

## Week Four

### 11/17/00 f. Moby Polyphemus

Some whales are so big that when seen from afar they seem like islands or groves, or resemble great hills. The whale heaps a thick coating of earth upon its back, so that when seaman are driven to it by the stress of weather upon this earth, they imagine it to be an island and that they have come to land. Rejoiced at this they let down the sails, drop their anchor in the water, build a fire upon the earth and seek to enjoy a little rest. As soon, however, as the whale feels the heart of the fire, it becomes enraged and dives beneath the water, bearing down to the depths both ship and sailors.

Thomas de Cantimpre  
*De natura rerum*

I wonder what is out there, in the big bubble of time, which, if I entered, I would find myself living in a different element, as radical as the change one might undergo if suddenly morphed into a creature who could live in the fluidity of water, or in the ephemeral continents of flame, or in the packed geometries grinding away in fault lines under the earth? Up to now, I have lived my life like every other human being known to me, in a state of isolated oblivion, as if the “I” of my identity were impermeable and fixed. Now I suspect otherwise. The rocks have broken me down, so that currents carrying other identities, some not human, sweep through me with every breath. I do not think I can go back to the way I have always been. And, although sometimes I long to, I know that I don’t really want to return. It’s odd to say, but this process of “dying,” if that’s what this is, makes me feel immortal. Rock Gazing has mutated me from barnacle-being, to drifting detritus. So that now, without my having consciously chosen, I am an explorer. How else can I explain the insistent nature of these texts, their insidious ability to erode everything that I imagined that I was, and to reveal that which is persistently wondrous?

M.P. — I am going to push myself down into reason, into words, so that I can enter the timid portal of reality that you call your self. You think that you have to cope with the unpredictable. The unpredictable is a part of you. Take advantage or take off. To you, that seems crude, even shocking. You want to think of the Divine as a big tit, a faucet for your baby needs. You

can't believe that even God has to fight for what (S)he gets, has to confront the unlimited pleroma of the Self, and stare it down and make it manifest. So, you're not fighting whales, you're fighting bills. You're fighting your own appetites, your angers, your fears, your self-indulgences. You have to face up to the fact that the most trivial event could take your life. You think if you had to really live on this ledge, your life would lose meaning, that you would become a bundle of fear and hopelessness, or else a ravenous monster. That may be true. But it may be that a great zest would infuse you. It may be that your life would find its joy.

R.D. — My dad used to say, "Give a kid a hammer, and the whole world is a nail." You seem like that portion of the Divine that needs to grow up and stop hammering things.

But as I'm saying this, something is taking a pounding in my heart, as if a mighty and majestic beast were suddenly reduced to tattered rags. The back of the rock is almost blackened from the oils of my hand, and the eye is almost smothered in that black.

*11/18/00 Saturday's Rock, Aesklepios, the Folly Master*

Engineering, botany, architecture, mathematics, none of these sciences can describe what they talk about with texts alone; they need to show the things. But this showing, so essential to convince, was utterly impossible before the invention of 'graven images'. A text could be {hand} copied with only some adulteration, but not so a diagram, an anatomical plate, or a map.

Bruno Latour  
"Drawing Things Together"

The post-election trauma or titillation, I can't tell which, of the nation, as the officials in Florida flounder with the trivial, has incensed me, even as I follow it through visuals alone, my TV muted as always. Today it came to me: "You don't need the TV. You are receptive." No rational person would for a moment accept the things I am writing, if I am indeed the author. The rational would say that these words, these experiences, are fantasy, unconscious projection, the mere physiological effluent of a neurological disintegration. But I know that they are none of these things. As I watch the

newscasters, politicians and ad-demons posturing, their voices stripped from them, so that only the attitudes of their raving remain, I cannot accept that the world we have come to embrace as a consensus reality is the only dimension that exists. The thought itself is absurd. And something or someone, for I surely have not initiated my own initiation, is pounding on me from the other side to see vaster, more potent possibilities. Why? Why would they care at all? And why, if I knew for certain what I pretend to know, would I feel this anger towards these hysterical theatrics that are pouring over the airwaves and into our boiling collective psyches?

A., T.F.M. — To indulge your anger, to judge others, that's your sense of a single self, a thing that can be violated and provoked. You call me the Folly Master. Here's the lesson of the jester: Fluidity — shape-shifting — heals. If you would simply follow your anger and your doubt uncritically, it would "go" some place else. It would intensify. It would dissipate. It would spin, like an eddy, round and round. What an illusion to think that you are stuck in any emotion, any thought, any relationship! Every rock is battered to sand, and every grain of sand is battered to finer sand, and so it is throughout eternity. The processes of being betrayed, abandoned, disappointed, maddened, saddened and so on *ad infinitum*, *ad nauseum* are the processes of a spiritual granulation that lead to one thing and one thing only: freedom.

R.D. — How will I know if I am free, if there is no longer anything left of me to be freed?

A., T.F.M. — Exactly. You will be free of the problem of identity, free of a sticking point for betrayals, abandonments, disappointments, provocations and slights. You will be the master of fluidity, the infinite cipher, the fool — the only thing in the universe that can rival and converse with God.

R.D. — You are a very grandiose, self-assured jester. How do I know whether or not a fool has anything but foolish advice?

A., T.F.M. — You don't. But eventually you will have to weigh every conceivable alternative, and my propositions are confronting you NOW! as hard as rocks, as insidious as air. The rocks may be things, and your maps of them may be things, but what thing are you when you sorrow, or hunger, or laugh? How can you turn away from what you are?

R.D. — You know that I can succumb to exhaustion, can be leveled by apathy or fatigue. But I can't become indifferent to this process. I can't stop probing the labyrinths you've shown me.

A., T.F.M. — Oh, but you can. You always have a choice. And who am I, but the slit between rock and air?

11/19/00 Sunday's Rock, Fergus's Druid Dreamstone

The law of the preservation of energy applies also to the psyche. Whatever is repressed, while then lost to consciousness, still does not disappear. It becomes an unconscious compulsive force which then has primitive and potentially destructive characteristics. Repression of sexuality leads to hysteria (*hystera* means womb in Greek, {and} exaggerated pseudospirituality . . . But repression of the religious myth leads to the neurosis of our time, to a primitive mythologization of secular values, to a pseudoreligion of material prosperity, monetary greed and sexual thrills. Finally, the repressed energy of the myth contains also the threat of collective no less than individual psychosis, which those who can become aware of the situation have the awesome responsibility to attempt to transform.

Edward C. Whitmont  
*The Symbolic Quest*

Today, mostly I slept, with close-packed sensations in dreams, which seemed to be moving me through some sort of peristaltic action underground. The feeling was one of sluggish grandeur, as if I had been swallowed by a vast female form and was being digested by her, the voice of the rock made manifest as a journey through the processes of gastrointestinal assimilation.

F.D.D. — Let me tell you about a dream, about a woman who has an invisible lefthand side. Inside the spine of a man is a kind of pudding, which she scoops out with a long, a talon-like finger. Her food is the very essence of his being. She cares about two things that he can give her, and when his spine is empty, she will smile. She will have all that he is, and he will be nothing but sorrow.

R.D. — Then the war begins, a war of legal scrawls, of Os like penmanship drills, loop after loop after loop.

F.D.D. — You have seen the dream inside the rock. The universe can be hard or soft, elegant or crude, straightforward or deceiving. The invisible side, the lefthand “she” is you. It is not another, a woman made of terror, but an intuition coming to cleanse the clog. That feeling that is stuck inside your gut betrays you to your own suspicions. The dreams will come to eat you or release you. When will you learn that there’s just one way to love?

R.D. — These are the lessons of rocks. But there must be other lessons, kinder lessons, lessons of kinship and of caring.

F.D.D. — What is your stomach saying to you now, now that you’ve passed the dolman guarding caring? Down here in the dark, you must write, with your left hand, loop after loop of Os that ring your sorrow — not to be eloquent, not to reveal a truth, but simply to be faithful to a vow.

11/20/00 Monday’s Rock, Sandro Lingam

I am the master of the tone. With the tone, I can kill living things and revive dead things . . . All creatures, all things, even seemingly lifeless ones, give off tones. Each being, each thing produces a special, characteristic tone which, however, changes as the states of the being or thing by which it is produced change. Why? Beings and things are conglomerations of the smallest particles . . . they dance, and with their movements they produce tones.

Lama Bonpo

Mary Ann’s presence in the house is waning, like a radio signal fading, but waning or fading in a way that is more sweet than painful, a kind of what-might-have-been dreaminess floating me quietly around the house in search of what I cannot say. When evening arrives, I am not surprised that the rock speaks, but I am surprised by what it says. After all I’ve gone through, the prodigies of Awareness incessantly inflicting me with alien perceptions make simple human regret a relief. I think I was even quietly weeping a little before the Rock Gazing session. Maybe that’s why the words delivered tonight have been such a jolt.

S.L. — You think that I'm naïve. But just as there is an aspect of the universe which storms, or which works, or which fights, there is also a permanent force that aspires and loves. I give grace and ardor to the most sordid of calamities. It was said of Proust, that even on his deathbed, he retained the pallid elegance of youth. What I am saying is that this gleam, this silver halo, is not a wisp or an illusion. It is a rock, the basalt of the cosmos where onyx columns rest. The pedestal, upon which I exalt the ideation I call love, is the very cornerstone of the universe. The wind blows through the strings that thread the lyre and that most subtle whispering has made stone columns dance.

R.D. — I was mistaken. I thought you were weak and moony, an insubstantial embryo of feeling, awaiting the blows of time to thicken your skin.

S.L. — I am older than the oldest philosopher. I am the one who loves what cannot be. When I am moonstruck, nebulae are born.

*11/21/00 Tuesday's Rock, Serenity Pitt, the Zen Master*

American Citizen Dressed in the Quaker Tradition, Mid 18<sup>th</sup> Century:

Hair: The straight hair is worn at shoulder length.

Headdress: The black felt hat is turned up in front and down in back. There is a depression in the centre front of the large brim.

Garments: The coat, waistcoat and knee breeches are all dove-grey cloth. The buttons are covered in the same stuff. A plain white neckcloth is worn.

Stockings: The stockings are of dove-grey wool.

Shoes: The black leather shoes have high vamps, with small, modest buckles.

Accessories: The man carries only his dignity, like a walking-stick.

Margot Lister  
*Costumes of Everyday Life:*

*An Illustrated History of  
Working Clothes 900-1910*

The Meeting House is empty. It is the middle of the afternoon, on a weekday, a Tuesday, circa anno domini seventeen-sixty something. The place is Philadelphia, the second largest English speaking city in the world, and the keystone of William Penn's "Holy Experiment." A short man, about 50, sturdily built, clean-shaven, in a plain gray suit, bareheaded, wigless, sits on a bench in the middle of the room. The fiery leaves of the autumn maples crowd the cross-paned glass of rows — on either side of the narrow room — of narrow windows. The wood plank floors are flamed with flickering lights. The flickerings fall where they will about the room, hover about his spotless hose and shoes, tremble upon his legs and on the walls. The man stares at his feet, troubled. He is thinking about money, or the lack thereof. He is trying to travel to the Inward Light. He should be closing his eyes. He should be emptying his mind. He should be wrapping himself in the wool of silence. He hears the creak of wheels on cobblestones, the clop of horses' hoofs, the sharp, monotonous bark of a single dog. One bark, then another, one, one, as if its sole intent is to mar his searching. Along with his worry, his irritation rises, an irritation at God for denying His peace. He closes his eyes, for how long, he does not know. After a time, he opens them again. Or perhaps he only dreams that he opens them. The flickering lights are leaping around the room, creating an ever-deepening quietude. It is as if he becomes the silent gong of a great glass bell which transforms every sound — the wheels on the cobbles, the hoofclops, and the barks — into a kind of choir, intoning calm. His shoes and legs begin to granulate, his entire body corroding in strange lights. Now he is outside of himself, and looking down, drifting higher and higher as he travels into the silence. He rises above the roof of the Meetinghouse, above the tremulous crimsons of the maples, above the grid of the commerce of the town. Below him the slight Schuylkill bends its curve into the muscular brown of the Delaware. He sees the busy quays. He sees New Jersey and the distant fens, which fan into the Bays of Delaware and Chesapeake. He sees the farms, the villages, the hills arising to the north of the checkerboard city. He rises higher, ascending through a cloud that glows more brightly, seems more intimate, the more his body penetrates its mist. The light surrounds him, covers him with warmth. He has the odd, but comforting sensation that he has entered some enormous mouth, the mouth of an infinitely kind, angelic being. This being is speechless, yet somehow takes words *back*. The useless frivolous words, the hurtful words, the words he has uttered every day of his life — are all

consumed in this being's eloquence. The silence and the light are all one thing, and one thing only: food for this bright angel. He struggles to think of his name, but he cannot. He opens his mouth again and again and hears the creak of his jawbone popping in his inner ear. He hears the distant bark, the bark of the dog. He opens his eyes in the empty Meetinghouse, and he feels a dampness on his face and neck. Nothing has happened. His problems are still with him. But he cannot recall the cause of all his fretting, nor the word for the golden discs he sought to console him. Instead, he hears a voice, which speaks these words:

And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received the tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your Master pay tribute?

He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?

Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him. Then are the children free.

Notwithstanding, go thou to the sea, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: take that and give unto them for me and thee.

11/22/00 Wednesday's Rock, Grace Maryanka

Today the Assistant Director, Rakmanov, appeared and announced that he had been asked by the Director to take his place for a class in drill.

“Collect all of your attention,” he announced in a crisp, confident tone. “Your exercise will be as follows. I shall select an object for each of you to look at. You will notice its form, lines, colours, detail, characteristics. All this must be done while I count thirty. Then the lights will go out, so that you cannot see the object, and I shall call upon you to describe it. In the dark you will tell me everything that your visual memory has retained. I shall check up with the lights on, and compare what you have told me with the actual object. Listen closely. I am beginning. Maria — the mirror.”

“O good gracious! Is this the one?”

“No unnecessary questions. There is one mirror in the room, and only one. An actor should be a good guesser.”

Constantin Stanislavski  
*An Actor Prepares*

O! Was it the sun or the sea? After her secret loss, whenever Grace was overtired now, and dared to close her eyes, this enormity would besiege her, so that she did not know whether to cry for joy or to weep, so great and so ambiguous was its presence. She was prostrate, convalescing in her suite at the Ritz, reading half-broken heartedly, Baudelaire — *Un Ange, imprudent voyageur/Que’a tenté l’amour du difforme,/ Au fond d’un cauchemar énorme/ Se débattant comme un nageur* — unhappy, but relieved to be at last alone, having turned the usual nest of flattering well-wishers away and ordered the fretful Françoise to bed. ‘*Mon Dieu,*’ she thought, to be somewhere else, anywhere. Perhaps a Greek island, washed by the azures of Mediterranean light, and far from any gazer’s feasting eyes. The crystal facets of the chandeliers launched schools of lampfish flickering through the room. She watched them undulate across the elegant surfaces. The Persian rug, the vases filled with roses — ah, grief, grief — from Lamaître’s and Charton’s, the silk upholstery, the velvet wallpapers, the red-veined Sarancolin marble of the carved mantel — all were transforming themselves. The suite became the set, Bakst’s intricate and polychrome décor. This was a scene that lived for a moment only, like money spent and gone, like words spoken to no one and forgotten, like music silenced by the thin baton. The room had become the sheerest ephemera, an instance, like all others, of pure theater.

She was spent, but also exhilarated, as she so often was following a performance or a rehearsal. But tonight, something was different. She knew that it was coming, her loss told her that, that some of the applause now was only for her reputation, and that, if her grace was still evolving, her animal strength was waning. Something that wanted to be born is not, and the loss of that life takes some of her own life with it. Like tonight, the slight weakness in the fish slide of the *pas de deux*. Vaslav detected it, and compensated. But later she overheard him making a “moo” sound to Serge. Oh, for the days of *la décadance*, when men were banished or kept in supporting roles! ‘*Je ne suis pas une vache!*’ she cried, bestricken. Sperm

donor to a cipher. Now she would have to bear the insupportable insolence of this upstart, assuming airs of condescending concern, saying over and over again “we are artists” and asking in that “tone” about her ankles, and about the old scar on her toe where the rats gnawed, his voice reminding her always of his way of doing it: the impersonal roses, the crazy, impersonal letter. She felt a suffocating rush of horror, and slumped down on the bed to catch her breath. Perhaps she should call Françoise to administer the fumigations.

No one understood her, except perhaps the genius invalid, whom she alone recognized and honored. The audiences, of course, still applauded madly and threw roses, but they were, to speak ironically, cows — rich, important, even titled cows, but cows nonetheless. For a moment she had a shuddering vision of humans and cows together, consumed in the most frightful slaughter. For a moment, she, Grace Maryanka, *prima ballerina assoluta*, felt a pity that rumbled deep in her defrocked uterus. She shook it off. Oh, she knew that Alexandre would rave as he always did. But Alexandre was a supercilious sycophant. She knew the truth. She who had attained the apotheosis of artistic expression knew that even the slightest diminution of that greatness was a calamity. All the lauding Philistines on five continents could not alter nor diminish in scope the colossal pit of this catastrophe. She trembled under the cerise brocade of the bed’s canopy, her ankles, her old scar, throbbing. Then she looked into the mirror over the mantel. The carved cherubim smiled. There was something in this mirror that was different from all those other mirrors in the practice rooms where the body, controlled by the stick of the dance master, was enslaved by the authority of the dance, and that difference was a kind of renewed innocence. She felt again like a child in Mother Russia, the child that was, with white feathers in her white hair, not the child that she could have been, before she entered this harsh discipline. She could hear again a voice from one of that stream of drunken, blind *skomoroxi*, who came through her village, plying drinks from the destitute *krepostnye* with tales from ‘way beyond thrice nine or seven lands.’ Tales of fantastic, banal or wondrous events, where the impossible, by words alone, was able to infiltrate the crushingly drab existence of their lives. When the voice departed, with that plying phrase for hand-outs: “and now the real tale begins,” why did she think again of that ridiculous English doctor and his *enfant sauvage*?

The patterns and the colors in the Persian began undulating like a sea, wild with innumerable reflections — jittery, liquefied mirrors, or melting honey,

colors that could be tasted, smelled, felt. The threads of cinnabar, indigo, azure, chamois, pewter brown, teal, deep raspberry, willow, peacock blue — every hue and more of Bakst's wildest sets, all arabesqueing now, like exotic, alluring serpents, not only through the carpet, and through the room, but through her body also, her skin, muscles, sinews taking on the characteristics of watery light, in hues, no longer from this earth, but like those of the Redon screen, seeming to her like fluidic gems in dreams. Baudelaire's book of mad badness was not helping her to escape from the hallucinating beauty of these hypnotic images, and from a stack of books on the nightstand, she traded his evil flowers for a tome of selections from Tolstoy's diaries, thumbed through, read a few pages where the book fell open from habit, phrases on art and decadance that she loved and feared. But the words did not assuage her. She retired the great Count — counting, counting, continuously counting, as a way to numb herself to sleep. But the numbers did not solace her. She opened Afanas'ev's book of Fairy Tales, those that so often calmed her now whenever these nocturnal moods intruded. She tried to read, flipping pages, scanning, until the letters said: “. . . there is evil in the world; I will go and search for it.” Until the letters said: “I too live well, and have never seen evil, let us go and look for it.” She squinted with one eye trying to locate the tranquilizing magic. But the magic would not come. Here there were only black marks on a white ground, when what she needed were red ones, were roses. Red roses on a white sheet: hope and horror, two words that mean the same thing. She directed her eyes from the book, and to the glass hung above the mantel. The speculum reflected a strange view of the rococo white and gilt cornices and wainscoting, which seemed to wriggle at odd converging angles down through the darkness, white-gold serpentining roots worming and squirming down, down and down into the unknown. The view she remembered — vermilion waddings on linen's white — from that morning when . . . but she would not allow herself to think of them: those horrible bloody worms. No, that chance was gone. Perhaps forever. She was growing smaller as her fame grew larger, and the room was accounting for this phenomenon in the mirror, where all the finite objects, however lush, however bright, were draining, like smoke, into a cold, dark hole. She heard a creaking sound, almost as regular as a heartbeat, which she thought were steps approaching from the corridor. But then she realized that it was her eyelids, dry, and mechanically — obstinately — blinking. She put down her reading and reached for the sleep mask, which patiently awaited the touch of her hand. But before she put it on, she gazed again into that commanding sheet of glass. From the jumbled angles and writhing serpents, a sound arose, a

guttural “*rorrim*” with grinding R’s. Then, he appeared. The cherubs smiled — He had come again! — the visitation of the ruggèd one, huge in his shaggy cloak, glaring at her again from that lexical nest of his feral hair and beard. He seemed a thing inhuman, more than human. A being battered by the elements, guiding his coracle over tumultuous seas. His face bore two-deep sockets, one dark, one gleaming with a shard of amber. In those eyes, she glimpsed the darkness of her future: a scarred rock rounded by the weathering of time. At first she fought the apparition, but then she surrendered, entered it, entered *him*. Then peering out of those two foreign eyes, she scanned the sumptuous havoc of her room with its lone figure on the bed, serene, but broken, the child gone. She put the sleep mask on and swallowed her troubled breath. ‘*Certainement*,’ she thought, ‘I am way beyond thrice nine lands now.’ Then, just as she slipped beneath the waves — icy, *ici* — *sur l’oreiller du mal* — she heard the whistles, the moans, the creaks, the clicks — and here, in the trench, *ici*, — before sleep’s blackening rush — there swished the eerie echolocation calls of whales. O!

11/23/00 Thursday’s Rock, Giles Nagual

When you have learned to do that, then construct before yourself, mentally, a definite scene, which you must hold firmly in mind. Then, as you are falling to sleep hold this scene before you, and at the very last moment, before you fall asleep, consciously transfer yourself into the scene — in other words, step into the picture; and if you have developed yourself to the requisite point, you will be enabled to carry over an unbroken consciousness into the dream state; and in this way you have a perfect continuity of thought; there is no break in the consciousness; you step into the dream picture and go on dreaming consciously. That is the process of dreaming true, and after this dream is fully enacted, then you should remember perfectly all that has transpired during the sleep period.

Dr. Hereward Carrington

My Dear and Most Esteemed Captain Hiram Jinks, and the Eminent Mr. Benjamin Talks-a-Lot,

You may remember us, Captain, as one of your satisfied clients. Last year you visited a home of ours in Paradise Valley to remove and

replace a faulty garbage disposal. As you may recall sir, at the time we were obliged to rely on your discretion *vis à vis* an assignation with a certain young lady of local prominence, whose company we were enjoying when you rather too promptly and unexpectedly arrived. We have had no occasion since to be disappointed in your sense of delicacy, and we now wish to embrace your trust once more in a matter of like delicacy.

We would be pleased if you would graciously accept the enclosed retainer check, and would consider yourself, Good Captain, along with your associate, Mr. Benjamin Talks-a-Lot, once more in our employ for a matter requiring your combined investigative skills.

Please remain vigilant in the coming weeks for these black envelopes bearing our golden sigils, and study the enclosed contents with the utmost fervor and attentiveness. Upon their receipt, we implore you to apply all of your affianced erudition and sagacity to lay bare their secrets. No urgency could be more profound. No task more fateful. It is to your own wisdoms, good sirs, that we bequeath, for the time being, what actions you might think appropriate regarding the intelligence which you may glean from these documents.

We must also insist that you refrain from contacting us, and that our one-way discourse be confined to these epistles. You, sirs, have both been carefully marked for this task by powers which exceed any that we may humbly claim as our own. Acquit yourselves according to the magnitude of the work, and all will be well. Suffice it to say, many lives, not the least of which, ours and your own, lie in the balance.

We are relying on the two of you to keep this and all subsequent matters which may arise in the course of our association locked in the vault of your hearts, securing its confidentiality with the key of your own manly honors.

We now close by assuring you, as an oath sworn on the memory of our Sainted Mother's tomb, that your efforts in this matter will be amply remunerated with both Mammon's and God's currencies.

Your everdevoting fiend,

Dr. Sandro Lieto, M.D.

enclosures: one (1) cashier's check, manuscript texts

### Stone Totems

Late autumn in the Superstition Mountains, an early snowfall spawning plumes of melt: two-hundred-foot-long tongues licking the sliprock golden, and making a treacherous beauty of the canyon. Devon Sephera, n e Gary Pearson, drove the car with care, hugging the walls, and hoping to God the tires would keep their footing. This was the first time he had come to hike when there was water flowing, now he knew how those darker stains had come to grace the rocks. He reached the bottom of the canyon, crossed a narrow wooden bridge, pulled off, got out, and started planning where his hike should take him. He had two choices: hike upstream or down. Downstream was milder, that was his usual way. Upstream was full of boulders, larger than boxcars. He'd hiked that way before, and always struggled, scrambling over and under the jumbled rocks. The only trail was near or in the stream. He walked back to the center of the bridge, looked down into the rowdy slip of water, weighing his courage against his sense of awe. Above him, like the canyon's giant eye, a large cave loomed, below him, the tireless stream kept splintering mirrors through yellow stands of willow. 'What to do? Which way to go?' The sky was growing darker. It was warm, too warm to snow again, in any case. This was a place where rain fell far too sparsely, five inches a year in sultry August squalls, and never at all this far into November. Water and stone conspired with one voice to coax him *up*, against the downward flow, *up*, and not down, where he could be alone, away from other hikers and his worries, his gnawing fears of money and of work. He climbed into the cave, and sat a while, gathering calm and strength for the coming struggle.

After two hours of wrestling with boulders, squeezing between their shoulders, scrambling over their rugged backs and heads, a slight rain started. What had been tiring and difficult was now becoming treacherous as well. He kept ascending, reasoning that rain was odd at best this time of year and likely, for all the thick clouds, shortly to desist. The path would dry as fast as it was soaked. That was his hope, his fear said otherwise. He crawled beneath an overhang and waited. 'Another hour, and this will end,' he thought. Two hours passed, and now a downpour raged. A toad croaked from a corner of the cave, its voice a fear that plunged him into action: 'How did these boulders get so tossed about, if not by these destructive, sudden

floods?’ The canyon’s coaxing was a deadly trap. He had to get out now, and get out fast.

He started recklessly, fell often, ripped his clothes, retraced his steps, risked leaps across mean gashes, training a wary ear for walls of water. Then, suddenly, he saw them, near the stream — how had he missed them on his upward climb? — totems of stone stacked to the height of humans, the work of careful and anonymous hands. A joy leapt through him, dousing all his terror. This was the art of arts, the solo, concerted action. Incredibly, in this remote location, lone seekers had made these balancings stand true. The voice of the canyon told him what to do, which rocks to choose to add to the creation. He lifted stones as heavy as himself, and balanced them, miraculously, precisely, defying every physical restriction. The rain rushed down to cleanse him as he labored.

Three hours later, he crawled, on his scrapped belly, back to the wooden safety of the bridge. He walked back to the car, mud-caked and torn, the great eye-cave of the canyon watching him. The voice that coaxed him to this reckless action spoke through the anonymity of stones, raised him above himself and stripped him clean, thundering secrets from the balanced rocks. The canyon roared with choirs of brute force, while he stood, laughing, in his tattered costume, bloody, yet richer than the richest king.

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Captain Hi, head bandaged, but clotting, flicks the check with blunt, callused forefinger, as if by so doing, and by a process analogous to biting a gold coin, he might verify its veracity. He waves it over the point of a rose quartz crystal that rests in a lacquerware bowl which resides on his kitchen table. He lavishes on the windfall document the gaze of his one good eye. “Looks real to me,” he says. He hands the check, its black satin-finished envelope with gold lettering, and all of the envelopes’ other contents to his faithful Indian companion, and co-beneficiary, meanwhile vigorously cowboy-boot toeing his little Boston Terrier-Chihuahua *mesito* away from a dried puddle of blood the pooch is licking from the beige postage-stamp-sized asphalt tile kitchenette floor. “Out of that, Bullet!” The dinky, sausage-plump dog cowers, snarls a one-tooth snarl, and stares back at his master with bug-eyed resentment. The Indian smiles, and says, flatly, and without the slightest hint of irony, while taking the check and envelope. “That dog’s wintered Ok. Make a nice heap of gravy.” The Indian snakes, *avec* verbal apologies

— “excuse me,” “pardonez moi,” “squeezing by, thank you” — his uncertain way through totems of books, magazines, files, and emptied or semi-emptied health food containers, and reaching a tiny, sprung-cushioned love-seat hide-a-bed, he carefully toes aside, with one moccasined foot, a stack of papers. Then, considerately sitting down next to these displaced ones, he reads. Hi watches his friend’s placid face intently as the latter peruses with concentration the check, the letter, and the other materials he’s been given, not omitting in his scrutiny, the fussy, and expensive-looking envelope itself. Finally, as the last of the evening’s foliage-scattered light flits through the blinds, and bars the reader with alternating piebald shadows and golds, he says. “Do you think the salutation is a typo?” “Could be,” sighs Hi, “but I am thinking maybe a quote.” To verify, Hi walks to one of the totems, reaches in, collapses the stack, but grabs a broke-back tome with a stained and frayed green binding, and begins thumbing. Finally, in the failing light, Hi holds the butterflyed pages under his eye and eye patch, and bringing the book to within an inch of the meldropped tip of his self-tinted, wrinkling, ruddled nose, he reads “it should have been my other with his leickname for he’s the head and I’m an everdevoting fiend of his.” Bemused, the Indian says. “Of course. Joyce. *Finnegans Wake*. The flop thickens.” Then adds, addressing wryly his freshly trepanned fiend. “Looks like you’re getting smarter already.” A silence now ensues as the two men, in the darkening trailer, study each others’ disappearing faces, and think about what the other might be thinking. Their silence is swollen by two *fresser* sounds: the tongue of the dog, who, unmolested, now resumes licking the blood from the kitchen floor, and the clawing of talons on the metal roof, where buzzards and ravens have been attracted by the promising scent of an ancient desert aroma.

## Interregnum: Fourth Week's Summary

At this point, there are no two ways about it. Preliminary research strongly indicates that as an individual brain develops ROIs in parallel chronological sequences, EEG patterns begin to synchronize with other brains and it becomes possible for a single individual to make a consciousness “leap” into the experiential realm(s) of one, or perhaps several, other individuals. Data seems to indicate that these synchronizations may leap backward and even forward in time (not unlike certain quantum entities). They may even cross species’ boundaries under favorable circumstances whose perimeters are not yet well understood. It seems clear, however, that the physical brain is some kind of communication modem which has at least a latent potential for connecting with other brains in a way that dramatically expands the awareness of all those “in synch.” The scientific and political implications of this cross-linking phenomenon are incalculable, and lie beyond the scope of this paper. But it is perhaps safe to say that the first individuals who are able to expand their ROIs beyond the confines of their own bodies (and therefore escape their habitual chronologies, becoming, in effect, immortal) will possess an enormous evolutionary advantage over those whose minds remain fixated in a single body — unless, of course, and this seems likely given the connecting nature of the phenomenon, the early adapters entrain the rest of us with their own expanded awareness. In which case, an unprecedented state of oneness would prevail on the planet, ushering in who knows what sorts of new possibilities.

Dr. G. G. Bernole  
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Before writing the following, I was awakened from a very intricate and frightening dream, in which the doctor I had met at the Hep-U-Sef was explaining, in minute detail, something about brainblood volume. There was lots of technical stuff, like a download almost, of a program that I might never be aware of consciously, but would nevertheless change my life unalterably. Words flashed by, or flashed *in*, like *glucose combustion, brain*

*metabolism, Liquor Cerebrospinalis*. Snippets of phrases were also worming their way in: “worldwide ancient ritual,” “the importance of allowing the brainblood volume to expand,” the necessity of “regaining the creativity we had as children,” “the ease of attaining ‘surgical’ enlightenment.” While speaking, the Doctor arranged various instruments matter-of-factly on a tray: a scalpel, pads and bandages, a brown bottle labeled *carbolic acid*, sutures, various hemostats and clamps, a mirror, a large plastic squirt gun, and a drill. In the corner of the room, there was a mop and a scrub bucket, whose presence made me shudder. As he spoke, the Doctor was shaving the front part of his head, and when he had completed this procedure, with the help of the mirror, he dabbed the area with a sterile pad. Then, serenely taking the scalpel, he proceeded — without for an instant altering the rather monotone timber of his delivery — to make a crescent-shaped incision in his own forehead. Blood bounded forth, and the Doctor pointed the squirt gun at his head and irrigated the wound. Then I knew what the mop was for. The Doctor was as calm as a stone, but I was sweating buckets. I awoke with a shriek just as he picked up and activated the high-whining drill . . .

The fourth week began much like the third week ended — in a series of contentious dialogs presenting unaccepted and perhaps unacceptable propositions, the personas struggling, and maybe successfully so, to master their master. I know that these were arguments, however harsh the outcomes of their logic, that I did not really have the heart to win. Perhaps this is a new rule: to have the last word is to risk killing the personas, is to risk renewing the old enslavement to one body, one mind, one constant, guarded I. The Rock Gazing Exercises may be one of precipitant struggles, of foolish suppositions, of nightmares and of naïve hopes, but in the brief span of four days, from Friday to Tuesday, it produced a new eye, an objective penetration of space and time.

On Tuesday, the Serenity Pitt persona, not only does more than take a name and a mind, he takes a body, and a place and a time as well. Amazingly, or perhaps ironically, his is a body much like mine, one that struggles with money fears, fights for a spiritual balm in a cluttered, noisy world, nurses regrets, and stumbles into moments of transcendence. I want to know more about him. I want to see what his life is (was?) like when it is acting independently, and not interacting with my own. I want to see what he is, when he’s not the persona of a stone.

On Wednesday, Grace Maryanka continues this objectification, this ironic splitting off of self from self. I find myself watching her from a distance, but not too distant. I catch my breath as she is catching hers. I see the richness of her prison, her elegance, her talent, her wealth, her fame — all dissolving — but dissolving into what? She is breaking apart from the onslaught of great waves that seem to bring her comfort while they drown her. Something that could have been renewing was aborted, denied. And now? A mystery. And what is this persona that engulfs her, this “visitation of the rugged one?” Isn’t it Friday’s stone, the one-eyed leviathan? I see how our artifice, taken to extremes, connects the theater to the untamed seas.

But then on Thursday, the curious dénouement. Giles Nagual, remaining behind the scenes, shows me, not his persona, but another. Although I have never been to the Sonoran Desert, I may be going, if the legacy of Dr. Sandro Lieto pans out. Nevertheless, it seems as if the episode is something that has already happened to me. The incident depicted is a hike I never took, but nevertheless, seem to remember, in a place east of Phoenix called Fish Creek Canyon. A flood in the desert flushed forth my deepest fears, but also infused me with a rush of joy. I had forgotten about those eerie totems, the desolation balanced with inspiration. But how can I remember an event that has not yet occurred? Or has occurred, but not to me. Still, it is so. So potent is the force of this Awareness Exercise, that even the flow of time can be subverted, and the mind can be made to believe that the future is past. Gazing at stones is something I’ve done before.

Something else is happening, too, perhaps more portentous than any of the other radical weirdnesses that are unscrolling: there is a tendency for the text to collect itself into long segments of blank verse, blank verse that sometimes even rhymes. What to make of this? Am I being given a glimpse of the DNA strands of language, a poetry, or at least a poeis, that squiggles and intertwines beneath the more opaque flesh of prose, which these forays into memeland are making apparent. I catch tantalizing glimpses that for a moment seem to clarify things, only to obfuscate them in the next instant. The oscillation exalts and befuddles me, and makes me happy in a way that is both curious and oddly stupefying. The Awareness Exercise is entrancing me to a kind of wakefulness that threatens to unite all of my trances, and leave me exactly where? This is liking peeking over the brim of one’s own open skull, and seeing, not grey matter, but a kind of spiraling, crystalline pool whose depths spin with ghostly wonders, not yet perceptible perhaps, but waiting in the offing for their chance.

### *A Breath of Air*

The card given to me by the weird, prophetic doctor in the convenience store was that of one John C. Meneghini, Conscious Breathing Instructor and Certified Teacher of the International Self-Esteem Project. His business, and it is a business, is called Sadhana Concepts, Inc., and is located at 10040 Barston Court, Alpharetta, Georgia, 30012. Mr. Meneghini, I discovered, holds workshops on something he calls “conscious breathing,” a technique, he told me over the phone, which had come “directly from Babaji,” through Leonard Orr. By “directly,” he meant something like “in a line of succession,” but the word, as anyone who has lived in the American south can attest, has other associations, as in the phrase, “y’all go on now, I’ll be along directly.” John C. Meneghini, during our conversation, in which, I am afraid, I rather “went on” a bit much about my physical-marital-financial condition, urged me to come at once to his next workshop, scheduled, as it turns out for this very weekend. Here, I can presumably find relief from all my troubles by simply breathing. I say “simply,” but this is not just to be my habitual and ineffectual lung inflation, no, this technique is something different, esoteric and potent. I am intrigued. But I am also broke, credit card bereft, and sick. When I informed Mr. Meneghini of this, he said that he had a feeling that “the Universe will find the resources for you to attend.” Later, as we were addressing our final salutations, he referred again to the Universe, familiarly this time, as “Ms. Uni,” and my intrigue soured to cynicism. That kind of line reminds me of those television evangelists who squeeze the widow’s last mite into their own coffers under the pretext that they can heal or save. I determined in that instant that the whole thing was a con, and I decided not to go. However, I am not actually, it seems, in control of these sorts of events any more (if, indeed, I ever was), and “Uni,” it seems has other plans for me. Those other plans included a doosie of an asthma attack. This I suffered alone in my house the very evening of the phone call (last Wednesday, I believe), eventually passing out, my breathalyzer proving ineffectual, and my physical and metaphysical functioning unraveling before I could reach the kitchen phone and dial 911. Oddly, unconsciousness proved to be medicinal, for I was awakened (still alive, thank you very much, Ye unwise Gods!) by the ringing phone that I had not quite reached before blacking out. I answered to find the weepy voice of my erstwhile alcoholic client, now in rehab, apparently cured of his giant-phone-phobia. Incredibly, he tearfully apologized for his former soused theatrics and informed me that a long past-due payment was winging its way to my abode via the U.S. mail. When he hung up, I was still sitting

on my kitchen floor, in my urine soaked Depends, one hand clutching the receiver, the other my breathalyzer, and Diva, the revenant(?) cat rubbing my leg for food. It was about 5 in the evening, high-traffic bewitching hour in Houston, when the city's fangs come out to tear the throats of motorists. The dying light was stealing swiftly across the ceiling and out the smog-dimmed window. Diva yowled, "UNI! UNI!," a name I now received as a personal message from the One, who had, it seemed, just spoken to me, and contrived to send me money. My thoughts, however, did not immediately rush to my own condition. I thought of a Quaker, short of funds, and meditating in the Meetinghouse, and of a dancer, short of breath, and in need of her fumigations. Suddenly it dawned on me that Mr. Meneghini's Conscious Breathing workshop might somehow benefit these other unseen companions, the emanations of the rocks. As I fed Diva (no longer perturbed by the incongruity of providing physical nourishment for a figment of my own imagination) I noticed that I was breathing easy again, and I resolved to make the trip to Alpharetta.