off my chest. I had an incredible urge to paint. And not just strictly with oils in the same style I always had in the past, but I opened my mind up to incorporate other materials and approaches. The most prominent change has been the usage of spray paint along with oil paint. This new methodology created a new style and change in depth of expression. I painted 15 paintings in 9 days, something I had never done before. And 2 days before I moved, I held an art exhibition showing the new work (and some of my older work) to anyone in my own home. I opened my then-empty house to friends, family, and strangers off the street with amazing success. Over 25 pieces were sold and I had this burst of momentum and excitedness I had not felt in years.

The shock of the move itself, however, was, and still is, a bit overwhelming. I've had a very rough time adjusting to a city of 5.5 million people with a completely new mentality I had never encountered or expected in my lifetime. The memories of Portland were long since wiped away forever with my newfound "culture shock". Sure, I've reconnected to the punk scene somewhat, as I have with many other groups of people in this city, but it takes time. I had forgotten that patience is a virtue and that change is inevitable.

Yes, my anxiety attacks have increased. My ego and esteem have been challenged time and time again, and then I naturally started questioning

myself again. But to compensate for it and occupy my time, I set up my own production company online to establish (and document) the culmination of my multi-media skills. That is when I established Kraley Productions in 2006 (www.kraleyproductions.com), and suddenly I realized that life is truly cyclical.

Everything I had taught myself and learned was coming together: art, painting, graphic design, web design, music, and film. I also started working (and am currently in the final stages of production) on a third album, challenging once again my previous approaches to music. Amazingly, one sign of change is the usage of my voice in some songs amongst several instrumentals. I struggled with this initially for months after moving. Why was I so resistant? Then, after several meditations and a conversation with my buddhist friend Christine, she reminded me how simple some things are. Her answer was, "Don't fight it like a fish swimming upstream. Just accept the fact that perhaps you simply have a lot to say. So say it."

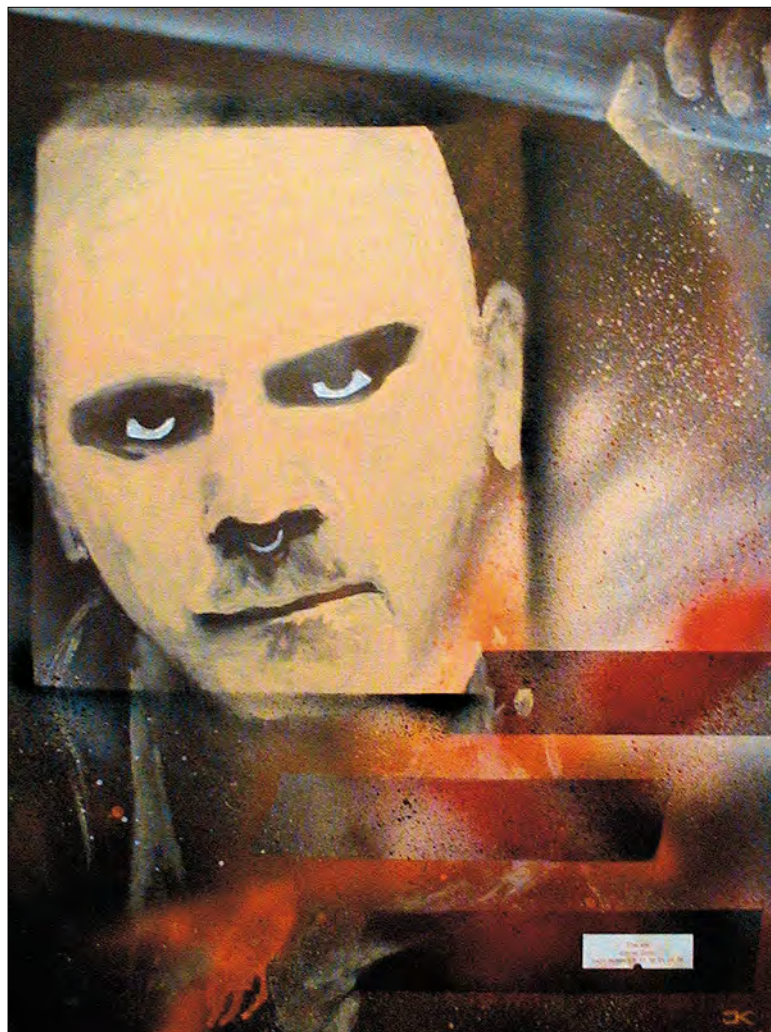
With those words of simplistic wisdom, and continually expressing myself through music, art, design, and film, it has taken over 16 months before finally feeling a sense of direction, momentum, and purpose. My anxiety disorder is something I will have to live with for the rest of my life. Some days are better than others, but my reality is that I have such hopeful changes in the process of adaptation to a new city; a new life. Now, more than ever is it clear that I don't need to believe in a god to have spirituality. I need to believe in myself, I need to stay in the present moment (that's something I constantly have to work on), and I need to keep expressing and creating. I'm not a model buddhist by any means, nor would I ever claim to be. What I am grateful for, however, are the little, simple, yet so incredibly important things I have learned since reading the books and meeting the people I have met who have helped me feel that it's OK to be me. Taking what is useful to me personally and applying it my daily life is not an abuse

of buddhism. It is my own approach to what I think of as “punk buddhism”, or as I’ve been reminded: It is my own spirituality.

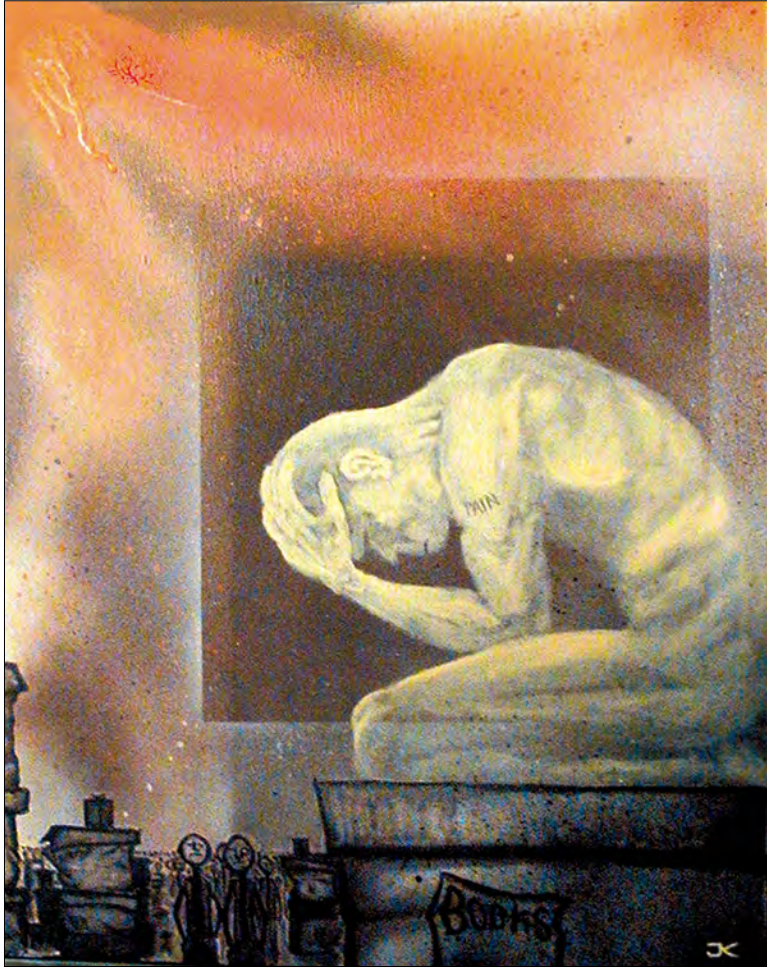


Making New Friends

2005, Oil and spraypaint on canvas, 16" x 20"



You Are Almost There
2005, Oil on and spraypaint canvas, 20" x 26"



Packing Alone

2005, Oil and spraypaint on canvas, 16" x 20"



All That I Am And All That I Ever War
2005, Oil and spraypaint on canvas, 16" x 20"



Monkey See, Monkey Do
2005, Oil and spraypaint on canvas, 24" x 30"

Don't Forget Tom Snyder

David Finn

& Matt said to me, in a dreamy kind of way
As the rock band played
do you like girls, Dave?

& I said to him
oh yeah, don't get the wrong idea
They light this empty heart,
They always have
They always will

Ever since the Second Grade
When we were the kids chasing the kisses,
but when I catch them down by the shelter shed
They always fade away,
Slip right through my fingers,
The things I never have

Been that way right from the start,
Back when we were the Pirate Captains
Who discovered that secret inland sea,

I named it after you
You named it after me

blonde hair like an angel
skull and cross-bones bandana
she got real sick and I gave my soul away
because back then I believed that I had a soul to give away

and we got real drunk and we talked about the blue light
and how space is like an ocean
and she slept in my bed
and we said don't forget, don't forget, don't forget

What about Tom Snyder?
Is he still alive?
I used to watch his show
When I was 20
and stoned and self-aware

What about Tom Snyder?
Is he still alive?
Is he on the air, in America right now?
Maybe just a little pod-cast
Coming straight out of Hollywood

Beaming to the bedrooms of those lonesome teen angels
who are always on sale, no matter what the season
Beaming to the strange places, where the thin junkies hide from the sun
looking like death warmed up,

Beaming to the people, who remember everything
Beaming to the people, who remember everything

I'm not one of them
I'm not one of anything
My feet burn, and this sky is torn,
All the saints such mortal men,
I wonder if Johnny Depp is their hero too

I don't have great tousled hair,
Or a killer smile
To mask the pain
I don't own an acoustic guitar
To play some little tune to sooth your heatache
I don't wear cardigans
To look soulful in Winter

But I wish I was Kurt Cobain
I wish I was John Lennon in the 1970's
I wish I was emo
I wish I was a Free Man in Paris
I wish I was the kind of guy to fall in love with
I wish I was on The Late, Late Show

blonde hair like an angel
skull and cross-bones bandana
she got real sick and I gave my soul away
because back then I believed that I had a soul to give away
back then I believed I had a soul to give away

And Matt said to me, in a dreamy kind of way
As the rock band played
do you like girls, Dave?

& I said to him
oh yeah, don't get the wrong idea
They light this empty heart,
They always have
They always will
Ever since the Second Grade,
When we were the kids chasing the kisses
but when I catch them down by the shelter shed
They always fade away,
Slip right through my fingers,
The things I never have

I miss all my old friends
I miss all the things that passed away
Some nights I can touch all the people in my life
Everybody so far and distant now

Some nights I wake up
& I feel so ashamed
& I wish I had never changed
I wish I had fucked around

A couple of thieves forever, that's what we vowed
I never thought I'd fly straight,

I never thought I would be anything but a cowboy

Just a gun for hire,

Out on the range

With his price

& his scars

& his slender whores

& his Vegas sunset

To ride into and die

To ride into and die

Singing Hi-Ho Silver

Hi-Ho Silver

Hi-Ho Silver

& what about Tom Snyder?

Is he still alive?

Is he on the air, in America right now?

David Finn is from Sydney, Australia. He is a writer of fiction and poetry. He draws most of my poetry inspiration from song lyrics—his favorite artists include Bob Dylan, John Lennon, George Harrison, Chris Cornell, and The Man in Black, Mr Johnny Cash. He is currently completing work on a science time-travel fiction book. He thinks we should follow the dream in our hearts, because they are the most honest thing we have. You can catch him on LiveJournal, <http://redlantern2051.livejournal.com>

“Mary don’t you weep,” and more struggles over sexuality, filth and salvation

Diepiriye Kuku-Siemons

“Mary, don’t you weep. Oh Papa don’t you moan,” goes the old Negro Spiritual’s first few lines. For me, these hymns evoke spirituality and resistance simultaneous to the reality of slaves—the progenitors. Like Mary’s tears, these hymns reflect, contemplate and help make sense of life—whatever life may be. At least on the surface, this was the religion that the progenitors of these spirituals sang, in order to survive. The slave shared this religion with even the most brutal slave master, one who liberally dealt lashes, forced slaves to breed like steed, effortlessly sold off children, regularly raped women, denied paternity and with increasing intensity lynched and castrated men. Such a reality led many to plead for an afterlife as the only plausible relief from such circumstances, crooning “Soon—ah will be done wit’ da troubles of da world. Goin’ home to live with God.” These words solaced Blacks—to get on while retaining some sense of sanity in insane circumstances.

Viewing Christianity as an outsider has since my childhood been an obsessive pastime. Driving down Jefferson Street between downtown and the predominantly African-American, mixed-class “West End,” one experiences an awing institution of religion. This particular pattern is repeated throughout Black communities in America: A menagerie of massive

to mundane churches, all various protestant sects, spanning blocks along the broad road, each boasting massive, congregations and boisterous clergy—one of which my grandparents helped found. Domestic work was the work most available to Black women, and was fraught with the looming threat of sexual exploitation and the resentment from the masters' wives. Men were humiliated by indemnifying work and labor conditions that were unfulfilling and low-wage earning. Under and unemployment among Blacks continues to be exuberant. Like many of their contemporaries, my grandparents had transitioned from cotton fields to the urban south as soon as they could. After WWII, southern Blacks, many of whom had heard first hand account from former slaves, migrated north in hoards. In Kentucky, many flocks of church eventually congregated between 27th and 18th streets on Jefferson. For Blacks in the south, kin was understood and traced through church affiliation. Queries in our vernacular phrases like, "Whose your pastor," "Which church you 'long to," or "Which congregation you 'part of" pervade each new introduction. Churches serve as spiritual safe spaces of communal solace and mobilization. In fact, in the New World it was the only space where we could peacefully congregate.

Even as a non-Christian, the Christian ethos was inescapable. As a Black child in Kentucky, and educated in a schematized liberal, multi-cultural and artistic oriented school, I was constantly affronted with difference. The endeavor of that institution was to bring together so-called races and classes so divided across the city; less attention was given to religion, and even less to sexuality. Our teachers and curriculum overtly acknowledged and celebrated Jewish people as a minority, yet offered little education about Judaism beyond the superficial set of facts deemed necessary to know by the Euro-Christian hegemony—one which Blacks consistently subverted for its inequality, and yet strangely many buy into for its promise to reward discipline and diligence with power. The Euro-American

Christian ethos justified the exploitation and continued disempowerment of Black people in America as we were deemed descendents of Ham—the fallen son of Noah. Thunderous leaders of large local African-American congregations used the same Christian-fundamentalist doctrine to resist hate crimes and anti-discrimination in employment and housing initiatives to protect queer people that white supremacists use/d to justify Slavery, Jim Crow (American Apartheid), racial segregation, contemporary social segregation, discrimination, as well as the so called redemptive penal system. Now it seems as if the whole world looks and laughs at our American antics: The systematic race and class bias of our penal system contrast with pop cultural reward for the poor, the Black and the meager all just laughing and smiling on stage as if none of this has happened—as if systematic disenfranchisement were not the definitive basis for power and wealth in America. The rhetoric simultaneously encourages alterity while demonizing the Other.

By the mid 1980's multi-culturalism had become a national obsession, like a trend slowly taking hold in urban and eventually rural communities alike. I was raised Buddhist. My family is religiously mixed, which facilitated early acculturation to the idea of loving and respecting another despite fundamental, radically important theological and cosmological rifts and therefore responses to present day suffering. Confounding alterity in my world, at a very early age I became aware of what I then considered my 'deviant' sexuality. In my mind, it made sense that since people of such conflicting and deep ideological differences could seamlessly consider one another as kin, then wider acculturation of differences in sexuality should certainly follow in the very same thread.

By seventh grade, just when I started to actively contemplate and attempt to understand my homosexuality, my best girlfriend grew breasts. Frankly, by Thanksgiving Alicia was voluptuous. Her breasts were huge,

larger even than several of our teachers, most of whom were slender and white. I believe that more than a few resented this. It was as if the presence of my best girlfriend fed them angst—though just a child. I resisted believing that the hostility could be envy; for Alicia and I were only kids; I did not want to believe that we were threatening. Yet, I could not ignore how many adults began to relate to her with contempt. Her presence evoked a defensiveness and aggression.

I was always on the look out for the same response of contempt, which I generally only received from kids who were not in my immediate environment. I worked very hard to avoid provoking the hostility I often felt when meeting strangers—kids clearly the cruelest by virtue of being crude ambassadors of a culture of intolerance. As soon as they heard my funny, African name, or perceived that I was effeminate, their look and tone would shift and conveyed such great contempt. I developed many successful strategies to avoid this response from adults. Largely, adults recognized the general inappropriateness of contempt and hostility towards a child, notably one that showed reverence and respect to adults. Further, most adults with whom I interacted as a child were either aware or would be presented with my accolades: I was a ‘product’ of the most socially progressive and academically challenging public school in the city; I spoke vernacular and Standard American English both with great articulation; adults either exoticized or romanticized my African heritage; I belonged to an infamously inter-cultural and inter-class religio-spiritual community; I was active in various artistic, academic and athletic groups; and I did not shy away from engaging adults in conversation. Compared to most Black people in that city, I was relatively ‘progressive’ and well off in the localized cultural currency. To this day, most people I meet freely assume that I come from a solidly middle class family—known in urban India as “a good family.”

This is the social currency with which we contend in the South, and for which Black families nudge and fight over either collectively or discursively—hoping to gain acceptance, success and perhaps affirmation in a patriarchal masculine system. By virtue that patriarchy incessantly dehumanizes us and teaches us to mimic the same patterns of dominance/subordination, it is not our culture; it cannot be. Simply, it is not life affirming for women, people of color, and anyone else whose very existence challenges its status of control, despite any amount of cultural currency we may gain in order to play and succeed at the game.

Patriarchal masculinity is not just prejudice. Prejudices based on perceived racial or class differences, for example, inform everyday interactions—repeating and therefore reinforce the patriarchal power-oriented paradigm of dominance to mediate relationships. It extends beyond the ability that one individual has to oppress another—for example an adult slapping a child, an employer yelling at his/her employees, didactic teaching, or even lovers resolving conflict through deception, coercion or violence. Patriarchal masculinity informs each of these interactions, affirming individual power to oppress another through repeating the pattern of violence, intimidation, dominance/superiority and underlying subversion of intimacy in order to create and maintain (power) distance.

“Prejudice plus power,” is the ability and reasoning of one group of people to determine the destiny of another group of people. We have a culture of endemic violence, intimidation coercion and entitlement, manifest as systematic discrimination and oppression. It is not safe. It deems that even basic communication between people becomes a power play—a threat of humiliation, assertion of authority or even violence, where one must win and one must lose. All are armed and shielded, inevitably at some point turning those defenses and that armament inwards. Patriarchal masculinity often ‘reads’ this armor as cockiness on the part of women and

people of color, 'bitchiness' on Queer people, or even read as belligerence on Black men. Black women, of course, are simply wanton whores in that paradigm. This armor was, and still is necessary for any non-mainstream child growing up in America and especially in the so-called 'Commonwealth' of Kentucky. This type of democracy presupposes majority/minority polarization—someone is always bound to get screwed.

By the seventh grade, my best friend was suiting up with her armor as well. Her breasts and my effeminacy evoked negative sexual connotations and many responded as if we were very threatening. Attending the same school since the second grade, she and I had been longtime friends so it was easy for us to side with one another over the issue of public scrutiny of our emerging sexualities. Many of my earliest memories of any issues surrounding sexuality involve she and I gradually coming to terms with the discord between the innocence and curiosity with which we saw ourselves and what our world expected of us.

Even as early as the second grade when we referred to intercourse as "doin' the oochie coochie," most of my male classmates had already been socialized to relate to sex as a conquest over females—as if it were our duty as males to conquer in any way, by any means, her untamed sexual prowess. Perhaps we were curious and creative, for our discursiveness brought relief to otherwise muted hues, particularly in times and in places adverse to comprehensive sexual health education. Though at that age we lacked any language to discuss these circumstances outside of our juvenile understanding of racism, I believe that Alicia also felt that we were unduly treated. After all, just as in the praxis of racism, we had no say in the matter; it was simply nature taking its course. Alicia's family was also deeply Christian, and non-reticent to accept a universal hierarchy that simultaneously justified the system of oppression in which we are entwined, and offered no respite.

I will never forget one particular late autumn afternoon during English class. It must have been the last class of the day as Alicia and I had hurried through our assignments. We raced to the teacher's desk, handed in the papers and just as quickly returned to our seats, anxious to continue our usual chatter. In a hushed voice, Alicia revealed to me that her conservative Christian denomination neither fêted on Christmas and Easter nor worshipped any idols such as flags. I felt like swinging from the lights as she explained this, because finally there was someone who could articulate what I felt.

By then I was beginning to question patriotism and the purpose of the nation-state system; I was repulsed by its symbols, none of which reflected positive views of me or anyone like me. The whole thing seemed artificial—a sham. We all knew that Blacks were not even legally 100% human for most of our time here in the New World. She and I also talked about the 'August the Eighth', which is when we in Kentucky mark the Emancipation Proclamation Declaration. Alicia gave me a sly grin as I told her about my summer trips down to Hopkinsville, Kentucky to just be Black and celebrate 'August the Eighth' with other Black people for a week each year.

I was enamored at her rejection of the 'good ole boy' system. This is how we referred to what I now name as the white Christian patriarchal masculine middle-class monopolization of regional, state, county and local politics, much to the disenfranchisement of our communities and people. In Social Studies class, we had spent months on sanitized white-American history, weeks on European history, days on African-American history (as if it were somehow separate from 'American' history) and just hours on the histories and cultures of non-Western peoples. Though the city boasted neighborhoods and parks with names like Shawnee, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Seneca and Iroquois, there was not even a mention of the Trail of Tears in all of my education in Kentucky.

Most of what we learnt about the world outside of Western Europe, Russia, North America and Israel revolved around the colonial experience. Absolutely no information was presented in any of my public school education regarding non-white and non-wealthy people and places outside of the colonial experience. Hence, the “Third World” conditions in which poor Blacks in the West End of Louisville, poor whites towards the north, and the isolated southeast Asian slum in the south was all justified by this universal position of dominance of those seeking wealth at any expense.

Alicia realized that these slightly non-mainstream aspects of her life unclouded the lenses often worn by those in the world around she and I. We were minorities within minorities, in a place where we knew that we were expected to be different and to make a difference, by all of the adults in both our families and in school. Adults in our environment never accorded us the simplicity of ‘being’. Whenever we exited our homes, we carried the responsibility of representing. Right there, in the seventh grade, as Alicia fumbled through endless ways of folding her arms to hide her new chest, I realized that if I thought about boys the way that our guy friends boasted about their conquests over girls, I could somewhat relate to their juvenile sexual sentiments. Buried and hidden deep in the corners of my mind I started to eroticize males the way the world around me eroticized women and girls, and it felt good. Nonetheless, I knew that I did not (nor wish to) relate to conquering or boasting over my erotic interests.

Alicia lived in a family that staunchly discouraged the very thought of sex. Though my family was relatively forward about sexuality among young people, I never encountered an adult who was ready to approach the topic of homosexuality. Despite this, I knew that I was surrounded by a plethora of love. I had visited Alicia’s home several times after school, and knew her elder siblings who attended the same school. I realized that Alicia was insecure about any support for her searching for understanding. Though we

could not offer each other any information, we offered each other acceptance. In the circumstances in which we lived in Louisville, I have always been cognizant that I am extremely fortunate to have known such acceptance at such a young age. Clearly, Alicia helped to teach me to give that in return. We knew that we were vulnerable, but she helped train me to be tough in spite, and despite of it all. And, to act wicked and love every minute of it.

By the end of the seventh grade, it was clear that my best girlfriend would be labeled a problem child. Alicia had demonstrated several instances of violence in school. I knew that she was just acting out at a world that demonized her to her face, and continually ignored and effaced her voice. I wanted to act out too, but not for the strong presence of my mother and her determination to development me to know and love myself, relish in the freedom of mobility, mentally free of class oppression and lust to know and engage the world. Inevitably, I knew that I would leave Kentucky, which I did at 17 only months after high-school graduation. In the seventh grade, however, my best friend, the first person to ever stand up to those who would gay bash me, was not encouraged to develop her own self-esteem. Her mother had several children, no other parental or communal support but the church, which left little time for parenting past strict disciplining. This, it was clear even to a twelve year old, would not suffice to develop my best friend into a vibrant woman who would be comfortable with her body and her sexuality in a patriarchal, racist and misogynistic environment.

It was years after her expulsion from our school that I heard any concrete news about my best friend. Apparently, she had been shuffled from public school to public school, and had eventually shot a teacher in the ear at the school for ill-behaved students. This was a time and in a place where a child was more likely to have access to a gun than a condom. The word was that Alicia would be expelled from that school, which then left such youth with little opportunities in life in general, and a severely retarded

opportunity to earn a high school or equivalent degree. Our school system was apt, effective and efficient in producing poor, mal-educated, Black youth with criminal 'record and resonance' with local cops!

In our eighth grade Physical Education course, we were offered the new and improved sexual education curricula, which had been totally re-invented that year to include comprehensive contraception information, responding to the increasing incidence of teenage pregnancy and, at that time, the onset of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. I started to pray that none of my friends would get pregnant, raped or contract some disease. Protectively, I even dated one girl whom I often walked home from school, knowing that with me she would never have intercourse, and that my masculinity had no intention of dominating, conquering or coercing her. Most of our peers were preyed upon by older, presumably heterosexual, boys; many such girls were easily coerced into unprotected sex. This pre-mature 'sexperimentation' and lack of appropriate information constituted their sexual debut. In retrospect, both the girls and their elder male counterparts lacked positive modeling of behavior in our environment as well as sufficient sexual guidance appropriate to their level of physical and mental maturity. I still remember that first girl to leave our school for the teen-mothers' school, which simply left me wondering who would follow suit.

Vicariously, I experienced many first, second, and perhaps tenth sexual experiences through the network I had developed by middle school. I believed, as I do now, that my female peers earnestly sensed my sexuality was not one of dominance vis-à-vis theirs and therefore concluded that my masculinity was of no threat to them as they would not be judged or labeled; this made me privy to their rather informative chatter. Certainly, I also wanted to date and rush to indulge my friends with the details of those crush-induced heart palpitations like everyone else in all my entire eighth grade class. Like everyone else, I may have also wanted to experiment with

sex. Having several slightly elder female cousins, I was also able to see how the onset of puberty and experimentation with sex played out at home. I collected a great many facts about female adolescent sexuality among urban Blacks in Louisville in the mid-eighties to nineties. This insight led me to conclude that my emerging sexuality was threatening and taboo.

In the early days, I worked tirelessly to maintain an image of a high-achieving, well-adjusted adolescent in order to detract from my sexuality and perhaps compensate (or my penance) for effeminacy. Sometimes I felt I should not have any sexuality, especially not one resembling my own homosexuality. I sustained this facade for many years to come. In my environment, women and girls demonstrated healthy relationships based on open communication amongst one another, mutual consent, acceptance, consistency and respect. With the notable exception of my mother's parents and their relationship with me, in my environment and even popular culture many relationships between men, women and men, adults and children, were all based on domination, and few did little to question that. By the time it became evident to me that I was gay, I had been able to surround myself with enough caring women and girls, be they family or friends, who were prepared to accept knowing about my gayness and continue to support me.

Every now and again, I think of my best, best, 'bestest' girlfriend, Alicia. On one trip home from college, I bumped into Alicia at a burger joint. There she was, still smiling, happy as ever to see me. I tried my best not to make her feel embarrassed. She had been bitterly cast away from the school where I later graduated as a star student. She was working the cash register at a second rate fast-food chain in an obscure neighborhood while I was away excelling at an exclusive small liberal arts college. We spoke for a while and caught up. I do not remember if she had any kids. Her high and full cheeks shone as I recounted the past few years of my life. Her ever cheerful, glossed-

over eyes betrayed the fact that she had faced her share of adversity is what short lives we had lived thus far.

**TWO ROADS DIVERGED...
AND SORRY I COULD NOT TRAVEL BOTH[†]**

I left the greasy burger joint and hurriedly trailed down the street. Once I knew that I had cleared eyeshot of the restaurant, tears burst from my eyes, as they do now as I recount this story to myself. All Alicia knew that she could rely on was her church. Even that community was not able to supplement whatever tools she lacked to overcome her circumstances, which I first sensed when we both became conscious of our sexualities. Upon that chance meeting, Alicia showed me that her life was barely above water, fighting her environment for even a chance at breaking the cycle of poverty bestowed to us. Social rejection from peers and adults, as well as lack of positive role models appropriate information leads many to such an enormous deficit in self-confidence—a deficit that reduces life-choices. Cognizance of such a systematic deficit can lead to ambivalence or rage. I still try to sift through the factors that push the lives of two people in such different directions, whose lives cross paths for such a good while. We shared the scope of the planet and it as clear now as it was then that there exists little space for alterity. Yet, for those years in elementary and middle school however, we both had a chance to give and receive love.

[†] From Robert Frost's poem "The Road Less Traveled."

Three Poems

Matt Mallon

THE SIDE EFFECTS OF FAITH

The days rip and tear at the seams
Of their own machinery;
Their deaths mirror bruises,
All black and blue,
Hung on cosmic cross.
And their resurrections are
Infernos,
Cast in slow mo,
Contained within
A flame-kissed globe.
Each life-cycle
Rips with a hiss
Of deflated hope,
And flecks of rain fallen
From an eyeball atmosphere.
A static sermon preaches
A benediction of
Destruction,

“Weep and rejoice,
For you harvest your
Own oblivion
With each dream
That tastes like salvation
In every realm except
The three dimensional.”
I wail a throbbing sorrow
Till the notes become beautiful,
And the words prayers
To a loving
And understanding God.

IT HAS DAWNED UPON ME

When dawn's truth serenades an onyx sky,
Nocturnal melodies decay and mute—
Their voices disappear with their midnight.
How the sun's golden franchise, ripe with skill
Annexes land and blooming air; just look!
On the horizon, petals of gold unfurl—
A solar monopoly is born.
With space ensnared in goldenrod wonder,
The hands of time tied in suspension; just
What is this world to do, but breathe the peace
Of creation, and live like they know how?

MY CHILD

Bedazzled by a spell of sleep,
Dreams drunk off golden slumber;
Awakened by a voice so deep,
Time's echoes cry, outnumbered.

Yet gentle with grace abounding,
From birth I have adored
The rumble sweetly sounding—
How could I mistake the Lord?

“My child, sweet child, your tears!
They glimmer like the morning dew;
Halcyon lakes of mortal fears,
Dying tenderly in blue.

“Though hardships often you may find,
My light, like stars, it guides you;
In mortals bless your virtue kind,
And thy path, it shall be true.”

“But Lord, dear Lord, how so?
I lie battered by their hate;
It cloaks me like the virgin snow,
Yet thousand-fold the weight.

“Exploding with violet is my skin,

And my soul aglow with red;
I lay in pain as devils grin,
And wish that I were dead.”

“But child, hurt child, the love!
It waxes strong with life around you;
Heaven breathes it from above—
A sacred rain of essence true.

“So love until the hate recedes,
And you’ve nothing else to give;
Put aside your petty needs,
And then, you too can live.”

Matt Mallon is a student at Edwardsville High School in Edwardsville, Illinois, a suburb of St. Louis, and a self-proclaimed poetry nerd.

Moons

Christopher Woods

He found five moons along a road where no one traveled much anymore. The road stretched between an old mining town and another town that sat beside a river.

He was new to this part of the country. He had been walking a very long time. Maybe for years, but he had not kept count, of time or the miles. He didn't think much of it, how long or how far he had walked.

Once, he lived in a small town. He lived in an orphanage. And he lived there because he had no parents, and no family. No one, and especially not him, knew who his mother and father had been.

Like the moons, he too had been found along a road, a different road of course, but a road just the same. A family, on a picnic outing, had found him. He was still a baby. He lay in a basket that was very much like the picnic basket this family had. Their basket was full of fried chicken and salad and cherry pie. In his basket, he was alone. And he was hungry.

The family took him to a nearby town. No one should be without someone to care for him, the family was thinking. They showed him to a woman in that town. The woman said there was a place for people like that, people no one wanted, just around the corner. It was an orphanage, and a lot of children lived there. So the family, wanting to get on with their picnic, took him to that place.

Now, as he walked between the old mining town and the town beside the river, the man tried to remember all that, now so long ago. He did not remember very much of his early times in the orphanage. He could remember the noise from all those children who, like himself, had nowhere else to go.

And he remembered something else, very well. It was how the other children, one by one, left the orphanage. A family would come for a child and leave with one in their arms, or sitting beside them in a car. He had friends, and this is how they all left.

But he never left. No one ever came for him. He saw many families he would have gone with, but when they left it was always with someone else. The years passed this way, until he felt extraordinarily sad. He felt like no one in the whole world wanted him. No one at all.

He ran away. He left the orphanage one night while everyone else was asleep. He slipped out a window and climbed down a trellis covered with jasmine. He climbed down the side of the building in that small town. It was summer, and fireflies gathered around him as he climbed down. They wondered what he was doing. They circled him in the air and lit his way down to the ground below. And he, seeing the fireflies all around him, felt like he was falling through space. The night was black, but the fireflies, maybe hundreds of them, lit up the night sky like so many stars.

No one saw him leave. He began walking on one road, then another, then another still. After some time, and many roads, he realized he would not be able to find his way back to the small town and the orphanage. Not that he wanted to go back. It was only that he couldn't be sure where he was going, or where he might end up. So, not knowing the way back, he could only keep walking. There was always another road.

Sometimes people in houses along roads would give him something to eat. Some would even give him food to take along for later. And every

person had but one question for him. They would watch him eat and drink, and they would ask him where he was going. And he would always have the same answer. He would smile, and say nothing.

He would say nothing because he did not know where he was going, or when he would arrive there. But he smiled because he thought there would be something good up ahead, or down the next road. He didn't know why he felt this way. He only knew that he did.

It was a very large country. Roads took him up into the mountains, along beaches by the sea, through valleys and great cities. There were always enough roads, and he was glad for this. And he was thankful for all the people who showed him kindnesses along the way. Someday, he thought to himself, he would find a way to thank them all. But of course he had no idea how he would do this.

Then, one day, he found himself out along a road where no one traveled much. He saw no one for several days. He was hungry. He had some dried fruit that someone had given him a few days before, and he ate the fruit sparingly.

It was getting dark now. Walking along, thinking how hungry he was, he saw something up ahead on the road. The road itself seemed to shimmer. Coming closer, he saw what was making the shimmering glow.

There were small moons, five of them, sitting in the middle of the road. He had never seen anything so beautiful in his life. He had never imagined moons like this, so small, so full of light.

He wondered if they were hot, or cold. It was a hard thing to know. Very slowly, he reached down and touched one. It was warm. He touched the others, which were also warm. He picked one up. He picked up another. There was no harm or hurt in this. When he had picked up three of them, he thought of something. He threw the three moons into the air and began

juggling with them. And even though he had never juggled in his life, it came easy to him.

It was so easy, in fact, that he soon had all five moons in the air at once. They drifted in small circles, and he remembered the fireflies that night when he left the orphanage.

He wondered what he should do with the moons. He wondered where they had come from. Maybe they had fallen from the sky. He looked up, but he could not see any holes in the sky. Left like they had been on the road, he didn't think they belonged to anyone.

He decided something. He would keep these moons. He would take care of them. And he would share them. Moons like these, moons so very beautiful, were much too fine to keep to oneself, he thought.

The moons in his pockets, he began walking again. He came to the town beside the river. He could see it was a sad town. People living there were poor. People there had depended on the town where the mine had been. It had been a gold mine, but now there was no more gold. People in the town beside the river had put the gold on ships that sailed all over the world. Now, without gold, no ships came. The town was without a reason for being, it seemed. People still lived there, but they no longer knew why.

Coming into the town beside the river, he knocked on the door of the first house. A woman, old and frail, came to the door. He took a moon from his pocket and showed it to her. Her mouth dropped open. That's a fine looking moon you have there, she said. So he took the others from his pocket and showed them to her. She could not believe his moons.

He juggled all the moons for the old woman. And while he did this, he asked if she had ever seen them before. He wanted to know if someone had lost them, if he needed to return them to someone.

The woman, who said she had lived in the town beside the river for seventy-five years, shook her head. She had known gold, much gold, but

never moons. And she too looked up into the sky, looking for moon holes. But the sky seemed fine to her.

Soon a neighbor woman, who had been watching from her window, came over. Then another neighbor came. And others. Before long, it seemed that the entire town had come to see the moons.

The townspeople loved the moons, not only because they were so lovely, but because they were certain there were no other moons like that anywhere in the world. And they liked the man who had brought the moons. Even gold is not as beautiful as your moons, they told him. And gold doesn't have faces like moons do, said someone else.

Then something very wonderful, and quite unexpected, happened. The townspeople asked him to stay. If he stayed, they promised to build a moon museum. And next to that museum, they would build a house where the moon man, as they called him now, could live.

He thought of many things. He thought of the fireflies that had once circled him as he climbed down backwards on the trellis from the orphanage. He thought of a thousand roads he had walked along, never knowing where they would lead, or where he would end up.

He wondered why he had found the moons. Anyone could have found them, he knew, even on a road so few traveled. He felt there was a reason why he had been allowed to discover them.

He was tired of walking. He was tired of being hungry. These people wanted him to stay. They would build him a house. They would build a museum for his moons.

He thought about something else as well. He had no idea where the moons had come from. Maybe from the sky, though no one could see that they were missing from there. Maybe from the earth, but no one could be sure of this. Maybe, he thought, the moons had fallen out of someone's dream.

But wherever they came from, he didn't think it fair to take them away from the town where he had found them. The town, which no longer had a reason for being, could now be known for its moons. If he stayed, maybe the town would not die.

People would come from all over to see the moons, to touch them, to see the faces inside them.

That night, he juggled the moons for all to see. The moons glowed in the darkness. He knew there was only one thing in the world more beautiful than the moons, and that was belonging somewhere.

Christopher Woods is the author of a novel, *The Dream Patch*, a collection of prose poems and short fictions called *Under A Riverbed Sky*, and a collection of monologues for stage, *Heart Speak*. He lives in Houston and in Chappell Hill, Texas.

Meditation

Laurie Corzett

Sitting, meditating
on self-hallowed ground
surrounded and succored
by the spirit of life.
It isn't easy
turning on the tide
being the talk of the town
the laughing stock
the example for errant schoolboys,
don't want to end up like him.
Yet no thing is easier.
Moving with the rhythm
natural, unafraid.
Beat by beat,
sometimes a song appears.
It sings with me and the crickets,
the cicadas, the bees and birds
and chittering creatures.
We dance a little jig,
breathing, breathing

inspiration, exhalation, exhilaration.
Bit by bit the sunshine
infuses with my cells.
I am opening. I am learning.
I am being made new.
All it takes is total dedication,
not a renouncing,
not a denying,
not what one would call a discipline,
just total awe and gratitude
for sweet layer unto exquisitely beautiful layer
as each is revealed.

Laurie Corzett/libramoon publishes the visionary art ezine Emerging Visions: <http://emergingvisions.blogspot.com/> You can also see more of her work on her webpage: <http://www.geocities.com/libramoon.geo/> and her blog, libramoon's observatory: <http://www.lulu.com/libramoon>

The Chopped Liver Sutra

Jonathan C. Sampson

1

Rapturous mountains and billboards so quaint,
Overgrown as kudzu or sparse as the desert,
There's nothing unnatural in any of it.

Satori doesn't care if it's lonely or loved,
If it's strolling down a mist-laden valley of sequoias
Or chugging on a rusty locomotive through industrial swampland.

It's a joy beyond joy.
Which means it's unconditional.
Which means you can only choose it right now.

2.

All things were in Nirvana from the start.

Even your headache: it isn't a headache.

How can it be that your headache is a headache?

It's just a part of the furniture in this cozy little alcove of the mansions of
heaven.

Your most deluded ambition is beatific in itself.

There's not a chance of failing.

When you're young, it's time to play at catching butterflies.

When you're older, it's time to play at being a serious butterfly hunter.

When you're senile, it's time to play.

3.

Lust, latte, and cigarettes, greenery and grime,
Are glowposts all, a vast mandala, chiming, their suchness all stuff.

The myriad signs are pristinely empty of meaning, let alone
meaninglessness.



Every fawn knows the language of trust and fear,
Lovingkindness and greedy murder.

Whence this tragic specialness?

If your dad ditched his seed at a different tilt, you would still exist.

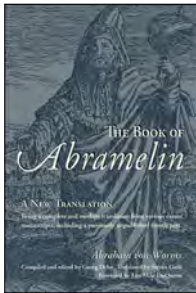
Any face trades for your own.

So if I said you're chopped liver, what I meant is: you're a son of man.

A natural born adventurer, **Jonathan Sampson** used a technical Ph. D. as a
springboard to live and work in various countries.
JonathanCSampson@yahoo.com

Reviews

The Book of Abramelin, Abraham von Worms
(Ibis Books, 2006, 272pp, hardcover, \$45.00)



Since noted Golden Dawn magician S.L. MacGregor Mathers first produced his English translation of the magic of Abramelin, the work has become one of the most studied sources for modern magicians. The heart of the work is a complex and time-consuming operation aimed at attaining ‘The Knowledge and Conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel.’ The goal of the working, conducted over months, is to gain contact with your personal god, higher self or Adi-Buddha. Aleister Crowley chose to base the core of his system on this working. In *Magick In Theory and Practice* Crowley declared the Abramelin method to be “so patently absurd that only simpletons would waste much time in analyzing it.” Despite old Crowley’s assumption, beginning with Mathers, himself, generations of subsequent magicians have squandered countless hours analyzing the various sections of the work.

Mathers based his translation on a French manuscript he discovered at the Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal in Paris. Mathers was a skillful translator of occult material. His source document, a later French translation in the case

of the Abramelin material, however, was extremely flawed as Lon Milo DuQuette notes in his forward. Now there is a new translation of the grimoire compiled and edited by Georg Dehn, translated by Steven Guth. Dehn tracked down several versions of the work in other European archives. Several of these predated the flawed manuscript Mathers worked from.

Abramelin was originally written in German in the late 14th or early 15th centuries. The work is separated into four books, each containing a treatise on a component of the system—ranging from Kabbalah, magical recipes, the Guardian Angel material and a mysterious series of magical squares. Of course the heart of Abraham's work is the self-initiation rite based on gaining contact with a godlike entity that is intrinsically connected to the individual magician.

This new translation is a must for any modern magician—especially those seeking to understand the Crowleyan system. Dehn uncovered numerous differences between Mather's manuscript and the older sources to which Dehn had access. The magical squares that comprise Book Four, for example, are very different in the French manuscript than in the original German editions. In Mathers' work the squares contain a series of letters and blank spaces. In the German material, the squares are filled out in their entirety. Mathers spent hours analyzing and attempting to decode these mysterious squares. To think, he wasted so much time attempting to fathom the hidden mysteries of what it would now appear was a copyist's error.

Also included in this edition is a foreword by Lon Milo DuQuette and a series of very useful and informative appendixes. These include: a re-telling of the translator's own quest for the secret behind Abramelin; an argument for the historical personage behind the Abraham von Worms non de plume; a search for Abramelin's hermitage; examinations of the work's Kabbalistic connections, the word squares and spirit names; and an analysis of

Abraham's links to modern Jewish scholarship. Numerous illustrations from the original sources are included throughout.

Generation Loss, Elizabeth Hand

(Small Beer Press, 2007, 254pp, hardcover, \$24.00)

Review by Craig Laurance Gidney



Cassandra Neary is a burn out in the early 2000s, living in a rent-controlled apartment in New York City, working in the stockroom of a large bookstore, dealing with grief (a lost lover) and her considerable chemical addictions. Her brief moment in the sun occurred in the mid 70s, when she gained fame and a book deal as a photographer. Her photographs chronicled the dark side of the nascent punk scene in New York City, capturing scenesters dead or dying of drug overdoses or crime scene victims. She never produced a second book, became an alcoholic and fell from grace into obscurity, eclipsed by the work of Cindy Sherman and Annie Leibowitz. So when a friend from the old days offers her a chance to interview and take photographs of her hero, the reclusive Aphrodite Kamestos, it's an assignment that she can't resist, even if it opens up old wounds.

When she arrives in Maine, she finds herself unprepared for both the chilly weather and the brooding psychic atmosphere of the coast and its islands. Neary's natural intuitive nature is stirred. She is drawn to the dark side of life like a moth to flame, and we all know what happens to the moth in that situation. Her sixth sense' is a blessing and a curse, something she's carried around with her for ages.

"I had from earliest childhood a sense that there was a skin between me and the world. I saw things that other people didn't see. Hands that slipped

through gaps in the air like falling leaves; a jagged outline like a branch but there was no branch and no tree.... Once, when I was fourteen, walking in the woods, I stepped from the trees into a field where the long grasses had been flattened by sleeping deer. I looked up into the sky and saw a mirror-image of the grass, black and yellow-grey whorls making a slow clockwise rotation like a hurricane. As I stared the whorl began to move more quickly, drawing a darkness to its center until it resembled a vast striated eye that was all pupil, contracting on itself yet never disappearing.”

The island where Aphrodite lives is bleak and beautiful. It was the subject of her galvanizing series of photographs that inspired Cass to become a photographer herself. The island and the surrounding archipelago are filled with local eccentrics and survivors from an abandoned commune that Kamestos and her husband presided over. Cass finds the landscape challenging, to say the least, and her meeting with Kamestos is explosive. It turns out that Kamestos, who is notoriously reclusive, was not expecting Neary. Not only that, Aphrodite is the patron goddess of burn out. She’s rude, paranoid, and occasionally violent. Luckily, her son Gryffyn, who is also staying with her, is stable and offers to have Neary stay with them overnight.

Trapped on a small island, the resolute city dweller explores the landscape and its history, and uncovers a decades old mystery that surrounds Kamestos, her son, and the surviving members of the commune. Neary’s premonition and photographic expertise comes into play during the harrowing climax of the novel.

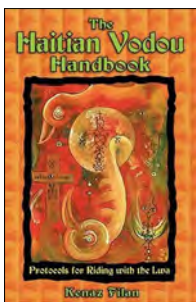
In Cass Neary, Hand has created a memorable character. Her passion for photography is filtered through this novel, and her descriptions, done in Neary’s voice, are spectral and unforgettable. Neary is a mess, a bit of a shit disturber, and a severe alcoholic. She is a force of nature on this island of lost souls, and Hand makes her just this side of sympathetic. She moves through

life in haze of Jack Daniel's and prescription narcotics. How she becomes an unlikely heroine is a fascinating character arc.

The Maine landscape is another character in this book. Hand moved there in the late 80s, and her love/hate relationship with its wintry wild beauty comes through. She (and Neary) turn Maine into a terrifying place, full of dead trees, cold water, rocks, and barely tamed nature. It's a place that you have to make a bargain with before it will let you see its treasures.

Hand's pet theme, the relationship between art and madness, comes through here clearly. Neary, Kamestos and the commune's survivors walked the razor's edge in search of art, and all are damaged by it. The title of the novel is perfect. Generation Loss is a photographic term, referring to reproduction of an image into another form (i.e., film to JPEG) and the clarity you lose in the transfer. It also refers to the lost generation of 70's—both Neary and the doomed artists' colony haven't fared well in the new century, and have to adapt. Hand has created a thriller about the emotional underpinnings of art—and it succeeds on both the visceral and meditative levels.

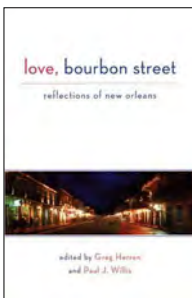
The Haitian Vodou Handbook: Protocols for Riding with the Lwa,
Kenaz Filan (Destiny Books, 2007, 283pp, \$16.95)



Kenaz Filan has succeeded where many before have failed. *The Haitian Vodou Handbook* (emphasis on the “handbook”) is a highly practical and informative starter's guide. Too many books on the subject take an anthropological approach, choose the easy path of the sensational or hide behind the veil of secrecy and import little or no practical knowledge. Filan approaches his subject with respect and reverence. He goes as far as his oaths will allow in

imparting the details of the tradition. He provides a brief overview of Haitian Vodou's origins, background and historical context. He then provides a detailed chapter on each of the major Lwas providing their history, insights into their personality and methods of serving them. He finishes the book by covering the various levels of initiation giving enough information to impart understanding without compromising his oaths. Where his oaths prevent him from giving details, he draws on his experience with Wicca to provide appropriate substitutes. Filan's book provides all the necessary information, and then some, to get one started in serving the Lwa. For those wishing to continue their exploration of the subject, the author provides extensive references and pointers to sources of information, internet resources and suppliers. While with a tradition such as Vodou no book can be a substitute for initiation and direct interaction with elders of the tradition, *The Haitian Vodou Handbook* provides a great place to begin.

Love, Bourbon Street: Reflections of New Orleans, edited by Greg Herren and Paul J. Willis (Alyson Book, 2006, 226pp, hardcover, \$24.95)

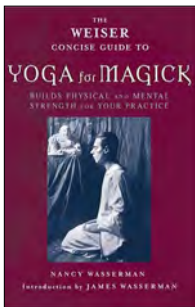


As the debate over the Iraq war captivates our attention and we're sucked prematurely into a presidential election, the devastation of hurricane Katrina seems a distant memory. The continuing struggle of one of the nation's greatest cities to recover is only a rare blip in the national media—the occasional article in the *Times* or a filler piece on the cable news. From my own recent sojourns to the city, I don't doubt that the city will come back—though the jury is still deliberating how changed the resurrected queen shall be. One of the common threads running through the pieces contained in *Love,*

Bourbon Street is the consensus that a rebuilt New Orleans will never be the same again. It is sad to contemplate the possibilities—the French Quarter turned into a Disney Land styled resort or well financed land speculators buying up the ravaged Ninth Ward—but one has to have faith, I suppose, that the very unique spirit of the city will take care of its own. As Greg Herren observes in a blog posting, reproduced in his piece, the French Quarter is the heart of New Orleans and if it has survived than the city will too. The wet sidewalks of Bourbon Street will still possess their unique perfumed mixed of beer and urine rising in the humidity. Love, immense grieving and hope are the things that strike me about these stories collected in the months after Katrina from folks for whom the city was lover (current or ex seemed to make little difference to the lingering emotional impact). The editors are ideally suited to their editorial task. They have a love and knowledge of their city subject that only a transplant could—they know what life was like *before* moving home. Willis and Herren organize the annual Saints & Sinners Literary Festival held each spring in the Quarter. New Orleans is a singular city, unlike any other in the United States. Victoria Brownwerth describes it as a *fleur de mal*—“incalculably perfect, incalculably damaged.” It is indeed a Baudelarian city—ancient, seedy, threadbare, dangerous while possessing all the hubris and attitude of a 19th century aesthete. Brownworth acutely observes that the city “is a place where people come specifically to be bad, to escape their own inherent goodness.” She is siren lover prostitute all rolled into one. The title of the collection proves a misnomer, for the pieces are indeed love letters *to* the city, not from her. The Crescent City holds a magical power like a beautiful and mysterious lover. When Patricia Nell Warren writes, for her “New Orleans is the only city in America where I knew I’d been there already when I finally arrived,” I know that same strange, and exhilarating, feeling walking through the Quarter for the first time. Others write of the pain

flying out of the city after a visit, tears of separation at leaving a city they had just discovered and a home they had never known they had. I know this emotion all too well, the feeling of tearing loss taking off from Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport not knowing when I will return. Herren and Willis's book kept me from wanting to put it down as few books have in these days with review copies piled to the ceiling. The contributions are poignant, moving and often highly personal. Authors include Patricia Nell Warren, Poppy Z. Brite, Martin Hyatt, Toni Amato, Amie Evans among many talented others. The amazing poetry of Martin Pousson (*Sugar*) punctuates the collection. Herren's own piece, a mixture of reminiscence and blog posting from the time immediately following his exodus from the city, stands out as simultaneously moving and temporally grounded.

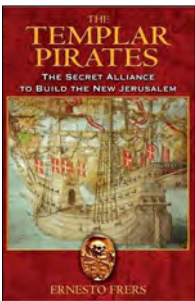
The Weiser Concise Guide to Yoga for Magick, Nancy Wasserman
(Weiser Books, 2007, 126pp, \$12.95)



Nancy Wasserman's book promises to assist the reader in building physical and mental strength for one's magical practice. She provides a practical guide to the basics of yoga tying it directly to Aleister Crowley's yogic instructions contained in *Magick (Book Four)* and *Eight Lectures On Yoga*. Her manual is usefully brief, giving quick coverage to the basics of Yama/Niyama (ethics), Asana (posture), Pranayama (breath control), Mantra yoga, Pratyahara and the advanced techniques of Samayama (Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi). Western occultists, with all their bookish studying, often neglect their physical concerns. Acknowledging this tendency, Crowley looked toward the eastern practices of body work. First introduced to such

techniques by Allen Bennett, his preceptor in the Golden Dawn, Crowley coupled his own brand of occultism with eastern methods of body, breath and mind control. Wasserman does a good job of providing an introduction to this complimentary side of Crowley's system. She places the methods in their historical context and then introduces each with elacrity. A slight volume, *Yoga & Magick* provides an easily accessible guide to get magicians started. The frequent references to Crowley's ceremonial magick make this guide no less useful for other western magical traditions such as Wicca. While there are many books written on both ritual magic and yoga, very few have tied the two together making this a valuable additional to the western occult library.

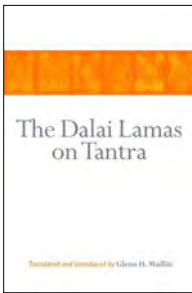
The Templar Pirates: The Secret Alliance To Build the New Jerusalem, Ernesto Frers (Destiny Books, 2007, 192pp, \$14.95)



In *The Templar Pirates*, Ernesto Frers traces the survival of the Knights Templar following their suppression in 1312. Frers's book focuses on a theory that a group of knights became early pirates. As the story goes, the Templar fleet disappeared from La Rochelle to later reappear in the Mediterranean, and later in the Atlantic and Caribbean, as the originators of New World piracy. Frers proposes that their original objective in turning to piracy was to exact revenge on the Pope and Church responsible for their Order's dissolution. *The Templar Pirates* is the perfect combination of *The Davinci Code* and *Pirates of the Caribbean*—at once, fascinating and entertaining. Intriguing as Frers work is, one comes away wishing for references to original source materials and corroborating documentation. The author makes frequent use “it's known that...” turn of phrase. As the

discussion moves from the sensible to the improbable—the excommunicated knights resorting to piracy to their connection to Billy the Kidd, his mythical lost treasure, and the misery of Oak Island—the desire for references grows accordingly. Fact, fiction or somewhere in between, *Templar Pirates* is entertaining to say the least.

The Dalai Lamas on Tantra, translated and introduced by Glenn H. Mullin (Snow Lion, 2006, hardcover, \$24.95)



For five hundred years the Dalai Lamas of Tibet have given the world the gift of their wisdom and insight. Respected Tibetologist Glenn Mullin has spent much of his career studying the Dalai Lamas and their legacy. Tantra is the esoteric side of Tibetan Buddhism—complimentary to the exoteric Sutra method of the Buddha’s public teachings. In this book, Mullin collects his translations of the various Dalai Lamas’ works on the path of Tantra. He begins with the Thirteenth Dalai Lamas survey of his predecessors works on the subject. The material, selected by Mullin, cover the systems of Avalokiteshvara, Kalachakra, Chakrasamvara, Hayagriva and Yamantaka. Also included is material on less widely known practices such as the Six Yogas of Niguma and living on the essence of flowers. *The Dalai Lamas on Tantra* is a wonderful, door-opening collection of original sources.

The Great Kagyu Masters: The Golden Lineage Treasury, translated by Khenpo Könchog Gyaltsen, edited by Victoria Huckenpahler (Snow Lion, 2006, 270pp, \$16.95)



Snow Lion Publications has released a revised second edition of *The Great Kagyu Masters*, translated by Khenpo Könchog Gyaltsen and edited by Victoria Huckenpahler. Originally compiled by Dorje Dze Öd, this book tells of the lives of the great Kagyu masters, originators of its lineage of transmission. *Ka* may be translated as ‘oral teachings’ while *gyu* means ‘lineage.’

The Kagyu line traces back to the primordial Buddha, Vajradhara. This collection begins there and then relates the spiritual biographies of the great lineage holders of the Kagyu school. Originating in India with the master Tilopa who, through his high spiritual attainment, received the wisdom teachings of Vajradhara, what have now come to be known as the Mahamudra lineage. Tilopa transmitted the teachings to Naropa, who in turn passed them on to Marpa. Among those to whom Marpa transmitted the teachings was the legendary meditation master Milarepa. The Dharma Lord Gampopa was one taught the mahamudra teachings held by Milarepa. Gampopa also studied with the great master Atisha and received from him the Kadampa lineage. Thus this book provides an encompassing first glimpse at the founding of Tibet’s oldest Buddhist school.

Childe Morgan, Katherine Kurtz

(Ace, 2006, 279pp, hardcover \$24.95)



Childe Morgan is Kurtz's latest addition to her Deryni series of fantasy works. This is the second work in a trilogy begun with 2003's *In the King's Service*. The Deryni books are set in a world very similar to medieval Europe—much of the action centering on the kingdom of Gwynned. The *Childe Morgan* books take place just before the time of the original *Chronicles of the Deryni* trilogy. *Childe Morgan* follows the story of Kenneth Morgan, his wife Alyce heiress to the lands of Corwyn and Lendour and their young son Alaric. To those who have read the earlier Deryni novels, Alaric Morgan will be familiar as the confidante and protector of King Brion (*Chronicles*) and, his son, King Kelson (*Kelson* trilogy). Also in this work, one may wobserve the beginnings of Oliver de Nore's rise to ecliastical power. The world of the Deryni is one of the most developed and highly detailed of any fantasy realm and that attention to detail continues here. This work is very much a transition point aging the critical dramatis personi up to the point of relavence. Thus, it will likely not appeal to anyone not having read the earlier (and dramatically later) novels. Since the key player is a meer toddler, the book lacks the action and climax of Kurtz's other works. The focus on historic minutia of both the medieval court and its counter power the Church is all here. Kurtz's ability to draw a picture of the subtle movements of power and politics of era is certainly here, though a little more muted than in the earlier Deryni novels. If you are an enthusiast of the Deryni world, than there is still much here that will be of interest—just consider it the mid-night in a three night mini-series. If you are unfamiliar with the many wonders of the Deryni, than you would be well advised to start

elsewhere. Though the author, herself, has suggested reading them in the order they were written—starting with the Chronicles and then moving backwards in time to the Camber trilogy—this is a much discussed point of debate.