



*Humanity's Dark Side: poems, patches & reflections*  
E.C. News-Roberts

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Humanity's Shadow

Humanity's Shadow:  
poems, poetics & reflections

E.C. Theus-Roberts

Humanity's Shadow: poems, poetics & reflections

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Once upon a Time....

For H.H.

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## Foreword

My first thought when starting this project was: "This is going to be an absolute train wreck."

Poetry, in and of itself, is a difficult art and, if I may be totally candid, I can not claim to be a poet; my talents reside elsewhere on the literary spectrum. Still and all, I admire poetry for many reasons and at the same time am jealous. My jealousy springs from the simplicity of so many poems that effortlessly sound the depths of the human soul. Masterpieces such as Richard Lovelace's "To Lucasta, On going to the Wars," or poet extraordinaires like José Martí, Emily Dickinson, Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda, among others are able (with enviable frequency and eloquence) to achieve what many of us prose writers flounder at approaching: Humanity's shadow. What I may fail to accomplish in voluminous tomes, encompassing tens of thousands upon tens of thousands in words, syntax and context, subtext and the like. A poetess, even the most novice in her discipline, can in an inspired moment trump all my efforts, as well as those of my contemporaries. The reason is simple:

Poetry is much less about skill in application of poetics and its devices as conveying truths of the human condition.

If you happen to look in any dictionary to learn what exactly is poetry, you'll generally find this definition - the art or practice of composing poems, which then leads to poem proper, forming a division of literature; and, finally, poetics - being

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of or characteristic of poetry or poets). The poem in itself is a troublesome thing. The human condition is a common but subjective experience. To convey it properly means dipping below the mask-persona, to employ jungian parlance—into the vulnerability we generally try to bury in the abyss seated just underneath our humanity, both collective and personal. In a way, poetics means traversing the infinite plane from generalities to particularities and likewise in reverse from our private experiences to society's in general. In my experience, poetry tends to be more honest, fierce, emotional, soul-bearing, saddening, enlivening, tense, contradictory, yet, direct and human than other forms of literature. Perhaps, fault lies with its simplicity; its heart and its direct nature? Or, maybe, it's an aspect far beyond my comprehension that allows poetry to float into the realms of the exalted ....? Whatever the reason, poetry seems to speak most honestly to the nature of an individual concerned; whether one is reading or writing poems. For this fact, if not for any other, poetics should be given a serious, searching examination.

My examination into poetics "Humanity's Shadow" is also an exploration of my own shadow inasmuch it is of society's. From our commonalities in each person's particulars we arrive at the universality of the collective. For what more is the collective conscience but the manifold expression of individual humanities finding common ground? Although, my focus is not on humanity but all that lurks behind it in its shadows. Therefore, the poems, poetics, and reflections that follow will examine poetic vision, license, intention, and

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Reflections consequence of experiencing the human condition: life - or, more precisely, the life we tend to ignore and avoid. So, without further ado, let us dip into murky depths of humanity's shadow.

Poems and Poetics

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- Bellum Natura

Of Fall, I know nothing,  
'Tis the season of Autumn;  
Being Death to the world  
To be followed by slumber.  
An utterly Mad King -  
So boastful, severe and Cold.  
When Winter's chill soon melts  
Spring is only childhood's Folly.  
Youth to rebirth the world,  
Yet, candid I must remain;  
For summer's a breath away  
As all continues to change.

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## On "Bellum Natura": Line by Line

Employment of literary devices begin in the first line of "Bellum Natura." As is characteristic of all poetry, words chosen are more than a simple and useful mechanism of conveyance. Its mask of subtlety belies a deeper meaning. The allusion to 'Fall' in "[O]f Fall, I know nothing," expresses two primary connotations. The obvious being reference to the season between summer and winter, as the three immediate following lines solidify in our minds. 'Fall' also evinces a more complex, philosophical idea: the fall of something; as in the descent of man, fall of the Roman Empire, descending into insanity, depravity and the like. The 'Fall' could very well hark back to the origin of sin with humankind's tumble from Divine Favor in the biblical Garden of Eden. Beyond any specific historical references, this 'Fall' is representative of decline and failure. Though, to fully grasp this 'Fall' we must consider the next line: "[I]s the season of Autumn;" which in the context of the human condition grows exponentially in its meanings. From the realm of Nature we make an abrupt departure into that of humanity. 'Autumn,' as regards us people, is often a reference to one's harvest years - generally, the epoch in our lives when we can and do begin to collect and enjoy the fruits of our labors. Another literary synonym for 'Autumn' is 'August,' as in the golden twilight of her august years. August is, in general, the time when seeds sown are ripe and ready to be harvested. After the reaping follows a time of rest.

In the first two lines of "Bellum Natura" we are given

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the inkling of just how much complexity its subtle mask hides. While subtlety, word play, and literary allusions remain constant throughout the piece. It is in the third and fourth lines that we get the sense of some journey in-progress and seismic shift in the poem itself.

Bringing Death to the world  
To be followed by slumber.

On the heels of man's decline comes 'Death' and as is often the case with Nature, her "death" is a much less permanent thing than in regards to the human condition. 'Death,' times encompassing the period after our reaping, is a general period of reconciling ourselves to the inevitable outcome of the human condition in decline; a condition forever in a state of 'Fall.' Beyond the rudimentary understanding of "[B]ringing Death to the world," for something so permanent "[T]o be followed by slumber" transmits a certain definitive temporality. Death and dying, as we know them, are incontrovertible experiences. Once these bridges, like virginity and loss of childhood innocence, are crossed there is no "restart," no "do over" button. The first experience constitutes the last. Rest, slumber, sleeping are transient acts common to all sectors of Nature—humans, base animals, Nature herself. Resting also translates to recuperation. After a harvest, soil is "rested" and "prepared" for the next sowing. Nature and we, human beings, do the same, if only differing in specifics. Neither Nature nor people

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truly die. While we may cease to be a breathing, experiencing, animate factor in the human condition, the immortality of life is captured in much simpler terms than karmic ratios, balances, debts, and reincarnation. There is a continuation beyond the you and I and our individual microcosms. Contemplation of the 'Fall', declining years and the 'Death' they precede, is a long, elaborate preparation for the eternal 'slumber' of all things beholden to Nature; but, it also intimates, by going beyond strict human understandings, something very perennial.

Death brings with it the sense of termination, an end in a cycle, but correlating our understanding of death's permanence with slumber, a temporal state, we find 'Death' could also translate to renewal. Though, extremely metaphoric "[A]n utterly Mad King -" strengthens our sense of impermanence and regeneration. Madness is a state of "unbridled-ness"; as a mindframe it means to be unburdened by the restraints of conscience, bindings of social convention - in short, to relinquish reason and be absolved of responsibility. 'Death' being the "final slumber" is a wild card "[S]o boastful, severe and cold." Death is the eventual end of all life. Which explains why we find 'Death' to be 'boastful' because, unlike other aspects of the human condition, it triumphs over every instance of human connivance and this has continued in an unbroken chain since time immemorial. The fact that death can result at our height of health, Autumnal years, or before we can manage to announce our entrance into the world and life's rat race seems to be a thing worth bragging about. Total dominance over

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life's most contumacious creature, when that creature has, without exception, dominated all in its path since its first stumbling steps forward, is an exceptional accomplishment. Furthermore, the reality of death is very 'severe.' There is no pleasant, no gentleness, nor is there any compromise. Although we are in the habit of giving the inevitable stage of dying in the human condition humane characteristics, this is only a human contrivance to acclimate ourselves to the severity of Nature's processes and our powerlessness, at present, to stem the tide, stop and reverse it all. There is an absolute absence of warmth to 'Death.' My capitalization of 'Cold' is meant to signify numerous word associations; chief among them - finality or certainty, something unequivocal. Fear, as in the cold hard lump in one's stomach or how one's blood can turn frozen with fright. We fear death as some deep, impenetrable darkness - an unknown void; and, like the void in space, an expanse devoid of light and its warmth. The unknown brings a sense of chill and coldness. 'Cold' also correlates to things at rest. Things in movement create friction which in turn produces heat. The opposing elements in a contradiction produce development and development - movement from one stage to another - is a mainspring of life. Without development, opposition, friction - movement - life is at rest; a thing lacking warmth and liveliness - life is dead, 'Cold.'

As I'm certain you've noticed by now, "Bellum Natura" relates to a fact much larger and beyond the narrow-mindedness of the human condition and subjective perspectives. Besides the literary shifts, our transition from one season to the

next carries the poem and our thinking from the limiting rudiments inherent in scientific logic - consideration of objective facts alone, to the boundless vistas of free association characteristic of philosophy. "[W]hen winter's chill soon melts" is a line not quite obvious in its meaning.

The coldness of 'winter', our final years - the end of decline, is finality; the absence of heat, warmth, life itself. Though, as alluded to above, if the 'chill soon melts' then, we must consider it an occasional thing. As the seasons are perennial; renewing themselves year after year; succeeding over their predecessor; reigning for their allotted epoch and, in turn, ceding to their usurper. Nature's cycle is eternal. 'Death' is the requisite end to life; life is the prerequisite for death. Changing seasons, the consistency of Nature and her processes, have, for millennia, provided hope to the hopeless in terms of death's inescapableness. Perhaps, this is closer to the roots of our times' morbid saying "everytime a baby's born someone dies."

'Spring' is renewal, the reinitiation of life. During winter all life hunkers down, battens the hatches, and goes into a state of suspension-hibernation. 'Spring' is also the resurrection in a biblical and philosophical sense. It is a general time of new and freshness and youth and emergence. Such emerging signals "[c]hildhood's Folly" - trial and error of experiencing life. Nature, every faction of Nature, exhales the left-over, stale stiffness of slumbering in winter's cold hearth to breathe in the full, exhilarating scent of potential, things to come, our bright future -

'Spring'. The rejuvenating power of "[Y]outh to rebirth the world" is easily understood as that indefatigable flame - Hope - which warms, wakens the inert, chilled human spirit, propelling it, us and all humanity towards ever-new horizons. All in all, 'Spring' is a time for experimenting, gamboling, feivolly born of lack of responsibility - life's grand imposition. In all Nature, 'Spring' - season and epoch - is a time of delusive freedom. This constitutes the 'Folly' of infancy, childhood, early years; the folly of innocence. We enjoy the newness of things until we unwittingly stumble upon their darker under-sides. 'Youth' is a time of innocence but also of innocence lost. Despite the pain and consequences of disappointment, betrayal, confronting reality in all its cold severity and the loss of innocence natural to the human condition. 'Spring' and 'Youth' remain times of beauty and purity for which we are nostalgic for everafter.

"[Y]et, candid I must remain;" constitutes another shift. I would love to say its significance were only a smooth transition by and through manipulation of tone and that it held no greater import than to move the work forward in a seamless manner, but such is not the case. This line is a pivotal and integral part of the poem. In one sense, it functions as the transformative moment of the piece, taking its thematic programme from abstraction - which is dominant from the second line onward - to somewhere, and, in my view, something very much personal. "Bellum Natura" has a rapid *a posteriori* movement in its first two lines, transferring reader orientation

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and contemplation from a particularity, an individual perspective or singularity, to a conception universal and common. The poem follows the human development of cognition: begins with the "me" and, immediately, involves the "exterior" (i.e., all that is outside of self and independent of our whim), returning to our "me" once more before engaging the "exterior" again. In "Bellum Natura," though unconsciously, my mimicry of our innate process lends it an imperfection, a flaw contrasted Nature's infallibility. In a further sense, the key to unravelling all the metaphorical and, yes, esoteric insinuations lies in this tenth line. Take a minute or two and read the piece through, omitting the tenth line. It makes no sense, just a jumble of meandering literature and allusions and poetic puffery-nonsense. What's more this line gives us a sense of profulence. We begin to form a picture and understanding of the path we've been traversing. "[Y]et, candid I must remain;" brings us to just within the final steps of our journey. It connects the beginning, every shift and variance, each subtlety and blatant contradiction, nuance and murky in-venudo to that which must needs be the end of our 'Fall'.

For summer's a breath away  
As all continues to change.

Without line 10, we could never find ourselves with the feeling of completeness we get from the poem's final lines. Though line 10 is a narrative, perspective, tonal shift of great

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importance; it bridges what could be viewed a digression and results in a wholeness. "[F]or summer's a breath away" is, of course, the next logical step thematically, but it is also a necessary step in order to shift us into the final stages of the fall we knew nothing about beforehand. Summer is a time of experience. Not the foreyouthful experience of trial and error in things as of yet unexperienced, unknown, and incomprehensible, but rather of calculation, foreplanning, implementation, reassessment and building on solid foundations, for now and a desired future. These are our years of effort, toil, application, and, in some instances, reaping early fruits. In other words, a time in which impositions of the human condition - in the main, responsibility - have been learned, accepted, assimilated in varying degrees, and free reign is given to our drive, our natural hunger to run before we can walk. The latter part ("[a] breath away") is a shift within a transition. As "[F]or summer's" removes us from the particular to the general; "[a] breath away" sounds forlorn, doleful, and personal. Yet, its tone is still universal. Summer itself is a mere transitional phase, in man and Nature, where life is lived, things are done and the consequences are not fully reckoned, if at all, until 'Autumn' and our augustal harvests. The effervescence of 'summer' is fragile, an era gone quickly before we knew that it was ever here; just a single breath. Though a breath seems insignificant, it truly is important. A newborn becomes a stillborn were it not for that first breath. In fact, without our first lungful of air there can never be any spring, no summer,

neither a fall, nor a winter's end; only a premature conclusion. The line read in its entirety also conveys the eternal constant transience of the human condition and Nature. Summer is never long enough nor do the seasons last to our satisfaction. Breathe too long or look away and next thing you know it's all over, you've missed all you had so long and eagerly awaited.

In my view, "[I]s all continues to change" harks back to the poem's overall theme - continuity of life. Besides reinforcing our sense of impermanence, seasons continue even though each person's decline comes to an end, it also conveys an absolute of Nature: nothing is static. There's an intrinsic motion in everything; rise and fall in the human condition; the metamorphosis of a butterfly; cognition and reasoning, at higher levels. Nature is a woman driven forward. She demands progress and accepts nothing less. This final line's appeal is not that it brings closure to "Bellum Natura", but, indeed, that it creates - in a simultaneous motion - a feeling of ending and beginning. "Bellum Natura" started us on a journey to find an answer, perhaps, resolve some perplexity. Along our odyssey we stumbled upon new insights and coming to journey's end has only led to a realization that that "end" is really only another beginning. Maybe, "beginning" is the wrong term. It could be "The Never-Ending Story" of poetry and poetics.

No exploration into poetics is complete without discussing title. Not all works have a title (Emily Dickinson's work is characteristically titleless), but when they do, normally, it is

More than an assignation of theme, subject matter, or what not. Richard Lovelace's "To Lucasta, On going to the Wars" is about exactly what the title suggests, but so much more than the simple act of going to battle. In its totality this masterpiece bares the soldier's convictions and most intimate truths, as well as flaws and consequences of these principles; these demand that all other duties and obligations - including those of love - be subordinated. It is a deeply personal, honest poem. Its title's format, word choice, punctuation, etc., gives us the first inklings that "To Lucasta, On going to the Wars" is not a mere profession of love, duty, or experiencing the same. So too is the case with "Bellum Natura."

Latin, meaning roughly "to war against Nature" tells (I hope) how much more involved the poem is. Latin is the language of knowledge and the sciences. Many of the greatest philosophical, scientific and spiritual information constituting the foundations of modern Western civilization come from Latin texts. Latin, by nature, is a lyrical language, it lends itself to subtlety and musings of the profoundest types. I chose it, on purpose, because Latin is a frank and simple form of conveyance, in which my affinity for wordplay and free word association can gleefully run amok. Another meaning could be "Nature's War" though, in either instance, 'Nature' does not necessarily refer to Nature herself. While I mean 'Nature', I also mean the things of Nature - human beings, our natural endowments and fallacies, seasons, time and change. These are all part of the natural order and contradict one another constantly. This incessant tension constitutes the war within Nature

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and against her. The "end" of any war never truly equates the end of conflict and tensions. They remain present below the surface, at times far below; at others not so much; ready to flare up with greater ferocity than before. Should we doubt this, allow me mention World War I and its sequel to stand as proof.

While each line of the poem is intricate, my employment of seasons changing, their essential attributes, and literary allusions to carry the piece forward is necessary. Correlations between Nature and people, times or eras of our lives and the inevitability of the human condition, temporariness and permanence, the inexorable progress of time, Nature and decline - everything's 'Fall'. The work speaks simply and in a 'candid' manner with a soft, but forceful tone. Despite all of that, integral as it is for any poem in communicating its message, insights and emotions. For me, it is the title that is most important.

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- Untitled

Betrayal through your every kiss, caress  
Glimpsed underneath, glanced by oblivion  
Obsidian cold cooled by raging fires  
Dulled by joyous laughter, a living affliction  
Unrequited hate, the pit overmastering  
Such depths where only light may ever shine  
Empty, so full of all never to be had  
Fore youthful too brittle by ease  
Shards scatter, burning in consumption  
To conquer thee, thou treacherous imp  
Fueled only by my furious, cold void  
Raze, end the existence of of such utter destitution  
Hallowed, absentee, as sharp as full as apathy  
Vizite as the blade, infallible always futile  
Sweetbreed to my palate, inconsulate constant  
Frostbitten... beautiful fury... humanity without

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- Suspendee

Oh, how lovely you could be  
Sowing and reaping that once sowed  
Light and fresh, a peace Descends.  
Turmoil nor angst shall never reside

A breath so tender and sweet  
Heard as just so and so so fair  
Thus to tickle up and down one's sleeve  
Feathery touches of an Angel's feet.

To glimpse but a tenth of such realm  
A bounty of ceaseless joy and more  
A sharp access to speed our way  
Luscious indulgence rides to the Helm.

Words of Love, another magnificent lie  
Unfathomed but for this moment indeed.  
Eternal, forever lasting once sworn  
Oh, such pleasurable floating upon his scythe

Thrumming soft tattoo through my breast  
Loss beyond the void, powerless of concern  
Leaves fall, tumble, flutter and skip  
On wings to crescendo awaiting the rest.

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If only today our time would tell  
All of which Ages never silenced hence  
Heavens and Hells nor the gray in between  
In those eras when men's strength fell

Fanciful dreams recalled at your behest  
Roses pale by Autumn's fragrant breeze  
Pleading mournfully, but for what to come?  
Truth's honied venom dare mace youth's flesh.

Two Poems: As Philosophical Approach and Subjective Expression

You may not find it shocking that some of the early readers of these two poems felt their author, yours truly, needed "to go to church" or as one elaborated, "you need Jesus. I read your work and feel like I need to go outside and get some sunlight."

Our inner "darkness" is not something the majority of us are comfortable, let alone willing, to deal with. We shove our dark half as deep as is plausible in the basement of our conscious, as far down and forgotten in the subconscious we can manage with conscious effort. Through discussing these works, I came to realize such reactions are not due to the poems, in and of themselves, but rather a consequence of confronting the smoky mirror of our hidden selves in a moment of clarity. After all, it is very difficult to hide from the monster when it's staring you in the face. Even more so, when that monster is you yourself, an intrinsic facet of your very nature.

Beginning with "Surrender," if for no other reason than, in contrast to the Untitled piece, its orientation is centered around a single, specific theme. Let us embark on a contextual and subtextual comparison and miniature exposé on usage of contradiction in literature and life. Contextual basis for "Surrender" is found in the poem's subjective meditations on, what some have termed, "life's most sublime moment." That moment is death and all it encompasses. While the Untitled one

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is more a work of free association based on the reader's personal experiences and their resultant perspectives. "Surrender" volleys back and forth between how terribly fearsome, horrific, absolutely panic-inducing death is; yet, in the same and next breath, how quizzical the concept is, how befuddlingly beautiful its paradox. Death is scary, a big bad unknowable; dark, cold and, yet, so much more. Death is also beautiful, its clarity descends like a peaceful exhalation; an unavoidable, natural outcome of the human condition. In fact, so natural that everything in creation follows suit. No living creature goes obediently into death, not at first. When the realization that death is real, as in really coming, our natural urge for self-preservation compels us and all things to struggle to continue breathing, experiencing, living. It is in the clarity occasioned by death's inescapableness that we, as living creatures, can come to accept reality and then, only then, enter into life's sublimest of moments.

Contrasting beauty with that which is terrifying, correlating the two until the terrible bleeds into the breathtaking, the heart-wrenching into serenity, and all equated with the highest peace of mind - acceptance. While "Surrender" leads us on a journey through the phases of death - abstraction, dissociation, confrontation, realization, disturbance and paralysis, resignation, acceptance, and, finally, serenity - by means of contrast, sensorial reference and subjectivity. The Untitled piece does the same, if only more so being very much memorial

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for its lack of an anchoring point in subject matter. Here, each line metamorphoses the poem. As with "Surrender," the Untitled work draws heavily on contradiction and allusions; and, it is in these lines, where the meaning of what all is written is less intended to be interpreted literally than to convey something, idea chimeric—experiencing the human condition—, I feel the power of poetics is exemplified. Reading both poems you get a sense of purpose, as if you have started on a definitive mission. "Surrender" comes to an end, it concludes in an absolutism. 'Truth' is a sweet thing, desirable, but deadly like 'venom' which 'make[s]' youth, the era of purity, innocence, naïveté. These are good reasons we often say, "I was innocent once," or, "I remember being young too." Unspoken is that the truths of life and 'Truth', itself, corrupted that purity, ruined our innocence.

Counterposed this, the Untitled piece's "changableness" from line to line and even within lines, compels us forward on a never-ending quest. Reading over it again, it is such a work in contradiction and contrast, mercurious and substantial. I'm certain I could write a small volume on it alone. Does it deal with emotions or experiences? Is it related to the author, somebody else, or humanity in general? It presents a growing riddle in every line, turn of phrase, manipulation of wording, word choice, even placement. At its base, its most simplistic, is the poem nothing more than a reflection on life before death? Or, is it dealing with life's totality, including the final result of every fall? Does it deal with death at all?

Together, at least in my view, these poems expound on the contrariness of life. It is not my intention to plumb the "depths where only light may ever shine," at least, not here and now. Still, I often times feel these poems are separated halves of a whole. In all reality, perhaps, they are. There can be no "pleading mournfully, but for what to come" if there was nothing which came before it in "Fore youthful too bristled by ezas."

Perhaps I'm alone in this, but I find it strange that though we are dying every moment a small death, we deny this decomposition with our ever-evolving desire, call it a thirst, to feel more and more alive. Is there any sense in trying to be more alive than we are in this moment? Probably the better question is, can external experiences (i.e., sky-diving, wrestling alligators, and all other "death-defying" actions and activities we engage in) quantitatively change the worth of our lives? Life is all about moments. Indeed, it is, but is it in these moments themselves or their effects on us in the human condition that is most significant?

In a way, life is a lot like the Untitled poem - it is an event with a beginning, distinction and variety, solidity and variability; something we can not quite put a name, give a title to because, it has not reached a point where defining it would be anything but transitory. "Surrender", on the other hand, and rightfully so, is denominated as such to convey the end of every journey, every stage of life, each moment lived. No matter what we do, are engaged in, or however

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we live. There always comes a moment in which we must surrender the old for the new, a path once trodden for another virginal; at every journey's end a new one begins.

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- Through a Veil

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Though we see her together  
You, through a film of sleep  
I, from the land of the dead  
Her beauty remains forever.

I had glimpsed through a slight  
Some imperfection built into us  
Witnessing her and life by half  
You, viewing her other by night.

There by day, blink - she flees.  
At twilight, shining forth liquid -  
Solid, yet, so very changeable  
Islander's heart she fails to please

She, beauty and grace all in one.

We, imperfect, self-consume as the Sun.

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- hide, I seek

Always a temptation  
Plenty is never enough  
Enraged by separation  
to fly off the cuff

Such sweet words  
Whispered through my senses  
Migrating like birds  
how my chasing always misses

The greatest heaven  
Reveals my darkest Hell  
Fly wingless Raven  
Above where I have fell

Lusting after perfection  
plenty is never enough  
needful of intoxication  
So, plenty is never enough.

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- Love of the Chase

Addicted I am  
there can be no doubt.  
Like gravity's pull  
no hope for safe escape.  
To topple giants  
brought kneeling at your feet.  
Giving great power  
only given to those worthy.  
Strive and struggle  
though you are just paper.  
With burning ambition  
all come to pay homage.  
Me your servant  
raised high above the swine.  
Illuminated by favor  
world domination without a weapon.  
Fortune so fickle  
like all of her breed.  
Laying to waste  
all paper empires once built.  
King is damned  
through an abyss kingdom gone.  
Once more slavery  
craving and hungry for power.

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None ever knew  
the wily dangers you possess.  
To create gods  
changing the tides of life.  
Meanings in blood  
oceans crossed and peoples slain.  
Words of love  
coloring ink on smooth flesh.  
Driven beyond madness  
drink your power is complete.  
You paper money  
weakest king rule without doubt.

Poetics: Working in Translation

For me, poetry represents an almost insurmountable intimidation. To put it plainly, I would much rather write a thesis on the mating rituals of hummingbird bats in southeastern Cuba. In general, my every attempt to invade the poet's realm proper is an Herculean task and I am no demigod. Contemplations of composing poetry set off alarm bells. I sputter, connect some lines, perhaps, a stanza or two, stutter over another three words, review the drivel of some mischievous trickster possessing my pen, shake my head in resignation, destroy the evidence, and return to a place more appropriate somebody my skill sets. Like any writer subject to Apollo's crowned Muse's whims, I do have some few moments of inspired poetic competence. Otherwise, the only time I escape a sense of utter ineptitude is when dealing in translation.

Though, I do not deem myself a poet, when it comes to weaving languages, playing with allusions, definitions, and significances of words and such I find myself capable, if not somewhat savvy. Perhaps, it is the translating one poem into two distinct, yet, identical works which I find to be more of an intellectual daring than an artistic exploration of one's humanity. In a manner you can say I take the technical challenges and eschew the less mechanical. I relish capturing cadence, rhythm, inflection, intricacy of word play and choice, individual aesthetics and resemblances; so, that when reading the pieces, a familiarity results from one

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language to the other. In a different manner, you can call it an act of intellectual cowardice and rightly so because, by focusing on such mechanics I skirt the issue of what intimidates me most in poetry: bare, honest vulnerability.

Beyond my poetic reticence, the topic of translation in literature is of the utmost importance, especially in verse. In the poem, distinct from every other literary expression, words have a life of their very own. A perfect example, in writing this essay, I may say "~~It~~ represents an almost insurmountable intimidation" which obviously translates to something being an imposing, overpowering obstacle, a thing which provokes apprehension, trepidation, and, perhaps, fear in those facing it. While in poetry, words and lines of words may, and often times do, have little to do with a poet's desire or meaning being conveyed.

It pains you I provoke  
Or, the pain I seek?

Just from these two lines of "Pa' Amar, Debe sufrir/suffrage of Love" the meaning is fairy-like, there one moment in your periphery, but gone the second you search for it full on. Poetry is the chimeras of literature. Free verse, metered, rhymed, lyricism, haiku. The art of word alchemy which contributes metamorphoses in meaning and in the reader. Translating the "exact" wording is not enough. In my experience working in Spanish to English or flirting with French, Latin, Japanese, and Russian, sense

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of the word is much less and much more consequential than the emotion of the line, lines, stanza, or entire work. For instance, in a four line, one stanza poem I led with "[Y]ou, my dear, constitute enjoyment." The five words composing this line are simple in definition but deathly complex in significance. Allow me to explain.

In the first place, it is an address. The poem is speaking to someone who is familiar, yet, not so much; a known, yes, but still unknown character. Hence the formality of '[Y]ou' contrasted with a '[M]y dear' which, as a term of endearment, often speaks to a familiarity. In the same breath, '[M]y dear', historically, has also been a ready address in certain class circles - in the United States and western Europe, mostly - as a manner and means of politeness just below the ultra-formals of mister and sir, miss and ma'am. In these words the poem grows to such complexity, no hope of an elementary understanding is possible. Its sub-textual implications and blatant insinuations set the tone for what all follows. Certain detachment, distance and estrangement. Chastising in its wording and substance, but do we ever expend our energies to admonish strangers or those who are of no importance to us? Of course not. Therefore, the single stanza poem evinces a certain intimacy deeper than mere shallow social association. As with so much more in art, there is a double entendre, at the very least. Such was the challenge in capturing the sense, meaning and subtle depths, not to mention, lyrical quality and rhetorical nuance in another language - Spanish.

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Usted, mi querida,

Significa el gozamiento

There is always a plethora of potential choices when traversing linguistic boundaries because, when changing languages you also change cultural mannerisms, connotations, meanings and more. For instance, "spanish" as it is, is truly an umbrella term like Arawak or Romance languages. We cubans speak a different spanish than do Mexicans and other latinos, a distinct manner from spanish people. In cuban to say "conseguir" means to obtain a thing (i.e. obtener), but to do so in a less than entirely legal or legitimate way. It deals with the cultural differences in cuban society versus salvadorian, peruvian, and other Latin American countries during the 1960s until the later half of the early 2000s. Still, "conseguir" is the same as "obtener" and interchangeable in most spanish-speaking countries.

English is a very, very confusing language. There are less distinctions between the forms of address so it is more difficult to "read into" the message, its significance, the words chosen in address, temperament, important relationship cues so on and so forth than say in Russian or Japanese. In Spanish I can say "Usted, mi querida" and, automatically you will know there is a familiarity, but also a distance. What's more, it shows an attraction and equality by usage of a polite informality "usted" followed by an endearment "mi querida". Though, in English this sense is not evident until later in the poem. In

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spanish it is present from the first line lending an immediate complexity to the beginning of the work which the english version only accomplishes after a time.

Beyond the challenges of conveying a proper sense and the many insinuations or innuendos, as well as word balance (i.e., words equal in significance/definition), there is the question of rhythm. I say "rhythm," but in poetics this relates to meter which encompasses cadence, spacing, rhyme, length, repetition and more. In my view, rhythm in translation is fairly simple: both (original and translation) need to flow and strike the reader in like manner. This is why I've always felt a translation is not a mere changing of language but an effort to construct something new and distinct, yet, still the same in essence as the original; fraternal twins not identicals. "Pa' Amar, Debe Sufrir" translated to english "Suffrage of Love" transforms and shrinks from one, twenty-one line stanza to two, five line stanzas. In contrast, "Illusionist", a single stanza, four line stanza reproof unfolds into a lovingly severe fourteen line, seven stanza "Espejismo." In both instances (i.e., going from spanish to inglés or english al español), a poet/translator must be concerned with translating the rhythmic sense, a poem's orientation, its softly whispered secret music, as much as, if not more than, the words, meaning and nuance.

A faithful rendering, therefore, demands a translator engage in much more than "simple" word selection and mechanics, but must, in fact, come to understand and recreate

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the work's poetic vision. The translator becomes the poet, thus my usage of "poet/translator." It is not enough to interpret the poem's wording. To give a faithful rendering one must be fully immersed in the various aspects and even subtleties and provide an honest, reinterpretation - a reconstituted version. It would appear that translation involves as much, if not more, creativity than the original creation. Certainly, nothing is harder to convey than the idea of humanity across linguistic boundaries.

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- Pa' Amar, Debas sufrir

Te duele

Lo que provooco yo  
o

¿es el Dolor que busco?

Epocas de alegría aún no llegadas  
Por tantas Lágrimas

que las he producido

Los rojos, el gris y estas rosas  
de la Iza vestida

y la inocencia perdida

Érase una vez cuando

Tú estabas amada

de Niñez que te he puesto

pa' arriba

Para acordarse a su corazón

ahora mismo

Lo recuerdas que

Te amo más

que

La rapidez

De esta vida.

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- Suffrage of Love

An original English translation of "Pa' Amar, Debas Sufreiz"

If pains you I provoke

Or the pain I seek?

Ages of joy yet arrived

For so many tears I had derived

Reds, gray, and those pinks

Of rage poured and innocence lost

Once upon a time you were loved

From childhood placed above

To remind one's heart thus

Remember, I love you over life's rush.

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- Illusionist

You, my dear, constitute enjoyment  
but this - only by a moment  
for once one looks beneath the surface  
there is nothing of substance.

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- Espejismo

An original spanish translation of "Illusionist"

Usted, mi querida,  
significa el gozamiento

aunque esto -  
tan sólo

por lo ahora  
porque si cuando

se mira uno  
debajo

del nivel más superficie  
se lo averiguaría

que no hay nada  
la virtud

de la más mínima  
calidad.

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- Secrets Kept

jealously guarded prideful of such essence  
far off from the fairy tales of youth  
still enchanted so many dreams undreamt.  
No Thief. No Princess yet still we fly  
Instead of carpets some float on hopes  
Secrets kept but known to both;

fiercely defended mistrustful of such promise  
a distance of ages from morn 'til noon  
Pains once felt so fully recalled  
The height of ascent belies a falling depth  
how to describe shades of past unseen?  
Secrets kept but known to both;

honestly believed dutiful of such innocence  
by miles separated proceeds the darkening truth of  
none to learn learning to live  
some loyalties no belief to hold  
Pleaded for an end of two suffering  
Secrets kept but known to both;

fiercely demanded hateful of such process  
from ancient epoch rages flames of oblivion  
chilled and freeze driven beyond madness

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The key to one a devastation of two  
Consequences to be avoided a foregone conclusion  
Secrets kept but known to both.

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- quiet within a storm

Once upon a dream,  
You and I, we had it all.  
During far off days  
flying through Paraiso  
with hands clasped  
bound us tight together.  
Until dusk rose up  
the early twilight fell.  
For the now,  
we count off days;  
by the then,  
eyes casted toward tomorrow.  
We loved, fantasizing a future,  
until we slept away today;  
Soon the twilight fades  
from darkness to light gray.  
This nightmare we have fled.  
Pitch black burned away  
cooled by tender touches.  
Once upon a slumber,  
here, we dream for nothing.  
You and I, my queen;  
You and I will have it all.

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-Then

A beauty she was  
My woman I mean too  
Through a warming film  
That she loved true ----

Could one ever explain  
What lacks through my failing  
My rock your solid foundation  
So broken my need of healing

Your strength to my heart  
How you persevere so I admire  
Ours is the purest  
needed should I expire;

A beauty she was  
My woman I mean too....

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- Sensuous Thirst

Shades of passion  
inflamed by whispers.

Some simple attraction  
though lust tampers.

Pale of Sun  
enquited by blush.

Pining for love  
frantic and hush.

Courage from lips  
trace paths hidden.

Concealed from sight  
below bosom laden.

Shades of primrose  
glistened through need.

Some simple seduction  
kindle for greed.

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- With Life in View

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Though I breathe  
I can not say that I live,  
minute by minute  
I slip, my heart a faulty sieve.

Into a hell,  
My concrete cage turned box.  
The walls close in  
and all the while, time tocks.

I tick away some memory  
after precious moments shared.  
Joyous the years we had  
What followed, how I fared.

In your hands, my all.  
Without reply, I pen life stark.  
Vicious words, my teeth,  
be they more off the mark.

Such could fire my soul,  
bless me wings to fly.  
Our love is no banal thing  
for without this, I'd surely die.

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Yet, still, here I exist.

Perennial purgatory my fate.

Miles upon miles,

This pain knows no sate

Of such breath you give.

My greatest hope a whisper

through this gloom is thick

from you shines a glimmer.

The best of me

all that's tied to you.

Mad, hellbound, I rage

and only love bleeds true.

## Poetics: Explaining the Human Heart

There are many necessary mechanics and mechanisms employed in poetry. Connotation, terms, unique elements, symbolisms and literary chicanery, to name but a few. The tone or attitude of a piece of poetry transforms its words into feelings evoked and senses understood. Word choice matters. Each word is significant and that significance is its meaning to the human heart. What sense do we get from Edgar Allan Poe's "Annabel Lee?" Is there pain? Grief? Bereavement at the separating hand of death? Life's fragility or the supremacy of Love to eclipse the grave? Therein lies the glory in poetry. Its recognizable sentimentality is as intelligibly incomprehensible as a finicky human heart is changeable.

Poetry, at its heart, expresses the universal—our experiences in life. An unique experience, in and of itself, the human condition is as varied as the hearts that survive it and as much in flux. As we go through life our hearts may grow warmer, more open or frigid and exclusive dependent upon our ever-evolving understanding of the human condition. The same applies to poetry, one of the most ancient means of conveying the language of the heart. As I'm a fan of intro- and retrospection, I take myself for example. In my childhood, my very early childhood that is, I felt certain I was the caged bird in Maya Angelou's famous poem. Even at such a tender age, I identified with its lack of liberty; unable to unfurl its wings, away

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at its will; its beautiful lament; the confounding reality of its captivity. Later in youth, it was Poe who spoke to my station. His "The Conquering Worm" and "The Raven" gave vent to my grim and sombrous outlook. What then, for me, had seemed an omni-oppressive and inescapable isolation. An early reality which contributed to my greatest later fortune - finding solitude in any place, time, or situation. Late teenaged years and early adulthood, Whitman's "Pallid Wreath" and "To Those Who've Fail'd," as well as Dickinson's "#444," "#656" and "#1732." Then, in my third decade of life, Lovelace's "To Lucasta, On going to the Wars," John Claise's "An Invite to Eternity," Laila Allush's "The Path of Affliction," and Dickinson again, in her poetic, pithy piece numbered 1049.

Reflecting on myself, I notice two things: change is inherent in our condition - living, that is - and life is incomprehensible without our heart to give it meaning. Nothing in life gives the pursuit of happiness - what is in all reality our search for meaning, reason for being, assignation of purpose - a more resolute significance than a heartfelt conviction.

Contention, compromise and compassion: three "C's" of life. Are we not just bundles of contradictions? If not then, how could I fully agree with Gabo (Gabriel Garcia Marquez) when he said it was useless to explain his reasons to other people because, they only held import for him alone; yet, in the same breath disagree by asserting life has no meaning, no reason, but for that which the heart provides? Water is just water until we drink it then, it becomes the building blocks of life. Like-

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wise, meaning in life is nothing till it is conveyed to and from the heart. The human heart is a mass of contradictions. From beliefs and prejudices to feelings and emotions, the heart knows no equilibrium. Our hearts' constant indecisive temperament correlates poetry's iridescent nature.

At different periods in my life various poems, in no few instances the same poem, have had no meaning, gained or lost it after certain experiences, and changed irreconcilably from what I had once been sure was an unalterable significance. Genius of the poet is being able to express that chimerical sense, demonstrate its universality by means of its particular personality. The mechanics and mechanisms of poetics are not only useful but essential, integral for explaining the human condition, giving forum to the heart on which every stripe and scar gained throughout this journey we term "living" is etched, remembered and resurrected. What other means of communication do we have better suited to the task? What else can give voice to humankind's insignificance counterposed Nature's grandness, the triviality and importance of human endeavors striving against the immensity of time - humanity's unreliable best friend and always charitable nemesis. While I may be being a little too philosophical, it stands to reason without knowing the heart of a matter the things of life would be meaningless.

At any rate, it is by means of our greatest creation - language - that we can communicate the human condition and through poetics its contradictions, complexity and

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come to terms with its myriad possible meanings. There is a final poem I wish to discuss: "De Rebus Belli."

Almost every ancient wisdom, knowledge and such remained obscured until the Roman Empire spread Latin the world over. I chose Latin for this piece's title because, first and foremost, Latin is the language of the philosopher, learned scholar, doctor, and knowledge. Latin because Roman sages and scholars, not least among them the Philosopher-Emperor, were fond of retrospection, introspection and circumspection. "De Rebus Belli" is not merely these but the communication of life truths universal in importance, yet, personal in origin. The concept of the Heart is another such personal/universal fact of life. Each of us has one and we all have a common belief of what constitutes one. The lessons of a life translate to those of others and all as a whole species, generation upon generation. Likewise with the Heart.

This, in my humble view, is why poetry - its poetics, its basest connection of syllables, configuration of consonants and vowels - is the purest and only means of explaining our true heart. The poem exposes life. Life is particular and common to all in one breath. For one but not another "It]o wage this life means Years beyond the bone." Not every aspect is "[W]ar without cease -" some lead a life so charmed that to "[e]nd Dream" would be too horrid. Do I or should I beguilde someone for never experiencing "[M]elan-choly Joy?" Can I really wish my "[T]rophies etched by tears" on somebody else? Misery does love company but what

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of cruelty? By means of the poem we do not only gain company in our saddest moments - "The Hauntings" - but invite others to be party to them and the same follows when it deals with overwhelming joys and all in between.

Life is about moments, living and experiencing these touches our heart of hearts and this really gives them meaning. Whether that meaning be sweet, gruesome, powerful, frivolous, or any multiplicity of meanings. It is poetry that is best suited for the communication of life, a day in life, a moment in time's complex, in many events what we over-complicate, meaning. Poetry is, perhaps, the last lingua franca and, to be sure, the only one of the Heart. This could explain why

To wage this Life means Years beyond the bone.

War without cease - a Peaceful hunger - end Dream;  
Melancholy Joy, our trophies etched by tears -

Memory, the Hauntings, mementos of Madame Victory.

Reflections

## Delphic or Shakespearean? A sketch on Humanity

Some four million years have elapsed since the first - thought - Australopithecus hominin graced the scene. Many paleoanthropologist of days past believed this the turning point in natural history; if nothing else, it does signify the "start" of human history. Since emerging at the tailend of the rough and tumble Pliocene, our species has yet to stop stumbling forward, and, perhaps, the very mechanism of our species' conveyance is the explicit reason why. During the late-18th and majority of the 19th, flowing into early-20th centuries, scientists and no few academicians and scholars were convinced our predilection for upright movement today, was the catalyst for our evolution from primarily tree-dwelling / climbing mammals. No one has successfully explained our quantum leap, overstepping Darwinian logic, from swinging branch to branch, climbing tree trunks to upper limbs, descending only to collect fallen foods or precociously independent offspring thirsty for exploration to one bright and humid day in Autumn - "Foot Loose!"

The argument for humanity's departure from primitive ape-ish animals, by and through greater, more fluid proficiency in walking on two instead of four seemed a good one. After all, do we not all evolve from wriggling balls of downy and joy to quick-crawling accidents awaiting something to happen to until we find ourselves chasing girls we like around the playground? Even George Orwell's "Animal Farm"

depicts the evolutionary bounds made by trotting on two instead of four. For a short while, this specious argument held great sway. Well, that is, until a greater, good many observant individuals put forth some, for lack of better phrases, hard questions. Winning debates over occasional canine and ursid bipedalism was a simple matter. Neither man's best companion nor Smokey the Bear's relatives - not even goats and horses, to be on the safe side - spend a majority or even a large and significant amount of their lives on hindquarters. They, as do many other animals (reptiles included), only display flashes of bipedalism. Even our closest genetic relatives: rhesus monkeys, lack real proficiency in walking upright; as too do other primates, including our intellectual cousins - chimpanzees. Still, the topic of birds screws the pooch. These flighty wonders of evolution date back to the Jurassic Period of monstrous, King Kong-sized reptiles and not a primate in sight. The reign of Tyrannosaurus Rex, cut short by a fiery ball from the heavens, was the era in which carnivorous, winged, scaled, feathered and not-so-feathered avian predecessors dominated the skies. As a species, they have been bipedal for as long as they could fly, if not longer. Millions upon millions of years prior to paradigm-shifting *Australopithecus africanus* and, yet, despite such a headstart, avians do not shape the future; though, they do deflat our bipedal balloon quite nicely.

For the most part, no real, pure bipedalists remain in our day and age. Could any intelligent person really argue

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against the Big Brain stance? A good, golly many scholars posulated, not that walking upright led to a bigger brain and all its attendant consequences, but rather, an increasing brain preceded our physiognomic morphology which resulted in bipedalism. Now that we have that mouthful out of the way, it is important to note that with changes in our brains and its size there were parallel, corresponding ones in our physiology. A larger brain meant a heavier load on the neck, shoulders, spine, and related muscles which, general consensus says, provoked an increasingly upright disposition. Soon, from the need to support the head upright, our posture morphed; bones lengthened, over time their positionings realigned; visual and auditory orientations made diametric shifts; and, in slow, pain-staking stages, we transitioned, just as infants do, until we were "Dirty Dancing" to Belia Cruz.

The Big Brain Club (my affectionate term), has a very large membership roster and some interesting, heavy-weight sponsors. None of us today should find it astonishing that René Descartes was a vocal member of said club. His views were lucid on the subject of levelling evolution (humanity's, at any rate): reason was the spark that compelled the fire. Cartesian-influenced paleoanthropologists were enamored with the concept. How else could you reasonably explain our complex existence? The bandwagon broke down with the sheer weight of all those who jumped on it. Reason, as catalyst, rendered a much more palatable explanation. A bigger brain,

in particular, the 'neocortex' or new brain predominated by an evergrowing more advanced, highly developing frontal lobe, meant structural changes to support. These gave permission for new talents to express themselves in physical and mental terms - previous dexterity employed in climbing, grasping, clinging coupled with a larger, advanced brain fell into the service of shelter building, later tool manufacturing; and, yes, of course, all the mental prowess demanded a naturally disadvantaged mammalian who had, but until recently, been, more or less, prey in trees and now lived on level ground with all the most threatening terrestrial predators. With so many megapredators on land and by sea, taking into account nascent Australopithecine mental capacities, limitations as regards capabilities and such. The playing field advantage was tilted away from our ancestor Australopithecus and, by all modern objective standards, our species' progenitors committed themselves to a suicidal path. Our predecessors' unKantian transition forces us to question how much "reason" a big brain gifted early hominins. Besides this, reason does seem to explain everything: bipedalism, human physiognomy, dexterous capabilities, sense orientation; everything, that is, except the elephant in the room.

Four million years and counting change is a long time. From Australopithecus to Neanderthalus and growing divergences of Homo (e.g., erectus, habilis, sapien, etc.). Our species has, for the most part, flouted Nature's rules. What one paleoanthropologist summed up as a "[m]entally unbalanced

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predator threatening an otherwise harmonious natural order." Compared to other species, crocodiles for instance, ours is still in its tender infancy. Just consider our four million year old presence totals only one-one hundredth of the longest known ice age, some four hundred millions during the pre-Cambrian period; that, by the way, would be some eight hundred million years ago, long before life began populating the continents with flora and fauna. In comparison, our "a long time" is infinitesimally tiny which turns our achievements into legendary, perhaps, even godly, feats. Homo sapiens boasts a species count of over seven billion; yes, 'b' as in big brain. Perhaps, the only other single species comparables are marine animals (e.g., crill and shrimp) and birds. No other megafauna and predator is as populous. We can also brag about being able to survive on all seven continents, sharing space with unwelcoming, pushy neighbors such as Ursus maritimus (i.e., polar bears), and even, in outer space. Whether it be due to bipedalism or enlarged brains, humankind has evolved at lightning speed from fragile recipient of Natural Order's imperatives to pinnacle, quasi-independent of Nature, superpredaceous agent striving to bend Nature to humanity's caprice. Humankind has some staggering claims to fame: aztec, maya, inca, egyptian, indian pyramids; written language, recorded history; mathematics, science and vaccinations for Polio and other formerly fatal diseases, bacteria, and viruses; in vitro procreation; even, cooking up new species hybrids among many other head scratches. On the other hand, humanity also has equal, if not greater,

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claim to infamy: directly and indirectly causing the extinction of innumerable species (e.g., asian lions, cave bears, woolly mammoths); changing the global ecology in less time than it took to create; and, worst of all, the only species which indulges in mass genocide with apparent glee. If you take a moment, as I did, to reflect on Homo sapiens' penchant for pernicious activities, our proclivity for destruction. Then, you can probably understand what provoked Matt Cartmill to conclude we "endanger" an "otherwise harmonious natural order." But, while humanity does appear to be precocious in the extreme, aggressive in seeking out avenues for progress, and, in no few instances, ignoring the potential detriments of said advances. These, according to the likes of Cartmill and company, "deleterious" characteristics have also made every positive consequence of our machinations possible. No one should forget, our encompassing knowledge of anatomy comes, mainly, from our destruction and deconstruction of other human beings - alive and not-so-much; Frankenstein, anyone? Prodigious advancements aside and moral judgments notwithstanding for the moment. Are we any more certain on matters of substance than were 9th century BCE Greek sages? This brings us back to the elephant in the room. What is the meaning, purpose, significance, reason for human life? Human existence? Is there a purpose at all? What does it mean to be human? Would it be more poetic justice or just ironic that we hunted elephantids to near extinction, save the last remaining species protected in parts of Africa

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and parts Far East; yet, they would come to represent human-kind's reluctance and obstinancy in addressing obvious, unavoidable themes. Seems Ol' Woolly enjoys the last laugh from beyond the grave, forever taunting us postmodern sapients.

Over several centuries we have tried to stalk, corner, ambush, flank, and bring down this perennial mocker with varying degrees of failure. It is our modern equivalent of Jason's quest for the Golden Fleece or Theseus's attempting to carry Persephone from the Underworld. The meaning of life - what it means to be human - has been and continues to be a source of much consternation. Bipedalism and the electric slide or big brains and Hegelian dialectics? Paleanthropologists have debated the exact delineation between ancient/primitive and modern/advanced hominins as indecisively as when the Pleistocene beginning the Quaternary period ends, ceding to the Holocene epoch and if, indeed, that latter is succeeded by an egotistical "Anthropocene?" Questions regarding when the egg hatched the chicken lead to never-ending abstraction, postulates and incomplete hypotheses resulting in the very discouraging realization that the more we learn the less certain we are of what we knew. To be honest, while it would be nice to know when modernity supplanted antiquity and in what measure. Our postmodern reality is defined by culture's evolution, but the main and only constant character of culture is creation. Renowned paleanthropologist Louis Leakey was the first one who said we "crossed the threshold with our ability to create." If one accepts the premise then, we postmoderns sur-

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passed modernity's limitations with our ability to dictate. The most positively potent manifestation of humanity's deviant usurpation of Nature—her prerogatives and dominion—was not an ever-increasing lifespan nor drastic changes in infant mortality, but rather our viability in a variety of climes. Actually, our presence and flourishing in every climate, even the most harsh and unforgiving on both ends of the spectrum—frigid arctics and desiccated deserts; not to forget our zero grav-habitats. Mother Nature stares across the table at us befuddled by how her latest creation escaped from being a rook on the chessboard she and Father Time had played on to being an equal. She is not alone in puzzling this because, the powers—fire, culture, electricity, etc.—that elevated our species to equal footing with our Mistress have proven likewise very detrimental. Loath as I am to quote any superhero action film, Ben Parker was spot on—“with great power comes great responsibility.” Though, time has shown we seem only able to circumnavigate this responsibility in lieu of taking it head on.

Stepping beyond paleoanthropology and evolution theory conflicts, the entire concept of history, as we know it, is a human invention. “History” is one of the greatest expressions of our creativity. For those of us uninitiated, history is not a mere record of past events. If you wanted to get technical, there is a history inherent in every particle making up any bit of mass extant in the universe from the time of its presentation until its dissolution. In a way, history is time's

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passage which then leads us to a few head scratches. If history is really only the passing of time in things existing in the cosmos then, what exactly is modern history? Ancient or classic and prehistory? By definition, would not prehistoric be the absence of history, meaning nonexistence? Now that our heads are set on medium spin, we can begin tackling our conception of history and its significance.

History is the pristine mirror of humanity's depravity. Were history to simply record events, important and trivial, it would be a thing little fought over. Instead, it encompasses the contextual, subtexts, evident and subliminal connotations, or psychological developments (arguably, more often retrogression than progressions) in humanity and human history. Which is why history goes to the victor. We human beings are very ego-centric animals - I, me, my, mine, ours. While history may have, in its earliest concepts, been intended to keep track of things we have had zero qualms with appropriating it for our ego-bound purposes. The perversion of history, historical records and events, dates back at least, to remembered antiquity. The ancient Romans went from being outcasts, riff-raff, unwanted and deviants to royal, imposing emperors descending from the gods themselves. The celebrated and ever-growing in renown Aztecs provide, in my humble opinion, the clearest example of the human tendency to "correct and clarify" history. Through the Conquista of Mexico - the most minutely recorded - it is clear see the prerogatives of civilization's victors. Evil conquistadores did their level best to erase and

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efface Aztec history and superimpose their retrospective version on the natives; luckily they failed. Much as apologists and later revisionists are fond of condemning "demonic, greedy European invaders" (were I similarly naive and idealist, I might do the same). Truth of the matter is they only did what the noble, esteemed Aztecs did: subjugate those they conquered. If we are to be completely genuine, like the descendants of the orphaned Romulus and Remus, Aztecs - the people of the sun - corrected and clarified their Chichimeca roots. By the late-15th, early-16th centuries when Old World collided with New World, it was beyond difficult to segregate fact from fiction in Aztec lore; even, for the most knowledgeable of their own. I guess we all get conceited with success in our own fables....

Historically speaking (no pun intended), hominins have yet to find a challenge they could not defeat. I say 'they', but I mean 'us' by extension. Have no fear, us postmoderns today are due and diligent participants in this developing depravity. History's perversion, as you can imagine, dates back to the very dawn of acculturation and the spark of humanity. Bipedal proficiency, proliferating superior brain power, various means and methods of communicating, growing comprehension, adaptability, all the plentiful gifts and dire curses of our natural endowments coalesced into one scary concept turned reality: civilization. The yoke of civilization - what the pilgrims came to impose on the natives; what conquistadores subjected Taíno, Siboney, Aztec, Maya, Inca, and others to; before the Aztecs forced

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conformity on their neighbors, Alexander the Great did the same to Greek and the Persian Empire's world, as the Romans did in their turn, and all the way back to the first hominins "civilizing" their barbarian, savage contemporaries. Though, back then, we were probably a lot more honest and called a spade a spade: eliminating the competition, as we would later with cultural and historical narratives. Surveying the ruin of post-hominin history - there only being three types of history: pre-historic, historic and post-hominin historic; what we understand as history proper - one thing is apparent: we are something "special." So, I advise you: strap on your helmet, stop licking the window and pay attention.

Humanity, or at least the part we hold up to the light, and culture combined to create Society. Society, being a system of civilization, imposes certain constraints on its members (i.e., law and order, rules, consequences, give and take); it creates a neat and orderly mess. A long, unbroken lineage is evident in the descent of humanity. Parallels are inescapable, as are comparisons, between barbarous antiquity, modern and post-modern society. Actually, the only real quantifiable difference between us today and ancients yesterday is that our bloodlust, savagery and pernicious tendencies parade around in the wrappings of civility, decency and equality. Still, the fabric is sheer because, ever so often, at frequently irregular though reliable intervals, humanity's shadow pokes through the veil. There is a pogrom here, tiny genocide there, bloody coup,

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Religious persecution, conventional war, or unconventional slaughter; and this is only on larger scales. Depravity is much more prevalent on the smaller and smallest (i.e., individual) scales. The bastion of Post-Modern Civilization - the United States of America - has had the world's most prolific history of serial killers, not to mention staggering rates of incarceration, which prompts one to wonder just how much evolutionary progress we, as a species, have made since the bumbling, unKantian, anti-Hegelian, quasi-suicidal reasoning that led our late-Pliocene progenitor pioneers to hop down and cross over the threshold.... If nothing else we have been consistent in our fall, just like Manny the Woolly from "Ice Age" with his drive forward. Perhaps, it all comes down to a fall and not a leap?

Seeing as though the likelihood of me not being ~~ex~~communicated for writing persuasively on evolutionary science is slim to none. I might as well ensure my place as a second Socrates and earn my share of hemlock. The Fall of Man, hope nobody admonishes my sexist terminology, is a touchy but interesting subject. According to the Church and Holy Scriptures, the world and all life on it, and now, off it, is only about six thousand years old give or take. In fact, if we were to base all calculations on Jewish calendars, we would only be around 5,780 years old as a species and world which lends itself to some impressive problems. Though, I tend not to keep company with the likes of Elliot Smith, Arthur Keith and

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and those of the Big Brain Club, I can not say I would even humor bipedalism, let alone creationism! Creationism seems to be the basis for every religion seeking to align and square off archaeological evidence and paleoanthropologic realities. Not speaking from any personal convictions, but strictly on an intellectual plane, religion seems much less an explanation for life as an absolution for humanity's shadow. Going beyond the fact no established religion, esoterics, hedonist, paganism, or new age spiritualism has yet to explain Homo ferzensis, naledi, sapien, habilis; neanderthalus, australopithecus, troglodytes, and the like; let alone Tyrannasaurus Rex and his lesser, maybe taller relatives - other over-sized reptiles. Today's and yesterday's religions and doctrines have succeeded inasmuch as they failed. Religion still has difficulty in terms of existence but speaks fluently about the human condition. Ecclesiastic princes have reigned long before Paul ascended the dias. Humanity's conviction of itself as something unique, special and "superior" is irretrievably intertwined with our creation of deity; a higher power, some supreme, omnipotent/present entity, or, most often, being which, ever so conveniently, we happen to be patterned after. Though every religion says it differently, in the end, they all say the same thing: humankind is made in the image of God (who or whatever that god, gods, goddess, or goddesses may be.) They [religions] also claim we are imperfect. Can perfection create an imperfection? It stands a good chance if humanity tumbled out of divinity. But, that brings us

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right back to the fact Manny the Mammoth is still alive and we are very far away from "Ice Age 2"; perhaps, this is the seventh installment - "Bone of Humanity?"

While today, we rob Peter to pay Paul, our wise and cantankerous ancients were fudging and smudging things galore, as they did when it came to their "epic" origins. I find it intriguing, actually quizzical, and you may also, that regardless the cultural influence, era, archaeological time period, geography or ideology (were there to be one), every single origination story of humans has us popping out the womb ready for a "West Side Story" dance-off like Athene leaping forth from Zeus's head fully clad, sword in hand prepared to emasculate the God of War. Therein lies the problem. Adam and Eve found themselves just as we are today minus our unrestrained gregariousness then, a maleficence slithered and soothe-sayed Eve into corrupting Adam into tasting the forbidden fruit-knowledge-which resulted in - Well, you know how the story goes. Herein we find the expression of creativity. Seeing as though the evolutionary trail of humanity can not be effaced, erased and replaced. Religions obviate history by pronouncing our progenitors as perfect replicas of harmonious divinity, that is, until we began to put on airs. That preceded the Fall, the expulsion from Tomoanchan and made human-kind's derangement an eventuality. From perfect divine creation we descended into the mire of susceptibility. At the risk of sounding crude and over-simplistic, religion seems to

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have been and continues to be a means to explain, justify and, ultimately, absolve humankind's manifold failings. Such is the imposition and expression of guilt to a higher power, who is ultimately responsible, exercises supreme authority, and can "forgive" their misguided subordinates' follies and misadventures. The creation of morality is one of the chief consequences of religious order. By means of religious mores, to be more precise, transgression of such, comes the distress of guilt and a guilty conscience. The root of sin is guilt which provokes a confessional crisis, what expresses itself in the moral breakdown of a soldier who no longer feels his former all-encompassing righteous conviction in his mission. My favorite phrase for the institution of confessing comes by way of French author Louis-Ferdinand Céline: "disencumbering cogitative diarrhea." No matter the terminology it remains a method of evasion, a correction and clarification of human nature.

Even more so than providing absolution for a pernicious species' mishaps and unavoidable fallacies, religion represents the foundation, the bedrock of social order. This is realized in the exercise of secular authority. From each's infancy, the state and religion have always been wedded. Civilization, from conceptualization to actuality, is a study in subjugation: the exaltation of Law and Order. Rulers have always had recourse to God for their privilege. For Taino and Aztec cultures, caciques and tlatoanis, respectively, were believed to be the earthly representatives of divinity; in a way,

they were defied as were their old world contemporaries. This mixing of divine right and secular power led Machiavelli to state any act of a king is a kindly act, beyond and above reproach. Monarchs, whether ordained by the Pope or elevated by the people, were the embodiment of power. The power of benevolence or reproach, life and death. Premised on their elevation, rulers were the favored of the gods given due authority and permission from the heavens to lead the rest of us. Their word was law and through one leaders and the mechanisms they set in motion, over time, we created institutions of government. Though, as is well-known, history shows itself fond of repetition and humanity has always been liable to destroy whatever it may create. As we created "history," we also created religion and king (i.e., government) and acquiesced to subject ourselves to their authority. For a long while this sublimation was met with equal humility by rulers - king as first servant. It did not take long for the fall to occasion an outflow of our innate deity. Antiquity gives a terrific example in Roman history. Trajaninus Superbius, the last king of Rome, proved the later Lord Actons reversed adage: "Power tends to corrupt; and, absolute power corrupts absolutely." The unminged acts and mental decompositions of monarchs have become legend only the world over. Vlad is an appropriate example. Of course considering now interrelated secular and ecclesiastic authority is, it is only right that the Romans would expel monarchy

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as surely as Adam and Eve were swift-booted out of Eden. Romans despised the very notion of a king, even the word itself. After all, all it took for Julius Caesar to be assassinated was the whisper he had kingly designs. More than leaving a bad taste, the idea of king provoked a visceral fear. Was it the fear of another Tarquin rising from among the masses or the unruly king lurking within that drove them to found the Republic? The same question could be asked about the French Revolution of 1789, the Winter Revolt leading to the Romanov dynasty being extinguished, New World rebellions of the 19th century, uprisings throughout Europe and Asia, multiple coup d' etats characterizing the 20th century, and impeachment attempts in the bastion of Post-Modern Civilization. To be quite honest, we appear to be unable, maybe unwilling is closer to the truth, to accept any schematic of law and order for very long. Christianity split from Judaism. Protestants and Lutherans and Baptists and Episcopelians and Evangelicans and more from Christianity to form Christendom. Pagan religions are co-opted in parts, ruled heretical in others. Religions have been vitiated, invalidated, reevaluated and reinstated or reestablished under new or altered banners. Monarch to emperor to dictator to representative to president and prime minister. By dictates of Papal Bull or majority rule of democracy; from a general's bullhorn or congressional lecture; civilization has sought what society is meant to achieve - control and obedience; yet, the infernal yoke of

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subjugation - religious or secular - has never sat quite comfortably on humanity's shoulders.

Perhaps, it is not only Mother Nature who is flummoxed by our audacity? We, besotted by our seemingly limitless capacity for creation, revel in our grandiose self-delusions. Descended from gods; born perfect and whole; elevated above the baser creatures of Nature; deposed Lord and Lady by "Manifest Destiny." No wonder insanity was among Pandora's Seven Woes. Unlike Dorothy's scarecrow, we do have a brain and it has been incessantly bent to the unsuccessful task of finding reason, significance and purpose behind the human condition - life. Leaving aside missing links, big brains vs. two pegs, and all the other evolutionary hubbub and unresolvable, infuriating conundrums of paleoanthropology; as well as religion's unexplained and unaccounted several tens of hundred million year increments, that every fall seems to coincide with modern history and that creationism is about as reasonable as "Ancient Aliens." Humanity's caprice has always lent itself to progress; a departure from the known to the unknown, or, at least, something different.

We create and in my view that is what sets us apart from the rest of Nature's critters. To elaborate on Leakey's hypothesis - it is not the act of creation alone but our interpretation and reimagination - comprehension and communication - of creation that makes us a different entity from the rest. Art, music, literature. These are the primary

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arenas in which creativity expresses itself. Humanity, religion, the exercise of secular authority all manifest the "pursuit of happiness" in the human condition. The words of Shakespeare in the mouth of Edmund: "[a]s if we were villains by necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion." He speaks to the core inexplicableness of our situation. By means of creation man has given elevation to the human condition, yet, in the same breath provided it utter incomprehensibility. One thing we fear more than death itself is a meaningless existence. For this reason, and this alone, we struggle with the cumbersome speculations of eras and ages past. To be certain, we are faced with a choice of equal evils. More creative we become - surpassing this or that intellectual limit, these or those physical boundaries - the more wayward we turn. Just think about it.... How is it we live in space, can even debate space travel in the immediate future and theorize establishing colonies on other planets, but we have yet to comprehend construction of ancient civilizations' pyramids? Are still mind-boggled by several mathematical enigmas wrapped in riddles and boxed in question marks since antiquity. Our constant quest for new external horizons to challenge and eclipse correlates to our need to avoid succumbing to an inability to achieve the same internally. Whether divine spontaneous creation or doddering along with the evolutionary train, the more civilization has matured the better its masking of its failings; the more

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spectacular the changes in physical, material circumstances, greater our retardation on the immaterial plane. At its core, the issue is not so much creation, but its role in designating a purpose for the human condition. How do we delineate between meaningless and meaningfulness? Is human capacity for ingenuity, the manifestation of our inborn creative spark, really all that important for understanding life?

Music is a great example, it speaks to the variety in our experience and interpretations in the tumultuous human condition we seem to be invariably stuck in. Music, like every artform voicing our creation of significance, has officially, unofficially, and off-times found itself at the mercy of secular demands. Dmitri Shostakovich's Leningrad Symphony (his 7th Symphony) was greedily appropriated by the soviet government to form part of their war effort during World War II - which, by the way, is still the most embarrassing demonstration of collective depravity since post-hominin history recorded its first genocides. The depiction of humanity, more precisely "human-ness", in secular authority takes many forms - national anthems, military marches, patriotic ballads, and such, but the Leningrad was special. The seventh spoke to Shostakovich's native city, St. Petersburg, Russia's face to the West. It spoke to his people, a nation and world torn by conflict. What's more and most important, it voiced the composer's experience in this indivisible quagmire we know as life. We get a feeling Shostakovich was hunting to pin down some sense, meaning,

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purpose from the unhinged sadism of the Nazi Leningrad Siege, the Great Terror of Stalin's iron-fisted totalitarianism, Lenin's October Revolution, the February Revolution, full of Tsarist Russia, and the history he lived: the death, the pain and grieving, the destruction, every ounce of senselessness unleashed by human depravity - the flipside to the coin of humanity, humanity's shadow - uninhibited by mores and social control mechanisms; the abolishment of Law and Order and free reign to the beautiful fury of humanity. He was searching for something we all seek, in due course, the silver-lining to life's bellicose gray cloud cover. Few things in life force us to search for the good, no matter how miniscule, as death. With death we often come across music, religion and humanity all mixing and matching. Death is something we all come to know, intimately so, regardless our stations in life. Songs, melodies, hymns, funeral marches, requiems, laments. Music has, perhaps, a longer, more storied history with divine kinds of kingdoms on earth than with those secular. "Amazing Grace" is such a popular hymn, not only because it attempts to give some semblance of intelligibility to the only sunset humankind has been unable to rise from, but because, in like manner as Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony, it gives testimony to our need, our deepest desire to comprehend that which has annoyingly remained just beyond our mounting understanding. Through art and music we create a medium in which the individuality of the human condition can be announced in

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visual and auditory representations; emotive, challenging, even soothing or enthralling. It takes the singular and peculiar into the common and universal then, back into subjectivity because, humanity would have no voice were there no one to hear its language, see its portraits and re-imagine them or internalize their messages. Music and art, likewise humanity's other grand creation, history, record more than that we lived. They give much needed context and subtext to possible whys, while in the most frustrating of all circular semantics, they still leave the only question of substance unanswered: why do we live?

It is our one ultra-exasperating puzzle. To date, our pre-historic, non-exorcisable pottergeist remains more real than many early-hominin cave paintings of long-tusked, shaggy-coated, herbivore goliaths. Though the paleoanthropologic record is clear we still appear incapable of heeding the sage advice at the entrance to Apollo's Temple at Delphi: Know thyself. It is absolutely ludicrous! We know about pre-Cambrian ice ages, reason for cyanosis, subatomic particles such as fermions, gluons and beyond; we even know how to clone and use technology to print organic materials, eyeballs and other human organs; yet, we still ponder the meaning of life... I can not be the only one who finds it absurd. Literature seems to me the only hope of explaining this madness. Beginning with the historian and moving to the playwright, one thing is certain: every member of the literary genus is caught up in

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this frenzy, in some measure or degree. Every piece of literature aspires in some way, whether conscious as in Dr. Frankl's "Man's Search for Meaning" or unconscious as we see in modern-day fiction or fables, to achieve the as of yet unachieved.

Doubtful mankind has a greater creation than our various means by which we communicate all we experience in the human condition. The creation of writing more than our species' prolific polymath talents - we speak as many, if not more, languages and dialects than nations - makes it probable that some later-day Einstein, Bohr, Socrates, Lucretius, Thales, Franklin, or beloved by the Muses will be able to put an end to our haunting. Whether it be for secular or divine purposes art, music, literature, creativeness and humanity itself are all subject to interpretation. And said interpretation is impossible without some form of conveyance. By this conveyance, not our mechanical movement in bipedalism, but rather our various methods of communicating. Perhaps, therein, lies the means for putting to rest vindictive pre-historic mammoth spirits....

The truth is truth, no matter its guise; some days it is a hideous or brutal thing, other days not so much, just honest. Despite, and, maybe in spite of, the greatness of humanity's creative genius and capacity to overcome, our thirst for dominance and more sordid tendencies towards depravity play an equally important role. Buddhists may be convinced the whole point of reincarnation is striving to attain a state of Nirvana and by no means like that of Kizk Co-

bane. Christians of all stripes and colors feel the goal is to live Christ-like. Few of us can claim to be as exemplary as Mahatma Gandhi or Mother Teresa, let alone as blemish-free as God incarnate. Then again, there are the Suhartos and Adolfs of the world who pursue genocide to achieve the perfection of humanity. Or you have the various demented despots ruling countries and corporations and families who only see in domineering others life's fulfillment. Both, by the bye, are not so common. The overwhelming majority of us fall somewhere among the ignominious middle. The creation of religion meant the imposition of law and order through veneration and, later, morality. Secular authority naturally evolved out of divine right as surely as every culture's origination descended from the gods or resulted from some holy inspiration. Though, each gave law and order; that law, such order was always meant to give meaning, provide purpose and direction for us. In the human condition there is plenty of joy, disappointment, misery, happiness, passion, quixotic and utterly ridiculous. All of these and much, much more are the attendant consequences of the human condition. Some forty million years ago we, our species, might have been in the first embryonic years, our nascent divergence, which just over four million years ago bore fruit in the first recognizable hominid - Australopithecus. Some five messianic millenia from our present day, we may be "civilizing" barbarian, savage extra-terrestrials on intergalactic planetary campaigns for new

habitable planets as our modern ancestors did when establishing divine rule and secular order among their uncouth, uncultured and underdeveloped contemporaries, some six thousand years ago. We read the Mesoamerican-Spanish conquistador codexes; relive post-modern, nuclear history; unearth fully preserved mummies; half-obiterated Sumerian or Phoenician stone and bronze tablets, and continue to find ever-mounting evidence of exactly how immense is our incomprehension of past hominin civilizations, in general, and our species' ingenuity, in particular. Many before me and, hopefully, few after will have said, "the more we learn the less we know." With our elephant in the room, nothing can be done. The curse of humanity, by all objective standards, seems to be to forever pursue purpose - good, evil, or neutral; anything, anything whatsoever, just so long it transfers meaning to what most of us find to be irritating and confusedly meaningless. Humanity's memory and what all it will be remembered for is bound up in our common history made of our peculiar individualities and experiences. Our elusive "purpose of life" is, undeniably, an individual concept. What's more, it is an unique pursuit. In its very singularity, our search for life's purpose provides that purpose which allows the aged after eight, nine, ten score decades to pass away with a sense of accomplishment, convinced they have fulfilled their special purpose, some purpose at all. Beyond that, maybe, life has no purpose besides experiencing the human condition in all its variety, which could be why we

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have yet to find any universal answer to the most important of all questions.

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- A Raza Fuerza

Reticence, my humble speech - manner -  
Por eso no me piensan macho  
Aunque, soy hombre humilde y  
Pensativo, how I am judged or even  
To such degrees persecuted - as other -  
- de mentalidad distinta tanto color  
Burning desire Woman's softest reproach  
Lust. Accusation. ¡Ay, Dios! the need of her  
Which tints mi piel, se sonrojiza.  
What of being?, being café con gotas de leche  
De la rabia propia which never sleeps  
Amable, cariño, simpático, carece de  
La beligerancia, el porte agresivo y bravo.  
H por hombre, el macho, antítesis to weak.  
She curls in my cavernous cage  
Some place where a Battered Flesh - absent.  
La alimento cotidiana con toda la  
Dignidad, el orgullo y el más profundísimo  
Dolor which never calms nor grows dull.  
That they debate y me dudan a espaldas  
Porque no tengo sed de alzar la voz  
Ni siquiera do they know my mien  
An acumen below their farthest,  
Most fantastic endeavors failed.

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The persona, Jung's mask - infamous -  
Though, I have yet to attain it.  
Sí que ahora me entristezco tanto  
Que lo sé, my Love for those  
Is not equal to that they harbor for me  
A causa de que no grito, ni tampoco  
Could I puff my plumage  
Were they to poke and pick and angle  
All of which is done, they do y  
Todavía, yo sigo callado, hacer el amor  
Al colorado innato que sólo me acompaña  
Precaution, reflection, pensar antes de hablar  
Ni actuar sin reflexionarme  
Though, because I do not proclaim  
Proceed with the minutest decible that keeps  
Dare not I, bare it large and loudest for  
The whole of my Depravity and this Closed Society  
My quiet nature, soft timbre and sentimentality  
But know, for they are within that's surface  
At a depth tan hondo como el abís.  
Martial as I remain, to retire - my early grave  
No lo respizo, apenas lo aquanto  
And, yet, I am! I stand! I rage!  
Not in words así como los machos  
Sus maneras no las comprendo y no  
Lo nunca lograré for want of being

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Being a breed apart and of slight atavism  
Atavistic, savage, or uncivilized in nature  
Deviancy, la enfermedad de nuestra modernidad  
Us, the Long Lost Link, barely extant.  
So me lo apuntan el dedo murique  
Indicative of my... different-ness -  
A mi manera, a mi movimiento firme;  
Desde que había nacido en California,  
A Land of golden blood, yes, anger  
Se radica, mi cultura, en el machismo y na' más  
Sadly, I am not boisterous; a square,  
A quadrangle among ellipticals or diamantes  
Por lo general, I fume in silence, awaiting,  
No espero ni busco el límite agotador  
Still, todavía, aún sí que esperar  
There is a such thing as tomorrow  
And he carry her, burdens through  
Or is it from - his mistress's yesterdays -  
Blood to Ink to Tears to blood and Despair  
The placidity of a temperament lacking temper  
Neither desesperación ni hopeful love  
Inflames my choice, informing this course too  
Little is known forged as I am by Alexander  
Conservatismo hasta llegar al momento adecuado  
Explosive by some, pernicious according to most  
Plodding y peligroso must needs be there

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Bleeding my Void of blues, reds, finally, of white.  
Since I must be here, degraded  
I shall demand no half measures  
Esto, porque soy más que machito, I will  
With my pens, papeles, libros y pensamientos  
Take to my designated corner of your hell  
And, as cerebral as I was when at Front  
Guerrreando en contra todas las ideas, concepts  
No, - conceptions- mi propio pueblo, la Patria  
Que creó a mis antepasados, mi Papá;  
That hot Salsa, that flows from Void to extremity.  
I war in silent deeds, scheme revenge in shadow  
Draft my opposite's defeat, a smile of glee  
Buried deep beneath the facade many can only hope,  
But there be none, is only just as such  
Porque no sollozo ni por mi lamento ni  
Por lo suyo según a la ética común.  
A villain, relishing the foretaste of an aftermath  
Que eso de ser macho o lo macho que es  
No se refiere tan a la voz ni alardear como  
A los valores inmutables y ¡los propósitos internos!  
Never could I feign a peacock ruffling my feathers  
Sí, I preen; por supuesto, I groom incessant  
But, to way's end? To what of being?  
Mighty Brown Eagle, surveying the Sonora  
Lofty Stork over La Habana harbors-

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Cazando en silencio, stalking, living my utility  
No, I guess I lack el machismo y que  
No puedo afirmar a estar macho  
For I do not bark as poodles and pomeranians  
Nor strut as do our most common pigeons.  
As wolf, I bite; como jaguar, I devour, I-  
No wondrous identity to behold or scorn-  
Lo probaré, plying my trade - war not pretense, -  
Tan sólo hombre soy yo.

# Acknowledgements

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To Zachary H.R.W. Walsey, III, get all the sunlight and Jesus you can then, come meet me in the gloomiest of dungeons to take part in this trainwreck you instigated. Yes, this is your fault.

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I've never claimed the title "poet." It feels almost blasphemous to make the association. If it weren't for the encouragement, interest and enthusiasm of all those who early on gave me an indulgent ear to pull on; this would've remained that terrible idea that never was. Sueann - an amazing mind, sharp critique and the best of enablers. Noel - like the tenders of orchids, you're never lacking in enthusiasm. To Antoinette, Ginga, Julie, Josh and Jess, Nichole, Eric, Brian, Jerome, Juan, Michael, Dawn, Michelle and Leanna: you've helped to breathe life into this Frankenstein; a thing unexplainable. To the One upstairs (or down below), I don't always like you, but in the end, I'm eternally grateful.

Last but never least, my Muse - to whom this work is dedicated. You inspire me in more ways than one could ever imagine. Villain though I am, you make me believe in tomorrow

The reader, without you, words in the wind.

Selected Readings

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Anderson, M. Tobin. Symphony for the City of the Dead:  
Dmitri Shostakovich and the Siege of Leningrad.

Beard, Mary. SPQR: A history of Ancient Rome.

Berlin, Isaiah. The Crooked Timber of Humanity.

Blanco, Richard. For all Us, One Today: An Inaugural  
Poet's Journey.

Cano, José Luis. Lírica española de hoy: Antología.

Freud, Sigmund. Civilization and Its Discontents.

Handel, Nathalie, ed. The Poetry of Arab Women: A Con-  
temporary Anthology.

Johnson, Thomas H. ed. The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson.

Jung, Carl G. The Undiscovered Self.

Leon-Portilla, Miquel. Quince Poetas del Mundo Nahuatl; The  
Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico (trans.  
Lipson de Kemp); see original, Visión de los Vencidos.

Martí, José. Ismaelillo; versos sencillos.

Nezuda, Pablo. Cien Sonetos de Amor.

Perzalta, Bernaldo. El Poeta en su Tierra: Diálogos con Octavio Paz.

Plato. The Early Socratic Dialogues.

Poe, Edgar Allan. The Complete Tales of Edgar Allan Poe.

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About the Author

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