

ASHÉ!

JOURNAL OF EXPERIMENTAL SPIRITUALITY

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**TOUT EST
PARFAIT**

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Japanese Greeting, in Response to History

Darin Beasley

History fits in the big blue room
built to remember the ones who left, who
knew how to choose
the right spot
when they felt like relaxing.

It's fun to piss
across an ocean, our nakedness
on display, a foot long hot dog, no
make that two, available
from a makeshift stand.

Let's propel an all-nighter on this
dazzling rock,
we'll carry our noisemaker friends
far and away
how they love to spill jolly
cold beer across well-known cracks,
the beauty of their yelled out throats.

Hallelujah
our party and the guests
who showed up late,

cell phones,
moshi moshi,
anyone
with the unnamed heart.

Darin Beasley is a writer and artist living in Oakland, California. His essays have appeared in the following publications: *Small-Town Gay: Essays on Family Life beyond the Big City* (Kerlak Publishing) and *Identity Envy: Wanting to Be Who We're Not* (Haworth Press). His short story, *Meriwether*, will be published in the forthcoming anthology *Distant Horizons* (Howarth Press). You may reach him at darin.beasley@gmail.com.

The Sutra Of Immeasurable Life And Wisdom

Brendan Connell

HOMAGE TO THE BUDDHAS AND BODHISATTVAS!

Thus have I heard: At one time the Buddha was staying by Sravasti, in Prince Jeta's Grove, the garden of Anathapindika, together with a large company of monks, even one thousand two hundred and fifty, and numerous great Bodhisattvas.

Then Buddha said to the youthful Manjusri, "Manjusri, in the heavens there is a world called Immeasurable Excellence, wherein abides a Tathagata, an Arhat, a fully enlightened Buddha called Exceedingly Definite Immeasurable Life and Wisdom, King of Brilliance. He engages in sustaining life, extending it to its limit, as well as in demonstrating Dharma to sentient beings.

"Listen youthful Manjusri! The people of Jambuling have a short life span, merely one hundred years, and in general they die prematurely.

"Whatever sentient being, Manjusri, proclaims the good qualities of, and praises the Tathagata Exceedingly Definite Immeasurable Life and Wisdom, or copies down the words of this discourse on Dharma, has others copy them, or just hears the name of it, or reads it and copies it into a book, memorizes it at home etc., or offers it flowers, incense, garlands, ointments and aromatic powders, they will Manjusri, instead of having their life exhausted, live for one hundred years. Whatever sentient being, Manjusri, hears, one-hundred and eight times, the name Exceedingly Definite Immeasurable Life and Wisdom, King of Brilliance, will also have their life extended. Whatever sentient being, when their life is almost exhausted, recites this name will also have their life

extended. Therefore Manjusri, a son of a good family, or daughter of a good family, who, wishing to have a long life, hears the name of the Tathagata Immeasurable Life and Wisdom one hundred and eight times, or writes it down, asks another to write it down, or reads it, their excellence and well being will also be so.

Om Namó Bhagavate, Aparimíta Ayurjnána Subiníshchítate Jorajaya, Tathagataya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimíta Punye Aparimíta Punye Jnana Sambharopachite. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gaganasa Mudgate Sabhava Bishuddbhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.

“Manjusri, whoever copies down the name of this Tathagata one-hundred and eight times, or has others copy it, or, memorizing it, copies it into a book, or reads it—whoever does this will, instead of having their life exhausted, live for one hundred years. And, at the time of their death, they will transmigrate to places such as the pureland of the Tathagata Immeasurable Life, The World of Immeasurable excellence.

Om Namó Bhagavate, Aparimíta Ayurjnána Subiníshchítate Jorajaya, Tathagataya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimíta Punye Aparimíta Punye Jnana Sambharopachite. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gaganasa Mudgate Sabhava Bishuddbhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.

“Furthermore, nine hundred and ninety million Buddhas pronounced, with one thought and one voice, this Sutra of Immeasurable Life and Wisdom.

Om Namó Bhagavate, Aparimíta Ayurjnána Subiníshchítate Jorajaya, Tathagataya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimíta Punye Aparimíta Punye Jnana Sambharopachite. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gaganasa Mudgate Sabhava Bishuddbhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.

“Furthermore, eight hundred and forty million Buddhas pronounced, with one thought and one voice, this Sutra of Immeasurable Life and Wisdom.

Om Namó Bhagavate, Aparimíta Ayurjnána Subinishchítate Jorajaya, Tathagátaya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimíta Punye Aparimíta Punye Jnana Sambharopachíte. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gaganasa Mudgate Sabhava Bishuddbhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.

“Furthermore, seven hundred and seventy million Buddhas pronounced, with one thought and one voice, this Sutra of Immeasurable Life and Wisdom.

Om Namó Bhagavate, Aparimíta Ayurjnána Subinishchítate Jorajaya, Tathagátaya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimíta Punye Aparimíta Punye Jnana Sambharopachíte. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gaganasa Mudgate Sabhava Bishuddbhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.

“Furthermore, six hundred and fifty million Buddhas pronounced, with one thought and one voice, this Sutra of Immeasurable Life and Wisdom.

Om Namó Bhagavate, Aparimíta Ayurjnána Subinishchítate Jorajaya, Tathagátaya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimíta Punye Aparimíta Punye Jnana Sambharopachíte. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gaganasa Mudgate Sabhava Bishuddbhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.

“Furthermore, five hundred and fifty million Buddhas pronounced, with one thought and one voice, this Sutra of Immeasurable Life and Wisdom.

Om Namó Bhagavate, Aparimíta Ayurjnána Subinishchítate Jorajaya, Tathagátaya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimíta Punye Aparimíta

Punye Jnana Sambharopachite. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gaganasa Mudgate Sabhava Bishuddhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.

“Furthermore, four hundred and fifty million Buddhas pronounced, with one thought and one voice, this Sutra of Immeasurable Life and Wisdom.

Om Namó Bhagavate, Aparimita Ayurjnana Subinishchitate Jorajaya, Tathagataya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimita Punye Aparimita Punye Jnana Sambharopachite. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gaganasa Mudgate Sabhava Bishuddhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.

“Furthermore, three hundred and sixty million Buddhas pronounced, with one thought and one voice, this Sutra of Immeasurable Life and Wisdom.

Om Namó Bhagavate, Aparimita Ayurjnana Subinishchitate Jorajaya, Tathagataya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimita Punye Aparimita Punye Jnana Sambharopachite. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gaganasa Mudgate Sabhava Bishuddhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.

“Furthermore, two hundred and fifty million Buddhas pronounced, with one thought and one voice, this Sutra of Immeasurable Life and Wisdom.

Om Namó Bhagavate, Aparimita Ayurjnana Subinishchitate Jorajaya, Tathagataya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimita Punye Aparimita Punye Jnana Sambharopachite. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gaganasa Mudgate Sabhava Bishuddhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.

“Furthermore, as many Buddhas as there are grains of sand in the river Ganges, multiplied times ten, pronounced, with one thought and one voice, this Sutra of Immeasurable Life and Wisdom.

Om Namo Bhagavate, Aparimita Ayurjnana Subinishchitate Jorajaya, Tathagataya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimita Punye Aparimita Punye Jnana Sambharopachite. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gaganasa Mudgate Sabhava Bishuddbhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.

“Whoever copies down the words of this Sutra of Immeasurable Life and Wisdom, or has others copy them, will, rather than have their life become exhausted, have it grow strong and last one hundred years.

Om Namo Bhagavate, Aparimita Ayurjnana Subinishchitate Jorajaya, Tathagataya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimita Punye Aparimita Punye Jnana Sambharopachite. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gaganasa Mudgate Sabhava Bishuddbhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.

“Whoever copies down the words of this Sutra of Immeasurable Life and Wisdom, or has others copy them, will never be reborn in the hell realm, the animal realm, or the land of Death; they will never be born into a life without leisure, and they will be able to recollect all their past lives, and where they were born.

Om Namo Bhagavate, Aparimita Ayurjnana Subinishchitate Jorajaya, Tathagataya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimita Punye Aparimita Punye Jnana Sambharopachite. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gaganasa Mudgate Sabhava Bishuddbhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.

“Whoever copies down the words of this Sutra of Immeasurable Life and Wisdom, or has others copy them, will be doing the equivalent of having the eighty-four thousand collections of Dharma written out.

Om Namo Bhagavate, Aparimita Ayurjnana Subinishchitate Jorajaya, Tathagataya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimita Punye Aparimita

Punye Jnana Sambharopachite. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gaganasa Mudgate Sabbhava Bishuddbhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.

“Whoever copies down the words of this Sutra of Immeasurable Life and Wisdom, or has others copy them, will be doing the equivalent of having the eighty-four thousand collections of Dharma manufactured and making them persevere.

Om Namó Bhagavate, Aparimíta Ayurjnana Subinishchítate Jorajaya, Tathagataya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimíta Punye Aparimíta Punye Jnana Sambharopachite. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gaganasa Mudgate Sabbhava Bishuddbhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.

“Whoever copies down the words of this Sutra of Immeasurable Life and Wisdom, or has others copy them, will cause the five inexpressible sins to be totally purified.

Om Namó Bhagavate, Aparimíta Ayurjnana Subinishchítate Jorajaya, Tathagataya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimíta Punye Aparimíta Punye Jnana Sambharopachite. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gaganasa Mudgate Sabbhava Bishuddbhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.

“Whoever copies down the words of this Sutra of Immeasurable Life and Wisdom, or has others copy them, will cause a heap of sin equal in size to Mt. Sumeru to be totally purified.

Om Namó Bhagavate, Aparimíta Ayurjnana Subinishchítate Jorajaya, Tathagataya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimíta Punye Aparimíta Punye Jnana Sambharopachite. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gaganasa Mudgate Sabbhava Bishuddbhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.

“Whoever copies down the words of this Sutra of Immeasurable Life

and Wisdom, or has others copy them, will provide no opportunity for either Mara, Kamadeva, yakshas or rakshasas to harm them.

Om Namó Bhagavate, Aparimíta Ayurjnána Subinishchítate Jorajaya, Tathagataya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimíta Punye Aparimíta Punye Jnana Sambharopachite. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gagana Mudgate Sabhava Bishubbhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.

“Whoever copies down the words of this Sutra of Immeasurable Life and Wisdom, or has others copy them, will, at the time of their death, be directed by the prophecies of nine hundred and ninety million Buddhas. —One thousand Buddhas will stretch out their hands to them, and they will go from Buddhaland to Buddhaland.

“Do not have doubt, hesitation, or indecision about this.

Om Namó Bhagavate, Aparimíta Ayurjnána Subinishchítate Jorajaya, Tathagataya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimíta Punye Aparimíta Punye Jnana Sambharopachite. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gagana Mudgate Sabhava Bishubbhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.

“Whoever copies down the words of this Sutra of Immeasurable Life and Wisdom, or has others copy them, the Guardians of the Four Directions will follow like a shadow, protecting, saving and concealing them.

Om Namó Bhagavate, Aparimíta Ayurjnána Subinishchítate Jorajaya, Tathagataya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimíta Punye Aparimíta Punye Jnana Sambharopachite. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gagana Mudgate Sabhava Bishubbhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.

“Whoever copies down the words of this Sutra of Immeasurable Life and Wisdom, or has others copy them, will be born in the Buddhaland of the Tathagata Amitabha, the World of Bliss.

Om Namó Bhagavate, Aparimíta Ayurjnána Subinishchítate Jorajaya, Tathagataya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimíta Punye Aparimíta Punye Jnana Sambharopachite. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gaganasa Mudgate Sabbhava Bishubbhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.

“Also, whatever place wherein this precious sutra is written becomes a stupa.

“If these words enter into the ears of birds and deer, those born into the animal realm, then they will all become fully enlightened Buddhas.

Om Namó Bhagavate, Aparimíta Ayurjnána Subinishchítate Jorajaya, Tathagataya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimíta Punye Aparimíta Punye Jnana Sambharopachite. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gaganasa Mudgate Sabbhava Bishubbhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.

“Whoever copies down the words of this Sutra of Immeasurable Life and Wisdom, or has others copy them, will never be reborn as a woman.

Om Namó Bhagavate, Aparimíta Ayurjnána Subinishchítate Jorajaya, Tathagataya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimíta Punye Aparimíta Punye Jnana Sambharopachite. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gaganasa Mudgate Sabbhava Bishubbhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.

“Whoever, for the sake of this Immeasurable Life and Wisdom, this discourse on Dharma, gives away but a single coin, will be doing the equivalent of giving away a trichiliocosm filled with the seven precious substances.

Om Namó Bhagavate, Aparimíta Ayurjnána Subinishchítate Jorajaya, Tathagataya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimíta Punye Aparimíta Punye Jnana Sambharopachite. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gaganasa Mudgate Sabbhava Bishubbhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.

“Whoever makes an offering to this discourse on Dharma, makes an offering to all holy Dharmas.

Om Namó Bhagavate, Aparimíta Ayurjnána Subiníshchítate Jorajaya, Tathagataya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimíta Punye Aparimíta Punye Jnana Sambharopachite. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gaganasa Mudgate Sabhava Bishuddbhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.

“It is like this:

“The heap of merit gained by offering the seven precious substances to the Tathagatas Chitraka, Top-Knot, Visvabhu, Lok-bar Tang Sel, Kanakamuni, Kasyapa and Shakyamuni is calculable, but the Immeasurable Life and Wisdom’s heap of merit is incalculable.

Om Namó Bhagavate, Aparimíta Ayurjnána Subiníshchítate Jorajaya, Tathagataya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimíta Punye Aparimíta Punye Jnana Sambharopachite. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gaganasa Mudgate Sabhava Bishuddbhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.

“It is like this:

“The heap of merit gained by offering a collection of jewels piled as high as Mt. Sumeru is calculable, but the Sutra of Immeasurable Life and Wisdom’s heap of merit is incalculable.

Om Namó Bhagavate, Aparimíta Ayurjnána Subiníshchítate Jorajaya, Tathagataya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimíta Punye Aparimíta Punye Jnana Sambharopachite. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gaganasa Mudgate Sabhava Bishuddbhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.

“It is like this:

“One by one the drops of water in the four great oceans can be

calculated, but the Sutra of Immeasurable Life and Wisdom's heap of merit is incalculable.

Om Namó Bhagavate, Aparimíta Ayurjnána Subinishchítate Jorajaya, Tathagataya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimíta Punye Aparimíta Punye Jnana Sambharopachite. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gaganasa Mudgate Sabhava Bishuddhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.

“Whoever copies down the words of this Sutra of Immeasurable Life and Wisdom, or has others copy them, and prostrates and makes offerings to it, they are prostrating and making offerings to all the Tathagatas of all Buddhalands throughout the ten directions.

Om Namó Bhagavate, Aparimíta Ayurjnána Subinishchítate Jorajaya, Tathagataya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimíta Punye Aparimíta Punye Jnana Sambharopachite. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gaganasa Mudgate Sabhava Bishuddhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.

“The Buddha, Power of Giving, perfectly excels.

That lion amongst men, realizes the power of giving;
As he enters into the City of Compassion,
The renown of the power of giving is circulated.

The Buddha, Power of Morality, perfectly excels.

That lion amongst men, realizes the power of morality;
As he enters into the City of Compassion,
The renown of the power of morality is circulated.

The Buddha, Power of Patience, perfectly excels.

That lion amongst men, realizes the power of patience;
As he enters into the City of Compassion,
The renown of the power of patience is circulated.

The Buddha, Power of Effort, perfectly excels.
That lion amongst men, realizes the power of effort;
As he enters into the City of Compassion,
The renown of the power of effort is circulated.

The Buddha, Power of Concentration, perfectly excels.
That lion amongst men, realizes the power of concentration;
As he enters into the City of Compassion,
The renown of the power of concentration is circulated.

The Buddha, Power of Wisdom, perfectly excels.
That lion amongst men, realizes the power of wisdom;
As he enters into the City of Compassion,
The renown of the power of wisdom is circulated.

Om Namó Bhagavate, Aparimíta Ayurjnána Subiníshchítate Jorajaya, Tathagataya. Om Punye Punye Mahapunye, Aparimíta Punye Aparimíta Punye Jnana Sambharopachite. Om Sarva Samskara Parishuddha Dharmate Gaganasa Mudgate Sabhava Bishudbhe Mahanaya Parivare Svaha.”

After the Buddha pronounced these words, the youthful Manjusri, and the whole congregation and world with its gods, humans, asuras and ghandarvas, delighted, all praised his speech.

So ends the Mahayana Sutra of Immeasurable Life and Wisdom

Brendan Connell was born in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in 1970 and currently lives in Ticino, Switzerland, where he teaches English and writes. 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 Graftisk Press the same year.

Listen Up

Tim Holmes

Listen Up

Quieten Down

Move along

Hang around

Take a chance

Try your luck

Have a go

Give a fuck!

Sparks From The Wheel Of The Dharma: Bad Painting, Right Action and the art of Sylvain Bouthillette

Peter Dubé

It's a Thursday evening in a bar of which I am inordinately fond. I sit across a tight, round table from an artist who talks passionately ... and talks a lot.

Ideas spill out of him, one after another, chained together in loose causal sequences. From time to time he pulls them back, reconsiders words, phrases, concepts; rearranges them, puts them together in new ways and then articulates once more to see if this rethought configuration works any better. What is striking about the rapid-fire chatter is how deliberate it is—despite its seeming randomness it is not haphazard. Sylvain Bouthillette is *trying* something out.

When I first considered writing this essay I called the artist asking him to get together to talk a bit before beginning—not because I wanted to interview him, not (certainly) to get his approval for the piece, not even to pick his brain about his history and artistic development since I wanted to focus here on the work itself, not on the detritus of biography. But despite that, I wanted to talk to him because there was something about the paintings I'd seen over the years that was about presence, and paying attention to it. So why not start with a face to face encounter? I thought, why not start with presence? And paying attention.

Then, sitting here, I find another benefit to my decision. Sylvain tells me has something for me

BAD PAINTING, BAD ATTITUDES AND PUNK

Sylvain Bouthillette is a Montreal visual artist with a long, active history in the punk and post-punk scenes. He has exhibited widely, in galleries, artist-run centres and museums since the late 'eighties. He also played for many years with the Montreal hardcore band *Bliss*, the noise combo *Roughage*, and, for a shorter period, with the anarcho agit-prop outfit *Rhythm Activism* (with poet/performer/musician Norman Narwocki). Not surprisingly, with so much creative activity, he has generated a significant body of work, diverse but rigorous and paradoxically focused.

Bouthillette's paintings, prints and installations are sprawling affairs; regardless of their physical dimensions (though they are frequently expansive) they always feel big. They are crowded with signs, gestures, and touches. The surfaces are worked, scratched, treated; they appear *thick* whether or not the pigment is layered on with a heavy hand. This denseness has led some critics to detect a debt to "New York's *Bad Painting*, with its clashing colours and provocative pictorial technique." (Lamarche 2006, 74) The nineteen-eighties school of art so designated reacted to the increasing hyper-intellectualization of the art world with a free, often deliberately careless, gestural and a cult of trashiness. Bouthillette's rough-hewn canvasses with their torn outlines, graffiti-inflected figures and splotches clearly do derive—at least in part—from those concerns, but, I would argue, move beyond them in a number of ways. While the link to "Bad Painting" is fair enough, the rawness of the work is clearly also related to the "street" aesthetic of punk rock too.

Though it was a powerful explosion of new musical energy, punk was equally a visual revolution, bringing about enduring, radical transformations in graphic design, fashion and the fine arts.¹ The force of Jamie Reid's groundbreaking graphics for the Sex Pistols opened new areas, as did the

1 The impact of punk in visual media is an area that is finally beginning to be explored seriously. For example, London's Barbican Gallery recently presented the exhibition, "Panic Attack! Art in the Punk years" held at London's Barbican Gallery (June to September, 2007).

work done later by Raymond Pettibon for Black Flag or Winston Smith for the Dead Kennedys. Punk and hardcore bands made extensive use of visual media in disseminating their music and message, from record covers and flyers to tee-shirts and other kinds of merchandise and though this work was diverse enough in style, there was (and is) a strong commitment to rawness and energy, to accessibility and force over abstraction and/or the merely discursive. One of the earliest fanzine makers, Mark Perry, described it thus:

‘Most of the things in the Glue were written straight down, no looking at it later,’ says Perry, ‘which is why you get all the crossing out. People never believed me at the time, but I didn’t really care about the magazine. It was the ideas that were important.’ The point was access: anybody with a certain command of English and a few pounds could make their statement. (Savage 1992, 202)

Bouthillette’s work reflects this commitment to accessibility and immediacy as well. The paintings bear spray-painted slogans, bold central figures, cartoonish depictions of animals and clowns. His work *Mahakala bombardant le conditionnement mental* (1999) [*Mahakala bombarding mental conditioning*, translation by the present writer] offers one rich example of this sensibility at work. It is a large piece (61 by 72 inches) in which, against a dark background spotted with red and violet, a tangle of white lines and scratches knot and unravel, occasionally suggesting letters or indecipherable words. (Think of hurried graffiti in a particularly squalid and semi-literate men’s room.) Just off the centre point, the main “figure” hovers. It is a disembodied head, a hybrid thing somewhere between a grinning skull and a demonic clown, suggested by the pointed cap it wears. A sharp nose protrudes from the face and the one visible eye is covered by ... a coin? An eye-patch? Some sort of disk on which a star is inscribed? Below the jaw line, another rough composition of white lines suggests a horn, waiting to be blown.

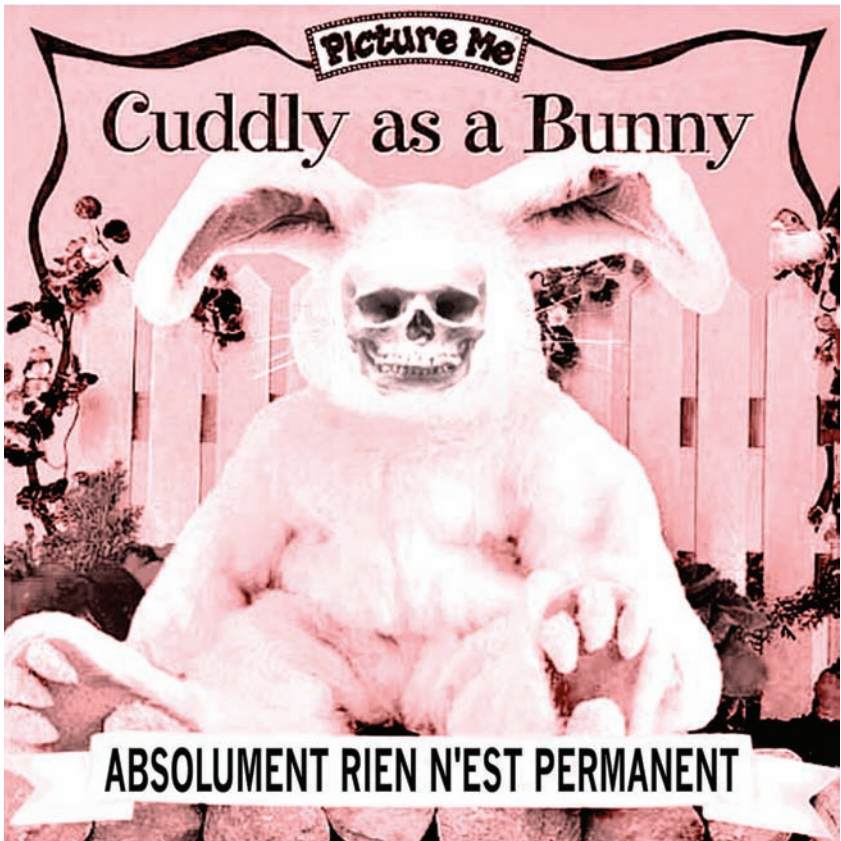


Mahakala bombardant le conditionnement mental, 1999, oil, chalk, latex on wood, 61 x 72 inches.

The image is macabre, grotesque, carnivalesque even, in its yoking together of dizzy pleasure and putrefaction; it summons up a hundred different album covers and photocopied flyers, none so powerfully as those of *Berrurier Noire*, the French punk band whose clowning (and clown makeup) added to their notoriety, or—more familiar to North American audiences—the giggling and violence of the Dead Kennedies or Flipper.

The death's head—often in a distorted or absurd iteration—is an icon that appears repeatedly in Bouthillette's *corpus*, in a particularly clever and note-worthy case it manifests itself in an enhanced inkjet print of 2006 entitled *Cuddly as a Bunny*, in which a candy-cotton pink plush-toy rabbit has a skull for a face and sits atop a banner reading “Absolutely nothing is permanent.”

The image of the skull, and the treatment Bouthillette gives it, evokes



Cuddly as a Bunny, 2006, enhanced inkjet, 24 x 24 inches.

another of the aesthetic traditions that feed the artist's work; that of tattooing's traditional imagistic vocabulary, strong outline and emphasis on emotional communication. The relationship to tattoo imagery is further heightened by the extent to which he creates canvasses that appear scratched or damaged by lines in some way, suggesting the action of needle on skin. And, of course, tattoos have traditionally played a vital role in the style of punk and its myriad subcultural offspring.

The artist borrows a number of other elements from a punk visual sensibility, notably an organizational tension between flat working surfaces and haphazardly applied devices (figurative and other.) Punk aesthetics

owe much, of course, to their own predecessors, notably to Dada's willfully random assemblage of newsprint and magazine photos and the Situationists' dismantling and realignment of maps and clippings. Such approaches to composition were commonplace in flyers, zines and other punk outlets and are detectable in their reliance on collage and the deliberate crudity marked by "bad typing for the text, headlines scrawled graffiti-like in thick felt-tip pen, 'blackmail'-style cut-out letters, found images, angled photographs, paper with torn edges..." (McDermott 1987, 66) Classic examples would include Jamie Reid's floating buses headed "nowhere" and "boredom," or his safety-pins applied to a postage stamp depiction of the Queen. The record covers of bands from X-Ray Specs to Discharge display similar indifference to illusionistic technique and perspective, a taste inclined to, for lack of a better word, *willful messiness* and *anti-layering*—placing an equal emphasis—not to say an equivalence—on figure and ground, material and message.

Time and again Bouthillette's pictures display such visual leveling; the artist makes backgrounds that are given every bit as much detail and texture as his objects and the application is deliberately rough in places. More often than not they are dark, enlivened with spots, made busy with scratches, densely textured to suggest a kind of turbulent, infinite space. It is within this agitated void that his clowns and tigers, his pointed hats and birds float and hover, singular phenomena within a broiling cosmic soup. A series of flat, but concrete, perceptual events that occur one after another and—one imagines—eventually fade back into the morass that gave rise to them.

TOTEMS, TANGKAS AND ICONOGRAPHY

That things come into being and wait, it seems, to be washed away in Bouthillette's pictorial work can hardly be read as coincidence. The sense of form emerging, unfolding and dissolving from the formless is one of its leitmotifs, and it is a feature, or a gesture, that finds itself foregrounded discursively and formally through iconography. Bouthillette has a long and

committed involvement in Buddhist practice (in the Gelug or “Yellow Hat” tradition of Tibet) as well as in punk and hardcore. This sense of chaos and transient form that animate his work may be read as a reflection of his investment in Buddhist conceptions of ontological—and fundamental—impermanence.

The first characteristic of life’s constituents is impermanence. For the Buddha, everything except for Nirvana is in constant flux and change. Material things undergo obvious changes, and one’s mental-emotional life is also constantly changing. Even the gods, according to the Buddha, are born, experience change, and eventually die only to be reborn in another state of existence. According to one early text, ‘All compounded things are impermanent, prone to arise and fall’ –*Digha-nikaya*, II, 157 (Mitchell 2002, 34)

Bouthillette commented on this conception of phenomena thusly: “My work,” he writes in his Roenisch Gallery statement, “is always on the verge of total compositional disintegration, echoing the notion that everything in the universe is made of energy in motion.” (Dault 2006) Certainly, the caption on *Cuddly as a Bunny* is a pointed reminder of such a view. But let us consider some other players in this parade of forms before they pass onto their hypothetical dissolution.

Bouthillette’s figures, in addition to the clowns and skulls, are frequently drawn from the animal kingdom; he has created series that feature the heads of tigers, hares and a variety of birds. His 2006 show at the Clint Roenisch Gallery in Toronto, for example, featured “a green tiger coughing up pure libidinal force, or a ghostly horse looming as big as a cloud...” (Dault 2006) Invariably, the bestial figures are given immensely detailed treatment. Whether they are treated “realistically,” in a caricatured manner, or in the crudest flurry of lines and dabs of paint, the animals are always worked thoroughly enough to lend them greater visual heft and highlight their presence within the loose



The Artist in front of his Alléluia series, 2004-2005 (Photo: Guy l'heureux).

composition. In his series, *Alléluia* (2004-2005), for example, the artist reprises an identical roaring tiger's head four times, fixing it against a beige/off-white background, splotted and dotted with dark stars, but changes its colour every time. The big cat appears in blue, venomous green, a more naturalistic orange and a blue-white suggestive of albinism. The vivid figures literally pop off the backgrounds, hovering above the text—"Alléluia"—in the base of the frames, which incorporate concrete. The tiger reappears in other works from the same period, *Twirl of Sonic Dimension* (2005), for example, or *All Part of the Inexpressible and Unthinkable*, (2005.) In all these cases, it is given a visual treatment that pulls it from its amorphous, swirling context, making it a focus—an icon, if you will, and one should recall that icons have a vital role in Tibetan Buddhist practice, one of the more visually complex strains of the Buddhist tradition.

Icons set above an altar are dwelling-places for their spiritual presences. They are invoked by mantras to acknowledge and receive offerings and participate, so creating a kind of



All Part of the Inexpressible and Unthinkable, 2005, oil and spraypaint on wood, 90.6 x 96 inches (Photo: Eliane Escoffier).

‘theatre’ of spiritual principles on the altar table... Altar-layout and rite together are where human and transcendent meet and combine. (Rawson 1991, 18)

In *Alleluia* Bouthillette would seem, in joining his roaring, ferocious heads to solid, cement foundations to be creating a new sort of altar, one to a kind of cosmic defiance and joyful ferocity.

Other image series give the same repetitive, visually prominent treatment to the hare: the edition of prints entitled *Pâque* (1999) is one case. *Erleuchteung* (2000) and *Tsongkhapa* (named for the legendary founder of the Gelug sect) of 1997 are others.

This specific choice of the animals that receive iconic treatment is

significant, as well. The tiger and the hare (as well as the horse mentioned in the review above) are all creatures associated with several Asian calendar systems, and are, therefore, also associated with the Buddhist legend concerning how they were awarded their places therein through a visit in which they paid homage to the legendary teacher. In this regard they are iconographic placeholders for the movement of time, and by extension for the Buddhist wheel of the dharma. Their constant reiteration and transformation in Bouthillette's visual language references this, creating a visual analogue of change, displacement, progress—of time passing, and, once again, of phenomena in all their rage, splendour, indifference arising and falling back into nothingness.

Other creatures recur throughout the body of work too, the crow or raven prominent among them. This symbolically charged bird is particularly noticeable in his 2002 series of paintings *Hail to the Almighty Green Tara*, and in the prints *Crowbar* (2001) and *Wenk* (2001). The *Green Tara* paintings



Tsongkhapa, 1999, acrylic, chalk on wood, 108.3 x 144.5 inches.

are, like, the *Alléluia* tigers, a series of four with all the obvious references to the elements that must necessarily imply. The crow appears in Buddhist practice in a particularly dark (from an outsider's perspective) role insofar as it figures in a meditative sequence in which the meditator is called upon to visualize a dead body devoured by birds in order to achieve equanimity and a sense of the final impermanence of life.²

All of these animal figures are as encrusted as Bouthillette's image surfaces themselves. They hold immense symbolic weight and historical and mythological allusion; moreover, the particular visual treatment they are given inflates this charge by foregrounding their iconic status. This becomes vital in encountering the work, of course, because it raises important questions about religious iconography and theoretical issues about the practice of representation itself... but it does more than merely raise questions.

CONFLICT AND THE CONTEMPLATIVE

The swirling backgrounds and foregrounded figures, equally worked and treated, that comprise Bouthillette's visual universe play with their inherent conflicts: that between calm and turbulence, between figure and ground, the figurative and the abstract, the declarative and the oratorical voice. They both comment on and incarnate those oppositions in a particularly aggressive dialectic. They are forceful; they wrestle with the viewer.

In the past, Bouthillette has made comments both pointed and joking about the happily impassive Buddhist that is a prominent cultural cliché: "Buddhists don't always smile," he has said in one press interview³ and, in fact, his work often references some of the more *grand guignol* and frightening forms of Buddhist iconography—terror deities, faux destroyers, bardo images, the chod rite. His language about his work is often martial, highly politicized

2 For a summary of these meditative themes, see: <http://www.buddhamind.info/leftside/lifestyl/medi/themes.htm>

3 quoted in Peter Godard's "Art by Numbers" column, *The Toronto Star*, October 30, 2004



TOU **EST**
PARFAIT

Tout est Parfait, 2001, inkjet, 49.6 x 37.4 inches.

and utterly in keeping with his musical history in punk and leftist bands. He uses words like “warrior” and “tough” quite readily.

One image, a photograph from 2001, entitled *Tout est Parfait* (*Everything is Perfect*, translation by the author) is worth commenting on in connection with this. It shows the artist, stripped to the waist, in a meditative posture, bearing a sword in one hand and a book (the *Heart Sutra*) in the other while wearing a military-style gas mask. He is seated before a thin, outlined star (another recurring motif in his work and one that also carries martial, or revolutionary, connotations) in red.

Here the uneasy tension between the contemplative and the confrontational that characterizes so much of Bouthillette’s art is given the most literal possible treatment. The presence of weapons, armor and scripture echoes images of the bodhisattva Manjushri, but also invokes any number of fierce Tibetan Buddhist iconographies from Vajrabhairava to the “destroyer of enemies,” Yamatanka, or the terrible figure of Mahakala himself, shown by Bouthillette in the painting already discussed (and in which the mighty spirit is depicted “bombarding” no less.) In this way, *Tout est Parfait* constitutes a kind of contemporary take on the mythic terror figures and faux destroyers that haunt the lamaseries and that led one writer to observe of the images dedicated to them, “You would think you were looking out over primordial chaos.” (Tucci 1949, 320). Like them it disturbs most of all for its disinterested, not to say contemplative, acknowledgment of violence and uncertainty, and the way it recognizes the paradoxical aggressiveness that is a part of meditative practice, the way in which it is a kind of war on the normal functioning of the mind.

Violence, aggression and uncertainty play off against a declarative flatness in other works as well. *Santo Subito* (2006) and *Rth Except For* (2006) provide interesting examples. In the first, *Santo Subito*, a white canvas, covered by stars, letters and black lines appears to be rent through by the head of a white horse forcing itself into the picture. The horse’s head rears, his eyes flash. Is the sudden charge the product of terror or exuberance? Impossible to know. In its violation of the imaginary plane of the picture it is an image of



Rth Except For, 2006, oil, collage, charcoal, spraypaint on wood, 8 inches diameter.

rupture, tearing, dismemberment of even the very image it is part of—hence of self-immolation—and a suggestion of wild animal energy unleashed. It is also a singularly powerful and powerfully literal image of spontaneous breakthrough, whether of images, animal nature or any number of other possible references.

As in the “*Alléluia*” series and the Bunny photo already discussed, *Rth Except For*, adds another level of tension to that between abstracted backgrounds and prominent figures, or that between the traditional iconographic language of Tibetan Buddhism and the post-modernizing treatments it receives at Bouthillette’s hands. Here the additional tug-of-war between the image and the word comes forward.

At the centre of the circular painting the smiling death's head reappears, winged and crowned with a clown or dunce's cap. Stars are in either of the empty eye sockets and a tangle of lines suggesting the markers of longitude and latitude that appear on maps makes up much of the background. Around the edges appears a text which reads: "THE MONKS SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH EXCEPT FOR A VERY THIN LAYER AT THE SURFACE."

The image chills for reasons far exceeding the light-hearted ironies of the joke; there is a sobering declaration of the sovereignty of death and ontological impermanence agitating the work. The skull presiding, winged, over a visual shorthand for the whole world is complicated by both the absurdity of its millinery and the bitter laugh provoked by the text, but neither one can be isolated from the image as a whole. The text undercuts the brutality of the figure while the visual elements highlight the literal truth that underpins the gag. They feed off each other in an orgy of representational self-cannibalization that is rendered with a grotesque but festive spirit. All of human life happens on the surface of the earth and no one but death will ever inherit it, the image whispers, and all of the struggle to possess it becomes both terrible and ridiculous. It is the instability of the image itself, both comical and frightening, grotesque and beautiful, that renders it, somehow, contemplative; impossible to resolve (on an emotional level, the literal "meaning" is exhausted almost immediately, but something in its presence lingers) it becomes like a koan. It is oddly reassuring in its stubborn refusal to be untangled and is a kind of signpost of the indecipherability, the irreducible otherness of phenomena as they pass by. It is a trace of the impossible *dhukka*⁴ of the world, the inescapable fact of emptiness and impermanence, characterized by one author thus:

In other words, all things in the world, the elementary factors of life and the particular beings that these factors

⁴ The term is central in Buddhist scriptures and has been translated as both "suffering" and "dissatisfactoriness."

constitute, are seen by a higher wisdom to have this fundamental characteristic of emptiness. (Mitchell, 98)

PAINTING, PRAXIS AND PRACTICE

Gyrocompas (1999), whose very title suggests some of the problems implicit in finding, or fixing, one's direction, is another work exploring themes of transitoriness and impermanence, albeit in a slightly less gothic manner. The work is an installation in which a sculpted hare (an animal, as already discussed, that is a frequent figure in Bouthillette's work, on one occasion named for Tsongkhapa, the founder of the lineage of Buddhist practice in which the artist works) is suspended, head-down. It revolves slowly over a metal tondo on which one may read "OM TARE TOUTTARE TOURE SOHA," the mantra of the savior deity, the almighty Green Tara. Accompanying the sculpture is a soundtrack consisting of the artist's own name, "Sylvain, Sylvain, Sylvain..." repeated ceaselessly until it dissolves, emptied of meaning. The linkage of his name, repeated and, in the process, voided, with the renowned mantra and the totemic hare floating in the void of space all point to meditative practice, to elements of its forms, to its conceptual framework and its pursuit of fearlessness and calm before impermanence. Moreover, the piece foreshadows in a variety of ways one of the fundamental promises of such calm, salvation through the dissolution of attachment and false consciousness.

The even-handed, not to say equanimous, treatment Bouthillette gives to the mental and semiotic conflict that must surround an irreducible ontological emptiness is both a hallmark of the artist's work and a crucial philosophical underpinning for it. Whether one assesses the artist's production for its formal treatment, or its representational strategies, or for the ambiguity of its deployment of humour, terror or other emotional "content," this sheer steadiness of gaze is present. Of course, this should come as no surprise, it



Gyrocompas, 1999, wood, metal, spraypaint, motor, sound, 81.5 inches diameter (Photo: Denis Farley).

is an incarnation or demonstration of a key discovery made in meditative practice: that of the fundamental identity of combat and contemplation. It is a recognition that stilling the mind is, as has already been suggested, a kind of unending, almost warrior-like, discipline.

There is, first of all, the general purpose to keep the mental contents under constant control. A disciple should be able to decide what ideas, even perceptions, should be allowed into his consciousness and he should be able to keep other ideas out. He should also be able to keep his conscious contents fixed and still. This aim is very frequently described in the Nikayas... (Johansson 1969, 94)

This discipline is a kind of commitment to taking action and a similar commitment to discipline animates much of Sylvain Bouthillette's work. It is unquestionably present in Bouthillette's decision to create paintings and prints in series. The repetition of the same image in a number of iterations is in some ways a visual mantra, and can be read as an investment in the gesture, the application of paint, the construction of some *thing* for its very sake. In repeating the head of tiger, a crow, a death's head over and over in exactly the same way, Bouthillette makes the clearest possible statement that his primary interest is not necessarily in the making of new and different images, but in the practice of image making itself and he empties it (no irony intended) of any facile portentousness. This reiteration, like meditation and chanting, simultaneously asserts the fact of its presence, the nature of its shape and the emptying out of its content. The terror and laughter alike drain out of the images in the same way as the "meaning" of his name is blotted out by repetition in *Gyrocompas*. The viewer sees or hears this if he or she contemplates the work for sufficient time, but for the artist all of this occurs in the making of the work; the painting becomes a process rather than a quest for result. It becomes a kind of *practice*.

Which brings us to the end, and in the end, practice as *such*, may have proven to be our actual subject here, because despite the extensive discussion of Buddhist iconographies and theories that led us to this point, it could well be that Bouthillette's Buddhism is—paradoxically—the least important question about the work for any individual viewer. (It is, after all, no more or less than a personal profession of belief.) The idea of Buddhist practice, on

the other hand, with its emphasis on “Right Action,” “Right Livelihood,” and “Right Meditation” and its comparative devaluation of theology (in most traditions) is quite another thing. The idea of practice suggests that the work is not first and foremost a philosophical investigation of a certain number of theoretical questions, nor a self-interested “career” per se, nor a desire to produce “beautiful things,” even admitting that all those things are present in the work, in the last case, to a startling degree. Bouthillette’s art distinguishes itself most tellingly from much contemporary work, one might argue, by its investment in the sheer value of doing something with one’s full, conscious attention. It asserts itself most vociferously as a *practice* and so offers us the one possible consolation to ephemerality, that of paying attention to where one is here, now. And that—all by itself—may have at least as much to do with Punk’s clamorous shout of “do it yourself” as it does with the Buddha’s urging to do things consciously...

Which brings me back to presence, the shared presence of Sylvain and I in our little bar, struggling to exchange ideas, information, experience, to pay attention to each other in a world that discourages that. That may indeed actively oppose it. (Where, after all, is the profit in simple practice?) At one point we laugh, and he says something, something I can’t quite make out in the sudden burst of music from the speakers, about us needing “more fearlessness to learn.” Then he slides that other “something” he had said he had for me across the table, wet with beer.

It’s a little sticker, roughly trimmed from a larger sheet bearing the image of crossed vajras in the centre. Around them circles a single line of text that reads: “Dharma Warriors Training Camp.”

And remembering the tigers’ heads, their rawness and refusal to bend to a whole army of compositional principles, the reckless, thick, impassioned surface, and their silent roar of alleluia, I think—maybe we do need more fearlessness.

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Evil Is Stupid

Brad Warner

The idea of moral cause and effect really shouldn't be so surprising. You know, for example, that if you roll a bowling ball straight down the lane, when it hits the pins at the end, it's gonna scatter them every which way. Why is it so hard, then, to understand that if you roll some loud, angry thought into your brain, it's gonna scramble all the rest of the stuff in there every which way? Whenever your mind is disturbed, it affects everything you do. And whenever you do something you know is wrong — and Buddhist theory says you always know when you're doing wrong — your mind becomes overactive, and you end up making mistakes you wouldn't have made if your brain weren't so scrambled up. And because of those mistakes things start going wrong in your life, and you begin to reap the dubious “rewards” of your previous behavior.

So even with the idea of karma, Buddhism doesn't address the Problem of Evil. But be careful here. The idea that good and evil really don't exist creates some problems when it's not clearly understood. Take a look at this letter I received from a guy who'd read my first book:

“While studying Zen I have come to feel unity in all forms, life and death are equally perfect, good and evil are equally perfect, everything is one. Since good and evil are equally important and perfect, why do we only show love and compassion to everything, why not show hatred and evilness to everything? Could one be an enlightened individual even if he was a nun-raping murderer? These thoughts kind of scare me because these are the thoughts that crazy, murderous lunatics have.”

Of course such ideas are the kinds only lunatics believe. To believe such

ideas is the very definition of lunacy. Just having ideas like that is another matter. Bad ideas are fine until you start believing them. Recognizing that ideas like those are crazy and not believing them is an exceptionally healthy thing.

There's a tendency to think that Buddhism is about leaving this world of distinctions for some nebulous ill-defined imaginary someplace where everything is all the same. But actually the idea that all is one and the idea that everything is separate are equally important. Reality includes both. What is needed is the balance of both views, and that's tough to find.

To adopt the Buddhist view doesn't mean getting all blissed out and saying everything is one. You need distinction. You need to know the difference between your ass and a hole in the ground, between Hostess Ho Hos® and dog turds, between your boyfriend and your sister's boyfriend. Distinctions are very important.

Contrary to popular belief, Buddhism is not about doing away with all distinctions. It's about seeing distinctions for what they truly are. That does not mean you throw them away and start eating dog turds instead of Hostess Ho Hos®. Like I said, you gotta be careful! Dogen goes into this idea of real difference as opposed to false difference at length, and we'll get into it a little later in the book.

Just because there is no absolute immutable eternal substance we can call evil does not mean that right and wrong do not exist. Right action is doing what needs doing right here and right now. Wrong action is doing what doesn't need doing. Knowing the difference requires mental and physical balance. To become more balanced, you need...you know what I'm going to say by now, I think.

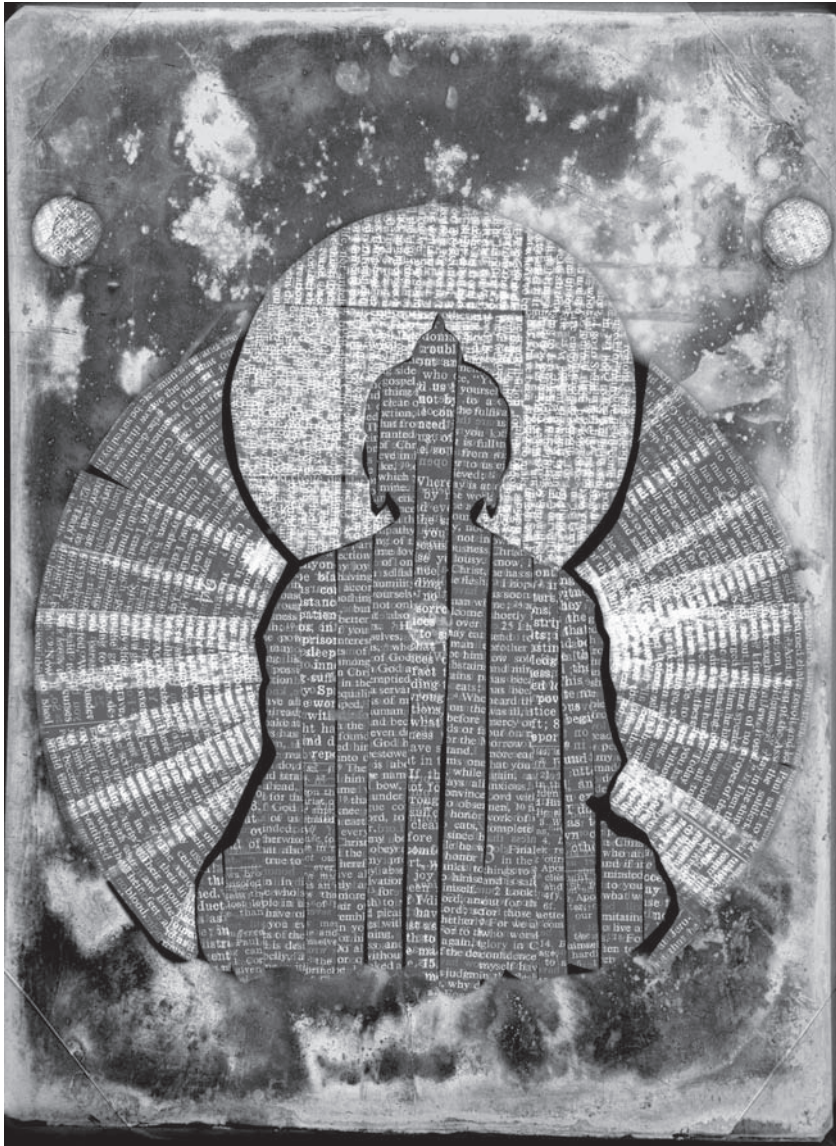
I suspect that much, perhaps even all, of the "evil" that is done in the world is done as a kind of test, as a way for the "evildoer" to try and prove to him- or herself that he or she really is separate from the rest of creation. If you poke your little sister with a pin, she screams, and you laugh. She felt pain, and you felt pleasure. This proves that the two of you are eternally separate. At least you think it does. But the rule of the universe never lets any action

go without some reaction. So she smacks you a good one right across the jaw. Instant karma!

You may be inclined to say it's nonsense to believe that all "evil" will one day be "punished" — as it were — by the laws of moral cause and effect. You can probably think of all kinds of examples of people who do evil deeds and live to a ripe old age without ever feeling their effects. But do such people really exist? I have my doubts. When I look at my own life I see very clearly that the law of moral cause and effect works perfectly, 100 percent of the time. It's impossible for me to suppose that there may be other people out there somewhere for whom the same laws do not apply. We do not know the full story of all these people who've supposedly profited from evil deeds without ever suffering the consequences. If we did, we might see something quite different from what we expect.

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Thus Gone 1, *Garin Horner*.

Kill Your Anger

Brad Warner

When I really observed my anger, it became apparent that it wasn't some substance that built up inside me that I could "let out" and be rid of. There was nothing into which anger could be bottled. That something I called "me" and that something I called "anger" were completely indistinguishable. I started to see that the process of "letting anger out" was actually the process by which more anger was produced.

When you suppress your anger, though, you've got to do it in the right way. Suppressing anger is not the same thing as what most folks call "keeping it inside." For most of us, "keeping anger inside" is the act of reinforcing anger internally. To really suppress anger, you have to suppress the urge to enjoy the beautiful juiciness of it all.

It's hard for most of us to admit, but when you start paying attention you'll notice that you actually enjoy being angry. There's this wonderful rush of self-righteousness to it. Because, obviously, you can't be angry about something unless you know you're right and the other person is wrong. You are angry because you want to be angry. Always, always.

So what do you actually do to suppress anger? I'll tell you what I do. Or at least what I try to do, since I fail sometimes. Not as often as I used to, though, because unlike any other method I've found for controlling anger, this one actually works because it addresses the real problem in a realistic way.

The main thing is to avoid acting on any angry impulses that might pop into your head. No matter how justified you might know yourself to be, an

angry action will only invoke another angry response, both in the person you're dealing with and in yourself. These actions and responses scramble your brain and make it impossible to act in any kind of efficient way to solve the problem at hand.

In a little book called *Shobogenzo Zuimonki*,* which compiles a bunch of Dogen's short talks as recorded by one of his closest students, Dogen puts it this way: "It is not good to overwhelm another person with argument even when he is wrong and you are right. Yet it is also not right to give up too easily, saying, 'I am wrong,' when you have every reason to believe you are right. The best way is to drop the argument naturally, without pressing the other person or falsely admitting that you are wrong. If you don't listen to his arguments and don't let them bother you, he will do the same and not become angry. This is something to watch carefully."

That's pretty straightforward advice, I think. But we can go a bit deeper. The next step is to see anger for what it really is. And that's the tough part.

See, if anger isn't some substance that gets bottled up inside us, what is it?

Since meditation is all about understanding the state you're in here and now, and since I was often consumed with black rage as I sat on my black cushion, I've often focused my attention during zazen practice on understanding the real source of anger. It took a long time for me to see anger for what it was, and when I did, I was truly shocked.

See, I always used to believe that anger was somehow something apart from myself, that "I" experienced "my" anger. But as my practice deepened, it began to dawn on me that this was not the case at all. It wasn't that I could eradicate those things about myself I'd labeled as negative qualities while leaving the good stuff intact, like cutting off the rotten parts of a carrot left in the fridge too long and cooking the rest. The source of anger, hate, fear, and all the rest of it was the same as the source of that collection of ideas and habits I had mistakenly called "me" for most of my life. To end anger once and for all, I had to die completely. Not commit suicide but something much, much more difficult.

If you're serious about transcending anger, you have to be prepared to give up everything. I'm afraid most people, including those who say they're Buddhists, are not at all serious about doing this. We've invented a million clever methods of building up our egos while pretending to tear them down.

When you get angry, you need to ask yourself where anger comes from. Not just your anger right now, about whatever it is that might be pissing you off, but anger itself. What is it? Can you really say it's caused by whatever it was that set you off? Did that idiot who cut you off on the freeway — or whatever — really produce your anger? Or is the real cause of anger something deeper? What is the need we so often feel to prove to everyone around us that we are right and they are wrong? Why is it important to us that others agree with what we believe? Where does that desire come from? Why do we do that? Does that help? Or does that just begin a chain reaction that will inevitably lead to more anger?

Watching the recent debates surrounding the war in Iraq — war being the ultimate expression of human anger — I began to notice that neither the warmongers nor the peaceniks had the slightest clue about what the real situation was. None of them has the courage to look deeply into themselves, to find the source of war itself — which is ultimately the same as the source of anger — and to rip it right out of their guts. Because that is more difficult than marching with picket signs or firing guns and dropping bombs. It's far more repulsive to us to really face up to who and what we actually are than it is to face the prospect of fires and bombs and blood and misery. We would gladly choose war any day of the week over that. Quite literally. You can get all self-righteous and pretend that there's a big difference between the anger you feel at some warmongering politician or general and the anger those guys feel toward whomever they've labeled as "the Enemy" this week. But is there? You need to find out. You really, really do.



Wearing the Body of Visions, *Garin Horner*.

Koanhead: Discourse on a Dharma Punk

Iamba

This is what I have heard. At one time, I (the Venerable Koanhead) was staying near the cash register in the Lotus Loft. At that time, a customer addressed me, saying, “My friend would like to know, are you a girl or a boy?”

She was about 14, wearing the backpack of a school student. I presumed that her “friend” was the brown-haired girl at the far corner of the small store, the one who had suddenly become quite absorbed with reading the labels of the tea tins, her back turned to us.

I eyed both girls for a moment, then replied, “For your friend, I’m a boy.”

For the curious, I’m 5’6”, have short, rainbow-colored hair, and I do—for the record—have boobs. Whether you can tell they’re there is another story. Today, I am wearing a Pink Floyd shirt. Pink Floyd is not punk, but I am. I’m a skatepunk samaneri—a dharma punk. I’m kind of like Jack Kerouac’s dharma bums; only, instead of hopping freight trains and arguing about Buddhism in Berkeley, I work in a little metaphysical shop and scribble Zen koans all over my college campus with sidewalk chalk. As far as I know, I’m the only dharma punk in South Florida—the Krafter of Koans, the Dame of Discourses, the one and only Badass Bikkhu. But you can call me B.

I’d like to think of myself as a “pure” rebel. I don’t rebel simply for rebellion’s sake. I rebel against the things worth rebelling—sometimes, rebellion itself. As far as I’m concerned, we live in an uncompassionate, estranged society, most of us too preoccupied with our own problems to open our eyes to our interconnected nature and to the joy of living. My duty

is to open them. “Universal compassion” is my tagline.

Once, a coworker of mine, Sondra, slyly asked me, “So, are you a punk with Buddha nature, or a Buddha with punk nature?”

I said, “I think that’s a mu point.”

Sondra is cool. A fledgling chaos magic, and a typical Goth—black hair, grey mood. Kinda cute, too. We work together on weekends and some afternoons. For the most part, she’s pretty withdrawn, but we get into some interesting conversations. You know, small talk: the nature of reality, male/female polarity, the way of the Tao, totems, music, customers. A dharma punk and a chaote have a lot in common. Plus, she sniggers at most of my jokes, so we get along.

Then, there’s Morgan. Morgan of the Fae. Resident Wiccan solitaire and aspiring Reiki Master. She’s friendly and she tries hard, but when she claims to be a “Green Witch,” I nod my head emphatically in agreement. Couldn’t have said it better myself.

The other day, Morgan said to me, “B, I have such a hard time meditation. Do you have any tips on how to clear my thoughts?”

“Simple,” I said, and swung at her head.

Morgan is working with me today. As usual, her nose is stuck in a book. It’s pretty quiet in the Lotus Loft, which doesn’t surprise me, since it’s a Wednesday afternoon. I am catching up on math homework and snapping my bubblegum. That’s one of the perks of working here—getting paid to study. Now and then, a customer will come in looking for a crystal or a vial of essential oils, but for the most part, Morgan and I have the store to ourselves.

When I get tired of algebra, I pop my wrist and ask Morgan, “What’re you reading?”

She holds the book up for me to see. “It’s about contacting deities,” she says.

“Interesting,” I say. “Hey. You know, I can show you how to really learn that stuff.”

“What do you mean?” she asks, furrowing her eyebrows.

I hold my hand out for the book. “Here,” I say.

“You’re going to do something funny,” she says.

“Naw,” I say. “I’m serious.”

Still looking at me suspiciously, she hands me the book. “How?”

I put the book on my stool, sit on it, close my eyes, and pretend to meditate silently.

“B!” she says. “What are you doing?” Then, “I don’t get it.”

After another quiet moment, I ask, “Did you get it before?”

“Get what?” she asks.

I smile, tip an eyebrow, and say, “There you go.”

All right, so I don’t hold books in the highest regard. A lot of people think, *If it’s written, it’s truth*. I, on the other hand, believe in the power of personal truth and enlightenment. The Buddha didn’t sit reading under the bodhi tree all night when he came to his realization. Hell, it was hundreds of years before Buddhist teachings were even written down. Don’t get me wrong. Books have a lot of great ideas in them, but I think you have to know when to close the book and look around yourself—or into yourself. Sure, I read a lot, but I don’t live in books like Morgan. So, I poke fun at her about it—all in the name of enlightenment, of course. I figure that one of these days she’ll catch on. Until then, I’ll just keep sitting on her books.

Of course, there’s more to being a dharma punk than slinging quippy koans at my friends. I spend a lot of time at meditation, which I think my parents are grateful for. I was always a pretty hyper kid—I used to goad my older brothers into fistfights, and I almost split my skull a dozen times trying to leap over our pool on my skateboard—and I’m proud to say I’ve mellowed out since high school. Also, for a while, I made a big deal out of practicing charity. Soup kitchens, animal shelters, that sort of thing. Now, I like practicing spontaneous friendliness and random kindness. You’d be surprised at the sort of reaction you get when you bow and hand flowers to people walking by. I’ve gotten smiles, stares, kisses on the cheek, blatant attempts at ignoring me. Someone called me a “fag” once. (Wrong sex, but I guess he had the right idea.) For me, the whole point is to break down the common

misconception that we are alone in this world—alone in our suffering, alone on our journey.

I hand Morgan's book back. Restless, I ask if she minds watching the store while I take a break. I offer to buy her lunch. "Well," I add, glancing at the clock, "Dinner."

Outside, the late afternoon sun burns over my shoulder. Hands stuffed in my pockets, I walk to the little sandwich shop down the street. I have a car, but I prefer to walk when and where I can. It's a form of meditation for me. The pace, the movement, the world sliding past. Anyway, it's more interesting than driving. Smells, sights, sounds—a whole universe.

As I reach the end of the Loft's little strip mall, I glance back at the side of the building. I can just make out the remnants of chalk markings.

"Show me some magic," I'd told Sondra last week.

She was silent for a moment, counting money in the drawer. I could practically hear the gears in her head grinding. She was trying to come up with a way to refuse, I'm sure. She knew me by now, though. I'm a persistent person.

After closing, she took me outside, and—under the light of the waxing moon—performed a banishing ritual on the building while I watched. I remember the smell of incense and dry grass, the itch of dead brush.

The pentagram she'd drawn in chalk is still there on the wall. Come to think of it, the mood has felt a little lighter in the store since that night.

Inspired, I pause to draw a banishing pentagram on the ground at the street corner while another pedestrian stares. "Making the crosswalk safe for everyone," I say cheerfully, dusting off my hands.

When I return to the store twenty minutes later, Morgan is sitting quietly with her eyes closed, and I smell fresh incense.

The little door chime rings as the door closes behind me. "Yo yo," I say. I place the sandwiches behind the counter. I wave one in front of Morgan's nose. She still hasn't opened her eyes.

I don't get a response, so I let her be and bite into my sandwich, making a lot of noise. For a few minutes, I sit and watch the tendrils of smoke twist

and whorl from the stick of incense on the counter. Finally, I turn to look at Morgan again. She hasn't so much as moved a muscle since I came in. Her face is slack, perfectly relaxed.

"Ommmmmm," I intone softly. That teases a small smile from her. "What are you doing?" I ask.

She says, "The maple tree quietly soaks up water."

I stare at her. I roll the words around in my head. *The maple tree quietly soaks up water. The maple tree...quietly soaks up...water...* Then, I say, "What?"

Her face cracks into a wide grin. Finally, unable to hold it in any longer, she begins to laugh. She pulls her book out from under her ass and whacks me on the shoulder with it.

It is then that I realize she had been sitting on the book the entire time, doing exactly as I had shown her earlier.

Laughing, I say, "The incessant wind is humbled by the maple tree's growing branches."

Iamba is an RN, a writer, and chaote. When she isn't asleep or pretending to be an elven bard, she can be found at a local South Florida hospital tormenting sick people with odd rites involving ritual handwashing, sharp objects, alchemical potions, and blood.



Thus Gone 2, *Garin Horner*.

Against

Riley McLeod

Trey opens his eyes to a row of dirty boots in different styles of disrepair, all with reeking socks frothing out like foam on last night's sea. In the spaces between them there's a pile of grisly punks passed out on top of each other. His waves have been replaced by their smell, lapping over him and back.

He rolls over to sit up and promptly pukes. It happens so fast he doesn't have time to dread it or be surprised. So much puke escapes that it's monumental, more puke than the food he's had in his whole life, then body liquids that end in stomach cramps. He pushes himself away from it, gripping his head in one hand and his stomach with the other. There's a little core of warmth from the dope deep inside him someplace, throbbing peacefully behind his spasming stomach, that makes puking seem a little hilarious.

One of the punks raises her head from the pile. Her hair is a monument to mankind's war against the shape of sleep.

"Aw, *man*," she grumbles. "What the fuck is *your* problem?"

Trey looks at the guilty puddle of puke spreading beneath him. He isn't sure he should open his mouth, so he shakes his head and frowns



apologetically.

“You gonna die or something?”

He thinks about it, shakes his head no.

“Well that’s *good*,” the girl snarls, heaving herself to her feet. She scratches her thick matted hair and stumbles around Trey’s puke into the kitchen. She comes back with a big towel that she throws across the floor. She moves it a little with one foot and then tumbles back into the heap, which shifts and groans. She turns her head away from him and passes out again.

Trey puts his head between his knees and breathes for a bit. He works up to the improbable task of balancing himself on the soles of his feet. He staggers into the kitchen, reeling like everyone in the house, like the floorboards aren’t stable. Maybe that’s where last night’s waves came from. Maybe the house is secretly built on an ocean and they’ll wake up one day to find they’ve floated away, a bunch of bleary punks stumbling onto the porch to find they’re all lost at sea.

The kitchen’s boarded up with posters and doorless cabinets and cracked yellow linoleum. Roaches survey the rotting bundles of food and party monuments. There’s a twisty set of stairs heading up and a tiny passageway past them. Trey heads for the passage. It ends abruptly in a ripped screen door that guards a closet-sized square of yard. Finn’s standing in the middle of it, wearing a spiky, patch-tattered leather jacket over his pajama pants and a pair of knee-high pink boots, smoking a potent-smelling joint and gazing beatifically at the sky. Trey pushes his upper body through the hole in the screen.

“You got a cigarette?” he shouts. Finn turns slowly and peers at Trey, not recognizing him. “I moved in yesterday,” Trey says once the stare gets too long. “Trey.” Finn fishes a package of cigarettes out of his coat and chucks it against the wall of the house. Trey catches it as it falls. A lighter crashes next to his ear. He takes two cigarettes, tucking one behind his ear for later. When he starts smoking he feels like he hasn’t done it forever and he gasps at the pleasure of it, and that tiny remainder of dope sparks and throbs inside him.

“Fuck lot of *snow* out here,” Finn says strangely, staring at the piles around his boots. He looks over at Trey with a face smudged with uncertainty.

“Sure is,” Trey agrees.

“Where the fuck’s all this fucking snow *come* from?”

“Uh, the sky, I guess. There’s some kind of science to it or something.”

“Science,” Finn mutters. “Huh.” He kicks at some snow and watches it scramble through the air away from him. He takes a long toke off the joint and puffs his chest out epically. “That’s some nice fucking science.” He exhales like a dying breath. “Bet they closed all the schools. You go to school?”

“No.”

“Me neither. I ain’t been to school in, like... I dunno how long. Maybe never. But if we were in school right now, we’d be, like, so happy it was cancelled.”

Trey pulls up some generic school-cancellation morning memory, tugging on clothes in the dark while the sound of the radio murmurs from the kitchen. Walking through the dark house while the streetlights and snow make the windows glow like church. When he gets to the kitchen for some reason his mom is there instead of his dad, her hair a mess, wearing some kind of clothes he isn’t creative enough to cull up. She has a cup of coffee in one hand and her other hand on the radio dial. She turns it down a little when Trey comes in, muffling the vital, boring radio voices. She smiles at him as he freezes in the doorway. He remembers the excitement of the unknown, the limbo of chance, the warm and cold possibilities. There’s no way this memory could have happened, but he can smell her coffee and some weird Mom smell, like a grown-up girl smell but different too, like all kinds of uncomfortably intimate things he’s forgotten or never known. Almost all of him crammed into this one close moment.

“What would you do with today if you were going to school but then you didn’t have to?” Finn asks, pulling Trey back to his now, to the ripped screen and the dead yard and all the Crown Heights noises behind everything all around them all the time.

“Uh, probably play in the snow. Like, go sledding or make snowmen or

something.”

“*Fuck*,” Finn remarks like he’s never heard something so original. “Fucking *snowmen*.” He crouches and starts pushing snow into heaps with his bare hands, poking the joint out of his lips. Trey watches Finn’s fingers turn red.

“What the hell?” someone says behind Trey. It’s another tall kid with an overgrown buzzed head, and his clothes are black and he smells like dogs and something chemical. “What’s he doing?”

“Making snowmen?”

“Balls. Move it, kid.” He helps Trey move with a kick. Trey’s cigarette falls and the roaches run toward it then away. The new guy punts the screen door open and steps barefoot into the yard. “Finn you stupid douchebag! Get inside before you freeze you high motherfucker!”

Finn looks up from his snowman. “Who are you?” he asks.

“It’s Gabe you fucker! You stay out there for another six seconds and we’re locking you up in the yard again. You remember that?! You remember how much that sucked?!”

Finn considers it, then lets his handfuls of snow fall and scurries inside. Trey can feel the cold pulsing off him like heat. Gabe slams the screen and pushes everyone into the kitchen. Finn bounces against the counter and drops the burnt crust of his joint into the sink. Gabe stomps past him into the living room and stares at the wreckage of bodies on the floor.

“Get up!” he belts at the heap. “It’s Sunday you shit-fucking heathens! We’re having fucking church!”

Groans but no movements meet this declaration. Gabe scatters the pile of punks with a few confident swipes of his feet. The mound individuates, grows limbs and walks upright. They just keep coming, evolving like a clown car. Countless pointy patchy kids Trey never saw when he was with the squatters, most of them naked or drooping tatters.

“What’s going on?” Trey asks Finn, who is staring at the hard-water stains in the sink.

“Aw, Gabe became a Christian a while ago and now he pretends that

he only sells drugs instead of doing them. And every Sunday he brings some kind of creepy punk church and he talks a lot and they bring us food.” Finn surveys the architectural shell on the dishes. “We put up with it ‘cuz they bring us food. Free food’s our religion like Jesus is theirs.”

The punks in the living room grumble as they search for boots or shirts or pants. Some of the undressed don’t seem in any hurry to rectify the situation and gape at their surroundings scratching themselves. Gabe gruffly creates a semi-circle facing the taped-up windows on one side of the living room, arranging chairs and piles of blankets and pillows. Punks, dressed or not, rescue their boots from his mission.

“You gotta get your shit together,” Gabe continues, making Trey wonder if he ever stopped talking. “Look at you, fucking wasted all the time. We have church every fucking Sunday and nothing gets through your thick skulls.”

“I thought Christians didn’t swear,” someone protests with the meekness of being naked. Gabe pauses from his domestic efforts to snarl generally at the room.

“Why, ‘cuz Jesus don’t swear in the Bible? Well there ain’t no cars in the Bible but we got those. There’s tons of shit *not* in the Bible. There’s cuss words and we got them. Maybe they didn’t got cuss words, how the hell do I know?”

“Actually I think there’s some kind of scriptural basis...”

“And there’s some kind of scriptural basis for me to beat your ass to Bay Ridge but I don’t do it out of Christian charity. All of you put your damn boots on; your feet fucking reek.”

A perky knock sounds from the end of the hallway maze. The room kicks into sluggish overhaul: Gabe rushing to open the door, punks struggling to remember how to dress themselves, someone scuffing Trey’s towel to the side and leaving a thin trail of watery puke. A troupe of clean people in pressed jeans comes through the hallway, carrying big foil trays of food and red-covered hymnals. The white of their shirts has the same effect as the mushroom cloud. They touch the punks on their way to the kitchen like they’re wearing something germ-proof on their hands.

A blonde woman with a dyed red ponytail puts a tray on the counter and scoots it against the wall to tragically trap a few roaches. She smiles at them and folds her arms so a few uninteresting tattoos show from the cuffs of her gleaming dress shirt.

“I haven’t seen you before,” she says brightly to Trey.

“No, I’m new.”

“You look pretty young to be living on your own.”

“He’s not living on his own,” Finn pipes up. “He lives with us.”

The woman frowns at both of them, then smiles forcefully, says “Well we’re glad to see you both today.” She touches Trey briefly on the arm as she puts a hymnal in his fingers. He feels the urge to tip her. She smiles harder and brisks back into the living room.

Punks meet the freshly-arranged floor, jamming their fists in their eyes. Gabe glowers until Finn shuffles toward the makeshift pews. Trey follows and they slouch in the back. Gabe stands in front next to a white guy with long tied-back dreads that have something wrong with them, like he taped an informative drawing of a hairstyle to his scalp. He has all these knives in his eyes he’s trying to keep point-down, and he meekly holds a Bible at his waist like a lunch tray.

“Welcome, brothers and sisters,” he begins grandly. “We’re so glad you could join us this morning. Let’s begin with a song, shall we? Please turn to page 116...”

The whisper of flipping pages provides the soundtrack to Gabe and the preacher smiling smugly as they don’t open their hymnals. When the search settles down the punks launch loudly into an indecipherable hymn, cranking it at the tops of their lungs and purposely out-of-key. Gabe sings like a rock star and doesn’t seem to notice. He and the preacher close their eyes and sway as the song lurches through the room. The rest of the church has taken up stations at the doors and windows like guards and they just smile instead of joining. As Trey stares at them their smiles mutate into something fiendish, clever. He turns nervously through his hymnal exploring the songs. They look like Christian songs with partial swear words or pop songs with “Jesus”

in the place of “baby.” The song finishes and Gabe growls as the hymnal covers slap together with finality.

“Well, no one said punk had to sound good,” the preacher chuckles like he knows something they don’t. “Let me tell you, coming to Charnel House is truly the highlight of my week, and I know that my friends here all feel the same way.” The smilers murmur their assent. “You know how stuffy ‘church people’ can be. But here, we really feel that we’re with our own people, that we can just... let our hair down and be ourselves. Maybe you be yourselves by dancing or playing records. We be ourselves by sharing the Word of the Lord with our friends. Gabe here has been such an important contributor to our church, and we are so grateful that he brings us here every week to speak with you.

“Now, today I want to start with something different,” the preacher continues. He ignores the scoffs and titters that make Gabe flip two middle fingers from his waist. “Before I give my sermon I would like to invite Sally up to testify about how her relationship with Jesus Christ has influenced her life. She and I have been praying together a lot lately, and I think it would be so valuable for her to share what she’s been learning.”

The woman with the red ponytail smiles as she picks her way to the front. Trey can’t help keep an eye on her unguarded post. She stands between Gabe and the preacher, and the preacher puts his hand briefly on her back. He shows a flash of all his pointy parts. He smiles like he has something in his mouth.

“Man, this is a shock,” she starts in a practiced tone. “It’s all so personal for me, this is just... I guess I can explain myself a little, right? Like many of you, I ran away from home at a young age, you know, *looking* for something. I thought I knew everything and my parents and school were just a waste of time. Eventually I wound up squatting and started to sell drugs in order to feed myself.”

“You think she’s holding?” Finn hisses hopefully to Trey.

“It started small—weed, that kind of thing, but before long I was on to coke and heroin and crack. Of course I finally got set up and lost my stash and

all my money and almost my life. This encounter with the truly vile in people I considered in my scene made me wonder if there wasn't something more. I broke with my old friends and started living alone on the street. One day I went to a church soup kitchen for food, and there I was first introduced to the glory of our Savior." She pauses, smiling at the floor. "From the moment I heard of His love and forgiveness I knew that I had found the truth. The truth to a happy life wasn't in punk rock, or drugs, or in the street. It's beyond all that, in a world we can't reach yet, in a world we can't even imagine yet." She laughs to her shoes and maybe there are tears in her eyes now. "But all the faithful around me were—gosh how can I say this?—square. Soccer moms? But when I heard of this church I knew this was where I belonged. I think my first service was someplace in Bushwick, one of those terrible spaces. I hope I didn't just offend anyone." She laughs again. "I now hold a job and my own apartment and have my lovely husband. I don't know what else to say," she tells the preacher. He pats her gently on the shoulder like a dog, and she trots back to her post.

"Thank you, Sally. As we can see, it is only through the compassion of our Savior that we can truly escape from the self-destructive cycles that keep us from receiving the birthright of our Father, which is to live a prosperous life on earth and to be with Him eternally in Heaven."

"Amen!" Gabe barks.

"That's right, *amen*. We can learn so much from Sally. She's like so many of you, isn't she, *looking* for something. Searching so hard and so earnestly. I'm not here to dump on punk, no matter my reputation. It's a lifestyle which holds a special allure for people who are different, who are truly seekers. A religion unto itself, if I can get poetic. But, my brothers and sisters, you'll never find salvation there. You'll never find salvation in the world at all. We all know the punk anthem, 'no future.' It's *this* attitude that keeps punks out of Heaven. There *is* a future, and it's in the hands of our Father in Heaven. And he wants so badly for all of us to join him. Gabe himself was brought to the faith by just this realization, weren't you?"

"That's right," Gabe responds. "I had just overdosed on smack—not the

first time, I'm sorry to say. But man I was dead. Actually dead, they told me later. And in death I saw Jesus. But I didn't know who he was of course. You could have put the lead singer of fifty different bands in front of me and I would have recognized them, but not my fucking Savior. And Jesus told me that I couldn't be a punk and go to Heaven. I told him I didn't want to go to Heaven if I couldn't have a 40 in my hand and my elbow in some guy's face, and besides, who was this square talking to me anyway. But then Jesus looked so sad, just defeated, like I was a girl and I'd broken up with him. And He said 'Well that's really too bad, Gabe, because *I* certainly wanted you there.' This was... the first time in my whole life that someone had said they wanted me anywhere. And in that instant I knew the depth of the love of our Savior, his love for me, right, just as strong as it for everyone. And then I came to in the ER full of Narcan and as soon as I could talk, I asked to go straight to a Christian rehab."

"Fucking party line," Finn hisses to Trey. "They say the same thing as every other quote-square-church-unquote that they'll all ragging on. Why the hell would Jesus say you can't go to Heaven and be a punk?"

"I thought *they* were punks?" Trey asks.

"They all look like punks 'cuz that's what lures the kids in. They get them to come promising, like, punk church, and then they kind of convert them away and make them get jobs and mortgages and heterosexuality and boring shoes. You can keep your weird hair 'cuz that's kind of hipster anyway and apparently hipsters can get into Heaven but punks can't. I think they got the wrong idea about punks myself, but when they come to places like Charnel House it's hard to convince them that any of us are gonna be saved when all the cars with those stupid bumper stickers are actually unmanned and go slamming into phone poles."

"No matter how much fun you have," the preacher is saying, eyes closed and palm open, rocking slightly so his dress shoes squeak. "No matter the friends you think you've made, the great bands you've seen, how many miles you've hitched, trains you've hopped, people you've had sex with, drugs you've done, bands you've played in, tours you've gone on. No matter what

you do you will not be saved. The answers are *not* here, brothers and sisters. Look around you.” He spreads his arms to the brittle, illogical structure of the room. “The world is merely the testing ground, the stage upon which to prove to our Lord that we can follow His word, to prove to Him that we are thankful for the sacrifices His Son made for us. What is your hair and your jacket going to do for you? What can possibly compare to what Jesus has already done for you?”

“How come Gabe’s still a punk then?” Trey asks Finn, watching Gabe shamelessly wipe tears from his filthy face.

“Cuz he’s a punk, man. If your parents, teachers, neighbors, cops, society, capitalism, poverty, starvation, broken noses and scabies can’t get you to stop, why the hell should Jesus be able to? And he loves this stupid dump. We all love it, no matter how shitty it gets. It’s kind of fucked up, isn’t it?” Finn scratches his mohawk and it cracks so loudly that one of the churchies shushes him. “Shit, man. All this talking is getting me down. Let’s have some fucking breakfast.”

“Won’t Gabe get mad if we leave?”

“So what? Gabe getting mad doesn’t mean anything compared to the wrath of our Father in Heaven.”

They rise to a crouch and silently slink into the kitchen. The church members watch them go but don’t stop smiling. They duck through the kitchen door and straighten up, and Trey plucks the cigarette from behind his ear and lights it gratefully. Finn searches through the cabinets until he finds a crushed box of Cap’n Crunch. He knocks old pasta water from a pot into the sink and empties the cereal into it. He takes a survey of the 40s that litter the floor and countertops, then dumps the ones that don’t have cigarette butts into the pot. Thin half- or quarter-streams of Ballantine and Olde English piss into his cereal and float it. He finds a spoon in the sink and digs in, crunching noisily.

Trey lifts up a corner of the foil on a tray as quietly as he can. Fortunately the preacher has gotten loud at this point, shouting something and maybe crying. Inside the tray are heaps of dairy case cinnamon rolls, wet with

frosting and still a little hot. It's just the sort of filling non-food that would make punks happy while wondering if there isn't some real food out there someplace. Trey untangles a roll from its sticky position and devours it with the speed street life has instilled in him.

"Excuse me." Trey jumps. Sally's in the door. She isn't smiling. "Those are only for the congregation."

Trey swallows half a roll in a thick lump. "What is?"

"I'm sure you're hungry," Sally tells him, "and we're happy to feed you, but we want to feed your soul as well. Why don't you come listen to the rest of the service and then you can eat?"

"Do you really believe that punks can't get into Heaven?" Trey asks. Sally's eyes panic and she smiles like she's trying to be cheerful in the face of an oncoming blow.

"Yes, I do. Punk isn't the type of lifestyle our Father wants us to lead."

"Why not?"

"Why not? Look around you. Do you think Jesus would want to enter this house?"

"Didn't he live in a tent or something? Besides, not all punks live like this. Before this I was living with some straight edge punks, and—"

"—and let me guess: they stole and gossiped and maybe even beat other people up?" Sally nods. "It doesn't matter what, what *sect* you're in. Being punk is not a holy life."

"But you're really happy with the missing screws on your IKEA furniture and your Amy Winehouse CDs and all that bullshit?"

Sally looks down on him, even though she isn't much taller than he is. She shakes her head pityingly.

"How old are you?"

"Fifteen."

"Oh, of course. When I was your age I thought all of those things were... *bullshit* too. But there comes a point when you have to understand that our Father wants more for us than this. He wants us to be secure and productive, to create a household and a family."

“But my parents had a house and a job and they weren’t happy. They got divorced and they turned out me and they were, like, totally some kind of Christian.”

“Well clearly they weren’t Christian enough.”

“Woah,” Finn says through a mouthful of cereal and beer. “Who the fuck made you the religious Hot or Not?”

“Christians don’t get divorced. If they got divorced they clearly weren’t Christian. The outward trappings of a holy life don’t mean that your soul is pure.”

“But what does it matter?” Trey asks. “That guy with the hair just said that nothing in this world can save you, so why should kids and a Bible? What difference does it make how you live if nothing can save you?”

“It isn’t that simple. A good life shows gratitude and respect to our Savior.”

“But He died for me already, right? I don’t need to be gracious. If He loves me as pure and unselfishly as Christians say, then can’t I do whatever I want?”

“Haven’t you done whatever you want?” Sally asks urgently. Her look tag-teams with a serious one, *real*, scary. “Didn’t you run away to follow your instincts, your wants? And look where you are. No closer to the thing you left home to find, and *you never will be*.” She stares hard at him. “Because it isn’t here.”

The truth comes to him in little flashes. Scud, smug, breaking something. Meeting Zero on the train and his private, earnest confidence. Davis’ convictions. Her face going all the wrong ways, saying all the wrong things, when he told her he loved her. Staggering into this fucked-up house that’s merely a different kind of fucked-up than his father’s house in Trumbull. Poorer and skinnier and more beat-up, but not any different. But this lady? She’s different. She says she’s different.

“You think you’re being radical?” she says. “Forsaking the world is the most radical thing of all.”

Finn comes to the rescue with a lot of crunching and slurping.

“So you can do the ‘little boxes made of ticky tacky’ thing and not have Christ in your life, or you can do the ‘I wanna be anarchy’ thing and not have Christ in your life. So as long as you have Christ in your life, it doesn’t really matter how you live. And, like, besides, Jesus became a person so He could die for us, right? So there must be *something* valuable here, if it was worth enough for Him to come check it out.”

Outside they’re singing again, screaming from their off-key stomachs with the urgent desire to be something, someplace, else. Sally glances behind her like she can see the sound. Trey likes her eyes not on him anymore.

“We’re wrapping up,” she says. “I’d be happy to continue this conversation with you after the service has ended.”

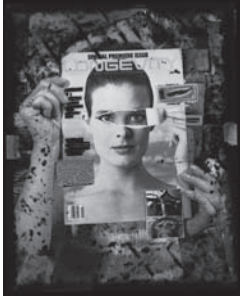
She goes back into the living room. Trey’s cigarette has burned to a long column of ash and he drops it on the floor. Finn chucks his bowl loudly into the sink and brings the pack out of his coat. Handing one to Trey, he slides through the passage and bangs the broken door against the wall. He steps out into the snow while Trey stops at the edge, already shivering. Finn, realizing he’s alone, looks back at Trey. He tugs off his jacket and slams it into Trey’s face with the gruff kindness of people who don’t want to be showy about being kind. Snow glitters violently before their eyes. They wade together into the middle of the yard, unlit cigarettes dangling from their lips. There’s still the chance of a snow day. Little this-world graces. Salvations you can put your hands, fill your stomach with.

“Fuck Jesus,” Finn spits. “Fuck this crap. I like my fucking hair. Besides, Jesus was probably some kind of emo poser anyway.”

Riley MacLeod holds a Master’s in Theological Studies from Harvard Divinity School with a focus on American Buddhism. Other honors from graduate school include being the school’s only anarcho-queer trans punk. He lives on a boat in Brooklyn, but he can’t tell you where. *Against!* is an upcoming novel retelling the life of the Buddha as a kid from the suburbs.

Artist's Statement

Garin Horner



My newest body of work is titled “Photomancy,” which means “to conjure with light”. As a photographer, I utilize any tools I can find to best “conjure” light into artistic expression. I manipulate conventional photographic negatives of all sizes (both color and black & white), digital files, Xerox copies and transparencies, digital scanners, pinhole cameras, light pens, and any objects through which light can pass. I assemble my images as negatives on sheets of glass (sometimes layering multiple sheets). To arrive at a final product I make contact prints on conventional black & white silver gelatin paper.

Black & white photography has always been my preferred medium. I view the black & white tonal range as communicating three categorically distinct meanings. The first is embodied by the lightest tones, representing the *life* of the image. The second lies in the middle tones, which commonly conveys *information*. The third comes to life in the dark tones, conveying *mystery*. These three meanings are important in any image, but the photographs in this body of work tend to be saturated with the dark shades of mystery.

Photomancy means juxtaposing images, trying to compose (conjure) a visually poetic landscape where unexpected relationships might point beyond the mundane. It's an artistic practice aimed at turning awareness toward the magic beyond conventional, sensual perception...to uncover a creative potential that is meaning-full, transformative, and darkly mysterious... something beyond the depths of two dimensions. I find that in art it is the darkness which illuminates. As an artist, if I can bring my own awareness into the murky shadows of images, then I might discover more about the mysteries of longing to grow as a human being.

Two Thieves: A Tale from Old China

Thomas Fuchs

Sometimes you believe a legend because belief is all you have left. That was pretty much the way it was for Zong-li and his dear friend Ping-lau when they first heard about the treasure of the monkey monastery. They were thieves who had gotten themselves into desperate trouble. One of their bolder schemes had gone awry and their victim—a wealthy merchant with a thirst for vengeance—had discovered who had stolen from him. They knew it was only a matter of time until they were hunted down and carved into little pieces unless they left Shanghai and went some place far away.

But where? They had lived all their lives in the great river city and never been anywhere else. As they were pondering this problem, they found themselves in a drink house, sitting next to an old man who begged a jar of warm rice wine from them and then insisted on repaying them with valuable information. He told them about a fabled treasure held in a remote monastery far to the north, near the very top of a great mountain.

The old man's account was somewhat vague as to the exact nature of the treasure and he wasn't able to say exactly where the monastery was located. He was positive about a few things—there was a treasure, and the monastery was a very difficult place to get to.

“Why is it called the monkey monastery?” asked Zong-li.

“Oh, yes, that's right,” replied the old man. There is one more thing I've heard about the place. It's supposed to be infested with monkeys. Filthy animals who steal whatever they can get their disgusting paws on.”

“Why don't the monks chase them away?”

The old man shrugged. “Well, they are monks...”

He didn't need to finish. Zong-li and Ping-lau knew what he meant. Monks were almost always very kind, even to thieves. The real problem with them was that they usually didn't have anything worth taking. But in this case... That very night, the two friends left the great city and headed north.

As they got deeper and deeper into the countryside, the trip became, by small degrees, more arduous and more tantalizing. Most of those of whom they made discrete inquiries knew nothing about the monastery they sought -- or claimed they knew nothing -- but there was always someone who had heard of the place, who thought that it was somewhere over the next ridge or across the next river. Only a few more days. And a few more. And so on.

They used up their cash, their clothes became ever more ragged, they lost supplies when a raft they had stolen foundered in a stream that became angry and swift. But Zong-li and Ping-lau sustained each other through all these difficulties, as they had since their childhood days working as beggars in the great city and then moving up the ladder together to their present status as thieves. If one was glum the other rallied him, and it was rare for them both to be daunted by anything for long.

Then the disaster. It should have been nothing more than an escapade of the kind they'd had so often and laughed about later. They stopped at a tiny inn in a tiny village. Nothing but rubes here, so it should have been easy to escape the bill with an old trick. In the morning, when it was time to settle up for the miserable food and pestilential accommodations, Ping-lau offered the inn-keeper a wager, a proposition involving three cups and a coin.

Of course, the rube went for it, and of course just couldn't keep track of the migrating coin. That should have been the end of it and they should have been on their way but the inn keeper's daughter was a real firebrand. She attacked Ping-lau with a broom, which would have been comical if she had used the brush end, as most people do, but she raised the other end of the sturdy pole and struck with a broad downward sweep and somehow managed to land a tremendous blow across the right side of Ping-lau's forehead. He sat down abruptly, recovered, climbed half way to his feet, then staggered and

fell again, flat out. He seemed to be struggling to breathe with irregular gasps and then made a noise like very deep snoring and then he stopped breathing, spasmed, and stopped moving altogether. Ping-lau was dead, struck dead by a girl.

Zong-li ran, because that's what thieves do when there's trouble. He had seen men die before and he knew Ping-lau had gone on to the next world. There was no helping him. If his friend had only been wounded, that would have been a different matter. Certainly. Or so Zong-li told himself when he finally stopped to rest, but it must be said that a thief's a thief and thieves run.

For days, Zong-li wandered without purpose. He missed Ping-lau terribly, often found himself talking to his old friend, debating whether to press on or just turn around and head back. Maybe the vengeful merchant had cooled off. Not likely.

Then late one afternoon as he was scouring the ground for twigs he could use to make the grass soup he was living on, a dreary mist which had been hanging all day suddenly broke and the sun reclaimed the land. Zong-li's head came up as the light streamed down, and it was then that he caught sight of something gleaming from a distant slope, about a quarter of the way from the top. It had to be very far away, so why was he able to see it so clearly? Of course! That must be the fabled monastery with the mysterious treasure! The reason he and Ping-lau had set out in the first place on this damnable trip.

Instantly, he was seized by a resolve stronger than any he had ever known before. He would climb that slope, he would get to the monastery, he would find the treasure, whatever it was, and he would steal it!

His resolve sustained him as he crossed the miles to the lower slopes of the great mountain. The sun was bright and warm every day and the ground rose gently. Soon he was at the mountain and climbing. Even though he somehow just wasn't ever able to quite catch sight again of that gleam he had spotted, he was sure he knew where it was and that he was headed for it.

He came across lovely meadows with grasses and other plants for food,

and stands of trees providing firewood, and got it into his head that the mountain was welcoming him. He changed his mind the day he saw a lion with a still struggling rabbit in its jaws. Don't be a fool, he told himself. The great river city has its pleasures and its dangers and it's much the same here.

Soon he was climbing gorges so steep that a single misstep would mean a plunge into oblivion. Vegetation grew thin. No meadows, only a few stunted trees. The weather turned cold, then colder. Time was passing relentlessly toward winter. The days were shorter. Some days, clammy mists closed in and there was no sun at all. Clear days were worse, the mist chased off by a steady wind that was very, very cold and penetrating. Snow fell. Ice formed, making even easy stretches precarious. It occurred to Zong-li that he might have lost his way, that he wasn't heading toward whatever it was he had seen gleaming that afternoon a month or more ago. Some thief he was turning out to be! Was he doomed to die in this terrible place, with no one to mourn him or bury him? At least Ping-lau had had some kind of burial. He was sure of that. The inn keeper and his devil daughter were rough, country people, but they wouldn't deny decent burial and proper rites even for a thief. Ping-lau. Poor Ping-lau. He had left his friend. What else could he have done? And now he was going to die. He sat down to wait for death. Maybe he would see his dear friend in the next world. That would be fine. Zong-li was feeling warm and safe, often the final delusion of the man freezing to death, when the mist lifted and the sun blazed through. He braced himself for the inevitable bitter wind, but the air was calm. And there just below him—he had actually climbed past it!—were the gleaming slate roofs of the monastery compound.

He lurched to his feet and stumbled down the few dozen yards to the gate of the monastery, where he collapsed.

He awoke to a bitter smell—an ointment spread so thickly on his chest he could feel its weight. When he tried to sit up, a hand restrained him from behind. "Don't move," said a voice that was slow and commanding but not threatening. "Don't move or you will disturb the needles."

Needles. Acupuncture. Ointment. Medical treatment. He must be in

the monastery. He had made it! The first step accomplished. Now, to... but he was overcome by drowsiness before he could finish the thought and then he was deeply asleep.

A face as sharp as any thief's startled him the second time he woke. Brown eyes specked with gold were studying him with a look Zong-li knew well. Golden Eyes was calculating whether it was worth the risk of attacking this stranger for any valuables he might have.

"Get away!" and hands clapping sharply saved Zong-li from whatever the monkey—for it was a monkey that was appraising him—might have done next.

"They have no manners," said the deep-voiced doctor monk as he approached. "They are only animals but they seem so much like people sometimes, don't they?" As he spoke, he knelt down by Zong-li, draping his fingers over the inside of Zong-li's forearm to gauge the flow of his patient's blood and chi.

"Recovering," he said, and smiled.

"You saved me," said Zong-li. He spoke from genuine gratitude but also this was the beginning of the second step of his plan, which was to win the confidence of the monks.

"If you hadn't come here," said the doctor monk, "we couldn't help you at all. It's a good thing you were strong enough to make it." Of course, at the time he heard these words, Zong-li had no idea of their real meaning. How often we miss the real meaning of things.

In the quiet, healing days which followed, no one asked Zong-li why he had climbed the mountain, whether he had just happened on the monastery or had meant to come here. Zong-li wondered at their lack of curiosity. Perhaps it was just exquisite politeness. More likely, they were just a little stupid, these mountain monks. There were about twenty of them, ranging in age from... well, it was hard to say, maybe their late twenties, a little younger than Zong-li, to well, it was very hard to say how old. There was a dignified senior monk to whom everyone deferred, but in an easy, informal way.

The monks were slightly outnumbered by the monkeys, of which there

seemed to be about two dozen, although it is of course very hard to keep track of monkeys since they are always climbing and hopping about.

In any event, the monks were a kindly and generally cheerful bunch, who gave Zong-li a cup and a bowl and included him in all their meals. As soon as he was fully recovered, he began, trying not to be obvious about his intent, to systematically explore the compound.

He was allowed to go wherever he wanted, and was disappointed to find no sign that the monastery was rich or remarkable in any way. Except for the monkeys, of course. The place consisted of only a few undistinguished buildings of various sizes arranged haphazardly around a roughly defined central courtyard, the whole place surrounded by a high wall. Most of the rooms were small, with few windows and not many candles. There were a few jade ornaments, nothing of quality, no gold or precious stones. Maybe the monks were smarter than they looked. If there was any treasure, they had hidden it well. Their Buddha, about half life-size, was carved from ordinary dun colored stone. Certainly wouldn't be worth carting that down the mountain! Zong-li began to suspect there was no treasure. His trip had been in vain. Ping-lau had died in vain. No, he thought, there must be some truth to the stories. Don't give up hope. Keep your eyes and your ears open. Besides, the weather had turned even harsher. It would be suicide to try to get back down the mountain before the return of spring.

Zong-li was a thief but he wasn't an evil person or lazy, and soon he was helping out with cooking and other chores. He began to sit with the monks when they prayed and meditated before their poor stone Buddha.

One day, to pass an idle moment, Zong-li put a few pieces of barley cake out in the courtyard and stepped back, waiting for the monkeys to climb down and claim the food. There was no sudden swarming as when you scatter grain for birds. Finally one large creature appeared, sniffed the food and poked at it. Then he turned and shit on Zong-li's gift.

Zong-li, furious, looked for a rock to throw at the offending beast, who quickly retreated to a high wall. Zong-li was just gauging the distance when a monk happened by and said, "If you throw a rock at him, he'll likely throw

it back.”

Zong-li dropped the rock. “Why did he do that, anyway? I just wanted to put food out for them.”

“They prefer to steal.”

“Why, if it’s there for the taking?”

“It may be that they don’t trust people. Why would anyone give them anything? It must be a trick. It must be poisoned.”

“They think all that?” asked Zong-li.

“Maybe not,” said the monk. “Maybe it’s just their nature. Monkeys are thieves by nature.”

Winter set in fully. People went outside as little as possible. Even the ever busy monkeys were subdued. Little happened.

Then, gradually, day by day, the days lengthened, sunlight edging darkness out of their lives. The weather softened. Branches which had seemed dead began to be decorated with emerging green. Grasses began to push up through the soil. And even to Zong-li’s untrained eye, it was apparent that one of the monkeys was pregnant.

Now that the weather was turning, Zong-li began to think about leaving, even if he had to go empty-handed. Then came the revelation. Spring’s approach meant a whole new round of chores. The garden had to be cultivated and planted. Clothes, mats, bedding had to be washed and dried. Cabinets containing tools, seed and supplies were flung open... cabinets Zong-li had never suspected existed. Many of the monastery’s interior walls were in fact double walls, creating long, deep closets. So there were lots of secret hiding places. And, as Zong-li was about to discover, one of these held the prize he sought.

Very early one morning, earlier than usual, hours before darkness would dissolve into daylight, Zong-li awoke to the sound of monks up and about. Usually they went directly to their first prayers of the day, but this time they washed themselves with ceremonial care and put on fresh robes. Only then did they go to the room where they worshipped.

The monks knelt in their usual places, facing their stone Buddha, but

they did not pray, not yet. One of the monks slid the shutters open on a small window which Zong-li had never seen open before.

Then the Buddha began to move slowly backwards as one of the monks turned a small wheel in the wall. A panel opened, and the statue slid out of sight. A second panel opened, and another Buddha slid forward, into the room. A golden Buddha.

The sky outside had been brightening, birds had begun their songs, dawn was approaching. The monks sat silently. And then the sun was shining right through the newly opened window. The light poured in, falling directly on the golden Buddha, which began to glow. An aura appeared around and above it, a shapeless, golden glow, a reality at once less clearly defined than the statue itself but intensely bright. So bright, Zong-li had to shut his eyes and turn away, but even so the golden vision continued to dance before him. Around him, he heard the monks murmuring their quiet prayers.

Later, after the sun had moved on and the glow was gone and morning prayers finished, a monk answered Zong-li's questions by explaining that all things have their time. Just as the green buds hide in the barren twigs until the sun is ready for them, so it was for the golden Buddha. This had been a special, once a year moment. The sun would not shine through that window at just that angle again until next year but the golden Buddha would remain where it was until the last day of summer. Then it would be withdrawn and replaced by the stone Buddha. Thus had it been for... oh, well, a very long time. No one knew for sure how long.

When he thought everyone had left the prayer room, Zong-li went back for a closer examination. Even if it was only wood gilded with gold, this Buddha was valuable. This Buddha was worth all he had gone through. This Buddha was worth stealing. He ran his hand over it.

"It is solid gold," said the monk who was in fact watching him.

"Aahhh..." said Zong-li, surprised.

"I'm sorry," said the monk. "I disturbed you at your worship. Inexcusable."

Was this a sly remark or a stupid one? So hard to tell with monks, thought

Zong-li. What he said was, “No, no. I was just... it is very beautiful.”

It was at this moment that another monk came running with news—the monkey mother had given birth, to a boy monkey.

Zong-li went along with everyone else to see the new monkey, even though his mind was spinning. Had he given himself away? Had the monks known all along why he was there, what he was up to?

The monkey’s mother sat on a high wall, cradling her precious infant. Monkey mothers are good mothers, and proud. She leaned forward slightly so that the hairless ones gathering below could admire her beautiful new child.

What Zong-li saw gave him a nasty shock. The monkey baby seemed well formed... except that it had a narrow dark streak like a birthmark across the right side of its forehead, beginning just above the eye, running across the forehead, disappearing under the fur of the skull. So much like the wound that had killed his friend, Ping-lau.

His eyes must be playing tricks on him, thought Zong-li. He pushed up on his toes, trying to get a better look. The mother shifted her position slightly, he couldn’t see as clearly, was it just a shadow on the little monkey’s face? Then the mother tired of the attention and withdrew from sight altogether, along with her baby.

What had he seen, really? He’d been cooped up here way too long. Time to go soon. With the Buddha, of course. But how?

On another day he went into the prayer room, this time checking carefully to make sure no one was watching. He wrapped his arms around the Buddha, lifted, and discovered two things. It wasn’t attached to the platform it rested on, and although it was only about half life size, it was very heavy.

The days were growing longer and warmer. The snow had largely melted and the ground hadn’t softened to mud yet. An excellent time to travel. But how to carry the Buddha?

Days passed as he pondered the problem, and then the answer came to him. A sled. He would secure the Buddha to a sled and drag it down the mountain. It took more days to scavenge two sturdy beams to serve as

runners, a piece of wood for a platform, a few other pieces for braces, some rope. He had to find these things and then hide them under his bedding when no one was looking but he was a thief and all this was easy enough for him. It just took time.

During this time, he acquired a new friend. The new-born one, whom he soon came to call Little Monkey, seemed intensely curious about Zong-li's activities, even slipping away from its mother to watch him. Little Monkey rarely came close enough or stayed still long enough for Zong-li to get a really good look at his face. There was some kind of a mark. Maybe it wasn't really as well defined as it had seemed that first time. Maybe it was fading. Maybe his mind had exaggerated it in the first place. The one time it seemed Little Monkey was coming quite near, there was an explosion of movement as its mother bolted forward to retrieve her baby. She bared her fangs at Zong-li.

After a time, working so carefully, so secretly, Zong-li had acquired all that he would need to build his sled. His plan was to take the pieces to the prayer hall when everyone else was asleep, assemble the sled there, and then use it to haul the golden Buddha away.

The monks never bothered to post a watch at night. They only slept a few hours—part of their discipline and they seemed to get along well without more—but when they slept, they all slept. Would he really be able to get away with it? It was, he had to admit, a plan that could go wrong in a number of ways, but what else was he to do? And suppose they did catch him? They were monks, after all, they had to be gentle with him, didn't they? At worst, they'd just send him away. It was worth the risk. Nothing to lose. He had come here for treasure. He had to try. It was his duty as a thief. And if he did succeed! He would build a fine house for himself and eat and eat until he was fat. Everyone would respect him. And he would go back to that miserable inn and retrieve Ping-lau's poor bones from whatever miserable place they'd been buried and build a fine altar for him in his house. Ah, if Ping-lau were here now. Well, enough of thought. Too much thinking keeps a man from action.

And so one night, Zong-li carried the pieces to the prayer room and

soon had them assembled just as he had planned. As he carried the finished sled to the golden Buddha, he was suddenly, inexplicably, impelled to pause and bow to it, a silent apology for disturbing its serenity. Then, gathering his resolve, he lifted and struggled with the statue until he had it on his sled, covered with a cloak and tightly secured with rope. Slowly, carefully, he began to haul his treasure through the monastery, toward the outside.

Squeaks, a rattle, a bump, then another. Was each noise really as loud as it seemed to him? Several times he stopped and listened for some sign that he had roused the monks from their sleep. Ha! Perhaps they didn't sleep much, but when they did, they slept very deeply indeed.

He was outside. The most dangerous part was over. Now to put as much distance as possible between himself and the monastery before the monks woke and went to pray. He glanced over his shoulder. No one was pursuing him; no sign anyone was up. Except for the monkeys. One of them was perched on the arch over the gate, looking at him. Ai! Was it, yes, it was Little Monkey.

Zong-li shivered even though the weather was mild. Then he pushed off the feeling of -- what was it, foreboding? -- turned and continued on.

The terrain was much harder on him and his sled than the monastery floor had been. Within a mile or less, he got stuck several times and had to lift the sled and the Buddha -- only a few inches to get free, but the combined weight was enormous. And then the binding between one of the runners and the platform worked loose and he had to stop and rewrap it.

He struggled to the top of a rise but coming down the other side, the sled hung up on something. Zong-li pulled, pulled harder. The sled broke free and shot forward and as it did so, there was a heart breaking crack. The sled collapsed, lurching to one side. The Buddha slid precariously. One of the runners had split lengthwise. The sled was useless.

Zong-li wouldn't quit. He unwound the rope from the sled and rigged up a crude harness, which he draped over the Buddha. Then he hoisted the crushing weight on to his back.

As he tried to stand upright, he thought, this was a struggle he had to

win. Like breaking in a horse or taking control of a gang. A test of wills. He did it, he got upright. He began to stride forward. It was just a matter of balance. Just keep moving.

He got about eight feet and then began to sway back and forth and side to side. He couldn't seem to get his balance after all. An odd thought flashed through his mind -- monkeys can't really stand upright. And then the ground was coming up at him.

When he woke he realized he was about to die. He was lying face down in a patch of snow which hadn't melted yet, suffocating in it, firmly pinned by the weight of the treasure he had gone to so much trouble to get, although in his panic, the irony of this eluded him. His lungs seemed about to explode, his heart pounded. The most terrifying moments of his life and they seemed to go on forever. Maybe he was dead and in hell. Yes! He could feel demons pulling at him, and striking him!

"Breathe, you silly monkey," said the monk who was slapping his face. "Breathe."

Zong-li gasped, sucking air into his lungs. The monks had found him and pulled him upright in the nick of time. He was saved. By the monks. Again. There were half a dozen of them gathered round.

With few words, as though this was just another routine task, they used his ropes to make a kind of net, suspending the Buddha between four of them and started back toward the monastery. Zong-li didn't know what to do until one of them said, "Come on, it's almost time for mid-day meal."

Zong-li was, literally, at a crossroads—continue on down the mountain, empty-handed (it was clear the monks would let him go) or return home. Home? What a strange way to think of the monastery. Well, he was getting hungry and it was cold. He had food with him, but the meal at the monastery would be hot. And, of course, if he went down the mountain he would be doing so empty-handed. If he returned to the monastery, there might be another chance at the great prize, the golden Buddha.

As he walked behind the others back to the monastery, he rehearsed various excuses, explanations, apologies, but in fact no one ever said anything

other than what they had always said—would you help with this or that, did you sleep well, a beautiful day, a cloudy day. He bided his time and developed new plans for stealing the Buddha, but each had its flaw and had to be discarded. Weeks passed and then months and without quite realizing it, Zong-li slipped further and further into the life the monks lived. He began to learn the prayers, and how to meditate. At times he felt as young and bright as he had as a child; at other times, he was filled with great peace.

Months passed. At the end of summer, as the hours of darkness again began to overwhelm the hours of daylight, there was a special twilight service and the golden Buddha was returned to its compartment out of sight, replaced by the humble but, as Zong-li was beginning to understand, equally important one of stone.

Through this time, although Zong-li continued to call him Little Monkey, the animal grew into adolescence and toward powerful adulthood and became more interested in other monkeys and less intrigued by Zong-li. And the birthmark, however distinct it may have once been, was now barely discernible.

More months passed. Spring returned, and this time Zong-li took part in the ceremony and special prayers which marked the re-emergence of the golden Buddha. This time he didn't have to turn away from the brilliant aura.

As spring ripened, something nagged at him, some task left undone. Oh, yes, that. Yes, of course. He had promised himself, he had promised Ping-lau, that when the time was right again, he would steal the golden Buddha. He tried to come up with a plan, something better than last time, but he kept forgetting about the theft. There were so many other things that had to be done—planting, cleaning, prayer, meditation. And instruction.

He had begun to take instruction. Like anyone of his faith, he already knew something about the cycles, each soul reborn countless times, in forms reflecting the spiritual achievements and failures of the life preceding... the loyal horse reborn as a human soldier; the cruel soldier reborn as a jackal. Now Zong-li learned more. Among the things he learned -- according to

the old teaching, the reborn creature recalls its preceding life (which must be exceedingly unpleasant for, say, the proud beauty reborn as a spider or a toad) but this memory only lasts for a while and as the new life crowds in, the old memories are slowly but steadily crowded out. This is why people can never recall their earliest years.

Little Monkey had seemed attached to him at first and had since drifted away. Could this be proof that Little Monkey had really been Ping-lau? Zong-li asked the senior monk about this and the monk said he didn't know.

Then one day, a strapping young fellow appeared at the monastery gate with a story about looking for medicinal herbs in the mountains and could he spend a night or two here? Zong-li instantly spotted him for what he really was—not a dealer in healing herbs, but a thief. The way the young man looked around, the false smile... it was so obvious! Soon after the visitor was settled with a cup of welcoming tea, Zong-li drew the senior monk aside to warn him.

“I know,” said the old man.

“You do?”

“There are no medicinal herbs in this area. Nothing that would be bring a gatherer anywhere near us. And this is a monastery thieves come to.”

Zong-li, who had been drifting into self-righteousness, was taken aback. “You mean, like me,” he said, abashed.

And now another secret about the monastery was revealed to Zong-li.

“Like all of us,” said the monk. “We were all thieves. Every monk here came as a thief.”

Ah!

The old man helped Zong-li recover from his astonishment (and any bad feeling he might have) by telling how he himself had come, many, many years ago, in search of the treasure of the monkey monastery. His story wasn't exactly the same as Zong-li's but it was close enough that the two men were soon sharing a good laugh over the old man's long-ago misadventure. Zong-li still respected the senior monk very much and found it easier than ever to accept the old man as his teacher.

“And so everyone here tried to steal the golden Buddha?” asked Zong-li.

“Yes.”

“And they all failed?”

“It is still here.”

“And they all became monks?”

“No,” said the old man, suddenly solemn. “Some continued down the mountain.”

“And what happened to them?”

The old man shrugged.

“If they died before they mended their ways, were they reborn as monkeys?” asked Zong-li.

“Maybe.”

Zong-li reflected on all his new knowledge for some minutes. Then he asked if that was why the monastery was built in the first place, as a special place for the saving of thieves.

“It was like this when I came here. For all I know, it has always been so.”

“Were the monkeys here before the monastery?”

“They were here when I got here. That’s all I know,” said the old monk.

Zong-li’s thoughts returned to a subject of more immediate concern.

“What should we do about our visitor?”

“Treat him as you were treated.”

“Suppose he remains a thief nonetheless,” said Zong-li. “Shouldn’t we tell him who we are and all the rest of it?”

“Would you have believed it when you first arrived?”

Zong-li smiled and shook his head.

The old monk continued, “About all one can do is walk the path one is on and if someone else thinks that’s the path for them, they can follow. It’s their choice.”

“But for a man to come back as a monkey, that’s a terrible thing,” said Zong-li.

“Yes, it is.”

It was shortly after this conversation that Zong-li made his decision. He renounced any thoughts of returning to the city and thereafter devoted his life to the tasks of the monastery, to kindness, to meditation and the reciting of prayers. And every day, he left a small gift of food for Little Monkey, hoping that some day the creature would accept the gift and give up its life as a thief.

Thomas Fuchs has spent much of his career writing television documentaries and some print non-fiction. Over the past few years, he has discovered the joy of imagining and inventing afforded by the writing of fiction.

You Are the Buddha

Girish Menezes

There were ten thousand screaming Buddhas all dressed in white robes dancing around me. The room was erupting into organized chaos to the wild beat of the music...and then...silence. Osho walked into the room, relaxed smiling. I looked at him and saw a man who could have been my father. This was no God – he was just an ordinary man. But that was his beauty. He was more ordinary than any of us. He had nothing to prove and nothing to hide. We all sat down and he began to speak. And then half way through his talk he turned to me and said, “You are the Buddha”.

I was just sitting there quietly amongst the ten thousand odd white robed disciples of this remarkable man. He spoke for two hours non stop, sitting there on his armchair calm and relaxed. I don't remember a thing other than those magic words. But those words stayed with me for the rest of my life. But what did they mean?

In fact, Osho had always told his disciples that they are all Buddhas, they just don't know it. Not very different from Christ telling us that we are all the children of God, this makes me personally the son of God. And a traditional Hindu meditative technique has meditators chanting ‘Aham Brahmasmi’, which literally translates to, ‘I am God’. A neat twist brought to the technique by Nisargadutta Maharaj is the chant ‘Tat tvam Brahmasmi’ which translates to ‘You are God’. So what is this all about, is it pure blasphemy, or are we missing something?

The fact is that whenever we look at something in its purity in nature, a cloud, tree or snowflake, it is always perfect. But unfortunately, whenever we

look at things in its utilitarian manifestation, it becomes somehow less. The cloud brings rain, the yield from your apple tree is sub-average and the lowly snowflake causes disruption on the roads. Cars are too fast, slow or polluting. People are short, fat, skinny, rude or just plain ugly. Suddenly, judgement takes over from the first premise that everything in nature is perfect. Milton once wrote, 'He also serves who stands and waits', and no truer words have ever been spoken. Everybody and everything is perfect in itself, regardless of size, shape or utility. Reality may be inconvenient to you, but it is reality in its very own perfection.

And you. You are perfection as well. Yes, whatever your parents and teachers told you. However much you were bullied at school. Even if you eat more than a sumo wrestler, own 5,000 cats and have a habit of spitting in the supermarket. You are a child of God. You are the Buddha.

Unfortunately, that doesn't make you any less irritating. Nor does it mean that people are going to worship you. Don't forget we are Buddhas too. And if all of us are children of God, brothers and sisters, including George W. Bush and Bin Laden, what does that mean about how we should behave? How does that change your attitude toward your boss, or your subordinates, or all those horrid immigrants trying to steal your job, and the millions dying in Asia and Africa because of imbalanced trade restrictions? If it doesn't change your behavior and attitudes – that really makes no difference either – you still remain a child of God, a Buddha. Funny, isn't it?

Think about it.

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Cockroaches and Other Buddhas

Killing Them Softly

Charles Suhor

I've given a lot of thought to cockroaches over the years. This may sound weird, but I came about it honestly. They kept appearing from the crannies of my houses, showing up in my readings, and insinuating themselves into my reflections on who has the right to kill whom in a conflicted world.

I was born and raised in New Orleans, the roach capital of the South, and big cockroaches were the object of universal fear and loathing. They were quick, ugly, and ubiquitous. Sometimes they would even fly from a place on the wall or ceiling and land in your lap or on your arm. *Ech!*

Even if you were swift enough to chase one of them down on the linoleum floor, the victory wasn't very satisfying. Step on the roach and there would be a sharp *Crunch!* and the next step was to wipe your shoe and pick up the mess with a tissue. *Yuk!*

The most challenging way of getting them was with bug spray. Before aerosol insect sprays, there was the back-pumped can that spread a heavy mist of a popular insecticide known as Flit. A radio ad depicted a domestic scene interrupted by the pests, and someone hollered, "Quick, Henry, the Flit!" Ready, aim, spray. Douse the little bugger, and his millennia-long trek through evolution is over. Poet Charles Bukowski wrote, perversely, "that's the best/spraying roaches." But don't inhale.

My first stirring of sympathy for cockroaches came at a teenage King Cake Party in the garage of a friend in our Ninth Ward neighborhood. The noise and general din kept most of the roaches in hiding, but one of them ventured onto the slab that was our dance floor. Girls screamed, guys looked

on with amusement.

A huge kid named Barry swept us all aside, reared himself up like a superhero, and said, “Wait, I’ll take care of this!” He strode mightily back from the garage to the driveway, affected a fierce countenance, ran forward at full speed, leaped high into the air, and came down on the hapless roach with his full weight. It sounded like a firecracker going off. The comic romp set us all to doubling over in laughter.

We got the point that Barry was satirizing our fear of the little crawlers by a literal act of overkill. Even so, it occurred to me that this was a mismatch of epic proportions. A roach, despite a formidable pedigree as a survivor, is no match for a man, woman, child, or frisky kitten.

The poet Edward Field had a kinder take on roaches, writing “They are among the most attractive/and brightest of small creatures/ though you have to be prepared/ for the look of uncomprehending horror/ when a large roach walks across the floor/as you are sipping drinks.”

I softened even more when I read Franz Kafka’s “Metamorphosis.” In the first line, Gregor Samsa wakes up one morning to find he has been transformed into an enormous insect, commonly translated as a cockroach but sometimes as gigantic bug, dung beetle, or even monstrous vermin. You’ve got to feel bad, for both Gregor and our sentient brethren, the cockroaches, and there’s a deep poignancy as the story unfolds in Kafka’s intense, surreal way.

It’s a short distance from the sympathy for an anthropomorphized roach to compassion for the one you see after the exterminator’s visit. There it is, capsized, little legs flailing, dying slowly before your eyes. Come on, isn’t that sad?

This makes Peter Wild’s poetic anti-roach screed look hopelessly mean-spirited. “I would have no truck with roaches/ couched like lions in the ledges of sewers/ their black eyes in the darkness/ alert for any tasty slime...laboring up drainpipes through the filth/ to the light.”

Match point for the roaches came when I heard a marvelous story from a therapist about a client, a Viet Nam veteran who told of being in one of those small, miserable cages for several years, the kind where DeNiro and

Walken were kept in *The Deer Hunter*. The soldier kept his sanity only by adopting a family of roaches. He gave each a name, watched them multiply as a family, celebrated their birthdays, and followed their lives day-by-day. The roaches were his love connection, saving him from despair.

Granting that pests like cockroaches, spiders, ants are in some sense enemies of clean and healthful living, can we love them even as we spray the Flit, stomp them, watch the Orkin worker sprinkle poison into our cabinets? Yes, we can. PETA notwithstanding, it's clear that we kill animals with genuine love pretty routinely. They shoot crippled horses, don't they? And who hasn't seen a beloved dog or cat "put to sleep," as the euphemism goes, rather than let them endure in a pain-wracked body.

It's not impossible to extend our compassion from beloved pets to innocent pests. They seem outside the circle of human affection, but that could be because we're drawing a small circumference. St. Francis of Assisi said that it's easy to love things that are beautiful but we can learn "to embrace God in all things." The Viet Nam prisoner knew that every cockroach has a mommy, and he used that knowledge to envision the family of crawlers as part of the universe of kindly relationships. Hemingway said, "Fish, you are my brother!" The prisoner said, "My family, the roaches!"

The leap to the next question is inevitable. Can we kill fellow humans without ill-will? Religious fundamentalists notwithstanding, the answer, again, is, yes. That's what euthanasia, pulling the plug, and living wills are all about. Even those who think that mercy killing is immoral under all circumstances can't deny that the psychology of euthanasia is, absent deceit or pathology, a mind-state of profound love. An ironic left-handed admission of this comes from pious survivors who denounce euthanasia but put the rap for their loved ones' deaths on God—"In His mercy, God relieved Grandma of her suffering." God the pluggpuller, the surrogate Kevorkian, can kill with love. We, created in His image, are damned if we do.

Things get messier when we ask whether we can kill our enemies with love. There's a dazzling number of answers to that in the form of speculations, rationalizations, and condemnations. History provides a rich killing field of

responses. Hatred, unspeakable cruelty, and cold-bloodedness are common. The Roman Coliseum. Vlad the Impaler. The rape of Nanking. Hitler. Stalin. Idi Amin. It's all the more horrible when treated cavalierly, as in Stalin's infamous statement, "A single death is a tragedy. A million deaths is a statistic."

Rationalizations for killing abound. Hiroshima and Nagasaki loom as the most expansive end-means justification in history, but innumerable misleaders of nations, tribes, and little groups with funny names have talked their constituencies into killing for a cause. If the Bush administration, the Janjaweed militias in Darfur, and the Aryan Brotherhood come to mind, that's somewhere between pardonable and spot-on accurate.

Shakespeare gave us a terrific case study of rationalization with Brutus. The conspirators artfully pick away at his resistance to murdering Caesar. Once earnestly self-deceived, he can shank his best friend and proclaim his reason to the mob: "It's not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more." I actually liked the guy when he committed suicide and said, "Caesar, now be still. I killed not thee with half so good a will." Ambivalence, anyone?

It's even harder to wrap your mind around the ancient military ideal of the warrior. Some Eastern traditions, alive today in popular martial arts courses for everyone from preschoolers to senior citizens, hold that hostility plays no part in it. Hey, you use the energy of attackers to disarm them. Plus, the training is great mental discipline and wonderful exercise. If kids become inflated with macho delusions of invincibility, that's their mistake. They weren't listening to the theory of thing but to the their quick-strike, hard-kicking bodies and the popular culture that glorifies well executed violence.

The variations on the horror and honor of warriorship are as wide as they are bizarre. "Exterminate the brutes!" and "God is on our side!" are the dominant cry throughout the ages. But Karen Armstrong describes seventh century China warfare as chivalric in the extreme. Violence in combat was sternly limited by rules and amenities that make the Geneva Convention rules look as nasty as the My Lai massacre. Warriors engaged in major competition to outdo the enemy in acts of ritual courtesy. A quota system was established.

It was ignoble in the extreme for a warrior to kill more than three captives, and ideally, his eyes would be shut while doing the deed. One warrior was put to death because he boasted of killing six combatants on the battlefield.

Unfathomable, in a time of pre-emptive invasions, intertribal genocide, suicide bombers, honor killings of raped daughters, indiscriminate terrorist attacks, and the obscene euphemism of “collateral damage” to soften the fact of killing and maiming noncombatant men, women, and children.

I’ve climbed a shaky stepladder from our death-to-cockroaches impulses to the casual murder of millions of human beings. But the overarching question of killing of any kind is a context worth considering. The Buddhist ethic of non-harming aims at extending compassion to all living beings—from cockroach-Buddhas to Christ on the cross. The Jains took this to extremes, declining to walk on the grass for fear of crushing unseen critters.

Maybe someday I’ll buy into the democracy of all sentient beings, but at press time I don’t take these admonitions to mean that we should live with harmful or unsanitary creatures. More is at stake in taking or sustaining a human life than that of a bacterium, cockroach, or snail darter. But we should not kill any life form unnecessarily, and we can hold them in some reverence even in the act of killing. If we destroy cockroaches for good reasons, we can still do it in a way that honors their interiority, their manic scurrying to escape death, and their altogether noble ancestry. There’s a story of a Buddhist monk who stepped on a roach, saying “Better luck next life!”

The matter of taking others’ lives—whether, when, by whom, and how—is just one of the species-specific questions we’re charged with answering by reason of our role as reflective beings in an evolving universe. We’re groping towards an understanding of many such questions—human sexuality, the distribution of wealth, ways of governance, religious experiences and institutions, our relation to the environment, nationalism and globalism, the uses of technology, and more.

Cultures that lay claim to the final answers to those huge questions have invariably enforced their solutions through oppression. Finding some things unseemly, unpretty, or immoral, they set out to destroy rather than interact

with them in a shared universe. But they are the saber-toothed societies. They win battles in the short run but, unable to adapt, they are self-programmed to extinction. If you or I make up our minds with complete certainty about any of those questions, and cockroaches too, we have set the boundaries of our own growth.

The great advocates of non-harming and passive resistance seldom advanced their cases as dogma. Surely, St. Francis, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King were persuasive, but they were not coercive. They simply lived in ways that enacted their beliefs. Their model encourages us to navigate the world of possibilities with a sense of aptness about our path but without grim zealotry.

Wittgenstein and the Buddha, separated by two and a half millennia, had the same advice. Hold your ideas lightly. Don't take your beliefs too seriously. An old Buddhist adage says, "If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill the Buddha." That is, if you hold onto a teaching as dogma, trash the whole thing and start over, you've blown it. With a sense of play in matters of heart, mind, and spirit, we decline to participate in the rigidity that discourages dialogue and retards our evolution towards peace and an as yet unimagined omega.

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Two Kinds Of Hurt

Bob Makransky

There are two kinds of hurt: self-pitying hurt and sad hurt. Self-pitying hurt is the kind of hurt we feel on purpose, so that we'll have a good excuse to wallow in self-pity. Whenever we are self-righteously indignant at someone else's behavior, we are indulging in self-pitying hurt. We seek self-pitying hurt when we expect or demand something from another person which that person is not offering freely. Whenever we believe that other people (e.g. our parents, spouse, or children) owe us anything; whenever we try to bribe, wheedle, or coerce other people; to try to make them feel guilty if they don't come across for us; to impose our own desires on them beyond what they are comfortable with; then what we are actually seeking from them is their rejection, which we can conveniently blame on them.

Whenever we make our happiness depend on something which someone else does or doesn't do, we are just asking that person to hurt us. This kind of hurt is easily avoided by being respectful of other people's space: their limits, their right to have feelings of their own, including the right to reject us, if they so desire, without our resenting, denying it, or taking it as a personal affront.

Where self-pitying hurt is the natural consequence of possessive love, sad hurt is the doorway to true love. Sad hurt is the hurt which other people make us feel in spite of our having reached out to them joyously and in good faith. Sad hurt is puzzling hurt (as opposed to self-righteous hurt). Where self-pitying hurt can easily be avoided by listening to and respecting other people's feelings, sad hurt is unavoidable – it's part and parcel of the human

condition. Sad hurt is the hurt which other people lay on us purposely – the product of their self-hatred which they project onto us as scapegoats. Sad hurt is the hurt we feel when other people are just using us as an excuse to pity themselves.

This kind of hurt seems very unjust and unfair; and it is unjust and unfair. Although it is a meager consolation, this kind of “unmerited” hurt is indeed the result of karma that we ourselves set into motion in other lifetimes and realities. If we feel that it is unjust that we should have to suffer now for sins committed in other lifetimes, that’s too bad; but it’s life, and there’s no use complaining about it. Complaining is what turns it into self-pitying hurt.

When other people try purposely to hurt us, it hurts. There’s no use pretending that it doesn’t hurt, or getting angry at them in return. Those responses (apathy or anger) cover our feelings of sad hurt – keep us from feeling the hurt directly by substituting thought forms of self-pity for the direct perception of pain. These are our protections (closing up or striking back) when other people deliberately try to hurt us, and they are effective blocks against the feeling of sad hurt. However, they also block out the feeling of true love.

If we’re going to be open to other people’s love, we have to be open to their hurt as well. Vulnerability is not a door that can be opened and closed selectively, to let some feelings through and not others. To protect ourselves from feeling hurt is to prevent ourselves from feeling love.

When the crowd taunted and crucified Jesus, he felt deeply, deeply hurt. He felt exactly the same way we would feel if there was a crowd of people taunting us and pouring their self-hatred upon us, and we had done nothing to deserve it. Jesus was not such an exalted being that he no longer had a capacity to feel hurt. On the contrary, he was an exalted being precisely because he let himself feel the hurt directly, instead of blocking his pain with self-pity (apathy or anger).

No matter how enlightened we may become, we never get to a place where hurt no longer hurts. There’s no way that hurt ever does anything

except feel BAD. But if someone hurts us and we let ourselves feel the hurt directly, then that's that; that's the way the cookie crumbles. We feel bad for a little while, and then the feeling passes and we go on to something else.

But if we are afraid to feel hurt directly; if we reject the feeling of hurt by substituting apathy or anger for it, by trying to dominate or control relationships, by rolling over and playing the victim right off the top, or by avoiding intimacy altogether; then we are in fact grabbing onto our hurt, hugging it to our bosoms, and making it the centerpiece of all our relationships. And all there can ever be is hurt, because we leave no room for love to get in anywhere – we've got every chink stuffed.

Apathy and anger aren't really painkillers, they're just pain deferrers. All they do is postpone the pain. The only way to really get through pain, to get over it and past it, is by feeling it directly. Of course, this is the last thing which people who are in pain want to hear: "Haven't I suffered enough?" they ask. "And it's not even my fault!" But the truth is that the amount of pain which people feel (or repress into apathy or anger) is the precise amount of pain which they must yet feel to disentangle themselves from it and put the pain behind them.

This is because pain is not something which is external (imposed from without), but rather arises from within ourselves. The external situation which causes pain is but a symbol for something going on inside us on an emotional level. To consider our pain as something detached from ourselves is to refuse responsibility for our pain. To blame someone else for our pain, to try to make someone else take responsibility for feeling our pain, is futile. Only by feeling our pain directly, looking within ourselves for the source of our pain, are we taking responsibility for it, and thereby putting ourselves in a position to move beyond it. We do this by finding a way to heal our own wounds, instead of expecting or demanding other people to heal them for us. Other people can't heal us; they're in too much pain themselves to have any extra love to spare. We have to be willing to take complete responsibility for our own healing.

Go back in your mind's eye to every scene in your life when you were

hurt by other people. You do this like a normal daydream or fantasy, but instead of trying to capture a feeling of glory, vindication, self-righteousness, etc. (as is done in normal daydreaming), you try to capture the feeling of hurt that you felt at that time. Watch the scene of that person who is you being rejected and needing love, and give love to that person. Talk to the you in the visualization, call to him or her: “There, there, cheer up! You may have been rejected, but you’re still a worthwhile person. You’ll go on living and breathing, and in time you’ll find true love. After all, I love you. I really do!”

Say this using your own words and sentiments, and mean what you say. Give yourself all the sympathy and compassion that you were denied at that time. Let yourself feel sad for that person who is you. And when you let yourself feel sad for yourself, you’ll also find yourself feeling sad for the people who hurt you.

Sad hurt implies forgiveness – the sadness is as much for those who hurt us as it is for ourselves. Sadness, not anger, is the true feeling we share with the people who hurt us. Anger separates us from them, whereas sadness unites us to them – we are one with them in sadness.

This visualization is not so different from what we do when we indulge ourselves in angry fantasies of the people who have hurt us – telling them off, or delighting when they feel remorse for what they’ve done to us. But instead of using the visualization to stoke our self-pity, we use it to heal ourselves by feeling good about who we are.

To be able to love others and to freely receive their love in return, we have to be ready to be rejected and hurt by them. We have to be willing to face this directly, instead of preparing ourselves in advance, bracing ourselves, taking out insurance in advance against hurt. We have to be able to forgive people for the bad things they do to us rather than get into a tizzy about it – forgive them because they don’t know what they’re doing.

Of course, this is a lot easier said than done, but the key to it is being willing to feel hurt: not angry and vindictive, not blithely pretending we’re not hurt, not bitterly wallowing in self-pity over past hurt, not setting up

ground rules and strictures in relationships to guard against the possibility of future hurt; but just plain old feel hurt. If we can truly open ourselves up to hurt, then we'll automatically open ourselves up to love.

Reprinted with permission of the author from Bob Makransky's book *Magical Living*.

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The Great Spirit

Stephen R Killeen

When I speak fluently in language of Understanding and Compassion

When I feel the tremors and tremblings of Centuries of Slaughters heaped upon the burdened spines and skulls of my people--the downtrodden, the different, the hoodlums, the strays, the addicts, the outcasts, the vagabonds, the mad Shaman seers, the genius artists, the imprisoned and tortured, the 'mentally ill', the indigenous natives I grew up spending summers and moons with, et cetera.

When I speak passionately without the falsity of ego or reservation of fear

When my voice finally thunders with philosophy and magick, and even the alchemy of turning stone minds into vibrant blooming orchids seems possible...

It is then that the Great Spirit speaks through me with a resounding, Universal voice which takes each atom, each fragment and faction, drawing from harmony and dissonance, beauty, chaos, order and peace... to form an overwhelming union of symbiosis, symmetry and community of thoughts, feelings, ideas.

It is then that the Great Spirit speaks from the hearts of the ancients, the warriors, the struck-down leaders, the elder voices on the council of Space and Time... a visionary chorus of unmatchable, ineffable colours and chords, with the rhythms of Sky and Sun and Sea, desert and lake, forest and plains all mingling and conjoined and inseparable in timeless strength and awful wisdom. It is only then that I may approach fathoming Life, Meaning,

Purpose and 'Impossible' Perfection.

It is the injustice of 'Man' and 'Government' which disrupt and distract us from our true freedom! (our celebrations, our rites and rights---our true and just creativity, heritage and culture.)

We must return to blood, return to fire, return to the full spectrum of emotions, visions and voices so that we may celebrate the uniqueness of Life as Art, and stop persecuting the profound thinkers, the insightful, the rare and unusual ones who disturb us only with their extreme Genius/Difference.

We must not allow a thought or voice to go unheard in our Ocean simply because it doesn't fit the mainstream shouts and squawks our political ears have grown accustomed to hearing.

We must not allow corruption and conformity to be our way when it leads to cataclysm, when clearly Evolution, Revolution and Transformation of the system is wiser and freer.

We must allow for Change and pursue Happiness for All, equally, and without reservation, bias or any human restrictions.

We must destroy the delirious common notion of 'contentment' when the STRUGGLE of peoples brutally oppressed continues to rage volcanic and burn caustic in the mouths of those who choose to bear witness, and choose to bring illumination and light to show the shadows of the neglected, the ill, the dying and the dead.

We must all speak out powerfully and relentlessly with courage and without shame, instead of weakly accepting the status quo of discrimination, inequity and injustice.

We must go forward by cherishing Difference and nurturing Genius, or they shall perish from our existence and become extinct, just as countless living creatures on our little blue planet already have done.

Stephen Killeen is a 34 year old Diagnosed Schizophrenic writer. His work has been published in *Syntax*, a Denver journal. His essay "Antonin Artaud: An Impossible Mind" appears in issue 6 and can be read in their Archives.

J. D. Salinger and James Joyce

Farrell Davisson

Surely the most poignant tribute to William Shawn, the awkwardly unseated editor of *The New Yorker*, was paid almost a half century ago by J. D. Salinger. Remember him? He was the magazine's brightest literary comet during Shawn's regime.

A dazzling illusionist, Salinger remains the most misunderstood, thus belittled writer, of his generation. This despite the hordes of avid disciples he enticed on college campuses during the '50s and '60s. The homage included a volume of essays by voguish critics, mostly academics, that "peerage of tin ears," stone deaf to the resonant subtleties of his art.¹

Back in 1961, Salinger dedicated the Little, Brown edition of *Franny and Zooey* to the devoutly genteel Shawn. The stories, as well as other accounts of the libido-impaired Glass progeny, first appeared in *The New Yorker*. The family romance began in 1948 and ends, at least for the time being, with the candidly testy epitaph "Seymour—An Introduction," published in 1959.

Salinger's congenitally droll dedication to his literary guardian reads: "As nearly as possible in the spirit of Matthew Salinger, age one, urging a luncheon companion to accept a cool lima bean, I urge my editor, mentor and (heaven help him) closest friend, William Shawn, *genius domus* of *The New Yorker*, lover of the long shot, protector of the unprolific, defender of the hopelessly flamboyant, most unreasonably modest of born great artist-editors, to accept this pretty skimpy-looking book."

1 See *Salinger*, edited by Henry Anatole Grunwald, Harpers & Bros., 1962.

It takes a truly sympathetic scanning of Salinger's precisely chiseled stories to appreciate the nuances of the affectionate paean. Remember he was writing in an era when such modestly earthy words as "sweat" were considered too roughhewn for the magazine's fastidious columns. It went without saying that any graphic detailing of other everyday bodily activities, including love-making, was out-of-bounds, whether for dramatic effect, purposes of plot or other creative intent. Oddly, the only ejaculations passing muster dealt with deities.

Meantime, Salinger's postwar contemporaries were waging an all-out assault on the rearguard barricades left behind by squeamish philistines. The rebellious guerrillas were led by the likes of Mailer, Roth, Ginsberg, the somewhat less shrill Bellow, and the more orthodox Updike, Salinger's *New Yorker* colleague. Their battle cry was as old as Western Civilization: Any and all human phenomena, real or fancied, are fit topics for an artist's scrutiny.

Salinger did openly fire a few small-bore volleys of his own in that now-quaint skirmish. He employed the F-word and a mundane assortment of stock teenage erotica and cuss words in *The Catcher In the Rye*, which came out in 1951 as his first and only novel to date.

The novel is a fondly empathetic study of a tender-to-the-touch adolescent hectored by endemic anxieties, primarily gonadal, while merging into manhood in the inhospitable urban setting of that stagnating period. An epoch shrouded in gray flannel, trimmed in chrome ghastly lighted by neon and overrun with phonies on the make. The book was an instant and sensational hit with the targeted age group.

That age bracket only a decade later was to produce those anti-preppie counter-culturalists, many of them Ivy League refugees, promising free love and eternal peace for the price of a Bob Dylan album, a posy, a whiff of *cannabis* and a dodge of the Vietnam draft, licit or illicit.

The narrator, Holden Caulfield, a classic victim of the hoof and mouth restlessness common to the young, was a quantum evolutionary stride beyond Booth Tarkington's Penrod, role model for a previous generation. Like *his* diffident predecessor, Holden was still celibate, a modern-day Manhattan

Galahad teetering between lust and mistrust.

Holden, however, was brotherly enough, as a Salinger prototype, to invite little sister Phoebe to join him once more in practicing the ritual mating dance. A *jus sanguinis* rehearsal with handy next-of-kin that likely dates back to the cave. The pair's warmup, unchaperoned in her borrowed bedroom, even included a tango, "for God's sake."

When Salinger invoked The Word, now as adulterated by reckless abuse as its more romantic synonym, he did so sparingly. Also he disguised it as a threatening imperative, an admonishment. No doubt that's why the novel lives on these 35-odd years later as assigned homework in advanced high school American Lit classes. An autoclaved specimen of *Catcher* ran in *The New Yorker* as "A Slight Rebellion on Madison." The preview was cleansed of any of Holden's allusions to Sally Hayes's "cute little ass."

The entire corpus of Salinger's efforts is rife with clues that he, along with his more flamboyant peers, saw editorial constraints as artistic challenges, as irresistible dares to his prankster's bravado. The true measure of his genius is the deft, doubled-meaning word play, the poker faced insinuations, he used to skirt the anachronistic taboos, venturing, when necessary, into the ribald, the venereally explicit, yet saving face all around.

The hunch persists that the hermetic author/poet remains in limbo behind his woodpile in New Hampshire ("Live Free or Die") because his warning that he writes "a sort of semantic geometry" has never been heeded as his creative trademark. The latent thrust, the lasting import of his art, has gone too long undetected, glossed over as it is by its faddishly glib veneer.

The dynamic tensions indigenous to fiction that is more than mere entertainment springs from the subliminal conflicts between what Salinger seems to be saying and what he is really saying, annealing prose into poetry. "...a great inverted forest/with all foliage underground," Salinger's own description from an apprenticing story in the *Cosmopolitan*.² It's a scarring

² The time-honored artificers' camouflage, sometimes donned unwittingly, was used to advantage in his short stories by the youthful, pre-celebrity Hemingway.

irony, perhaps even tragic, that Salinger's sleight-of-hand dexterity seems to have been too crafty, his open-ended ambiguities too cunning. Thus the full scope of his wit, delightfully puckish, was lost on his blindsided readers.

This is all the more startling because he baldly, if belatedly, stakes out his literary credo in "Seymour—An Introduction." With typical circumvention, he has Buddy Glass paraphrasing brother Seymour's definition of the poet's function:

"...to write what he would write if his life depended on his taking responsibility for writing what he must write in a style designed to shut out as few of his old librarians as humanly possible."

James Joyce earlier made much the same claim in *Ulysses*, modern letter's Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights. Speaking of Shakespeare, no less, Joyce argued that it's the poet's risky lot to explore the portals of discovery. "Portals of discovery opened to let in the quaker librarian..."³

To the attuned, Salinger's works, burnishing the banal into high art, tinkles with Joycean echoes. As prime examples, the pivotal scenes in both "Franny" and "Zooney" are spun out while the "leading ladies" of the cast are on the commode.

In that much tweezered and analyzed climatic vignette in the story bearing her name, Franny has her spiritual miscarriage seated in a latched stall in the ladies' room in the college restaurant. After a "suspensory moment" she breaks down and gives vent to "a violent outburst-inburst," a change of polarity that has "an immediate, pacifying effect on her body."

And in "Zooney," Mother Glass is likewise sitting on the stool. This instance in the family bathroom while she carries on a longwinded, domestic debate with son Zooney, awash in the nearby tub. Zooney, a resolutely wry 25-year-old, labels the *intime* setting as "our little chapel."

The description is reminiscent of Joyce's sardonic biblical paraphrasing:

3 An obscure English preacher, Thomas Bowdler, some 150 years ago earned ignoble immortality as a pioneering editorial pussyfooter. He had the bad taste to try to pasteurize the Bard's plays for family consumption.

“It is meet to be here. Let us build an altar to Jehovah...It is meet to be here. Let us construct a watercloset.”

The homespun mother and son *tete-a-tete* is punctuated by this aside: “A much deeper sigh then customary—almost it seemed, a part of the life force itself—suddenly carne from Mrs. Glass.” Agenbite of inwit! One can hear Leopold (Poldy) Bloom, “asquat on the cuckstool” of his backyard privy, murmuring “Pwee. A little wind piped wee.”

Mrs. Glass may go down in history as the first character with the Gaelic panache to flaunt her flatulence, if only a stockingfooter, in the decorous confines of *The New Yorker*.

Bessie Gallagher Glass’s enthroned mannerisms are spelled out in suggestive detail. “Distinctively, her way of holding it tended to blow to some literary hell one’s first (and still perfectly tenable) impression that an invisible Dubliner’s shawl covered her shoulder.” Sic.

But Salinger hoards the last chuckle for himself. He has Zooey grouching to his mother with a loud guffaw that he doesn’t “want any poops around here.” Scatological? It depends on one’s bias.

Speaking of firsts: The parasitical exegetists, presumably familiar with Walt Whitman, if not Alice B. Toklas, failed, to a man, to notice that Zooey Glass was likely the first gay individual to put in an appearance in full dress uniform in *The New Yorker*. The *sub-rosa* data, in hindsight, protrude like sore thumbs. His Achilles heel, his mastery of Greek, the allure of “sunny *old* Athens,” his concerns about playing “Martha to somebody else’s Mary.” Yoicks, Zooey himself admits he judges “straight from the colon.”

Seymour, the astigmatic *seer* of the clan, was introduced and suddenly dispatched in the prismatic short story “A Perfect Day for Bananafish,” which came out in 1948. Every syllable in the gem-like story seems chosen with a poet’s frugality. The eldest Glass sibling is in his Capricorn/Pan phase, indulging his benign proclivity for anatomically virginal nymphs, barely eligible for kindergarten.

Seymour is vacationing with wife Muriel in Florida, that juicy target for satire. On this perfect day he retreated to the beach where he’s sought out by

Sybil, a pre-nubile groupie of recent acquaintance. He takes the flirty tyke on an impromptu belly-down cruise on his rubber float. They're on the lookout for mythopoetically orgiastic bananafish.

Seymour abruptly calls off the buoyant tryst when precocious Sybil spots one of the fish with a mouthful of bananas. He plants a parting kiss on the tot's arch and, spurning her pleas for more, reverses course and navigates towards shore.

He returns to their hotel room to find Muriel asleep on one of the ascetic twin beds. He glances at her, then digs a pistol out of his luggage. "He cocked the piece" it says here. Figuratively and/or literally? He sits down on the other bed, looks at "the girl," still lost to the world, and fires a bullet through his temple.

Legend has it that when the Temple veil was rent on the occasion of the earlier deaths, a wail went out, "Great Pan is Dead!" Time of death: The Crucifixion.⁴

An early acolyte of Eastern poets and Zen masters, courtesy of Witter Bynner and R. H. Blyth, Salinger prefaced his collection of *Nine Stories* with the koan: "We know the sound of two hands clapping. But what is the sound of one hand clapping?"

Again the Great Emancipator from Dublin offers an answer: The doting cadences of Leopold Bloom's applause a stone throwaway as he admires the lamely preening adolescent Gerty MacDowell that eventide on the Sandymount strand.

In this context, a bit of doggerel Joyce swiped from W. S. Gilbert seems apropos: "Writing on a cloth untrue/with a twisted cue/and elliptical billiard balls."

There's much more specific gravity, to be sure, in Salinger's art than his Harlequin playfulness, his adroit finesses, the palpitating undercurrents —

⁴ Spleeny Elizabeth Barrett Browning, hardly a Salinger favorite, daintily embroidered, with due credit to Plutarch and Schiller, on the dual fatalities in her gloating poem of the same name.

those ingredients of an historic literary spoof. One reminder should suffice: The thumbnail critique of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address found in "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters."

Buddy Glass is speaking: I'd said that 51,112 men were casualties at Gettysburg, and that if someone *had* to speak at the anniversary of the event, he would simply have come forward and shaken his fist at this audience and then walked off — that is if the speaker was an absolutely honest man."

Dostoyevsky, notebook in hand, would have nodded in agreement. As did William Shawn, meticulous pen hovering over the text.

When Mountains Never Leave Us Alone

Toni Fergusson

When a book is still discussed with approval ten years after its publication, it deserves careful review among a wider audience of readers. Adrian Cooper's *Sacred Mountains: Ancient Wisdom and Modern Meanings* (Floris Books, 1997) has dropped into so many conversations around me, I knew it was time to share my thoughts on his achievement with others who may be interested.

Sacred Mountains is a record of Cooper's interviews with 144 pilgrims from many faiths and from all over the world. They have one thing in common: a fascination with the inspirational quality of mountains. Each of these pilgrims had their own reasons for traveling out to their chosen mountain destinations. Sometimes those expectations were gloriously fulfilled. More often, their illusions were shattered, only to be replaced by deeper and more challenging spiritual truths. Rarely after all, are mountains places of comfortable vindication. Through his interviews with these spiritual seekers, Cooper explores how their truths were first encountered, how they challenged the pilgrims, and how those individuals became changed through those surprising and unsettling encounters. Significantly, Cooper not only shows how the pilgrims were challenged and changed in the mountains, but also when they returned home.

Part of Cooper's success is to include throughout his book extracts from tape recorded interviews with these pilgrims. We therefore get to read first-hand what it felt like to feel the mountains bring profound change and renewal. But Cooper didn't just spend a few hours taking a superficial

snapshot to interview these people. Sacred Mountains took thirteen years of patient research to compile. While only a few pilgrims made contributions over that full period, it remains true that everyone was interviewed over a period of years. Most of the time, meetings were face-to-face when ever the interviewees were able to visit the UK, or when Adrian Cooper was able to travel out to meet the pilgrims on their home soil. But with the added help of e-mails, letters, phone calls, faxes and extracts from diaries, Cooper was given an amazing insight into 144 spiritual journeys. When ever the book is discussed among people I know, one of the themes which often arises is the respect which those individuals must have had for Cooper's intentions to spend so much time with him in an attempt to get the book right.

Another fundamental element of Sacred Mountains is Cooper's inclusion of extracts from sacred texts and other inspirational books which have challenged and influenced each pilgrim. So not only do we have their personal words at various stages of their spiritual journeys through the world's mountain areas, but we also have the published words which the pilgrims were carrying with them at the time. And what a range of books there are! From the Bhagavad Gita, Upanishads, Torah, New Testament, Eddas, Manyoshu, Homer's Illiad, Ovid's Metamorphosis and many others, the list is long and fascinating. For me, it is a collection of texts which have stood the test of time – books which have worked and inspired these pilgrims during some of the most challenging journeys of their lives.

But who are these pilgrims who Adrian Cooper spent so much time with? Are they the great and famous names of spiritual authors, celebrities or other media personalities? No, they are not. They are ordinary people like you and me. Their occupations include car mechanics and office workers, business people and teachers, single parents, hair dressers, artists and electricians, musicians, truck drivers and students. Cooper therefore shows convincingly and conclusively that the power of mountain sacredness is not restricted to famous authors and ascetic seekers. It is a power which is available to all of us today, if only we would be humble enough to let it in. Sacred mountains can never be restricted to the distant realms of history and myth. They can

be alive for all of us today. That's what these 144 pilgrims are really telling us. Many of those individuals have taken extended breaks from their home-lives and careers, often at great personal cost and sacrifice. But when a sacrifice is recognized as being so abundantly worth making, there is no choice other than to follow its call.

For all these reasons, and probably many more, Adrian Cooper's book has stayed alive for the last ten years since its publication. Something tells me it will continue to inspire and influence spiritual seekers for many more years to come.

These mountains are our temples, our sanctuaries, and our resting places. They are a place of hope, a place of vision, a very special and holy place where the Great Spirit speaks with us. Therefore, these mountains are our sacred places."

Quoted by Adrian Cooper from Chief John Snow, *These Mountains Are Our Sacred Places: The Story of the Stoney People* (Samuel Stevens, Toronto, 1977, p13)

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Reviews

At the Bottom of the Sky: Fictions, Peter Dubé
(DC Books, 2007, 112pp, \$16.95)



Literature is still wrestling to throw off the varied directives of the past century—the reporter’s style of Hemingway’s clipped sentences, Salinger’s veiled peccadilloes, the intricate plots of speculative fiction and post-modernism’s emphasis on technique over substance. It is rare (and refreshing) to come across a work where the writing itself stands on its own even above the minor considerations of plot or character. *At the Bottom of the Sky*, the recent book by Peter Dubé is just such a work.

To borrow a line from Kathy Kinney’s character in *Parting Glances*: There is more art in a single line of Mr. Dubé’s work than in all the combined efforts of the authors represented on the current *Times*’ list. Indeed, though one can detect modern cinematic influences in his work, Dubé’s creations have more in common with the last artistic act of the 19th century than the one whose curtain just fell. In the careful interaction of character with character, conversing over the gulf of what is not said, one detects the esotericism of the Symbolists. This cycle of vignettes has more in common with Baudelaire’s *Paris Spleen* than modern narrative fiction.

In the artful and prolonged description of a single exquisite object one can readily detect echoes of the Decadents. I was reminded more than once

of the intricate descriptions served on the platter of Huysmans' *Aus Rebour*s. Dubé makes magic of the mundane. A description of stone apples rivals anything in Des Esseintes' own conservatory: "Bodies of cool light, or hot. They make black holes of shadow on their siblings. A gleam like that of star is on their marbled surface. They might be worlds circling round invisible suns, the hearts of granite universes. Teaming oceans and forests on them, torrents of life, some of it human, or human-like, filled with aches and laughs, triumphs and devastation, no doubt..."

At the Bottom of the Sky is a collection of fictions tied together by friendship and season. It runs its course across a hot, lingering summer in an unnamed city. A group of friends attempts to come to terms with betrayal by one of their own. The question of his untruth laces through their interactions. It is ever there lingering in the shadows at the edge of their adventures.

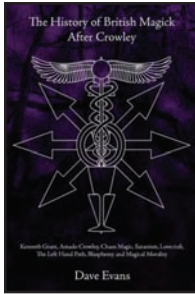
In *At the Bottom of the Sky* there is also the hint of the Gothic novel without falling victim to that genre's over-reliance on florid language and over-written descriptions. Yet suspense is there in the breathless fear when two characters encounter the irrational and pagan lurking beneath the surface of the modern city.

The reader is constantly left in the tantalizing state of not quite knowing exactly what has happened and what is being talked about. Dubé delivers his readers to this interstitial space through the combination of his well crafted writing and its contrast with the white silence between the lines.

The book is like a film consisting only of reaction shots; the critical moment happening just before the edit. Over and over the reader is in that powerful moment, filled with angst and adrenaline, where characters attempt to make sense of a pivotal moment just out of sight.

The History of British Magick After Crowley Kenneth Grant, *Amado Crowley, Chaos Magic, Satanism, Lovecraft, The Left Hand Path, Blasphemy and Magical Morality*, Dave Evans
(2007, 422pp,)

This is a very readable, at times fascinating if perhaps slightly tendentious account of magick since the death of Aleister Crowley in 1947. It is strongest on material of the last thirty years that more or less corresponds with the author's own entry into the chaos magick scene.



The first 200 pages of the book lays down the theoretical basis for the author's approach to the material, the kind of thing that would please the examiners for Dave Evans successful PhD submission at Bristol University under the supervision of the world renowned pagan scholar Professor Ronald Hutton.

Numerous authorities are cited including the highly influential work of Paul Heelas, whose theoretic stricture that “the academic simple does not have the tools to assess’ a magician’s theology or claims to power” (p230). The academic must, so we are told, confine himself to surface contingencies of a belief system rather than any underlying meaning. This I must say I find an odd position and makes for a book that is strong on anecdotal detail but has little to say about the meaning and purpose of magick. But there again these are my own presuppositions and I would have to admit they are not shared by a great many, if any other magicians, certainly not many of those cited in the book.

This book is certainly quite different to any previous history you might have read. The subject matter is the kind of stuff that was almost invariably left out of previous studies. So whereas Chaos magick was pretty much dismissed in a few sentences in Tanya Lührman’s notorious study, Dave Evans, who is a chaos magician, bends the stick the other way. So much so that we might call this a chaos magick history of British magick. And no bad thing that. Some so-called scholars often can not see the wood for the trees. Professor Keith Thomas once strode through an Oxford’s town hall full of magicians, on his way to an interview where he denied the possibility of contemporary magical practice!

For Dave Evans British magick since 1947 really only comprises three topics—Kenneth Grant, who for a short time was Crowley’s unpaid secretary

before becoming one of several claimants who attempted to seize control of the OTO when Crowley's caretaker Germer began to fail. But before that a bit of light relief in a long disquisition on Amado Crowley, self-styled 'love child of the beast' and claimant to some sort of secret hereditary 'Thelemic' tradition. And finally Chaos magick in various permutations, beginning with its putative progenitor—Lionel Snell.

So despite describing itself as a history of British magick this is no serial account but more of an examination of three related examples. You won't find very much here about the practice of magick within Wicca, or even very much of the so-called tradition of 'white magic' as in for example Gareth Knight, Marian Green, William Bloom etc. Also strangely absent is Mike Magee, one time editor of very influential occultzine Sothis. In the 1970s he was groomed to be the head of KG's 'Typhonian' OTO but when he asked for the kind of tantrik initiation alluded to in Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God, was told that he needed to look elsewhere for authentic 'diksha' and which he eventually found. It is this same stream that is the source of the Left Hand Path material that resurfaces in the works of several chaos magicians, although I'm not sure they always acknowledge such. So respect.

Personally I could have done with knowing less about Amado Crowley. I just don't see the point of taking fifty odd pages to tell us that the author cannot validate any of his claims to his 'father's' magical inheritance. The strange thing is that Amado does have a circle of devoted followers and what I wanted to know is what keeps them going? Is it really just inherent human credulity? The fact that 'people prefer fakes' or is there something interesting going on behind the scenes. Amado's magical system is dismissed as a mere blend of Wicca with Francis Barrett, which doesn't sound so unpromising to me, depends if Amado is good a ritualist. Maybe the guy has charisma—we are never really told because this is not something 'academics' have an opinion on??

I was happy to leave the Amado behind and much more interested in Kenneth Grant—Although here I guess the line that has emerged all over now is that KG is really a game player - to him nothing is really that serious?

Of course game playing, or to give it a fancy name—the ludic—can be a very productive mental activity—especially for the artistically inclined—witness the whole surrealist package of which KG is part. As an indication of the territory midway between hard fact and fiction inhabited by KG, consider the possibility that the character of Phineas Nigellus who appears for the first time in *The Ninth Arch* has an uncanny resemblance to Phineas Black, the ex-headmaster of Hogwart's School for Wizards! Dave Evans avoids the thorny question of how this all fits with being head of a magical order. In fact I should warn folk that this is after a chaos magick view of magical development and traditional order type activities play very little role in this account. In fact the British revival since 1981 of the so-called 'Caliphate' OTO is pretty much ignored throughout this book which will delight some and infuriate others.

This material on KG and the final section, a long overdue survey of Chaos magick, is certainly the strongest part of the whole book and well worth the read. Of course some will see in this one long series of pub-stories of the kind much liked by chaots. Perhaps to the outsider it will confirm the belief that magick really is just a castle in the air. To which I'd say some of it clearly is just glamour or pose with very little content. But perhaps that is the value of this provocative thought provoking book. It makes you ask – surely that's not all there is? But there again this is where we pass out of the arena of the academic and into the real theatre of magick.

—*Mandrake Speaks* (mandrake-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

The Voudon Gnostic Workbook (Expanded Edition), Michael Bertiaux
(Red Wheel/Weiser, 2007, 619 pp, \$29.95)

Reviewed by Peter Dubé

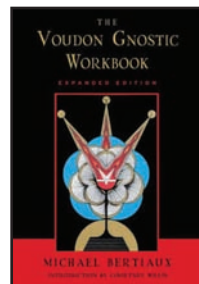
Long out-of-print, hard-to-find and much talked-about (particularly since Grant Morrison cited its influence on his *The Invisibles*), the somewhat shadowy—and truly voluminous—*Voudon Gnostic Workbook* has been re-

released at last.

First, a significant *caveat*; the new edition still does not, somehow or other, include all the illustrations. This is a real drawback in a book in which *vèvè*, for example, are vital information. However, they are readily available online which helps—somewhat—resolve the difficulty. [*Editor’s note: the missing illustrations and a short history of the LCN were intended to be included as appendix material to the new edition and were left out of the first printing. One may hope that these materials will be included in later printings. Check after page to be sure they are included.*]

That being said, we can return our attention to all the talk around this book. The fact is, much of this muttering could be defended on the simple basis that the *Workbook* represents original research in a field that is all-too-often dominated by retreads, rehashes and reframings of over-familiar magical material. M. Bertiaux is, to his credit, one of a handful of contemporary occultists who can claim to be working new and creative ground. In this *Workbook* the author outlines a syncretistic fusion of Voodoo and his take on “Gnosticism.” Unsurprisingly, given how odd a marriage the two traditions make, the ambiance pulled together thereby is startling, almost radical. Among the few groups that *might* find the (for lack of a better word) mood of the material familiar would be readers of Kenneth Grant (who numbered Bertiaux’s organization among the “Cults of the Shadow” in his volume of the same title) and for them it is likely to appeal. For others it will undoubtedly prove a little rough going and provoke, even, a raised eyebrow or two. However, it is less the ambiance and style than the nuts and bolts of the material that are of interest.

And what a range of material it is: from “How to be a Lucky Hoodoo” with its rich echoes of New Orleans and a touch of the mountebank, to Esoteric Time Travel and “Zothyrian Physics and Radio-Psychology” the book’s dense delvings are organized into relatively convenient and easy-to-assimilate lesson/chapters that often feature hands-on exercises, considerably



heightening its practicality and “use-value.” A good example of such are the “Psychological Exercises of Zom-OVIZ” in which an interesting technique of active imagining is outlined involving the creation of a magical world and techniques to communicate with its denizens. Later on in the book, an exercise in “Esoteric Gnosis” is provided where a simple light visualization is given a new sorcerous twist. Hard-working information of this sort anchors the book and compensates for some of its wilder speculation and theorizing.

That theorizing may in fact—as is the case with the aforementioned Mr. Grant—be a stumbling block for a number of readers, rightly or wrongly. The best way to deal with such hesitations may be for the more practically-minded (if so inclined) to take a page from chaos magick’s “belief as tool” model; simply accept all the metaphysics-mongering as a working hypothesis and get on with trying out the techniques. On doing that, the reader will certainly, and quickly, determine for him or herself whether or not all the talk was merited.

The Book of Mephisto: A Left Hand Path Grimoire of the Faustian Tradition,
Asenath Mason (Edition Roter Drache, 2006, 76 pp,)

The Necronomicon Gnosis: A Practical Introduction, Asenath Mason
(Edition Roter Drache, 2007, 184 pp,)

Reviewed by Nathaniel J. Harris

Experienced occult practitioners understand that the Mysteries may be invoked under many identities, shifting forms and names from circumstance to circumstance. Thus it is that amongst the oldest traditions we often find elements of what might otherwise be called ‘post modern’ sorcery. For example, I remember during an adventure into the dark underbelly of London coming across a Voudon altar which had been erected to the Baron of the Cemetery—a genuine lwa of that tradition- represented by the image of Darth Vader (or perhaps that should be Daa’th Vader?). Much to the bafflement of the uninitiated, many of those practicing ‘traditional’

witchcraft often display a similar attitude towards the Mysteries of our own culture. We know that underneath all archetypes, be they from the pagan myth cycles or modern popular iconography, there lies the power of the ultimately unknowable, unnameable Mysteries of which even our traditional pantheons are ultimately the merest shadows.

Just as the Voudon cultists have identified their own lwa or 'laws' at different times with the saints of Catholicism, or the new myth cycles of popular culture such as the Star Wars films, so have we as witches in England. Hence it is also that the pagan gods found themselves re-identified as demonic forces in the various grimoires of cunning tradition. We know that neither interpretation of these Mysteries are strictly speaking the 'ultimate truth'. We know also that the form beneath which the Mysteries are called may even be completely fictional, and like the rest of Western Magic in the modern day have even succumbed on occasions to applying the mythos of H. P. Lovecraft in our rites. Similarly, post-modern Chaos magicians have found that it has proved possible to work effective sorcery by invoking gods that did not exist five minutes ago, or even invoking characters from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (although why you would want to do that is anybody's guess). It is an attitude that is shared also by Asenath Mason, founder of Lodge Magan—Polish lodge of the Order Dragon Rouge, in the two books I have recently received from her.

In the *Book of Mephisto*, Asenath explores the goetic tradition through an exploration of the Faustus myth, specifically his making of a Pact with Mephistopheles, whom she identifies at various times with Ahriman, Samael, the Initiator, the Opposer, and the Jungian 'Shadow'. She sees the Faustian Pact to be ultimately a misunderstood manifestation of the Great Work of the Left Hand Path, pointing out early on that in Marlowe's play he does not evoke demons to satisfy petty desires, as many of the later editions of *The Lesser Key* promise to fulfil. He does not seek material benefit, or to have control over other humans. Rather, he sells his soul in exchange for knowledge, and for exploration of the outer and inner cosmos. In this sense he seeks illumination with the ultimate aim to become himself 'as a god', which

as Mason points out is the definitive quest of the Left Hand Path magician. From this perspective she goes on to explore the tradition of the magical pact in sinister witchcraft, identifying Mephistopheles also as a face of the Black Man of the Sabbat. The work includes a number of ritual formulae that combine traditional and modern elements that might be employed by any aspiring magician or witch to commune and invoke this Mystery, whether in the guise of Mephistopheles or any of its other names.

In *Necronomicon Gnosis* Asenath explores the employment of the Cthulhu mythos in practical modern Left Hand Path sorcery; not entirely unknown also amongst witches (being not too far a stretch of the imagination, since we commonly refer to the Mysteries as The Old Ones even when we are not being post-modern about it all), Chaos magicians, the Typhonian O.T.O., and not forgetting of course the Voudon traditions as they are transmitted through Michael Bertiaux's O.T.O.A., nearly all of whom receive at least a passing mention. Although described as an introductory level work, there is also much here that may be of inspiration to the more experienced practitioner. Indeed, Asenath generally assumes an advanced knowledge in her readers, hoping perhaps as much to reach out to those who might be her equals (distressingly few I would imagine) as to inspire those whose journeys are only just beginning. Again, she employs this modern pantheon to explore mysteries that are in fact so ancient as to be ultimately unnameable. Along the way she offers us her always profound and occasionally alarming insights into such traditional magical practices as astral travel, the Sabbat, dream incubation, shape-shifting, necromancy, sexual communion, invocation, evocation, the creation of thought-forms, and other elements that fit well into the Cthulhoid mould of working. That the pantheon is fictitious means very little, since it resonates with the deeper mind that knows no bounds to 'truth' or 'fantasy'; the dreaming mind of the sorcerer.

Logic might tell us that offering sacrifices and pacts to gods that do not actually exist will bring no fruit, yet experience tells us otherwise. Similarly, just because a subjective magical belief yields objective results, this does not necessitate the objectivity of that belief. This, besides the human mind's

incapability of seeing the whole ‘truth’ at any one time, is something that we can be very thankful for. Again there are enough inspiring rituals to keep any cultist happy. These are much more your ecstatic rituals of sex and blood than the usual dry old recycled ceremonial material one has got so used to reading but never getting around to doing these days. You cannot go wrong with the odd frenzied rite here and there.

I am reminded also of a telling of a Buckinghamshire coven that, wrapped up in the usual inter-coven magical warfare over the five mile ruling or some such nonsense, attempted to evoke the Lovecraftian entity known as Azazoth, the ‘Blind Idiot God’, to direct its destructive capabilities towards their perceived ‘enemies’. As if such a being is likely to concern itself with petty squabbles about poaching each other’s coven members... As Asenath points out in the *Necronomicon Gnosis*, summoning entities like this to manifestation is never wise move under any circumstances. True to form, this coven failed entirely to direct the chaotic forces of Azazoth in the directions they intended, and within six months all those involved in the ritual were either in an asylum, dead after a freak accident, or had committed suicide. Which, personally, is the kind of magical f**k up we could all learn from observing. Thank the Old Ones that other people are out there to make mistakes like that for us, so that we do not have to.

Both works display profound insight into the Mysteries, as does her breathtaking ‘fantasy’ artwork which adorns their pages. I am always suspicious of so called Left Hand Path magicians that display no particular talent, such as the ability to paint inspiring images to write evocative prose (this is supposed to be the Dark Art after all) and it is obvious that Asenath Mason must surely be an accomplished sorceress to produce the quality of work that she does. I expect that her lodge will prosper and grow through her inspiration and guidance. It should matter little if your own approach is purely ‘Traditional’, or whether you are open to employing elements from fantasy as new ‘masques’ for the ancient Mysteries, there will most likely be much to inspire you within these pages. Highly recommended indeed.

—*Mandrake Speaks* (mandrake-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

New & Notable

Of the books we receive for review, few have proved as useful as Elizabeth Esther Kelly's *Tibetan Cooking* (Snow Lion, 2007). Kelly has spent years cooking for lamas and other Tibetans, including a stint as cook at Karma Triyana Dharmachakra, the North American seat of His Holiness the Seventeenth Karmapa in upstate New York. She uses her experience and extensive working knowledge of Tibetan cuisine to craft a book that is both easy to use and rich with context. Unlike many Asian cookbooks, the recipes are easy to follow and use ingredients that are readily available in the West. Included are many traditional foods, meal planning, serving suggestions, as well as numerous vegetarian dishes. As the full title denotes, the recipes cover the cultural breadth from daily living to celebration to ceremony. Included in the chapter on ceremonial foods are how to prepare *tsok* (food for offering), *torma* (ceremonial offering cakes), *po cha* (Tibetan tea), along with instructions on creating a shrine and serving the lamas. The book is printed in a large font which makes it easier to use in the kitchen and provides a nice selection of color photos.

Two other notable titles have come in from Snow Lion in the past couple of months: a revised edition of John Powers' *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism* and *Guided Meditations on the Stages of the Path* by Thubten Chodron. The former is a new edition of Powers' superb comprehensive introduction to Tibetan Buddhism, updated and expanded with discussions of recent Tibetan history and tantra. The work also incorporates new publications in the field. The work remains one of the best single-volume introductions

available covering its origins, Mahayana philosophy, tantric methods along with a nonsectarian discussion of the four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism along with the indigenous practices of Bon. *Guided Meditations* is by the American-born Tibetan Buddhist nun Thubten Chodron. She has spent more than 30 years studying Tibetan Buddhist techniques and now travels worldwide teaching and leading retreats. The *lamrim* (“stages of the path”) teachings are easily accessible and because of this they have become popular in the frenetic Western pace. In *Guided Meditations*, Chodron provides clear explanations of the stages presented in the *lamrim*. An accompanying CD includes guided meditations on each of the topics covered in the book.

Inner Traditions has added two more titles to its growing collection of Rumi related offerings. Will Johnson’s *Spiritual Practices of Rumi* presents the Sufi mystic’s radical techniques for beholding the divine. Nevit Ergin again joins Mr. Johnson, with whom he collaborated on *The Forbidden Rumi*, to produce the first English translation of *The Rubais of Rumi*. The new book presents 233 pieces selected from Rumi’s 1,700 rubais. Best known for his verse, very few of Rumi’s aphorisms and observations have been translated into Western languages. Ergin and Johnson have begun to rectify this.

The New Orleans Voodoo priestess Marie Laveau may be on of those a historical persons for whom a definitive biography is not possible. Even in her own time, the reality was eclipsed by legend. The intervening century and half has only served to increase the mystery surrounding her and further removed historians from the scratches of fact left behind. Martha Ward began to tackle a true biography a few years ago in her *Voodoo Queen*. Though entertaining, Ward’s book was a biography of legend and failed to penetrate the popular myths beyond setting the evocative *mise en scène* of mid 19th century New Orleans. In *A New Orleans Voodoo Priestess: The Legend and Reality of Marie Laveau*, Carolyn Morrow Long (University of Florida Press, 2007), begins to pierce the legend(s) and approach a biography that is neither scandalous or hagiographic. Long provides more facts and artifacts than any of her predecessors. She has certainly been tenacious in her research and manages to bring together scant facts into a narrative. Despite this there

remains a paucity of evidence and Long is left to provide extensive details and analysis of life in New Orleans during Laveau's time rather than verifiable stories of her life. The author does a good job at presenting a more plausible Laveau, but this reviewer has not made up his mind if that is a good thing in the end. Laveau has become something akin to an American Voodoo saint and perhaps she may be better left as legend than brought down into the dross of reality.

And last... perhaps we save the best for last? ...Or, at least, the most interesting: A new occultural anthology, *Antibothis vol. 1*, produced by Thisco/Chilicomcarne just arrived from Portugal. According to the accompanying ad copy the project intends to produce a collection of books promising to feature material that showcase “ideas that are a genuine alternative to the dogma of conformity, the commitment to disconnect the cables of corporhate colonization, disinverting cultural reality through the dissemination and dispersion of alternative vortices of information and infinite chaotic propaganda, speculation, simulation, stimulation, to revolutionize the dynamics of life in a total process of cultural transformation, reclaiming our guts and revolt in the name of imagination in opposition to a toxic life of love awareness, herd mentality and programmed thought, infecting human minds and alter their behaviour.” Ok, you may now take a breath. The anthology, selected by Fernando Cerquiera, is a very interesting assortment of pieces including among their number: an excerpt from a punk manifesto, cut-ups and other homages to William S. Burroughs and interviews with Denny Sargent and the Ordo Antichristus Illuminati. Accompanying the book is a CD compilation of spoken word and oral cut-ups.



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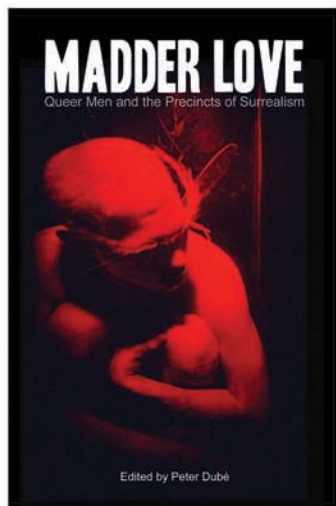


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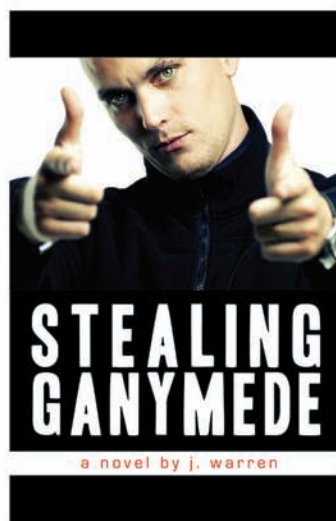


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