

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Rubén Casas for the degree of Masters of Fine Arts in Creative Writing presented on May 2, 2008

Title: Modern Apostles

Abstract approved:

Tracy Daugherty

Modern Apostles actively attempts to blur the line between academic scholarship and narrative fiction for the purpose of satirizing the social and the political assumptions of its contemporary moment. By appropriating the loudest voices in dominant American culture, the inter-textual narratives (1) call attention to the voices that go unheard, ignored, while (2) recognizing that there is an abundance of absurdity in what contemporary culture simultaneously produces and consumes; there is no need to create more absurdity, and finally (3) are transparent about their dialogic nature—how they instantly are added to the cacophony of voices they mock.

Humor and levity, the brand of these narratives, make the intolerable palatable in a culture that touts itself as tolerant.

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Modern Apostles

by
Rubén Casas

A THESIS

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APPROVED:

Major Professor, representing Creative Writing

Chair of the English Department

Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Rubén Casas, Author

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Modern Apostles

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Modern Apostles

by Rubén Casas

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IN ORDER TO FORM AN IMPARTIAL JUDGEMENT UPON IT, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN NECESSARY TO HAVE READ ALL THE HISTORIES, ALL THE MEMOIRS, AND ALL THE MANUSCRIPT PRODUCTIONS, FOR THROUGH THE LEAST OMISSION MIGHT ARISE AN ERROR, WHICH MIGHT LEAD TO OTHERS WITHOUT LIMIT.

– GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

WE DESIRE A FRAGMENT OF HUMAN HISTORY AND ONE, INDEED, THAT IS DRAWN NOT FROM THE PAST BUT FUTURE TIME, THEREFORE A PREDICTIVE HISTORY.

– IMMANUEL KANT

THE MAN WHO HAS NO MEMORY MAKES ONE OUT OF PAPER.

– GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ

MODERN APOSTLES

FOUR NARRATIVES RECLAIMED FROM THE 20TH & 21ST
CENTURIES

RUBEN CASAS, DIRECTOR OF RECLAMATION, EASTERN
BOARD

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DECLARATION

Modern Apostles, A PALIMPSEST DUTIFULLY RECLAIMED BETWEEN 2279-2281, AND AGAIN IN 2324 BY RECLAIMANTS HORATIO SEASONS AND RUBÉN CASAS RESPECTIVELY, WHOSE INQUIRIES AND DECISIONS DUTIFULLY OBSERVED THE ETHICAL STANDARDS FOR RECLAMATION AS STIPULATED BY THE STATEMENT OF VALUES ISSUED BY THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY ON 3 JANUARY 2161 WITH THE ENACTMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY ACT, WHOSE NATIONAL AESTHETIC CLAUSE ESTABLISHED THE RECLAMATION PROJECT, A PROJECT WHOSE SUCCESS IS MARKED BY THE RECLAMATION AND SUBSEQUENT RELEASE OF THIS DOCUMENT, NUMBER 133,727. RECLAIMED DOCUMENT HSRC133727-20/21 ORIGINATES FROM THE FINAL PERIOD BEFORE THE GOOGLE SERVER CRASH OF 2050. COMPRISED OF FOUR ORIGINAL NARRATIVES, COLLECTED AND RELEASED AS A SINGLE PALIMPSEST IN RECOGNITION OF THE NATURALLY OCCURRING CROSS-REFERENCING IN ALL FOUR OF THE NARRATIVES. ORIGINAL CONTENT WRITERS: UNKNOWN COLLECTOR, BARBARA WALTERS, ROBERT OSBORNE, RANDAL SMRZ. RECLAMATION CONTENT WRITER: RUBÉN CASAS.

THIS PALIMPSEST IS THE PROPERTY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

TREASURER OF THE UNITED STATES

SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY

PROLOGOS

THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED TO HOPE ST. OGDEN.

HOPE ST. OGDEN WAS SUPPOSED TO FIGURE MUCH LESS IN THIS RECLAMATION PROJECT, AND THE DEDICATION OF THIS BOOK WAS SUPPOSED TO READ JUST LIKE THE 133, 726 VOLUMES THAT CAME BEFORE IT:

“THIS VOLUME HAS BEEN RECLAIMED AS A GIFT FROM THE PAST FOR THE PRESENT.”

IN THE END IT IS THE SAME THING IF HOPE ST. OGDEN, MY UNIT’S CUSTODIAN OF RECORDS, REPRESENTS—AND I THINK SHE DOES—A PRESENT THAT I HADN’T ACCOUNTED FOR IN THE PAST.

I DIDN’T FIND OUT ABOUT HOPE ST. OGDEN’S PROGNOSIS UNTIL ABOUT A MONTH AFTER SHE WAS DIAGNOSED WITH BREAST CANCER. NOW, HOPE DIDN’T COME INTO MY UNIT OFFICE ONE MORNING, LOOKING BEHIND HER SHOULDER BEFORE COMING INTO MY OFFICE AND CLOSING THE DOOR QUIETLY BEHIND HER, ASKING IF SHE COULD HAVE A MINUTE OF MY TIME. NOR DID SHE CONFIDE IN A COWORKER WHO THEN ANNOUNCED IT (AS A SECRET) TO THE REST OF THE OFFICE. HOW I FOUND OUT IS THAT I SIGNED INTO HOPE’S COMPUTER ONE EVENING AFTER SHE HAD GONE HOME. I HAD ACCESS TO EVERYONE’S SIGN-INS AND PASSWORDS, AND I WANTED TO KNOW WHY HOPE HAD BEEN SPENDING AN INORDINATE AMOUNT OF TIME ON HER COMPUTER. IT BECAME OBVIOUS WHEN I REALIZED THAT THE ONLY INTRAWEB SITE SHE HAD VISITED IN THE PREVIOUS SEVEN DAYS WAS FINALITY.GOV. AND IT’S NOT LIKE HOPE HAD BEEN MERELY “WINDOW SHOPPING;” NO, HOPE HAD HER OWN LOGIN ACCOUNT, WHICH MEANS THAT HER PROGNOSIS WAS A YEAR OR LESS. THE NEXT MORNING I ASKED HOPE IF SHE WAS DYING, AND SHE SAID “YES.” “IT’S BREAST CANCER,” SHE SAID, ASKING ME IF I WANTED

TO SEE THE ECZEMATOID SKIN CHANGES SHE WAS EXPERIENCING, TELLING ME HOW MUCH PAIN SHE WAS IN.

IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS I FOUND MYSELF INVOLUNTARILY HELPING HOPE ST. OGDEN THROUGH HER FINAL PREPARATIONS ON FINALITY.GOV. IT SEEMED TO ME AS IF HOPE COULD DO WHATEVER SHE WANTED WITH HER FINALMEMORY; SHE HAD SAVED ENOUGH MONEY TO AFFORD EVEN THE MOST EXPENSIVE PACKAGE, AND THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT I ADVISED HER TO DO: "BOOK THE MOST EXPENSIVE FINALMEMORY YOU CAN AFFORD. YOU DON'T HAVE TO SPARE A SINGLE DETAIL. HAVE THEM BUILD AN ENTIRE SET TO REPRESENT YOUR CHILDHOOD TRIPS TO THE CALIFORNIA REDWOODS OR THE MAINE COAST, OR WHEREVER IT IS YOUR PARENTS TOOK YOU. OR PAY TO HAVE ACTUAL FOOTAGE SHOT OF THE EUROPEAN CITIES YOU SAW ON YOUR HONEYMOON—HIRE PROFESSIONAL LOOK-ALIKES, EVEN. GO ALL OUT ON YOUR WAY OUT, HOPE."

IT DIDN'T OCCUR TO ME THAT HOPE ST. OGDEN DIDN'T HAVE A SINGLE EXPENSIVE MEMORY TO BEGIN WITH, SO CHOOSING EVEN THE MOST EXPENSIVE ONE WOULD HAVE BEEN ANTICLIMACTIC ANYWAY.

I HAVE SPENT NEARLY FIFTEEN YEARS RECLAIMING DOCUMENTS FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY, NINE YEARS AS A FIELD RECLAIMANT, AND SIX AS EASTERN BOARD DIRECTOR OF RECLAMATION. IN THOSE FIFTEEN YEARS I'VE OFTEN THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS TO LOSE SOMETHING, AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, WHAT IT MEANS TO NOT KNOW WHAT YOU HAVE LOST. THE QUESTION HAS BEEN AN ESPECIALLY PRESENT ONE RECENTLY AS I OVERSEE AND REVIEW THE WORK OF A

WHOLE STAFF OF RECLAIMANTS WHO EACH HAVE THEIR OWN NOTIONS ABOUT THE WORK THEY DO. THEIR VARIED ATTEMPTS AT ANSWERING THIS QUESTION (AND EACH ONE WILL SAY THAT THEY ARE AS OBJECTIVE AS POSSIBLE) LEADS ME TO BELIEVE THAT THE GOAL OF THE RECLAMATION PROJECT IS AN INSURMOUNTABLE TASK. WHEN I THINK ABOUT WHAT IT MEANS, THIS WORK WE'VE UNDERTAKEN, TO CONTEXTUALIZE EVERYTHING THAT HAS COME AFTER THE GOOGLE CRASH OF 2079 IN TERMS OF EVERYTHING THAT WAS LOST IN THAT CRASH—NEARLY THREE QUARTERS OF WHAT HAD BEEN WRITTEN, PRODUCED, FILMED, VIDEOED, AND RECORDED—I REALIZE THAT THE WORK OF THE RECLAMATION PROJECT IS BOTH IMPOSSIBLE AND NECESSARY. IT IS LOSS, AND OUR MONUMENTAL MISUNDERSTANDING OF WHAT AND HOW MUCH WE'VE LOST, THAT SHAPES OUR RELATION TO THE PRESENT, TO OUR OWN POST-HISTORICAL WORLD.

AT LOW ESTIMATE, THE DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY CALCULATES THAT WHEN THE GOOGLE SERVERS WERE INVADED BY THE ALEXANDRIAWORM.EXE PROGRAM EIGHTY PERCENT OF THE MASSIVE DIGITIZING EFFORT GOOGLE BEGAN IN 2004 WAS ERADICATED, IF NOT ENTIRELY THEN PARTLY. IT WAS AT THIS POINT THAT THE TENDON CONNECTING OUR SOCIETY TO THE PAST SNAPPED. IN ITS PLACE WE'VE CREATED A BRIDGE BUILT OF ABSENCE, FOR WHAT WE LOST ISN'T EXACTLY AS IMPORTANT TO THE PRESENT AS HOW WE COME TO UNDERSTAND THAT LOSS, HOW WE RELATE TO THAT ABSENCE; IF WE SOMEHOW GAINED EVERYTHING WE (THOUGHT) WE LOST, OR AT THE VERY LEAST RECLAIMED A LIST OF TITLES THAT TOLD US WHAT WE LOST, AND MAYBE A SYNOPSIS OF EACH OF THOSE TITLES—WOULD THAT NEW INFORMATION MAKE US

PERCEIVE OUR CURRENT EXISTENCE ANY DIFFERENTLY? THAT KNOWLEDGE WOULD BE NO MORE USEFUL OR POWERFUL THAN SIMPLY KNOWING THAT WE'VE LOST SOMETHING, AND THAT WE DON'T KNOW, PRECISELY, WHAT IT IS WE'VE LOST. ABSENCE SHAPES AS ACUTELY AS PRESENCE. I'VE WORKED IN DENIAL OF THIS REALIZATION FOR THE MAJORITY OF MY CAREER AT THE RECLAMATION PROJECT; IT WASN'T UNTIL I HELPED HOPE ST. OGDEN WITH HER FINALMEMORY THAT I REALIZED HOW POWERFUL ABSENCE COULD BE.

“CHOOSE YOUR FONDEST MEMORY (AND THERE'S REALLY NOT THAT MANY), OR AUGMENT ONE TO MAKE YOU SMILE WHEN YOU PASS,” I TOLD HOPE ST. OGDEN THE FIRST TIME WE SAT DOWN BEFORE HER FINALITY.GOV PROFILE, AND WHAT I WOULD REMIND HER OF THE HALF-DOZEN OTHER TIMES WE SAT TOGETHER AGAIN. BUT THEN I REALIZED THE INORDINATE AMOUNT OF MEANING SHE PUT ON THINGS THAT HAD (NEARLY) HAPPENED TO HER. “HOPE,” I TOLD HER DURING ONE OF MY LAST ATTEMPTS TO GET HER TO AUGMENT A MEMORY (OR AT LEAST BORROW ONE), “YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS ABOUT CHOOSING SOMETHING THAT'S YOUR VERY OWN. I MEAN, FOR GOD'S SAKE, THE MOST SIGNIFICANT ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP YOU EVER HAD WAS THE EQUIVALENT OF YOU WRITING A GUY'S NAME—SAMSON—OVER AND OVER AGAIN IN YOUR NOTEBOOK, THEN ACTUALLY GETTING THE GUTS TO WRITE A NOTE TO HIM, GOING AS FAR AS TO PUT IT IN AN ENVELOPE WITH A CONDOM IN IT, AND THEN THROWING IT INTO A GARBAGE CAN ON YOUR WAY TO HOMEROOM THE NEXT MORNING. IS THIS REALLY WHAT YOU WANT TO SEE YOURSELF DOING JUST BEFORE YOU DON'T SEE

ANYTHING EVER AGAIN?"

HER ANSWER WAS ALWAYS, "WHY NOT?"

HOPE ST. OGDEN'S FINALMEMORY WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A COLLAGE OF MAINLY INSIGNIFICANT THINGS, INCLUDING EACH ONE OF THE THIRTY-SEVEN TIMES SHE WENT SHELL COLLECTING ON THE COAST OF MAINE, THE 342 TIMES SHE ATE A PASTRAMI SANDWICH AND A PICKLE SPEAR IN THE DELI UNDERNEATH HER APARTMENT, THE 114 TIMES SHE STOPPED AT THE PET STORE ON HER WAY TO CHURCH TO LOOK IN AT THE PETS AT CAROL'S CRITTERS, AND THE ONE AND ONLY TIME SHE ALMOST BOOKED A TRIP TO EUROPE. SHE GOT AS FAR AS THE ENTER-YOUR-CREDIT-CARD-INFORMATION PAGE BEFORE SHE CLOSED HER BROWSER. BUT HOPE PREEMPTED HER OWN FINALITY AND SO SHE DIDN'T GET TO SEE ANY OF THESE THINGS, NOR DID SHE GET TO SEE THE SLIGHTLY AUGMENTED FINALMEMORY I BOOKED FOR HER THE DAY AFTER SHE THOUGHT SHE HAD FINALIZED HER ORDER. IN MY VERSION SHE ACTUALLY GOT TO EUROPE! SOMEONE MIGHT CALL THIS INSENSITIVE—BARBAROUS EVEN—BUT ISN'T THIS WHAT I'VE BEEN ENTRUSTED TO DO, TO MAKE SOMETHING OUT OF NOTHING, TO FILL IN WHAT WAS LACKING? HOPE KNEW THIS. WE ALL KNOW.

I SHOULD PROBABLY TELL YOU THAT HOPE ST. OGDEN DIDN'T DIE WITH HER FINALMEMORY. SHE DIED IN HER SLEEP EIGHT DAYS BEFORE SHE WAS DUE TO GO, SO SHE DIDN'T SEE EITHER HER OWN VERSION OR MINE. I DO WONDER WHAT REAL MEMORY, DREAM, OR NIGHTMARE SHE FINALLY PASSED WITH. AND BY DYING EARLY HOPE PREEMPTED BOTH HER AND MY ATTEMPTS AT MAKING HER LAST MEMORY MEANINGFUL.

THE FOUR NARRATIVES RECLAIMED IN THIS VOLUME ALSO REPRESENT HOW WHOLE GENERATIONS MIGHT ALSO PREEMPT THE RECLAMATION PROJECT'S BEST INTENTIONS. "HELL ON EARTH," "MOTHER AND ME," "AT THE END OF TIME," AND "REASONABLE' RANDAL SMRZ'S 'SOCIETY NOTES'" ARE THE FOUR MOST WIDELY-READY NON-RECLAIMED NARRATIVES OF THE LATE 20TH/EARLY 21ST CENTURIES PERIOD (NOT COUNTING THE BIBLE). I SUSPECT THAT NONE OF THESE NARRATIVES ARE NEW TO MOST OF THIS GENERATION, CERTAINLY NOT TO THOSE THAT CAME BEFORE BUT AFTER THE GOOGLE CRASH. SO WHY RECLAIM THEN NOW? THAT WAS MY QUESTION WHEN THE RECLAMATION AGENCY ASSIGNED ME TO THIS PARTICULAR PROJECT. AS I UNDERSTOOD IT, HORATIO SEASONS, A SENIOR RECLAIMANT WHO WORKED FOR THE AGENCY BETWEEN 2189 AND 2200, PUSHED FOR THE RECLAMATION OF THESE NARRATIVES FOR MOST OF HIS CAREER, COMING BACK YEAR AFTER YEAR TO SEE IF THE RECLAMATION COMMITTEE WOULD OVERTURN ITS ORIGINAL RULING. I SUSPECT THAT SEASONS WAS DRIVEN BY A SIMILAR SENSE THAT I NOW HARBOR, THAT WHICH WANTS TO VALIDATE AT LEAST A SMALL PART OF THE POPULAR AESTHETIC, NOT BECAUSE IT IS NECESSARILY RIGHT, BUT BECAUSE IT IS A MINOR ADMISSION THAT POST-GOOGLE GENERATIONS DON'T FULLY REALIZE WHAT WE'VE LOST, AND THAT A STATE AGENCY MIGHT NOT UNDERSTAND THIS LOSS ANY BETTER, NECESSARILY. THEREFORE, JUST BECAUSE WE DON'T FULLY UNDERSTAND WHY SOMETHING ATTRACTS US TO IT SHOULDN'T BE THE REASON WHY WE DISTRUST IT OR DENY ITS USEFULNESS. AND HERE IS WHERE I THINK SEASONS FAILED; LOSS IS CENTRAL TO EACH OF THESE NARRATIVES,

AND I SUSPECT THAT IT IS THIS SENSE OF LOSS (AND HOW THE VOICES THAT POPULATE THE NARRATIVES DEAL WITH THIS LOSS) THAT HAS MADE THE NARRATIVES SO POPULAR. LOSS IS SOMETHING OUR POST-HISTORICAL WORLD HAS COME TO UNDERSTAND INTIMATELY, AND SEASONS WAS RIGHT IN ASSUMING THAT THESE NARRATIVES COULD SPEAK TO THAT SENSIBILITY. UNFORTUNATELY HE WAS NEVER ABLE TO ARTICULATE THIS ARGUMENT WELL ENOUGH TO CONVINCING THE RECLAMATION COMMITTEE. HIS LAST RECLAMATION RATIONALE STATES THAT THESE FOUR NARRATIVES “AT MOST DEMONSTRATE THAT THE PRE-MODERNS WERE IMAGINATIVE, CONFLICTED, AND CONTRADICTORY, AND THESE TRAITS ARE USEFUL TO ALL LIVING POST-GOOGLE, ESPECIALLY IF WE ARE TO UNDERSTAND HOW WE ARE CONNECTED TO THAT WORLD.” NOTHING OF WHAT SEASONS WROTE (IN ANY OF HIS RATIONALES) WAS INCORRECT, BUT HIS INSIGHTS FAILED TO SEE THE NARRATIVES AS MOST OF THEIR READERS WERE SEEING AND SEE THEM—IN TERMS OF LOSS. JUST AS I FAILED TO RECOGNIZE THE MEANING IN HOPE ST. OGDEN’S PEDESTRIAN MEMORIES, SO DID SEASONS IN THE FOUR NARRATIVES THAT MAKE UP THIS VOLUME.

ANOTHER COMPLAINT AGAINST SEASONS IS THE EMPHASIS HE PLACED ON HOW THE PRE-MODERNS RELATED TO THESE NARRATIVES RATHER THAN HOW THESE NARRATIVES MIGHT RELATE TO THOSE OF US LIVING POST-GOOGLE. IN THE RECLAMATION COMMITTEE’S RESPONSE SEASON’S RATIONALE IS CORRECTLY ACCUSED OF “TRYING TO ESTABLISH A RAISON D’ÊTRE FOR THESE NARRATIVES IN THEIR OWN TIME, RATHER THAN OURS.” A MORE DEFT SEASONS WOULD HAVE CRAFTED AN ARGUMENT THAT ADDRESSED THIS WARRANT SIMPLY BY ADMITTING THAT POST-GOOGLE

GENERATIONS DO NOT KNOW HOW POST-MODERNS CONSUMED OR RELATED TO THESE NARRATIVES, BUT THAT THEIR WIDE-SPREAD POPULARITY MIGHT INDICATE THAT CURRENT GENERATIONS ARE PROBABLY RESPONDING TO THE INNATE LOSS THAT WEAVES THROUGH THE NARRATIVES. IN MY OWN RATIONALE TO THE RECLAMATION COMMITTEE I WROTE THAT

THE PRE-MODERNS MIGHT HAVE UNDERSTOOD THESE NARRATIVES THAN WE DO NOW. WE DO NOT KNOW. THEY MIGHT HAVE MADE A DISTINCTION BETWEEN NARRATIVE THAT TOLD TRUE STORIES, FOR EXAMPLE, AND NARRATIVES THAT WERE INVENTED, EITHER LINGUISTICALLY OR CONCEPTUALLY. WE DO NOT KNOW. AND BECAUSE WE DON'T KNOW HOW THESE NARRATIVES WERE PRODUCED AND CONSUMED, WE COULD ALLOW FOR THE POSSIBILITY THAT BOTH MOTHER NATURE'S SEX CHANGE AND THE OVERPOPULATION OF HELL COULD HAVE HAPPENED IN THE SAME REALITY. WE DON'T KNOW. MAYBE NEITHER OF THE TWO HAPPENED, MAYBE BOTH NARRATIVES ARE MEANT TO REPRESENT IDEAS OR A PLAUSIBILITY FOREIGN TO OUR OWN CULTURES. MAYBE THEY WERE JUST MEANT TO ENTERTAIN. WE SIMPLY DON'T KNOW. BUT IN NOT KNOWING—IN NOTHING—WE CAN TAKE HOLD, JUST AS THE MILLIONS OF READERS OF THESE FOUR NARRATIVES HAVE. THE LOSS REPRESENTED IN THESE FOUR NARRATIVES IS NOT UNLIKE THE LOSS THAT WE ARE ALL SO INTIMATE WITH. OUR WORLD MAY NOT BE CONVERSANT WITH THE WORLD THAT PRODUCED AND CONSUMED THESE NARRATIVES, BUT IT IS CONVERSANT WITH THE LOSS THEY COMMUNICATED. THAT CONVERSATION WE NEVER HAD INFORMS EVERY CONVERSATION WE HAVE HAD SINCE THEN, AND STAND TO HAVE. HERE ARE FOUR NARRATIVES TO HELP US DO THAT

BETTER.

IN FAILING TO SEE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF HOPE ST. OGDEN'S CHOICE FOR HER FINAL MEMORY, I CAME TO APPRECIATE THE SIGNIFICANCE OF NARRATIVES THAT THE RECLAMATION AGENCY DOES NOT RECLAIM, AND OF MY OWN ROLE AS DIVISION DIRECTOR. NO NATIONALLY-PRESCRIBED MEMORY, NO MATTER HOW CAREFULLY COLLECTED OR OBJECTIVELY PRESENTED, WILL EVER BE AS USEFUL AS THE MEMORY INDIVIDUALS DECIDE IS REAL AND SIGNIFICANT TO THEM. THIS RECOGNITION IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RECLAMATION, FINALLY, OF THESE FOUR NARRATIVES IN THIS SINGLE VOLUME. MAY IT BE AS MEANINGFUL TO YOU AS HOPE ST. OGDEN WAS TO ME.

ALEXANDRIA, VA 2324

□

OF THE FOUR NARRATIVES CONTAINED IN THIS VOLUME, "HELL ON EARTH" WAS THE MOST DIFFICULT FOR ME TO UNDERSTAND IN TERMS OF LOSS. BECAUSE IT LACKS A SINGLE NARRATIVE VOICE, IT WAS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO ASCRIBE A PARTICULAR WANT OR NEED TO THE NARRATOR, THAT WHICH SHE HAD LOST, OR WOULD

LOSE IN THE COURSE OF THE NARRATIVE. HOPE ST. OGDEN THOUGHT THIS WAS LAUGHABLE. “BUT IT IS SO OBVIOUS,” SHE TOLD ME ONE DAY. “THAT ‘HELL ON EARTH’ WAS MOTIVATED BY SOME DEEP NEED CANNOT BE QUESTIONED,” I TOLD HER. “COLLECTING IS NOTHING ELSE IF NOT A SYMPTOM OF SOME DEEP-ROOTED DESIRE—BUT AS TO WHAT, EXACTLY, THE COLLECTOR OF ALL THESE MEDIA SNIPPETS THAT FOLLOW THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE “DISPLACED DISEASED,” AND THE ERECTION OF AN ALTERNATE HELL ON EARTH WAS AFTER—WHAT SHE EXPECTED TO FIND—(OR PERHAPS EVEN HIDE) BOGGLES ME.” HOPE SMILED AT ME, AND ASKED ME WHY I THOUGHT IT WAS A WOMAN THAT HAD COLLECTED THE MATERIAL. “YOU’RE RIGHT,” SHE SAID. “BUT WHY DID YOU ASSUME THAT?”

I AM VERY DELIBERATE WHEN I ASCRIBE THE FEMININE PRONOUN TO THE COLLECTOR HERE AS I, LIKE HORATIO SEASONS, BELIEVE THAT SNIPPETS WERE COLLECTED AND ARRANGED BY A WOMAN. THIS, OF COURSE, BETRAYS SOME OF MY OWN PROBLEMATIC ASSUMPTIONS, NAMELY A HETERO-NORMATIVE ONE WHICH IMAGINES THE COLLECTOR AS A WIDOW WHOSE HUSBAND HAS DIED CLOSE ENOUGH TO THE PERIPHERY OF THE “DISPLACED DECEASED” PHENOMENON SO THAT SHE HARBORS SOME HOPE TO SEE HIM AGAIN. WHEN THIS DOESN’T HAPPEN OUR UNNAMED COLLECTOR CULLS THE NEWS SOURCES AND MEDIA OUTLETS FOR A CONTINUING REASON WHICH SIMULTANEOUSLY EXPLAINS WHY HER LATE HUSBAND HASN’T APPEARED AT HER FRONT DOOR, AT THE SAME TIME THAT IT CONTINUES TO GIVE HER REASONABLE HOPE THAT HE STILL MIGHT.

IT TURNS OUT I WAS RIGHT, ACCORDING TO HOPE. “THIS IS PRECISELY WHAT’S

GOING ON IN THIS NARRATIVE, SHE TOLD ME.” I ASKED HOPE IF SHE THOUGHT THAT THIS IS WHAT CURRENT GENERATIONS WERE RESPONDING TO, AND SHE SAID IT HAD TO BE.

I’M NOT SURE HOW MUCH HORATIO SEASON’S MARGINAL NOTES, WHICH SPECULATE A GOOD AMOUNT ON THIS UNNAMED FEMALE NARRATOR, INFLUENCED MY OWN READING. REGARDLESS, ONCE I REALIZED WHAT WAS LOST IN THE NARRATIVE (AND ONCE HOPE VALIDATED IT), IT WAS SO PAINFULLY CLEAR. IN THIS WAY, BOTH HORATIO SEASON’S AND HOPE ST. OGDEN’S WORK IS INESTIMABLE IN THE INCLUSION OF THIS NARRATIVE.

HELL ON EARTH

FROM *The Guardian*, AUGUST 2, 2004

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH HAS ENLISTED THE HELP OF A RETIRED CHEMISTRY PROFESSOR AND RESEARCHER TO DETERMINE IF A STATUE OF THE VIRGIN MARY IN A CHURCH IN BRISBANE IS REALLY WEEPING. THE INVESTIGATION COMES AS A FOLLOW-UP TO A REPORT FILED AT THE VATICAN BY DR GIUSEPPE FARRELLY, JUDICIAL VICAR AND CHIEF INVESTIGATOR FOR THE HOLY SEE.

DR FARELLY'S REPORT CONFIRMED THE INORDINATE NUMBER OF EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNTS OF PARISHIONERS AND CURIOSITY-SEEKERS WHO VISITED THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNITY CHURCH IN SOUTH-WESTERN BRISBANE AFTER AN 82-YEAR-OLD WIDOW REPORTED HAVING SEEN TEARS OF ROSEWATER FLOWING FROM THE VIRGIN'S EYES.

"THERE MAY BE A SCIENTIFIC EXPLANATION FOR THE WEEPING OF THE HOLY STATUE, WHICH MANY HAVE CALLED A MIRACLE," DR FARELLY TOLD REPORTERS EARLIER THIS WEEK IN A PRESS CONFERENCE HELD AT THE VATICAN.

DR FARELLY ALSO TOLD REPORTERS THAT "THE PROFESSOR CONTRACTED TO FOLLOW UP ON THE REPORT IS NOT CATHOLIC, BUT AN AGNOSTIC WHOSE CREDENTIALS NONETHELESS QUALIFY HIM TO ASSIST IN THE VATICAN'S INVESTIGATION."

THE PROFESSOR'S IDENTITY REMAINS UNKNOWN. DR FARELLY EXPLAINED THAT "THE PROFESSOR WISHES TO KEEP HIS IDENTITY SECRET GIVEN THE SENSITIVITY OF THE CASE," AND WHILE THIS INSTANCE OF A WEEPING STATUE, UNLIKE NUMEROUS INSTANCES IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH, HAS BEEN INVESTIGATED AND CONFIRMED

BY THE HOLY SEE, CRITICS SUCH AS BARRY LYNN OF AMERICANS UNITED FOR SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE, HAVE WONDERED IF THE SCHOLAR AND RESEARCHER ISN'T SIMPLY TRYING TO CASH IN ON A SIZABLE CHURCH STIPEND WITHOUT AFFECTING HIS STANDING IN SCIENTIFIC CIRCLES.

IT IS NOT KNOWN IF THE PROFESSOR WILL ALSO INVESTIGATE THE OTHER RECENT REPORTS OF WEeping STATUES IN ALJEZUR, PORTUGAL; BUDAPEST, HUNGARY; LEON, ITALY; DUBLIN, IRELAND; SINALOA, MEXICO; AND CUZCO, ECUADOR.

FROM *The Vatican Secret Archives* [FRAGMENT]

DECLARATION ON

THE CURRENT STATE OF HELL AND THE FUTURE OF ALL PEOPLES

INFERVESCO GLACIALIS

PROCLAIMED BY HIS HOLINESS

POPE BENEDICTUS XVI

ON JULY 18, 2005

IN OUR TIME, WHEN MANKIND FINDS ITSELF DRAWN CLOSER TO ITSELF, HUMANITY AS A WHOLE FACES CHALLENGES UNLIKE ANY THAT HAVE BEEN WITNESSED BEFORE. OF THESE A NEW AND RECENT PORTENT THREATENS TO DESTABILIZE SOCIETY AT ALL ITS FOUNDATIONS—POLITICALLY, SOCIALLY, ECONOMICALLY, AND SPIRITUALLY. THE VERY TIES THAT KEEP OUR CURRENT ORDER INTACT, THE VERY TIES THAT MEN AND WOMEN HAS FOUGHT AND BLED AND LAID DOWN THEIR LIVES FOR—COULD ALL BE

UNDONE.

MEN AND WOMEN EXPECT FROM THEIR RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS AND PLACES OF WORSHIP THE ANSWER TO THEIR MOST ELUSIVE QUESTIONS, AND NO MATTER AT WHICH POINT IN HISTORY WE LOOK, QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NATURE OF EXISTENCE, THE MEANING OF LIFE, THE DEFINITION OF GOOD AND EVIL, THE REASONS FOR SUFFERING, HOW TO ATTAIN HAPPINESS, AND THE POSSIBILITY OF EXISTING AFTER DEATH HAVE DRIVEN MANY A MAN AND WOMAN'S LIVES. ADMITTEDLY, THE HOLY CHURCH HAS NOT ALWAYS HAD THE POPULAR ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS, BUT ONE QUESTION IN PARTICULAR HAS NEVER ESCAPED THE LIGHT OF THE HOLY CHURCH. THIS IS THE QUESTION OF HELL.

THE MOST RECENT POSITION THE CHURCH HAS TAKEN IN REGARDS TO HELL WAS WRITTEN BY POPE JOHN PAUL II:

"THE IMAGES OF HELL THAT SACRED SCRIPTURE PRESENTS TO US MUST BE CORRECTLY INTERPRETED. FOR THEY ARE DEMONSTRATIVE OF THE COMPLETE FRUSTRATION AND EMPTINESS FELT BY THOSE WHO LIVE A LIFE WITHOUT GOD. HELL IS MUCH MORE THAN A SITE OR PLACE OF TORMENT, AND IS MORE ACCURATELY AN INDICATION OF THE CONDITION IN WHICH THOSE THAT HAVE, OF THEIR OWN VOLITION, SEVERED THEMSELVES FROM GOD, THE SOURCE OF HAPPINESS AND JOY IN LIFE."¹

THE HOLY FATHER REMAINS CORRECT, BUT WE HERE EMPHASIZE THAT HELL IS A PLACE OF ACTUAL TORMENT, WHERE NON-COMMUNION WITH THE LORD IN LIFE HAS ADVERSE EFFECTS ON THE SOUL IN DEATH. POPE JOHN PAUL CONTINUES HIS EXPLICATION OF HELL WHEN HE WRITES:

¹ John Paul II, DeV 31 #2.

“TO DIE IN SIN WITHOUT REPENTING AND ACCEPTING GOD’S MERCIFUL DEMONSTRATION OF LOVE MEANS THAT THE SOUL WILL REMAIN IN A STATE OF SEPARATION FROM HIM AS AN ACT OF ONE’S OWN FREE CHOICE. THIS STATE OF INDEFINITE SELF-EXCLUSION FROM THE GRACE OF GOD AND THE BLESSED IS CALLED ‘HELL.’”²

THE BIBLICAL DESCRIPTIONS OF HELL—THE SITE WHERE ALL SOULS IN NON-COMMUNION SPEND AN ETERNITY—DEPICT A PLACE OF DARKNESS, FIRE, SULFUR, AND LAKES OF MOLTEN MATTER, ALONG WITH WEEPING, THE GRINDING OF TEETH, AND DEMONIC TORMENTS OF EVERY KIND—ALL MEANT FOR THE SOULS WHO HAVE BEEN CONDEMNED TO THAT EXISTENCE. HELL IS A PLACE APART FROM HEAVEN, A PLACE AS FAR AWAY FROM THE LIGHT OF THE LORD AS POSSIBLE.³

THE PROLIFERATION OF SIN IN MODERN TIMES WOULD INDICATE AN INCREASED NUMBER OF LIVES WHO HAVE CHOSEN A LIFE AWAY FROM GOD. FURTHERMORE, THE CRISIS OF SPIRITUALITY THAT HAS PLAGUED SCORES OF PEOPLE IN THE LAST FEW YEARS, ALL DEMONSTRATED BY A DECREASE IN CHURCH ATTENDANCE, THE INCREASED THREAT OF WAR AND TERROR, THE UNRELENTING AND UNPRECEDENTED PROLIFERATION OF IMMORAL CONTENT IN ENTERTAINMENT, AND A CONTINUED ACCEPTANCE OF LEADERS WHO DON’T SUBMIT THEMSELVES (AND MUCH LESS THEIR CHARGES) TO GODLY GUIDANCE INDICATE DISUNION WITH GOD, SO THAT WHEN THESE IMPIOUS MEN AND WOMEN PERISH, THEIR SOULS FLOW TO HELL TO THE TORMENTS OUR LOVING FATHER

² John Paul II, DeV 31 #1.

³ Matthew 25:41.

HAS PREPARED FOR THEM. AND BECAUSE THIS EVENTUALITY, LIKE THAT OF HEAVEN FOR THE RIGHTEOUS, IS ETERNAL, THE OVERWHELMING NUMBER OF SOULS NOW IN HELL, ALONG WITH THE EXPONENTIAL INCREASE OF NEW SOULS INTRODUCED DAILY, HAS TAKEN A TOLL ON THIS LOVING PROVISION SO THAT THERE IS SIMPLY NO MORE ROOM IN HELL FOR SINNERS [END]

FROM *Last Words on CNN*, TRANSCRIPT. AIRED 19 JULY 2005 – 22:00 ET [FRAGMENT]

Andre Spooner, CNN host: GOOD EVENING EVERYONE. YESTERDAY’S ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE VATICAN THAT HELL LIT UP ITS “NO VACANCY” SIGN, THAT THE SOULS OF SINNERS NO LONGER HAVE A PLACE TO GO AFTER DEATH, CONTINUES TO DEMAND THE ATTENTION OF THE NATION, AS NUMEROUS CREDIBLE MEDIA OUTLETS TURN THEIR ATTENTION TO THE ISSUE, AND TO WHAT EXPERTS, CRITICS, AND COMMON AMERICANS ARE SAYING ABOUT THE VATICAN’S ANNOUNCEMENT.

HERE AT *Last Words*, WE HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING THE STORY SINCE DR. ALDERMAN, THE ONCE-ANONYMOUS RESEARCHER HIRED BY THE VATICAN TO ASSIST IN THE INVESTIGATION OF THE WEEPING STATUES IN BRISBANE, ATHENS, SALAMANCA, MILAN, TOURS, PHOENIX AND SANTIAGO DE CHILE—TO NAME A FEW—DISCLOSED HIS IDENTITY AND HIS ROLE IN THE INQUIRY IN A PRESS CONFERENCE HELD AT THE OUR LADY OF ANGELS CATHEDRAL IN LOS ANGELES.

TAKE A LOOK AT THESE IMAGES FROM THAT PRESS CONFERENCE, WHERE DR. ALDERMAN, STANDING NEXT TO THE VATICAN’S OWN INVESTIGATOR, DR. FARELLY. THE CONFERENCE WAS HELD ALMOST A YEAR AFTER DR. FARELLY ANNOUNCED THAT THE

VATICAN HAD CONFIRMED THE WEEPING STATUE IN A SMALL CHURCH IN SOUTHWESTERN AUSTRALIA, AND THAT IT WOULD RETAIN THE SERVICES OF A SECULAR RESEARCHER TO ASSIST IN THE INVESTIGATION.

DR. ALDERMAN HAS SINCE ACCEPTED AN INTERVIEW OFFER MADE BY THE BBC, THE DATE OF WHICH STILL REMAINS UNKNOWN.

[COMMERCIAL BREAK]

Andre Spooner, CNN host : WELCOME BACK. TONIGHT WE ARE TALKING ABOUT THE VATICAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING THE CURRENT STATE OF HELL, AND THE MYSTERIOUS MAN THAT HAS LENT HIS SCIENTIFIC ENDORSEMENT TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE PHENOMENA SURROUNDING IT.

THE VATICAN HAS MADE NO COMMENT REGARDING THE NUMEROUS OFFERS FOR AN INTERVIEW MADE TO DR. ALDERMAN BY MANY NETWORKS, INCLUDING CBS, FOX, AND SPANISH-LANGUAGE NETWORK TELEMUNDO. CNN LEARNED THAT THE BBC MADE THE MOST LUCRATIVE OFFER, BUT NONE OF DR. ALDERMAN'S SPOKESPERSONS HAS CONFIRMED THIS.

HIS FAME WILL LIKELY BE SHORT-LIVED, GIVEN THE ANNOUNCEMENT THE VATICAN MADE YESTERDAY.

REGARDING THIS ANNOUNCEMENT, WE GO TO SENIOR RELIGIOUS CORRESPONDENT TANYA HENDRICKS:

ANDRE SPOONER: GOOD EVENING, TANYA.

TANYA HENDRICKS: GOOD EVENING, ANDRE.

AS: WHAT DOES THIS ANNOUNCEMENT MEAN, EXACTLY, AND WILL IT HAVE ANY LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES FOR THE EVERYDAY PERSON?

TH: ALTHOUGH THE VATICAN HASN'T MADE ANY OFFICIAL COMMENT AS TO HOW THIS DISCOVERY (AS THEY ARE CALLING IT) WILL BE OF CONSEQUENCE, THEY ARE TREATING IT—AND TALKING ABOUT IT—AS IF IT WERE OF MONUMENTAL IMPORTANCE. THE VATICAN SPOKESPERSON DESCRIBED IT AS “A CHALLENGE THAT SHAKES THE FOUNDATIONS OF HUMANITY,” AND THEREFORE WE CAN ASSUME THAT WHATEVER THE FALL-OUT, CHURCH OFFICIALS EXPECT IT TO BE BIG.

AS: HAS THERE BEEN ANY TALK AS TO WHERE THESE DISPLACED SOULS ARE GOING? IF NOT TO HELL, HEAVEN?

TH: THE VATICAN HASN'T DISCLOSED THE SPECIFICS AS TO WHERE, IF NOT HELL, SINNERS' SOULS ARE GOING, BUT SEVERAL CLERGY MEMBERS I'VE SPOKEN TO SEEM TO AGREE THAT THEY ARE NOT GOING TO HEAVEN.

AS: PURGATORY, THEN?

TH: PURGATORY WOULDN'T BE AN OPTION EITHER, EVEN THOUGH THE CHURCH HAS DESCRIBED IT AS A TRANSITION-TYPE PLACE FOR SOULS. ACCORDING TO CHURCH DOGMA, PURGATORY IS RESERVED AS “THE FINAL PURIFICATION OF THE ELECT,” OR IN OTHER WORDS, AS A PLACE OF FINAL PURIFICATION FOR THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN ASSURED OF GOD'S SALVATION BUT STILL NEED TO BE PURIFIED. THOSE SOULS WHO HAVE BEEN CONDEMNED TO HELL WOULDN'T THEN FIT THE PROFILE OF THOSE ALLOWED TO TRANSITION IN PURGATORY. FURTHERMORE THE DOCTRINE OF

PURGATORY IS CURRENTLY UNDER SCRUTINY BY THE CHURCH, AND THEREFORE ISN'T A VIABLE OPTION FOR THAT REASON EITHER.

AS: ARE THESE SOULS COMING BACK TO EARTH THEN?

TH: ONE DIOCESAN BISHOP I SPOKE WITH HAS SUGGESTED THAT IF THEY CAN'T GO TO EITHER HELL OR HEAVEN, THAT THESE DISPLACED SOULS WILL EMERGE UPON EARTH.

BUT THIS THEORY HAS FOUND LITTLE SUPPORT AMONG OTHER CHURCH LEADERS.

AS: THANK YOU, TANYA. THAT WAS TANYA HENDRICKS, SENIOR RELIGIOUS CORRESPONDENT SPEAKING TO US FROM BOSTON. [END]

FROM FOXNEWS.COM. JULY 24, 2004

NEBRASKA PLANE CRASH KILLS ALL 50 ON BOARD

LINCOLN, NE—A COMMUTER PLANE MISTAKENLY TRIED TO TAKE OFF A RUNWAY THAT WAS TOO SHORT AND CRASHED INTO A FIELD EARLY SUNDAY MORNING, BURSTING INTO FLAMES AND KILLING ALL 50 ON BOARD.

FEDERAL INVESTIGATORS ARE NOT SURE HOW NORTHWEST FLIGHT 214 GOT ONTO THE 35,000-FOOT-LONG STRIP OF RUNWAY. A CRJ-100 REGIONAL JET NEEDS AT LEAST 50,000 FEET TO TAKE OFF.

IT'S POSSIBLE THAT THE PILOT MISTAKENLY TRIED TO TAKE OFF THE SHORT RUNWAY IN THE RAINY PRE-DAWN, AS VISIBILITY WAS MINIMAL. INVESTIGATORS SAID THAT THEY WILL LOOK INTO FLIGHT DATA THAT RECORDS SPEED, VISIBILITY, COMMUNICATIONS, AND WEATHER CONDITIONS TO IDENTIFY THE EXACT CAUSE OF THE CRASH.

THE CLEVELAND-BOUND FLIGHT WAS SCHEDULED TO TAKE OFF AT 4:27A.M., BUT

INSTEAD PLOWED THROUGH A FENCE AND CRASHED INTO A FIELD ABOUT A MILE FROM THE END OF THE RUNWAY.

EMERGENCY CREWS REACHED THE PLANE MINUTES LATER, TO FIND IT MOSTLY INTACT, BUT ENGULFED IN FLAMES. THE FLAMES KEPT RESCUERS FROM REACHING ANYONE INSIDE.

ABOARD WAS A NEWLY-WED COUPLE ON THEIR WAY TO VISIT THE GROOM'S GRANDPARENTS IN OHIO, A BUSINESSMAN CATCHING AN EARLY FLIGHT TO SEE HIS DAUGHTER'S SOCCER GAME, AND AN OFF-DUTY PILOT HEADING HOME TO HIS WIFE.

LANCASTER COUNTY CORONER PAUL SHARP SAID THAT "MOST DEATHS ARE GOING TO BE FIRE-RELATED BECAUSE THE PLANE WAS JUST TAKING OFF AND SO WAS LOADED WITH FUEL."⁴

FROM *People en español*—ENGLISH SITE. SEPTEMBER 12, 2005

LATEST NEWS

TELEVISION ACTOR AND STAR OF UNIVISIÓN'S *Amor fuerte*, NARCISO BAUDE, WAS RELEASED FROM THE CLINICA Y CENTRO DE REHABILITACIÓN FATIMA PURA ON FRIDAY MORNING. HE WAS ADMITTED EARLIER IN THE WEEK AFTER CALLING FAMILY AND FRIENDS TO TELL THEM THAT HE HAD RECEIVED A VISIT FROM THE LATE DIRECTOR LORENZO BRACHO, WHO DIED ON THE SET OF *Amor fuerte* AT THE END OF THE TELENOVELA'S LAST SEASON.

⁴ Many of the original reclaimants thought this section to be a clear case of contamination, either during the Gcrash or due to some field collector error. Thompson (MS A1; postG 2544) published his reports without this section, and the numerous copies that were based on Thompson excluded it as well. It wasn't until the New School acquired the original field collector document that the Beverly MS (MS C6; postG 2550) included this excerpt along with interlinear notes that established its relation to other passages of interest, such as the two letters that follow.

A FRIEND OF BAUDE'S ARRIVED TO FIND THE ACTOR IN THE MIDDLE OF A TELEPHONE CALL WITH THE SOAP OPERA'S NEW DIRECTOR, SEBASTIÁN ABELLO, WHOM ALLEGEDLY TOLD BAUDE "ALL THE PLACES WHERE [ABELLO] HAD GONE WRONG SINCE TAKING OVER."

ACCORDING TO BAUDE, BRACHO HAD BEEN PLACED ON A "WAITING LIST" AFTER DYING.

A FAMILY MEMBER TOOK BAUDE TO FATIMA PURA THAT SAME NIGHT.

NEITHER BAUDE NOR HIS AGENT WERE AVAILABLE FOR COMMENT.

FROM *L.A. Weekly*, SEPTEMBER 15, 2005

"THE L.A. SHERIFF'S OFFICE HAS REOPENED THE BONNIE LEE BLAKELY MURDER TRIAL OF ROBERT BLAKE AFTER A LETTER POSTMARKED SEPTEMBER 1, 2005 ARRIVED AT THE L.A. CRIMINAL COURTS BUILDING LAST WEEK," SAID DEPUTY SHERRIFF ART MEDINA. THE LETTER ALLEGEDLY IS WRITTEN IN BLAKELY'S HAND, AND IT DIRECTLY ACCUSES BLAKE OF MURDERING HER.

ATTORNEYS FOR BLAKE DENY THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE LETTER, CALLING IT "AN ELABORATE HOAX," AND HAVE THREATENED TO PROSECUTE WHOEVER IS RESPONSIBLE.

BLAKE WAS ACQUITTED OF MURDER CHARGES ON MARCH 16, BUT WAS FOUND LIABLE FOR THE WRONGFUL DEATH OF HIS WIFE IN A CIVIL TRIAL AND ORDERED TO PAY \$30 MILLION.

FROM BBC NEWS, SATURDAY 26 OCTOBER 2005, 15:07 GMT 16:07 UK

THE LIGHT FOOT CIRCUS AND VARIETY EXTRAVAGANZA HAS GAINED POPULARITY IN RECENT MONTHS FOR FEATURING THE “INCREDIBLE, INDESTRUCTIBLE KEELEY FAMILY” MADE UP OF FATHER LANE, MOTHER SHIRLEY, SONS PHILLIP AND MARCUS, AND DAUGHTER CASSIE. THE KEELEYS JOINED LIGHT FOOT IN JUNE 2004, WHEN LANE LOST HIS JOB AT DUBLIN PORT.

RING LEADER LANCE “WONDER” WILSON SAYS THAT IT ALL BEGAN WITH A ROUTINE TRAPEZE ACT DURING A SHOW IN JUNE WHEN LANE LOST PHILLIP’S HAND AT A CRUCIAL MOMENT IN A LAUNCH, BARRELING THE 13-YEAR OLD LAD INTO A SUPPORT COLUMN WITH SUCH FORCE THAT IT SNAPPED HIS BACK.

WITNESSES SAY THAT THE BOY WAS DEAD ON IMPACT, AND THE SUSSEX MEDICAL EXAMINER’S REPORT CONFIRMS THIS.

THE LIGHT FOOT CIRCUS REOPENED ITS DOORS A MERE TWO DAYS LATER, AND TO THE AUDIENCE’S SURPRISE THE KEELEY FAMILY—COMPLETE AND INTACT—CAME OUT SWINGING.

CIRCUS ATTENDANCE NEARLY DOUBLED—THEN TRIPLED—AS SPECTATORS CAME IN FOR A CLOSER LOOK, TRYING TO DETERMINE IF PHILLIP HAD BEEN REPLACED WITH AN UNCANNY LOOK-ALIKE. SOME HAVE CONCLUDED THAT IT WAS ALL PART OF AN ACT, AND THAT PHILLIP NEVER REALLY DIED.

NEITHER MR WILSON NOR THE KEELEY PARENTS HAVE COMMENTED ON THE ACCIDENT NOR THE REAPPEARANCE OF THE YOUNG BOY, THOUGH THE FAMILY’S ACTS HAVE BECOME MORE DARING, EACH ENDING WITH A WOULD-BE FATAL “ACCIDENT,” ONLY TO HAVE THE FAMILY REAPPEAR THE VERY NEXT NIGHT WITH NEW MATERIAL, THUS

EARNING THEIR NEW STAGE NAME.

FROM *Sojourners.com Daily Bread Blog*; TITLE, AUTHOR UNKNOWN; DATE UNKNOWN

THE VATICAN HAS ASKED FOR THE HELP OF THE WORLD COMMUNITY, AND WHO ARE WE TO DENY THIS HELP? THE VATICAN HAS LOOKED BEYOND RACE, COLOR, AND CREED AND IDENTIFIED AN OPPORTUNITY TO ACT IN THE NAME OF HUMANITY: "IF WE ARE TO FACE THIS CHALLENGE," A SPOKESPERSON FOR THE VATICAN SAID EARLIER THIS MONTH, "THEN WE NEED TO ENLIST THE HELP OF EVERY MAJOR POWER, AND IN FACT EVERY PERSON ON THE PLANET. THIS IS NO LONGER A DEBATE ON RELIGION OR A THEOLOGICAL SPECULATION; EVERY SINGLE ONE OF US IS AFFECTED BY DR. FARELLY'S TROUBLING FINDINGS." IT IS IN ALL OUR BEST INTERESTS TO PRESSURE OUR STATE-HEADS AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS TO ACCEPT POPE BENEDICT'S INVITATION TO "PUT PETTY DIFFERENCES ASIDE AND HELP HIM MEET THIS DIFFICULT TASK."

LEADING BY EXAMPLE, PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH HAS ALREADY ACCEPTED THE CHALLENGE BEFORE A CONGREGATION OF HUNDREDS AT THE NATIONAL CATHEDRAL THIS MORNING, WHERE HE ANNOUNCED THAT HIS ADMINISTRATION WAS COMMITTED TO THE VATICAN IN THIS MATTER: "THIS IS NOT A TIME FOR RELIGIOUS PARTISANSHIP," HE TOLD THE CONGREGATION, "SO WE MUST ALL TAKE THE SIDE OF GOOD TO DEFEAT EVIL AND COME TO THE AID OF THOSE WHOSE TASK IT IS TO SAVE US FROM THE DEAD."

FROM *The Sun*, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2005

IS IT STRESS? IS IT LONELINESS? DR. ALDERMAN'S FREUDIAN SLIP

TINA SLOWEN

DECEMBER 28, 2005

GERRY ALDERMAN MISTAKENLY CALLED THE WOMAN WITH WHOM HE HAS BEEN SEEN IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS HIS WIFE, AN IMPOSSIBLE MIX-UP SINCE THE SCHOLAR-TURNED-CELEBRITY-HOLY-MAN HAD PREVIOUSLY STATED THAT HIS WIFE HAD DIED OF BREAST CANCER IN 2003.

ALDERMAN WAS SEEN WALKING OUT OF THE BLACK ROSE IN BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS LAST FRIDAY EVENING WITH THE MYSTERIOUS WOMAN ON HIS ARM. A GROUP OF PHOTOGRAPHERS APPROACHED THE COUPLE. ALDERMAN USHERED HIS COMPANION INTO THE WAITING VEHICLE AND THEN GOT IN HIMSELF.

ACCORDING TO SOME OF THE PHOTOGRAPHERS, ALDERMAN THEN ROLLED DOWN THE WINDOW AND SHOUTED, "PLEASE LEAVE MY WIFE AND ME ALONE" AS THE CAB PULLED AWAY.

IN AN INTERVIEW GIVEN BY ALDERMAN EARLIER THIS YEAR, WHERE HE DISCUSSED HIS INVOLVEMENT WITH THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S INVESTIGATION, ANNOUNCEMENTS ABOUT HELL, AND HOW THIS NEW HIGH-PROFILE LIFE WAS AFFECTING HIS FAMILY, ALDERMAN REVEALED THAT HE WAS WIDOWED—"MY WIFE LOST THE BATTLE TO BREAST CANCER ONE YEAR, ONE MONTH AGO"—AND THAT HIS TWO CHILDREN WERE GROWN.

IT IS UNCERTAIN WHO THIS NEW WOMAN IN ALDERMAN'S LIFE IS, BUT WE CAN BE SURE THAT HE HASN'T FULLY FORGOTTEN HIS LATE WIFE.

FROM *The New York Times* SUNDAY EDITION, SUNDAY, JANUARY 8, 2006

ROME, ITALY, JAN. 8—A NUMBER OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS AND THEIR LEADERS HAVE DENOUNCED THE CATHOLIC CHURCH FOR ANNOUNCEMENTS MADE EARLIER TODAY REGARDING DISPLACED SOULS WHO CANNOT ENTER HELL BUT ARE NOT ALLOWED INTO HEAVEN, CALLING THE CHURCH’S DECISION A “SCARE TACTIC” AND “FOR SHOCK VALUE ONLY.”

DR. FARELLY, VICAR AND SPECIAL COUNCIL TO THE POPE, IN A PRESS CONFERENCE TODAY SAID THAT “A NUMBER OF ‘SIGHTINGS’ CONFIRM THAT DISPLACED SOULS ARE RETURNING TO EARTH.” DR. FARELLY DID NOT CITE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF WHEN THESE SIGHTINGS OCCURRED, OR WHO WITNESSED THEM, BUT HE DID WARN THAT “GIVEN THE NATURE OF THESE BEINGS BEFORE DEATH, WE COULD NOT BE SURE WHAT THEIR INTENTIONS, ATTITUDES, OR MOTIVATIONS WILL BE POST MORTEM.” HE URGED EVERYONE TO TAKE EXTRA CARE WHEN DEALING WITH STRANGERS AND PEOPLE CLAIMING TO BE SOMEONE FAMILIAR.

BECAUSE THE VATICAN HAS FAILED TO GIVE PROOF OF SUCH SIGHTINGS, MANY RELIGIOUS LEADERS HAVE VEHEMENTLY DENIED THE POSSIBILITY OF THE DEAD RETURNING TO EARTH.

PERSONAL CORRESPONDENCE DATED JANUARY 22, 2006; SENDER UNKNOWN;
ADDRESSEE M.S.,

HYATT REGENCY

GARDEN GROVE, CA

JANUARY 22, 2006

BOOGAMS,

PLEASE TRY AND MOVE ON. CHARLES HAS LEFT US, AND WHILE I UNDERSTAND HOW MUCH THIS REALITY IS HURTING YOU, I URGE YOU TO TRY AND MOVE ON.

CHARLES CANNOT AND WILL NOT RETURN. THOSE WHO CLAIM—AND I DON'T CARE WHO THEY ARE—THAT PEOPLE ARE COMING BACK FROM HELL ARE OUT OF THEIR MINDS. IT'S PROBABLY AN ELABORATE SCAM.

YOUR FATHER AND I LOVE YOU, AND WE ONLY WANT THE BEST FOR YOU. IF YOU BELIEVE THAT THEN YOU WILL DO WHAT YOU CAN TO MOVE ON. YOU SHOULD HAVE COME ON VACATION WITH US. DISNEYLAND IS JUST AS MAGICAL AS WHEN WE BROUGHT YOU HERE SOME TEN YEARS AGO. DO YOU REMEMBER THE ELECTRIC PARADE? WELL, IT'S BACK. YOU USED TO GET SO EXCITED WITH THE LADY BUGS.

FATHER SENDS HIS LOVE. I DO TOO.

LOVE,

MOM

CORRESPONDENCE DATED FEBRUARY 14, 2006; SENDER NORTHWEST AIRLINES,

ADDRESSEE UNKNOWN
NORTHWEST AIRLINES/KLM
7500 AIRLINE DRIVE
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55450-1101

FEBRUARY 14, 2006

CLAIM NUMBER 06-224558 A

DEAR MS.

PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT AN INDEFINITE STAY HAS BEEN APPLIED TO YOUR CLAIM BENEFITS PURSUANT TO AN INVESTIGATION INTO YOUR HUSBAND'S DEATH. I AM AWARE THAT OUR ADJUSTER CONFIRMED YOUR HUSBAND'S PASSING AT THE TIME YOU FILED A CLAIM ON SEPTEMBER 8, 2005; HOWEVER, THE SUDDEN REAPPEARANCE OF OTHER CASUALTIES OF THE LOSS OCCURRING ON JULY 24, 2004 HAS CAUSED US TO FURTHER INVESTIGATE EACH ONE OF THE CLAIMANTS ASSOCIATED WITH THAT LOSS.

WHILE YOU ARE NOT UNDER INVESTIGATION FOR FRAUD AT THIS POINT, WE URGE YOU TO COME FORTH WITH ANY INFORMATION YOU MAY HAVE ABOUT YOUR HUSBAND AT THIS TIME THAT MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN DISCLOSED IN THE INITIAL INVESTIGATION. BE ADVISED THAT YOU ARE LEGALLY BOUND TO INFORM NORTHWEST AIRLINES OF ANY ATTEMPT MADE BY THE DECEASED TO CONTACT YOU.

SINCERELY,

DARRYL ROBBINS

FRAUD UNIT MANAGER

FROM NEWS.YAHOO.COM, DATE UNKNOWN

ALDERMAN CONFIRMS WIFE'S REAPPEARANCE

BY PAULINE JANNS, ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

33 MINUTES AGO

LOS ANGELES—DR. ALDERMAN, WHO SEEMS TO BE IN A PUBLICITY RIVALRY WITH THE VATICAN, CONFIRMED THAT THE WOMAN HE HAS BEEN SEEN WITH IS INDEED HIS WIFE. IN A NEWS CONFERENCE THIS MORNING, DR. ALDERMAN APPEARED NEXT TO HIS WIFE, TELLING REPORTERS THAT HE AND HIS WIFE HAD “GOTTEN A SECOND CHANCE, ONE THEY WEREN'T LIKELY TO WASTE,” BEFORE THE FAMED SCHOLAR BROKE DOWN IN TEARS.

ALDERMAN IS THE FIRST HIGH-PROFILE PERSON TO PUBLICLY DISCLOSE THAT A RECENTLY-DECEASED LOVED ONE HAS RETURNED FROM HELL TO RESIDE ON EARTH AGAIN PER THE VATICAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT SOME MONTHS AGO.

THE VATICAN'S DISCLOSURE HAS BEEN UNDER ATTACK BY NUMEROUS RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, AND ACADEMIC ORGANIZATIONS AND GROUPS WHO CITE THE IMPLAUSIBILITY OF SUCH AN OCCURRENCE DESPITE THE INCREASING NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES WHO HAVE REPORTED SEEING OR RECONNECTING WITH FRIENDS, FAMILY,

AND SOMETIMES ENEMIES THAT HAVE PASSED ON.

LUISA KORZYBSKI, ALDERMAN'S WIFE, DID NOT SPEAK AT THE CONFERENCE, BUT PICTURES TAKEN BEFORE THE DEATH OF THE FORMER NEUROLOGIST ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE WOMAN ALDERMAN RE-INTRODUCED AS HIS WIFE.

IN A STATEMENT MADE BY ALDERMAN'S PUBLICIST, THE CELEBRITY SCHOLAR EXPRESSED HIS DESIRE THAT "BY VIRTUE OF [HIS] OWN ANNOUNCEMENT, OTHER INDIVIDUALS WITH CLOUT AND INFLUENCE WHO ARE IN SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES WILL FEEL MOVED TO VALIDATE A REALITY THAT IS KNOWN BUT NOT OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED."

[PAGES MISSING]

FROM GOOD DAY L.A. NEWSCAST TRANSCRIPT, FEBRUARY 28, 2006

GINA TURNGOOD: GOOD MORNING, MIKE AND JULIE. THAT'S RIGHT: CITIES THROUGHOUT THE WESTERN WORLD ARE BEING OVERRUN WITH DISPLACED DECEASED, AS THEY ARE BEING CALLED. THE DISPLACED DECEASED HAVE MADE THEIR WAY INTO MOST EUROPEAN CITIES AND REPORTS OF MASS MIGRATIONS HAVE ALSO BEEN REPORTED IN MOST OF THE U.S., CANADA, AND MEXICO. SOUTH AMERICAN REPORTS HAVE BEEN SLOW IN COMING, BUT EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNTS WOULD INDICATE THAT THIS PART OF THE WORLD IS ALSO BEING AFFECTED.

MIKE: AND WHAT DO THESE THINGS LOOK LIKE? ARE THEY WISPY GHOSTS?

GT: NOT AT ALL. FROM WHAT I'VE BEEN TOLD THE DISPLACED LOOK NO DIFFERENT THAN YOU AND ME.

JULIE: SO HOW CAN YOU TELL IF SOMEONE IS DECEASED OR NOT?

GT: APPARENTLY YOU CAN'T. MOST PEOPLE JUST REPORT SEEING AND TALKING TO SOMEONE THEY'VE RECENTLY LOST. ONE MAN I TALKED TO WHO LOST HIS SON IN A CAR ACCIDENT EARLIER THIS YEAR SAID HIS SON WAS SITTING ON THE COUCH EARLY TUESDAY MORNING. HE SAID THAT HE FIRST THOUGHT HE WAS LOSING HIS MIND, BUT SOON REALIZED THAT THIS WAS, IN FACT, HIS DECEASED SON "COME BACK FROM THE DEAD."

MIKE: SO THESE DECEASED CAN TALK AND WALK JUST LIKE ANYONE ELSE?

GT: THIS SAME GENTLEMAN I SPOKE TO SAID THAT HIS SON COULD BE AFFECTED BY SOLID OBJECTS, BUT THAT HE COULDN'T EXERT ANY FORCE OR ACTION AGAINST THEM. SO HIS SON COULD SIT ON A COUCH FOR EXAMPLE, BUT HE COULDN'T PUSH IT TO A NEW LOCATION.

MIKE: DID YOU SPEAK TO THE SON?

GT: I DIDN'T MIKE. REPORTS INDICATE THAT THE DISPLACED DECEASED ARE VERY SHY. THEY ALL SEEM TO HAVE A SENSE OF IMPROPRIETY, AS IF THEY KNOW THEY DON'T BELONG AND SO TREAD LIGHTLY. THEY ARE VERY SELECTIVE, IT SEEMS, AS TO WHO THEY CONTACT AND HOW.

JULIE: SO IT'S POSSIBLE THAT WE MIGHT BE DRIVING AND THE PERSON IN THE CAR NEXT TO US IS A GHOST?

GT: NO, THAT'S NOT THE CASE. THE DISPLACED DECEASED ARE EXTREMELY SHY AND PREFER TO STAY INDOORS. ALSO, THEY CAN'T EXERT FORCE ON MATTER, SO IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR ONE TO DRIVE A VEHICLE.

MIKE: IT'S UNLIKELY THAT WE'LL BUMP IN TO ONE OUT ON THE STREET, THEN.

GT: PRECISELY.

MIKE: THANK YOU, GINA. THERE YOU HAVE IT, FOLKS. THE DEAD WALK AMONG US. AND IN VAST NUMBERS, IT SEEMS. AS OF THIS MORNING THE VATICAN REPORTED A TOTAL OF 850 OF THEM WITHIN ITS WALLS. THAT'S ONE FOR AT LEAST EVERY RESIDENT OF THE CITY.

JULIE: AND THAT'S THE RATIO FOR ITALY AS A WHOLE, IT SEEMS, ACCORDING TO A REPORT WE JUST GOT, IN WHICH SILVIO BERLUSCONI, ITALY'S NEWLY-ELECTED PRIME MINISTER, STATES THAT THE TOTAL NUMBER OF REPORTED SIGHTINGS OR CONTACTS MADE IS UP TO 55,000,000.

MIKE: IT ALMOST SEEMS AS IF THE ITALIANS WERE EXPECTING THIS, DOESN'T IT? THEY HAVE SUCH EXACT COUNTS.

JULIE: WELL, LET'S REMEMBER THAT THE VATICAN MADE THE ANNOUNCEMENT EARLY ON IN THE INVESTIGATION, SO IT'S POSSIBLE THAT THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT WAS CONVINCED BEFORE THE PUBLIC HAD FULL KNOWLEDGE. THEY MIGHT HAVE PUT AN EFFORT EARLIER THAN WE IMAGINE.

MIKE: ANOTHER COUNTRY THAT HAS REPORTED AN ONSLAUGHT OF DECEASED REFUGEES IS SPAIN, WITH 36,000,000 CONFIRMED DISPLACED OF THEIR OWN. BOTH POLAND AND SPAIN HAVE BEGUN A REGISTRATION PROCESS FOR THEIR DISPLACED AND SO POLAND IS ALSO REPORTING SOME 36,000,000 OF THEM. FRANCE AND THE PHILIPPINES ARE COMING IN WITH 50,000,000 EACH, AND LISTEN TO THIS: IRELAND HAS JUST COME IN WITH ITS FIGURE, 4,000,000, WHILE THE REST OF BRITAIN REMAINS

VIRTUALLY DISPLACED-FREE.

[COMMERCIAL BREAK]

FROM NEWS.YAHOO.COM, DATE UNKNOWN

DWAINE ROTHENBERG, ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

1 HOUR, 29 MINUTES AGO

BOSTON—PROVIDENCE COUNTY IN RHODE ISLAND HAS PROVIDED A MODEL FOR OTHER COUNTIES ACROSS THE U.S. LOOKING TO DO SOMETHING WITH THEIR DISPLACED DECEASED PROBLEM. COUNTY OFFICIALS, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE 102 PARISHES WITHIN THE STATE’S BORDERS, HAVE SET UP “SHELTERS” FOR THEIR DECEASED DISPLACED THAT RESEMBLE WAGON CARTS MADE OUT OF TITANIUM RATHER THAN WOOD.

EACH CAR CAN HOLD TWO DOZEN DISPLACED DECEASED ALONG WITH A TEN GALLON PROPANE TANK THAT IS USED TO HEAT UP THE BOTTOM OF THE WAGON TO A TEMPERATURE OF 800 DEGREES FAHRENHEIT.

LOCAL PARISHES HAVE ALSO PROVIDED MEMBERS OF THEIR CONGREGATIONS WITH POKERS TO TORMENT THE DISPLACED DECEASED AS THESE ARE PARADED THROUGH TOWNS AND COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT THE STATE.

SOME RESIDENTS HAVE PROTESTED THE TREATMENT OF THE DISPLACED DECEASED, CALLING IT INHUMANE AND ARCHAIC. SEVERAL CHURCHES HAVE COORDINATED

EFFORTS TO PROTEST THE TREATMENT OF THE DISPLACED DECEASED IN THEIR COMMUNITIES, AND AT LEAST TWO HAVE TAKEN CREDIT FOR A NUMBER OF INCIDENTS—NOT ALL SUCCESSFUL—TO SABOTAGE THE CART PARADES.

MANY OTHER AREAS IN THE U.S. HAVE FELT THE EFFECTS OF THE HIGH NUMBER OF DISPLACED DECEASED THAT HAVE SETTLED IN ALREADY CROWDED CITIES. NEW YORK AND LOS ANGELES, FOR EXAMPLE, WITH THEIR 7,142,067 AND 7,280,488 DISPLACED DECEASED RESPECTIVELY, FIND THEMSELVES IN PEDESTRIAN DEAD-LOCK AS LARGE GROUPS OF DISPLACED DECEASED TAKE TO THE STREETS, PARKS, AND COMMON AREAS AS THEIR OWN LOVED ONES CONTINUE WITH THEIR DIURNAL ROUTINES.

THIS IS DIFFERENT FROM OTHER COMMUNITIES, SUCH AS THOSE IN TEXAS WHERE COUNTIES LIKE KENEDY, REEVES, LA SALLE, STAR, CAMERON, HIDALGO, WILLACY, AND WEBB ARE OFFERING THE DISPLACED DECEASED PLOTS OF LAND IF THEY DECIDE TO MAKE THE STATE THEIR PERMANENT HOME.

LAREDO CITY COMMISSIONER LARRY LOPEZ CALLS THIS “THE OPPORTUNITY OF THE CENTURY FOR THE STATE OF TEXAS,” IN A RADIO AD THAT HAS BEEN AIRING SINCE LAST MONTH. “ONE CITY’S NUISANCE IS ANOTHER’S FUTURE,” IS THE SLOGAN ADOPTED BY THE CITY’S DEVELOPMENT OFFICE.

FROM *BOMB* SPRING 2006 ISSUE NO. 95; INTERVIEW EXCERPT

GERRY ALDERMAN BY TODD DECORNA

TODD DECORNA: MY FIRST QUESTION, ONE THAT I’M SURE YOU HAVE ASKED YOURSELF

MANY TIMES, IS: DID YOU EVER IMAGINE YOUR CAREER IN CHEMISTRY EVER TAKING A TURN SUCH AS THIS?

GERRY ALDERMAN: NEVER IN MY WILDEST DREAMS. MY THERAPIST SAYS THAT IT'S A MIRACLE I HAVEN'T DEVELOPED MULTIPLE-PERSONALITY DISORDER. SOMETIMES I THINK I HAVE. IT'S SOMETHING INCOMMUNICABLE, HAVING MEMORIES LIKE THE ONES I DO, AND NOT HAVING THEM INFORM OR CORRELATE WITH WHAT I SEE ME AS NOW.

TD: DO YOU HAVE PLANS TO RETURN TO CHEMISTRY?

GA: I CANNOT SAY. I DON'T KNOW, REALLY, EXCEPT THAT I KNOW THAT WHATEVER I'M MEANT TO DO NOW IS NOT FINISHED. SO FOR THE TIME BEING I WILL CONTINUE TO WORK IN WHATEVER CAPACITY A HIGHER POWER HAS LAID OUT FOR ME. I'VE BEEN FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO HAVE BEEN GUIDED SO STRONGLY IN MY LIFE. I CAN'T IMAGINE THAT EVERYONE WHO IS AN INSTRUMENT IS LED BY THE HAND AS I AM, SO TO SAY.

TD: YOU'VE TAKEN A MORE SPIRITUAL—IF NOT RELIGIOUS—ROLE IN RECENT DAYS. HAVE YOU DISCARDED YOUR AGNOSTICISM FOR A MORE FAITH-BASED APPROACH TO YOUR LIFE?

GA: INDEED I HAVE. AND I SUPPOSE IT'S NO USE TRYING TO HIDE WHAT I AM WORKING SO HARD TO ENACT OTHERWISE. I HAVE ACCEPTED GOD INTO MY LIFE. MY WIFE AND I

BOTH HAVE GIVEN OURSELVES AND OUR WORK TO HIM. WE SEE OURSELVES AS HIS PR AGENTS.

TD: CAN YOU SAY A LITTLE MORE ABOUT HOW, EXACTLY, YOU SEE YOURSELF FULFILLING A ROLE IN THESE INTERESTING AND BIZARRE TIMES, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE CATHOLIC CHURCH HAS ALL BUT DISAVOWED YOUR AWARENESS CAMPAIGN.

GA: I CAN'T FAULT THE CHURCH, AND I HAVE NO ILL WILL TOWARDS IT SINCE I AM NOW A BELIEVER. BUT I DO UNDERSTAND THAT AS AN ORGANIZATION THEY HAVE CERTAIN PRIORITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS THAT I DON'T HAVE AS AN INDIVIDUAL. I BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE IN THE SERVICE OF GOD, BUT THEY ALSO FUNCTION ON EARTH, A TIE WHICH ISN'T EASILY IGNORED. THE CHURCH HAS MORE MASTERS THAN I HAVE, AND THEREFORE I CAN UNDERSTAND WHY A PETTY CRUSADER SUCH AS ME IS OF LITTLE OR NO CONSEQUENCE TO IT.

TD: YOU CALL YOURSELF A CRUSADER, AN INSTRUMENT OF GOD, A TOOL IN THE PLAN OF THE LORD. WHAT EXACTLY IS YOUR CRUSADE, MISSION, OR TASK?

GA: IN SUCH A GRAVE TIME I BELIEVE THERE IS HOPE. I AM THE FACE OF THAT HOPE. FOR MANY, THE GRIM REALITY THAT HELL IS, IN EFFECT, OVERFILLED AND CANNOT TAKE ON ANY MORE SINNERS IS A HARD REALITY TO ACCEPT, AND IN FACT IT IS, BUT THERE IS HOPE. GOD IS USING THIS SITUATION TO WIN OVER SOULS TO HIS SIDE, AND

THE TRUTH IS THAT WE, AS A SOCIETY, NEEDED SOMETHING THIS SENSATIONAL TO WIN US OVER. WE WITH OUR BIG HOLLYWOOD MOVIES, BIGGER-THAN-LIFE CELEBRITIES, OUR SUPER-DESTRUCTIVE WEAPONS—IT'S EASY TO FORGET THAT THERE IS AN OMNIPOTENT, OMNIPRESENT BEING THAT DESERVES AND REQUIRES OUR WORSHIP. AND SO HERE I AM, ALONGSIDE MY WIFE, AND WE ARE POSTER-PEOPLE FOR GOD'S CAUSE: TURN AROUND, LOOK TO HIM. IT IS HERE THAT THE POWER AND GLORY RESIDES.

TD: WHAT RESULTS HAVE YOU HAD IN YOUR WORK?

GA: MANY. JUST TODAY I READ A LETTER BY A WOMAN IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST WHOSE HUSBAND DIED IN A HORRIBLE AIRPLANE CRASH LAST JULY. SHE WRITES TO SAY THAT SEEING ME NEXT TO MY WIFE GIVES HER HOPE THAT SHE WILL ALSO BE REUNITED WITH HER HUSBAND. SHE WAITS. SHE PRAYS. AND WHILE MANY OF THE VICTIMS OF THAT AIRPLANE CRASH HAVE TURNED UP AND HAVE BEEN REUNITED, SHE DOESN'T LOSE HOPE THAT HER HUSBAND WILL TOO. AND SHE WAITS, AND SHE PRAYS.

TD: DO YOU THINK THAT THERE CAN BE INSTANCES OF FALSE HOPE? THESE DISPLACED DECEASED WON'T BE AROUND FOREVER—WHETHER SPACE CLEARS UP IN HELL OR THEY DIE OR WE DIE—SEPARATION WILL INEVITABLY OCCUR.

GA: YES, THAT'S ALL TRUE. AND EVEN NOW, IN THE PRESENT, JUST BECAUSE A DISPLACED DECEASED HAS RETURNED TO EARTH DOESN'T MEAN THAT HE OR SHE WILL

NECESSARILY SEEK OUT HIS OR HER SURVIVORS. THE DISPLACED DECEASED STILL EXERT AN AMOUNT OF AGENCY, SO IN THE CASE OF THIS WOMAN IT'S POSSIBLE THAT HER HUSBAND—IF HE IS RETURNED—MAY NOT BE LOOKING FOR HIS WIFE. THAT HAPPENS. BUT HOW IS THAT DIFFERENT THAN UNIONS THAT HAPPEN BETWEEN TWO LIVING PEOPLE? THE LIVING STILL FORM UNIONS BASED ON A COMBINATION OF HOPE AND THE FAR-FETCHED ACCEPTANCE THAT THE UNION WON'T LAST FOREVER. THAT IT WILL COME TO AN END. SO THIS HOPE ISN'T ANY DIFFERENT THAN ANY OLD HOPE. HOPE IS HOPE, AND IF HOPE LEADS PEOPLE TO GOD, THEN IT'S USEFUL.

TD: HOW DO YOU THINK THIS MIGRATION AND ITS REUNIONS WILL END? THERE IS PLENTY OF TALK ON BOTH SIDES AS TO HOW LONG CITIES AND COMMUNITIES CAN OR WILL SUSTAIN THE MIGRATION. SOME ARE CALLING FOR SOME SORT OF SYSTEMATIC RELOCATION, OTHERS FOR ASSIMILATION. WHERE DO YOU FIND YOURSELF IN THIS DEBATE?

GA: TO ANSWER YOUR FIRST QUESTION, I DON'T KNOW HOW THIS PHENOMENON WILL END. OR THAT IT WILL END. AS FOR ME, WELL, I HOPE THAT I CAN LIVE OUT A FULL LIFE WITH MY RETURNED WIFE, AND I HOPE THAT OTHERS IN POWER TO MAKE DECISIONS FOR MILLIONS CONSIDER CASES LIKE MINE

TD: YOU SEEM TO BE MAKING GOOD USE OF MEDIA OUTLETS IN ACCOMPLISHING YOUR MISSION. DO YOU HAVE ANY OTHER PLANS TO FURTHER YOUR WORK?

GA: I DO. AS YOU KNOW, MY BOOK *How I Came to Believe: a Man's Journey into Reason and Salvation*, TOPS THE BEST-SELLER LISTS BOTH HERE AND IN BRITAIN, WHICH HAS FORCED ME TO FINALLY ACCEPT AN INVITATION TO APPEAR ON *Oprah* LATER THIS MONTH. I HAVE NOTHING BUT RESPECT FOR MS. WINFREY, AND I APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK TO VIEWERS. AS PART OF THE BOOK TOUR I HAVE ALSO AGREED TO BE INTERVIEWED BY TERRY GROSS ON *Fresh Air*, AND THAT WILL ALSO HELP ME SPREAD THE MESSAGE. I'VE BEEN BLESSED TO BE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO APPEAR ON THESE VERY RESPECTABLE VENUES, AND OF COURSE I CREDIT GOD, FOR NOT ONLY WILL MY EXPERIENCE ENSURE MY SALVATION, BUT THAT OF THE MANY WHO HAVE A CHANCE TO HEAR IT. "ONE COULD NEVER AMASS TOO MANY RICHES ON HEAVEN," WE'RE TOLD.

TD: OR ON EARTH.

FROM REUTERS.COM; WED JUNE 7, 2007 1:46PM EDT

BUSH PRODS CONGRESS TO PASS TRANSMIGRATION LEGISLATION

BY TABITHA ZACHARY

FORT MEADE, MARYLAND (REUTERS) - PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH URGED CONGRESS ON WEDNESDAY TO EXPAND THE GOVERNMENT'S POWERS TO OVERSEE AND CONTROL THE EMERGENCE OF MILLIONS OF DISPLACED DECEASED, SAYING FAILURE TO

DO SO WOULD INTERFERE WITH THE NATION'S EFFORTS TO FIGHT TERRORISM, MAKING THE COUNTRY VULNERABLE TO ANOTHER ATTACK.

CAPITOL HILL LAWMAKERS HAVE BEEN RELUCTANT TO INTERFERE WITH STATES IN THE HANDLING OF THE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF DISPLACED DECEASED THAT HAVE TAKEN TO VARIOUS CITIES ACROSS THE U.S. UNTIL RECENTLY, WHEN WHITE HOUSE ATTORNEYS REPORTED LAST MONTH THAT A CREDIBLE THREAT EXISTS IF EVEN ONE OF THE DISPLACED DECEASED WAS A SECURITY THREAT BEFORE DEATH.

BUSH SAID THAT SECURITY AND INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES MUST BE ABLE TO MONITOR DISPLACED DECEASED TO RULE OUT ANY POSSIBLE THREAT HERE OR ABROAD THE.

WITHOUT PROPER LEGISLATION "IT WILL BE HARDER FOR THE U.S. TO FIND OUT HOW ENEMIES MIGHT USE DISPLACED DECEASED TO TRAIN, RECRUIT, AND INFILTRATE OPERATIVES INTO AMERICA" SAID BUSH IN A VISIT TO THE NATIONAL SECURITY AGENCY, WHICH OVERSEES ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS OF TARGETS ALL AROUND THE WORLD.

FROM CHAPTER 2 OF *Asking Myself: A Memoir by Barbara Walters*; EXCERPT

MANY PEOPLE HAVE WONDERED (FEW HAVE ASKED DIRECTLY) WHY I DIDN'T TAKE MORE INTEREST IN THE DISPLACED DECEASED AND THE PERSONAS THAT HAVE POPULATED THESE EVENTS SINCE DR. FARELLY AND THE THEN UNKNOWN GERRY ALDERMAN INVESTIGATED THE WEEPING STATUES IN BRISBANE. THE TRUTH IS, I HAVE

TAKEN A KEEN INTEREST IN THESE MATTERS, ALBEIT A PERSONAL ONE.

THE BEST POSSIBLE WAY I CAN THINK OF EXPLAINING WHY I CHOSE NOT TO INTERVIEW FARELLY OR ALDERMAN—OR A DISPLACED DECEASED, EVEN—HAS LESS TO DO WITH MY OWN INTEREST IN SUBJECTS OR CURRENT EVENTS THAN THEY DO WITH MY OWN PHILOSOPHY OF REPORTING. IN FACT I’VE BECOME CLOSE FRIENDS WITH ALDERMAN, AND IT COULD HAVE BEEN RATHER EASILY HANDLED, AN INSIDER-INTERVIEW WITH HIM, BUT FROM THE VERY BEGINNING, EVEN WHEN I WAS WRITING SMALL EXPOSÉS FOR *The Republican*, I HAVE BEEN DRIVEN BY A SENSE OF DUTY TO UNCOVER THE HIDDEN, RATHER THAN TO COVER THE POPULAR. THAT PHILOSOPHY HAS SERVED ME WELL, AND I’VE BEEN FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO HAVE PRODUCERS WHO SHARED THAT SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY. IN THE CASE OF THE DISPLACED DECEASED, ENOUGH MEDIA COVERAGE HAS BEEN GRANTED THE EVENTS AND CHARACTERS OF THE PHENOMENON, AND SO INSTEAD OF “GOING UN-BOLDLY WHERE EVERYONE ELSE HAS GONE,” I FOLLOWED ANOTHER STORY—OR PHENOMENON RATHER—THAT HAS BEEN ALL BUT LOST IN THE COMMOTION OF⁵

FROM *The Orange County Register*; WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2007

⁵ This excerpt abruptly ends here, though not necessarily by accident or by digital erosion as is common in reclaimed documents. I suggest that the collector of these excerpts discovered that this particular excerpt was not entirely related to whatever purpose s/he had in collecting these snippets of media. Whether s/he meant for it to stay is unknown—it’s likely s/he didn’t and simply forgot to go back and “edit,” as it were. Nonetheless the significance of the collector’s likely oversight does indicate that s/he was motivated in the collection of these documents, and it’s probable that Horatio Seasons considered this very motivation when he recommended reclamation of the “Hell on Earth” narrative. His notes, along with a number of intriguing speculations regarding the documents reclaimed from the years leading up to the Google Server Crash is the topic of Soraya Quintrell’s *The Voices We Don’t Hear: A Retrospective Glance at Women and Women Writers in the Final Period* (New School, 2418). For the purposes of my own inquiry, I have reclaimed and included the entire second chapter of Barbara Walter’s autobiography in this palimpsest.

CONGRESS MATCHES FUNDING TO RELOCATE DISPLACED DECEASED

BY MARCOS BETANCOURT

LAWMAKERS IN WASHINGTON HAVE APPROVED A 20 MILLION DOLLAR CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS THE BUILDING OF AN ALTERNATE HELL JUST WEEKS AFTER THE U.N. SPECIAL COUNCIL ON AN ALTERNATE HELL AWARDED THE CONTRACT FOR THE PROJECT TO ARCHITECT FRANK GEHRY, WHO BEAT OUT A DOZEN OTHER ARCHITECTS ALSO INTERESTED IN THE CONTRACT.

THE CONTRIBUTION MATCHES THE FUNDS RAISED BY THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE, WHICH LEAVES MANY WONDERING WHERE THE ADDITIONAL 15 MILLION WILL COME FROM IF THE ALTERNATE HELL IS TO BE BUILT ACCORDING TO THE SPECIFICATIONS FRANK GEHRY AND ASSOCIATES PRESENTED TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL.

MR. GEHRY PRESENTED HIS PLANS DURING A SPECIAL SESSION OF THE U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL ON SEPTEMBER 1 IN WHICH HE REVEALED PLANS FOR AN ALTERNATE HELL CONSISTING OF A CONICAL STRUCTURE TO BE SUNK NEARLY 30,000 FEET INTO THE EARTH'S CRUST. ONLY A SMALL PORTION—ONE OF TEN SECTIONS—WILL BE AT GROUND LEVEL, WHILE THE REMAINING NINE WILL BURROW DEEP INTO THE GROUND. FRANK GEHRY HAS CREDITED DANTE'S *Inferno* WITH THE STRUCTURAL IDEA FOR HIS ALTERNATE HELL, STATING THAT IT WILL BE "A PREDICTABLE SPACE FOR BOTH THE DISPLACED DECEASED AND THEIR LIVING SURVIVORS."

THE LOCATION OF ALTERNATE HELL REMAINS AN INTERNATIONAL SECRET, WHICH, ACCORDING TO THE WHITE HOUSE, IS A NECESSARY PRECAUTION IN THE FACE OF TERRORIST THREATS.

FROM *The Orange County Register* "LIFE" SECTION, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2007

LEVEL ZERO OF ALTERNATE HELL TO BE NAMED ALDERMAN HALL

BY KYLE GIBB

THE ALTERNATE HELL BOARD OF TRUSTEES ANNOUNCED ON THURSDAY NIGHT THAT THE GROUND LEVEL OF ALTERNATE HELL IS TO BE NAMED ALDERMAN HALL, AFTER THE RESEARCHER-TURNED-CRUSADER DONATED 15 MILLION DOLLARS TO COMPLETE THE PROJECTED BUDGET SET BY FRANK GEHRY AND ASSOCIATES FOR THE PROJECT.

SO FAR ONLY ALDERMAN HALL, WHICH UNTIL NOW WAS SIMPLY KNOWN AS "LEVEL ZERO" BECAUSE DANTE'S VISION OF HELL, *Inferno*, IS ONLY MADE UP OF NINE LEVELS, EACH ONE LIKE A COMPARTMENT FOR DIFFERENT TYPES OF SINS, HAS BEEN THE ONLY ONE FULLY DESCRIBED BY FRANK GEHRY AND ASSOCIATES.

ACCORDING TO A SPOKESPERSON FOR THE FIRM, ONLY THE GROUND LEVEL WILL BE ACCESSIBLE BY THE LIVING, AND WILL INCLUDE A LIBRARY AND RESEARCH CENTER, A MUSEUM AND MAUSOLEUM, A 300-PERSON THEATRE AND LECTURE HALL, AND A MULTI-MEDIA ROOM BUILT A ROTATING STAGE MADE OUT OF SEE-THROUGH TEMPERED GLASS THAT ALLOWS FOR AN UNOBSTRUCTED VIEW CLEAR TO THE POINT OF THE ALTERNATE HELL CONE.

A VISITOR CENTER AND GIFT SHOP HAVE ALSO BEEN PLANNED FOR ALDERMAN HALL.

THE DIAGRAM PUBLISHED BY FRANK GEHRY AND ASSOCIATES (FIGURE 1) ALSO SHOWS THE ENTRY POINT FROM WHICH THE DISPLACED DECEASED ARE TO ENTER THEIR NEW HOME ONCE IT'S COMPLETED. ACCORDING TO A SPOKESPERSON FOR THE FIRM, WORLD-CLASS ARTIST BEETH COOPER HAS DESIGNED A GATE (FIGURE 2) "JUST LIKE THE ONE THAT OPENS DANTE'S POEM SO AS TO MAINTAIN THE INTEGRITY OF DESIGN THAT MR. GEHRY HAS ENVISIONED FROM THE VERY CONCEPT OF THE PROJECT."

IN A JOINT STATEMENT WITH FRANK GEHRY AND ASSOCIATES, THE ALTERNATE HELL BOARD OF TRUSTEES ALSO ANNOUNCED A TIMELINE FOR THE COMPLETION OF ALTERNATE HELL, STATING THAT THE FIRST PHASE OF THE PROJECT, WHICH INCLUDES ALDERMAN HALL AND THE FIRST THREE LEVELS OF ALTERNATE HELL—LIMBO, LUST, AND GLUTTONY—IS EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED BY FALL 2009.

THE NAMES LIMBO, LUST, AND GLUTTONY ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE FIRST THREE LEVELS OF DANTE'S LITERARY RENDITION OF HELL, BUT THEY "DON'T REFLECT THEMATIC OR SEGREGATE DESIGNATIONS IN ALTERNATE HELL AS THEY DO IN DANTE," SAID A SPOKESPERSON FOR THE FIRM, WHO FURTHER EXPLAINED THAT "AS FAR AS MR. GEHRY IS CONCERNED, EACH LEVEL OF HELL WILL BE SUITABLE HOUSING FOR ANY SINNER, WITHOUT REGARD TO SEVERITY OR TYPE OF SIN."

FROM *The New Republic* ONLINE, POST DATE 11.8.07

BUT WHY?

BY THE EDITORS

NANCY PELOSI IS SET TO MAKE A VERY INOPPORTUNE DECISION NEXT WEEK IF SHE GOES THROUGH IN NAMING TOM RIDGE, THE FORMER AND FIRST HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY, AS THE HEAD OF THE HELL-EARTH AGENCY OF TRANSMIGRATION. RIDGE'S EMBATTLED CAREER WHILE WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY SHOULD BE REASON ENOUGH TO LOOK SOMEWHERE ELSE WHEN SEEKING LEADERSHIP FOR WHAT IS SET TO BE ON OF THE MOST IMPORTANT AGENCIES THIS DECADE.

DEMOCRATIC LEADERS WERE FULL OF PRAISE FOR MR. RIDGE WHEN HE RESIGNED FROM HIS POST IN 2004, DESPITE THE NUMEROUS COMPLAINTS REGARDING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE BIGGEST BUREAUCRATIC REORGANIZATION OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SINCE THE NATIONAL SECURITY ACT OF 1947. AND EVEN WHEN FRIENDS OF HIS DEFENDED THE USEFULNESS OF COLOR-CODED TERROR ALERTS BY BLAMING "FEDERAL BUREAUCRACIES AND CONGRESS" FOR THE CHALLENGES THE DHS AND RIDGE FACED DURING THE FIRST TWO YEARS OF THE DEPARTMENT'S EXISTENCE, IT ACCOMPLISHED LITTLE FOR BEING IN CHARGE OF 22 DIFFERENT AGENCIES AND OVER 180,000 EMPLOYEES—ALL AT THE DISPOSAL OF RIDGE TO MAKE THE NATION SAFER, MORE EFFECTIVE IN INFORMATION MANAGEMENT, AND/OR IMPROVE THE RESPONSE AND RECOVERY TIMES IN SITUATIONS OF NATIONAL SECURITY. ANY NUMBER OF REPORTS RELEASED THIS YEAR, AS WELL AS THE REAL-TIME EXPERIENCES OF HURRICANE KATRINA, WILL INDICATE THAT THE NATION IS NOT ANY SAFER THAN IN THE DAYS BEFORE 9/11, NOR IS THERE MUCH HOPE SHOULD A DEMOGRAPHIC OF OUR NATION

NEED EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE.

BUT NANCY PELOSI IS DEAD-SET IN MAKING THIS MAN THE HEAD OF *HEAT*, THE NEWEST AND BIGGEST AGENCY IN THE DHS...

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FROM *The Los Angeles Times*, JANUARY 2, 2008

HEAT ARRESTS OVER 200 DISPLACED DECEASED IN ROSE PARADE RAID

BY SAMANTHA WATERS, LOS ANGELES TIMES STAFF WRITER

A *HEAT* SQUAD APPREHENDED 232 DISPLACED DECEASED TUESDAY DURING THE ANNUAL ROSE PARADE THAT TAKES PLACE EVERY NEW YEAR'S DAY IN PASADENA.

HEAT OFFICERS FIRST RAIDED THE FLOAT ENTRY POINT, WHERE SOME 75 DISPLACED

DECEASED WERE BEING LOADED ONTO A FLOAT DESIGNED BY THE PEOPLE OF FREEDOM IN LIFE AND DEATH, ONE OF THE MOST ACTIVE GROUPS IN SUPPORT OF THE DISPLACED DECEASED.

ANOTHER 157 WERE APPREHENDED IN RANDOM SEARCHES ALONG THE PARADE ROUTE. ONE COUPLE—A LIVING AND A DISPLACED DECEASED—ATTEMPTED TO FLEE WHEN *HEAT* OFFICERS APPROACHED THEIR LOCATION, LEADING TO A TEN MINUTE FOOT-CHASE THROUGH THE PARADE, WHERE HUNDREDS OF MEDIA OUTLETS WERE ABLE TO CAPTURE ON CAMERA THE CHASE AND EVENTUAL APPREHENSION OF THE TWO INDIVIDUALS.

THE RAID COMES AS PART OF A CRACKDOWN ON FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE REFUSED TO REGISTER THEIR DISPLACED DECEASED IN PREPARATION FOR THE RELOCATION TO ALTERNATE HELL IN THE FALL OF 2009. TO DATE, *HEAT* HAS APPREHENDED AND REGISTERED NEARLY 30,000 DISPLACED DECEASED SINCE RAIDS BEGAN SIX MONTHS AGO.

IN A RAID LAST MONTH *HEAT* ARRESTED AND CHARGED GLORIA QUEEN OF LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS WITH AIDING AND ABETTING AND OBSTRUCTION OF JUSTICE AFTER REPEATED ATTEMPTS TO HAVE MRS. QUEEN REGISTER HER TWO INFANTS. BOTH CHILDREN DIED IN A CAR ACCIDENT IN 2001. THEY RETURNED IN APRIL 2005.

MRS. QUEEN'S SUIT IS THE FIRST INSTANCE WHERE *HEAT* HAS BROUGHT LEGAL ACTION AGAINST AN INDIVIDUAL, BUT "MORE LEGAL ACTION CAN BE EXPECTED," SAID DISTRICT ATTORNEY MARIO BATES DURING MRS. QUEEN'S ARRAIGNMENT LAST MONTH.

A NUMBER OF DISPLACED DECEASED HAVE BEEN APPREHENDED AND REGISTERED AT

AIRPORTS AND THE CANADIAN AND MEXICAN BORDERS, AS THE DISPLACED DECEASED AND SOMETIMES LOVED ONES ATTEMPT TO FLEE TO OTHER COUNTRIES TO ESCAPE RE-SEPARATION. RECENTLY, *HEAT* UNITS HAVE BEEN PLACED AT BORDER CHECK POINTS AND AIR PORT CHECKPOINTS TO ENSURE THAT INDIVIDUALS LEAVING THE COUNTRY ARE DOING SO LEGALLY.

AIRPORT ADMINISTRATIONS AND TRAVELERS ALIKE HAVE COMPLAINED OF THE EXTENDED WAITING PERIODS AT AIRPORTS AND U.S. BORDERS, WHERE RANDOM CHECKS BY U.S. CUSTOMS, ICE AND ADI OFFICERS ALREADY SLOW DOWN TRAFFIC SIGNIFICANTLY.⁶

FROM [FROM *The Orange County Register* "LIFE" SECTION, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2009

A SOFT OPENING FOR A BIG PROJECT

BY KENDRA POWELL, SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT TO *The Orange County Register*

EVEN BEFORE THE ALTERNATE HELL SITE WAS ANNOUNCED IN JANUARY, THE RESIDENTS OF COTULLA, TEXAS WERE AWARE THAT SOMETHING MASSIVE WAS TAKING PLACE MILES FROM THEIR SMALL COMMUNITY. AS EARLY AS SEPTEMBER 2007, WHEN

⁶ Before ICE, U.S. Customs and the INS were two separate entities until the formation of the DHS, which brought both agencies into one, ICE—U.S Immigration and Customs Enforcement. A recovered electronic document (postG2241) described the ICE and U.S. Customs as such: "U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) strengthens national security and upholds public safety by closing down homeland security vulnerabilities. Created in March 2003, ICE was tasked with closing down our nation's vulnerabilities by targeting the people, money and materials that support terrorism and other criminal activities. ICE prioritizes its immigration enforcement actions by targeting the greatest national security and public safety threats -- an approach not taken prior to 9/11." For a few years the ADI, or American Dream Interpretation agency and *HEAT* were also separate from each other, at least until *HEAT* gained a significant presence at all U.S. points of entry and exit, at which point *HEAT* also enforced immigration rules for individuals looking to leave the U.S. to escape their American Dream Interpretation. For a case study of the ADI, see Appendix B.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT WAS FIRST MADE THAT THE U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL HAD APPROVED THE BUILDING OF AN ALTERNATE HELL, RESIDENTS OF COTULLA NOTICED A MARKED INCREASE IN THE AMOUNT OF TRAFFIC COMING THROUGH TOWN ON INTERSTATE 35, WHICH RUNS RIGHT THROUGH THE COMMUNITY OF 3,600.

“AT FIRST WE THOUGHT A NEW HOUSING COMMUNITY WAS BEING BUILT BETWEEN HERE AND GEORGE. THERE HAD BEEN SOME TALK ABOUT DEVELOPING THE LAND THERE,” SAID DAVID SYKES OF COTULLA, WHO WENT ON TO SAY THAT IT WASN’T LONG BEFORE THE RESIDENTS OF COTULLA REALIZED MORE THAN TRACT HOMES WERE GOING TO BE BUILT: “WE NOTICED THE AMOUNT OF HEAVY MACHINERY MAKING ITS WAY OUT THAT WAY. THEY EVEN BUILT A PRIVATE ROAD—PAVED AND EVERYTHING—TO TRANSPORT THE HEAVY TRUCKS OUT THERE. IT WAS GOING TO BE BIG.”

THE RESIDENTS OF COTULLA SOON REALIZED THAT SOMETHING BIGGER THAN A HOUSING COMMUNITY WAS BEING BUILT SOME 50 MILES SOUTH-WEST OF THEIR TOWN. IN FACT, A CITY MEETING WAS HELD IN THE SPRING OF 2008 TO ADDRESS THE TRAFFIC AND THE SHROUD OF MYSTERY SURROUNDING THE COMMOTION. ACCORDING TO MANY RESIDENTS AND CITY MANAGER CARL CLARKSON, NUMEROUS ATTEMPTS TO GET INFORMATION FROM THE DEVELOPERS COMING THROUGH TOWN PROVED FRUITLESS.

“FINALLY WE GOT A LETTER ANSWERED, AND IN IT THEY SAID THAT SOMEONE WOULD COME TO THE CITY MEETING TO INTRODUCE THE COMPANY AND THE PROJECT,” SAYS CARL CLARKSON, “BUT WHEN THEY CAME THEY ONLY TOLD US THAT IT WAS A GOVERNMENT CONTRACT AND THAT BEYOND THAT THEY COULDN’T SAY MORE, SO REALLY NOTHING WAS ANSWERED. IF ANYTHING, IT MADE FOR MORE QUESTIONS.”

COTULLA RESIDENTS LEARNED TO IGNORE THE COMINGS AND GOINGS OF THE CONSTRUCTION CREWS, AND FOUR MONTHS AFTER THE MEETING MOST OF THE TRAFFIC STOPPED ANYWAY. RESIDENTS CREDIT THE CHANGE TO A SYSTEM OF PRIVATE ROADS AND A LANDING STRIP—“IT HAD TO BE,” SAYS JOHN LESTER, THE COTULLA REGIONAL AIRPORT MANAGER, “BECAUSE I STARTED PICKING UP THE TRANSMISSIONS FROM THE PILOTS. THE FIRST TIME I HEARD ONE I ANSWERED IT, ONLY TO BE TOLD TO STAND DOWN. I HEARD THE PILOT ASK FOR PERMISSION TO LAND, AND I HEARD SOMEONE GRANT IT. WHEN I SAW THE PLANE FLY OVER THE LANDING STRIP HERE I WAS SURE IT WAS GOING TO CRASH LAND. BUT IT DIDN’T. AS MORE PLANES CAME AND WENT I REALIZED THAT THEY HAD BUILT THEIR OWN LANDING STRIP.”

IT WASN’T UNTIL THE SPRING OF 2009 THAT RESIDENTS OF COTULLA ONCE AGAIN TOOK AN INTEREST IN THE GOINGS-ON 45 MINUTES DOWN THE ROAD WHEN RESIDENTS NOTICED WHAT MANY DESCRIBED AS “BLADES OF GLASS OR STEEL” RISING IN THE HORIZON.

“THEY WERE ESPECIALLY NOTICEABLE IN THE MORNING OR EVENING, JUST AS THE SUN WAS RISING OR FALLING, AND THE STRUCTURES CAUGHT THE LIGHT,” SAYS MEG PFARR, WHOSE BAY WINDOW FACES PRECISELY IN THE DIRECTION OF ALTERNATE HELL.

ANOTHER COTULLA RESIDENT, SAMUEL CANTOR, SAYS THAT HE “THOUGHT A WHOLE NEW CITY WAS BEING BUILT. I THOUGHT IT WAS A SKYLINE LIKE THE ONE IN DALLAS.”

SOON AFTER, LOCAL AND THEN NATIONAL MEDIA OUTLETS MADE THEIR WAY TO COTULLA TO COVER THE STORY. ONE MONTH LATER THE U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL AND THE ALTERNATE HELL BOARD OF TRUSTEES MADE THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE

FIRST PHASE OF ALTERNATE HELL WAS NEARING COMPLETION, AND THAT THE SITE OF ALTERNATE HELL WAS EXACTLY HALFWAY BETWEEN INTERSTATES 35 AND 37, AND STATE HIGHWAYS 97 AND 624 IN SOUTHWEST TEXAS.

AND THAT'S HOW COTULLA, TEXAS BECAME THE GATEWAY TO ALTERNATE HELL, A DISTINCTION THEY DON'T TAKE LIGHTLY.

ALL 3, 600 RESIDENTS OF COTULLA WERE DISTINGUISHED GUESTS AT THE SOFT OPENING OF ALTERNATE HELL ON SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, WHERE HEADS-OF-STATE, CELEBRITIES, AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS GATHERED FOR AN ONGOING FIREWORKS SPECTACULAR, LAVISH GARDEN PARTY, AND RIBBON-CUTTING CEREMONY.

GUESTS ARRIVED TO ALTERNATE HELL VIA A SPACIOUS AVENUE LINED WITH JAPANESE MAPLES, THE LEAVES OF WHICH WERE ALREADY AN UN-REAL RED. ACCORDING TO THE PRESS PACKAGE, THE LEAVES ON THE MAPLES, AS WELL AS THE 1,000 OTHER TREES IN THE 125-ACRE GARDENS SURROUNDING ALTERNATE HELL ARE GENETICALLY MODIFIED TO BEAR THEIR FALL COLORS.

AT THE END OF AN AVENUE STANDS A FORECOURT COVERED IN BEAUTIFUL RED POISON IVY, FROM WHICH THE FACES OF TINY ANGELS, THEIR EYES ENCRUSTED WITH DIAMOND-SHAPED RUBIES, PEEK THROUGH.

AT THE FOOT OF THE FORECOURT ARE TWO SYMMETRICALLY-ARRANGED YARDS COVERED IN ORANGE POPPIES, EACH LIKE A FIRE-BED FOR GIGANTIC TOPIARY STATUES OF CERBERUS, AND HIS SIBLINGS CHIMERA AND HYDRA.

JUST BEYOND THE TWO HORTICULTURE YARDS IS AN AMPHITHEATRE WITH AN AVIARY AT ITS CENTER. AN INFORMATION PLACARD STATES THAT THE AVIARY REGULARLY

HOUSES ABOUT A DOZEN VULTURES AND OTHER RAVENOUS BIRDS. THE CARCASS OF A COW HAD BEEN DUMPED INTO THE AVIARY JUST BEFORE THE GUESTS ARRIVED SO THAT THE BIRDS TORE AND FOUGHT OVER THE FLESH THROUGHOUT THE CELEBRATION. A WALL OF FLAMES REACHING 15 FEET INTO THE AIR SEPARATES THE AMPHITHEATRE FROM A MAGNIFICENT COURTYARD THAT IS OUTLINED BY ALTERNATING FIREBUSHES AND SUGAR MAPLES, ABOUT 100 OF EACH. AT THE CENTER OF THE COURTYARD ARE TWO REFLECTIVE POOLS—ABOUT 30 FEET LONG AND FIVE FEET WIDE EACH—FILLED WITH BURNING OIL. IN THE MIDDLE OF EACH POOL A PLATFORM SUSTAINING ICE SCULPTURES OF SISYPHUS ROLLING HIS BALL; THE OTHER POOL DISPLAYED PROMETHEUS AND AN EAGLE TEARING THROUGH HIS INNARDS.

THE COURTYARD STANDS AT THE FOOT OF THE STAIRS THAT LEAD TO THE FRONT DOORS OF ALTERNATE HELL, WHICH ARE REALLY TWO SLITS IN THE FAÇADE OF THE BUILDING, A CHAOTIC ARRANGEMENT OF STAINLESS AND CORRUGATED STEEL BLADES ARRANGED TO RESEMBLE RISING FLAMES REACHING ANYWHERE FROM FIVE STORIES TO 55 STORIES INTO THE AIR. DURING SUNRISE AND SUNSET, THE BLADES REFLECT THE SUNLIGHT TO TAKE ON A NATURAL GLOW LIKE THAT OF HOT EMBERS; HOWEVER, FIBER OPTICS IMPLANTED IN THE STEEL AND SHOTCRETE USED TO SUPPORT THE STRUCTURES GIVE THE FAÇADE ITS FIERY GLOW DURING THE NIGHT. ON ESPECIALLY HOT DAYS THE BLADES REFLECT HEAT ONTO THE SURROUNDING GROUNDS, WHICH COULD REACH TEMPERATURES UP TO 140 DEGREES FAHRENHEIT.

GARY ALDERMAN, FIRST PRESIDENT OF ALTERNATE HELL, CUT THE RED RIBBON AT EXACTLY 7:06PM, TO A SIMULTANEOUS FANFARE OF TRUMPETS, A DISSONANT

BELLOWING FROM A PIPE ORGAN DEEP INSIDE ALTERNATE HELL, A HUNDRED-VOICE MIXED CHOIR SINGING DALE JERGENSON'S *Lament of Job*, AND A FLURRY OF FIREWORKS CIRCLING THE PERIMETER OF THE ALTERNATE HELL COMPOUND.

TO DATE NO ONE BUT GARY ALDERMAN, MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND ESSENTIAL PERSONNEL HAVE BEEN ALLOWED THROUGH THE DOOR OF ALTERNATE HELL, WHICH ACTS AS THE CENTER FOCAL POINT INSIDE ALDERMAN HALL. LIKE A VACUUM FOR LIGHT, THE DOORWAY, WHOSE ARCHES ARE MADE OUT OF BONE, HAIR, MARBLE, ROTTED WOOD, AND OTHER ORGANIC MATTER WHICH HAS UNDERGONE PLASTINATION—A PROCESS PATENTED BY GUNTHER VON HAGEN—DOESN'T SEEM TO ALLOW FOR MORE THAN DIM LIGHTING INSIDE ALDERMAN HALL. AN OCCASIONAL ROGUE REFLECTION WILL CATCH THE METAL OF THE TURNSTILE UNDER THE DOORWAY AND CAST AN EERIE LIGHT IN A FAR CORNER OF THE HALL.

AND REALLY THERE ISN'T MUCH TO ILLUMINATE, AS ALL THE SURFACES IN ALDERMAN HALL ARE MADE UP OF STAINLESS STEEL—FROM THE WALLS TO THE COUNTER AND TABLE SURFACES—NO VARIATION OF COLOR OR MODE EXISTS INSIDE THE HALL OR ITS COMPONENTS. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE FOYER, A CHAPEL-LIKE SPACE WARMED BY A TERRA-COTTA TILE FLOOR AND RAYS OF LIGHT THAT EMANATE FROM SHOEBOX-SHAPED OPENINGS THAT ROUND THE CEILING, CREATING A CRIS-CROSS OF BEAMS JUST UNDERNEATH THE FOUR CEILING PAINTINGS DEPICTING THE HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE. THE REST OF ALDERMAN HALL IS SPARSELY ADORNED, ALMOST CLINICAL.

IF THIS IS ANY INDICATION OF WHAT AWAITS THE DISPLACED DECEASED ONCE THEY

PASS THROUGH BEETH COOPER'S DOOR INTO ALTERNATE HELL, THEN THE PRESS PACKAGE MATERIALS' DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERIOR AS "MANY AUSTERE SPACES LEADING TO OTHER EQUALLY AUSTERE PLACES, ALL OF WHICH GIVE THE PERCEPTION THAT THE NEXT ROOM WILL BE MORE WELCOMING THAN THE CURRENT ONE, WHEN IN FACT IT IS AS DESOLATE AS ANY THAT WHICH CAME BEFORE," MOST AMONG THE LIVING WILL HAVE THEIR CURIOSITY SATISFIED BY SPENDING ANY AMOUNT OF TIME IN ALDERMAN HALL.

NO ACTUAL TORMENTS ARE DESCRIBED—IT ISN'T EVEN CLEAR IF ALTERNATE HELL IS A PLACE OF TORMENT AND TORTURE—EXCEPT THAT CERTAIN SPACES ARE SAID TO BE LINED WITH PLASMA SCREENS THAT RANDOMLY PLAY ARCHIVAL FOOTAGE OF WARS, PESTILENCE, FAMINE, DISEASE, HUNGER, SUFFERING, AND ISOLATION. THE FOOTAGE, ONCE IT STARTS, MAY GO FOR DAYS ON END, AND FINISH JUST AS ABRUPTLY. AS MANY DAYS OF DEAFENING SILENCE ARE LIKELY TO FOLLOW.

CORRESPONDENCE, DATED OCTOBER 8, 2009; SENDER *HEAT*; ADDRESSEE M.S.,

DEAR MRS. ,

WE REGRET TO INFORM YOU THAT YOUR APPLICATION TO ATTEND THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF ALTERNATE HELL HAS BEEN DENIED AS WE WERE UNABLE TO CONFIRM YOUR HUSBAND'S RETURN AS A DISPLACED DECEASED.

SINCERELY,

HELL-EARTH AGENCY OF TRANSMIGRATION

FROM *USA Today*, USATODAY.COM; UPDATED 42 MINS. AGO

THE OPENING OF ALTERNATE HELL AN EMOTIONAL EVENT

BY DIRK CAPONE, USA TODAY

THERE WAS AN OUTPOURING OF EMOTION TODAY AT ALTERNATE HELL AS THOUSANDS OF FAMILIES AND LOVED ONES CAME TO SAY GOODBYE TO THEIR DISPLACED DECEASED AS A TAPESTRY OF CULTURES, LANGUAGES, AND COLORS GATHERED FOR BOTH THE OFFICIAL OPENING AND THE LAST GOODBYE.

A WOMAN NAMED MARITZA REFUSED TO SEE IT AS A FINAL GOODBYE, SAYING THAT “IF MY JULIAN CAME BACK TO ME ONCE HE CAN COME BACK AGAIN,” A SENTIMENT EXPRESSED BY MANY AS PEOPLE HUGGED, KISSED, SMILED AND CRIED IN PREPARATION OF WALKING THROUGH THE GATES OF HELL.

IN PLACES LIKE BARCELONA AND GUADALAJARA, CITY-WIDE FESTIVALS WERE HELD IN HONOR OF THE DISPLACED DECEASED, MUCH TO THE BENEFIT OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS WHO COULDN'T TRAVEL TO AMERICA FOR THE OFFICIAL CELEBRATION.

BUT NOT ALL WAS MERRYMAKING, AS *HEAT* SQUADS FOUND THEMSELVES BUSY RAIDING INDIVIDUAL RESIDENCES THROUGHOUT THE U.S. IN SEARCH OF DISPLACED DECEASED WHO REFUSED TO GO BACK TO HELL. IN MANY CASES, DISPLACED DECEASED WERE FOUND UNDER BEDS, IN CLOSETS, CAR TRUNKS, AND EVEN THE OCCASIONAL DEMPSEY DUMPSTER. “THE WORK WE HAVE TO DO DOESN'T END TODAY,”

SAID A *HEAT* OFFICIAL PRESENT AT THE OPENING. THE WORK IS JUST BEGGING FOR US AND AGENCIES LIKE *HEAT* AROUND THE WORLD.”

NOT PRESENT AT THE OPENING WAS GARY ALDERMAN, WHO REMAINS IN CRITICAL CONDITION AFTER AN AUTOMOBILE ACCIDENT ON OCTOBER 13.

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MY COLLEAGUES IN CLASSICS TELL ME THAT ONE OF THE MOST ENJOYABLE ASPECTS OF THEIR RECLAMATION PROJECTS IS SEEING HOW PRE-MODERNS INTERPRETED THE APPROACH CERTAIN CIVILIZATIONS TOOK TO THE NATURAL WORLD, TO THE UNEXPLAINABLE. THE “MYTHOLOGIES,” OR CONCEPTUAL TECHNOLOGIES THAT MANY OF THESE CIVILIZATIONS DEVELOPED WERE BOTH ELABORATE AND SOPHISTICATED; WHAT INTERESTS MANY OF THE RECLAIMANTS THAT WORK WITH THOSE TEXTS IS HOW PRE-MODERNS APPROACHED THOSE CONCEPTUAL TECHNOLOGIES (THEY SOMETIMES RIDICULED THEM), WHILE FAILING TO SEE HOW SIMILAR THEY WERE TO THEIR OWN. I DIDN’T BELIEVE THAT HAPPENED UNTIL I READ “MOTHER AND ME,” THE NARRATIVE COMMONLY REFERRED TO AS “MR. MOTHER NATURE.” IN THIS NARRATIVE, BARBARA

WALTERS, WHOM WE'VE FIGURED TO BE A VERY PUBLIC FIGURE IN THE LATE 20TH AND EARLY 21ST CENTURIES (THOUGH MOSTLY THROUGH HER ASSOCIATION WITH OTHER PUBLIC FIGURES) INTERVIEWS MOTHER NATURE. IN AND-OF-ITSELF THIS DOESN'T SEEM TO BE ALTOGETHER SIGNIFICANT, BUT IN A CULTURE TOUTING ITSELF TO BE PROGRESSIVE AND HYPER-TECHNOLOGICAL, THE CREATION AND EXISTENCE OF MYTHS SEEMS FOREIGN. THAT IS, AT LEAST, WHAT MANY OF THE OTHER NARRATIVES WE'VE RECLAIMED FROM THAT ERA INDICATE, THAT THE PEOPLE LIVING IN THE LATE PERIOD CONSIDERED THEMSELVES TOO SOPHISTICATED AND ADVANCE TO HAVE ANY USE FOR MYTHOLOGIES. I'VE DISCOVERED THAT THE OPPOSITE IS TRUE, AND THAT A LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF THE NATURAL WORLD CAN BE EASILY REPLACED WITH A LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF THE TECHNOLOGIES THAT ALLOW US TO NAVIGATE THAT NATURAL WORLD. ANY SENSE OF THE MODERN IS TIGHTLY BOUND TO A MYTHOLOGY AND A LEAP IN TECHNOLOGY THAT DOESN'T COINCIDE WITH A LEAP IN CONSCIOUSNESS. THE GAP CREATED BETWEEN THE TWO WILL CALL UP A MYTHOLOGY TO EXPLAIN IT. THIS EXPLANATION IS NOT UNLIKE THAT WHICH MY COLLEAGUES IN CLASSICS OFFER, AND IT'S ONE THAT MAKES SENSE OF "MOTHER AND ME" NICELY.

AS TO WHAT PARTICULAR TECHNOLOGIES THE MOTHER NATURE MYTH COVERS, I COULDN'T SAY. BUT I AM CERTAIN THAT THE LATE 20TH AND EARLY 21ST CENTURIES HAD A GREAT MANY LEAPS IN REASON TO ATONE FOR, OF WHICH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES, SUCH AS THE ONES THAT GAVE RISE TO, AND THEN WERE SUSTAINED BY GOOGLE, CAN'T BE EXCLUDED. BUT THERE WERE OTHER, LESS TRADITIONALLY-VIEWED TECHNOLOGIES, WHICH WERE NEW AND RAMPANT DURING THIS ERA, INCLUDING AN INCREASED

LONGEVITY, A GLOBAL AWARENESS, AND IN AMERICA ESPECIALLY, AN INCREASED LITERACY AMONG A WIDER RANGE OF DEMOGRAPHICS. IT IS THIS PARADOXICAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROGRESS AND TECHNOLOGY AND THE MYTHOLOGICAL WHICH CONTINUES TO ATTRACT ME TO THESE PRE-MODERN NARRATIVES. IT IS ANOTHER WAY TO UNDERSTAND WHAT WE HAVE BY WHAT WE LOST.

CHAPTER 2

MOTHER AND ME

IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE HOW MOTHER NATURE WOULD PREPARE FOR A NATIONALLY-SYNDICATED INTERVIEW, WHO SHE MIGHT LET DO HER HAIR, FOR EXAMPLE, OR IF SHE WOULD USE THE STUDIO'S MAKE-UP ARTISTS OR BRING HER OWN. WHO WOULD SHE LET DO HER WARDROBE? I WAS MORE THAN SURPRISED, THEN, WHEN

MOTHER GAVE NO CONSIDERATION TO ANY OF THESE THINGS WHEN WE MET THE HALF-DOZEN TIMES TO TALK ABOUT THE SEMINAL INTERVIEW I DID WITH HER PRIOR TO HER SEX CHANGE.

I'VE KNOWN MOTHER FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS—DARE I SAY DECADES—SO WHEN SHE FAILED TO ORCHESTRATE EVERY EYEBROW PLUCK, MASCARA APPLICATION, AND NOSE POWDERING—WHEN SHE TOLD ME THAT “SHE TRUSTED WHATEVER [I] WANTED TO DO,” I KNEW THAT THIS INTERVIEW WOULD BE BOTH INFINITELY MORE SIGNIFICANT AND MORE DIFFICULT THAN ANY OTHER INTERVIEW I'VE EVER DONE. BECAUSE MOTHER IS NO STRANGER TO BEING SEEN, AND BECAUSE HER PR DEPARTMENT IS PERHAPS EVEN MORE COMPETENT AND DEDICATED THAN MINE IS, I HAD DIFFICULTY GRAPPLING WITH THE SUDDEN DISINTEREST. SHE CALLED IT TRUST, BUT I CALLED IT DISINTEREST.

IN AN OFF-THE-RECORD LUNCH MOTHER AND I HAD TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE INTERVIEW WAS CONDUCTED I BEGGED HER TO BE CANDID WITH ME, TO TELL ME THE THINGS SHE WOULDN'T ON NATIONAL TELEVISION. I WANTED THE REAL MOTIVATIONS FOR HER SEX CHANGE, AND FOR TO HER LACKLUSTER APPROACH TO OUR INTERVIEW. AND WHAT SHE TOLD ME I'VE DUTIFULLY COMMUNICATED BACK TO MY AUDIENCES, BUT THERE WAS NO WAY OF KNOWING THAT DAY, AND AT THAT MOMENT, THAT MOTHER'S DRAMATIC ACTIONS WOULD BE OF SO LITTLE CONSEQUENCE ONCE COMPLETED THAT HER SUBSEQUENT BREAKDOWN WOULD LEAD TO SUCH A TREMENDOUS NATURAL LOSS TO HUMANITY. IT'S NOTHING LESS THAN TRAGIC THAT SUCH A SIGNIFICANT PERSONAL LIFE-CHOICE, THE DECISION TO CHANGE ONE'S SEX, COULD BE SO INCONSEQUENTIAL,

BUT THAT ONE'S MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL BREAKDOWN COULD HAVE SUCH UNEXPECTED AND PROFOUND MEANING FOR THESE NEW GENERATIONS. FATHER NATURE HAS NEVER ENJOYED SO MUCH CELEBRITY—HAS NEVER BEEN SO CLOSELY WATCHED—AS HE DOES NOW, WHEN HIS ACTIONS AMOUNT TO LITTLE MORE THAN A NEW DUI CHARGE AND ARREST, ANOTHER EXTENDED STAY AT A REHAB CLINIC, ANOTHER BATTERY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EVALUATIONS.

MANY PROFESSIONAL ACQUAINTANCES HAVE WONDERED (SOME PUBLICLY) WHY I DIDN'T TAKE MORE OF AN INTEREST IN THE DISPLACED DECEASED SINCE DR. FARELLY AND THE THEN UNKNOWN GERRY ALDERMAN INVESTIGATED THE WEEPING STATUES IN BRISBANE. THE TRUTH IS THAT I DID AND CONTINUE TO TAKE A KEEN INTEREST IN THESE MATTERS. THE REASONS WHY I DIDN'T DECIDE TO CONDUCT AN INTERVIEW WITH EITHER A DISPLACED DECEASED OR WITH MY DEAR FRIEND GERRY ARE BOTH PERSONAL AND NO DOUBT REVELATORY TO THOSE THAT HAVE FOLLOWED MY JOURNALISTIC CAREER FOR HOWEVER LONG THEY MIGHT HAVE.

I SHOULD BEGIN BY SAYING THAT AT THE SAME TIME THAT THESE PHENOMENAL EVENTS WERE BEGINNING TO TAKE PLACE IN CATHOLIC STATES AROUND THE WORLD, INCLUDING OUR VERY OWN COMMUNITIES HERE IN AMERICA, ANOTHER, MORE PERSONAL, SITUATION WAS BEGINNING TO UNFOLD FOR ME: MOTHER NATURE'S SEX CHANGE. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT I DIDN'T HAVE ANY INTEREST IN THE THOUSANDS, THEN MILLIONS OF DECEASED FINDING THEIR WAY BACK INTO THE WORLD AND INTO THE LIVES OF THEIR STILL-LIVING. I MYSELF HAD A NUMBER OF UNEXPECTED "GUESTS" VISIT BEFORE THE OPENING OF ALTERNATE HELL, AND YET NONE OF THE KEY PLAYERS IN

THE DISPLACED DECEASED SAGA WERE AS PERSONALLY SIGNIFICANT TO ME THEN AS WAS MOTHER NATURE, WHICH BRINGS US TO THE FIRST REASON WHY I PURSUED MOTHER NATURE'S SEX CHANGE OVER THE DISPLACED DECEASED: I AM ALWAYS PERSONALLY INVESTED IN THE SUBJECTS I REPORT ON WHEN I REPORT ON THEM. ASIDE FROM MY PERSONAL INVESTMENT, I ALSO ADMIT A CERTAIN PREDILECTION FOR UNCOVERING THE HIDDEN IN MY INTERVIEWS. SOME MIGHT OBJECT TO THIS, POINTING TO THE LONG LIST OF HIGH PROFILE, A-LIST CELEBRITIES AND WORLD PERSONS I HAVE INTERVIEWED DURING MY CAREER, BUT ANYONE WHO LOOKS CLOSELY ENOUGH WILL REALIZE THAT EVEN IN THESE INSTANCES I'VE SHOWN A PENCHANT FOR UNCOVERING THOSE DEEP, PSYCHOLOGICAL MOMENTS IN WHICH A CONVERSATION MOVES THE GUEST TO REVEAL SOMETHING MEANINGFUL TO THE AUDIENCE (AND OFTEN TIMES HIM OR HERSELF)—LIKE WHEN STEPHEN COLBERT, FRONT-MAN OF COMEDY CENTRAL'S *Colbert Report*, DISCLOSED THAT HE ACTUALLY VOTED REPUBLICAN, AND THAT HIS STAUNCH CONSERVATISM WAS WHAT HAD DRIVEN HIM AND JON STEWART OF *The Daily Show* APART. "I PUSHED FOR A SHOW OF MY OWN AT THE NETWORK WHEN JON FIRED ME," COLBERT ANNOUNCED. "THE *Report* IS THE MOST NATURAL THING IN THE WORLD FOR ME. IT WAS THE NETWORK'S IDEA TO MARKET IT AS A PARODY OF OTHER CONSERVATIVE PUNDITS." I CAN'T SAY THAT THE POTENTIAL FOR MEANINGFUL DISCLOSURE DOESN'T DRIVE THE CHOICES I MAKE WHEN DECIDING TO INTERVIEW SOMEONE. MY PRODUCERS AND I CALL IT "HIGH-STAKES" REPORTAGE, SO IN THE CASE OF THE DISPLACED DECEASED, WHO WERE ALREADY COMMANDING MOST OF THE MEDIA, OFFERED LITTLE IN THE WAY OF "NEW" NEWS. PLUS, GARY ALDERMAN WAS ALREADY GIVING UP HIS LIFE

STORY IN NUMEROUS INTERVIEWS, EXPOSES, A BOOK, AND A MADE-FOR-TV-MOVIE.

EVEN NOW I FEEL A BIT BETRAYED BY HOW I CAME TO KNOW ABOUT MOTHER NATURE'S SEX CHANGE. MOTHER AND I HAVE ENJOYED A CLOSE FRIENDSHIP SINCE THE EARLY DAYS OF MY JOURNALISTIC CAREER, THOUGH I ADMIT THAT WE'VE HAD A BIT OF A COOLING-OFF PERIOD STARTING IN THE LATE 1990S AND INTO THE 2000S AS HER PUBLIC PERSONA HAS TAKEN ON A MUCH MORE INTERNATIONAL APPEAL SO THAT IT'S NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO SCHEDULE SOMETHING SO LITTLE AS A LUNCH AT BARNEY'S MID-WEEK WITHOUT HAVING TO CALL HER AMBULANT DAY-KEEPER, BRENDA, AT LEAST THREE MONTHS IN ADVANCE. THAT'S WHY WHEN TOM SNOOK POPPED HIS RUDDY FACE INTO MY OFFICE ONE MORNING TO ASK ME IF I KNEW ANYTHING ABOUT MOTHER NATURE'S "SWITCH," I REALLY HAD NO IDEA WHAT HE WAS TALKING ABOUT. AS I LATER LEARNED, NOAA WAS THE FIRST TO NOTICE. NOAA, THE NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION'S SENSORY DEVICES, WHICH ARE DISTRIBUTED IN SIGNIFICANT GEOGRAPHIC AND GEOLOGIC LOCATIONS AROUND THE GLOBE, AND THAT CONSTANTLY RELAY INFORMATION REGARDING FLOODS, STORMS, AND SEISMIC AND VOLCANIC ACTIVITY—THESE DEVICES PICKED UP IRREGULAR AND SIGNIFICANT TECTONIC MOVEMENT ALONG THE EASTERN COAST OF THE UNITED STATES ON OCTOBER 9, 2004. CURTIS HOLLAND, THE NOAA EVENT IMAGERY TEAM LEADER FOR THE RESPONSE CENTER ON THE EASTERN BOARD, CALLED IT "A SERIES OF SIGNIFICANT SEISMIC EVENTS."

"I WAS PRETTY FLIPPANT ABOUT IT AT FIRST," HE TOLD ME OVER THE PHONE DURING OUR INITIAL CALL TWO WEEKS AFTER THE TREMORS WERE FIRST REPORTED,

“TELLING MY STAFF THAT ‘IT WAS PROBABLY NOTHING MORE THAN CRAMPS,’ BECAUSE YOU KNOW MOTHER NATURE’S ON A CYCLE TOO YOU KNOW.”

I WOULD BECOME ACCUSTOMED TO CURTIS HOLLAND’S PROCLIVITY FOR COMPARING ANY NUMBER OF NATURAL OCCURRENCES TO HUMAN SYMPTOMS, AN ODD WAY TO TALK ABOUT AN ENTITY THAT YOU DON’T HAVE A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH LIKE I DO. I WAS HUMORED AT FIRST BY CURTIS HOLLAND’S REMARKS, AND THEN I WAS INTRIGUED WHEN I REALIZED JUST HOW RIGHT HE WAS: MOTHER NATURE WAS REALLY SYMPTOMATIC, WE JUST DIDN’T KNOW *of what* RIGHT THEN. IN A FEW WEEK’S TIME, THE WORLD OVER WOULD BE TALKING ABOUT MOTHER AS IF SHE WERE SOME AILING PERSON. I STILL DON’T KNOW JUST HOW I FEEL ABOUT THAT.

DURING MY FIRST VISIT TO THE REGIONAL EASTERN BOARD OFFICE TO TALK WITH CURTIS HOLLAND IN PERSON HE EVEN SUGGESTED “PUTTING THAT BISEXUAL, INBREEDING, SPECIES-CROSSING, HORNY, HEATED HEADMISTRESS ON BIRTH CONTROL.” HIS REASONING? “WE’RE OVERPOPULATED, HER BARREN WASTELANDS ARE SHOWING, THE ALPS ARE SAGGING, AND HER POLAR ICE CAPS ARE MELTING.” FOR A BRIEF MOMENT I THOUGHT THAT CURTIS REALLY MIGHT HAVE KNOWLEDGE OF MOTHER NATURE, NOT NECESSARILY IN THE WAY I DID, BUT INTIMATELY NONETHELESS. REALLY, IT WAS NOTHING MORE THAN THE COUNTLESS YEARS CURTIS SPENT IN UNIVERSITY AS A GEOLOGY STUDENT, AND WHAT DO GEOLOGY STUDENTS DO IF NOT DRILL INTO THE EARTH, POKING AROUND PLACES MOST OF US NEVER WOULD. HIS WAS SOLELY TEXTBOOK KNOWLEDGE.

BY THE TIME I PAID MY SECOND VISIT TO CURTIS HOLLAND, HIS REGIONAL OFFICE

HAD ALREADY BECOME THE UNOFFICIAL CENTER OF THE NUMEROUS PHYSICAL ANOMALIES OCCURRING ALL ALONG THE ATLANTIC COASTS. WITHIN 48 HOURS FROM MY FIRST VISIT CURTIS' TEAM HAD LOGGED HUNDREDS OF HOURS AND DATA DOWNLOADS FROM GEOLOGISTS IN IRELAND, BRAZIL, LISBON, FORTALEZA AND NUMEROUS OTHER CITIES ALONG THE ATLANTIC COASTS, ALL OF THEM REPORTING ABNORMAL SIGNIFICANT EVENTS. IN EACH CASE CURTIS TRIED TO ASSURE HIS INTERNATIONAL COLLEAGUES THAT THESE WERE "NO MORE SIGNIFICANT THAN ANY OF THE OTHER EVENTS THAT WERE ALREADY BEING MONITORED." HALF JOKINGLY, CURTIS MANAGED TO FIT IN HIS PROPOSED SOLUTION TO THE UNEXPLAINED SEISMIC ACTIVITY IN EACH PHONE CALL WHEN HE TOLD THE REPORTING PARTY THAT ALL MOTHER NATURE NEEDED WAS "100,000 TONS OF MIDOL DOWN THE NIAGARA FALLS. THE CANADIAN SIDE," CURTIS WOULD ADD, "BECAUSE ANYTHING GOING DOWN THE U.S. SIDE WILL PROBABLY MAKE HER SICKER."

MOTHER AND I OFTEN USED TO JOKE ABOUT HOW SHE AND I WERE MOSTLY IMPERVIOUS TO THE EFFECTS OF TIME. GOOD GENES AND CONSERVATION EFFORTS, WE USED TO SAY. AND ASIDE FROM THE OCCASIONAL INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC OR SMALL POX OUTBREAK, MOTHER MANAGED TO REMAIN RELATIVELY HEALTHY TOO, SO I WAS INITIALLY RESISTANT TO THE SUDDEN REALIZATION THAT THESE INCREASING "SIGNIFICANT EVENTS" REALLY MIGHT BE SYMPTOMS OF AN AFFLICTION MOTHER MIGHT HAVE BEEN SUFFERING DIRECTLY. "BUT SHE WOULD HAVE TOLD ME," I ASSURED MYSELF. "OF COURSE SHE WOULD HAVE TOLD ME." AND CURTIS HOLLAND WAS

JOKING. HE COULDN'T BE SERIOUS. AND EVEN IF HE WASN'T JOKING, WHAT GOOD COULD AN IMPOSSIBLE AMOUNT OF MIDOL DO FOR MOTHER? NOTHING.

THE IRONY OF MY MOMENTARY LAPSE INTO “WHAT-IF” IS THAT IN EVERY POSSIBLE WAY IT WAS ALL TRUE—CURTIS’ ASSESSMENT, HIS NEAR-DIAGNOSIS, AND MOST SHOCKING OF ALL, MOTHER’S FAILURE TO SHARE A MOST IMPORTANT DECISION WITH ME. I CAN’T IMAGINE ANY AMOUNT OF MIDOL WAS GOING TO FIX ANY OF THAT. BY MY THIRD VISIT WITH CURTIS AT THE NOAA IMAGING CENTER, HE COULD BARELY SPARE FIVE MINUTES TO TALK WITH ME, AS PHONE CALLS WERE COMING IN ABOUT EVERY 15 MINUTES TO REPORT A CASCADE OF SEISMIC ACTIVITY UP AND DOWN BOTH SIDES OF THE ATLANTIC. FROM BOSTON TO FORT LAUDERDALE, IN SAN JUAN AND CARTAGENA DE ANDES, RIO DE JANEIRO AND DOWN TO THE TIP OF ARGENTINA, THEN UP AGAIN FROM CAPE VERDE ALL THE WAY UP TO THE NORWEGIAN FJORDS, THE LOW RICHTER TREMORS SEEMED TO INDICATE THAT SOMETHING SYSTEMATIC AND VERY REAL WAS HAPPENING IN THE ATLANTIC OCEAN.

AND JUST AS THE GEOLOGICAL STORY BEGAN TO UNFOLD, MY OWN SEEMED TO BE ENDING. CURTIS HOLLAND WAS SUDDENLY TOO BUSY, AND MOTHER REMAINED INCOMMUNIQUE.

AS THE LARGEST DIVERGENT-PLATE BOUNDARY, THE MID-ATLANTIC RIDGE IS THE EARTH’S MOST PRODUCTIVE—MOST FRUITFUL—REGION (IN TERMS OF EARTH-CRUST AT LEAST). MOTHER NATURE SPREADS HERSELF OPEN HERE, AT A RATE OF ABOUT 2.5

CENTIMETERS PER YEAR, HER PLATES MOVING APART TO SIMULTANEOUSLY SWALLOW MOLTEN CRUST AND PUSH UP NEW CRUST STRAIGHT FROM THE MANTLE. FOR THE PAST 600 MILLION YEARS THE MID-ATLANTIC RIDGE HAS BEEN MOTHER NATURE'S SWEET SPOT. "SUDDENLY SHE STOPPED PUTTING OUT," CURTIS WOULD EXPLAIN TO ME LATER. I REMEMBER TELLING HIM THAT HE WAS JOKING, THAT THERE'S NO WAY THE MOTHER I KNEW WOULD EVER "STOP PUTTING OUT," TO USE CURTIS' PHRASING. NO ONE ELSE I KNEW SO THOROUGHLY THRIVED ON HER OWN FERTILITY. THERE WAS NO WAY THE MOTHER I KNEW, THE MOTHER WHO ON A SOUTH AMERICAN RAINFOREST EXCURSION WE TOOK IN 1991 LED ME OFF THE TOUR PATH COUNTLESS TIMES TO SHOW ME A GROUP OF BARE-BREADED NATIVE WOMEN WASHING IN A MURKY BASIN, OR A PACK OF HOWLING MONKEYS ENGAGED IN A FRANTIC SEXUAL TRYST, WAS ABOUT TO DENY HERSELF ANY AMOUNT OF CARNAL PLEASURE. AND HAD MOTHER TAKEN OR RETURNED ONE OF MY PHONE CALLS THAT WEEK SHE WOULD HAVE SAID AS MUCH. SHE WOULD HAVE DENIED CURTIS' CLAIM.

REGARDLESS OF MY INCREDULITY, SOMETHING SIGNIFICANT WAS HAPPENING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ATLANTIC. REMOTE-CONTROLLED EXPEDITIONS INDICATED IT, MANNED MISSIONS CONFIRMED IT: THE MID-ATLANTIC RIDGE HAD SEALED UP. IN ITS PLACE GREW A MOUND THAT SEEMED TO BE EXPANDING ON ALL SIDES. AND THE GIRTH OF THE MOUND HAD NEARLY DOUBLED IN THE SIX OR SEVEN MONTHS SINCE GEOLOGISTS FIRST TOOK NOTICE OF THE ACTIVITY ALONG AND AROUND THE ATLANTIC.

THE PHENOMENON WAS FOLLOWED BY A SERIES OF STRANGE OCCURRENCES

THAT BEGAN SHORTLY AFTER THE QUAKE ON THE EDGES OF THE ATLANTIC. IN ONE INSTANCE, THE AVIARY AT THE SAN DIEGO ZOO BECAME A CHORUS OF DEEP GRUNTS AND CHORTLES; EVEN THE PRIZED CUAKO, A 12 YEAR-OLD SCARLET MACAW TOOK TO WHISTLING AT YOUNG WOMEN, CALLING THEM *mamasita*, AND OTHER SUCH IMPROPRIETIES. THIS MAY NOT SEEM EXTRAORDINARY TO YOU, PLENTY OF INSENSITIVE PET OWNERS TRANSFER THEIR BIGOTRY TO THEIR IMITATIVE MASCOTS, BUT NOT CUAKO. CUAKO WAS RAISED BY AN ENGLISH PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO WHOSE SPECIALIZATION WAS THE 19TH CENTURY NOVEL. IN FACT, CUAKO DIDN'T BECOME CUAKO UNTIL HIS ADOPTION; TO DR. CASTRAJON, CUAKO WAS NONE OTHER THAN VAUTRIN. PART OF THE DRAW FOR VISITORS TO THE AVIARY WAS CUAKO'S SUDDEN QUOTING OF ENTIRE SECTIONS OF BALZAC, BAUDELAIRE, BRONTE, AND FOWLES. UNTIL THEN, CUAKO HAD ALWAYS DISPLAYED THE PROPER BEHAVIOR FOR A BIRD OF HIS CLASS AND STANDING, HIS HANDLERS REPORTED.

BUT THE BIRD'S SUDDEN CHANGE WAS NOT AN ISOLATED INCIDENT. PEOPLE EVERYWHERE TOOK NOTICE THAT CATS NOW CHASED DOGS, CHICKENS TOOK TO COCK-A-DOODLE-DOODLING IN THE MORNINGS, ROOSTERS SAT ON EGGS. CHERRY TREES THROUGHOUT JAPAN BLOSSOMED IN MID-FALL, SETTING OFF A RIOT OF UNTIMELY HAIKU; SOME PEOPLE STOPPED MID-DINNER—MID-COITUS EVEN—TO CAPTURE IN 17 SYLLABLES THE ONE TIME THAT NATURE HAD PRECEDED POET. THESE WERE BUT A FEW EXAMPLES: MOTHER NATURE'S SEX CHANGE MADE NO SMALL DISPLAY THE WORLD OVER.

OF COURSE I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE ANY OF THESE OCCURRENCES AS INDICATORS OF

MOTHER'S SWITCH. ON THE CONTRARY, I REFUSED TO CORRELATE ANY OF THE INFAMOUS NATURAL PHENOMENON WITH MOTHER. IT WASN'T UNTIL *The Wall Street Journal* AND *The Financial Times* (WHICH FOR THIS ISSUE RAN ITS PAGES BLUE, WITH A BOLD HEADLINE READING ACROSS THE TOP: IT'S A BOY: MOTHER NATURE GROWS SOME BALLS) YES, IT WAS THESE UNLIKELY SOURCES THAT POUNCED ON THE STORY FIRST. OF COURSE, MOST MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS HAD TIED UP THEIR RESOURCES FOLLOWING THE DISPLACED DECEASED, AND GERRY ALDERMAN'S CAMPAIGN WAS ALSO IN HIGH GEAR. BUT A FEW ENTERTAINMENT OUTLETS DID SEE AN OPPORTUNITY TO BOOST THEIR FALL LINEUPS. THAT'S HOW *The Wall Street Journal* GOT WORD OF THE MOTHER NATURE STORY: TIPPED OFF BY SOMEONE AT EITHER BRAVO OR THE DISCOVERY CHANNEL, THE TWO NETWORKS COMPETING FOR THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS TO DOCUMENT AND AIR THE TRANSFORMATION IN A SYNDICATED REALITY TV SHOW—ONCE THE *Wall Street Journal* AND *The Financial Times* HAD BROUGHT A MODICUM OF INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION TO MOTHER NATURE'S DECISION. IRONICALLY, IT WASN'T UNTIL THESE UNLIKELY SOURCES BROKE THE STORY THAT *neither Star Magazine* NOR *The Mirror* PRINTED SOMETHING ABOUT IT. AND *The Onion* AND THE PRODUCERS OF THE DAILY SHOW THOUGHT THE IDEA OF MOTHER NATURE "GOING IN FOR THE CHANGE" WAS TOO IMPROBABLE—TOO UNLIKELY—TOO "TABLOID," WHEN THEIR WRITERS FIRST HEARD OF IT. NOT EVEN STEPHEN COLBERT DID ANYTHING WITH THE STORY UNTIL AFTER MY INTERVIEW WITH MOTHER NATURE, THOUGH JAY LENO AND DAVE LETTERMAN HAD A FIELD DAY WITH THE NEWS, HER SYMPTOMS MAKING IT ONTO ALMOST EVERY TOP-TEN LISTS FOR MONTHS.

FINALLY A CALL FROM MOTHER. AN APOLOGY. PLANS FOR LUNCH. I WAS A LITTLE LESS THAN PLEASED ABOUT THE DEAL, BUT VERY MUCH LOOKING FORWARD TO AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW, WHICH MOTHER GRACIOUSLY ACCEPTED.

I DON'T NEED TO REMIND ANYONE OF THE INTERVIEW; IT WAS ONE OF THE MOST MOVING MOMENTS IN TV HISTORY. FOR ME IT WAS THE MOMENT THAT MOTHER APOLOGIZED IN WHICH I FELT THE MOST SADDENED. HOLDING BACK THE TEARS SHE APOLOGIZED FOR THE CONFUSION SHE HAD CAUSED WITH THE HORMONE THERAPY.

M: I THOUGHT I HAD A RIGHT TO PRIVACY. THE MEDICAL TEAM NEVER WARNED ME OF THE MOST DRASTIC SIDE EFFECTS OF THE TESTOSTERONE. I WAS CONFUSED MYSELF, SO I COULD ONLY IMAGINE WHAT IT WAS LIKE FOR ALL OF YOU, FOR ALL OF YOU WHO HAD NO IDEA OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES MY DECISION WOULD CAUSE.

B: BUT YOUR NEW MEDICAL TEAM, THEY ARE MUCH MORE HELPFUL AS YOU GO THROUGH THIS PROCESS.

M: YES, BARBARA. THANK YOU. I SHOULD HAVE COME TO YOU FROM THE VERY BEGINNING. IF ONLY TO GET A TRUSTWORTHY REFERRAL TO A SURGEON.

B: IT IS THE CASE THAT THROUGHOUT THE YEARS I'VE DEVELOPED SOME WONDERFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITH A NUMBER OF MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS WHO HAVE BEEN NEARLY AS RESPONSIBLE FOR MY JOURNALISTIC CAREER AS MY MENTORS AND PRODUCERS. I WAS ONLY GLAD TO HELP.

M: THE NEW MEDICAL TEAM, WITH WHOM I'M VERY HAPPY, HAS GIVEN THE COUNCIL AND GUIDANCE THAT'S SO NEEDED DURING THIS TIME. THEY HAVE ALSO PUBLISHED IN ALL MAJOR JOURNALS AND PERIODICALS, AS WELL AS ON THE WEB, A DISCLOSURE FOR

ALL HUMANITY OF WHAT THINGS CAN BE EXPECTED AS I UNDERGO THIS PROCESS. THIS SHOULD MAKE IT EASIER ON EVERYONE.

IN POST-PRODUCTION I SAT WITH THE EDITOR AND ASKED TO CUT TO A BREAK HERE. IT WAS A TOUCHING MOMENT: THE SHOT CAME INTO SOFT FOCUS, A PINK HUE COLORED THE EDGES, THERE WAS A RISE IN THE PIANO THEME WE HAD RECORDED FOR THE INTERVIEW, AND THE CAMERA PANNED OUT JUST AS I REACHED OUT TO LAY MY HAND ON TOP OF MOTHER'S. IN THE NEXT SEGMENT I FELT I NEEDED TO LIGHTEN THE MOOD, BECAUSE NO MATTER HOW MOVING A STORY CAN BE, SOBBING AND HEAVING CAN WEIGH DOWN AN OTHERWISE ENTERTAINING INTERVIEW. A FLOOD OF EMOTION—BE IT SORROW OR JOY—CAN OVERWHELM AN INTERVIEW, CAN MAKE IT UNWATCHABLE. SO WE TALKED ABOUT OUR YEARS AT UNIVERSITY, OF LOVE AFFAIRS, MARRIAGES, AND SEPARATIONS. MOTHER EVEN ASKED ABOUT MY “FALLING OUT WITH FATHER TIME.” WE LAUGHED ABOUT IT THEN, I ADMONISHED HER ABOUT IT LATER.

THE SECOND INSTALLMENT OF THE INTERVIEW, WHICH AIRED THE FOLLOWING WEEK, FOCUSED ON THE REASONS BEHIND MOTHER'S SEX CHANGE.

B: WHO DO YOU HOPE TO BE—WHAT DO YOU SEE YOURSELF AS—ONCE IT'S ALL SAID AND DONE?

M: IT'S VERY SIMPLY, REALLY. A PROTESTANT WHITE MALE.

B: A PROTESTANT WHITE MALE. REALLY? THAT'S RATHER SPECIFIC.

M: YES, THAT'S EXACTLY THE POINT: A SPECIFIC IMAGE FOR A SPECIFIC PURPOSE. I'M

TIRED, BARBARA—

B: WELL OF COURSE YOU ARE, WE AREN'T THE YOUNG—

M: NO, THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEAN. LET ME FINISH. I'M TIRED OF BEING STEPPED ON, TRAMPLED OVER, DUG OUT, BORED THROUGH, BOMBED ON. I MEAN, HAVE YOU SEEN WHAT THEY'VE DONE TO ME IN THE MIDDLE EAST? I HAVE PORES THERE THE SIZE OF CITY BLOCKS. I TRIED A CHEMICAL PEEL BUT I HIT THE WRONG REGION. EVERYONE SAW THAT. HOW EMBARRASSING. THEN I TRIED A MACRO-ABRASION TREATMENT IN THE GULF—WHAT PAIN!

B: BUT THERE'S MORE AWARENESS ABOUT ALL THOSE THINGS NOW, ISN'T THERE? AND EVERYONE—MOSTLY EVERYONE—IS STARTING TO DO THEIR PART. I KNOW I AM.

M: ... AND THEN I SEE HOW MUCH POWER THE PROTESTANT WHITE MALE HAS, HOW POWERFUL AND SEDUCTIVE HE IS—AND I REALIZE THAT THAT'S WHAT I NEED TO BE IF I'M GOING TO STOP THIS PILLAGING. I THOUGHT ABOUT THE CATHOLIC WHITE MALE, BUT HE'S TOO OLD AND HIS POWER TOO LIMITED. PLUS I COULD NEVER REALLY HOPE TO REGAIN CONTROL OF MYSELF—TO CHANGE ANYTHING—JUST BY LEADING MASS EVERY SUNDAY.

[PAUSE]

M: I'M OUT TO BE AN AMERICAN PRESIDENT.

I OFTEN FORGET HOW QUICKLY THINGS HAPPENED IN THE FIRST DECADE OF THE 21ST CENTURY. AND IN SOME INSTANCES, HOW SLOWLY. IN 2003, MOTHER NATURE, ONE OF THE MOST ATTENDED-TO WOMEN OF THE 21ST CENTURY AS A RESULT OF THE

WORLD-WIDE EFFORT TO SLOW THE EFFECTS OF GLOBAL WARMING (OR TO “COUNTERACT MOTHER NATURE’S HOT FLASHES,” ACCORDING TO CURTIS HOLLAND), COULDN’T CONCEIVE A ROLE FOR HERSELF IN WHICH SHE WOULD BE ABLE TO EXERT SOME AGENCY OVER HER OWN BODY, OVER THE SELF, OUTSIDE OF BEING AN AMERICAN PRESIDENT. NOT FIVE YEARS LATER, A WOMAN—HILARY CLINTON—RAN AN UNSUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN FOR THE OFFICE, AS A WOMAN NO LESS, BUT SHE RAN AGAIN IN 2012, WHEN SHE WAS FINALLY ELECTED AS THE FIRST FEMALE AMERICAN PRESIDENT. THAT A WHOLE CULTURE’S SENTIMENT AND POLITICAL CLIMATE CAN CHANGE SO DRASTICALLY FROM ONE SUCH EXTREME TO ANOTHER IN SUCH A RELATIVELY SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME IS BOTH EXHILARATING AND FRIGHTENING. FOR MOTHER IT WAS A COSTLY AND VERY PUBLIC EMBARRASSMENT. AT THE TIME OF THE INTERVIEW, HOWEVER, MOTHER’S ACTIVISM WAS SINCERE. A LITTLE DRASTIC, YES, BUT SHE REALLY DID MEAN TO MOVE THINGS FORWARD, BOTH SOCIALLY AND POLITICALLY. AND SHE REALLY DID MEAN TO STOP THE PHYSICAL ABUSES SHE WAS EXPERIENCING.

IN THE END MOTHER HAD HER SURGERY. BRAVO AND THE DISCOVERY CHANNEL CAME TO AN AGREEMENT IN WHICH BOTH SHARED EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS TO SEPARATE AND PARTICULAR MOMENTS OF MOTHER NATURE’S SEX CHANGE. HER RECOVERY HAS BEEN A LENGTHY ONE, BUT IN MY RECENT VISIT TO FATHER NATURE, HE SHARED THAT SHE STILL PLANS TO RUN FOR THE PRESIDENCY.

OF WOMEN IN POWER, THE WEEKS I SPENT WITH HILARY CLINTON LEADING UP TO THE EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW I CONDUCTED WITH HER TWO MONTHS AFTER SHE

RECEIVED THE DEMOCRATIC NOMINATION WERE EQUALLY MEMORABLE. I DETAIL THOSE CONVERSATIONS IN THE NEXT CHAPTER.

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BECAUSE TIME IS THE ESSENTIAL AND INESCAPABLE PROBLEM OF EVERY NARRATIVE, AND BECAUSE ENOUGH NARRATIVES HAVE BEEN RECLAIMED TO SHOW THAT PRE-MODERN GENERATIONS LEADING ALL THE WAY UP TO THE GOOGLE CRASH WERE PREOCCUPIED WITH TIME, THE FOLLOWING NARRATIVE—A TRANSCRIPT OF A TELEVISION PROGRAM IN WHICH THE HOST INTRODUCES A FILM ABOUT TIME TRAVEL IN THE CONTEXT OF AN ALLEGED CALLING-OFF OF TIME—SCREAMS OF A LESS-THAN-HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP WITH TIME. BUT WHAT IS, AND HOW DOES ONE GO ABOUT, EXPERIENCING, RESPECTING, AND REPRESENTING TIME? AREN'T ALL REALIZED RELATIONSHIPS WITH TIME, THOSE THAT HAPPEN IN THE REAL ARENAS OF CULTURE, HISTORY, AND POLITICS, JUST AS CONSTRUCTED AS ARE THE NARRATIVES THAT PLAY OUT IN NARRATIVES, TELEVISION OR MOVIES? NO MATTER WHERE THE NARRATIVE IS CONSTRUCTED OR HOW IT IS EXPERIENCED (AS A REAL EVENT OR ITS REPRESENTATION), TIME REMAINS THAT ESSENTIAL AND INESCAPABLE PROBLEM FOR THE WRITER, FILM MAKER, AND LIVING BEING.

FOR OUR PRE-MODERN COUNTERPARTS, IT SEEMS THAT PRE-EXISTING, AND IN MANY CASES MYTHOLOGIES HELPED SORT OUT THE COMPLICATED RELATIONSHIPS THEY HAD WITH TIME. THERE WERE THE MAYAN AND GREGORIAN CALENDARS, THE HINDU

CYCLES, AND THE BIBLICAL/APOCALYPTIC TIME THAT CHARACTERIZED SO MUCH OF WESTERN CULTURE IN THE LATE PERIOD. AND IT MADE LITTLE DIFFERENCE WHETHER THESE ANCIENT MYTHOLOGIES WERE PLAUSIBLE OR NOT, IT SEEMS, SO LONG AS THEY GAVE BOTH A PRACTICAL AND SUPERNAL WAY TO RELATE TO TIME.

THIS NARRATIVE IN TRANSCRIPT FORM IS ONE OF THE BEST EXAMPLES WE HAVE OF HOW PRE-MODERNS RELATED AND ATTEMPTED TO SOLVE THEIR PROBLEMS WITH TIME, EVEN THOUGH ARE OUR UNDERSTANDING AND RELATIONSHIP TO TIME AND REMAINS PROBLEMATIC, THE ESSENTIAL PROBLEM OF OUR EXISTENCE. IN THIS WAY WE ARE NOT AT ALL UNLIKE OUR PRE-MODERN COUNTERPARTS IN THAT WE WISH WE HAD A TIME MACHINE, BUT WE DON'T.

AT THE END OF TIME

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MAY BE UPDATED

TURNER CLASSIC MOVIES

HOSTED BY ROBERT OSBORNE

AIRD FEBRUARY 25, 2003

Robert Osborne, Turner Classic Movies host: AND SO IT CAME TO PASS—TIME DID
—ON JULY 30, 2009. BUT WE WERE READY FOR IT. THE FIRST STEPS TOWARDS
NOCHRONO WERE TAKEN AT THE 30TH G8 SUMMIT, WHERE THE LEADERS OF THE FREE
WORLD ANNOUNCED A JOINT EFFORT TO RESEARCH THE GROWING WORLDWIDE
INTEREST IN ALL THINGS APOCALYPTIC. OF COURSE, NOT EVERYONE WAS EXPECTING
THE APOCALYPSE, AT LEAST NOT OUTSIDE THE U.S., BUT THERE WAS A SIGNIFICANT
AMOUNT OF HUSTLE AND BUSTLE AROUND THE END OF THE WORLD. THE G8 SUMMIT

THUS ESTABLISHED A MULTI-LATERAL COMMITTEE TO CONDUCT AN EXHAUSTIVE STUDY IN THE RISE IN INTEREST IN EVERYTHING ESCHATOLOGICAL. ON DECEMBER 21, 2007 THE COMMITTEE REVEALED THAT THE MAYAN CALENDAR, WHICH BY THEN HAD BECOME THE CENTERPIECE OF TIME'S UNTIMELY DEATH, WAS CORRECT: TIME WOULD END ON DECEMBER 21, 2012.

IRONICALLY, THIS CONFIRMATION OF PUBLIC OPINION DID LITTLE TO ASSUAGE THE ALL-CONSUMING OBSESSION WITH WHAT WAS QUICKLY INTERPRETED TO BE THE END OF THE WORLD, AND QUITE UNEXPECTEDLY WHOLE CONSTITUENCIES BEGAN TO DEMAND THAT THEIR STATE HEADS PREVENT WHATEVER CATASTROPHIC CHAIN OF EVENTS "THE END OF THE WORLD" THEIR PARTICULAR SPIRITUALITY OR PHILOSOPHY HAD PROGNOSTICATED. IN THE U.S., THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY APPENDED A THREAT-LEVEL TO THE NATIONAL THREAT ADVISORY SYSTEM—BLACK—TO ALERT AMERICANS OF A "HIGH LIKELIHOOD OF THE APOCALYPSE."

NOT LONG AFTER THE COMMITTEE'S ANNOUNCEMENT, A LEADING EASTERN PHILOSOPHER, DR. KARAN NATH, GAVE A SERIES OF LECTURES IN WHICH HE CORRELATED THE MAYAN CALENDAR'S FOURTH SUN (WITH ITS END ON DECEMBER 21, 2012), WITH THE HINDU TIMELINE'S FOURTH AGE, A PERIOD CHARACTERIZED BY STRIFE, ANGER AND WARS—AND MOST NOTICEABLY—A PERIOD THAT WOULD END ABRUPTLY TO GIVE WAY TO A NEW ORDER. DR. NATH SUGGESTED THAT IT WAS POSSIBLE THAT THE HINDU CALENDAR HAD PROJECTED THIS COSMIC END TOO FAR IN THE FUTURE, AND THAT IT WAS LIKELY THAT ITS ACTUAL OCCURRENCE WOULD LINE UP WITH THE MAYAN CALENDAR DEADLINE. DR. NATH'S ENDORSEMENT THUS UNITED EAST

AND WEST TOWARDS ONE GOAL: THE PREVENTION OF THE END OF TIME.

AS IF BY CLOCKWORK, THE PLANET ALSO BEGAN TO SHOW SIGNS OF DISTRESS BY REVERSING ITS WEATHER PATTERNS, INCREASING ITS SEISMIC ACTIVITY, AND EVIDENCING A MOMENTARY BUT SUBSTANTIAL ROLE REVERSAL IN HUNDREDS OF ANIMAL SPECIES AROUND THE WORLD WHICH, IN THE CASE OF THE RARE SNAKE-NECKED TURTLE, RESULTED IN A MISSED MATING CYCLE, WHICH ULTIMATELY LED TO ITS EXTINCTION. ADD TO THESE EXTRAORDINARY EVENTS THE PHENOMENAL EMERGENCE OF THE DISPLACED DECEASED THAT OVERRAN THE CHRISTIAN-POPULATED WORLD, AND YOU GET THE PRECISE COMBINATION OF EVENTS THAT MADE THE PREEMPTIVE STRIKE AGAINST TIME A TOP PRIORITY FOR WORLD LEADERS COME THE END OF THE FIRST DECADE IN THE 21ST CENTURY.

A NUMBER OF RESEARCH AND POLICY INSTITUTES AND TEAMS WERE FORMED AND SUBSIDIZED BY VARIOUS WORLD GOVERNMENTS, EACH COMPRISED OF THE LEADING PHILOSOPHICAL AND SCIENTIFIC ELITE, AND CHARGED WITH ADDRESSING THE VARIOUS CHALLENGES THE END OF TIME WOULD POSE. THERE WERE LARGER THINK TANKS—ONE SUCH EXAMPLE IS RAND, WHICH ADOPTED A MORE GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE IMMINENT EFFECTS OF THE END OF TIME. IT WAS PHYLLIS SARCONNI'S LEADERSHIP THAT MADE RAND INTO A WORLD PLAYER DURING THIS TIME, BRINGING THE OTHERWISE VESTIGIAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ARM OF THE COLD WAR ERA AIR FORCE INTO THE FOREGROUND OF WORLD AFFAIRS. IN AN ADDRESS TO THE MORE THAN 1, 600 STAFF MEMBERS MADE ON OCTOBER 11, 2006, SARCONNI CHARGED RAND WITH THE "DIFFICULT—SOME MIGHT SAY IMPOSSIBLE—TASK OF PREVENTING THE END OF TIME,

AND IF IT REALLY CAN'T BE PREVENTED, THEN THE SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION TO WHATEVER COMES AFTER. THERE'S NO ROOM FOR THE CATASTROPHIC END SOME FEAR IN THE PLANNING AND EXECUTION RAND HAS UNDERTAKEN, WILL UNDERTAKE. AND IF NEITHER PREVENTION NOR TRANSITION IS POSSIBLE, THEN I CHARGE YOU WITH SHOWING HUMANITY HOW TO SURVIVE.”

THE RESOUNDING FINAL STRIKE AGAINST TIME CAME WITH THE PUBLICATION OF RAND'S *The History of Time: a Timeline*, A FULLY COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF TIME, ITS PASSAGE, AND THE INEVITABLE END IT WOULD MEET IN 2012. EVEN RENOWNED SKEPTIC MICHAEL SHERMER WAS COMPELLED TO MAKE A STATEMENT AFTER THE REPORT WAS PUBLISHED IN WHICH HE CONCEDED THAT THE END OF TIME NEARED, THAT THERE WAS NO DENYING IT. THE REPORT, WRITTEN BY RAND ANTHROPOLOGISTS DONNA FOSSUM AND STEVEN POPPER, POSITED THAT THE SUDDEN END OF THE MAYAN CIVILIZATION WAS NO LESS THAN A SYSTEMATIC COMMUNAL CULTURAL SUICIDE, AND NOT SIMPLY A LACKADAISICAL “LETTING GO,” AS MICHAEL SHERMER HAD RECENTLY SUGGESTED IN AN INTERVIEW ON COAST-TO-COAST: “THE MAYAN'S EVENTUAL BOREDOM WITH THE PLOTTING OF EVERY HOUR OF EVERY DAY FOR AN ENTIRE CYCLE LASTING 5,000 IS WHAT FINALLY LED TO THEIR DEMISE.” IF ONE THING WAS TRUE, IT WAS THAT THE MAYANS REALLY HAD PLOTTED OUT EVERY MINUTE OF THE 5,000 YEARS THAT LED UP TO AND ENDED ON THE WINTER SOLSTICE OF 2012, OR SO EXPLAINED *The History of Time: a Timeline*. THE MAYANS HAD BEEN SO DETAILED IN THEIR RECORDING OF TIME THAT THEY EVEN MARKED MAJOR CELESTIAL EVENTS, SUCH AS ECLIPSES AND EQUINOXES, SO WHY DIDN'T THE MAYANS SPECIFY WAS WHAT WAS TO

HAPPEN ON DECEMBER 21, 2012, OR AFTER, FOR THAT MATTER? WHAT FOSSUM AND POPPER CONCLUDED WAS THAT IT WAS WHAT THE MAYANS KNEW EXACTLY WHAT WOULD HAPPEN ON DECEMBER 21, 2012, AND THAT THEY DIDN'T WANT TO BE AROUND WHEN IT HAPPENED. SO, HE CONCLUDED, THEY PLANNED AND EXECUTED THE FINALITY OF THEIR OWN CULTURE BY 1100 A.D.

AS INFORMATIVE AS RAND'S REPORT WAS, PEOPLE WERE MOST INTERESTED IN WHAT WOULD HAPPEN *after* DECEMBER 21, 2012. PUBLIC OPINION BROKE DOWN INTO TWO CAMPS: THERE WERE THOSE THAT SAW DECEMBER 21, 2012 AS THE DAY OF RECKONING, JUDGMENT DAY, *the* END OF THE WORLD, DOOMSDAY, ARMAGEDDON. THE OTHER CONTINGENT EXPECTED DECEMBER 21, 2012 TO BE JUST LIKE ANY OTHER DAY: "IF THE SUN WILL RISE ON THE 20TH IT WILL ALSO RISE ON THE 22ND. AND IF IT RISES ON THE 22ND, THEN IT WILL ALSO RISE ON THE 23RD. BUSINESS AS USUAL, THAT'S WHAT WE CAN EXPECT. TIME, NO TIME—LIFE WILL GO ON," SAID NYSE CHAIRMAN MARSH CARTER JUST BEFORE RINGING THE OPENING BELL ON MAY 17, 2008.

AS THE DAYS AND MONTHS PASSED, IT WAS THE FIRST OPINION THAT WON THE POPULAR VOTE AND SOONER THAN LATER HUNDREDS, THEN THOUSANDS OF STATE AGENCIES AND PRIVATE GROUPS BEGAN OFFERING CRASH-COURSES IN LIVING WITHOUT TIME. WITH THE HELP OF CERTIFIED COUNSELORS (USUALLY A PERSON WHO HAD BEEN BOTH TRAINED AND WHO HAD DEMONSTRATED A COMPLETE DISREGARD FOR TIME FOR MOST OF THEIR LIFE) PEOPLE WERE STRIPPED OF WATCHES, SCHEDULES, AND TO-DO LISTS. FOR MANY, THE TO-DO LISTS WERE THE HARDEST TO LEAVE BEHIND. HOUSEKEEPERS OFTEN HID THESE IN THEIR SHOES OR BETWEEN THEIR WAIST AND

ELASTIC BAND, UNTIL NOCHRONO ENFORCERS DISCOVERED EVEN THESE HIDING PLACES AND CONFISCATED EVERY LAST SCRAP OF PAPER. THERE WERE CAMPS, SPAS, WORKSHOPS—EACH ONE GUARANTEEING TO MAKE YOU TIME-LESS.

THE U.S. WAS THE FIRST OF THE DEVELOPED NATIONS TO DO A MOCK SWITCH-OVER TO NOCHRONO. THE DEADLINE FOR BOTH THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS TO MAKE PREPERATIONS WAS DECEMBER 31ST, AND ALL PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURES, SYSTEMS, AND SERVICES WERE EXPECTED TO OBSERVE THE FAUX-END OF TIME WHEN THE CESIUM CLOCK AND BOTH WWVB AND THE NIST WEBSITE WOULD GO OFFLINE. IN PREPARATION FOR THE SWITCH, NUMEROUS AMERICAN CITIES HELD MANDATORY NOCHRONO DRILLS, MOST OF WHICH RESULTED IN UTTER WIDESPREAD CHAOS AS MOST PEOPLE FORGOT TO SET THEIR WATCHES FOR THE SWITCH. IN SOME CASES PEOPLE REFUSED TO SET THEIR WATCHES, AS WAS THE CASE WITH MARY CLOAK, THE WILLIAMSBURG, NY RESIDENT WHO LED ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL GRASS-ROOTS ANTI-NOCHRONO CAMPAIGNS. SHE SUCCEEDED IN CONVINCING A GREAT MANY NEW YORKERS TO RESIST “THE ARBITRARY [EXPLETIVE] WITH PEOPLES’ LIVES” THAT NOCHRONO REPRESENTED [TO HER]. AND HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR THE 15-FOOT DIGITAL CLOCK ON TOP OF THE EAGLE STORAGE AND MANUFACTURING BUILDING AT THE BASE OF THE BROOKLYN BRIDGE, WHICH, JUST AS THE AIR RAID SIRENS WAILED THROUGHOUT THE CITY TO SIGNAL THE MOCK SWITCH OVER, REMAINED LIT, EVERYTHING WOULD HAVE GONE ACCORDING TO PLAN. ALL PUBLIC CLOCKS AND TIMEPIECES WOULD HAVE SWITCHED OFF. TIME WOULD HAVE STOPPED. BUT THE BRIGHT RED DIGITAL DISPLAY REMAINED LIT, AND AS THE CITY OF NEW YORK STOOD STILL, THE ENTIRETY OF THE

CITY TURNED TO LOOK AT THE EAGLE CLOCK WHEN IT SWITCHED FROM 8:00 A.M. TO 8:01 A.M. MARY CLOAK HAD MAINTAINED THE CLOCK SINCE THE CITY GOVERNMENT HAD SUBSIDIZED IT WHEN THE EAGLE PROPERTY OWNER THREATENED TO SHUT DOWN THE CLOCK BECAUSE IT BECAME TOO EXPENSIVE A PUBLIC SERVICE. MARY CLOAK WAS ARRESTED AND SUBSEQUENTLY FIRED.

THE END OF TIME CAUSED A NUMBER OF LEGAL PROBLEMS TOO, AND AN ON ONSLAUGHT OF COURT CASES WERE HEARD THROUGHOUT THE NATION WHEN THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE WHO HAD TAKEN A VOW TO LOVE EACH OTHER “UNTIL THE END OF TIME” SAW AN OPPORTUNITY TO ANNUL THEIR ARRANGEMENTS, OR IN OTHER INSTANCES, RE-VOW TO LOVE EACH OTHER, THIS TIME “UNTIL THE END OF NOCHRONO.” THE COURTS HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO HONOR BOTH REQUESTS. THE LEGAL LOOP PRESENTED AN ALMOST TOO-GOOD NICHE MARKET FOR MATCH.COM, WHICH, WITHIN DAYS OF THE FIRST COURT DECISION HONORING MARRIAGE ANNULMENTS BASED ON THE END OF TIME, SECURED THE REBOUND.COM DOMAIN NAME. WITHIN A MONTH, THE SITE HAD SOLD NEARLY ONE MILLION MEMBERSHIPS.

OTHER CULTURAL ICONS WERE MORE HESITANT TO CHANGE, AND IN THE CASE OF *Time Magazine*, ITS RELUCTANCE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE END OF TIME, THOUGH UNDERSTANDABLE, AND ITS REPLACEMENT BY NOCHRONO, RESULTED IN THE MAGAZINE’S DEMISE. THE GLOSSY RAN ITS LAST ISSUE ON DECEMBER 12, 2012, BRANDISHING THE HEADLINE “THE END OF TIME,” WHICH WAS NEITHER IMPACTING NOR IRONIC. BY THAT DATE, TIME HAD STOPPED BEING NOTEWORTHY.

THE FINAL MOCK-SWITCHOVER ON JANUARY 1, 2009 AT 12:01AM PROVED TO

BE A MAJOR SUCCESS. THE FIRST OF JANUARY WAS FREE OF THE CHAOS AND DISORDER THAT HAD CHARACTERIZED THE MOCK SWITCHOVERS OF THE YEARS BEFORE; IN FACT, SWITCHING BACK TO TIME ON JANUARY 2 PROVED TO BE MORE OF A TASK THAN IT HAD BEEN TO SWITCH TO NOCHRONO IN THE FIRST PLACE SO THAT THE END OF TIME COMMITTEE RECOMMENDED THAT THE OFFICIAL SWITCH-OVER TO NOCHRONO BE MOVED UP. IT WAS DECIDED THAT JULY 30, 2009 WOULD MARK THE OFFICIAL END OF TIME. EVERYONE HOPED THAT THE PREEMPTIVE STRIKE WOULD ALSO SPARE HUMANITY FROM THE MYRIAD CATASTROPHES ASSOCIATED WITH ITS NATURAL DEMISE.

THIS FEAR WAS ALSO MANIFEST IN THE WILLINGNESS AND EAGERNESS PEOPLE SHOWED IN RIDDING THEMSELVES OF ANYTHING ASSOCIATED WITH TIME—FROM THOUSAND DOLLAR ROLEXES, TO SENTIMENTALLY VALUABLE HEIRLOOMS. THIS ONE HERE, WHICH I'M WEARING NOW, IS FROM THE MOST EXPENSIVE OF THE TAG HEUER LINE. IT'S WORTH NOTHING NOW, WHICH IS WHY I CAN HAVE ONE. IN A WORLD WITH TIME, RARE WAS THE MAN THAT COULD WEAR SUCH AN EXPENSIVE TIMEPIECE. THANKFULLY, NOCHRONO IS THE GREAT EQUALIZER, AND EVERYONE CAN BE INCLUDED IN ITS ORDERED PROGRESSION. UNDERSTANDABLY, PEOPLE WERE GENERALLY AFRAID TO LEAVE ON ANY VESTIGE OF TIME THAT MIGHT GROW AND MULTIPLY A FORCE OF PRE-NOCHRONO PROPORTIONS. THIS WAS A FORCE THAT COULD AGAIN LAY CLAIM TO PEOPLE'S LIVES TO SPEED THEM TOWARD SOME CATAclySMIC END LIKE IT HAD INTENDED TO DO IN DECEMBER 2012. SO TORNEAU, LIKE BIG BEN, WERE GUTTED OF THEIR LARGER-THAN-LIFE TIME PIECES AND REPLACED WITH NOCHRONO ONES. WATCH AND CLOCKMAKERS SHUT DOWN TO PRODUCE NOCHRONO KEEPERS, SO THAT BY JULY

31, 2009 EVERYONE WAS WEARING OR HANGING ONE. EVERYONE, IT SEEMED, HAD FULLY ACCEPTED THE SWITCH, AND IF NOT FOR A SMALL GROUP OF MALCONTENTS THAT CALLED THEMSELVES THE “TIME KEEPERS,” WHO FOR EIGHTEEN MONTHS LIVED IN A COMMUNITY IN EASTERN OREGON USING CONTRABAND WATCHES AND CLOCKS, KEPT SCHEDULES AND OBSERVED TIME, UNTIL THEY WERE INFILTRATED AND DISBANDED BY THE AUTHORITIES, THE SWITCH TO NOCHRONO WOULD HAVE HAPPENED WITHOUT A GLITCH.

THERE WERE, OF COURSE, SOVEREIGN STATES THAT WERE LESS THAN EXCITED ABOUT THE SWITCH, NAMELY RUSSIA, WHOSE PRIME MINISTER VLADIMIR PUTIN REFUSED TO CONFORM TO WHAT HE CALLED “AN UNABASHED INVASION OF PRIVATE LIFE BY THE UNITED STATES,” BUT AFTER NEARLY A YEAR OF ECONOMIC SANCTIONS BY THE U.N. AND THE EUROPEAN UNION, RUSSIA ALSO MADE THE SWITCH TO NOCHRONO.

TODAY THE WESTERN WORLD FLOURISHES UNDER THE AUSPICES OF NOCHRONO, AND TIME EXISTS ONLY IN PAST MEMORIES MAINTAINED BY FILMS SUCH AS TONIGHT’S *The Time Machine* STARRING GUY PEARCE AS ALEXANDER HARDEGEN, A MAN OBSESSED WITH A MOMENT IN TIME THAT’S PASSED AND CANNOT BE REPEATED—SURELY A FOREIGN CONCEPT TO THOSE OF US ACCUSTOMED TO NOCHRONO, THIS OBSESSION WITH THINGS PAST AND THINGS COMING. NOT SO FOR THE MANY GENERATIONS THAT LIVED WITH TIME. HERE THEN IS *The Time Machine*. RELEASED IN 2002, ADAPTED FROM THE NOVEL BY H.G. WELLS, A REMAKE OF THE 1960S FILM BY THE SAME TITLE, AND A CURIOUS REMINDER OF WHAT IT WAS WITHOUT NOCHRONO.

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THERE ARE VIRTUALLY NO REMAINING NARRATIVES PRE-GOOGLE WHICH OFFER BOTH A UNIQUELY REGIONAL PORTRAIT OF A SPECIFIC PRE-MODERN COMMUNITY, WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY DEPICTING A PERVASIVE NATIONAL PREOCCUPATION. CERTAINLY THE “AT END OF TIME” NARRATIVE OFFERS US A GLIMPSE OF WHAT AN INTERNATIONAL OBSESSION WITH ESCHATOLOGY MIGHT HAVE LOOKED LIKE IN THE EARLY PART OF THE 21ST CENTURY, BUT IT COMES NOWHERE NEAR THE SPECIFICITY OF THE “REASONABLE” RANDAL SMRZ ‘SOCIETY NOTES,’ ESPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO THE REOCCURRING CHARACTERS, THEIR PERSONAL DRAMAS, AND HOW THESE ARE INFLATED BY THE INTRUSION OF THE STATE.

RANDAL SMRZ’S “SOCIETY NOTES” IS ALSO UNIQUE BECAUSE IT SHOWS US THE DELICATE INTERPLAY BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND THE PRIVATE, WHICH IN THIS CASE, QUICKLY EVOLVES INTO AN ENCROACHMENT RATHER THAN A PUBLIC SERVICE. RANDAL SMRZ, OVER THE COURSE OF TWO MONTHS, LET’S US SEE HOW THIS INTERPLAY BREAKS DOWN IN HIS SOCIETY, AND THOUGH PERHAPS UNINTENTIONALLY, HE LET’S US SEE HOW IT BRAKES DOWN AN INDIVIDUAL, HIMSELF.

“REASONABLE” RANDAL SMRZ’S SOCIETY NOTES

A STICKY SITUATION AT THE Y...

THE BENEFIT SUCCESS...

A REASONABLE RECOGNITION...

SATURDAY’S AMERICAN DREAM INTERPRETATION ALTERNATIVE BENEFIT DINNER WAS A SUCCESS, PERFECT IN EVERY WAY, STARTING WITH THE TABLES: THE CRISP LINEN WITH ITS CREASES ALL POINTING NORTH, THE SILVERWARE LAID OUT EXACTLY ONE INCH FROM THE EDGE OF THE TABLE. AND THE REGAL AZALEA ARRANGEMENTS AS TALL AS A GROWN MAN. THERE WAS THE VERY TENDER PULLED PORK, SO TENDER IT SPREAD LIKE BUTTER ON THE TOASTED ROLLS. OH, BUT WE ALSO RAISED \$2, 500 OVER THE \$10, 000 GOAL WE SET. LUDMILLA ALSO MADE A VERY SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT, DESPITE MY PRE-BENEFIT PLEADINGS TO KEEP MUM (HOW EMBARRASSING), BY RAISING HER CHAMPAGNE FLUKE AND TOASTING MY AMERICAN DREAM CERTIFICATION! YES, IT’S TRUE—I WALKED UP TO MY BROWNSTONE ON CHERRY ST. TO SEE AN OVERSIZED ENVELOPE PROTRUDING FROM MY MAILBOX, A LARGE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY SEAL EMBLAZONED ON ITS RIGHT SIDE; IN IT, MY LETTER OF CONGRATULATIONS AND THE ADI CERTIFICATE. FINALLY, THE RECOGNITION AND ENDORSEMENT TO CONTINUE BEING YOUR “REASONABLE” RANDAL SMRZ, PURVEYOR OF

YOUR SOCIETY NOTES, OF EVERYTHING THAT'S GOOD TO KNOW HERE IN THE HEIGHTS. YOU'LL REMEMBER THAT I'VE WRITTEN ABOUT THE FUTURE OF SOCIETY NOTES HAD I NOT BEEN ADI RECOGNIZED, OR HAD ADI RECOGNIZED ME AS SOMETHING OTHER THAN YOUR "REASONABLE" RANDAL SMRZ, AS WAS THE CASE WITH OUR BELOVED PHILIP SENECA, WHOSE ADI CERTIFICATION CALLED FOR HIM TO STEP DOWN AS MY LONG TIME EDITOR HERE AT *The Eagle* AND TAKE A POSITION IN THE CLASSIFIEDS.

BUT BACK TO THE BENEFIT. I THANKED LUDMILLA WITH A KISS ON EACH CHEEK, GRACEFULLY BOWED TO THE CROWD, AND THEN HELPED LUDMILLA OFF THE STAGE BY HOLDING ONTO HER ARM AS SHE BALANCED HERSELF ON THE RAILING. IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN HER STEADYING ME AS I NEARLY TRIPPED AND FELL BY THE INCREDIBLE TUG A PIECE OF GUM GAVE MY WING TIP. THE PINK TAR NEARLY MADE ME MAKE A COMPLETE FOOL OF MYSELF, AND WHAT A DISASTER THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN FOR YOUR VERY "REASONABLE," ADI CERTIFIED SOCIETY NOTES WRITER.

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FOLLOW-UP ON SOME FODDER...

LUCINDA'S KNOWING WAYS...

AN ADI CERTIFIED GUARANTEE...

THIS WEEK'S LUNCH OF HADDOCK AND CHIPS AT THE CHIP SHOP ON ATLANTIC WITH LUCINDA WAS A BORE, FOR THE MOST PART, AS WE DISCUSSED THE "ANONYMOUS"

CONTRIBUTION MADE AT LAST WEEK'S ADI ALTERNATIVE BENEFIT DINNER TO MATCH THE NICE SUM WE COLLECTED. OUR "SECRET" BENEFACTOR OF THREE YEARS LIKES A RECEIPT—FOR TAX PURPOSES, NO DOUBT—THOUGH LUCINDA AND I CAN'T FIGURE OUT HOW HE IS ABLE TO CLAIM AN EXEMPTION TO AN ORGANIZATION NOT RECOGNIZED BY THE ADI. SURE, OUR SECRET CO-CONSPIRATOR IS HIGH-RANKING, BUT NOT SO HIGH-RANKING THAT HE COULD BRAZENLY DONATE TO WHAT ADI HAS DEEMED A "SUBVERSIVE ORGANIZATION" AND STILL EXPECT TO GET MONEY BACK FOR HIS GENEROSITY. LUCINDA THINKS HE'S SLEEPING WITH SOMEONE HIGHER-RANKING THAN HIMSELF. I AGREE, AND I ALSO THINK I KNOW WHO IT IS.

LUCINDA ALSO TELLS ME THAT, GIVEN MY NEW ADI STATUS, WARNER MEDIA HOLDINGS MIGHT ONCE AGAIN MOVE TO ACQUIRE THE HUMBLE *Eagle*. IF THAT HAPPENS, DEAR READER, DO NOT FRET. "REASONABLE" RANDAL SMRZ WILL NOT FORGET YOU, AND I'LL CONTINUE PROVIDING YOU WITH ALL THE NEWS THAT'S GOOD TO HEAR. YES, LUCINDA JOKES THAT IF WARNER MEDIA DOES ACT I'M IN LINE FOR A POSH EDITORIAL POSITION, BUT WHAT WOULD A HUMBLE WRITER SUCH AS ME DO WITH SUCH INFLUENCE. I'M A REASONABLE MAN, YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY. OR A POSITION WITH *NYNoChronos.com*. LUCINDA THINKS THAT I'LL FINALLY MAKE THAT HAPPEN. ONLY IF THEY WANT SOCIETY NOTES TOO! THAT LUCINDA, ALWAYS LOOKING OUT FOR YOUR "REASONABLE" RANDAL SMRZ AND HIS PLACE IN FULLY-ADI-COMPLIANT JOURNALISM. FOR THAT I'M THANKFUL.

BUT I DO CONFESS A CERTAIN BIT OF ANXIETY IN REGARDS TO YOUR RECEPTION OF MY

MEAGER SCRIBBLING NOW THAT I'M ADI CERTIFIED. WILL YOU STILL GRANT ME THAT GENEROUS PORTION OF YOUR ATTENTION, AND WILL YOU ENTERTAIN MY INFORMATIONAL WHIMS AND POSTURING? I KNOW YOU WILL. AND FOR THAT I PROMISE TO CONTINUE BEING YOUR VERY "REASONABLE" RANDAL, AND THAT SOCIETY NOTES WILL COME TO YOU EVERY FRIDAY AS THEY HAVE BEEN UNINTERRUPTED FOR 12 YEARS SINCE OUR FIRST RUN IN 2010.

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DIEGO'S NEW HELP...

HATS OFF TO YOU, MILES...

BIRDS OF A FEATHER GATHER ON 122ND...

DIEGO LAMPHEAR AND I MET AT CONNECTICUT MUFFIN ON ATLANTIC FOR THE DONATION RECEIPT HAND-OFF ON TUESDAY, AND I WAS RIGHT: AT HIS ARM WAS THE VERY BEAUTIFUL KELLY KROGER, WHO, JUST ON FIRST APPEARANCES, SEEMED TO BE A GREAT IMPROVEMENT OVER THE TRAGIC NYMPH DIEGO BROUGHT TO THE NEW YEAR'S GALA. I'M NOT CERTAIN HE'S LIVED DOWN THE EMBARRASSMENT HER DRUNKEN PRESUMPTIVENESS CAUSED HIM THAT NIGHT WHEN SHE RELIEVED THE EMCEE OF THIS DUTIES AND STARTED TO COUNT DOWN TO THE NEW YEAR TWO SECONDS TOO EARLY. SHE SUCCEEDED IN GETTING HALF OF THE ROOM TO FOLLOW HER LEAD, AND BEFORE THE TIMES SQUARE BALL MADE IT TO THE BOTTOM, HALF OF THE PARTY HAD ALREADY KISSED AND TOASTED AND ALL THAT...JUST AS THE REST OF US YELLED "HAPPY NEW

YEAR.” BUT KELLY CAN COUNT. AND AS HER FATHER IS THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY, SHE CAN PROBABLY COUNT TO VERY HIGH NUMBERS. “IF THEY ARE GOING TO SPEND YOUR MONEY,” REMARKED DIEGO, “THEN THEY MIGHT AS WELL ITEMIZE THEIR EXPENSES ON YOUR TAX FORMS THEMSELVES.” AND THEN HE ASKED ME ABOUT MY ADI PROCESS (I GUESS HE DIDN’T HEAR AT THE BENEFIT), WANTING TO KNOW IF IT WAS AS MUCH OF A NIGHTMARE AS HE HEARD IT WAS. I TOLD HIM THAT IT HADN’T BEEN, THAT I GOT MY CERTIFICATION, AND THAT I MUST HAVE BEEN EXAGGERATING WHEN I CALLED IT A NIGHTMARE. I HAD THE MOST WONDERFUL ADI COUNSELOR—MILES—YOU ALL KNOW HIM. AND HE WAS REALLY THE BEST ANYONE COULD HAVE HOPED FOR. I’M REALLY GOING TO MISS HIM. OH, AND MILES—THERE’S ONE LITTLE THING I DIDN’T PUT ON THE OCCUPATION(S) FORM: MY TAXIDERMY MOBILES. YOU CAN SEE MY RECENT BIRDS-OF-THE-SAVANNAH AT THE 122ND STREET COMMUNITY GARDEN.

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FROM THE EDITOR...

THE EDITORIAL STAFF AT *The Eagle* WOULD LIKE TO OFFER A SINCERE APOLOGY TO MR. DIEGO LAMPHEAR FOR THE LESS-THAN TACTFUL SUGGESTIONS MADE BY LAST WEEK’S SOCIETY NOTES. NEITHER THE EDITORIAL BOARD NOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THIS PUBLICATION HAS ANY PROOF OR INDICATION THAT MR. LAMPHEAR IS ANY WAY ASSOCIATED WITH ADI ALTERNATIVE, MUCH LESS A SUPPORTER. FURTHERMORE, THIS PUBLICATION WOULD LIKE TO RETRACT ANY AND ALL COMMENTS ABOUT MR. LAMPHEAR

AND HIS ASSOCIATES IN THE LAST AND ANY PREVIOUS INSTALLMENTS OF SOCIETY
NOTES.

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A REASONABLE ADDITION...

FAMILY VALUES...

COLDER WEATHER SETS IN MID-SUMMER

COULD YOU IMAGINE MY EXCITEMENT WHEN THE VOICE ON THE LINE—ELAINE’S, MY
SISTER—CALLED ME “UNCLE RANDAL”? THREE WEEKS AGO THIS SUNDAY ELAINE GAVE
BIRTH TO MY BEAUTIFUL (I’M ASSUMING) BABY NIECE. HERE I WAS, ENJOYING A CUP OF
KOJI CHAI GREEN TEA WHEN THE PHONE RINGS. THE LADY ON THE OTHER SIDE
WANTED TO KNOW IF I WOULD ACCEPT A COLLECT CALL FROM MEXICO. MEXICO? WHO
WAS IN MEXICO, I WONDERED. AND THEN ELI’S FAR-OFF VOICE: “RANDAL? RANDAL,
ARE YOU THERE? IT’S ELI. I HAD A BABY, RANDAL. YOU’RE “UNCLE RANDAL. YOU’RE
AN UNCLE. CAN YOU HEAR ME?” WELL, OF COURSE I COULD HEAR HER. TRUTHFULLY,
I WAS EXPECTING IT TO BE ELOISE OR BERNARD, WHO WERE THEN ON A CRUISE ON THE
MEXICAN RIVIERA. I WAS GOING TO GIVE THEM AN EARFUL FOR CALLING ME ON
SUNDAY MORNING, AT A TIME WHEN I COULD HAVE BEEN VERY POSSIBLY SLEEPING IN
OR STILL ENTERTAINING OVERNIGHT COMPANY. VERY POSSIBLY, YES. BUT IT WAS ELI’S
VOICE.

NOW MY DEAR AND INTELLIGENT READER, JUST AS I DIDN’T NEED TO ASK WHY

ELI WAS IN MEXICO, AND WHY SHE HAD GONE THERE TO HAVE HER BABY, I'M SURE I DON'T NEED TO TELL YOU EITHER. BUT REALLY IT'S SOMETHING I SHOULD HAVE EXPECTED, GIVEN THE UNFAVORABLE EXPERIENCE BOTH ELI AND DREW HAD WITH THEIR ADI PRE-NUPTIAL CERTIFICATION PROCESS. POOR ELI (AND DREW)—HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR THE ACCIDENT THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN APPROVED TO BE PARENTS. HOW IRONIC, DON'T YOU THINK, THAT ELI, THE FIRST MEMBER OF THE SMRZ FAMILY TO SEEK OUT ADI RECOGNITION, AS WELL AS THE STRONGEST SUPPORT OF THE AGENCY IN AN OTHERWISE INDIFFERENT FAMILY, WOULD END UP IN MEXICO BECAUSE HER VERY AMERICAN DREAM INTERPRETATION DENIED HER A BABY? SO WITH NO PATERNITY CLAUSE THERE HAD BEEN NO WEDDING, BUT THERE HAD BEEN FEELINGS, AND FEELINGS TURNED TO LOVE, AND LOVE PRODUCED A PREGNANCY, AND THE PREGNANCY PROVOKED THE SEPARATION AND NO DOUBT THE BORDER-CROSSING. WHAT'S GOING TO BECOME OF MY ELI AND HER BABY?

I WOULD ASK DIEGO FOR HELP, BUT JUDGING BY THE FRIGID AIR I FELT COMING FROM HIM ON WEDNESDAY WHEN WE CROSSED PATHS AT THE KEY FOODS, I DON'T ANTICIPATE MUCH HELP FROM HIM. AND ANYWAY I HAPPEN TO KNOW THAT HE'S SPENDING LITTLE TIME AT CITY HALL NOW THAT HIS LOVE-BUNNY HAS MOVED INTO THE BREUKELLEN. HONESTLY, SOMEONE WITNESSING OUR "EXCHANGE" WOULD HAVE SWORN THAT HE IGNORED ME ALTOGETHER.

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AN ADI ALTERNATIVE ALTERNATIVE...

WHAT ADI CAN'T DO FOR YOU...

WALK, ROLL, OR BAKE FOR THE COBBLE HILL SENIOR CENTER...

ANOTHER COLLECT CALL LATER, UNCLE "REASONABLE" RANDAL WAS INFORMED THAT ELI AND BABY MIRANDA ARE FINE BUT STILL IN MEXICO. AND THAT'S NOT ALL: APPARENTLY, ELI AND MIRANDA ARE NOT THE ONLY AMERICANS IN MEXICO. NO—THERE'S A WHOLE COMMUNITY FROM THE SOUNDS OF IT. ALL AMERICANS WHO WERE EITHER DENIED ADI CERTIFICATION OR, WHO LIKE ELI, DIDN'T TOTALLY AGREE WITH THE ADI CERTIFICATION THEY DID GET. BUT HOW UNREASONABLE, DON'T YOU AGREE? WHO DOESN'T WANT A TWO-STORY HOME WITH A GREEN LAWN, A SMILING SPOUSE, A MIRANDA-AND-A-HALF, AND A SHAGGY LABRADOR RETRIEVER? AND BECAUSE ELI IS AS REASONABLE AS YOUR "REASONABLE" RANDAL, I'M SURE SHE WILL REALIZE THAT THE PROVISIONS THE ADI MADE FOR HER AND HER FAMILY ARE MUCH BETTER THAN WHATEVER JERRY-RIGGED CAMP SHE'S LIVING IN NOW. I HAVE SOMEONE AT ADI ALTERNATIVE LOOKING INTO IT NOW, SO I'M SURE WITHIN A COUPLE OF WEEKS' TIME YOU WILL ALL JOIN ME IN GIVING ELI AND MIRANDA A PROPER AMERICAN WELCOME. THIS SAME CONTACT SEEMS TO BE FOND OF PICKLED TOMATOES, BECAUSE IN EXCHANGE FOR ANOTHER SERVING FROM HEIGHTS KNEADS, HE AGREED TO BRING ME MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE SHANTY-TOWNS THE ADI DENIED HAVE SET UP IN MEXICO. ACCORDING TO MY SOURCE (WHOSE OWN SOURCE IS CREDIBLE—HIS SON WORKS FOR THE STATE DEPARTMENT), THE ADI-DENIED COUNT IN THE THOUSANDS,

AND THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO BILL OUR OWN GOVERNMENT FOR SERVICES RENDERED. THE STATE DEPARTMENT WON'T FOOT THE BILL, HOWEVER, CLAIMING THAT THE ADI-DENIED AND NON-ADI CERTIFIED AMERICANS WHO FAIL TO UPHOLD THEIR AMERICAN DREAM EITHER HERE OR ABROAD EFFECTIVELY RELINQUISH ALL PRIVILEGES AVAILABLE TO ADI RECOGNIZED AMERICANS, INCLUDING DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATION OR MEDIATION. THIS IS CERTAINLY NOT A PLACE FOR ELI OR MIRANDA. I'M CERTAIN THAT MY CONTACT AND HIS SOURCE ARE REASONABLE PEOPLE, AND THAT ELI AND MIRANDA WILL BE STATESIDE SOON—ON CONDITION OF ANONYMITY AND WITH A PLATE OF PICKLED TOMATOES, OF COURSE.

LET ME ALSO REMIND YOU OF THE COBBLE HILL SENIOR CENTER'S WALK-AND-ROLL-A-THON. BRING YOUR TRAINERS AND YOUR WALKERS TO THE PROMENADE NEXT SUNDAY, OR COME AND HAVE A CUPCAKE AT TUESDAY'S BAKE SALE AT HEIGHTS KNEADS. THE GOAL IS TO PUT EVERY SINGLE ABLE-BODY SENIOR INTO DR. SCHOLL'S GEL INSERTS BY NEXT SUNDAY.

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MILES OF CHANGE...

THE ADI A-LIST...

IT COULDN'T HURT TO PUT IN A CALL TO MILES TO SEE WHAT HIS OPINION WAS ON THE ELI/MIRANDA SAGA, RIGHT? WRONG. MILES IS SMITTEN OVER A NEW LOVE IN HIS LIFE SO THAT HE HAS LITTLE TO SAY ABOUT MINE. ALL BUSINESS, I SUPPOSE, THIS ADI

COUNSELING THING. HER NAME IS CHITRA, AND HE SOUNDS EXCITED ABOUT HER. GOOD FOR HIM. EVERY RAMEN-EATING, SHORT-SLEEVE-SHIRT-AND-CLIP-ON-TIE-WEARING HERMIT WITH A BOWL CUT AND OVERSIZED WIRE-RIMMED GLASSES DESERVES AN INTERESTING LADY BY HIS SIDE. AND WITH A NAME LIKE CHITRA, HOW COULD SHE NOT BE EXCITING? MAYBE EVEN A LITTLE EXOTIC TOO? THIS ONE MIGHT MAKE A MAN OUT OF MILES YET. WELL I DIDN'T TELL HIM THAT, BUT I DID ASK HIM A GREAT MANY QUESTIONS TO WHICH I GOT VERY FEW ANSWERS: WHERE IS SHE FROM? HOW DID YOU MEET? WHAT DOES SHE DO? SHE'S INDIAN. SHE'S AN ADI-CERTIFIED DIGITAL TEXT ARCHIVIST. HE WAS HER ORIGINAL ADI COUNSELOR BEFORE SHE WAS REASSIGNED (I KNOW, I THOUGHT YOU WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO DATE CURRENT OR FORMER COUNSELEES). THEY'RE GETTING MARRIED. SO MILES HAS PUT IN FOR AN EARLY RETIREMENT. AND HE SAID HE LOVED HIS JOB...

ABOUT ELI AND MIRANDA, MILES SAID: "I WON'T GIVE YOU ANY FALSE HOPE." BUT HE DID PROMISE TO MENTION IT TO A FRIEND HE HAD IN MARRIAGE AND PATERNITY. I WON'T TELL ELI ABOUT THAT SINCE SHE'S HAD HER SHARE OF TROUBLES WITH MAP.

CONGRATULATIONS ARE IN ORDER TO SOME DEAR FRIENDS OF US HERE AT SOCIETY NOTES FOR THEIR RECENT ADI CERTIFICATION: STUART RUVALCABA, THE STAR OF THE STEAMY DAY-TIME SOAP "SECOND CHANCES," WAS RECOGNIZED BY *Rolling Stone* AS THE MOST "INFLUENTIAL MUSICIAN OF THE YEAR" A WEEK AFTER ADI CERTIFIED HIS MULTIPLE CELEBRITY ROLES. ACTRESS JULIE SINGBIEL, STAR OF THE FORTHCOMING BIOPIC OF THE FIRST WOMAN AMERICAN PRESIDENT, WAS ALSO

RECOGNIZED BY THE SCREEN ACTORS' GUILD AS THE "BRIGHTEST UPCOMING STAR" IN A PRESS RELEASE THE DAY AFTER HER ADI CERTIFICATION CONFIRMED EVERYONE OF HER CURRENT ACTING ROLES AND ANY FUTURE STUDIO CONTRACTS. KUDOS TO YOU!

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FARING WELL ELSEWHERE...

PERCHANCE TO DREAM TO STOP IN CAMDEN PLAZA...

I APOLOGIZE FOR STARTING ON A SAD NOTE, BUT RECOGNITION AND TEARY GOODBYES ARE FIRST ORDER FOR SOCIETY NOTES TODAY AS WE WISH A FOND FAREWELL TO WILMA BALLARD, A LONG-TIME CONTRIBUTOR TO *The Eagle*. WILMA LEAVES US FOR AN EDITORIAL POSITION ABROAD WITH *Il Tempo*. YOU'LL AGREE THAT WILMA'S SEMI-REGULAR TRAVEL WRITINGS, WHICH HAVE APPEARED NEXT TO SOCIETY NOTES, HAVE BEEN A PLEASURE TO READ, AND IN MY CASE AT LEAST, RESPONSIBLE FOR QUITE A FEW VACATIONS I COULDN'T REALLY AFFORD BUT TOOK ANYWAY. ONE OF MY OWN FAVORITES WAS A STORY *The Eagle* RAN IN 2008 IN WHICH SHE TRAVELED TO PANAMA WITH THE PALACIOS OF PARK SLOPE. OF COURSE THE DETAILED ACCOUNT OF THE CRIMINAL CONDITIONS IN WHICH THE PALACIOS' RELATIVES LIVE WAS EYE-OPENING, BUT WEREN'T YOU MOSTLY ENGROSSED WITH THE OCCURRENCE OF THE EXTRA LITTLE TOE ON EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THE WOMEN'S RIGHT FEET IN THE PALACIOS' FAMILY? I WAS. REPORTING LIKE THIS HASN'T GONE UNNOTICED, AND WILMA DESERVES BOTH THE PULITZER AND THE PEABODY SHE'S RECEIVED. UNFORTUNATELY, WILMA'S

ATTEMPTS AT ADI CERTIFICATION HAVE NOT BEEN AS PRODUCTIVE AS MINE, AND IN A PERSONAL BUT HARD CHOICE SHE'S DECIDED TO TAKE HER TALENT TO ROME, AND LEAVE *The Eagle* TO TIME WARNER.

AND NOW YOU TOO CAN FAST-TRACK YOUR ADI CERTIFICATION. THE ADI TRAVELLING CLINIC, "PERCHANCE TO DREAM," HAS ANNOUNCED A STOP HERE IN BROOKLYN. THE ADI TENTS WILL BE SET UP IN CAMDEN PLAZA FROM SEPTEMBER 16 THROUGH NOVEMBER 20. MAKE YOUR APPOINTMENT TODAY!

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LOU GREEN ON THE RUN...

THE ELI DEBATE...

MILES APART...

SOCIETY NOTES RECOGNIZES LOU GREEN, A VERY REASONABLE MAN, WHO HAS SERVED AS THE HEAD OF ACLU FOR ALMOST FOUR YEARS. LOU HAS ANNOUNCED HIS EARLY RETIREMENT WHEN HE FAILED TO RECEIVE ADI CERTIFICATION TO CONTINUE AS THE ACLU FRONT-MAN. HIS POSITION WAS NEVER FULLY ENDORSED, BUT DUE TO THE LENGTHY APPEALS PROCESS, HE'S BEEN ABLE TO LEAD THE ACLU INTO A VERY INFLUENTIAL POSITION DURING HIS TENURE. AND DESPITE THE INCREMENTAL SUPPORT HE RECEIVED DURING HIS PRESIDENCY, THE FORCE OF PEOPLE WAS NOT STRONG ENOUGH TO STAND AGAINST THE "CEASE AND DESIST" LETTER HE RECEIVED LAST WEEK.

HIS ANNOUNCEMENT WAS BOTH EMOTIONAL AND INSPIRATIONAL, GIVEN AT THE STEPS OF THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL (WHICH IS NOW A BREATHTAKING WORK OF PUBLIC ART WITH THE COMPLETION OF BEETH COOPERS MASSIVE MOSAIC SPANNING THE ENTIRE WALL BEHIND PRESIDENT LINCOLN), IN WHICH HE URGED ALL AMERICANS “TO PROTECT AND PROMOTE THE WORK DONE IN ASSURING THE CIVIL LIBERTIES OF ALL AMERICANS IN THE FACE OF NEW AND SEEMINGLY-LEGITIMATE THREATS.” WELL, HERE IN BROOKLYN WE ARE CERTAINLY DOING THAT. AT MOST COUNT, 67% OF THE BOROUGH HAS SIGNED UP TO HAVE THEIR AMERICAN DREAM INTERPRETED BY “PERCHANCE TO DREAM.” OF THE MOST RECENT INTERPRETATIONS AND CERTIFICATIONS, WE HEAR OF LESLIE HAMILTON, WHO FOR 45 YEARS HAS MANAGED THE GREAT EASTERN CANNERY COMPANY IN SHEEPSHEAD BAY. HIS ADI CERTIFICATION ACTUALLY SHOWS THAT HE IS SUPPOSED TO BE A BUILDING SUPERVISOR, SO NOW HE’S WAITING TO HEAR FROM THE BREUKELLEN TO SEE IF THEY WILL GIVE HIM A LATE-IN-LIFE-CHANCE TO LIVE OUT HIS AMERICAN DREAM. “IT’S A RELIEF,” HE TOLD ME ON WEDNESDAY. “ALL MY LIFE I KNEW I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE DOING SOMETHING ELSE. AND NOW I KNOW.” SIMILARLY, ADI CERTIFIED 98-YEAR-OLD CHELSEA MCCORMICK, WHO HAS BEEN SELLING AND BUYING OUR WARES FOR 15 YEARS ON EBAY. CONGRATULATIONS ARE IN ORDER, THEN, FOR MRS. MCCORMICK, NEW YORK’S OLDEST ONLINE-AUCTIONEER.

ON THE HOME FRONT ELI AND MIRANDA REMAIN IN MEXICO. I CAN’T HELP BUT THINK THAT ELI DOESN’T WANT TO COME BACK TO AMERICA AS MUCH I WANT HER TO. MILES HAS BEEN NO HELP IN THE MATTER EITHER; TOO BUSY PLANNING HIS WEDDING

AND A TRIP TO SOUTH AMERICA. I OFFERED TO PURCHASE HIS HONEYMOON PACKAGE, BUT HE REFUSED, SAYING THAT HE WASN'T SURE HOW MUCH TIME HE'D SPEND "DOWN SOUTH." NO ONE AT ADI MAP WILL RETURN MY CALLS, AND HEIGHTS KNEADS HAS STOPPED CARRYING PICKLED TOMATOES.

Thesis Defense Introduction
Presented 2 May 2008

I would first like to thank and acknowledge everyone here for their time, expertise, support, and willingness to help me along in this project. Tracy, especially, for taking the time out of his busy schedule, to focus solely on whatever work I gave him the week before. I never once felt that rushed in neither our conversations, nor that he was eager to get to whatever else was on his agenda. And the copies of work I gave him always demonstrated the time and patience he took to read carefully, line edit, and otherwise point out the wordage to so often keep me from “getting to the punch line.” Thank you.

My purpose in the next few minutes is to tell you how *Modern Apostles* came to be, what I intend for it to do, who it does and doesn't do these things, where I see *Modern Apostles* fitting in a greater literary tradition, and what happens next with these narratives.

In order of importance, my purpose in writing the narratives that comprise this project was to (1) make people laugh, (2) challenge certain conventions of storytelling, and, (3) make people think. I admit that for the first and last of these there are more literary acceptable terms by which to call them, but for the sake of simplicity—which is something I will try uphold in this conversation (especially since Tracy has time and again reminded the workshop that while it is worth talking about humor in writing, you effectively kill the humor by doing just that). And regardless of how I talk about these three purposes, I take them very seriously.

Regarding the first of these—to make people laugh—I credit my family’s influence. My father’s death, for example, which in many family’s (and this is an assumption) might have been transformed into a tragic situation, has always been looked at and talked about in humorous terms. If you asked anyone of my brother or sisters about it, or my mother even, they would say something like this: “On the night my dad died everyone was already in bed. My mom says that my dad started grabbing at his right arm, rolling his eyes back. He was shaking on the bed next to my mother. She told him to stop. My dad was always trying to scare us by pretending he was dying, faking seizures, heart attacks...continuing the charade until he saw actual fear creep into our faces, and then he would bellow out in laughter, pointing at us for being so gullible. So my mom thought he was kidding. “Not tonight, Rigoberto,” she probably said. “*Deja de fregar,*” she would have said. When he didn’t stop, when she lifted her head off the pillow and saw a look in his face that translated into real panic and fear, she asked him what was wrong with him. She yelled out for Mario, Leonor. We all heard, got up, ran into their bedroom. Sergio started laughing. We all thought it was a game. My dad was such a joker. My mom yelled to call 911. When the paramedics arrived and tore off his shirt to jump start his heart we were still in the room. I think that if we would have called a minute earlier they might have been able to revive him. My dad was such a joker.” And they whomever was telling the story will give a chuckle and tell you another story about how funny my dad was. But by now they would have revealed that secret regret, their culpability. Nonetheless, this is the general formula for dealing with the serious, the sad, the unfaceable, the skeletons. We laugh.

I can’t deny that the targets of the narratives that comprise *Modern Apostles* are serious, maybe even a sad feature of our contemporary culture, but before all of that, I do want to make people laugh. In my experience, at least, it makes these realities that much more palpable.

But there's a danger to this masking I've come to realize, in both my personal life and in the way I represent experience in my writing. Conversations with Marjorie and Tracy alike have brought me closer to interrogating the motivations behind the masks my stories wear; here are characters thinking about death and absence, sexuality, what it is to exist in two cultures, the merits and foils of being raised in a conservative environment in an otherwise non-traditional family—these are the very things that I think about, struggle with. It wasn't until I got to OSU and worked with the creative writing faculty here that I was encouraged to find people behind the masks I had elaborately created, where not surprisingly, I also found myself. This continues to be a challenge, but as Marjorie told me in her office a few months ago, “when I do this, when I've uncovered every little rock that before now I was reluctant to turn over, when I write the things I would have previously glossed over, that's when I'll have written stories that want to be read, that reveal their humanity.” Or something like that: sorry if I misquoted you, Marjorie!

Regarding the second of my purposes in writing *Modern Apostles*, I have to go back to the writers that effectively raised me, in a literary sense. It wasn't until college, when one of my professors, in a sincerely incredulous tone, asked me how I, who was Mexican, had never read Borges or Márquez. The postmodern—specifically the Latin American variety—with a particular focus on Magical Realism and its antecedents and not-too-distant cousins, the Russian Surrealist, Kafka, Calvino, Cortazar, the poststructuralists, et. al. What then happened would, for better or worse, show me that I could write a story—even if it didn't look, read, or feel like one—because these writers had or were already doing it. This is not to say that I didn't enjoy traditionally crafted stories, with ample character development, a defined narrative arch, all wrapped up in the neat assumption that language was both stable and an adequate vehicle of representation. I did enjoy reading these, I simply wasn't all that interested in writing them.

So what happened when I read about the yellow butterflies that flutter all around Mauricio Babilonia, or Borges at 65 having a conversation with Borges at 19, or about a nose, which because it has acquired a higher rank in city government than Kovalyov, refuses to reattach itself? I realized that I could write a story which simultaneously represented experience and called attention to itself, and how limited it was given the elements it had to work with.

But before I go any further, let me admit how ridiculous a notion this is, that a kid in the 2000s had suddenly “discovered” how liberating a certain mode of literary theory could be, when a whole generation of aging, probably bearded white men had been working with and talking about for nearly 50 years. Still, I wrote on, conducting my own experiments that focused on the elements I was so sure couldn’t even begin to relate experience, while continuing to be mesmerized by the writers who were actually doing it.

It is out of these experiments from which “Hell on Earth” arose. My Oulipian constraint was to write a story without a central character. The literary model I adopted was Dante’s *Inferno*, except that I removed both Dante and Virgil from its plot, which left me with the problem of who was going to tell the story. As I mentioned a minute ago, just because I saw both language and narrative conventions as incapable of relating experience, it didn’t mean that I thought that writing was impossible, or that a story couldn’t be written. I had a menagerie of writers to prove that notion wrong. Rather, like Borges, I saw the realization as liberating: if I didn’t have to adhere to the strict notions that had characterized genre before Wiggensien, then I had so much more material to draw from, work with. I mention Borges because his writing, in particular, demonstrates a willingness to hybridize, incorporate, out-right plagiarize texts that are otherwise not available to a factionalist. Letters, treatise, historical accounts, journalistic

writing, scholarship—the world, in effect, was a text, and if one accepts that it is impossible to represent it through language, then why not just have fun? Here is an example:

(Reading from “The Sect of the Thirty” in *The Book of Sand*)

Borges’ willingness to emulate and at times copy from the world-text allowed him to paradoxically highlight the gap between language and representation at the same time that bridged it. This is in contrast to another writer, Beckett, whose works and characters betray the own writer’s anxiety that arises from the realizations the tools you’ve been given to make things are ineffective. Unlike the Borgesian character, the Beckett hero is paralyzed, captured by the moment in which he realizes that there is nowhere to go, nothing to do. His landmark trilogy, “Molloy”, “Malone Dies”, “The Unnamable,” all give us pictures of precisely this: there’s the bedridden Molloy, the bedridden Malone, and then the punctuating end piece, which moves, almost impossibly, into further despair and panic. One might say that each of these is a study in the impossibility of writing in the first person. Beckett has given Molloy the language necessary to write about his experience, but the character is only aggravated by his inability to make meaning of it. Finally, as his thesis, Beckett offers: “The expression that there is nothing to express, nothing with which to express, no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express,” and “it will be the silence, where I am, I don’t know, I’ll never know, in the silence you don’t know, you must go on, I can’t go on, I’ll go on.”

In contrast, and this is the space I inhabited when I began writing the narratives that form *Modern Apostles*, both allows for the creation of texts where others can’t seem to, and it shares that burden with the world—that is Borges sees the act of writing as a co-authorship and co-subjective. We’re in this together, let’s help each other out.

It is this joyous sensibility that helped me solve the problem of “who is going to tell the

‘Hell on Earth’ story.’” Like Borges, I could (1) copy and incorporate texts already in existence through the acceptance that (2) both the world is co-authored, and therefore so are the texts a writer produces. I didn’t have to have a character tell “Hell on Earth,” I could transparently have multiple authors do it. This is how “Hell on Earth” became a pastiche of popular texts. Some are emulated, others are more directly copied, all of them work in cohort to satirize this contemporary moment, to tell a very serious story in a very funny way.

I can’t deny the Bakhtinian influence on these ideas, both on the “Hell on Earth” narrative and on the entire project. Bakhtin’s notions of dialogism, heteroglossia, and the chronotope were further license for me to appropriate the voices in American and western culture that rang loudest in my attempts to defy character and traditional narrative structure, at the same time that I called attention to the voices that aren’t heard in American and western culture. In “Mr. Mother Nature,” for example, I decided against satirizing the myth of Mother Nature, the fad of conservation, the business of spectacle, and the invasion of the self by the state (a common theme for me) by creating original voices; our current culture has done such a fantastic job of giving us the precise voices needed to peel back the layers of these otherwise obfuscated targets. And because I recognize my own complicity as part of this culture, the narrative choice in “Mr. Mother Nature” represents that which Bakhtin describes when he writes “For the prose writer, the object is a focal point for heteroglot voices among which his own voice must also sound; these voices create the background necessary for his own voice, outside of which his artistic prose nuances cannot be perceived, and without which they "do not sound.”” And regarding dialogism, because the utterances of these, some might argue, super-mythologized voices—Mother Nature’s and Barbara Walters—are used against themselves and what they represent, the narrative makes transparent how it is entering into a “constant, endless

state of intentional and value-laden dialogue” currently taking place all around us. The same is true for “Hell on Earth,” “At the End of Time,” and “‘Reasonable’ Randal Smrz’ Society Notes,” where the appropriated voices sound like the official voices of culture—the church, the state, the media—while revealing, much like satire does, the multiple layers of rhetoric that silence certain voices. In my opinion, there is no better place where these voices meet than in the official sphere of culture—it happens on T.V., the movies, the newspapers, in Academia, at the pulpit—here is the chronotope. This is how *Modern Apostles* function, by “Forming itself in an atmosphere of the already spoken, the word is at the same time determined by that which has not yet been said but which is needed and in fact anticipated.”

It is in this way that thinking about my writing not as purely fictional, or as purely prose, has helped me reach these targets better. I admit that the challenge to my own writing conventions in my time at OSU has made me think about my writing in different ways, and has, in fact made me a better writer (if only by not over-determining my stories, by leaving something to be discovered), but so has the instruction and writing I’ve done in the writ/comp courses here. And teaching WR121 has similarly made me think about my writing in terms of the choices I make. The idea of being deliberate when I write isn’t a new one for me, but between the workshop, one-on-one help with any member of the faculty, and the thinking and teaching of first-year writing I’ve gotten an invaluable amount of practice in thinking about process and rhetorical choice.

I have to step back here because I think that this recent vein risks me overemphasizing the political in *Modern Apostles*. Like I stated at the beginning, making people think comes third in the hierarchy of purpose for this project, therefore the political targets in these narratives present themselves to me more than I look for them, and they are only valuable to me insofar as I hear a

voice that wants to peel them apart, and then the structure that wants to hold it all together. All for the purpose of making you laugh, of course. In different degrees I think I've done that, and if I have discovered anything in writing these narratives, it is that culture is all too ready to offer suitable targets to satirize. So if my work is political, it is first interested in the politics of style, and then in the politics of society. Although I'm quick to qualify this statement, because really both form of politics are more closely related than one might think: Bakhtin writes: "Form and content in discourse are one, once we understand that verbal discourse is a social phenomenon - social throughout its entire range and in each and every of its factors, from the sound image to the furthest reaches of abstract meaning." And yet, for my purposes, they can be one, in so far as they come together to entertain.

A few things, then, on what *Modern Apostles* is and is not, does and doesn't do: this project is unequivocally postmodern, if we still call things by that name. It seems that in recent years those who engage in the sort of writing that I've described here have been reluctant tag their work as such, though no new "buzz word" seems to have been offered to replace it. Maybe it's because it is generally accepted that postmodernism wasn't unique to the 60s and 70s, though certain political conditions—the cold war mainly—certainly created an environment in which many of its tenants were accentuated. It seems that most people (who care) agree that the literary thing we started calling postmodern during this era had and has been happening all along—from Chaucer, to Cervantes, Sterne to Machado de Assis. But it isn't postmodern in the way that Beckett is postmodern, or in the way Pynchon is postmodern, whose writing, according to Louis Menand, "ought to be read in some sense as a lamentation at the horrors of colonialism." No, these narratives, because of the reasons I've stated above, are more in the line of Calvino and his characteristic levity, whose writing, though often aware of

the forces of colonialism and the homogenization of cultures—in *Invisible Cities* for example—never betrayed any discomfort with their fallout. Rather, when Marco Polo describes the “caravans of slaves shifting mountains of serpentine marble across the continent” in one of the far reaches of Khan’s empire, neither of the characters react in discomfort to the image. Calvino described, it did not pass judgment, just as the narratives describe, as accurately as possible, the moment we live in. They don’t necessarily mean to pass judgment. Though they are completely at ease with you reading them that way.

Along these lines, these narratives weren’t meant to be dystopian in the way *Brave New World* or *1984* are dystopian—they aren’t hyperbolizing or projecting any current paradigm to its logical or horrifying end...this is the moment we live in, and therefore I’ve tried, very hard, to root each of these narratives in the reality we all know. This is an absurd world we live in, and one would be a time-waster if she spent too much time imagining a world more absurd than this one. Regarding this, García Márquez, in *The Fragrance of Guava*, writes:

(read 35-36).

And what about the reality of living in the United States of America at this particular moment? Does it not also prove that “everyday life is full of the most extraordinary things?” So many are quick to criticize the simulacrum of this reality, but isn’t simulacrum just as real and doesn’t hold the same very serious implications than the “reality” some yearn for? It wasn’t that long ago that we saw the published photographs of the Abu Gharib prison guards posing—making a spectacle—of their prisoners. Does the fact that the prisoners were photographed in all-too-familiar American poses, thus making a spectacle of these non-beings, and their inability to be part of our reality so many thousands of miles away make it less real? A dystopia in literature wants to act as a warning of how things are likely to become if certain trends aren’t reversed,

addressed. *Modern Apostles* doesn't look into the future for the purpose of warning any of us of how things might become. They already are. And to see, this world—our world—is of first order.

What *Modern Apostles* does look into the future for, however, is to comment on the human cost of culture, specifically of the conjecture one culture employs on another. In 100, 200 years, how will we be read? Never mind the texts we produce, the movies we make, the speeches we deliver, how will the beings alive today be read and interpreted in a way that best suits those cultures? Will we even be read? What cause will our discourses hold up or tear down? That all literature is anthropological, and that we, like them, appropriate, interpret, and use past cultures selfishly and at their cost, is the controlling idea in *Modern Apostles*. If we see all these things, both in and of these texts, then I will have done something, for Borges writes: (read 58).

Now I would like to read two sections of *Modern Apostles*, one which is I think doesn't do all these things, one that does.