



EKPYROSIS

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witness to the conflagration
that was 2019
curated by Don Shewey

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XXX
YEAR IN REVIEW
ZANELE MUHOLI

Cover: The Folly, midnight at Burning Man

The Stoic Greeks spoke of ekpyrosis --the periodic destruction of the cosmos by a mass conflagration. (h/t Mabou Mines)

ADDICTION

Drug addiction of all kinds arises primarily from the relentlessly increasing dislocation in our society.

[Dislocation] is a word political economist Karl Polanyi used to describe alienation or disconnection, a state of being ungrounded and ill at ease. People are dislocated when their vital needs for individual autonomy and belonging are unmet. Dislocated people don't have a place in the established social order, and they fill that void with addiction. For instance, some young people can't stop playing video games, because a virtual fantasy world provides the excitement, identity, and meaning that are lacking in their actual world.

What causes all this dislocation?

The social and political system past generations struggled to create has been twisted into a cruel and stupid imperial system dominated by multinational corporations. This is hard for people to admit. Who can bear to face the fact that the consumer society we were raised to cherish is actually making us apathetic, crazy, and vulnerable to addiction? The disconnected, fragmented nature of our culture causes addiction, which causes further fragmentation. Most serious addictions are actually an adaptation to dislocation. To some extent addiction is a functional way of dealing with the problem. Of course, what people really need is to be genuinely recognized and accepted and believed in — to have a purpose.

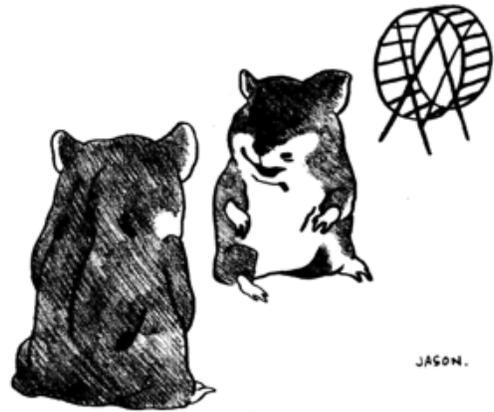
In these times, large numbers of people become addicted to something at some point in their lives. Drug and alcohol addictions form a substantial part of this, but nowhere near a majority of it. More common are addictions to gambling, food, sex, shopping, dysfunctional relationships, Internet surfing, social media, wealth, power, exercise, and so on.

Is this what you call “psychosocial integration”?

That's a term I borrowed from psychologist Erik Erikson. It means the essential satisfaction most people feel if they live in a society that meets their basic needs for four things: belonging, identity, meaning, and purpose. When these needs are met, we feel a profound sense of well-being. Lack of belonging is a feeling of being alone and neglected. Lack of identity is the unease of not knowing who you are and experiencing wild swings from one self-concept to another. Lack of meaning is a sense that the world is random or ruled by evil forces. Lack of purpose is boredom and a feeling of uselessness, of not having any reason to get out of bed. When all four of these needs are unsatisfied, life is hell.

The process of weaving together belonging, identity, meaning, and purpose is usually accomplished through a living culture, which we might say includes a mysterious spiritual component. We know that in cultures where everyone has a place and a purpose and a stable way of life, addiction is rarely found.

--Bruce K. Alexander, interviewed by Jari Chevalier in *The Sun*



"I usually do two hours of cardio and then four more of cardio and then two more of cardio."

The levels of addiction in our society are off the charts, and I'm not just talking about alcohol and drugs; I'm talking about shopping, working, sex. Addictions are an attempt to cope with intolerable states. The meager lives we are asked to live, in which we are often reduced to "earning a living" are themselves intolerable...For thousands of years we were nourished by being members of a community, gathering around the fire, hearing the stories of the elders, feeling supported during times of loss and grief, offering gratitude, singing together, sharing meals at night and our dreams in the morning. I call these activities "primary satisfactions." We are hardwired to want them, but few of us receive them. In their absence we turn to secondary satisfactions: rank, privilege, wealth, status – or, on the shadow side, addictions. The problem with these secondary satisfactions is that we can never get enough of them. We always want more. But once we find our primary satisfactions, we don't want much else.

--Francis Weller, interviewed by Tim McKee in *The Sun*



"I just need to get all my affairs in chaotic neglect before I die."

The distinguishing features of any addiction are compulsion, preoccupation, impaired control, persistence, relapse, and craving.

People are susceptible to the addiction process if they have a constant need to fill their minds or bodies with external sources of comfort, whether physical or emotional. That need expresses a failure of *self-regulation* – an inability to maintain a reasonably stable internal emotional atmosphere. No one is born with the capacity for self-regulation; as I've mentioned, the infant is completely dependent on the parents to regulate his physical and psychological states. Because self-regulation is a developmental achievement, we reach it

only if the conditions for development are right. Some people never attain it; even in advanced adulthood they must rely on some external support to quell their discomfort and soothe their anxiety. They just cannot make themselves feel okay without such supports, whether they be chemicals or food or an excessive need for attention, approval, or love. Or they seek to make their lives exciting by engaging in activities that trigger elation or a sense of risk. A person with inadequate self-regulation becomes dependent on outside things to lift his mood and even to calm himself if he experiences too much undirected internal energy. In my own case, I've binge-shopped CDs when I've felt down or restless or bored – but also when I've felt overly elated and didn't know what to do with myself.

Impulse control is one aspect of self-regulation. Impulses rise up from the lower brain centers and are meant to be permitted or inhibited by the cerebral cortex. A salient trait of the addiction-prone personality is a poor hold over sudden feelings, urges, and desires. Also characterizing the addiction-prone personality is the absence of *differentiation*. Differentiation is defined as “the ability to be in emotional contact with others yet still autonomous in one's emotional functioning.” It's the capacity to hold on to ourselves while interacting with others. The poorly differentiated person is easily overwhelmed by his emotions; he “absorbs anxiety from others and generates considerable anxiety within himself.

Lack of differentiation and impaired self-regulation reflect a lack of emotional maturity.

At the core of every addiction is an emptiness based on abject fear. The addict dreads and abhors the present moment; she bends favorably only toward the next time, the moment when her brain, infused with her drug of choice, will briefly experience itself as liberated from the burden of the past and the fear of the future – the two elements that make the present intolerable. Many of us resemble the drug addict in our ineffectual efforts to fill in the spiritual back hole, the void at the center, where we have lost touch with our souls, our spirit – with those sources of meaning and value that are not contingent or fleeting. Our consumerist, acquisition-, action-, and image-mad culture only serves to deepen the hole, leaving us emptier than before.

The constant, intrusive, and meaningless mind-whirl that characterizes the way so many of us experience our silent moments is, itself, a form of addiction – and it serves the same purpose. “One of the main tasks of the mind is to fight or remove the emotional pain, which is one of the reasons for its incessant activity, but all it can ever achieve is to cover it up temporarily. In fact, the harder the mind struggles to get rid of the pain, the greater the pain.” So writes Eckhart Tolle. Even our 24/7 self-exposure to noise, e-mails, cell phones, TV, internet chats, media outlets, music downloads, video games, and nonstop internal and external chatter cannot succeed in drowning out the fearful voices within.

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



Joni Mitchell and David Hockney

AGING

Once I have lived to 75, my approach to my health care will completely change. I won't actively end my life. But I won't try to prolong it, either. Today, when the doctor recommends a test or treatment, especially one that will extend our lives, it becomes incumbent upon us to give a good reason why we don't want it. The momentum of medicine and family means we will almost invariably get it.

My attitude flips this default on its head. I take guidance from what Sir William Osler wrote in his classic turn-of-the-century medical textbook, *The Principles and Practice of Medicine*: "Pneumonia may well be called the friend of the aged. Taken off by it in an acute, short, not often painful illness, the old man escapes those 'cold gradations of decay' so distressing to himself and to his friends."

My Osler-inspired philosophy is this: At 75 and beyond, I will need a good reason to even visit the doctor and take any medical test or treatment, no matter how routine and painless. And that good reason is not "It will prolong your life." I will stop getting any regular preventive tests, screenings, or interventions. I will accept only palliative—not curative—treatments if I am suffering pain or other disability.

This means colonoscopies and other cancer-screening tests are out—and before 75. If I were diagnosed with cancer now, at 57, I would probably be treated, unless the prognosis was very poor. But 65 will be my last colonoscopy. No screening for prostate cancer at any age. (When a urologist gave me a PSA test even after I said I wasn't interested and called me with the results, I hung up before he could tell me. He ordered the test for himself, I told him, not for me.) After 75, if I develop cancer, I will refuse



"We're doing everything we can, which is just hair and nails, unfortunately."

treatment. Similarly, no cardiac stress test. No pacemaker and certainly no implantable defibrillator. No heart-valve replacement or bypass surgery. If I develop emphysema or some similar disease that involves frequent exacerbations that would, normally, land me in the hospital, I will accept treatment to ameliorate the discomfort caused by the feeling of suffocation, but will refuse to be hauled off.

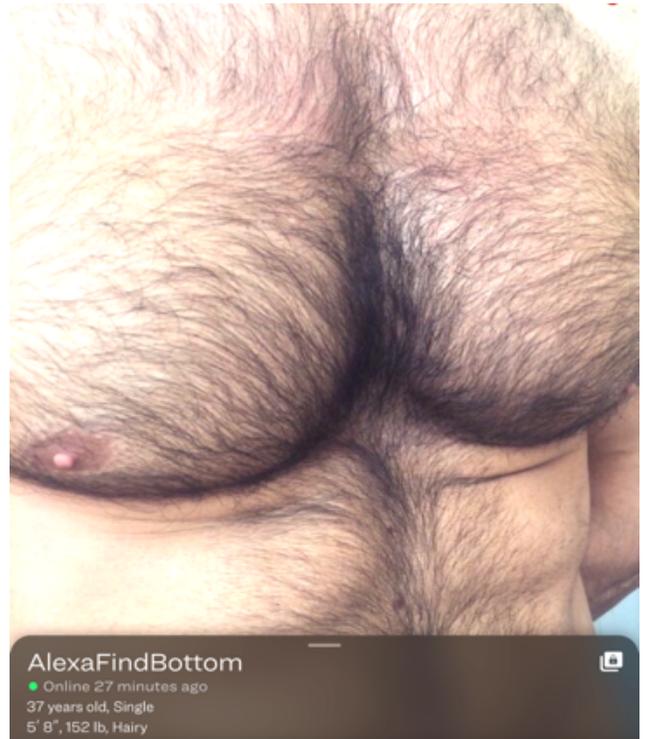
What about simple stuff? Flu shots are out. Certainly if there were to be a flu pandemic, a younger person who has yet to live a complete life ought to get the vaccine or any antiviral drugs. A big challenge is antibiotics for pneumonia or skin and urinary infections. Antibiotics are cheap and largely effective in curing infections. It is really hard for us to say no. Indeed, even people who are sure they don't want life-extending treatments find it hard to refuse antibiotics. But, as Osler reminds us, unlike the decays associated with chronic conditions, death from these infections is quick and relatively painless. So, no to antibiotics.

Obviously, a do-not-resuscitate order and a complete advance directive indicating no ventilators, dialysis, surgery, antibiotics, or any other medication—nothing except palliative care even if I am conscious but not mentally competent—have been written and recorded. In short, no life-sustaining interventions. I will die when whatever comes first takes me.

--Ezekiel J. Emanuel, "Why I Hope to Die at 75," *The Atlantic*



"Alexa, play 'As Time Goes By.'"



ANGER

So give me an idea of how you work with sensations to help cut-off clients get in touch with their anger.

With suppressed anger, the underlying sensation is often a particular tension in the jaw, neck, and arms.

So I might start by having someone feel that tension in their jaw and fist and then allow the jaw and fist to open just a teeny bit, until they feel an increase in tension. From there, I might have them then focus on closing and then opening the mouth and hand a little bit more. Then I might say, “And how about your neck? Are you still feeling the constriction there?”

“Yes, I feel it, but it’s not quite as bad,” they might say.

“Okay, would you be willing to do an experiment? I’m going to offer you my arm, and I’d like you to put both your hands on my arm. Just take the tension in your neck and chest, and move it into my forearm. Let my arm know how that tightness in your neck and chest feels.”

At this point, the person might report, “As I do this, I can feel the tension letting go. It’s like it’s going into your arm. Is that okay? It’s not hurting you?”

“No,” I’d say, “not at all.”

Or the person might say, “Oh my God, I can’t express this inner tension because I might do something violent.” So I’d assure them that I can handle whatever sensations arise for them and will tell them to stop if I need to. Then as they squeeze my forearm, I’d ask them to feel what’s going on in their arms, their hands, and their chest. As they continue, they’ll likely feel a release in the neck and chest, along with a burst of energy. Here, my job is to help them contain that energy so the anger doesn’t feel overwhelming.

In some of the older models of body therapy, you might have the person scream and hit on a pillow or twist a towel to get in touch with the anger. But the problem with those cathartic approaches is that they don’t actually release or dissolve the anger. I’ve found that a much better way is to proceed more slowly, layer by layer, using the principle of titration to find a path to discovering the strength and power that reside within (or beneath) the anger. When that happens, the emotion often shifts, or at least loosens its grip, and the person feels more freedom. In this way, rage can transform into strength and purpose—what I call healthy aggression.

--Peter Levine, interviewed in *Psychotherapy Networker*



BELTANE

The word “Beltane” originates from the Celtic God “Bel,” meaning “the bright one,” and the Gaelic word “teine,” meaning “fire.” Together they make “Bright Fire,” or “Goodly Fire,” and traditionally bonfires were lit to honor the Sun and encourage the support of Bel and the Sun’s light to nurture the emerging future harvest and protect the community. Beltane represents the pea of Spring and the beginning of Summer. Earth energies are at their strongest and most active. On May Eve the sexuality of life and the earth is at its peak. Abundant fertility, on all levels, is the central theme. Both young and old went A-Maying. Couples spent the night in the woods and fields, made love and brought back armfuls of the first May or hawthorn blossoms to decorate their homes and barns.

--Goatzette, Winter 2019

BLUES

The blues is an impulse to keep the painful details and episodes of a brutal experience alive in one’s aching consciousness, to finger its jagged grain, and to transcend it, not by the consolation of philosophy, but by squeezing from it a near-tragic, near-comic lyricism.

--Ralph Ellison

Funny thing about the blues—you play ’em ’cause you got ’em. But, when you play ’em, you lose ’em.

--Buddy Guy



CAMBRIDGE ANALYTICA

I got recruited to join a research team at SCL group which, at the time, was a British military contractor based in London. Most of its clients were various ministries of defense in NATO countries. And what we were looking at is how to use data online to identify people who would be likely targets of different extremist groups. And from that, try to understand and unpack: How would a fairly extreme ideological message spread through different kinds of social networks? And what could we do in order to mitigate its effectiveness? When Steve Bannon got introduced to the company, he realized that a lot of that work could be inverted. And rather than trying to mitigate an extremist insurgency in certain parts of the world, he wanted to essentially catalyze one in the United States.

When Steve Bannon got introduced to the company, he realized that a lot of that work could be inverted. And rather than trying to mitigate an extremist insurgency in certain parts of the world, he wanted to essentially catalyze one in the United States. He found us in London. He convinced a billionaire [Robert Mercer] to acquire the company, and then he transformed that company into a set of tools that he would be able to use to, in effect, manipulate a certain segment of the American voter population.

Originally, when we were looking at this for defense purposes, we wanted to figure out ... what were the psychological characteristics of those people that would make them more prone and more vulnerable to certain kinds of [extremist] messaging, so that we could engage them beforehand? That was based on a series of studies, many of which came out of the University of Cambridge, that looked at essentially how, particularly with Facebook data, you can quite accurately predict a person's personality profile. And from that, if you can understand how a person thinks and feels and engages in the world, and what kinds of biases they have, you can then figure out what's going to be most effective at engaging them in a particular objective — originally in some kind of counter-extremism or mitigation strategy.

Later, when it became Cambridge Analytica, it essentially became identifying people in the same way that you'd be looking for people who'd be more vulnerable to ISIS messaging — people who were more prone to conspiratorial thinking or paranoid ideation. Effectively, it looks for the same kinds of people. But rather than discouraging them from joining ISIS, it would be to encourage them to join the alt-right.

When the story blew up, one of the things that people often talked about is how it was a hack of Facebook, or some kind of data breach. And what actually happened was that Facebook authorized the applications that Cambridge Analytica ended up using to access the data. The company engaged professors at the University of Cambridge to create an application that then got put onto Facebook where people would go and fill out personality inventories, like surveys about who they are and their attributes. But the way the app worked was that they wouldn't just harvest the data of the person who responded to that survey, but it would go into their profile and look at all of their friends and harvest all of their friends' data as well.

So when you had one person fill out a survey, by default they effectively consented by proxy for hundreds of other people, simply because they were Facebook friends with them. So that scaled really quickly. And at the time, the way Facebook worked, they allowed applications to have that feature. They've since turned it off, and rightfully so, but at the time, you could acquire a lot of data really quickly.

I'm Canadian, and most of the people on the team were not Americans. So when we go into the United States, we don't grow up with the same narratives or the same biases, cultural biases that a lot of Americans do... there was one example where I sat in the living room with people as they were watching Fox News. And just how bizarrely almost therapeutic it was for them to come home, and they could release all of their stresses by yelling at the TV and blaming Obama for everything. You know, the fact that they didn't have health care, that - you know, that they were underemployed, was all a plot, you know, from Obama to change the, you know, the face and the fabric of America and that they were the victims here and it was Obama's fault.

Later, when the data profiling actually started, those were the first sets of targets that the companies started to engage. So first identifying those people and then inviting them into groups or pages. And very quickly, you know, imagine you're sitting there in your living room at midnight, and you just see some ads and you click on it. And then all the sudden, you know, you join a group and you start reading about stuff.

And then all the sudden, you know, other people start friending you or sending you messages, like, hey, like, welcome to the group - you know, whatever, Smith County Patriots. You know, I'm just a regular American from a couple counties over. Like, have you seen this? Isn't this crazy? And people would start to engage and build relationships with other people on these groups thinking that it feels very random - like, I chose to click on this. I chose this - but actually not realizing that they were there because they were chosen.

And so, you know, you would have these sort of staged events where they would be, you know, in a coffee shop or in a bar, as you said, and what - it does something very fundamental to a person because what starts off as sort of this, you know, dabbling in a digital fantasy, you know, in the comfort of their living room, it moves into their reality because they're now standing in a crowded room that's filled with people who are all talking about the exact same thing that they're thinking about and they're feeling. And you know, when they go and meet people, you know - they're a plumber, they're an electrician, they're a teacher - they don't seem to have, you know, a big political agenda or something behind them.

And so when you hear, as that person, you know, somebody talking about, you know, what Obama is doing by moving, you know, soldiers into Texas because he's planning something or, you know, all these people crossing the border, that, you know - or the deep state or all of this, you're listening to people who just look and sound exactly like you, and they couldn't possibly have an agenda. But then when you turn on, you know, NPR, CNN or NBC or whatever or read The New York Times, you don't see any of these things that are,

you know, in your view, actually happening in your country. And you start to detach yourself from this institution of journalism because you stop believing it; you think that this is actually propaganda that I'm reading.

One of the things that the company started to unpack was just, you know, how much hurt and pain there are in all kinds of different groups in the United States. There's a lot of resentment across the board in different groups, and so, you know, when you, for example, target African Americans with, you know, narratives about how, in the '90s, you know, Democrats had this idea or supported - or some Democrats supported this notion of super-predators and put lots of African Americans in prison or that they're just, you know, taking you for a ride. They just want your vote. They're not actually going to help you.

You know, and - or, on the flipside, you know, identifying people on the progressive side of the spectrum who also were more prone to conspiratorial thinking - you know, things about chemtrails or vaccines or things like that - and promoting, essentially, a mirror image of conspiracy theories at certain kinds of progressive people who otherwise would support Democrats to support a third-party candidate or to not vote because of it.

--Christopher Wylie, author of *Mindfuck: Cambridge Analytica and the Plot to Break America*, interviewed by Terry Gross on National Public Radio



"You were talking to Terry Gross in your sleep again."

CONFIDENCE

Schumer has always been anchored by a core of confidence...She said she always knew she would be famous and once gave back a \$1 million book advance because she believed in herself and figured she would get more money when she was more famous in a few years. She was right...But what about those who lack this self-assurance, who can't shake off the insults that women deal with every day online? Schumer pauses here. "I want to think on that," she said: "How do you rise from that?" Less than a minute later, she returns to the question: "Therapy, meditation, weed."

-- Jason Zinoman, "Amy Schumer Doesn't Care What You Think. Honest," *New York Times*



CUDDLING

We sleep together not because it's fiscally responsible but because we are affectionate human beings. Our minds need rest, but our minds also need camaraderie and intimacy and whispering. Anxiety and stress seem less intimidating when discussed with a partner while wearing pajamas...We cuddle. We laugh. At the end of each day we remove the onerous cloaks we've donned to face the world, and we want to do this lying next to our best friends, to know we're not in it alone.

--Jon Methven, *The Atlantic*

DEATH

Let's not get romantic or dismal about death. Indeed it's our most unique act along with birth. We must think of it as cooking breakfast, it's that ordinary. Break two eggs into a bowl or break a bowl into two eggs. Slip into a coffin after the fluids have been drained, or better yet, slide into the fire. Of course it's a little hard to accept your last kiss, your last drink, your last meal about which the condemned can be quite particular as if there could be a cheeseburger sent by God. A few lovers sweep by the inner eye, but it's mostly a placid lake at dawn, mist rising, a solitary loon call, and staring into the still, opaque water. We'll know as children again all that we are destined to know, that the water is cold and deep, and the sun penetrates only so far.

--Jim Harrison, "Death Again"

In the mid-1400s, an Italian Catholic monk wrote a self-help book called *Ars Moriendi*, or *The Art of Dying*. Illustrated with woodcuts for the illiterate, it taught laypeople how to navigate the physical and spiritual trials of the deathbed. A bestseller, it was translated into most major languages of Europe and went through 65 editions before 1500.

In its woodcuts, a gravely ill man or woman lies in bed, attended by friends, spouses, angels, and sometimes a favorite hound. Beneath the bed are demons, urging the dying person to give in to one of five "temptations to sin" that block the way to dying in peace: lack of faith, despair, impatience, spiritual pride, and what the monk called *avarice*—or not wanting to say goodbye to the cherished things and people of the world. Such emotions—fear of the afterlife, remorse, wanting to die quickly, and not wanting to die at all—are familiar to most who have sat at a deathbed.

--Katy Butler, "Dying Well," *Psychotherapy Networker*



"What? Is this not better?"

DENIAL

As Americans, we have always wanted the life of feeling without the life of suffering. We long for pure light, constant victory. We have always wanted to avoid suffering, and therefore we are unable to live in the present.

--Robert Bly

DESIRE

I grew up at the height of the AIDS panic, when desire and disease seemed essentially bound together, the relationship between them not something that could be managed but absolute and unchangeable, a consequence and its cause. Disease was the only story anyone ever told about men like me where I was from, and it flattened my life to a morality tale, in which I could be either chaste or condemned. Maybe that's why, when I finally did have sex, it wasn't so much pleasure I sought as the exhilaration of setting aside restraint, of pretending not to be afraid, a thrill of release so intense it was almost suicidal.

--Garth Greenwell, *What Belongs to You*



DYSTOPIA

[Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* is often compared with George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1948); each offers a view of a dystopian future.] What Orwell feared were those who would ban books. What Huxley feared was that there would be no reason to ban a book, for there would be no one who wanted to read one. Orwell feared those who would deprive us of information. Huxley feared those who would give us so much that we would be reduced to passivity and egoism. Orwell feared that the truth would be concealed from us. Huxley feared the truth would be drowned in a sea of irrelevance. Orwell feared we would become a captive culture. Huxley feared we would become a trivial culture... In short, Orwell feared that what we fear will ruin us. Huxley feared that our desire will ruin us.

--Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*

EDGELORDS

Edgelords — people who post offensive things online for attention — had always existed on message boards like 4chan. But YouTube brought them out of the shadows and turned provocation into a viable career path. On YouTube, there were few rules and no lawyers looking over creators' shoulders — which is precisely why millions of young people went there, to find the kind of stuff they couldn't get on TV. The platform's algorithms promoted engaging videos, with little regard for what made them engaging, and showered ad revenue on the most successful channels. And as all kinds of boundary-pushers raced to fill this void, it became harder to tell who had an actual ideology and who was just feeding the machines what they wanted.

--Kevin Roose, *New York Times Magazine*

ENERGY

Black and Third World people are expected to educate white people as to our humanity. Women are expected to educate men. Lesbians and gay men are expected to educate the heterosexual world. The oppressors maintain their position and evade responsibility for their own actions. There is a constant drain of energy which might be better used in redefining ourselves and devising realistic scenarios for altering the present and constructing the future.

--Audre Lorde



The Illustrious Blacks Photograph by Ivan Forde for The New Yorker



ESALEN

Esalen is a quintessentially American phenomenon of the middle twentieth century. As a mixture of therapeutic effectiveness and shallow hucksterism, of sincere humanism and power mania, it finds no equal on the entire social scene. It began as the private home and grounds of one man, who started a conventionally wealthy-man's trip of inviting his friends to his country estate. After a while, his friends invited friends, and within a few years, there was a very quiet groovy scene going on, against the glorious backdrop of Big Sur, and centered around a hot spring bath in a cave overlooking the Pacific surf.

However, through some mechanism or other, the people there got the idea to turn the place into a human growth center, and they began to attract a long list of defectors from the psychoanalytic and psychotherapeutic communities. The Freudian Empire was in shambles, and the new therapies weren't filling the gap left by its downfall. So modestly at first, but with increasing momentum, Esalen began its series of workshops in sensory awareness, sensitivity, encounter, massage, "meditation," bio-energetics, and that entire range of techniques which has come to be known as "the Esalen approach."

But a strange change took place once the place stopped being a natural home for a group of friends and became a business. Soon, Esalen began to sell sensitivity, to charge stiff fees for joy, and maintain waiting lists for awareness. They came at the proper historical moment. Therapy had sunk to such a level of pomposity and granite stupidity that no serious or hip person could take it seriously. And on its dead body, Esalen, like a great vulture, nourished itself.

The pioneers of that soon-to-be psychedelic Grossinger's stumbled onto a seeming truth, that if one lays emphasis on health, on growth, on joy, it is a more effective means of dealing with mankind's ills than by delving into the pathological aspects of the personality.

And if it had remained merely a corrective to the older forms of psychiatry, it would have been a reasonably healthy manifestation. But, as with all things, it was organized, ritualized, jargonized, and finally turned into a religion. It went rapidly from Bill Schutz's workshops called JOY, to Stu Miller's workshops called MORE JOY and stopped just short of SON OF JOY. The fact that a human emotion was sold the way the detergent of the same name sells its washing power did not seem odd to any of Esalen's founding fathers.

Also, the community remained silent on the fact that going into a room full of naked strangers, being led in a massive group grope, and running out among the breathtaking grandeur of Big Sur will turn anyone on and has nothing to do with the supposedly theoretically underpinnings of any psychological approach. Esalen's major crime came in refusing to cop to the fact that all they were doing, essentially, was providing tired and uptight middle-class America with mild orgies and a vain hope for a fuller life. They have never spoken about what happens when the Esalenized person steps back into his web of conditionings, into the fall of his civilization, with its war and corruption and poisoning of the water and air, and its ethic of violence and greed. As with so much of the California scene, no one there seemed to have the historical perspective to see themselves not as a cure for society's ills but merely one of its more vulgar products.

On they went, charging higher and higher fees, with Bernie Gunther helping people to discover that feeling the bodies of young girls would make you come more alive, with Betty Fuller leading giant workshops, with some five hundred people at a time processed through a four-hour pastiche of "growth techniques." The initial sense of family had disappeared, and big business took its place. Esalen became a groovy-factory manufacturing jollies. It even formed a "Flying Circus" to go around the country, "to introduce the Esalen techniques," as though intimacy and true sensitivity and flexible intelligence could be taught through "techniques." It held a weekend bash in New York City where some six thousand people paid almost a hundred and fifty thousand dollars to see the Esalen heavies put in a two-hour appearance apiece. Therapy transmuted to show business. And always, in the background, the sound of cash registers clanging.

--Marco Vassi, *The Stoned Apocalypse* (1993)



"Wow, I can't believe it's already time for you guys to pick up on social cues that we'd like you to leave."

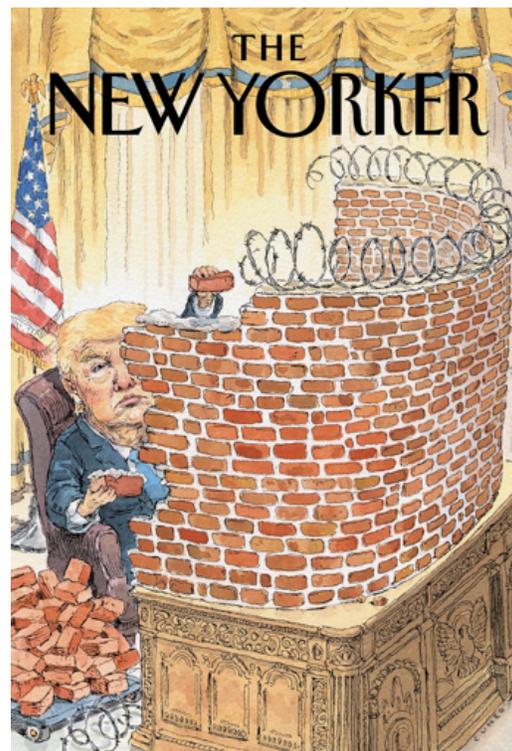
FAKE NEWS

“Fake news” need not be a conversation stopper. In debates with creationists, some scientists have taken to asking a simple question that either stops creationists in their tracks or forces them to acknowledge the bad faith in which they argue: “What evidence would you accept that evolution is correct?” Most reply, “None.” Perhaps reporters and the public should begin asking those who throw about the “fake news” charge. “What evidence would you accept that this is not ‘fake news?’”

--William J. Dougherty

Baldly false stories...are an integral part of the Putin system’s postmodern approach to propaganda. In the Soviet era, the state pushed a coherent, if occasionally clumsy, narrative to convince the public of the official version of events. But private media ownership and widespread Internet access have made this impossible. Today, state outlets tell viewers what they are already inclined to believe, rather than try to convince them of what they can plainly see is untrue. At the same time, they release a cacophony of theories with the aim of nudging viewers toward believing nothing at all, or of making them so overwhelmed that they simply throw up their hands. Trying to ascertain the truth becomes a matter of guessing who benefits from a given narrative.

--Joshua Yaffa in *the New Yorker*



FARMING

Our ancestral grandmothers braided seeds of okra and millet and rice and sorghum — all their cherished crops — into their hair before being forced to board transatlantic slave ships. They believed, against the odds, in a future in the soil. And with those seeds they also braided cultural tradition about how we interact with land, how we take care of the soil, and how we share resources and labor. African Americans brought these traditions to North America with us, and the colonial empire tried to stamp them out through centuries of enslavement and sharecropping and exclusion from fair-labor protections.

The work of Soul Fire is about reaching back over those four hundred years of oppression and rediscovering our noble and dignified heritage of belonging to the land. We're reviving that ancestral wisdom, defining a relationship to the land based not on the ways we've been harmed, but on the ways that our ancestors achieved dignity and sustainability.

--Leah Penniman, author of *Farming While Black*

HOW TO FEEL YOUR FEELINGS:
A THING THAT SOUNDS OBVIOUS BUT TOTALLY ISN'T.

1. AN UNPLEASANT FEELING ARISES.
2. YOUR MIND LAUNCHES INTO WHATEVER INNER STORY ACCOMPANIES THIS FEELING
"I'M UNLOVABLE... I'M A LOSER... I RESENT MY FACE"
(JUST FOR EXAMPLE)

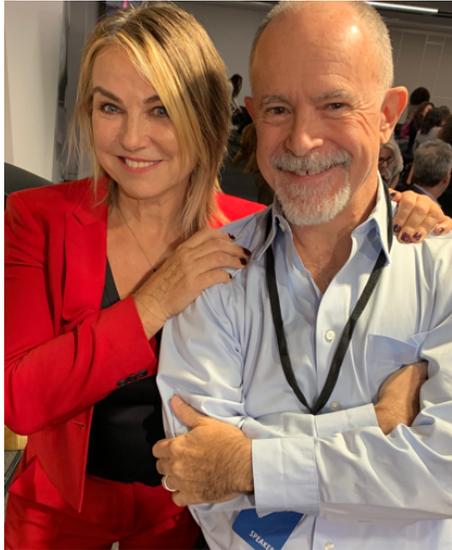
STOP! YOU ARE THINKING YOUR FEELINGS.

3. REDIRECT your MIND AWAY FROM THESE THOUGHTS & INTO THE SENSATIONS in your BODY. MENTALLY NAME THEM (my chest is TIGHT etc.)
4. BREATHE INTO the FEELING/SENSATION & ALLOW IT. (CRY, SHAKE, etc. (if you're not, like, in Target.))
5. YOUR MIND WILL REALLY WANT TO GO BACK INTO THOUGHT-STORY-MODE. WHEN THIS HAPPENS, REDIRECT your AWARENESS BACK INTO YOUR BODY.
6. TAKE DEEP BREATHS. KEEP FEELING INTO your BODY. LET the FEELING EXIST and TRUST that IT WILL LEAVE. OBSERVE IT CHANGING. WATCH IT MOVE. NOTICE that YOU HAVE SURVIVED.

EMILY M'DOWELL @EMILYONLIFE



On the beach in Vieques with Tom, Michael, Mike, Andy, and Andrew; Don and Andy with Allen, Maribel and Melissa, and Camp Yes Please! at Burning Man



Don with Andy, David Zinn, Esther Perel, and Pippi; Andy and Ben; Jay and Paul



GAYS AGAINST GUNS

I'm a proud GAG member — Gays Against Guns. I've even marched with them. I don't have the right to own any gun, even for hunting, and I say this in the show. Go give the animals in the woods a gun and teach them to shoot back. Then we'll call it a sport.

--John Waters



GENDER

Women walk the street and are afraid to be killed. Men walk the street and are afraid to be laughed at.

--Margaret Atwood

GRIEF

The playwright asked for the floor... But when McCraney talked, he didn't talk about the play [*Choir Boy*] or the dialogue. Instead, he talked about grief. Casually, as though it were something that just came to his mind. He explained what it felt like to lose his mother at 22. He did not talk about how she died, and he hinted only a little at the complexity of their relationship; this address was not autobiographical. It was to do with emotions. McCraney described how grief lives in a person's body, how it settles there. He explained its half-life, the unreliable nature of its decay. He talked about the phenomenon, when grieving a loved one, in which you begin to have memories of times after their death that you think they must have been present for. *Remember when I won an Academy Award for my movie, and you were so proud?* And then he talked about how things like that make you grieve their absence all over again, and how that grief catches you unawares, taking over your body when you least expect it. It sits in a small reservoir beneath your heart. It whispers to you at odd hours and yells at you in quiet ones.

--Carvell Wallace writing about Tarell Alvin McCraney in the *New York Times*

Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,
Silence the pianos and with muffled drum
Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.

Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead
Scribbling on the sky the message He Is Dead,
Put crêpe bows round the white necks of the public doves,
Let the traffic policemen wear black cotton gloves.

He was my North, my South, my East and West,
My working week and my Sunday rest,
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;
I thought that love would last for ever: I was wrong.

The stars are not wanted now: put out every one;
Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun;
Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood;
For nothing now can ever come to any good.

--W. H. Auden, "Funeral Blues"

HEARTBREAK

Here is a story
to break your heart.
Are you willing?
This winter
the loons came to our harbor
and died, one by one,
of nothing we could see.
A friend told me
of one on the shore
that lifted its head and opened
the elegant beak and cried out
in the long, sweet savoring of its life
which, if you have heard it,
you know is a sacred thing,
and for which, if you have not heard it,
you had better hurry to where
they still sing.
And, believe me, tell no one
just where that is.
The next morning
this loon, speckled
and iridescent and with a plan
to fly home
to some hidden lake,
was dead on the shore.
I tell you this
to break your heart,
by which I mean only
that it break open and never close again
to the rest of the world.

--Mary Oliver





"You're the one who wanted to go someplace off the beaten track—you ask him what's gluten-free."

HELEN OF TROY

after a bottle of chianti

Don't mistake me, I've pondered this before.
But tonight I'm *serious*.
One bottle and the end is certain.
Tomorrow: Lawyer. Boxes. Road map. More wine.

while walking the dog

Paris won't even notice.
I'll feed the pup, pack a quick bag,
take out the trash, and slip away into the night.
Home to Sparta. Or Santa Monica.
An island off the southernmost tip of Peru.
Disappear. Like fog from a mirror.

while paying the bills

Guess I'll have to give up that whole *new career* plan.
Academic dreams. House-and-yard dreams.
Stay on like this a few more years. Or forever.
Face the bottomless nights in solitude.
Wither. Drink. Write poems about dead ends.
Drink more. Work. Pay rent.
End.

when Paris comes home drunk

Call Clytemnestra. Make a plan.
Move a few things into Clym's spare room,

storage for the rest. Set up arbitration.
File what needs to be filed.
Head to Athens. Or back to Crown Heights.
Maybe find a roommate in Fort Greene.
All I know is *out out out*.
Sure, I can blame the past or the scotch
or my own *smartmouth* or my worst rage,
but blame is a word. I need a weapon.

when Menelaus writes a letter

As if.

from the ocean floor

Bathtub. Ocean. Whichever. All this water.
Yes, Paris pulled me from the ruby tub.
Menelaus fed me to the river a year before that.
Metaphorical, and not at all.
O, a girl and her water. *Such romance*.
Gaudy. And gauche.
How do I leave what cared enough to keep me?
What of those goddamn ships?
That ridiculous horse? All those men?
Now, wretched little me. All this dizzy sadness.
How many kings to tame one woman? Silence her?
How many to put her under?

--Jeanann Verlee, "Helen Considers Leaving Troy"



HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

To live in Washington is to learn the technique of avoidance. My office sits at the corner of 22nd and I Streets NW, an intersection at the heart of George Washington University, frequented by nonprofit canvassers. Colleagues and I avoid walking by these people if possible, which it rarely is, or at least avoid engaging with them as we rush by, not listening to whatever cause they're selling. The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) keeps a steady stream of "fundraising associates" at this intersection, mostly young gay men who think working for the HRC buys some credibility, and young women who look like they were dressed by their gay male colleagues.

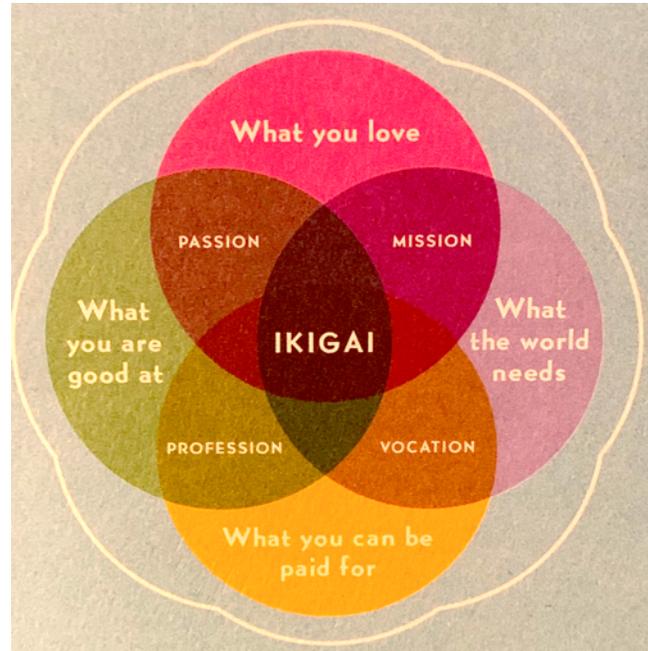
Recently a cute guy asked if I wanted to become an HRC member as I walked from office to Metro. "No, sorry," I said, but he jogged to catch up: "Do you not care about gay rights?" I stopped and in no uncertain terms, barked a treatise on why the HRC does not represent my political interests or those of a queer politic writ large. Their politicking for most of the past decade has centered primarily on three issues: 1) the overturning of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," thus allowing gays to serve openly in the U.S. military, i.e., an intrinsically homophobic war machine whose very existence should be open to debate; 2) the expansion of state-sanctioned marriage to gay and lesbian couples on both the state and national level, which invites the government to enter into their relationships with the promise of certain benefits such as health care and tax breaks, which should be available to everyone; and 3) the ranking of companies as "gay friendly" on an annual "Corporate Equality Index."

This last project drives me bat-shit crazy, as it labels otherwise horrible multinational corporations as stellar places for gays to work. The HRC's 2015 list includes oil companies that are wreaking havoc on the environment (Chevron, Exxon-Mobil); pharmaceutical companies more concerned with inflated profits than providing essential medicines to the sick and suffering (GlaxoSmithKline, Pfizer); defense companies developing weapons that allow the U.S. and its allies to take over countries and their resources (Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman); financial conglomerates that caused the 2008 global economic crisis and used subsequent public bailouts to pay bonuses to already overcompensated executives (Goldman Sachs, JPMorgan Chase); and finally, because of its political maneuvering and takeover of the world's farming and food, the one that many regard as the most evil corporation on the face of the earth: Monsanto. And yet, because these companies train employees in diversity, or give partner benefits, or financially support the gay rights lobby, they are deemed the best places for us to work.

--D. Gilson, "Homonormativity' and Its Discontents," *Gay and Lesbian Review*

IMPOSTOR SYNDROME





INSTAGRAM

With Instagram, self-defining and self-worth-measuring spilled over into the rest of the day, eventually becoming my default mode. If I received conflicting views of my worth or, looking at other people's accounts, disparate ideas about how to live, the influx of information could lead to a kind of panic spiral. I would keep scrolling as though the cure for how I felt was at the bottom of my feed. I'd feel like I was crawling out of my skin, heartbeat first, for minutes and hours. Finally, I'd see something that made me feel bad enough to put my phone away.

I think I am a writer and an actor and an artist. But I haven't believed the purity of my own intentions ever since I became my own salesperson, too.

For all my years growing up online, I am still unable to both rapidly and accurately manage so many realities at once: to account for hundreds of people's feedback in a matter of minutes; to know what to give weight to and what to let go of, what to take at face value and what to read into, what strikes a chord because of a real insecurity I have and what strikes a chord because of a silly insecurity I've learned to have, what of other people is authentic or performance or both or neither, and how to catch my brain when it goes to this place. This cycle of judging and being judged is a black hole in which time disappears, in which I and the people I encounter are all frozen in our profiles. It is where I nourish my insecurities over the millions of past versions of me that float around like old yearbook photos and where I still judge people I don't know for reasons I can't even remember. Together, we have helped Instagram become its own multibillion-dollar economy: the influencer industry, where people become brands and where brands reach people through other people, fueled by our attempts to solve the great mystery of how one looks in the eyes of another.

--Tavi Gevinson, *New York Magazine*

JOY

Joy is whatever is happening minus our opinion of it.

--Charlotte Joko Beck



Haring's Guernica

TEXT MATTHEW STADLER PHOTOGRAPHS JAN GROOVER

Painted in 1989 at the height of the AIDS crisis, the men's room at Manhattan's Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center is Keith Haring's "Guernica." Iconic dicks lace the walls, veined and spurting, entangled, like the limbs of Franco's victims. Here, the enemy is within. Haring had an instinct for joy that makes this death scene a party, a drunken day-of-the-dead. Mourning is celebration. On the wall, above his signature, Haring titled it *Once Upon A Time . . .* Seven months later he died of AIDS.

Like so much of his work, the bathroom mural has the urgency of an orgasm, an ecstatic eruption, the body unfurling its extended gesture, mapped in black paint on the white plaster walls. Double-dicks in twin fists; dicks on legs; dicks with faces sucking other dicks; limp dicks; thick dicks; dick-headed fuckers licking balls; a toe, cloven to become a tiny dick; silhouetted dicks that trail off into delicate abstraction. Haring's black-on-white carnival of members floats just above eye level (the bathroom tiles, rising to an eight-foot horizon, would not hold the paint) so that it forms an interior sky above the peeing visitor, a dream-space drawn up out of the head. The room isn't maudlin, but triumphant, comic, fugitive.

JUNETEENTH

Juneteenth (June 19) is a holiday commemorating the end of slavery in the United States. It was on this date in 1865 that Union soldiers arrived in Galveston, Texas, to spread the word that slavery had been abolished. Of course, the Emancipation Proclamation had gone into effect some two and a half years earlier, in January 1863; most Confederate states ignored it until they were forced to free their slaves by advancing Union troops. From the balcony of Galveston's Ashton Villa, General Gordon read the contents of General Order Number Three: "The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and hired labor. The freedmen are advised to remain quietly at their present homes and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be allowed to collect at military posts and that they will not be supported in idleness either there or elsewhere."

--The Writer's Almanac



KIDS

Q: As you did research and talked to focus groups for the new book, did anything make you feel particularly out of touch?

I didn't realize how out of fashion dating has become. Dating was a big part of my life as a girl. I mean, I wasn't seriously involved with anyone, but everybody went on dates. It was just part of what you did on a Saturday night. In my daughter's generation, there was probably a little bit less dating and more traveling around in big groups of kids, but there was still a lot of direct, flirtatious interaction that might eventually lead to relationships. Today, there's almost none of that.

Q: Your book is primarily about girls, but what about boys?

Well, one thing to note is that pornography is everywhere, and from an early age, boys today are exposed to a brutal, objectified model of sexuality. Yet many of them may never actually touch a girl until they're in college. This puts them in a strange learning situation. Unless the profound miseducation about the nature of physical affection and relationships gets corrected, it not only breeds misogyny, but often leads to sexual assaults. That's not to say high school boys don't have girlfriends or aren't interested in having close relationships with girls, but often their primary communication with them is via text. And while some of the conversations get pretty erotic, they're a game. Another interesting thing is that instead of spending six, seven hours a day on social media, boys tend to be playing online video games. So they don't seem to be as vulnerable as girls are to the whole emotional turmoil social media can create with getting likes and followers and "friends."

--Mary Pipher, author of *Reviving Ophelia*



Andy's nephews and nieces Nathan, Karolina, Avery, and Peter

KINDNESS

When you win, Be kind
When you are stuck, Be kind
When upset, Be kind
When you know more, Be kind
When disappointed, Be kind
When in doubt, Be kind
When you are ignored, Be kind
When scared, Be kind
When you are right, Be kind
Given a choice between clever or kind, choose kind.

--attributed to CA CS Umang Ratani

I've been thinking about the way, when you walk
down a crowded aisle, people pull in their legs
to let you by. Or how strangers still say "bless you"
when someone sneezes, a leftover
from the Bubonic plague. "Don't die," we are saying.
And sometimes, when you spill lemons
from your grocery bag, someone else will help you
pick them up. Mostly, we don't want to harm each other.
We want to be handed our cup of coffee hot,
and to say thank you to the person handing it. To smile
at them and for them to smile back. For the waitress
to call us honey when she sets down the bowl of clam chowder,
and for the driver in the red pick-up truck to let us pass.
We have so little of each other, now. So far
from tribe and fire. Only these brief moments of exchange.
What if they are the true dwelling of the holy, these
fleeting temples we make together when we say, "Here,
have my seat," "Go ahead — you first," "I like your hat."

--Danusha Laméris, "Small Kindnesses"

KNOWLEDGE

It is dangerous to be right in matters on which the established authorities are wrong.

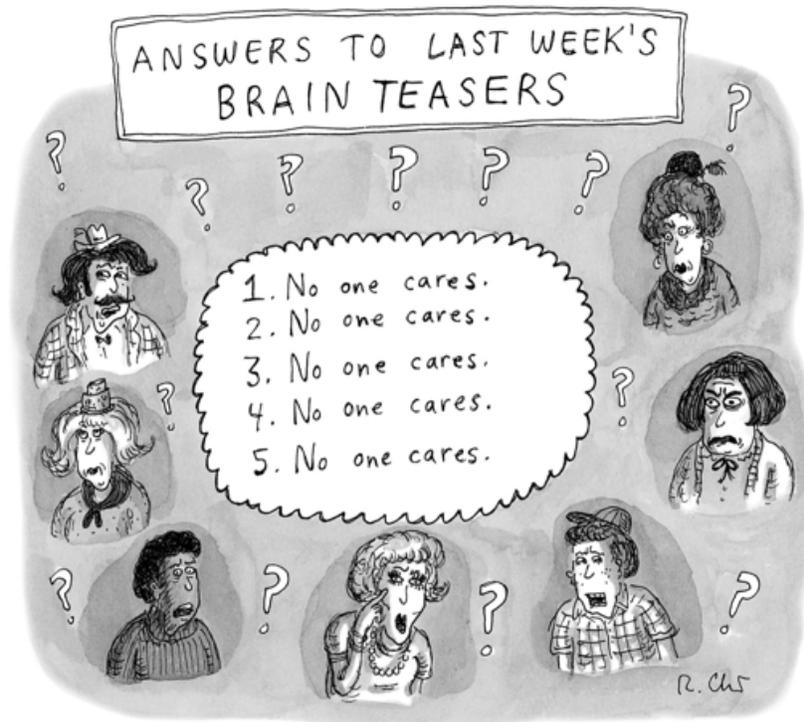
--François Marie Arouet Voltaire

LONELINESS

The economic and cultural ascendancy of video games has collided with a social crisis that we are only beginning to understand: the isolation, emotional stagnation and profound loneliness of American men. Recent surveys indicate that loneliness is reaching epidemic proportions among Americans. According to a 2018 Cigna survey, more than 40 percent of Americans feel that their relationships are not meaningful and that they are generally isolated from others; 20 percent rarely or never feel close to anyone. Young adults between 18 and 22 score higher on scales of loneliness than any other group.

There's good reason to think that single men are uniquely vulnerable to social isolation and its repercussions. Studies suggest that men rely primarily on a partner for emotional intimacy, whereas women are more likely to have additional support from close friends; men in their late 30s lose friends at a faster rate than women; and men are more likely to kill themselves because of prolonged emotional or social detachment. In three decades of research, Niobe Way, a professor of developmental psychology at New York University, has observed a striking pattern of behavior among American boys: in early adolescence, they are openly affectionate with one another, speaking freely of love and lifelong bonds; by late adolescence, as they become cultured to project an image of masculinity, heterosexuality and stoicism, they start to distance themselves from their same-sex friends. One 17-year-old told Way that "it might be nice to be a girl, because then you wouldn't have to be emotionless."

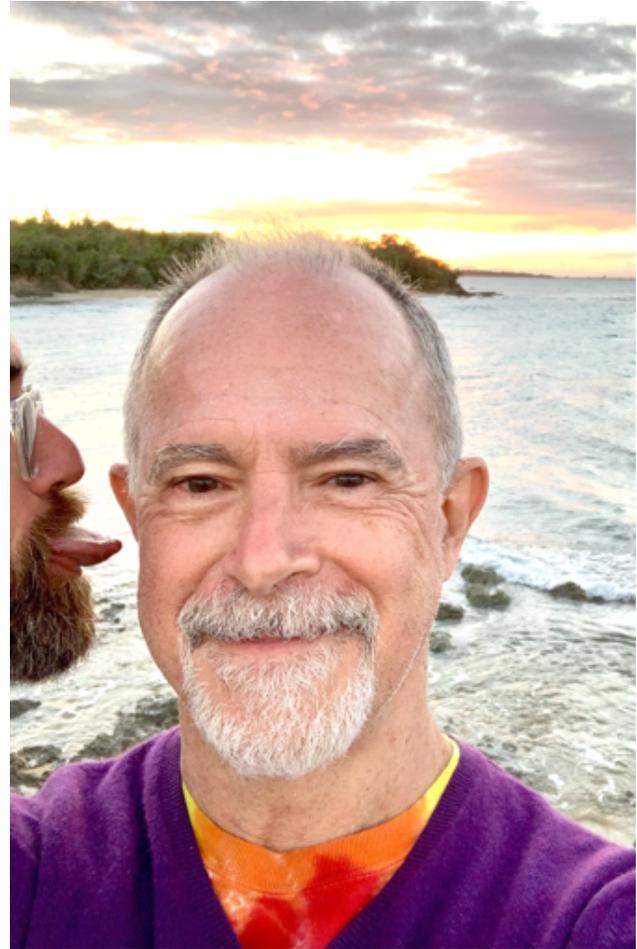
--Ferris Jabr, *New York Times Magazine*



LOVE

Looking up at the stars, I know quite well
That, for all they care, I can go to hell,
But on earth indifference is the least
We have to dread from man or beast.
How should we like it were stars to burn
With a passion for us we could not return?
If equal affection cannot be,
Let the more loving one be me.
Admirer as I think I am
Of stars that do not give a damn,
I cannot, now I see them, say
I missed one terribly all day.
Were all stars to disappear or die,
I should learn to look at an empty sky
And feel its total dark sublime,
Though this might take me a little time.

--W. H. Auden, "The More Loving One"



MAKING LOVE

In the Seventies you and I called it “having sex,” “fucking,” or just “doing it,” and we did it wherever and whenever we could: in the shower, on an air mattress in a tent, in saggy beds in cheap motels.

Somewhere in the eighties it became making love. Our honeymoon lovemaking was the best ever: in a real bed with no one to interrupt us. We were going to do this forever.

In the nineties we did it on a schedule: calendars and thermometers and keeping track. After the babies, making love meant keeping promises. It was as routine as you putting on the suit and tie and shaving every morning, and me doing laundry and having dinner on the table every night.

The babies grew up and left home. After 2005 making love was you saying I was beautiful even though I was vomiting and bald, and my skin was gray.

In 2008 it was your turn. Sex was out of the question. Making love was me changing dressings and cleaning the drainage tubes as gently as I could.

By 2012 making love was just this: lying beside you, our hands touching knuckle to knuckle; smiling and crying; letting the morphine do its job, saying good-bye.

--Therese Magee, “Readers Writing,” *The Sun*, June 2019



MUSIC

Music is a conspiracy to commit beauty.

--José Abreu

NEUROTRANSMITTERS

Adrenaline and dopamine have opposite effects: one takes blood out of the forebrain and shoots it to the arms and legs for fighting and fleeing, and the other brings blood back to the forebrain for focus and attention.

--Kate Cohen-Perry, *Psychotherapy Networker*

NEWSPAPERMEN

There was, I am sure, neither worldliness nor cunning enough among the lot of us to run a successful candy store. But we had a vantage point. We were not inside the routines of human greed or social pretenses. We were without politeness. . . . We who knew nothing spoke out of a knowledge so overwhelming that I, for one, never recovered from it. Politicians were crooks. The leaders of causes were scoundrels. Morality was a farce full of murder, rapes, and love nests. Swindlers ran the world and the Devil sang everywhere. These discoveries filled me with a great joy.

--Ben Hecht, *A Child of the Century*

OBAMA

[Hammons blamed the Trump catastrophe on President Obama] because of the backlash. [But now, at least] we have the truth. Yes, yes, Trump is the truth about America, because America has been like this forever. White people haven't seen it before, but we have. You know, the reason we never see aliens is that everyone in the galaxy knows this planet is a bad planet. They all know to stay away. I used to have a girlfriend who was a dancer. Dancers are always in pain, and she told me the thing to do was relax into the pain. That's a good metaphor for the time we're living in.

--David Hammons (interviewed by Calvin Tomkins in the *New Yorker*)



POEMS

As we joined the line of people getting off at the last stop before Sofia, I looked once more at the little boy, whom I felt I would never forget, though maybe it wasn't exactly him I would remember, I thought, but the use I would make of him. I had my notes, I knew I would write a poem about him, and then it would be the poem I remembered, which would be both true and false at once, the image I made replacing the real image. Making poems was a way of loving things, I had always thought, of preserving them, of living moments twice; or more than that, it was a way of living more fully, of bestowing on experience a richer meaning. But that wasn't what it felt like when I looked back at the boy, wanting a last glimpse of him; it felt like a loss. Whatever I could make of him would diminish him, and I wondered whether I wasn't really turning my back on things in making them into poems, whether instead of preserving the world I was taking refuge from it.

--Garth Greenwell, *What Belongs to You*

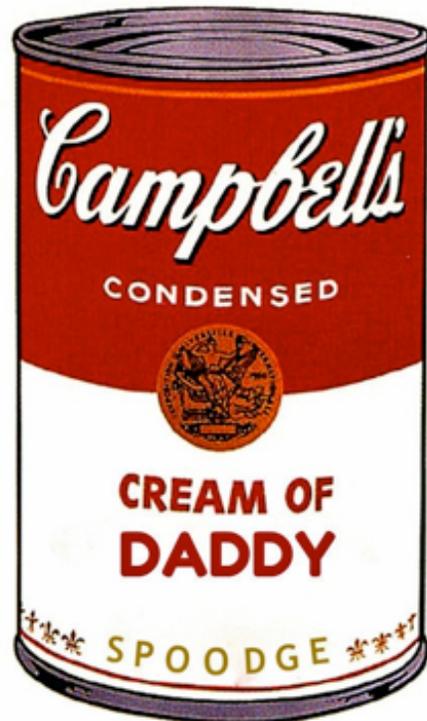
PORN

The philosopher Michael Rea has a helpful account of sexual pornography. He says that an image is sexual pornography when we use it for immediate gratification, while avoiding the complexities of actual sexual relationships like physical intimacy, emotional connection and romantic interaction.

To capture the new, generic sense of porn, we need only to generalize Professor Rea's account. Food porn is images of food, used for immediate pleasure, without your having to go out and buy the food, cook it or worry about the calories. Real estate porn is pictures of real estate, used for instant gratification, without your having to buy the house, clean it or take care of all that furniture. And so on.

These kinds of porn, like sexual porn, tend toward the extreme — and for the same reason. Food porn is often pictures of unhealthy, decadent or expensive food. Real estate porn is usually pictures of lavish homes, with hard-to-maintain surfaces and delicate, easily damaged décor. Porn is free to go to extremes because its consumers don't have to deal with the complications of the real thing. With porn, we get to skip the hard part.

-- C. Thi Nguyen and Bekka Williams, "Why We Call Things Porn," *New York Times*



PSYCHEDELICS

That's the way to proceed with psychedelic explorations. Doing one's homework can be critical. Do people actually get fucked up from psychedelics? Absolutely, they do. But do they if they take them infrequently and in high doses? I think what they do is take them at low doses frequently and in combination with alcohol and other drugs. This is stupid. The real problem is the wannabe, the person who isn't really interested in psychedelics, but all his friends are, so he takes some and gets anxious and has a panic attack and then turns in his friends, and then there's cascades of karma and hysteria. Most people take drugs because they're the hip thing to do. That's a terrible reason. There's a small percentage, say ten percent, who do their homework.

*

Buddhist practice is excellent for psychedelics. American should learn to sit still and pay attention and analyze what Buddha called the upwelling of causal effect.

*

(Are you a shaman?) No, no. I'm a shamanologist. I do shamanic journeying, but I don't cure. From a sociological point of view, the power to cure is all that matters. The fact that he has this rich interior world and mysterious experiences is irrelevant. His social function is to cure. A shaman who cannot cure is a broken shaman.

*

I'd rather see a very practical, hands-on psychiatric approach to psychedelics than turn it over to religions and have it dogmatized, not that a psychiatric school couldn't also become mired in dogma. The psychiatrists that I know are pretty eclectic. If you give people psychedelics you have to keep them reassured and give them permission to go wherever they want the experience to take them. I don't know if you need a lot of method or theory. You just need to be a compassionate human being who's reassuring when that's what's required. I couldn't do it, because of what Jung calls the danger of transference. All therapists know about this. People who are tripping are guaranteed to try to transfer something to you. You're his father, mother, lover, the guy stalking him, the person he's stalking. It's extremely challenging work of a sort I hate to do. I am not a people kind of guy. I've been in situations where people have come apart on psychedelics. They're okay twelve hours later and I'm a wreck for three months. That's why I do most of my tripping alone, because I find that I go deeper and return clearer than if somebody else's thing is unfurled all around me.

*

I developed a whole theory of evolution based on psychedelics, saying that the critical factor in moving advanced primates into being primitive human beings was the presence of psilocybin, which improved acuity, thus improving hunting, stimulated sexual appetite, and bifurcating consciousness, offering a choice between the static and a fantasized alternative.

*

Cultures are very narrow slices of the sum total of the patterns potentially coordinatable by a social system. When people move outside of that, they become bearers of the charge of

otherness. These are shamans, priests, scientists. Essentially, a shaman is someone deputized by a culture to go outside the culture. If you think of the culture as a spaceship, then the shamans are the people who do the EVAs [extra-vehicular activities], whom you send outside to fix it from outside, because it can't be fixed from inside. Shamans know a dirty little secret about culture, which is that it's show business. Everybody else thinks it's reality. The shaman knows that it's artifice.

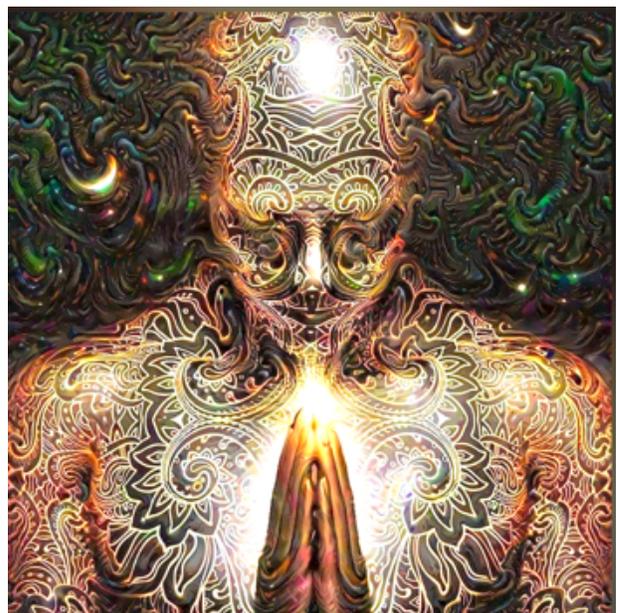
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A culture is a set of rules or an operating system that defines boundaries. Psychedelics indiscriminately attack this boundary-building process. A Marxist state, a fascist state, a democracy, and a theocracy can all get together to concur that psychedelics are terrible and have to be suppressed.

The French term for orgasm as a little death [*petite mort*] is an acknowledgement that orgasm is boundary-dissolving. In that sense, sex is the drug most people are able to access. There's a wonderful saying in Italian: "Bed is the poor man's opera." Most people arrange their lives so they can have sex, so they can have this incredibly fleeting, brief moment when it all falls away. Drugs do this same thing and for longer periods, so they gather to themselves the same attitudes and anxieties that surround sex.

So we've talked about the negative effects of psychedelics, how they take something away (boundaries) from culture and order systems. What do they give us? Once boundaries are taken away, wholeness is accessible. Wholeness is the great entity behind all these boundary-defined multiplicities. Suddenly, in the absence of boundary, good and evil, life and death, self and other, youth and old age, male and female, are transcended, and that is the essence of our notion of religiosity: the plenum, the One in neo-Platonic terms, the source from which all comes.

--Terrence McKenna, interview by Charles Hayes in *Tripping: An Anthology of True-Life Psychedelic Adventures*



Keep in mind that psychedelic drugs are not the only keys to our unconscious minds; they cannot be used for learning and growth by everyone. There is no single drug or dosage level that will benefit all explorers equally. And it cannot be said too often that what is being experienced in the use of a psychedelic drug or visionary plant does not come from the ingested chemical components, but from the mind and psyche of the person using the compound. Every such drug opens a door within the user, and different drugs open different doors, which means that an explorer must learn how to most safely and successfully make his way through each new inner landscape. This takes time and should be done with the guidance of a veteran explorer, as is the case, ideally, with all deep emotional and spiritual explorations.

All of the above cautions aside, these tools – the psychedelic drugs and plants – offer a much faster method than most of the classic alternatives for the accomplishment of the goals we seek: conscious awareness of our interior workings and greater clarity as to our responsibilities towards our own species and all others with whom we share this planet.

--Alexander T. Shulgin

“Whack World” the video, with its Mister-Rogers’-Neighborhood-with-LSD-in-the-water-supply visuals, invokes [Missy] Elliott’s spirit in another sense too. Tierra Whack is beautiful, in a normal, human way, but unlike many of her contemporaries — Ariana Grande, Chris Brown, Ava Max, Drake — she’s far too intoxicated by her own hypercreativity to trade on her looks... In a quarter-hour, she takes us on an attention-deficit-disorder safari through seemingly every genre and subgenre that has ever turned her head, from R&B to trap to doo-wop to reggaeton to — well, to something that can best be described as psychedelic anti-country as sung by Weird Al’s manic-depressive little sister. By the time you’ve finally begun to acclimate to the sheer magpie-inventiveness of “Whack World,” the magical mystery tour is over. And what a short, strange trip it was.

--John Wray, *New York Times Magazine*

[Kasey] Musgraves is well known for her support of the L.G.B.T. community, her unabashed love of weed and her ability to turn a cutting phrase in her perfect Texas twang — particularly when she’s writing about the shackles of social convention. She started writing her winning album, “Golden Hour,” early in 2016, when Donald Trump was still assigning stinging nicknames to his Republican primary opponents, and began recording it just after Trump’s inauguration. She has tweeted in support of the Women’s March and in disdain of Eric Trump’s family-branded Christmas ornaments. She speaks with pride about the stack of detention slips her mother still keeps from her daughter’s time in the Mineola, Tex., school system: “I was always getting in trouble for, like, insubordination.” Add all that to the nose piercing that, as she famously sings on the rapturous single “Slow Burn,” made her

grandmother cry, and you might expect her album to be a bit of a call to arms, a middle finger to a broken world.

Not so much. “I just got tripped out one day,” she says, musing on her inspiration for the album. “Thinking, Whoa, wait, we live in this world that seems so mundane, but at the same time that I’m sitting here, there’s things that are glowing in the ocean and eating each other — and there’s also northern lights and shooting stars and plants that grow and literally heal people.” She paused for breath. “And it’s all happening around us, you know?” Falling for the man who is now her husband — the singer and songwriter Ruston Kelly — was another part of the album’s genesis. “It’s sort of a love song to him,” she says, “but also to nature, the human race, Earth and why we’re here. We don’t know, and I kind of love it.”

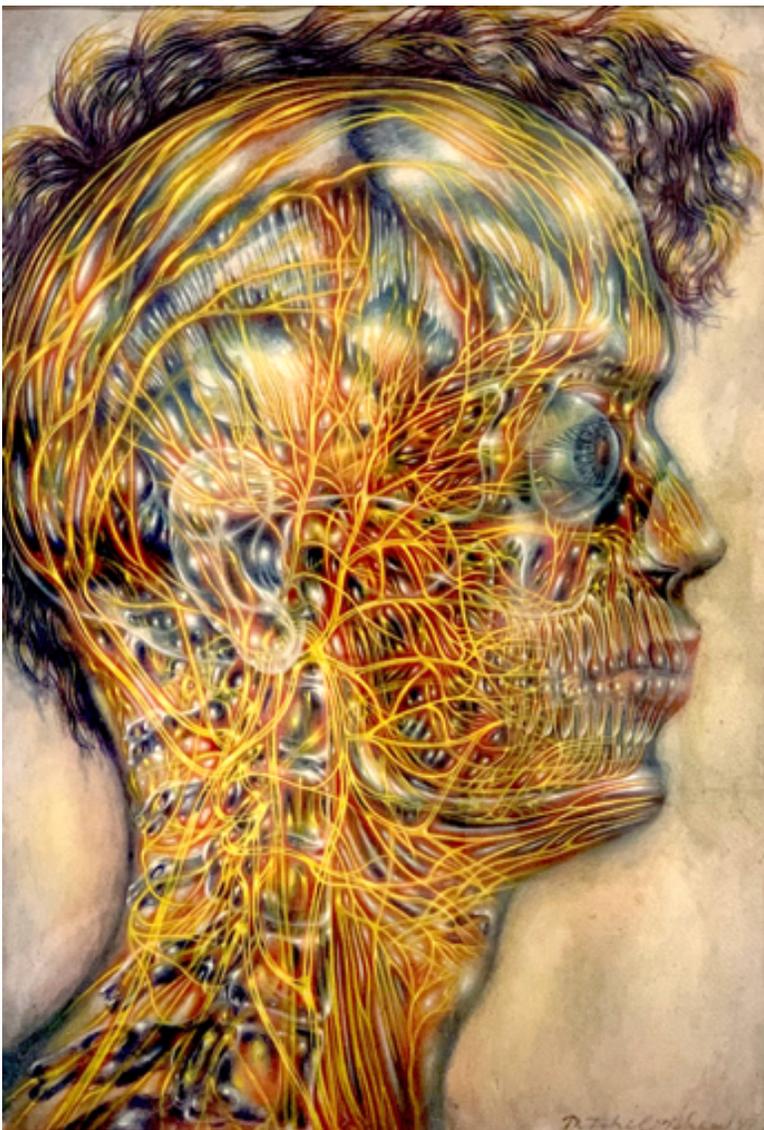
In other words, this wry firebrand’s big statement on the state of the world — at a time when so many of the issues she has become famous writing about, like feminism and gay rights, are making daily headlines — is a metaphysical country-pop record more inspired by Carl Sagan than Willie Nelson. And just so we’re clear, Musgraves was on acid only *part* of the time. “It’s not like I was tripping my face off every day,” she clarifies. (After she told reporters that psychedelics influenced a couple of songs, including “Slow Burn,” it was all anyone wanted to talk about.) “It has only been a couple times. And very responsibly! Enough to be able to get outside of yourself and see a different perspective or point of view.”

--Lizzy Goodman, *New York Times Magazine*



It's not easy to evoke the spiritual or therapeutic dimensions of a psychedelic drug, and ultimately [T. C. Boyle's novel *Outside Looking In*] is not quite persuasive about the allure or potential of LSD as transformative ego suppressant. Michael Pollan's recent book [*How to Change Your Mind*] testifies to the salubrious power of LSD, and I was prepared to have my mind expanded by a fictional account of Leary and crew. But the drug use of Boyle's psychonauts seems, almost immediately, decadent and dull. The trips are amazing, but they don't lead anywhere. Fitz and Joanie begin in the spirit of exploration, but that gives way quickly to the spirit of escape, an endless and thoughtless party. They seem as doomed by counterculture as by culture. This is probably the point — "more and more, they seemed to be going outward rather than inward," Fitz realizes late in the novel — but the inward journey never seems that vital or convincing. LSD does not radically alter Fitz's *sober* perspective, at least not in an appealing way.

--Chris Bachelder, *New York Times Book Review*



It started out with a few conscientious individuals using the materials for spiritual illumination, but then the zealots starting pushing it onto the youth, who weren't equipped and started using the stuff as a party drug, with six-packs, joints, coke, Quaaludes, and whatever else...I believe that we should do more to guide people through intense life experiences and inner journeys – *regardless* of whether they're driven by psychedelics. For this we need to turn away from the acquisitive consumerism that derails the minds of the young, and develop a shamanic tradition suited to the realities of modern culture.

--Charles Hayes

Engaged in the politics necessary to wire the world, I encounter many people in positions of influence and visibility, politicians, corporate leaders, scientists, engineers, writers, academics – who are motivated by the same mystical drive that propels me. They are acid-heads, but nearly all of them are afraid to admit it. It's as though the future were being created by a secret cult. And even though it's my secret cult, I'm not crazy about secrecy or cults, and I'm certainly not keen on having them design the rest of society. I think it's time to be brave and honest. I know that if everybody who'd ever taken a major psychedelic stood up and said, "Yeah, I did that and this is how it changed my life," the world would be a better place the next day.

--John Perry Barlow

Allen Ginsberg used to say that kids should be trained in meditation before they take psychedelics so that they can appreciate the experience of the spirit of what an Indian guru told him: "If you see anything beautiful, don't cling to it. If you see anything horrible, don't cling to it." Simply witness what you see. The ability to witness is a key fruition of psychedelic training.

--Steve Silberman



"Sandworm! Stop bothering Burger Man or I'll turn this car around!"

The problem with DMT alone is that it's so intense and so short, you come back knowing something profound has occurred, but you can hardly comprehend it. Ayahuasca allows you to put it into context and make more sense of it, if only because it's less intense and more prolonged. So there is a coherency there that you don't find with smoked DMT. Much the same considerations apply to the mushrooms, since the active ingredients – tryptamines closely related to DMT – are also orally active (though without beta-carbolines). Rather than just flooding the receptors all at once, as occurs with smoked DMT, oral activity changes the absorption kinetics; hence the duration and intensity of the experience. After extensive experience with all of these, I've become convinced that the way humans were "meant" to experience tryptamines is in an orally activated form.

--Dennis McKenna

MARLYS' GUIDE TO QUEERS

BY LYNDA SEAN COLLINS BARRY © 1991

EXCUSE ME BUT RIGHT ON AND WELCOME TO MY GUIDE TO QUEERS.

THIS IS FOR YOU TO READ SO YOU DON'T KEEP BLOWING YOUR MIND ON THE GREAT SUBJECT.

LIKE IF YOU GOT QUESTIONS FOR EXAMPLE WHAT DOES A QUEER DO WHEN HE SEES A DOG. ANSWER IT DEPENDS ON THE DOG. MAYBE PETS IT.

ALSO DEPENDS ON WHOSE DOG. IF IT'S A NICE DOG WITH A MEAN MAN? ANSWER FEELS SORRY FOR THE DOG. IF IT'S A MEAN DOG WITH A NICE MAN. ANSWER FEELS SORRY FOR THE MAN. IF IT'S A NICE DOG WITH A NICE MAN. ANSWER MAKE FRIENDS!

ALSO THERE'S PEOPLE WHO DON'T LIKE QUEERS. ONE THING THEY'RE THINKING IS THE QUEERS GOING TO KISS THEM

ANOTHER THING IS WHO IS A QUEER? ANSWER MY UNCLE JOHN. ANOTHER ONE IS BILL. THEY TOOK ME AND MY SISTER TO THE DRIVE IN AND MY FRIEND KEVIN TURNER. IT WAS SO GREAT BUT NOW THAT THEY ARE KNOWN QUEERS YOU CAN FORGET THAT WILL HAPPEN AGAIN UNTIL THE MIRACLE DAY OF PEOPLE QUIT BEING SO STUPID. WILL IT COME? I DON'T KNOW.

THERE'S PEOPLE WHO WILL HIT YOU IF THEY FIND OUT YOU ARE QUEER.

MY UNCLE JOHN HAS A SCAR ON HIS FOREHEAD. FROM IT, THE POLICE SAID 'FORGET IT.'

PERSONALLY I LIKE QUEERS!!! SO FAR I ONLY KNOW TWO QUEERS AND I AM LOOKING FOR MORE QUEERS!!! SO IF YOU SEE ME PLEASE SAY HI. DON'T BE ALL SNOBBISH!!! ALSO IF YOU KNOW OTHER QUEERS TELL THEM "MARLYS SAYS HI." SAY "RIGHT ON FROM MARLYS" AND DO THE POWER SIGN. AND IF YOU SEE MY UNCLE JOHN AND BILL PLEASE SAY I MISS THEM AND COME BACK SOON.

Love truly, *
* Marlys *
P.S. here's my school picture if you want to stick it in your billfold!!! it would be an honor!!!

QUESTIONS

Tell me about your friend. What other music does she listen to? What kind of pictures does she hang on her walls? What was the last movie the two of you saw together? What makes her laugh, and does she laugh easily? What enrages her? What does she like to eat? Can she cook? Is she easy to get along with? I would like to remind you there's a whole universe inside that person in addition to her fondness for Chet Baker.

--David Lida, *For You*

RALPH NADER

Like many people, I find it hard to forgive Ralph Nader for his role in the 2000 election, which resulted in George W. Bush's being appointed president by the Supreme Court. I can't imagine anyone who voted for Nader disagreeing that the world would be in a better place today if Al Gore had become our 43rd president. Nevertheless, interviewed by David Barsamian in the May 2019 issue of The Sun, Nader makes some insightful and provocative points.

Ninety percent of Republicans is less than 25 percent of voters.

*

What we have now is such a razor-edge system. If John Kerry had gotten about a hundred thousand more votes in Ohio in 2004, he would have won the election and made two nominations to the Supreme Court. If the Democrats had won just two more Senate seats in 2016, we wouldn't have Justices Gorsuch and Kavanaugh.

This is where we're at. The Democratic Party cannot defend our nation against the most corrupt, ignorant, Wall Street-indentured, warmongering, corporatist, pro-corporate-welfare, antiworker, anticonsumer, anti-environmentalist Republican Party since it was created in 1854.

*

Gerrymandering is basically a system in which the politicians pick the voters instead of the people picking the politicians. Democrats hate gerrymandering when Republicans control more state legislatures, and Republicans hate gerrymandering when the shoe is on the other foot. So who is responsible? I blame both parties.

Having said that, the Republicans control the majority of state legislatures and governorships, so they can gerrymander more. To combat this, the Democrats have to get a lot more people out to vote. There are more than 100 million people over the age of eighteen who didn't vote in 2016. And Democratic issues poll much better than Republican issues. The Democrats are for a higher minimum wage, and the Republicans are against a minimum wage on principle, never mind how much it is.

The way to get rid of gerrymandering is to do what California and Iowa have done: create a nonpartisan civil-service commission to carve out voting districts so legislators don't cherry-pick Republican and Democratic voters. It's up to the Supreme Court, and they're getting a little closer to declaring raw, brazen gerrymandering unconstitutional.

*

Americans who don't vote, who don't attend town meetings, who can't be bothered to go to rallies for causes they believe in, who can't be bothered to ask their children what they learned in school today — every time these people say, "I can't be bothered," they contribute to the drip, drip, drip erosion of our democratic society... Every major advance for justice in our country took no more than 1 percent of adults — around 2.5 million people — with public opinion behind them, mobilizing to change government policy. If you've got 2.5

million people, you can recover our country, recover our government, recover our hopes and dreams. Is that too much to ask, 1 percent?

*

If 2.5 million people each gave three hundred volunteer hours a year, across every congressional district, we would have full Medicare for All in two years or less. Why? Because the majority of people want it. They don't like our health-care system. They don't like the high prices of drugs these days. They don't want to be arbitrarily denied coverage even when they have health insurance. Too many people have internalized this sense of powerlessness that also makes them comfortable. They make excuses for themselves so they can spend more time watching TV.

I don't want to be too harsh, because I know a lot of people have two jobs, or are single moms, or have to take care of ailing parents. They often can't break away and go to a town meeting. But I was part of the disability-rights movement years ago, and we had seriously disabled people who got on the phone and pressured their legislators. And if they can do it, almost everyone should be able to do it.

I look for a million people to surround Congress — while it's in session, not on a weekend — and demand full Medicare for All, a more efficient system with free choice of doctors and hospitals and better outcomes and more lives saved. Right now when the members of Congress, all 535 of them, look around, all they see are drug-company lobbyists and hospital-chain lobbyists with their checkbooks out.

*

Without justice there's no freedom. Erich Fromm, the psychologist from Yale, defined freedom as having two parts: freedom from oppression, arbitrary authority, dictatorship, and harassment; and freedom to be civically involved in the shaping of local, state, national, and international policy — to be a citizen, to have a voice.

The rascals in charge of our plutocracy like to talk about freedom from big-government bureaucracy — but they love big government when it gives them bailouts, subsidies, legal monopolies, and so on.

Our law schools are a big contributor to the decline of democracy. They give priority to the corporate-law courses, because that's where the big money is, and neglect people's-law courses. When I took a landlord-tenant class at Harvard Law School, we hardly got to the tenant. There's no money in representing tenants. The money is in representing landlords. Labor law was far down in the pecking order. Criminal law was all about street crime and domestic crime, never corporate crime.

*

The campuses have really changed. They were among the first responders on the environment, women's rights, civil rights. Now they have conflicts over politically correct speech. People used to be invited to speak before large auditoriums full of rapt students ready to sign petitions. Those days are over. I really mean *over*. Done.

So you don't believe that students are politically aware?

You can't even look them in the eye. They walk through campus looking at their cellphones. They know less and less about history. I talk to students today whose priority is the environment, and they've never heard of Barry Commoner, arguably the most prominent scientist on the environment in the twentieth century. They are factually deprived, in part because they think they can access any fact at their fingertips anytime, anywhere. So why would they want to know the names of the Supreme Court justices, or the name of their governor, or the name of their member of Congress? The main way to get a rise out of students today is with verbal slurs about gender and race.

But hasn't Trump's election made students more aware of what's going on in politics?

Maybe, but if you ask them, "What bad things has Trump done?" the answer is about his misogyny, bigotry, lies, fabrications, egomania, and the border wall. All this provided camouflage to cover how his deregulators have devastated law enforcement for deadly, widespread corporate abuses.



What do you think about some of these activist movements that have developed in the last few years — Black Lives Matter, 350.org, #MeToo?

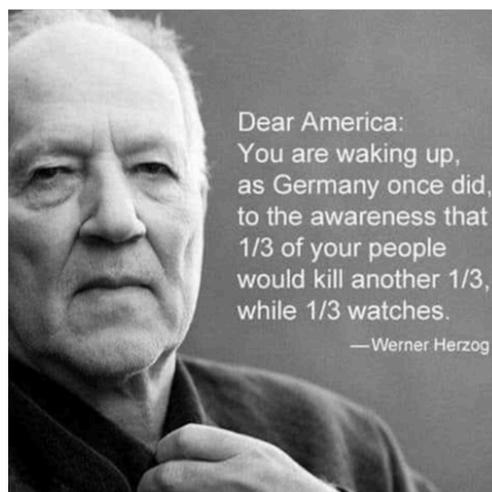
Not enough elderly people in them. Some retirees are ailing and can't get about, but there are plenty who can. Retirement communities could be incubators for peaceful revolution. Their residents have a lot of leisure time. Remember the Gray Panthers? They were started by Maggie Kuhn, a social worker for the Presbyterian Church. After she was mandatorily retired in her sixties, she was outraged. She stood up and mobilized older people all over the country. She said, "Try to do at least one outrageous thing a day." And, lo and behold, she was catapulted to *The Tonight Show*.

I think we ought to rouse the elderly. They have wisdom, experience, historical knowledge. They shouldn't be marginalized just because they don't have the latest Silicon Valley technology — though some of them can use technology pretty well. These are people who have time, they have perspective, and I think they are concerned about what effect they will have on their descendants.

Look at what the Tea Party did in 2009: Members of the right-wing grassroots organization showed up at town meetings where senators and representatives were used to seeing 90 percent of the seats empty. The Tea Party filled the seats. They talked back. Legislators in both parties returned to D.C. terrified because they'd had to face maybe a hundred out of their seven hundred thousand constituents. That changed the political dialogue. Instead of being proactive, the Left was now reacting to the Tea Party and right-wing Republicans. So people shouldn't minimize what can be accomplished by just a few people showing up at town meetings and personally confronting their senators and representatives. I think a petition of five hundred names in some states can get a senator to come in person to the people's town meeting, even fewer names for a member of the House.

We have to reawaken. I know every time I say this, people tell me the students are rallying, but not enough of them come out. I'm avaricious when it comes to student turnout. I want 2 percent of them, representing the majority opinion of students. Then you will see the media start paying attention to them. Of course, marches, rallies, sit-ins — it all matters. It toughens people. It creates solidarity. That's why it's important to know the history of unions, co-op organizers, and civil-rights fighters. When you realize there are a lot of people who came before you, you don't feel alone. You're standing on their shoulders even though they're no longer around.

You know William Sloane Coffin, the chaplain from Yale and the great civil-rights leader? He was arrested many times in the South under some pretty brutish circumstances. He was giving his last speech at Riverside Church, and he looked out at the audience and said to them, "Imagine our forebears. Imagine their courage. Imagine they are saying to you from the past, 'Finish the job. Finish the job of justice.'"



SECRETS

My story was that I had a secret, a big, dark secret I couldn't possibly tell anyone...I presumed that I was gay when I was fifteen, but I didn't come out till I was thirty-one. Which is a very long time to be avoiding the subject of sex. No one must ever know. Which is silly, because when you do eventually come out you realize no one gives a fuck. Truly, nobody cares. Which is a little disappointing, something of an anticlimax. All the things about ourselves that we think are so terrible, to other people, it's just a bit more information about us. We'd worry a lot less about what other people think of us if we realized how seldom they do.

--Derren Brown



SEXUALITY

[Re: the French tradition of writers on sex: Reage, Lautremont, Bataille, de Sade] Their work suggests that “the obscene” is a primal notion of human consciousness, something much more profound than the backwash of a sick society’s aversion to the body. Human sexuality is, quite apart from Christian repressions, a highly questionable phenomenon, and belongs, at least potentially, among the extreme rather than ordinary experiences of humanity. Tamed as it may be, sexuality remains one of the demonic forces in human consciousness—pushing us at intervals close to taboo and dangerous desires, which range from the impulse to commit sudden and arbitrary violence upon another person to the voluptuous yearning for the extinction of one’s own consciousness, for death itself. Even on the level of simple physical sensation and mood, making love surely resembles having an epileptic fit at least as much, if not more, than it does eating a meal or conversing with someone. Everyone has felt (at least in fantasy) the erotic glamour of physical cruelty and an erotic lure in things that are vile and repulsive. These phenomena form part of the spectrum of sexuality, and if they are not to be written off as mere neurotic aberrations, the picture looks different from one promoted by enlightened public opinion, and less simple.

--Susan Sontag, “On the Pornographic Imagination”

SILENCE

In interviews, silence is the weapon, silence and people's need to fill it—as long as the person isn't you, the interviewer. Two of fiction's greatest interviewers—Georges Simenon's Inspector Maigret and John le Carré's George Smiley—have little devices they use to keep themselves from talking and to let silence do its work. Maigret cleans his ever-present pipe, tapping it gently on his desk and then scraping it out until the witness breaks down and talks. Smiley takes off his eyeglasses and polishes them with the thick end of his necktie. As for me, I have less class. When I'm waiting for the person I'm interviewing to break a silence by giving me a piece of information I want, I write "SU" (for Shut Up!) in my notebook. If anyone were ever to look through my notebooks, he would find a lot of "SU"s.

--Robert Caro



"Let me go get my manager and see if she cares."

SMARTPHONES

I cannot get used to seeing myriads of people in the street peering into little boxes or holding them in front of their faces, walking blithely in the path of moving traffic, totally out of touch with their surroundings. I am most alarmed by such distraction and inattention when I see young parents staring at their cell phones and ignoring their own babies as they walk or wheel them along. Such children, unable to attract their parents' attention, must feel neglected, and they will surely show the effects of this in the years to come...

These gadgets, already ominous in 2007, have now immersed us in a virtual reality far denser, more absorbing, and even more dehumanizing. I am confronted every day with the complete disappearance of the old civilities. Social life, street life, and attention to people and things around one have largely disappeared, at least in big cities, where a majority of the population is now glued almost without pause to phones or other devices—jabbering, texting, playing games, turning more and more to virtual reality of every sort.

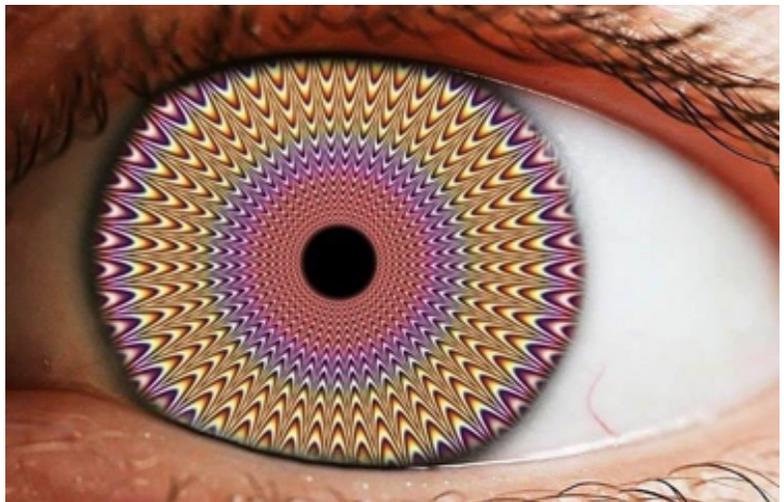
Everything is public now, potentially: one's thoughts, one's photos, one's movements, one's purchases. There is no privacy and apparently little desire for it in a world devoted to non-stop use of social media. Every minute, every second, has to be spent with one's device clutched in one's hand. Those trapped in this virtual world are never alone, never able to concentrate and appreciate in their own way, silently. They have given up, to a great extent, the amenities and achievements of civilization: solitude and leisure, the sanction to be oneself, truly absorbed, whether in contemplating a work of art, a scientific theory, a sunset, or the face of one's beloved.

A few years ago, I was invited to join a panel discussion about information and communication in the twenty-first century. One of the panelists, an Internet pioneer, said proudly that his young daughter surfed the Web twelve hours a day and had access to a breadth and range of information that no one from a previous generation could have imagined. I asked whether she had read any of Jane Austen's novels, or any classic novel. When he said that she hadn't, I wondered aloud whether she would then have a solid understanding of human nature or of society, and suggested that while she might be stocked with wide-ranging information, that was different from knowledge. Half the audience cheered; the other half booed.

--Oliver Sacks, "The Machine Stops"

SOMNAMBULISM

All children are good hypnotic subjects – so good that four out of five of them can be talked into somnambulism. In adults the proportion is reversed. Four out of five of them can never be talked into somnambulism. Out of any hundred children, which are the twenty who will grow up to be



suggestible to the pitch of somnambulism? ... We can spot them, and it's very important that they should be spotted... Politically speaking, the twenty percent that can be hypnotized easily and to the limit is the most dangerous element in your societies. Because these people are the propagandist's predestined victims. In an old-fashioned, prescientific democracy, any spellbinder with a good organization behind him can turn that twenty percent of potential somnambulists into an army of regimented fanatics dedicated to the greater glory and power of their hypnotist. And under a dictatorship these same potential somnambulists can be talked into implicit faith and mobilized as the hard core of the omnipotent party. So you see it's very important for any society that values liberty to be able to spot the future somnambulists while they're young.

--Aldous Huxley, *Island*

SUN

The sun, with all those planets revolving around it and dependent upon it, can still ripen a bunch of grapes as if it had nothing else in the universe to do.

--Galileo Galilei

SUPERMARKETS

The first supermarket supposedly appeared on the American landscape in 1946. That is not very long ago. Until then, where was all the food? Dear folks, the food was in homes, gardens, local fields, and forests. It was near kitchens, near tables, near bedsides. It was in the pantry, the cellar, the backyard.

--Joel Salatin



THERAPY

The “night sea journey” is the journey into the parts of ourselves that are split off disavowed, unknown, unwanted, cast out, and exiled to the various subterranean worlds of consciousness... The goal of this journey is to reunite us with ourselves. Such a homecoming can be surprisingly painful, even brutal. In order to undertake it, we must first agree to *exile nothing*.

--Stephen Cope

TRANSCENDENCE

There are women we love whom we never see again.
They are chestnuts shining in the rain.
Moths hatched in winter disappear behind books.
Sometimes when you put your hand into a hollow tree
you touch the dark places between the stars.
Human war has parted messengers from another planet,
who cross back to each other at night,
going through slippery valleys, farmyards where the rain
has washed out all the tracks,
and when we walk there, with no guide, saddened, in the dark
we see above us glowing the fortress made of ecstatic blue stone.

--Robert Bly, "Women We Never See Again"



New York-based artist Liza Lou spent five years covering every surface of "Kitchen" in small plastic beads.

UNDERWEAR

The collection was called Wonder and was shown in Paris's Bataclan theater, in the 11th Arrondissement, in late June of 2009. Large, hirsute men – bears, in the lexicon of gay male culture – stomped down the runway. A dizzying tempo of electronic music blared on the speakers. The bears had a variety of facial hair and wore a variety of looks: wide cotton cargo pants with zip pockets in the shape of dildos and clouds paired with electric blue and pink blazers fashioned from a lightweight cloqué material; acid pink and neon green PVC ponchos over sneakers with knee-high white socks scrawled with words like “bear” and “pleasure.” It was seemingly the end when the designer, Walter Van Beirendonck – himself a large, hirsute Belgian man, a chicer version of Santa Claus – emerged to do his own walk down the runway. As a finale, the bears assembled onstage, only to be upstaged by another group of bears, this one wearing white briefs, with a “W” sewn in red across the crotch, who arrived to stand defiantly in front of them, claiming the runway as their own. The crowd clapped. The show was over.



If Van Beirendonck's work can be challenging to actually find – he sells to around 45 buyers worldwide, including the online retailer Farfetch, which recently reissued designs from his 2,000-piece archive – his admirers, though small in number, are devout. The New York-based artist Nayland Blake is one such customer, who says that as a 300-pound, six-foot-two self-described bear, wearing a Van Beirendonck poncho decorated with evil eyes and butt plugs is a “monstrously joyful” experience. “So much of our life is spent in pursuit of a kind of conformity,” he says, “and to be willing to put on a show for each other is, to me, a really exciting prospect.”

--Thessaly La Force, T Magazine

VIRTUE

And yet, or just for this reason, it's so fascinating to be a woman. It's an adventure that takes such courage, a challenge that's never boring. You'll have so many things to engage you if you're born a woman. To begin with, you'll have to struggle to maintain that if God exists he might even be an old woman with white hair or a beautiful girl. Then you'll have to struggle to explain that it wasn't sin that was born on the day when Eve picked an apple, what was born that day was a splendid virtue called disobedience.

--Oriana Fallaci, *Letter to a Child Never Born*



VOCABULARY

Hearing that old phrase “a good death,”
which I still don't exactly understand,
I've decided I've already
had so many, I don't need another.

Though before I go

I wish to offer some revisions
to the existing vocabulary.

Let us decline the pretense
of the hyper-factual: the
myocardial infarction; the *arterial embolism*;
the *postoperative complication*.

Let us forgo the euphemistic:
the “passed away”
and “shuffled off this mortal coil,”
as worn out and passive as an old dildo.

Now, if poetry can help, it is time to say,
“She fell from her trapeze at 2 AM
in the midst of a triple backflip
in front of her favorite witnesses.”

Let us say, “In broad daylight,
Ms. Abigail Miller
conducted her daring escape
before life, that Crook,
had completely picked her pocket.”

It is not too late for some hero
to appear and volunteer
in the name of setting an example:

Let us say, “He flew with abandon,
and a joyous expression on his face,
like a gust of wind
or a man in a necktie
from the last dinner party he would ever have to attend.”

To say, “He was the egg
that elected to break
for the greater cause of the omelet;
the good piece of wood
that leapt into the fire.”

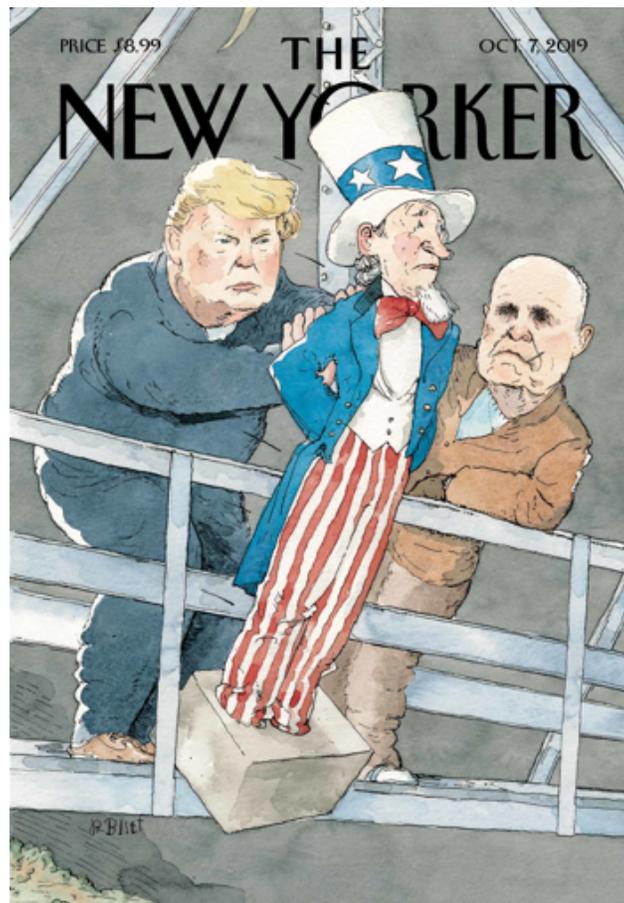
“Though grudging at first,
he fell like the rain,
with his eyes wide open,
willing to change.”

--Tony Hoagland, “In the Beautiful Rain”

WARREN ON WALMART

[Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth] Warren grew up in Oklahoma, the youngest of four children. When her father lost his job, in the early nineteen-sixties, and the family lost their station wagon and very nearly their house, her mother, who had a high-school education and no job experience, supported them by getting a minimum-wage job at Sears. That's no longer possible, Warren argues, and there's no disputing her evidence: "Adjusted for inflation, the minimum wage today is lower than it was in 1965—about 24 percent lower." The nation's largest employer is Walmart, which reported \$14.69 billion in profits in 2015. The seven members of the family who founded the company, the Waltons, "have more money than 40 percent of our nation's population put together," but Walmart's wildly underpaid employees get by only with assistance from the federal government. Warren writes, "The next time you drive into a Walmart parking lot, pause for a second to note that this Walmart—like the more than five thousand other Walmarts across the country—costs taxpayers about \$1 million in direct subsidies to the employees who don't earn enough money to pay for an apartment, buy food, or get even the most basic health care for their children."

--Jill Lepore in *The New Yorker*



WITNESS

To witness is to ignore as little as possible. Because a judgment so often impairs the ability to notice what doesn't conform with it, the witness chooses for the time being to keep judgment at a distance. If she watches a documentary about a singer's alleged history of child abuse, she doesn't fall back on the clichéd excuse that she couldn't look away from it. She admits that she chose to look. Having chosen, she has a responsibility to *herself* to notice what she sees — the changing colors of the singer's umbrellas as he goes each day into court, the leather chair in which the accuser sits before the camera.

It's the thoughtless stare — agape, gawking, able to absorb only the most salacious aspects of the story — that leads to the quick high and nauseating crash of outrage. But the witness, by maintaining her sensitivity to these neutral details, and not only to the fraught allegations, breaks the habit of shaming and allows herself to fashion her own moral response.

Too often we may feel ourselves trapped in the jury box, but we put ourselves there, and we can choose instead to sit in the chair of the witness. Freed from the responsibility to deliver a verdict, our new role is to separate assumption from knowledge. Watching this way, whether on the page or on the street, releases us from the tyranny of our own estimations, even regarding people who have behaved in ways we might otherwise consider wicked. It is a no less morally awake response than holding a person in judgment.

--Salvatore Scibona

WORKING POOR

When someone works for less pay than she can live on...then she has made a great sacrifice for you, she has made you a gift of some part of her abilities, her health, and her life. The "working poor," as they are approvingly termed, are in fact the major philanthropists of our society. They neglect their own children so that the children of others will be cared for; they live in substandard housing so that other homes will be shiny and perfect; they endure privation so that inflation will be low and stock prices high. To be a member of the working poor is to be an anonymous donor, a nameless benefactor, to everyone else.

--Barbara Ehrenreich



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YEAR IN REVIEW

TOP THEATER OF 2019

1. Fairview – I was a latecomer to Jackie Sibblies Drury’s Pulitzer Prize-winning play, having missed it at Soho Rep and caught up with it at Theater for a New Audience (in a bigger and I have to imagine more ideal space). The play, Sarah Benson’s production, Mimi Lien’s set, Raja Feather Kelly’s choreography, and the masterful ensemble (especially Mayaa Boateng, Heather Alicia Simms, and Roslyn Ruff, below) rocked my world with its canny employment of theatrical elements to dramatize how we perform race for each other.



2. Octet – Composer Dave Molloy continued to astonish with this a cappella musical about a 12-step group for internet addicts, with a superb cast directed by Annie Tippe with extraordinary music direction by Or Matias.

3. American Utopia – David Byrne turned his latest album tour into a Broadway spectacle with the help of choreographer Annie-B Parson, staging consultant Alex Timbers, lighting designer Rob Sinclair, and whoever devised the technology to allow the musicians to roam the stage as self-contained entities.

4. Hadestown – Pop songwriter Anaïs Mitchell’s adaptation of the Orpheus myth was a revelation to me, beautifully staged by the great Rachel Chavkin with a bunch of remarkable performances, including Amber Gray, Reeve Carney, and standout ensemble member Timothy Hughes.

5. To Kill a Mockingbird – Aaron Sorkin’s adaptation surpassed my expectations, thanks to Bartlett Sher’s tough production and Celia Keenan-Bolger’s indelible Scout.

6. Fefu and Her Friends – Lileana Blain-Cruz’s exquisite staging of Maria Irene Fornes’s famous, rarely seen 1977 theatrical groundbreaker, with excellent sets by Adam Rigg, costumes by Montana Levi Blanco, and top-notch performances by all, especially Amelia Workman and Brittany Bradford.

7. Halfway Bitches Go Straight to Heaven – another rich, messy, double-slice of life from Stephen Adly Giurgis with a crazy good ensemble directed by John Ortiz, especially Elizabeth Rodriguez, Kristina Poe, and the towering Liza Colón-Zayas.



8. “Daddy” A Melodrama – Jeremy O. Harris has unerring instincts for language, stories, and imagery that make theater electric. Like his *Slave Play* (currently on Broadway) and *Black Exhibition* (recently at Bushwick Starr, above, Miles Greenberg with Harris), *Daddy* made up for its imperfections with puppets, outrageous performances, and Alan Cumming suddenly grabbing a mic to sing George Michael’s “Father Figure” with a female gospel trio singing backup.

9. Adaku’s Revolt – MacArthur fellow Okwui Okpokwasili mounted this beautiful small piece for young audiences at the Abrons Arts Center.

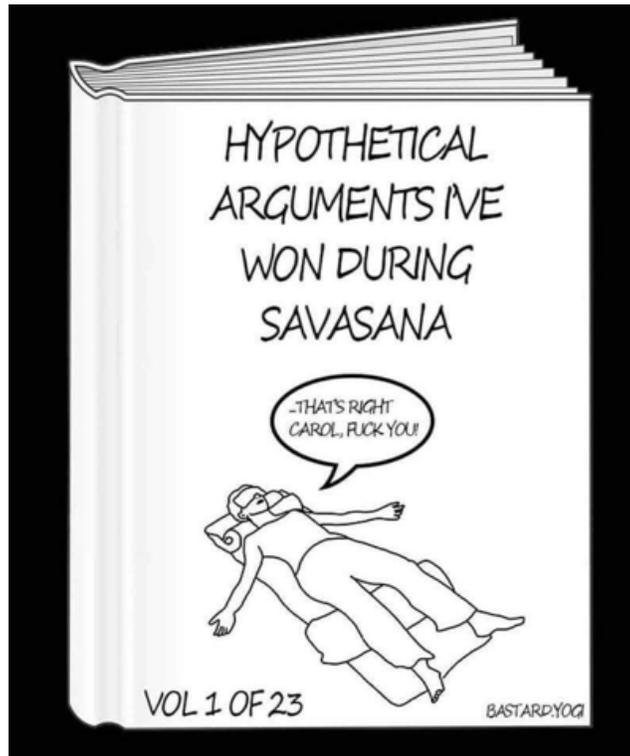
10. Soft Power – David Henry Hwang and Jeanine Tesori collaborated on this curious, ambitious fun musical-within-a-play about reimagining *The King and I* from a Chinese point of view in order to heal the 2016 election results and Hwang’s experience of being stabbed.

Special Mention: Madonna’s *Madame X* show at the BAM Opera House was surprising, annoying, theatrical, and unforgettable.

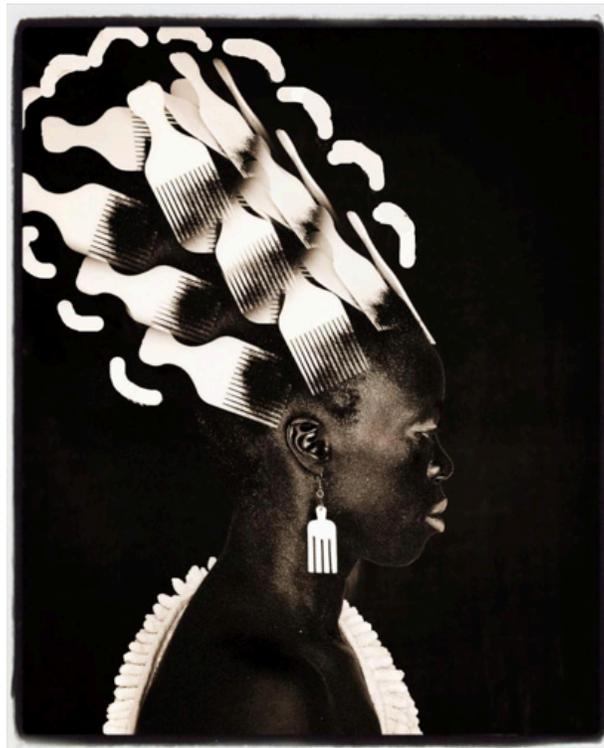
Other memorable performance highlights: Michael R. Jackson’s *A Strange Loop*, beautifully staged by Stephen Brackett with brave Larry Owen in the lead; Netta Yerushalmy’s epic *Paramodernities* at New York Live Arts; Becca Blackwell and Danielle Skraastad in *Hurricane Diane*; exquisite design and direction of Jackie Sibbles Drury’s *Marys Seacole* at LCT3 with Quincy Tyler Bernstine and Karen Kandel; Phelim McDermott’s beautiful campy production of Philip Glass’s *Akhnaten* at the Metropolitan Opera with a strong lead performance by counter-tenor Anthony Roth Costanzo; Lauren Patten in *Jagged Little Pill*; at least Part One of Matthew Lopez’s *The Inheritance* on Broadway; Jez Butterworth’s *The Ferryman*; Hannah Gadsby’s *Douglas; Come Through*, Bon Iver’s collaboration with TU Dance; and the Encores! Off-Center production of Al Carmines and Irene Fornes’s quirky, smart, devastating musical *Promenade*.



YOGA



ZANELE MUHOLI



2019 THANKS TO

EMERSON ANICETO * JEFF AUTORE * CHRIS BACON * GLENN BERGER * MISHA
BERSON * IAN BJORKLUND * MICHAEL BRONSKI * PAUL BROWDE * DAVID BROWN *
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STEPHEN SOBA * TUMBLR * ARIEL VERGOSEN * JACK WATERS * GREGORY WELLS *
MICHAEL WHITSON * ANDY WILLETT * XUAN ZHENG * DAVID ZINN

RIP

ROBERT BLACKER * JOHN GIORNO * MARY OLIVER * ANDY SAICH (below)



