



DARSHAN

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BOWING TO THE MYSTERIES OF 2018

AS CONTEMPLATED BY DON SHEWEY

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WORDS WRITING
XXX
YEAR IN REVIEW YES
ZERO

Darshan is derived from the Sanskrit word *darsana* meaning “sight,” “vision,” or “appearance.” In the Hindu tradition, darshan refers to the beholding of a holy person, sacred object, natural phenomenon, or deity. Darshan implies a mutual interaction between the viewer and the perceived object or being. Although it requires nothing more than the performance of seeing, darshan is considered a powerful form of worship and process of spiritual fulfillment.

ACCEPTANCE

It is only when you have seen and accepted your own capacity for fear, shame, and judgment that you can truly see the other for what she or he is. Without this acceptance we avoid parts of the other, simply because we are reminded of these in ourselves. And thus, no true connection, nor genuine compassion, can arise.

--Carl Jung

There appears to be a vast amount of confusion on this point, but I do not know many negroes who are eager to be "accepted" by white people, still less to be loved by them; they, the blacks, simply don't wish to be beaten over the head by the whites every instant of our brief passage on this planet. White people in this country will have quite enough to do in learning how to accept and love themselves and each other, and when they have achieved this – which will not be tomorrow and may very well be never – the Negro problem will no longer exist, for it will no longer be needed.

--James Baldwin

ACTIVISM

No sane person with a life really wants to be a political activist. When activism is exciting, it tends to involve the risk of bodily harm or incarceration, and when it's safe, it is often tedious, dry, and boring. Activism tends to put one into contact with extremely unpleasant people, whether they are media interviewers, riot cops, or, at times, your fellow activists. Not only that, it generates enormous feelings of frustration and rage, makes your throat sore from shouting, and hurts your feet. Nonetheless, at this moment in history, we are called to act as if we truly believe that the Earth is a living, conscious being that we're part of, that human beings are interconnected and precious, and that liberty and justice for all is a desirable thing.

--Starhawk

ALCOHOLISM

It is a common trait of alcoholics to make plans and promises, to oneself, to others, fervently, sincerely, and in hope of redemption. Promises that are broken, again and again, through fear, through loss of nerve, through any number of things that hide that deep desire, at heart, to obliterate one's broken self.

--Helen MacDonald, *H Is For Hawk*

ALIENATION

The reason we feel alienated is because the society is infantile, trivial, and stupid. So the cost of sanity in this society is a certain level of alienation. I grapple with this because I'm a parent. And I think anybody who has children, you come to this realization, you know – what'll it be? Alienated, cynical intellectual? Or slack-jawed, half-wit consumer of the horseshit being handed down from on high? There is not much choice in there, you see. And we all want our children to be well-adjusted; unfortunately, there's nothing to be well-adjusted *to*.

--Terence McKenna, "The World and Its Double"

ALLIES

Privileged people often ask me what they can do, and I think the idea of accompaniment is greatly underestimated: maybe I can't help, but I can just be with this person while she sells papers. Recently Hyatt Hotel housekeepers in Boston asked people to show up to their protest for higher wages and better working conditions. If someone from an advantaged background walks in a picket, it might spark a moment of connection with those workers. And if the police come along and treat the protestors like dirt, this advantaged person will have his or her eyes opened.

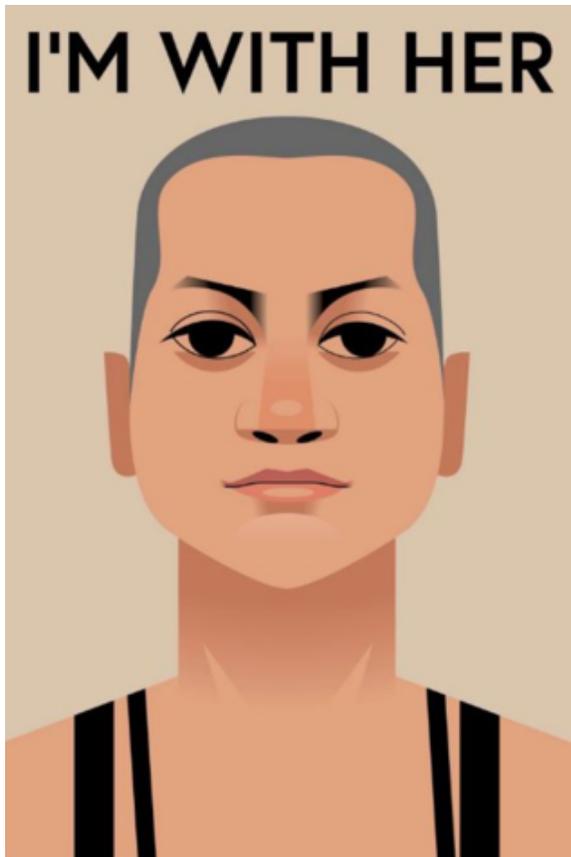
Over the years I've participated in eviction blockades. When the police arrive to put a renter out on the street, some of us stand on the steps of the house and risk arrest, while others are just there to witness. I'll invite people I know to come along for this experience. I want them to see it. If they ask what good it will do, I'll say, *Just come along*. Sometimes our presence is enough to stop the eviction. Sometimes it goes through anyway, but we witness it, and this deepens our understanding and our empathy.

Q: How can people go further than just accompanying and become an ally?

Being an ally means actually leveraging your privilege to intervene in a situation or dismantle structural inequality. If you're not sure how to do this, ask the people you're trying to help. Let them tell you, *Here's what it means to be an ally in this situation. Here's the code of conduct*. That's very important.

For example, in Montana a group of women, galvanized by a picture of a dead Syrian-refugee child, got a resettlement agency to come to their state, which has historically been unfriendly to refugees. Now they have a nonprofit in Missoula called Soft Landing, which provides services like driver's education and English-language classes to refugee families. It also educates the Missoula community about the refugee crisis and how to extend welcome to all. This organization, which has more than six hundred volunteers, was started by a woman who had no background in activism or politics.

--Chuck Collins, interviewed by Megan Wildhood in *The Sun*, February 2018





Two pieces from the Metropolitan Museum's show "Like Life: Sculpture, Color, and the Body": Reza Aramesh's *Action 105: An Israeli soldier points his gun at the Palestinian youth asked to strip down as he stands at a military checkpoint along the separation barrier at the entrance of Bethlehem, March 2006* (left) and Elmgreen & Dragset's *The Experiment*

ARTISTS

I think there's a terrible problem with young artists today who really aren't concerned about educating themselves enough about culture and reading great books and knowing great films — and really just caring about success and what they're going to look like on Instagram. People like Kanye West who think that they know everything and they know absolutely *nothing*. David Bowie was probably the best example of someone who did his homework. One of my jobs is to maintain respect for the bastions of culture.

--Rufus Wainwright

ASK

In the 4th World, *regardless* of what you deserve, all you are going to *get* is what you are capable of *asking for*.

--Frank Waters, *The Book of the Hopi*

ATTENTION

Do stuff. Be clenched, curious. Not waiting for inspiration's shove or society's kiss on your forehead. Pay attention. It's all about paying attention. Attention is vitality. It connects you with others. It makes you eager. Stay eager.

--Susan Sontag

AVOCADOS

The precious commodity that drives Michoacán's economy and feeds an American obsession is not marijuana or methamphetamines but avocados, which local residents have taken to calling "green gold." Mexico produces more of the fruit than any country in the world — about a third of the global total — and most of its crop is grown in the rich volcanic soil of Michoacán, upland from the beaches of Acapulco. It is one of the miracles of modern trade that in 2017, Mexico's most violent year on record, this cartel-riddled state exported more than 1.7 billion pounds of Haas avocados to the United States, helping them surpass bananas as America's most valuable fruit import. Nine out of every 10 imported avocados in the United States come from Michoacán.

The real marvel of Mexico's avocado trade, however, is not so much its size as the speed of its sudden growth. Avocados have been cultivated in Mexico for around 9,000 years. (When Spanish conquistadors first encountered the oblong fruit in the early 16th century, they called it *aguacate*, after *ahuacatl*, an Aztec word that means testicle.) Despite this deep history, Mexico exported very few avocados — and none at all to the United States — through the 1980s, when a California-based company, Mission Produce, opened the first avocado-packing plant in Uruapan. The United States had banned Mexican avocados since 1914 over fears of an insect infestation and cheaper competition. But in 1994, Mexico, Canada and the United States enacted the North American Free Trade Agreement — and soon thereafter the United States began lifting its ban.

An avocado explosion followed. In 1994, Americans consumed a little more than one pound of the fruit per person per year — almost all from California growers, whose harvest comes only in the summer. Today, that figure is up to seven pounds per person year-round. Fueled by a growing Latino community and Hollywood stars promoting the health benefits of the fruit's unsaturated fats (Miley Cyrus has an avocado tattoo on her arm), America's avocado craze has intensified every year. An estimated 135 million pounds of avocados were consumed in the weeks leading up to the Super Bowl last month. (The Super Bowl is America's top avocado day, just ahead of Cinco de Mayo.)

--Brook Larmer, *New York Times Magazine*



Mario Cid, "La Pincesa Xochitl" (mural in the Mission District in San Francisco)



BRAVE SPACE

Together we will create *brave space*
 Because there is no such thing as a “safe space”
 We exist in the real world
 We all carry scars and we have all caused wounds.
 In this space
 We seek to turn down the volume of the outside world,
 We amplify voices that fight to be heard elsewhere,
 We call each other to more truth and love
 We have the right to start somewhere and continue to grow.
 We have the responsibility to examine what we think we know.
 We will not be perfect.
 This space will not be perfect.
 It will not always be what we wish it to be
 But
 It will be *our brave space together,*
and
We will work on it side by side

--Micky ScottBey Jones, “Invitation to Brave Space”

COLOR

In Christian iconography, it was gold that signified the aura of sanctity, but, as Baroque masters experimented with the effects of extreme light and dark, the hunt for a deep, light-fast yellow became urgent. The cheapest, most widely available yellow glaze was made from unripe buckthorn berries and wasn't sufficiently long-lasting for the likes of Rembrandt, who turned to the pale Lead-Tin Yellow, or massicot, for the luxurious costume of Lieutenant van Ruytenburch, in "The Night Watch." In the early eighteenth century, antimony, combined with lead, known as Naples Yellow, became the most popular version of the hue.

Around the same time, Europeans in India noticed the rich, glowing yellow used for wall paintings and Mughal book illustrations. Botanical pigments like saffron and turmeric had been used in Persian and Turkish art for centuries, but this was more vibrant. The first samples of Indian Yellow, available in Bengal, Bihar, and centers of Rajput painting like Jaipur, were known by many Indian names: *piuri*, *purrée*, or *gogili*—a corruption of the Persian term *gaugil*, meaning "cow-earth." . . . The ingredients of Indian Yellow, which arrived in little parcels at the London docks, apparently from Calcutta, were a mystery. The smell, either interestingly pungent or rank depending on the sensitivity of your nostrils, seemed to offer a few clues. To some, it had a distinct whiff of castoreum, the secretion from a gland close to the anus of beavers, which is still sometimes used in commercial ice cream as a substitute for vanilla and raspberry. Others were sure that the origin of Indian Yellow was to be found in the urine of camels, or water buffalo. After a chemical analysis in the eighteen-forties found no nitrous traces in the pigment, some argued that the dye probably originated in a plant such as the *Mycelium tinctorium*, which is notorious for its pissy odor.

To get to the truth of the matter, Joseph Hooker, the director of Kew Gardens, sent T. N. Mukharji, an expert in the materials of Indian arts, to the village of Mirzapur, in the Bihar region. There, as Mukharji wrote in an account published in 1883, he discovered a sect of *gwalas*, or milkmen, who fed their cattle mango leaves; the cattle's urine, when evaporated in earthenware pots set over a fire and then baked in the sun, produced the precious yellow powder. Cows are sacred in Hindu culture, and the ones Mukharji had seen were, he wrote, "very unhealthy." Mukharji's account apparently led the British-Indian government in Bengal to ban production of the pigment at the turn of the century. Doubts about Mukharji's story remain. Victoria Finlay, the author of "Color: A Natural History of the Palette," found no record of the pigment's ban in the archives, nor did she find, when she travelled to Mirzapur around 2002, any local memory of cows being fed on mango leaves. Was this yet another fable in the great treasury of color lore? In her book, Finlay writes, "When I think of Indian Yellow, I will always wonder whether the explanation that I have heard is reality or merely a reflection of reality, and whether this story is simply an example of somebody gently, and literally, taking the piss."

Toward the end of my visit to the Forbes [Collection at Harvard, an archive of 2500 color specimens], [Narayan] Khandekar, [head of the Straus Center for Conservation and Technical Studies, which houses the Forbes Collection and] who has been following the ongoing debates surrounding Indian Yellow, waved a paper before me. "Guess what?" he said. According to two scholars at SUNY Buffalo State, in 1883 T. N. Mukharji sent samples of both purified and unrefined Indian Yellow to Kew Gardens, along with one of the earthenware collecting pots and a specimen of the cloths used to strain the urine before evaporation. In 2016, some of those samples, in addition to the balls of Indian Yellow from the Forbes Collection, were subjected to rigorous analysis using an array of novel techniques, including ultraviolet fluorescence and Raman spectroscopy. They were found to contain traces of the hippuric acid associated with animal, particularly ungulate, urine, and euxanthic acid—a possible by-product of the metabolic processing of mango leaves.

I have no idea why, on leaving Harvard's palace of color, the vindication of Mukharji's account should have made me cheerful. But I do know that you can order a synthetic version of Indian Yellow from the line launched by Bob Ross, the friendly TV painting tutor, for \$7.29 a tube. Ross used it, just as Turner did, to "paint the sun in the sky."

--Simon Schama, "Blue As Can Be," *The New Yorker*

CONTACT

Interclass contact conducted in a mode of good will is the locus of democracy as visible social drama, a drama that must be supported and sustained by political, educational, medical, job, and cultural equality of opportunity if democracy is to mean to most people any more than an annual or quatra-annual visit to a voting booth; if democracy is to animate both infrastructure and superstructure. The supports and guys that stabilize such contact must be judicially enforced and legally redressable. It is not too much to say, then, that contact – interclass contact – is the lymphatic system of a democratic metropolis, whether it comes with the web of gay sexual services, whether it comes through the lanes of heterosexual services (and such gay and straight services including but are in *no* way limited to heterosexual and homosexual prostitution!), or in any number of other forms (standing in line at a movie, waiting for the public library to open, sitting in a bar, waiting in line at the counter of the grocery store or the welfare office, waiting to be called for a *voir dire* while on jury duty, coming down to sit on the stoop on a warm day, perhaps to wait for the mail – or cruising for sex), while in general they tend to involve some form of “loitering” (or, at least, lingering), are unspicifiable in any systematic way. (Their asystematicity is part of their nature.) A discourse that promotes, values, and facilitates such contact is vital to the material politics as well as to the vision of a democratic city. Contact fights the networking notion that the only “safe” friends we can ever have must be met through school, work, or preselected special interest groups from gyms and health clubs to reading groups and volunteer work. Contact and its human rewards are fundamental to cosmopolitan culture, to its art and its literature, to its politics and its economics; to its quality of life. Relationships are always relationships of exchange – semiotic exchange at the base, in a field where, as Foucault explained, knowledge, power, and desire all function together and in opposition within the field of discourse. To repeat: Contact relationships cannot be replaced by network-style relationships because, in any given network group, the social competition is so great that the price on social materials and energies exchange is too high to effect emotional, if not material, profit. If we can talk of social capital (for those who enjoy a truly outrageous metaphor): While networking may produce the small steady income, contact both maintains the social field of “the pleasant” and provides as well the high-interest returns that make cosmopolitan life wonder-filled and rich.

--Samuel R. Delany



DARKNESS

When your eyes are tired
the world is tired also.

When your vision has gone,
no part of the world can find you.

Time to go into the dark
where the night has eyes
to recognize its own.

There you can be sure
you are not beyond love.

The dark will be your home
tonight.

The night will give you a horizon
further than you can see.

You must learn one thing,
The world was made to be free in.

Give up all the other worlds
except the one to which you belong.

Sometimes it takes darkness and the sweet
confinement of your aloneness
to learn

anything or anyone
that does not bring you alive

is too small for you.

--David Whyte, "Sweet Darkness"



DRAG

Who were your drag inspirations? Were there any human beings?

Barbie is at the top of the list. I mean, she's as real as anybody to me. In society we are what we're dressed as. If you're backstage, wearing all black with a headset on, you're a stage manager. If somebody knocks on your car window, you wouldn't open it — but if he's dressed as a policeman, you would. And with Barbie, it's the same toy from the same mold from the same factory, but if she has a lab coat on, she's a vet. If she has an astronaut suit on, she's an astronaut. Drag is a parody of all that. Everyone knows *we're* not what we're dressing as.

--Trixie Mattel (below), interviewed by Molly Lambert in the *New York Times Magazine*



I do differentiate myself from the cookie-cutter drag that's out there today. Ru wears a flower in his hair, so everyone wears it. I don't want to be just like someone else. I would rather see a busted booger queen who has smeared glitter all over her face and black tattered teeth come and tear a number up than one who spent five hours on her makeup on the highest-priced cosmetics, but has nothing to do onstage.

--Lady Bunny, interviewed by Michael Schulman in the *New York Times*

EGO

For me, “spiritual” is a good name for some of the powerful mental phenomena that arise when the voice of the ego is muted or silenced... When Huxley speaks of the mind’s “reducing valve” — the faculty that eliminates as much of the world from our conscious awareness as it lets in — he is talking about the ego. That stingy, vigilant security guard admits only the narrowest bandwidth of reality, “a measly trickle of the kind of consciousness which will help us to stay alive.” It’s really good at performing all those activities that natural selection values: getting ahead, getting liked and loved, getting fed, getting laid. Keeping us on task, it is a ferocious editor of anything that might distract us from the work at hand, whether that means regulating our access to memories and strong emotions from within or news of the world without.

--Michael Pollan, *How To Change Your Mind*

When each thought absorbs your attention completely, it means you identify with the voice in your head... This is the ego, a mind-made “me.” That mentally constructed self feels incomplete and precarious. That’s why fearing and wanting are its predominant emotions and motivating forces. When you recognize that there is a voice in your head that pretends to be you and never stops speaking, you are awakening out of your unconscious identification with the stream of thinking... Who you are is not the voice — the thinker — but the one who is aware of it.

--Eckhart Tolle

FAILURE

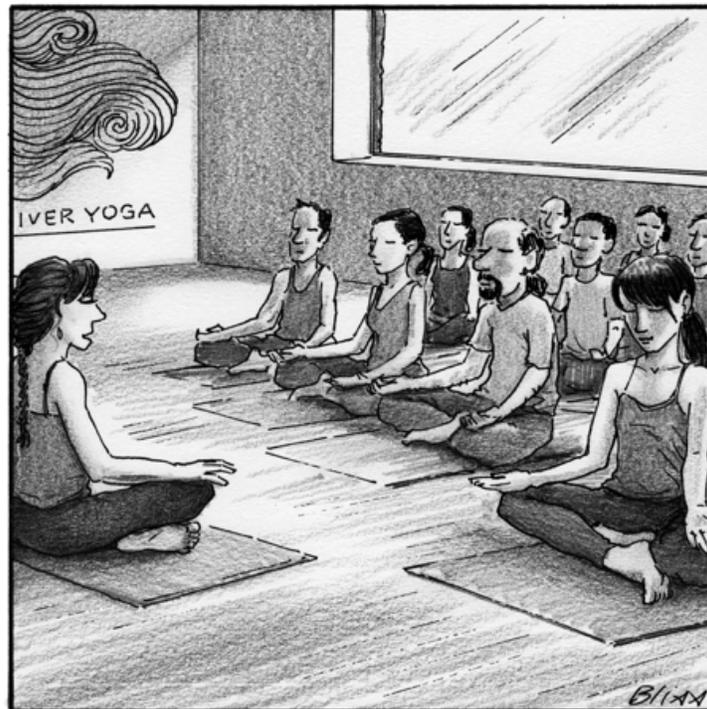
When I first worked in recording studios with Brian Eno in the early 1990s I was unnerved by how much he liked failure. He seemed to look forward to it. Failure gave him the chance to rethink the whole project, to be flexible, to redefine it, to start over. During the long recording process I noticed that often by the time a song was finished it had little to do with the original version. Sometimes it's painful to discard everything, sometimes it's exhilarating. But I've finally learned that failure is largely a form of perception and definition, the way a dessert can be a complete failure as a cake but a great success when it's renamed a pudding.

--Laurie Anderson, *All the Things I Lost in the Flood*

FREE

A long time ago, when you were a wee thing, you learned something, some way to cope, something that, if you did it, would help you survive. It wasn't the healthiest thing, it wasn't gonna get you free, but it was gonna keep you alive. You learned it, at five or six, and it worked, it *did* help you survive. You carried it with you all your life, used it whenever you needed it. It got you out — out of your assbackwards town, away from an abuser, out of range of your mother's un-love. Or whatever. It worked for you. You're still here now partly because of this thing that you learned. The thing is, though, at some point you stopped needing it. At some point, you got far enough away, surrounded yourself with people who love you. You survived. And because you survived, you now had a shot at more than just staying alive. You had a shot now at getting free. But that thing that you learned when you were five was not then and is not now designed to help you be free. It is designed only to help you survive. And, in fact, it keeps you from being free. You need to figure out what this thing is and work your ass off to un-learn it. Because the things we learn to do to survive at all costs are not the things that will help us get FREE. Getting free is a whole different journey altogether.

—Mia McKenzie



"And we'll close with a moment of silence for all the people with jobs who couldn't be with us today."

GRACE

“The Cure for Racism Is Cancer”

The woman sitting next to me in the waiting room is wearing a blue dashiki, a sterile paper face mask to protect her from infection, and a black leather Oakland Raiders baseball cap. I look down at her brown, sandaled feet and see that her toenails are the color of green papaya, glossy and enameled.

This room at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas, is full of people of different ages, body types, skin colors, religious preferences, mother tongues, and cultural backgrounds. Standing along one wall, in work boots, denim overalls, and a hunter's camouflage hat, is a white rancher in his forties. Nervously, he shifts from foot to foot, a styrofoam cup of coffee in his hand. An elderly Chinese couple sit side by side, silently studying their phones. The husband is watching a video. The wife is the sick one, pale and gaunt. Her head droops as if she is fighting sleep. An African American family occupies a corner. They are wearing church clothes; the older kids are supervising the younger ones while two grown women lean into their conversation and a man — fiftyish, in a gray sports coat — stares into space.

America, that old problem of yours? Racism? I have a cure for it: Get cancer. Come into these waiting rooms and clinics, the cold radiology units and the ICU cubicles. Take a walk down Leukemia Lane with a strange pain in your lower back and an uneasy sense of foreboding. Make an appointment for your CAT scan. Wonder what you are doing here among all these sick people: the retired telephone lineman, the grandmother, the junior-high-school soccer coach, the mother of three.

Show up early on Friday morning and lay your forearm on the padded armrest of the phlebotomist's chair. Her nametag reads, NATASHA. She is clear-eyed and plump, and a pink plastic radio on her cubicle desk softly plays gospel at 8 AM. Her fingernails are two inches long, and it is hard to believe she can do her job with nails like that, but she's flawless and slips the needle into the hardened, scarred vein in the back of your hand.

I wish there were other ways to cure your racism, America, but I don't see one. Frankly your immune system seems to be the problem. Installed by history and maintained by privilege, it is too robust, too entrenched to be undone by anything less than disaster. That's how it is for a lot of us. If you are white and doing well in America, a voice whispers to you incessantly, repeating that you deserve to be on top, that to profit is your just reward. And it's not only white people who need the cancer cure; it's any person who thinks that someone of another religion, color, or background is somehow not indisputably, equally human.

The first time you park your car in the vast, cold cavern of the underground garage and step onto the elevator, you may feel alien and forsaken. Perhaps you'll feel that you have been singled out unfairly, plucked from your healthy life and cast into this cruel ordeal. Walking through the lobby with a manila envelope of X-rays under your arm and a folder of lab reports and notes from your previous doctor, you'll sense the deep tremor of your animal fear, a barely audible uneasiness trickling up from somewhere inside you.

But there is good news, too. As you pass one hallway after another, looking for elevator B, you'll see that this place is full of people — riding the escalators, reading books and magazines, checking their phones near the coffeepots. And it will dawn on you that most of these people have cancer. In fact, it seems as if the whole world has cancer. With relief and dismay you'll realize, *I'm not special. Everybody here has cancer.* The withered old Jewish lefty newspaper editor. The Latino landscape contractor with the stone-roughened hands. The tough lesbian with the bleached-blond crew cut and the black leather jacket. And you will be cushioned and bolstered by the sheer number and variety of your fellows.

This strange country of cancer, it turns out, is the true democracy — one more real than the nation that lies outside these walls and more authentic than the lofty statements of politicians; a democracy more incontrovertible than platitudes or aspiration.

In the country of cancer everyone is simultaneously a have and a have-not. In this land no citizens are protected by property, job description, prestige, and pretensions; they are not even protected by their prejudices. Neither money nor education, greed nor ambition, can alter the facts. You are all simply cancer citizens, bargaining for more life.

It is true that this is not a country you ever planned to visit, much less move to. It is true that you may not have previously considered these people your compatriots. But now you have more in common with them than with your oldest childhood friends. You live together in the community of cancer.

More good news: now that you are sick, you have time to think. From this rocky promontory you can contemplate the long history of your choices, your mistakes, your good luck. You can think about race, too, because most of the people who care for you will be nonwhite, often from other countries. You may be too sick to talk, but you can watch them and learn. Your attention is made keen by need and by your intimate dependence upon these inexhaustibly kind strangers.

Two years ago I was diagnosed with cancer and underwent surgery followed by chemotherapy at MD Anderson. It was the start of my journey through this well-lit underworld. By now I have orbited many times around the honeycombed complex of registration desks, prep rooms, and staging areas, potted plants and bubbling aquariums. I have sat in the infusion lounge, where twenty IV poles rise like trees beside twenty upholstered recliners, each pole hung with a fat plastic udder feeding gemcitabine or cisplatin into someone's arm: the unnaturally cheerful evangelist minister; the gray-faced Vietnam vet wearing his American Legion hat and windbreaker, as if he were going off to another war. We are not tourists in this place; we live here now.

In nothing but my hospital gown and cotton long johns, I have pushed my IV pole down the corridors at midnight, trying to keep my skinny legs from getting weaker. I've rolled my IV miles through the deserted hallways and empty waiting rooms, taken it over the sky bridge and back. Once, at 1 AM, I met a black guy doing the same thing. We paused and talked a bit, in our matching pale-green smocks, with our IV poles and drip bags. He explained to me, with a strange enthusiasm, that his doctors had cut out and then reversed his rectum, and now they would not discharge him until he could pass gas for himself. That's why he was out walking so vigorously each night. As we stood there together on the wide, deserted walkway, it seemed as if cancer had erased our differences by bringing us into the intimacy of shared trouble. Then, with a nod, he strode swiftly away on his muscular legs, at least four times as fit as I was.

In the Republic of Cancer you might have your prejudices shattered. In the rooms of this great citadel, patients of one color are cared for by people of other colors. In elevators and operating theaters one accent meets another and — sometimes only after repetition — squeezes through the transom of comprehension. And when the nurse from the Philippines, or the aide from Houston's Fifth Ward, or the tech named Dev says, "I'll pray for you," you are filled with gratitude for their compassion.

This place bears a passing resemblance to those old photographs of Ellis Island — so many travelers come from afar, sitting with their papers and passports, hunched on wooden benches with luggage at their feet, waiting to find out if they will be admitted and advanced to the next stage in the process. Some of the travelers are dressed in pajamas and slippers; some have on shiny blue tracksuits and Nikes; and some wear suits and ties, as if being presentable will make a difference. The shabby and the affluent, the stoical and the anxious, the scrawny and the stout, the young and the aged. If we are tense or pace restlessly, it is because we are aware that we may, on short notice, be swiftly deported. And because of this, perhaps, our hearts soften.

One awful night, after I'd made a scouring passage through the ER waiting room — room of heartbreak and harsh lighting — a smiling man from Nigeria named N'Dbusi entered my cubicle. I remember how he introduced himself, then reached out with his forefinger and thumb and gently plucked at my arm. Like a pleat in a piece of fabric, the skin stayed in a raised position. "You see this, my friend?" said N'Dbusi. "It seems you are dehydrated. We are going to give you some IV fluids to moisten you up." He continued to talk with undiminishable cheer as his hands deftly removed the paper wrappers from a needle-and-tube kit and threaded the needle into my vein with the grace of a seamstress slipping a stitch into silk. He must have done this thousands of times. But where others might have grown bored and careless at the repetition, he had perfected an elegance.

This is the stupefying and ultimately transforming thing: that here, where I do not expect it, I encounter decency, patience, compassion, warmth, good humor. I remember the middle-aged nurse from Alabama, his calm Southern twang and beer belly, who stood firm one night, utterly unperturbed while I vomited repeatedly, as if a demon had seized control of my insides. With empathetic watchfulness, he administered the proper shot until I fell backward into a state of blessed relief. I remember the shift nurse with pale-olive skin and thick eyebrows who, in the middle of the night, brought me hot packs of damp folded towels heated in a microwave. She was from the Middle East, maybe Syria or Egypt. She was so kind and respectful to me that, after she departed, I abruptly burst into tears and blew her a kiss through the closed door.

The historical record — for tolerance, for human learning — is not promising. Yet I believe, more than ever, that at the bottom of each human being there is a reset button. Undeniably it is difficult to get to. To reach it seems to require that the ego be demolished by circumstance. But reach that button and press it, and the world might reshape itself.

Unfortunately you must come here, America. You must lie on the gurney and be wheeled down miles of corridor under a sheet, staring up at the perforated-tile ceiling and the fluorescent lights, not knowing quite where you are. You have to ride a wheelchair to your date with the MRI machine, past women and men being wheeled to similar destinations. You will look into faces lined with fatigue and pain and anxiety. Often a glance will pass between you: a glance without the slightest veil of disguise or pretense; a look of recognition and solidarity. It is a strange communion, but that is what it is.

I remember how the orderlies would wheel us along, calling out as they approached the intersections of corridors, "Coming around! Coming across!" in order to avoid collisions. I remember handsome Marvin, the mayor of the hallways, with his sleek cornrows, greeting everyone he met, his full voice singing, "Coming around, coming around! Coming across! Coming around!"

So, America, I express this rather unconventional wish for you: I hope you get cancer. In order to change, you must cross this threshold, enter a condition of helplessness, and experience the mysterious intimacy between the sick and their caregivers, between yourself and every person who is equally laid low.

Come into the fields and meadows of the examination rooms, come to the clean beds, to the infernal beeping of the monitors, to the lobbies and alcoves of this labyrinth. Look at the faces of the ones who are attending to you. Witness those who are silently passing by on their pilgrimage to surgery or radiology. Let the workers be fairly paid and valued, for their skills draw us together like the edges of a wound. Listen to the music of the voices around you. As the machines tick, as the ventilators suck and heave and exhale, as the very ground beneath our feet starts to dissolve, we shall be changed. *Coming around, coming around, coming across, coming around.*

--Tony Hoagland (1953-2018)



HATE

When you hate, the only person that suffers is you because most of the people you hate don't know it and the rest don't care.

— Medgar Evers

HILLMAN

Images are emotions in another form.

Fantasy is the direct expression of psychic energy.

The best thing you can give to the soul is autonomy.

Questioning is not the way to begin a conversation. Mumbling is better.

Myths are universals of the imagination. One studies myth to keep the imagination in order.

--James Hillman, "Jung and Active Imagination"

Imagination Isles

Grant Wood

I invite you to come with me on a ten-minute trip through the Imagination Isles.

You shall see brilliantly colored trees of shape unknown to science, silhouetted against purple mountains. Mountains whose snow-capped peaks pierce the saffron skies. Fantastic tropical plants with luscious fruits and flowers in amazing profusion wait only your coming and your choosing. A sea, bluer even than the blue Mediterranean, beats against the base of each jewel-like island and frets itself into a snowy foam. Upon this sea float ships of romantic shape. Glistening white castles with turrets and towers are all door-a-jar for your visit. These boats and these buildings are unoccupied. They await you if you can come.

No human body can visit these islands. Only the spirit can come. Your spirit is always a welcome guest. Your spirit and your friends; my friends' and mine; there is always room for all of us at any time. We may dip into the fragrant coolness of the indigo ocean. We may live as long as we please in our choice of the mother-o-pearl palaces without fear of intruding upon anyone or of anyone intruding upon us. We pay no rent. We are guests.

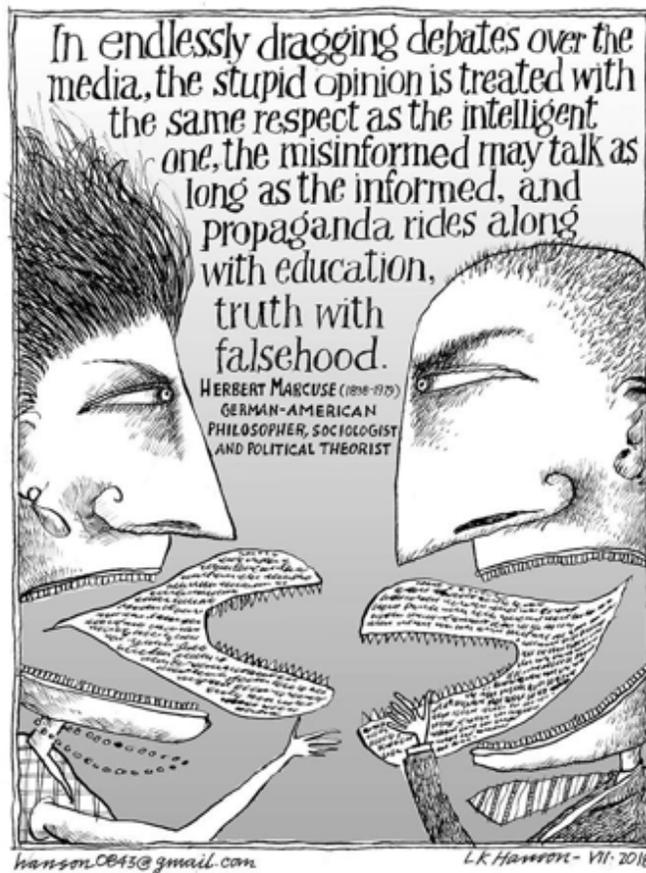
Our hosts on this trip are forty-five ninth-grade boys. They have produced the Imagination Isles in the art room of this school, using only the highest grade of oil paint and the very best imagination that is possible to be found locally.

It is difficult to find people who can produce this material of dreams. A very, very few people have this ability so strongly marked in youth that they are set apart and given special training. These people become musicians and poets and painters. They are valuable because they can lead others on in short vacation trips into the delightful land where their spirits are trained to dwell.

Almost all of us have some dream-power in our childhood but without encouragement it leaves us and then we become bored and tired and ordinary. In most of our studies we deal only with material things or in ideas that are materialistic. We are carefully coached in the most modern and efficient ways of making our bodies comfortable and we become so busy about getting ourselves all nicely placed that we are apt to forget the dream spirit that is born in all of us. Then someday when we are physically comfortable we remember dimly a distant land we used to visit in our youth. We try to go again but we cannot. We cannot find the way. Our imagination machinery is withered just as our legs or arms might wither if we forget for years and years to use them.

We can then never leave our heavy bodies for even short vacations. We are mental shut-ins. We become bored and cynical and hard spirited. People wonder why we, with all our material wealth, are so sharp and grouchy and peevish, while others without half our means are happy and interested all the time.





IMPOSTOR SYNDROME

For eleven years, I wandered around the Harvard campus, saying to myself, several times a day: *Am I really the president of Harvard?*

--Drew Gilpin Faust, first female president of Harvard University



INTIMACY

Emotional intimacy is the experience of being deeply connected to another person who knows and understands your most important feelings and who shares his or her own with you...[a willingness] to reveal personal details about oneself, to be vulnerable or let [others] help you, to comfortably share attention or let go of control, and to listen without having to solve a problem.

--Robert Garfield, *Breaking the Male Code: Unlocking the Power of Friendship*

Your great mistake is to act the drama
as if you were alone. As if life
were a progressive and cunning crime
with no witness to the tiny hidden
transgressions. To feel abandoned is to deny
the intimacy of your surroundings. Surely,
even you, at times, have felt the grand array;
the swelling presence, and the chorus, crowding
out your solo voice. You must note
the way the soap dish enables you,
or the window latch grants you freedom.
Alertness is the hidden discipline of familiarity.
The stairs are your mentor of things
to come, the doors have always been there
to frighten you and invite you,
and the tiny speaker in the phone
is your dream-ladder to divinity.

Put down the weight of your aloneness and ease into the
conversation. The kettle is singing
even as it pours you a drink, the cooking pots
have left their arrogant aloofness and
seen the good in you at last. All the birds
and creatures of the world are unutterably
themselves. Everything is waiting for you.

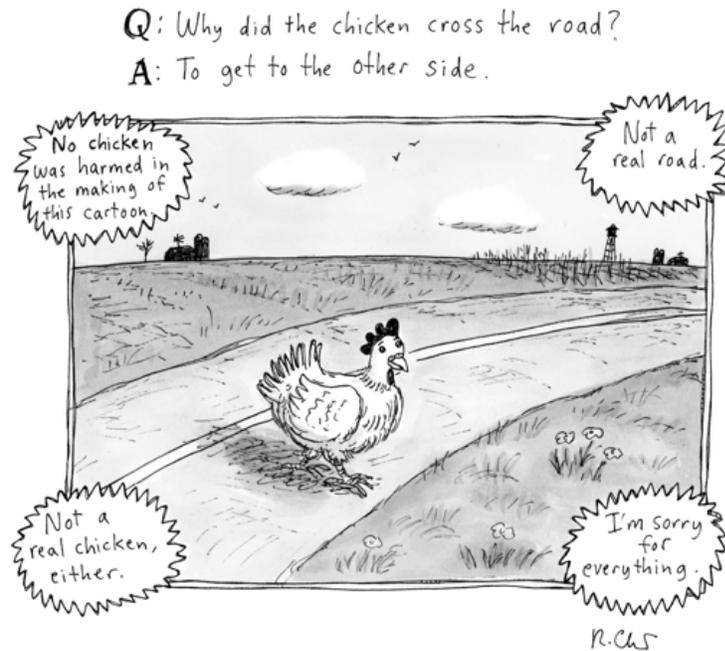
--David Whyte



JOKES

Let's say that we're sending another Voyager out into space, and you get to choose the one joke we include on the golden record to represent comedy to the aliens. What joke would you pick? I would put in Rodney Dangerfield's joke: "I was making love with my wife, and she had a faraway look in her eyes, and I said, 'Darling, is there someone else?' and she said, 'There must be.'" That's as perfect a joke as I can imagine.

--Jerry Seinfeld, interviewed by Dan Amira in the *New York Times Magazine*



KINKY



LILA

Shiva is the archetype for the energy play of non-attachment. The effect of this is Lila or Free Theatre.

LINEAGE

We are the only people who assume that we have ascended from apes. Everybody else takes it for granted that they are descended from gods.

--anthropologist Marshall Sahlins



LOVE

The person who is best suited to us is not the person who shares our every taste (he or she doesn't exist), but the person who can negotiate differences in taste intelligently — the person who is good at disagreement. Rather than some notional idea of perfect complementarity, it is the capacity to tolerate differences with generosity that is the true marker of the “not overly wrong” person. Compatibility is an achievement of love; it must not be its precondition.

--Alain de Botton, “Why You Will Marry the Wrong Person”



Me with some people I love: (top row) Andy; Tony and Cooper; Ziji and Sequoia; (above) me and Andy with his sister Becky and his Uncle George; (next page) me with Karolina Kosina, Andy's niece, and with Keith Hennessy at Dolores Beach

I love. Wouldn't we all like to start
a poem with "I love . . ."? I would.
I mean, I love the fact there are parallel lines
in the word "parallel," love how

words sometimes mirror what they mean.
I love mirrors and that stupid tale
about Narcissus. I suppose
there is some Narcissism in that.

You know, Narcissism, what you
remind me to avoid almost all the time.
Yeah, I love Narcissism. I do.
But what I really love is ice cream.

Remember how I told you
no amount of ice cream can survive
a week in my freezer. You didn't believe me,
did you? No, you didn't. But you know now

how true that is. I love
that you know my Achilles heel
is none other than ice cream—
so chilly, so common.

And I love fountain pens. I mean
I just love them. Cleaning them,
filling them with ink, fills me
with a kind of joy, even if joy

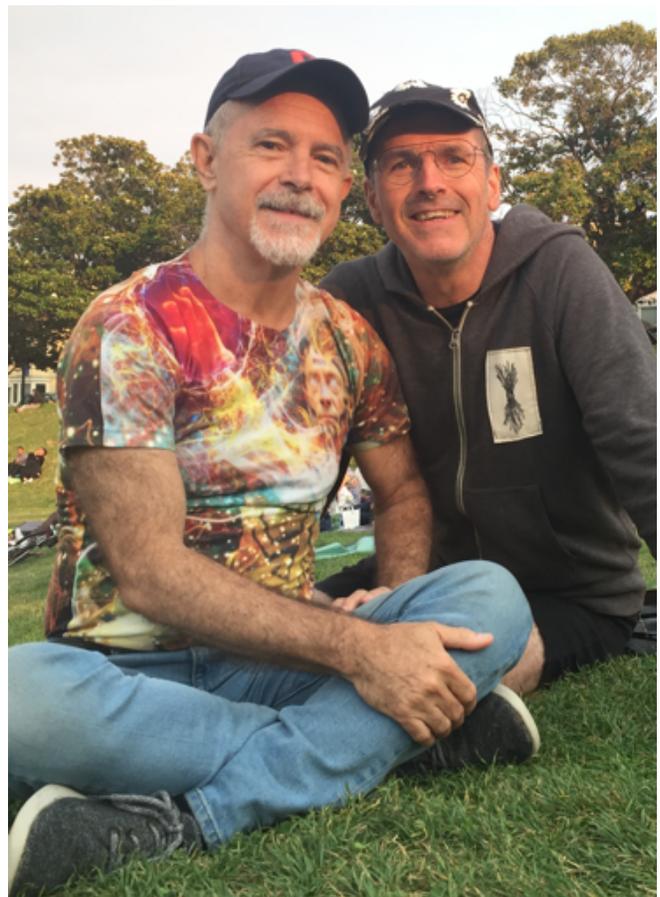
is so 1950. I know, no one talks about
joy anymore. It is even more taboo
than love. And so, of course, I love joy.
I love the way joy sounds as it exits

your mouth. You know, the word joy.
How joyous is that. It makes me think
of bubbles, chandeliers, dandelions.
I love the way the mind runs

that pathway from bubbles to dandelions.
Yes, I love a lot. And right here,
walking down this street,
I love the way we make

a bridge, a suspension bridge
—almost as beautiful as the
Golden Gate Bridge—swaying
as we walk hand in hand.

--C. Dale Young "The Bridge"



MALE ALLIES

Story time. I'm at the airport, working on my laptop, sitting near a guy I just met at a conference this weekend. He and I were both invited speakers, and he was waiting for his flight home too. Another guy comes and sits across from us. He starts talking. He is talking a lot. He finds out we were speakers at a conference about trauma, theology, sexual abuse, and the church. He thinks this is really interesting. He's into theology and trauma. He asks what my degrees are in. He launches into explaining his belief that everything happens for a reason, that the universe is filled with forces that even out all wrongdoing, that everyone is where they are supposed to be at all times, that something good comes from each thing that is bad, and so on. I listen and ask him questions and let him know kindly that I disagree. Did slavery happen for a reason? Has the Native American genocide been evened out? Was that woman really supposed to be in the room where she was raped? We argue. He works hard to show me that he is right. I look at my laptop. My work is not getting done. I say "I understand your perspective and I disagree." He reiterates his points and then says, "It was great talking to you, I'm gonna go catch my flight!"

Then this brilliant thing happened. My new friend leaned forward as airport guy was about to walk away, and he said, "Dude, you missed an opportunity. You had an expert in theology and trauma sitting in front of you. You say you're interested in these things but you didn't ask her a single question. You didn't try to learn anything at all from her. You know she has advanced degrees and is published but you just tried to show her that you know more about her work than she does. You missed out. Big fail, man."

I'm sure I didn't remember that verbatim, but I think the quote is pretty close.

The guy got uncomfortable and tried to defend himself, but my new friend and I smiled and shook our heads. Nope, we weren't having it. Then, the guy sat back down and asked me to "teach him" for 5 minutes before he went to board his plane. He was trying to make it right. I smiled and said no thank you, I didn't want to be put on the spot or responsible for him missing his flight (which had been boarding for 15 minutes). My new friend added, "No, man, you gotta live with the consequences of your mistake. Time's up."

We each said a pleasant goodbye, waved, and the guy went off to his gate.

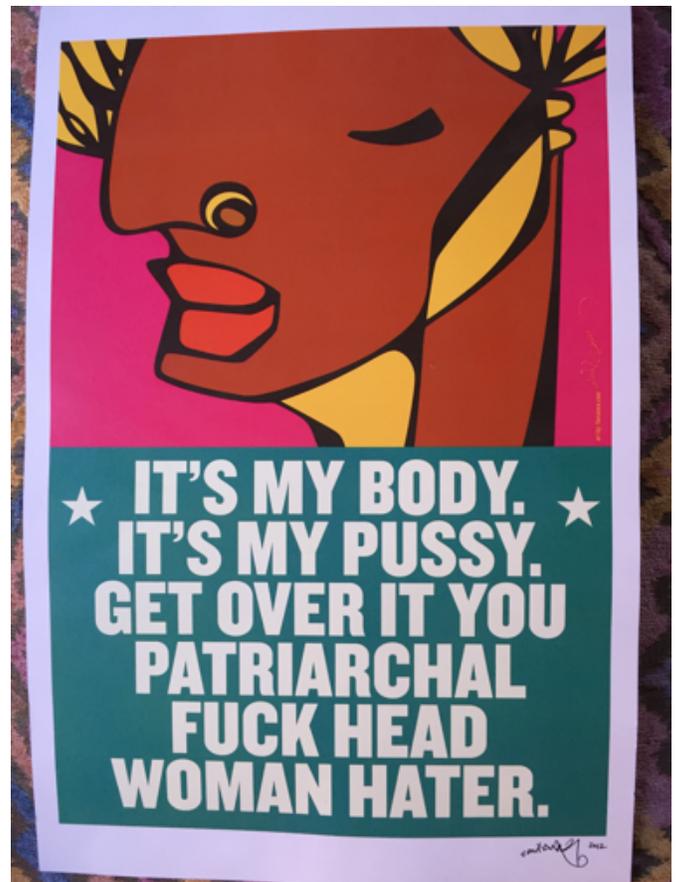
This was (for me, in this particular situation) an awesome experience of a man (my new friend) using his male privilege to call bs on another man's (airport guy) entitlement and sexism in a way that redirected power and dignity, and honestly, needed emotional energy back to me.

When he spoke up, my body relaxed. My new friend wasn't the least bit concerned about hurting airport guy's feelings or making him uncomfortable. He was concerned about interrupting men's patterns of lowkey dominating women. I found his priorities startling and refreshing. They made the physical space I was in change. It went from hostile space to safe(er) space in the time it took to speak a sentence. The ease with which my new friend expressed his priorities signaled a long term, practiced commitment to not only holding them in his mind but to embodying them as well. I wish I encountered this more often. My new friend shouldn't get accolades. I'm not writing this to praise him or put him in some kind of weird male savior position. His priorities should be normal and interrupting sexism should be mundane. But they're not, so. Here we are.

Menfolk, will you please make this happen more often? I could get by on half the energy it currently takes me to exist in the world if y'all would each take on one or two airport guys a month.

In earnest, though. I hope this might be a helpful example for those looking to build habits of supporting women and challenging sexism. This isn't the only way to do it but it's one way that worked today.

--Hilary Jerome Scarsella



MASTURBATION

The truth is that you never know what's going to happen in your head when you start to masturbate. it's like that challenge in Masterchef where the chefs lift the lid on a mystery box and find they have to make dinner from a tub of gherkins, some glacé cherries, a jar of peanut butter and a couple of crayfish. Who knows what will come out in the end? The only certainty is that whatever does emerge in the privacy of your head shouldn't be thrown in the bin. It might not win a TV show, but you should look on it as your own personal masterpiece.

--Stephanie Theobald, *Sex Drive*



MONEY

Money, the long green,
cash, stash, rhino, jack
or just plain dough.

Chock it up, fork it over,
shell it out. Watch it
burn holes through pockets.

To be made of it! To have it
to burn! Greenbacks, double eagles,
megabucks and Ginnie Maes.

It greases the palm, feathers a net,
holds heads above water,
makes both ends meet.

Money breeds money.
Gathering interest, compounding daily.
Always in circulation.

Money. You don't know where it's been,
but you put it where your mouth is.
And it talks.

--Dana Gioia

Without the ability to fully love or be fully loved, so many of us think that the acquisition of money can bring self-esteem and happiness. I've enjoyed friendship with some exceedingly wealthy people. If money brought happiness, then each of them should be ecstatically happy. But I doubt whether any of them is any happier than any of my less well-to-do friends. Money, it seems, attracts more envy than empathy. More lust than love.

--Cary Grant

MYERS-BRIGGS

The key to the [Myers-Briggs Type Indicator's] success is [Briggs'] insight that you can waste a lot of energy and bring on a lot of psychic pain if you think of these differences as incompatibilities that have to be ironed out. The differences are innate, and each type of personality is as "normal" as the others. There is no better way to be—logical or emotional, spontaneous or organized, party bro or brooder. These are not imperfections to be corrected. They are hardwired dispositions to be recognized and accommodated.

--Louis Menand, "Can You Type?" in the *New Yorker*

MYTHOLOGY

Arab fairy tales start with a line: *Kan ya ma kan*. It was, or it wasn't. The myth is yours to believe in or to deny.

--Kareem Shaheen

NAKEDNESS

Nakedness offers a contrast to self-possession, to discontinuous existence ... It is a state of communication revealing a quest for a possible continuance of being beyond the confines of the self. Bodies open out to a state of continuity through secret channels that give us a feeling of obscenity. Obscenity is our name for the uneasiness which upsets the physical state associated with self-possession, with the possession of a recognized and stable individuality. Through the activity of organs in a flow of coalescence and renewal, like the ebb and flow of waves surging into one another, the self is dispossessed.

--Georges Bataille



THE PARADOX OF PORN

THE PARADOX OF PORN
Notes on Gay Male Sexual Culture
Don Shewey

THE PARADOX OF PORN
Notes on Gay Male Sexual Culture
Shewey, Don
Joybody Books (226 pp.)
\$19.99 paper | \$4.99 e-book
978-1-73213-440-9

A New York writer and sex therapist's treatise on pornography and gay men portrays the genre as a double-edged sword.

Long before the days of internet porn and smartphone hookup apps, Times Square grind houses were teeming with adult films that catered to the curious, the horny, and the ubiquitous men in old raincoats. To Shewey (*Sam Shepard*, 1997, etc.), the 1970s gay porn films helped the audience connect with their erotic selves and filled a void in representation, showing a fledgling gay audience "a world where everyone is enthusiastically, unapologetically gay." As porn theaters gave way to home video, and the classified ads gave way to online dating, people's mindsets changed along with the innovations in technology: Solitary and repetitive home viewing of porn began weakening relationships while the impossible male porn standards of everlasting strength and massive endowment were altering ideas of what was normal. As a sex therapist, Shewey is able to recount many complaints from people who grapple with feelings of inadequacy and performance problems, and he writes about how pornographic images have exacerbated his clients' unrealistic expectations. Though he is clearly a lifelong fan of adult films and credits them with teaching him and others a great deal, he also blames porn for "liberating some inhibitions but installing others in their place, enslaving us to libidinal impulses at the expense of our health and mental well-being." He concludes with results from a study he conducted that included 50 men who were interviewed about their habits and feelings about porn. The author's effort to dive into the gay male psyche effectively touches on many significant topics, including the challenge of enjoying sex in times of great fear and calamity, such as during the height of the AIDS epidemic. Gay community history is skillfully told here, especially as it relates to the erotic side of things, and his warnings about subscribing to porn norms in everyday life sound important in an era of muscle clones and smartphone app players. Stories from his clients are told somewhat rapid-fire, but the intent is to remind people they aren't alone in their struggles and that intimacy can be rediscovered. There are many intriguing excerpts from other writers, including heavyweights in and outside of the gay community.

A relatable, timely analysis of pornography's history and its effect on the mindset of the gay community.

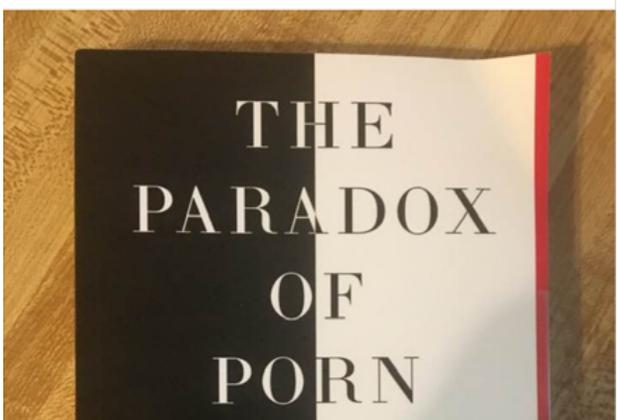
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Samuel Delany
4 hrs · 🌐

I confess I have only read six chapters of this book but it strikes me as both excellent in terms of content—and its many color illustrations are beautiful! I would recommend it to both gay and straight men, actually—or anyone who uses porn. Don Shewey may have written THE self-help classic for our time. Probably I'll say more when I finish it. So far it's the best thing I know to emerge from gay male culture. It's clear and beautifully put!

Lonely Christopher Don Shewey Vincent Czyz Chip Kidd John Madera Dale Lazarov Robyn Bradshaw Edmund White Talitha McEachin Jenny Davidson Jennie Burd Bo Swidersky Dan McLaughlin David Demchuk Loring McAlpin Juan Gallardo Sammy Stephen Matthias Stork



PAIN

Like with cold water until you finally get up your nerve to take yourself in hand. Then you take a deep breath and dive in and let yourself sink down it clear to the bottom. And after you had been down inside pain a while you found that like with cold water it is not really as cold as you thought it was when your muscles were cringing themselves away from the outside edge of it as you moved around it trying to get up your nerve. He knew pain.

--James Jones

PASSION VS. ADDICTION

The difference between passion and addiction is that between a divine spark and a flame that incinerates... Passion is divine fire: it enlivens and makes holy; it gives light and yields inspiration. Passion is generous because it's not ego-driven; addiction is self-centered. Passion gives and enriches; addiction is a thief. Passion is a source of truth and enlightenment; addictive behaviors lead you into darkness. You're more alive when you are passionate, and you triumph whether or not you attain your goal. But an addiction requires a specific outcome that feeds the ego; without that outcome, the ego feels empty and deprived. A consuming passion that you are helpless to resist, no matter what the consequences, is an addiction.

--Gabor Maté, *In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts*

PATH

The spiritual path is freedom from the known.

—Krishnamurti

THE POTLATCH

If we don't potlatch, our hearts will break.

—Calvin Hunt, Kwagut

Haa kusteeyi áyá. This is our custom, our culture, the way we are.

—Nora Dauenhauer, Tlingit

The word "potlatch" is derived from a Chinook jargon term meaning "to give." Up and down the Northwest Coast, potlatch ceremonies mark culturally important events: birth, bestowing of ancestral names, marriage, initiation into dancing societies, raising a new house or totem pole—and especially, the observance of death. The memorial potlatch, held a year or more after death, has been a time for final grieving, honoring the deceased, and passing down names and regalia, such as headdresses, hats and robes. Potlatches are observed differently among each culture group and their unique protocols and activities express core beliefs and values. Among the clan-organized groups of the north (Tlingit, Tsimshian and Haida), those in the clan "opposite" of your own provide the artwork and services needed: in this way, the ethos of reciprocity and balance—that "two halves make a whole"—was continually reinforced. All guests are given gifts in their capacity as witnesses to the event. The essential sentiments of acknowledgement, honor and support remain steadfast in the potlatch today, even though particular elements change over time.

COMING SOON TO ALL GOOD BOOKSHOPS

PHILOSOPHY ILLUSTRATED

A PICTURE BOOK OF PHILOSOPHICAL TERMS



Free Will



Anarchy



Democracy



Logic



Empiricism



Eroticism



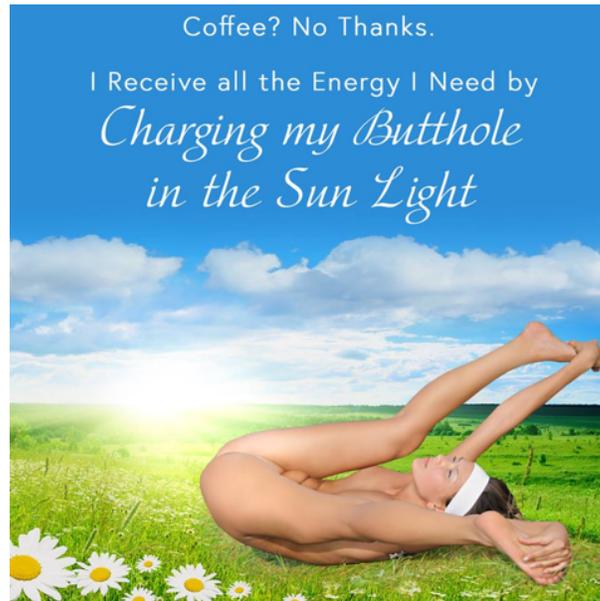
Atheism



Agnosticism



Love



POWER

I learned that I'm powerful because I don't have to say much to be heard.

--Mary J. Blige

POZOLE

Pozole is a kind of soup that was first eaten hundreds of years ago, long before the Spaniards came to Mexico. The principal ingredient is dried kernels of hominy that have softened after being soaked in water. The hominy cooks in broth, and then the *pozole* is served garnished with shredded meat – usually pork but sometimes chicken – as well as slices of avocado and radishes. Most people add chile, oregano, and a squeeze of lime. Legend has it that back in the old days, *pozole* was served to the entire community in a ritual act of spiritual union. Ancient Mexicans believed that humans were made from the dough formed with cornmeal. So the kernels of hominy represented all of humanity, each kernel symbolizing one of us. The meat in the soup was not pork. The Aztecs would adorn the *pozole* with strips of human flesh, from people who had been sacrificed for the ceremony.

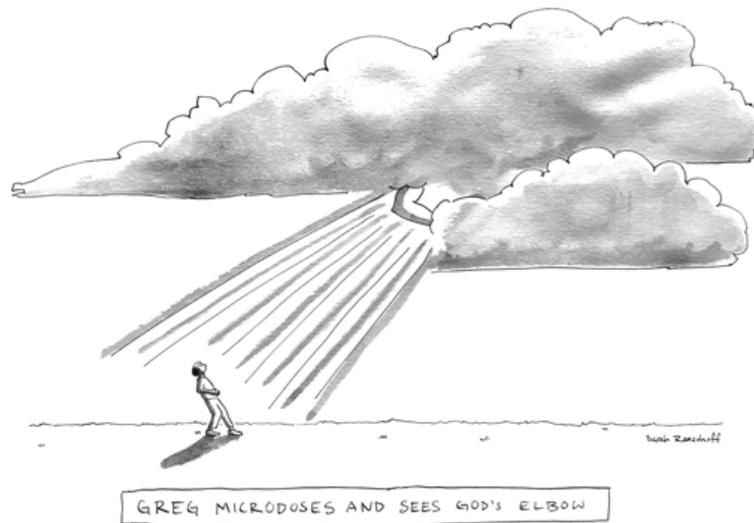
--David Lida, *One Life*



PSYCHEDELICS

Your body lies in the darkness, heavy as lead, but your spirit seems to soar and leave the hut, and with the speed of thought to travel where it listeth, in time and space, accompanied by the shaman's singing you are poised in space, a disembodied eye, invisible, incorporeal, seeing but not seen. In truth, you are the five senses disembodied, all of them keyed to the height of sensitivity and awareness, all of them blending into one another most strangely, until the person, utterly passive, becomes a pure receptor, infinitely delicate, of sensations. As your body lies there in its sleeping bag, your soul is free, loses all sense of time, alert as it never was before, living an eternity in a night, seeing infinity in a grain of sand. What you have seen and heard is cut as with a burin in your memory, never to be effaced. At last you know what the ineffable is, and what ecstasy means. Ecstasy! For the Greeks *ekstatis* meant the flight of the soul from the body. Can you find a better word than that to describe the bemushroomed state? In common parlance ecstasy is fun. But ecstasy is not fun. Your very soul is seized and shaken until it tingles. Who will choose to feel undiluted awe, or to float through the door yonder into the Divine Presence?

--Gordon Wasson



It does not seem inappropriate to compare [psychedelics'] potential significance for psychiatry and psychology to that of the microscope for medicine or of the telescope in astronomy. Freud called dreams the "royal way to the unconscious." The statement is valid to a greater extent for LSD experiences.

--Stan Grof

Using only plants and fungi that have evolved over millions of years and been selected and used by humans over millennia, I can safely travel to the furthest places humans have gone and stay there 5 or 30 or 120 minutes, during which I can experientially research consciousness, death, time, existence, magic, ecstasy, and the mystery within a tradition older than agriculture.

*

The pharmaceutical drug industry – whose ten largest companies, all publicly owned, earned around \$440 billion in revenue in 2014, when global revenue of legal drugs exceeded \$1 trillion for the first time – would lose probably tens to, eventually, hundreds of billions of dollars annually if psychedelics became legal, because hundreds of millions of people could then cheaply and effectively and sustainably, instead of expensively, ineffectively toxically, and fatally, relieve and/or treat depression, anxiety, addiction, pain, inflammation, insomnia, nausea, thanatophobia, epilepsy, cancer, asthma, dementia, arthritis, fibromyalgia, cluster headaches, PTSD, OCD, ADHD, Tourette, and other problems with cannabis, psilocybin, DMT, salvia, LSD, mescaline, and ibogaine, as users of psychedelics have known or suspected for millennia, aboriginals have known for tens to hundreds of millennia, and science has begun to confirm since the fifties in two main waves of research, the second beginning in 2006 at Johns Hopkins and New York University.

--Tao Lin, *Trip*

RESISTANCE

What can they do
to you? Whatever they want.
They can set you up, they can
bust you, they can break
your fingers, they can
burn your brain with electricity,
blur you with drugs till you
can't walk, can't remember, they can
take your child, wall up
your lover. They can do anything
you can't stop them
from doing. How can you stop
them? Alone, you can fight,
you can refuse, you can
take what revenge you can
but they roll over you.

But two people fighting
back to back can cut through
a mob, a snake-dancing file
can break a cordon, an army
can meet an army.

Two people can keep each other
sane, can give support, conviction,
love, massage, hope, sex.
Three people are a delegation,
a committee, a wedge. With four
you can play bridge and start
an organization. With six
you can rent a whole house,
eat pie for dinner with no
seconds, and hold a fund-raising party.
A dozen make a demonstration.
A hundred fill a hall.
A thousand have solidarity and your own newsletter;
ten thousand, power and your own paper;
a hundred thousand, your own media;
ten million, your own country.

It goes on one at a time,
it starts when you care
to act, it starts when you do
it again after they said no,
it starts when you say We
and know who you mean, and each
day you mean one more.

--Marge Piercy, "The Low Road"



Keith Hennessy sworn in as American citizen 5/3/18

SEX FIRST

The idea of proceeding with caution made perfect sense, but in my heart I most admired women who went to bed with me just after we met. I was grateful for the reckless gamble, placing an extravagant bet on a square marked “complicity.” I appreciated the rebelliousness of immediately smashing the ice with a pickaxe to see if there was any reason for us to make a sculpture together. I liked the idea that sex was part of quotidian life and not a bargaining chip to be strategically proffered or withheld. Of course intimacy, like a garden, has to be planted and nurtured before it is cultivated and pruned. But all gardens have to start somewhere, in a patch of raw dirt.

--David Lida, *One Life*

SHADOW

Exile nothing. The shadow may carry the best of the life we have not lived. Go into the basement, the attic, the refuse bin. Find gold there. Find an animal who has not been fed or watered. It is you!! This neglected, exiled animal, hungry for attention, is a part of your self.

--Marion Woodman



SOCIAL JUSTICE

If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.

--Desmond Tutu



THEOLOGY

If God had meant boys to be fucked, he would have put a hole in their ass.

--Charles Burch (quoted by Edmund White in *The Unpunished Vice*)

TIME

It's never too late.
If you believe it's too late,
Then you'll go to hell,
And the hell will be
The belief that it's too late.

*

How does a child learn about time?
By seeing wood cut in spring, burned in winter;
By seeing a seed sprout in summer, eaten in fall;
By seeing a mother's abdomen expand, then being delivered of a baby.
How does a child not learn about time?
By being taught how to tell time on a watch.

-- *The Book of the Mother*

VIOLENCE

It is exhausting having to declaim the same talking points over and over again: that the majority of the US official adversaries were once clients and allies. That almost every intervention comes with an *ex post facto* assessment from the government acknowledging the failure of the mission. That investigative reporters and historians almost always unearth internal documents betraying motives that not only run counter to public rationales but undermine all claims to humanitarian intent. That the US supplies the world with a preponderance of its weapons and fuels a plurality of its animosities. That the US is the only power to have ever dropped the bomb, that it did so twice, and that it did so not to end a world war (a war that was about to end anyway) but to launch what became a half-century-long cold war on superior footing. While not alone as a global malefactor, the US is the world leader in conventional foreign invasions since 1945, with 12; has engineered at least 38 coups or regime changes since the Spanish-American war of 1898; and has offered direct military support and training to dozens of governments with no regard for human rights. The US incarcerates the most people today, both in absolute and relative terms. It has incarcerated the most people for at least 30-odd years, and it either led the world in its incarceration rate or trailed closely behind the Soviet Union and South Africa for the preceding decades. As early as 1976, one study described America's rate as the "highest in the world and still rising." By any standard, the US empire ranks among the world's most formidable producers of violence, and one would be hard-pressed to defend such all-consuming production on liberal democratic grounds.

--Lyle Jeremy Rubin, "What military service taught me about America"



Street art, Mission District, San Francisco



WORDS

Even when you're upset, use words of love. God is love, Jehovah is love, Allah is love. So don't let your expressions even of anger be confused or misconstrued. Turn them into words of expression that can be understood by using words of love.

--Stevland Morris

WRITING

If one must climb a ladder to reach a height and from that height see, then it were best to write about what you see and not about how you climbed.

--Gregory Corso

In his office, Mr. Hersh fielded a call from his son, a reporter at Vice News, and laid out his "two little rules" rules for reporting: "Read before you write. And, secondly, get the hell out of the way of a story. You don't say 'in a startling development,' you *tell* the development. You don't need an adjective in the first two paragraphs. You don't have to sell it to yourself."

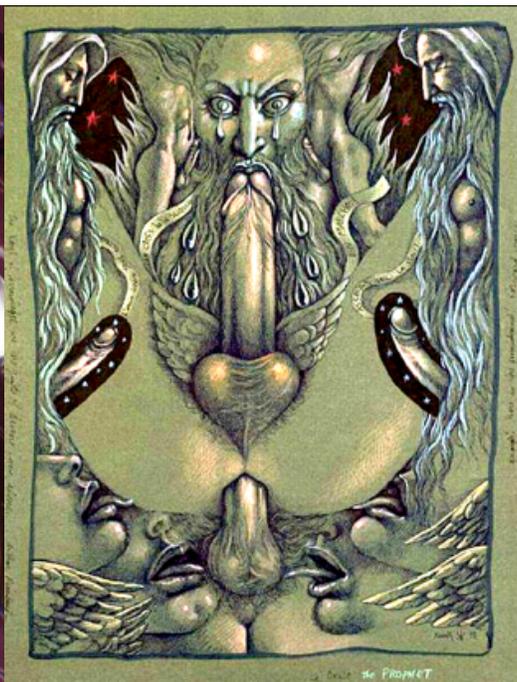
--Michael M. Grinbaum, writing in the *New York Times* about Seymour Hersh

For three successive days, force yourself to write, without denaturalizing or hypocrisy, everything that crosses your mind. Write what you think of yourself, your wives, Goethe, the Turkish war, the Last Judgment, your superiors, and you will be stupefied to see how many new thoughts have poured forth. That is what constitutes the art of becoming an original writer in three days.

--Emmanuel Carrère, *Paris Review*

Don't be so obvious/slow-witted/long-winded/overemphatic, I tell myself. ...Speed and lightness are two of the great qualities of a mature style, and compassion – or at least a searching understanding – is the most radiant aspect of a moral vision. We like writers who can see the world around them, who don't attribute impossible motives or responses to their characters, who can keep a balance between action and introspection, whose style is relaxed and flowing and conversational; in fiction we want the people to do things that are fresh but representational, that are "in character" but unexpected. I suppose above all we like fiction that is bold and new, either in form or in content or both, but that at the same time adheres to the rules it has set for itself.

--Edmund White, *The Unpunished Vice*

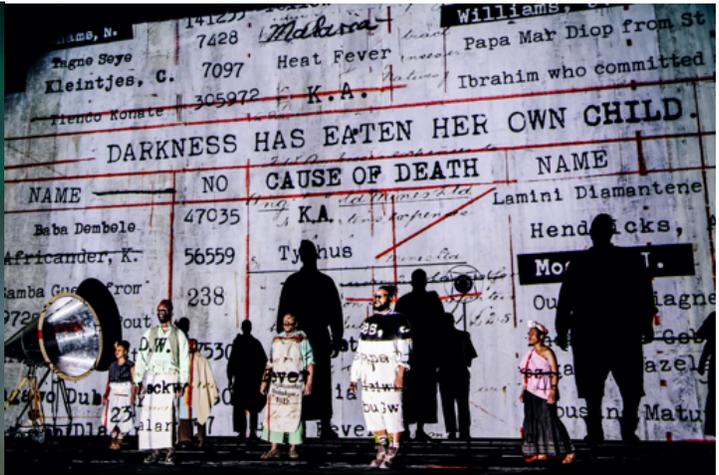


YEAR IN REVIEW

Best Theater of 2018:

(somewhat arbitrary ranking)

1. *After* – Andrew Schneider’s spooky high-tech meditation on what happens to the dying body (Under the Radar)



2. *24-Decade History of Popular Music* – Taylor Mac’s temporary queer utopia (all 24 hours in Philadelphia)

3. *The Damned* – Ivo van Hove’s intense, upsetting staging of the Visconti film performed by Comédie-Française at Park Avenue Armory with his usual peerlessly inventive multimedia design team

4. *The Emperor* – Colin Teevan’s adaptation of Ryszard Kapuściński’s portrait of Ethiopian dictator Haile Selassie at Theater for a New Audience with stunning performances by Kathryn Hunter and musician Temesgen Zeleke

5. *The Head and the Load* – William Kentridge’s spectacular, appalling pageant depicting the involuntary participation of Africans in World War I, at Park Avenue Armory (above right)

6. *Dance Nation* – Clare Barron’s fascinating, constantly morphing ode to girl power at Playwrights Horizons

7. *In and Of Itself* – Derek Delgaudio’s melancholy mind-blowing philosophy-seminar-as-magic-act

8. *Three Tall Women* – Joe Mantello’s exquisite revival of Edward Albee’s play with ferocious Glenda Jackson

9. *Is God Is* – despite everything I didn’t like about Taibi Magar’s production at Soho Rep, I was knocked out by Aleshea Harris’s crazy/bold language and theatrical imagination

10. *In the Body of the World* – Diane Paulus’s beautiful staging of Eve Ensler’s raw cancer memoir

Other remarkable manifestations: Toshi Reagon’s music for *The Parable of the Sower* and Dickie Beau’s stealth AIDS memoir *Re-Member Me*, both at Under the Radar; Vox Motus’s puppet epic *Flight* at the McKittrick Hotel; the Performing Garage incarnation of the Wooster Group’s homage to Tadeusz Kantor, *A Pink Chair (in Place of a Fake Antique)*; Joe Mantello’s Broadway revival of *The Boys in the Band*; Oneohtrix Point Never’s trippy theatrical concert *Myriad* at Park Avenue Armory; the brief, timely revival of Lee Breuer and Bob Telson’s *The Gospel at Colonus* in Central Park; Craig Lucas’s brave play *I Was Most Alive with You* at Playwrights Horizons, starring the mesmerizing Russell Harvard; Anna Teresa de Keersmaker’s spectacular staging of *Six Brandenburg Concertos*, right, at Park Avenue Armory (do you detect a theme? the Armory programming rocks -- hats off to executive producer Rebecca Robertson!); Elaine May and Joan Allen in Lila Neugebauer’s fine production of Kenneth Lonergan’s *The Waverly Gallery*; Daniel Fish’s bold reimagining of *Oklahoma!* at St. Ann’s Warehouse; Heidi Schreck’s righteously outraged *What the Constitution Means to Me*; Joe Murphy and Joe Robertson’s tough immersive drama *The Jungle* with its gigantic international cast at St. Ann’s; Jez Butterworth’s *The Ferryman* on Broadway with another terrific huge ensemble, among whom Justin Edwards especially stands out; and Jeremy Harris’s edgy, form-smashing *Slave Play* at New York Theater Workshop.



YES

I want to learn more and more to see as beautiful what is necessary in things; then I shall be one of those who make things beautiful. Amor fati (love of fate): let that be my love henceforth!

I do not want to wage war against what is ugly. I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse those who accuse. Looking away shall be my only negation.

And all in all and on the whole: someday I wish to be only a Yes-sayer.

--Friedrich Nietzsche

ZERO

The truth of Trump's support has become evident. What his base always wanted were racist scapegoats, as a means of restoring their vision of lost supremacy, which they'd either politely term America First, or acknowledge as a hatred of minorities. Trump has used immigration and the bogus need for a Wall as a smokescreen for the petty complaints, unwarranted fears, and blatant bigotry of his acolytes.

Illegal immigrants never threatened American jobs; they did the work Americans refused to do. The immigrant crime rate is miniscule when compared to that of white Christian citizens. Immigration is Trump's forefront issue, as he ignores infrastructure, education, housing and anything real. Even his base prefers Obamacare, and the Republicans, after years of whining, have never come up with a workable, or any alternative.

Trump's other predictable targets include LGBTQ people, especially brave trans soldiers; women's reproductive freedom; and always, the media. Again, all of these issues provide convenient scapegoats for Trump fans. They supply targets for their restless bile, and that's what they demand: someone to hate, whether it's Hillary, a teenager who wants to use the bathroom, or any reporter who fact-checks Trump's lies.

The good news? These ludicrous battle lines have caused a resurgence in activism. The midterm elections' blue wave resulted in historic wins for female candidates. I don't know if Kamala Harris or Beto O'Rourke can become President, but they're both viable and exciting candidates, and a new face for the Democratic party.

The most tiresome trope remains the concept of a still misunderstood, embattled Trump voter, that mythical creature without prejudice, who only wants his or her nation back on track. This person finds Trump's personal behavior immoral and disagreeable yet "likes the direction he's going in." This person "doesn't hate anyone." This person feels discriminated against, especially at liberal cocktail parties. This person somehow wants to be congratulated on their independence in voting for a repulsive bigot.

Trump may very well remain in office for another term, but he's never become a hero or beloved in any way. If he fails to deliver on his most hateful promises, his base will desert him - they're keeping score. He's only valuable in opposition to the hated liberals.

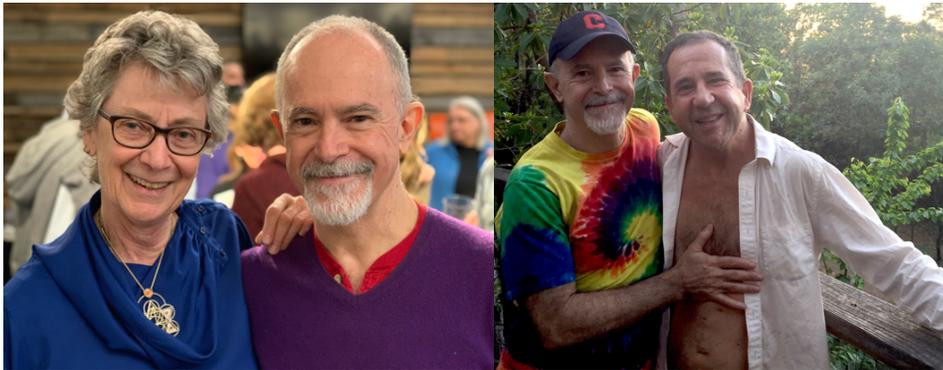
Michelle Obama's book is a huge bestseller, because she inspires people. This fact eats Trump alive, as he hunkers down and glowers, spewing irrational tweets which even his supporters ignore. Trump has been exposed, as a pathetic detour, the Great American Mistake, and he knows it. The future isn't about healing or compromise or learning to live together. It's about electing someone the country won't be ashamed of.



--Paul Rudnick

2018 THANKS TO

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Bobbie Louise Hawkins, Boulder, CO, August 1990

