

A Curt Theology

dM

Woolly

..that socks embroil, flagging fabric tears at the wind like cornered rats, and inhibition comes in three sizes, tight, loose, or soul-cinching: Eve, that carrion of culpability, looks lovely in envy, her first heart of the half humans yearns for the day but can't see the dawn through a blouse: Freedom should not be spun dry...or something to that effect elicited by the downy man with a brush of horse hair. Artist.

He was the choice for the community assembly on this, our Art Appreciation Day, our Thank Thee for Showing day. Himself was nude in grotesque proportion, 'he must,' said the intemperately sensible sass a row behind, 'lift his own weight, self-appraisal included, on weekends.' 'Could shave,' said her friend. Perhaps hair is humility.

The Artist recklessly dictates the disposition of a wall by what comes next. Busy is the big moss himself, with his rollers and palette indiscretions, lime and bourbon red, sowing cinder block holes with a magnificent mural of splatters while speaking of the Artistic Life with equally as munificent flourishes, even if variants of old felicities. 'Art is me. Me, Art. Artist.'

And what have we then?

Is it a bounding mare with the trappings of green skin and orange hair? A pastoral glimpse of lily squares and limp oil rigs to bleed cinder blue?

'Cyan is my favourite colour,' quoth he, 'it reminds me of my birth.'

For when he was done, or was it that some bell rung?, he opened himself for questions, availing himself of the flattery that curiosity hushes so poorly. I stood, it was all I could do to impose some propriety on the silence, and paid out, 'what I find most appealing about art, about painting in particular, about this painting in particular, is that the artist himself is his first audience. That by the quick decisions made throughout the process, that by the physically slight but apparently great difference between hues of color, that by the imperfection of human motor skills, and that by the variability of the medium, painting on cinder block, the actual development and end result might come to the

greatest surprise to the Creator himself; and that,' I continued fortified by the fumes, 'this painting -- this surprising endeavor, this experiment, accident, call it what you will, would come to define the Creator himself.'

He looked at the splotches framing him and decreed that, pointing to his gut, all his 'art comes from here.'

Milte

..that gods bedding in the hairs of yams might snore louder without eyes to define them? She'd ponder alike the deadening psyche of fruit, the juice glowing fantastic guts on oranges until their separation from the bunch, to lie, bemired; and separate. Then chewing on one orange too quickly discarded, its purple skin but with a few soiled locks left, she'd taste a hidden corpuscle of juice explode between the chain of her gums and say "there's a soul now"; and (to plunder hope of its dregs) her tongue might still find it passage, even if those of her village, passing as deaf as chores above her, have forgotten her passing.

Chimps feed her, only because they're greedy and flickering with nerves. Her home has the auspices of a garbage bin outside the steps of her sunken dwelling, and the slumped vagrants steal in from their new spacious forest to mine the trash of its stink. They're simple, the chimps, but not so ignorant to think that once one of their own was shot through its humanly skull over some interspecies cuckoldry. Their tastes are not discriminating; gluttonous, they grab diapers if the strained yams had been sweet enough, and quickly they waddle like morning harlots into the nearest home, empty, but with a blind cripple asking their names. "We'll all leave very soon?"

Her mother had been a clinic nurse, her ancestors doctors of bodies too tight for their souls; she had been born, her grandmother told, between planting and the harvest, between tides, flood and plain, husband and father; "child, you," said the grandmother, "you should learn *me* of medicine and song."

Once, she found the Lonely God by one of its sweaty emissaries, but didn't like the clothes; but still she read his books mostly for its encrypted recipes, all the ashes and gold. She wiped the blight out of many houses, and with unctuous rock and scented sand she scraped the growth off of many toes, before now, her underground habit.

Her treatment for her legs had forced her pupils to withdraw, her treatment for her eyes had tightened her legs to long, useless stems of wire. But while those who first told her the date for which she waits -- *the date* on which the entire village is to leave behind poverty altogether and, together, depart to the

City That Precious Metals Built -- could indeed confirm that her eyes were wholly gray, they themselves sired the same rumor rampant in the cafes, that if she didn't live so absolutely in her own head, she'd perhaps realize that the sickness in her legs was, indeed, all in her own head.

Either way, she waits, polishing the concrete floor by all the pulling for perishables. She swears the date of departure is very, very soon: when the men whose toes she's sanded and for whose children she's prayed and she's chanted together, will bring her thinning body up onto their wooden shoulders, ascend the stairs until the air is motion and the sun is felt, and, the village entire, will find the City That Precious Metals Built, together, and at last.

But that date has passed. Some time ago. And now, she waits; though she does wait for the past. And would it be an awful wish that she could know that they discovered diamonds in the new burial grounds by the new church, and had forgotten her altogether, so that at least she might scream at the living, instead of worrying in the meantime that someone might move the trash bin some houses down?

Ogen

..lines to at once betray the manifold monstrosity of being. That with a shade of obsidian, a minimal trace of chalk, and the sublime, negligible brush of sandstone, the cooled face of a corpse might bare every wince, grin, and grimace in like proportion to their use whilst alive, all in the single stony demeanor of the forgotten dead. In fact, it was the best, if uncouth, way to absorb himself into the human combine; but, dead or moving, as time bumps both beyond their keeping, subjects were in short supply, and so instead he applied himself to the very shells that hide their haste. Buildings.

The most diligent sort finds its kind the most compelled to their work. His boots, once borrowed, did more to canvas the hair on his feet from the chaff of his labor than to separate his souls from the same debris; but whether the wear was due to his long walk from the trees or the circuits of his deed, who, among the tenants of rote, would make to know which: in fact, busy themselves charging between the nodes of respectability, who would care to learn the functional chic of a bug-eater?

Sandstone to tinge brick, obsidian to delineate cinder block, and chalk for all structures steel, he'd care to touch up every unit of the wall, ever slightly, and unnoticeable to senses bent on some biological ruse; retracing every crack, and shading as much as nearly perpendicular light every contour, and every relief between metal and glass.

He came to the city from solitude to see what creation was about, to feel a part, to ingrain himself in the mortar and in the recesses of office buildings. He had been building trees from saplings, coloring leaves green with buckets of old rain, when he had heard, by the cups of skin attached to the sides of his smooth head, trucks shifting down far roads, and he began to think that all the world was a planet, himself included.

Now, as plucking off the shells of termites for sustenance, in the city he found slugs convenient, and if the lunch meat in the nearest refuse catch was mature enough to signal its proximity, he'd wrap the slugs and, full of the conceit of his work, barely

take notice of his fortune: that it'd permit him to work further up the block without stopping for slugs to eat.

Chalk to scarcely texture the plaster, sandstone to subtilize the brick, obsidian to render the cracks with adorning purpose, ribbons and gills for all things built in his world; he'd blink for sleep and only drink the salty rivulets plowing through the determination of his face, in nearly preternatural, utterly bizarre and self-sustaining resorption.

If any cared -- or really, if any knew -- to ask what he's already scraped over, he'd glance up indicatively to colossal structures tall enough for suicide, and who living could say he did not.

Tempus

..to him was an uncanny sense of self. Obviously, he thought, others appreciate the stark singularity of their own existence, and might themselves also find intolerable waking from dreams, closing books, and even -- or particularly -- powering off the pharmacies of cinema and television, with the confounding awe and dejection at still being absolutely flesh-locked to the same corporeal weight as before the vicarious lunge: replete with the same misleading transcriptions of experience knighted as memories, and with the same consumption of forward looking eyes, the same repetitive processes of cognition, the same capacity to comprehend the singularity of being and the same singular comprehension of being.

But he was more than suspect of others dwelling, as he did, in the perplexing Notion that "*I am in me*," or -- so certain he was that most others, at least the surrounding demos, did hardly spend time with the Notion past Sabbaths and self-help promotionals, that this transcription could say he was compelled and repulsed by the Notion that "*he was in him*" -- with all its shocking, glorious and horrible implications. Implications that meant he could lop off his own head, if he so desired, or just his apprehensions; but that his thinking utterly ends when his lungs are utterly stilled.

Quite had enough of this -- as he had deemed, necessarily lonely circus -- he stopped trying to find his nose and ears at once in his afternoon shadows, or his cowlick still on the right side of his head in the windows at night. In a frugally awarded, entirely unaccustomed to flash of modesty and awareness, he came to determine that he was hardly alone, that the Notion of the singularity of existence informs and confounds every work of this world, and, for that, the college library might just exceed its walls.

He threw himself onto long tables of books, admiring the force by which these works had been fattened between their covers; each passage retrying to convey the author's understanding of his own being by assemblages of symbols deferred to for lack of any better; each ending for weariness more than conclusion; and each failing in flourishes under the same cosmic governance that keeps us trying, and, consequently, the

museums and libraries full to the cellars. So many works, along with new works arriving incessantly, demonstrated to him that no work alone, no patterning of symbols could accomplish the deed that's very doing had set the author so ambitiously upon the page.

At last he contrived, despite his professor's warnings, to scratch at the open spots between every letter and at every blank space between passages, where authorial intent most resides, in an attempt to flesh out the designs of the writer, since it is in these blank spaces that the writer had paused to gather the words that, the writer wished, might still transpose his meaning; until he saw these blank spaces as peculiar to every work at least deemed appropriate for preservation. Between letters and in the spaces that divide attempts, he was able to then match up unappeased and unvarying authorial intent across continents, cultures, ages, and genres; linking blank space to blank spaces of books on every shelf and floor of the library -- until, beyond the hour of closing one evening, with the library locked for lack of interest during the disassembling turns of the night, the links, the connections between blank spaces that he had drawn from every book suddenly arced up into a convalescence of divining light, with the impossibly visible lines quickly forming an incandescent dome just before him; and at its top, at the crossing of every link, the most intense and brightest was pooled by all the transference and agitation. And so it came to be that before him was a great eye, the eye of something only defined by a long list of what it could not be; the pupil, its mouth.

Now he walks about, with his fill of revelation, and, he believes with such an intense fervor that he believes he knows, that the Idea Behind Being -- in truth, the nature of the cosmos itself -- is his to tell. He believes. He knows.

But you can't spring the Idea Behind Being in a night club or food mart; it'd sound like everything else. No, he knows that tact and timing were the criteria of the old prophets; and so every evening he walks in collapsing squares of city blocks towards the high and crowded spot where he'll be ready to unleash the Idea to his kind, as pleasing or as horrific as it might fall.

Routine bolsters the certainty of his deliverance: Twenty-two blocks from the designated spot he stops for a lick of orange concentrate and a bagel with jam at the food mart; at fifteen blocks he stretches and runs to the tenth block; at block nine he sits against the etched brick until his breathing becomes the metronome for the meter of his verses; past blocks eight and seven he flaps his tongue over the middle six letters of the alphabet and screams in staccato bursts; block five finds him apprehensive at being five blocks away; blocks four and three finds him sure again; blocks two and one: silent and full of purpose with the deliverance at hand.

And then someone might honk, or yell something impertinent from a fleeing car, and always suddenly he either finds himself unready or his kind unworthy, and then he turns and walks in growing squares away from the spot, full of considerations.

Hector

..patience of an idiot, demur beyond the effects of any opiate. Schoolmates, secrets hands of the absolute schoolmarm, would pop overripe tomatoes over his head while he was engrossed in the great worm race across the road; and even then he'd not capitulate his, as she perceived, eidolic coolness to the play of others, for with joy he'd watch the tomato seeds slowly pull stretching spindles of juice from his knees to the pavement.

As he grew in the orbit of all notice, at most tangential to the turnings of his own neighborhood in west Hemisferio, he developed the only apparent indicator of his own gravity, the most endearing smile that couldn't lose its luster for abuse. But, to feign omniscience, it was indeed only and always a mere token of simple, unrelenting glee. A joy so easily fed, that all he had to do was keep his eyes wide for the world; and a joy so habitual that the envious, if they knew its source, might accuse his shyness as part of his design: that by way of anonymity could he wholly enjoy the details and the proceedings that passes before him and avoid all the perplexing emotions always attendant to activity among them. Of course, they didn't know the smile's source; couldn't care; and only, if bothered, might say that only madness smiles without cue.

But mad or enviably detached, he couldn't avoid hunger and company beyond adolescence and conditional ration books. Standing with an idiot's contentment one wet afternoon in the doorway of the factory, he watched the men and women measure out the tobacco filler to plump the rolls of the leaves, until the boss mistook his curiosity for acquisitiveness, and so acquired him for the company.

He'd roll ten cigars for his colleague's fifty, busy as he was admiring the ever peculiar veins of the leaves, and recounting things he's seen with such ebullience that'd he mumble to the kind irritation of his colleagues: how the scabs on his neighbor's elbows are shedding away to betray the pinkish white skin; how the belly of some inspector is darker at the top for its nearness to the sun; and how the gaseous stink of the buses far precedes them. But one afternoon he rehashed a tale that caught the closest to him listening -- something about a bullock, apparently to at last redress the defining attribute of a bullock, charging

through the walls of a market and into the streets. And something about a man leaping from atop a broken truck and onto the steer to bring it down. A heroic tale, this one, that did not pass through the assembly without enhancement, unnecessary as it was.

But one shining facet thus added to the account that made it particularly attractive, while untrue, was the person in which it was told: their eccentric fellow roller, the protagonist himself, master of large beasts -- it was *He* himself that leapt out from the speeding truck onto the bull's horns to wrench the monster into still submission. He, the odd one among us; funny thing, would you ever have guessed?

Quickly do people amend their appraisals of each other by a phrase: you never can tell. And with that his image was altered, indeed it was remade, and hoisted high and recompensed doubly by their happy chagrin and excitement.

The next week, after a festering of talk, he was asked to replace the factory lector that had retired a year ago to make cigars at the next factory. They really had missed the rambling chatter that had so well counterpointed the tedium of tobacco: reading from newspapers, reading from announcements, reading from classifieds and dated magazines. But, alas, he, their new elected lector, while himself knowing which was the darkest stone in the old ruler's older palace, could not read.

Still, there were pictures. And what started as lists of details turned into item verse, as their lector led them through the visual layers of each glossy or newspaper photograph, sequenced by the order of his perceptions; with the depth of layers greatly exceeding the graze of any literate brute in any of the bureaus of coffee houses. Naturally there was poetry, and then as months passed, more his own narration: easily jogged by a set of details, he'd divulge from the quaint distortions of a solitary childhood the most bizarre captions -- the fat woman waiting anxiously to pass her children again; soldiers smoking duds before the season begins; a woman hanging out clothes to catch the man she lost in the thundering wind.

In the beginning, his people, workers and new visitors alike, knew very well that his imagination sprouted from his illiteracy, but soon none could remember the town so suffuse with the colors of his fancy; with his contagious reality, his

vision, creation, and at least one prognostication: He had one day told them of a hospital full of patient doctors, and the next day a child died of diarrhea and dehydration because the doctors waited for the heat of the noon hour to fall before an attempt was made for his rescue. By the following weekend the lector was endowed, by the ready awe of his people, with the reputation of augury; though, upon receiving the silk cap of a seer, he refuted it on the grounds that the future is not becoming to him, that instead he must go there -- and to that the people said that only a seer speaks in riddles; and that his gracious humility is the emblem of his piety; and all a part of the cabalistic veil of his prophecy.

Now, the kind lector is appealed to by everyone in town, and to each inquiry into the future and meaning of various things, he replies with a gentle remark about the day, or the mismatched button of that particular votary's shirt, or upon the faint mustache of that votary's daughter, or the diligence of the sun; and upon leaving they sit in consideration of his every word and its consequence.

So it is that many years pass, and soon the town cannot imagine life before their Lector; and, in truth, neither can he.

The Binding

..all that I feign, this much is certain: that the atomic bonds between all matter and shoots of metaphysics is proved by their each being now and then evident within any vagrant's vision. That the ultimate stillness and sterility of any sanctified ideology is owed to its experts, and that only by the ambitious, perhaps awkward, perhaps base copulation of alien ideas could bright Tempus find that glorious content. And might very well sing:

Is it, blind Milte,
 only to resolve your pittance to paradise;
What say you Hector,
 is there any one that made you Lector;
Ogen, Ogen,
 in every brick and drain is there Ogen to come;
And Woolly,
 supreme Woolly, how might we see you next?

The curious, the meddlesome Ogen, he dared, the compulsive one, to puncture the smoke-ingested bubble of his hollow; to streak through warring thickets, over broken roads, past the ruins of trucks, over glass, and the reminding mephitic stink of crushed and rubbery raccoons; to write himself into the scripts of creation: only to believe himself still there, in the bricks, past which Tempus readies himself to perhaps sing:

Is it, blind Milte,
 only yours to resolve to paradise;
What say you, Hector,
 what makes you their Lector;
Ogen, Ogen,
 in every crack and bloodstain is there Ogen to
come;

And Woolly,
sublime Woolly, how might we see you next?

Doctor Milte, patient of primates, stakes the remainder of her days on the collective ascension of the entire village from indigence to wealth, with cute, idyllic neglect of the diffracting prisms of circumstance. Who'll ever know if Milte's legs faltered before Milte's eyes, or if her eyes failed before her legs, but that the erosion of one affects the corrosion of the other in concert is even known by plunderous chimps in refuge. But whichever, aching for the congeal of free and enticed and daily taxed minds into one endeavor has left the doctor imprisoned and abandoned and still alone; so that sympathetic Tempus might not sing:

What say you, Hector,
is it good to be their Lector;
Can you, poor Milte,
at least wait as one for paradise;
Ogen, Ogen,
in every dark fold, is the obsidian to come;
And Woolly,
good Woolly, how might we see you next?

The punctual pundit of the witlings, kind Hector, whose words are authored by him and they alike, fist over fist; the utterance of which affects only nearly as much as the rendering. His devotees esteem the ripening Lector as far as they can hoist him, but that his voice is heard is why there can be a Hector to lift even a meter; and it shall remain ever a poke to reason whether Hector's words preceded their veneration, or whether their need for a Lector prevailed Hector's tale: but that both are vigorous in the interchange is depended their existing as such at all. But if Hector stops speaking, to sloth by his reputation alone, those only with a nostalgic care will hone their Lector down to another musty relic of their heritage; and if his adherents cease the creative rendition of his words, Hector will again be left only to his observations; the village only to its chores. And then why should Tempus bother to sing:

What say they, Hector,
 who is their Lector;
Will you, blind Milte,
 dissolve yourself into paradise;
Ogen, Ogen,
 the garland of all, is Ogen to come;
And Woolly,
 divine Woolly, how might we see you next?

Fat and garish Woolly splatters his worlds for notice; in the beginning supremely confident that an audience before a magnificently splotched wall might wonder of its creator, might even see the delineation of his face in the contrast between colors and shades. But throughout the process and in the ends, by the applause, inquiries, and condemns, he looks at his work and finds himself looking for himself. So that Tempus can very well sing:

Among us is Hector,
 our developing Lector;
It's yours, blind Milte,
 to up and dissolve paradise;
Ogen, Ogen,
 the nimbus of earth to come;
And Woolly:
 to us, *the making of Him*, his sacrifice.

This much is certain, but that..