

COYOTE RAMBLINGS 6

Interesting and Strange Facts, Irritations and Grumbings

That I Can't Get Out of My Head

The pupils of our eyes are indeed rightly named. They are students, through which Earth itself speaks to us.

The butterfly has been a mythic symbol for human beings for millennia, of death, transformation, and rebirth. The world's butterflies are dying because of technological damage to the Earth's ecosystems. What happens when such a potent myth symbol, woven into human experience for scores of millennia, disappears from the planet? What does it say about our own rebirth as a species when butterflies are endangered? Who benefits when the mythic dimension of Earth and ourselves is banished from our lives and cultures?

While butterflies have long been a symbol of human growth and transformation, and something which children of all cultures have felt a kinship to, butterflies are most often seen these days pinned to boards in museums. Children on school trips are taken to museums and are shown "butterflies," though, of course, what they see are not butterflies but corpses. Through schooling and constant immersion in rationalist thinking children are taught to be butterfly *collectors* rather than to absorb butterflies as symbols and kin into their sense of self. After awhile they come to think that the corpses *are* butterflies. Interestingly enough, the more the children of this world are turned into butterfly collectors, the fewer butterflies there happen to be. As James Hillman so poignantly observed, "Once science convinced us the world was dead they could begin their autopsy in earnest." The question I continually ask myself is: what is it that I will agree to become? Someone who loves butterflies or someone who becomes a collector of corpses? This question illustrates the line between moral ecological behavior and its opposite. Upon its answer lies the salvation or destruction of our world.

Butterflies, contrary to how people think of them, are meat eaters (more accurately, they imbibe the circulatory fluids of other living creatures after scratching through their external membranes). Most animals believed to be vegetarians also, in fact, eat meat, many of them hunt other creatures for food. (This includes deer, squirrels, songbirds, camels, elk, both wild and domesticated cattle, horses, and sheep, and so on.) As each new species is added to that growing list of meat eaters, I have begun to think that pure vegetarianism only exists within the human species (and maybe rabbits) due to some misplaced feelings of shame or guilt and from that a projection of certain attributes onto the natural world which are, and have always been, untrue.

Leeches are segmented worms with hundreds of teeth, 32 brains, 10 stomachs and nine pairs of testicles. I don't like thinking about that before I go to sleep.

Education is far different than schooling. Chris Hedges nails it when he says that: “Education is not only about knowledge. It is about inspiration. It is about passion. It is about the belief that what we do in life matters. It is about moral choice. It is about taking nothing for granted. It is about challenging assumptions and suppositions. It is about truth and justice. It is about learning how to think.” It is about, as James Baldwin writes in his essay *The Creative Process*, the ability to drive “to the heart of every matter and expose the question the answer hides.” And, as Baldwin notes further, it is about making the world “a more human dwelling place.” We have not been educating children (or the subsequent adults they become) for forty years now; the consequences are all around us.

How come all we hear is “people who menstruate” or “people who are pregnant” and never “people who produce semen” or “people with penises” or “people with prostates?” Women as a distinct category are being erased. There is a word for this. And a purpose behind it.

William Stafford once said at the beginning of one of his books: Take Hope All Ye Who Enter Here.

Alternative medical practitioners are the blacks of medicine. Phytorationalists are the blacks of alternative medicine, and community herbalists are the blacks of phtyorationalism. So say it now and say it loud, I’m black and I’m proud.

As long as we have our memories, we are never alone. Though, to be sure, we might not like the company.

Media articles are constantly going on about how horrible it is in New Orleans right now, no electricity, no air conditioners, no refrigeration. Some even say that no one can live like that. Not one mentioned the fact that New Orleans was founded in 1718, that people lived there for some 250 years before air conditioning became common in that region. Many people did in fact live long and happy lives before air conditioning, before electricity, before “modern” medicine. In fact the life span of human beings has not changed all that much since human beings have been. What has changed are the numbers of children dying in childhood, what has changed is the extension of life of the severely ill and the old. Thus the average life span increases. This does not mean however what most people think it means.

When the heart is hurt, the self keeps returning to the wound like the tongue to a broken tooth

Dehumanizing vitriol. That’s a nice phrase to describe what people are doing to each other now, isn’t it? Not sure it is going to go anyplace good though . . . for either the left or the right.

What is happening now, on the right and the left, is ensuring that “all other people shall resemble ourselves” as John Stuart Mill once put it, in his book, *On Liberty*. Ick, how boring.

If the children of America leave an average of three ounces of milk in their bowls of cereal every day (guessing at 30 million bowls of cereal out of 75 million children) they throw away 703,125 gallons of milk a day. Bet you never thought of that. There are a great many different kinds of waste and all of them have an ecological impact including on the cows and farms needed to produce that milk.

Diarrhea: hot fast poop (courtesy of a 4 year old).

I come across a lot of articles in which someone says something like this: “Like many others among my tribe, I honor my ancestors and say prayers to them daily; I work diligently to keep their way of life alive, for it is becoming endangered. If it is lost, we will no longer know who we are as a people.”

Like many readers, my first response is one of wanting to help, I feel a sense of their loss, and a compassion for their struggle and pain. But one day after many years of this, just because my brain is strangely neuroatypical I guess, it created (all on its own) this series of sentences: : “Like many others among my tribe, I honor my ancestors and say prayers to them daily; I work diligently to keep their way of life alive, for it is becoming endangered. If it is lost, we will no longer know who we are as a people. That is why, every day, I do my best to oppress and control all people who do not look like me, to form mega corporations to rape the environment, and to pay workers the least possible wage I can.”

There are ancestors and then there are ancestors. We come from them but it is within us to choose what we do with that. Things, irritatingly for the simple minded, continue to be more complex than their simplistic views can grasp. I know better but still fall into that trap over and over again. The real point is not so much honoring ancestors, though I think that is a crucially important aspect of a life, but seeing those ancestors with clear eyes. And seeing with clear eyes doesn't mean having a black and white view of life. As in: Oh, they did this, they are bad people and I disavow them, but rather seeing them in the midst of their complexity, embedded within the human condition as all of us are, and understanding their choices and the pressures on them and their aspects of character and their historical time which led them to make those choices. I can then disagree with their choices but do so without removing their humanity. When I remove their humanity, simply because their genome is in me, I remove some of my own humanity. It *is* possible to understand them and at the same time to deplore their actions and choices. The real challenge is to see with transparent eye and understanding heart and that takes one into a very different territory indeed.

Mansplaining: Correctile dysfunction

I have been hearing a lot of very rich artists of one sort or another whining about the loss of their privacy. Give me a break. Becoming famous is deciding to live in a people aquarium that you can't get out of. Ever. And they do it for all the same reasons people have always done it: money, fame, a sense of importance, prestige, and their need to be loved and wanted. There is a difference between being a successful artist, that is, being able to make a living from one's art and people's lives being made better because of the art one does or being obscenely rich and

powerful and dominant in some particular field. I love Bruce Springstein's work, but does he actually need or deserve six hundred million dollars. No, he doesn't. The world is not better for it, we are not better for it. Does Rihanna really need one billion dollars, does she deserve one billion dollars? No, she doesn't. Neither the world nor we are better for it.

Beauty is a distinct thing, so is ugly. Not everyone is beautiful just as every painting is not beautiful. Of course there is nuance: beauty and form are not always related. I have met ugly people who, once I get to know them, because of the beauty of their interior self, their ugliness is in fact beautiful. It is transformed by some indefinable essence inside them. They have, somewhere along the way, decided to concentrate on what and who they are and not how they look. I have also met physically beautiful people who, after a short time, I suddenly realize are ugly at their core. In some fashion, once I perceive it, that ugliness transforms their exterior beauty into an ugliness that is far worse than mere physical ugliness. These people seem to have concentrated who they are on their exterior form and ignored their interior selves. Similarly to Dorian Grey only the ugly is inside them, not on a picture in the attic.

Nevertheless, not every physically ugly person is beautiful, sometimes ugly goes all the way to the bone. That is just the way it is. Insisting that all people are beautiful has about the philosophical deepness of an NPR tote bag. It's just another way to confuse the aesthetic sense within each of us. Insisting that for political purposes, we are not allowed to see distinctions without being in some fashion bad people only causes people to continue to distrust their perceptions of the exterior world and sometimes their interior self as well. (Maybe that is the purpose of it all; if we don't trust our own perceptions, we have to rely on others to tell us the way it is.) Americans focus so very much on surfaces, that is why our food looks good on the outside but peaches have no flavor, why we worship the American suburban life style but do so in homes that are devoid of aesthetic value, form over essence. Looking deeper, it is clear that the pretty suburban house is instead, ugly all the way to the bone. And *that* is just the way it is.

If you live in a village in Iraq and are told that the people bombing you are of all races and sexual orientations, well, you just aren't going to give a fuck whether it is not all white heterosexual guys or some other aggregate killed you. You are still getting the shit bombed out of you. The opening up of the military or any other corporate entity doesn't do anything to stop their rape of the world. And if the left continues to think it does, then the left is an idiot and becomes, over time, complicit in the larger behavior.

Have you ever noticed that many people who marry have very similar facial features: smile, nose shape, and so forth. It is kind of uncanny. It's like they marry their mirror image. I sometimes wonder if marriages are stronger between people who do marry their mirror image than between people who do not. In any event, I find myself when I see all those photos in the news of people marrying, noticing these similarities. Once I got this in my head I never have been able to get it out. Welcome to my world.

Phrase I hate: sociology lab. Really? A sociology "lab." A sociology lab is in actuality an large room with a bunch of computer stations, a conference room, and some interview rooms. By this

standard a police precinct is a public control lab. The use of the word lab brings up the image of a chemistry lab and that is its intent, to try and make sociology appear to be a hard science. It isn't. It is a form of penis envy, or as they say in the academic world, physics envy. The desire to make everything appear to be hard science especially when it isn't. "Sometimes," [as Amir] Srinivasan writes, we just "don't need another crank of the reason machine," another spin of the "intellectual assembly line, endlessly performing the same task on different, fungible objects." Or to put it more bluntly: what we don't need is more rationalist distancing, more dissociated mentation, more brutalist thinking invading every aspect of human life.

I think nearly everyone in the US has been sexually abused in one way or another, to a greater or lesser extent, either terribly or mildly. It is an inescapable event in societies in which our naked bodies are hidden from view, in which most people feel shame about their bodies, in which the reality of sex is hidden, and in which religious oppressions about our sex and our sexuality are common and endlessly repeated. And the abuse comes from all sexes, genders, ages and professions. I lay the blame at the feet of oppressive monotheisms, in the US it's always christianity. The catholic priest abuses and the terrible stories coming out about the unwed mothers and children's homes in Ireland are an inevitable expression of the fear christianity and its adherents have about our natural sexuality. In reality, the shame and fear inculcated in children about their sexual organs, their sexuality, about sex in general is a form of sexual abuse, of child abuse. Anything that is put in the closet, any part of us that is shamed, that we treat without love, will come back at us eventually. Any part of ourselves that we do not love will become hostile to us. It, and its behavior will come out of the shadows in which we have imprisoned it and act out its rage on others (and ourselves) over and over again with increasing levels of psychosis. The solution, as it is with any part of the self that has been imprisoned, is its release, its acceptance, and the long, slow work of making amends to it for our terrible cruelty. The first act of decolonization of our bodies is to simply say no, I will no longer look at myself this way, treat myself this way, believe the things I have been taught. Then the long slow work of the ecological reclamation begins. We, too, like this land have lost parts of ourselves.

Is it just me? But what the fuck is up with women martial artists and detectives and private eyes wearing 4 inch heels in movies and then trying to run in them? I have asked many women about this sort of thing and they all think it is stupid and have said that those shoes are really uncomfortable. So why are they continually being worn. Is it some kind of porn thing? What?

High heels were originally only worn by men. They entered European (male) culture via Persian horsemen; they were a kind of cowboy boot. The French elite made them elegant.

Fish are becoming addicted to meth and opiates that we excrete or flush into toilets and the waste water stream (including that from illegal labs). They are hanging around the sewage pipes, waiting for their fix. (No, I don't make these things up.)

After shaking hands, nearly all people unconsciously smell their hands/fingers soon afterwards. Their non-conscious parts are checking out the scent of the person they just touched,

accumulating immune status data among other things. This is one of those things that is impossible to get out of your head once it gets in there. Welcome, again, to my world.

If you want to understand why appeasement doesn't work, just think of using it as a child rearing approach with a two year old. If you have had or taught children you know what will happen over time, don't you? The raising of a psychopath.

Funny how so many of my liberal tribe have been so concerned about bullying but then turn around and bully people who refuse to accept their ideology. That is all they are really, bullies. And you know what, I have never liked bullies and I am pretty sure that hardly anyone likes bullies but other bullies. Well, some people *pretend* to like bullies but they are just scared of them when they do so.

Babe Ruth was the best baseball player of all time. Period. While some of his records have been broken, they were broken by individual players. No individual player has ever compiled the number of records that Ruth compiled, many of which have still never been broken. Yes, those other players were good. But they weren't and aren't Babe Ruth.

The red cross raised 500 million dollars to build homes in Haiti after the earthquake. They built six. This same story was repeated by nearly every NGO in Haiti after the earthquake. Over 90 percent of the money raised went to fund the NGOs, for cars, their own housing, administrative costs and salaries. A lot of famous people went there and had their pictures taken, then they went back to their American mansions.

Reverse vandalism: Meaning, to fix potholes, benches, etc in one's town without permission. (And yes, some people have been prosecuted for this.)

Deer are NOT cute bambi-like animals, they actively hunt and eat birds and other animals and don't care anything about the lovely fruit trees you just planted except that they taste good. (Yes, they ate mine.)

Some good advice, learned the hard way:

ALWAYS check the water temp before getting into the tub.

ALWAYS pay attention to where you put your feet as you walk, NEVER walk while day dreaming.

ALWAYS, when remodeling, lay any board with nails in it, sharp side DOWN.

NOTE: If you have worn eyeglasses for a lifetime, when you get contacts you will NOT have an automatic protective reflex for your eyes.

NEVER act in haste unless you have no other choice; take as long as you need to think things through before you do them.

NEVER ask when the baby is due unless you know for sure that the woman is pregnant.

NEVER take your eye off the saw blade.

Lift with your legs means to crouch down and then lift, NOT bend over and use your legs as you

straighten up again (The way they talk about this is incredibly stupid, no one ever says crouch down first).

Most drugs and most foods are fine long past their sell by or expired dates. When it comes to foods, we have been trained to distrust our noses and default to “experts” re sell by dates. Those “experts” are more concerned with liability than edibility and government agencies are more concerned with regulations than sense. 25% of the fresh water in the US goes to food that is uneaten. One-fifth of the content of landfills is uneaten, unused food. State regulations in most states prevent giving out of date food to the hungry. And out of date medicines which are still good contaminate ecosystems with biologically active waste that rarely ever degrades, remaining active for generations and affecting every life form on this planet. Why are there expired dates on those medications? Liability concerns, government overregulation, and the desire of pharmaceutical companies for you to buy more. Boy, this really pisses me off.

The rot in the infrastructure (decaying concrete, pot holes in highways, bridges, and so on) is identical to the rot in the senate and all government agencies, *in* the politicians.

Climate warming is headed right toward us like an out of control train; people keep saying, “I am pretty sure it’s gonna swerve before it hits us.”

Corporations and government agencies figured out how to save money. Instead of having lots of employees that may have to sit around from time to time, they reduced staff so that when we call them WE have to sit around, sometimes for hours. Rage at this is completely justifiable, as is serious cursing and no, it is not impolite to use curse words to the “I am just doing my job” people. They work for the company, they represent the company, they deserve whatever kind of language is used by people who are being treated lie . . . hmmm, what is that word?

If you push a porcelain teacup off of a table it smashes and that requires far less energy than making the teacup. In other words, it is far easier to break than to make. This is something that the people destroying the herbal conferences and the conviviality of the herbal world do not understand. All they really want to do it to break so that they feel as if they are doing something important, so they feel important and purposeful. So, yes, they are doing something. But it isn’t anything good. Nor will it make the world a better place but merely a broken place. They are in control now, but only over something they have broken. They dance in the ruins of something it took decades to build. And it seems as if this same kind of thinking is active on both the left and the right. If we do not have a common belief in something better, something that we are working toward, even our common humanity, then we are lost as a people, as a nation, as herbalists, as Americans, as human beings. The only way to *make* is if there is inside us the vision of something better that we are working toward. We may fall short of the vision, but nevertheless, there is movement toward it, every day that we make. This is the difference between making and breaking, that is, the long slow years of incremental movement toward what that original vision showed was possible.

There are two kinds of capitalism: there is corporate capitalism which is a danger to all life and democracy on this planet and there is entrepreneurial capitalism which is what individuals do and which allows innovation based on their individual genius. We do not need the first except under extremely controlled and regulated conditions. We do need the second and it should be as lightly regulated as possible so as to provide the greatest innovation people are capable of.

What if war is evolutionarily built in, a design feature, not a flaw? What if it occurs in its worst manifestations when population is too high, when too many people are constrained in too small a space, when the ecological health of that location begins to break down? If that is so, then what is it going to look like when it is the entire world that is overpopulated? When the entire ecological system begins to break down? Are we looking at the beginning of an evolutionary response? An ecological response?

This sort of thing always drives me crazy: “The cause of the disease, which typically develops in late adolescence or early adulthood, is unknown but is believed to result from both environmental and genetic factors.” So, let’s change the wording a little so you can see what I mean: The cause of the disease, which typically develops in late adolescence or early adulthood, is unknown but is believed to result from both evil spirits and a disruption in the humors of the body. Or even: The cause of the disease, which typically develops in late adolescence or early adulthood, is unknown but is believed to result from both weather changes and negative energy from her mother in law. I just LOVE how people say that first sentence and think it means something. Nevertheless, they sure do feel in control after saying it. It pretty much sums up many of the problems with reductionist science and also points out that physicians have not changed all that much in a thousand years.

Environmentalists can be so boring when they talk about climate change that they can even make the Earth yawn.

No one can speed read the text of the Earth. The only way to read the text of the world is to slow down, to contemplate, and to feel and feel deeply.

If a newspaper article says: “she did not immediately respond to our request for a comment” it means that she DID in fact respond and before press time; the newspaper just didn’t find the response usable to the way the article was being slanted and so used language to make it seem as if the person was unresponsive.

The tragedy is, we could have taken a different path in our treatment of Earth and far too many of us know it. And so, we grieve.

Growing old happens *very* fast, one day you are in the prime of middle age, strong, vital, healthy, the next you have entered a different world, one that finds everyone of us sooner or later. It is a world where you look for a chair to sit down in, for help with the bags, for help that sometimes never comes and so you do the best you can with what you’ve got. The joy seeps out of life until

the entire world looks as tired as you feel, worn to the bone with living and the making and breaking of all those hopes and dreams. With endings. And the future you still had just the other day, well it begins to fade into looking for a chair to sit in, for someone to help with the bags, for someone to help you just get through the days. If you are lucky enough to have people who do love you and who will take the time then it makes it easier but never does it make it easy. For there remains all the pains, the unmet needs, and the growing disability. And, too, there is a lot to say goodbye to: much that you have loved, including this Earth, this body, this house which was built by your hands in younger days and all that love that went into the shaping of wood and stone and a place to just sit when you were tired. One day, soon, I will be gone and life will smooth itself over my absence the way stilled pond waters cover a thrown stone. Life will go on, children will be born, fishermen will mend their nets, butterflies will find the flowers they seek and soon, very soon, the mark a life made will be diluted by time, by new generations, by all that is going on *now*. Just as it was when I was born, when I was growing up, when I had all my life before me, and I believed that time itself began with my emergence into the world.

There are a lot of things that the tree hugging, left wing, new age, I-use-herbs, let's hug, trees are sentient world knows that the rest of America needs to be whole and healed and itself. And there are a lot of things that the working class, I can fix it, calloused hands, do with what you got, don't talk much, don't over think things, stand for something, your word is your bond, family is everything, I believe in my country world know that the rest of America needs to be whole and healed and itself. And there are a lot of things that the small government, we are overregulated, over taxed, over watched, not free enough to do what we need to do world knows that the rest of American needs to be whole and healed and itself. And there are a lot of things that the I believe in the Constitution, social safety net, build the infrastructure, protect civil rights, corporations need to be strongly regulated, small entrepreneurialism is important world knows that the rest of america needs to be whole and healed and itself. There is a way for all these things to come together and work well for us but only if the forces that are actively working to separate us into cliques that hate each other are opposed by all of us. If they are not stopped, whether they are on the right or the left, as a nation we will fall and all of us will be the worse for it. We *need* each other and the truths and understandings that all of us have found on our particular path.

Things I never want to be asked at a job interview: are you afraid of enclosed spaces?

Useful phrase: technological determinism. Meaning an unfounded belief that technology will solve all problems a people face and constantly increase well being.

Useful phrase: ideological pathology. A belief in things like american exceptionalism, exemptionalism, technological determinism, our god is better than their god and will protect us, for instance.

Rivers carry salt to the sea but when people divert rivers, in whatever form, but as an example, irrigation, the salt stays in the land and over time the crops fail because there is too much salt. This is what caused the collapse of the breadbaskets of the ancient world in the lands now known

as Iraq, Egypt, Pakistan. Perfect example of why technological intervention will always be worse than natural ecosystems and contain deadly unforeseen side effects.

Phrase I hate: history doesn't repeat itself but it rhymes. Geesus, get a life. Of course it repeats itself. The person who created that phrase and the ones who parrot it are perfect examples of facile historical repetition.

A certain subset of scientists spend a lot of their time convincing the rest of us that we cannot trust our sense perceptions. Once we accept that, only they will be the arbiters of what is real. It is a form of colonization. The truth is that our senses evolved with and from the natural world. They are designed to perceive it and with a great deal more subtlety and sophistication than that available to scientists. We are ecological beings on an ecological planet. That is the foundational truth of the reality we are in.

It is the unification of the flexible and the inflexible which creates the best bow for use in the martial art known as kyudo. Together they create a bow which is flexible to draw but will come back to its original shape quickly and firmly so that the arrow flies fast and true. Nor will the bow lose this capacity over time. This same unification is necessary for the person who draws the bow. For any of us, really.

You think you have rights? You must be from the 60s
 You think you have a right to be safe? You must be from the 80s
 You think racism is everywhere? You must be from the new millennium

What do the following statements have in common?

NO Women allowed
 NO Blacks allowed
 NO Jews allowed
 NO Mexicans allowed
 NO Chinese allowed
 NO Whites allowed
 NO Working Class allowed
 NO herbalists allowed

I really hate fantasy television series where the people's clothes never get dirty. No one ever has to go potty, no women menstruate. They travel for days through pine forests and never get sap on themselves. The women use heavy swords but have no arm muscles. And then there is always that stupid youngish person who gets mad and stomps off into the forest while they are being chased by seriously bad people. Geesh, I am mad again, just thinking about it all.

When Dick Francis, the jockey, began writing mystery novels, he didn't know that writers wrote the book, then edited it and *then* editors edited the writers' editing. He thought the book had to be in its final form when he turned it in. So, he wrote every sentence in its final form, taking, as he

once put it, up to a half hour on each one. Then, that was it. The book was done. On to the next one. And he wrote best seller after best seller. All of them good, many of them brilliant. I can't quite get my head around that. He had an amazing gift for both horse racing as a jockey and as a writer about jockeys and horse racing. And he was better than perhaps any other writer at the crafting essence of a character in a single paragraph. They just came alive. Further, he was in fact a good person and that goodness shone like a light out of the books and the stories he wrote. But hell, NO editing after (or really, during) the first draft . . . and they were that perfect? WTF? The rest of us are pikers. This is highly irritating.

The intellect of the heart cannot develop without the same degree of focus, training, and hard work used to develop the intellect of the mind. Only if both are developed to the same degree can holistic science occur. It is the fusion of the two that brings into being the different kind of thinking we need in our time, the different kind of science that is so necessary for us to sustainably inhabit Earth.

The reclaimed capacity to feel (that is to perceive the mood or, as William Gass has it, the secret kinesis of things) is the core of the different kind of thinking that our time demands of us, the foundation of what it means to reinhabit our interbeing with Earth and its trillions of life forms. Once reclaimed that capacity must be developed as a functional skill, a way of thought. It is necessary to develop a library of all the various moods (secret kinesis) that things possess and the meanings that belong to each of them. That is how the text of the world is read, how one thinks through the mood (or climate of mind that things possess) to deeper truths within them and as well how those interact with everything else around them. That part of us has to be educated by its direct encounter with the world.

War is not something that can be eradicated from the human species. But if it is accepted as inevitable then the focus can be shifted to minimizing its presence. I sometimes think that the erroneous belief that war can be eradicated is what leads always to war and ever more war. As with anything in our nature that we suppress, it just comes back harder and angrier when we do. We are not a peaceful species and unless we accept that we can never get to the place where the violence can be minimized.

Another reason I really dislike editors: I hired a proof reader for *Healing Lyme*, second edition. Told her that she was ONLY supposed to proof read. She spent most of her time editing (failed writer syndrome) and ultimately missed 45 typos, slowly corrected over the years.

So . . . when I hired the proof reader for *Earth Grief*, I really emphasized it, DO NOT EDIT, READ FOR ERRORS ONLY (five or six times). Well she was better but has this thing (as editors often do) that really bugs her, a pet peeve (which should be kept chained in the basement) that she just could not ignore. And that is the use of *Like* and *Which*. In some instances they are very much NOT interchangeable but in many other instances they are. The determining factor, for me and many writers as to which (ha ha) to use is the sounding . . . how the word-sounds work in the sentence. The word-sound of *which* is smoother to the ear and the tongue, it has a softness, a flow at the end. "That" on the other hand has a harder beginning and a very hard

stop which causes a different rhythm when the sentence is read. This interrupts the flow of sentence but it also interrupts the reader's immersion in the world of the word, they slightly come up out of the dreaming.

And so, despite my admonitions when she got to *that* and *which* she just could not stand it and began to, ever more energetically as the work progressed, "correct" my writing, big slash mark, then her insertion of the WORD that must be used. Of course in the process of doing this she missed ten (so far) typos, one of them very serious. I caught nine of them before it went to the printer, the worst one, I did not until today. As always, irritating. The funny thing is, at one point in the mss, as she was furiously and by now aggressively correcting *that* and *which* she did not notice that what she was now editing was a quote by Henry David Thoreau and yes, there is still a use for white out. (Her second pet peeve the use of an "s" at the end of words such as afterward – e.g., what he said to us afterwards. Thoreau transgressed here as well. "When I write," as Thoreau once wrote, "grammar is my enemy.") Nevertheless, her embarrassment did not last. She kept at it right till the end.

Over the past 30 years, I have found it impossible to stop editors from doing things like this. They also tend to cut the lines and sections I most liked in my work (and which subsequently, I have had the most positive comments about). I did learn a lot from them in the beginning of my career (I was a terrible writer) but now, no, they are impediments at this point. (That statement really sets them off. "ALL WRITERS CAN BENEFIT FROM EDITING." Really? All writers? Every single one who has ever lived? *You* could edit Auden? Shakespeare? (He made up a lot of his words you know.) Rilke? There is a word or phrase for that sort of thing but it escapes me now. Ahhh, desperate hubris.)

Why do they always nail the boards on crooked when they are boarding up the windows in movies? And why do they always use nails? Screws are easier, hold better, and are easier to get out later, and they go in faster. And what is with that knocking people through walls thing? (The hero hits a guy, or vice versa, and he/she/it goes *through* the wall into the next room. It is not possible UNLESS you conveniently leave out a stud as they do in films and also use thin sheet rock. Then: boom, right through. And don't get me started on kicking in doors.

How can we ever get along with the British? They pronounce everything wrong. Caius College is pronounced Keys College, the Thames river is pronounced Tims. Every person who knows English as it is spoke knows this is wrong.

I really hate the concept of moral pollution, that is, that people who hold what to some are morally objectionable opinions can, by simply having or speaking those opinions cause the social body to become polluted. This is the same reasoning that is used to disparage herbalists and their body of knowledge, that was used to disparage women (and prevent their participation in many professions), that was used to segregate blacks and so on and on and on. It is also a deeply held belief among both the left and the right in our time: there are lesser beings who cannot be allowed to be part of our community because of some essential aspect of their nature. What shocks me is that so many people on the left believe in this pernicious nonsense. This didn't work out well in Nazi Germany or in christian attacks on heretics or, well, ever. My tribe . . .

sigh. How embarrassing.

Nick Cave once said that he could never trust good that had not breathed the same air as evil. The thing is, if you are willing to breathe the same air as evil you find out that some of what you thought was evil are just opinions that threaten your belonging in the tribe which gives you self-identity. You also find out that some things are in fact evil. But you can never know the distinction unless you are willing to breathe the same air as evil. Your fear will just keep putting everything that frightens you into the same box which you call “evil.”

Teaching workshops at herbal and other conferences is identical in nature to teaching in colleges and universities. To be able to do so without self-censoring (or even curtailing or cancelling engagements) speakers need to be protected from attacks against first amendment protected speech. Like the colleges and universities themselves, the conference organizers must stand up to threats from activists and support the necessity of free speech in such situations.

Oddly enough, the main initiators of attacks on free speech and those who demand trigger warnings and who believe that speech has the same impacts as physical assault are the grown children of parents who did not let them play outside, who over protected them from harm, who constantly exhorted them to remain safe and taught them the world was a dangerous place. Oh, my, are we in trouble.

I came from a town that is no longer a town, it is a city. So . . . I come from a town that no longer exists, from a family that no longer exists, who rode in cars that no longer exist, grew, lived, and loved in houses that no longer have any relation to me or my life, some of them, too, no longer exist. The books in those houses are no longer read by new generations, the young have gone on to newer voices. And so a way of thinking and perceiving, while not completely extinguished, no longer is as it was. The possessions of those who were my family have now been absorbed back into the river that takes all possessions sooner or later. They make up parts of other people’s lives and memories now, people who have no idea of the ones who loved those things before them. Yet, I suspect that some small part of our lives still remains on or in those things, as it does in that town which became a city. Some of our love, the fabric of our lives, the work we did, our hopes and dreams, our strivings and failures. All of that leaves residues which, when blended with the residues of all the millions of other lives which came before ours makes up the fabric of our common history.

Some of the people who go vegan do so for ethical reasons. That is, they want to stop the torture and pain that animals suffer from being penned and killed because of human wants and desires. But when they hear of a vegan who has decided to eat meat again because of health issues caused by veganism, they threaten to physically assault, hurt, or murder the heretical former vegans. Something about this seems . . . hypocritical? Certainly it points up to deep psychological issues. Maybe their veganism isn’t about the pain and suffering of animals but something else again? Perhaps to be forgiven for their sins? To regain a former state of innocence and moral purity? To be saved? If so it stimulates the question: what was their sin? To be human? To be a killer? To be

bound by the ecological realities of this planet? Perhaps many of them feel as if they as a group are “saving” the planet and are, thereby, the good ones?

Does anyone really doubt that if evangelical christians get control over government in the US that prosecution for, even mob violence in response to, alleged blasphemy is far behind? The extremes that islamic fanatics go to have always existed within the christian world, its history is filled with them, even our history.

It may very well turn out that the American democracy was not lost through any huge cataclysm but rather met its death from a thousand little lies and omissions of our leaders and ourselves. After all, who gets promoted or liked from telling the truth?

New movie rating system:

Rated R for: Unrealistically “clean” language, pharmaceutical use, christian themes, unrestrained capitalism, honest policemen, honorable government officials, lack of tobacco smoking, lack of nudity or sex.

On average 5-10% of people who use opiates for pain become addicted to them. On average 23% of people who use benzodiazepines become addicted. More specifically, depending on the benzodiazepine used, 20-100% of people who use them become addicted. Withdrawal from opiates rarely causes death; death from benzodiazepine withdrawal is far more common. Addiction to them is very hard to break. Why then the panic over opiates and not benzodiazepines? Hmmmmm.

One of the greatest kingdoms known was the Mali Empire, especially under the rule of Mansa Muta Keita (ca, 1312-1337), reputedly the wealthiest person ever to have lived, his fortune being estimated, in today’s dollars, in the range of 700 billion USD. Under his rulership the Mali Empire became one of the richest, most powerful, and greatest centers of learning in the Islamic world. Timbuktu, for example, had more than 80 universities, including the most famous, Sankore, which was reputed to hold over one million manuscripts, making it the largest library in the world since the Library of Alexandria. Scholars came from all over the world to study, it ultimately had more foreign students than the current NY University system.

Slavery was an integral part of his empire and essential to Mansa Musa’s reign and his many displays of wealth. As Wikipedia notes: “[Mansa Musa] made a pilgrimage in 1324 [...]. At each halt, he would regale us [his entourage] with rare foods and confectionery. His equipment furnishings were carried by 12,000 private slave women (Wasaif) wearing gowns and brocade (dibaj) and Yemeni silk [...]. Mansa Musa came from his country with 80 loads of gold dust (tibr), each load weighing three qintars. In their own country they use only slave women and men for transport, but for long journeys such as pilgrimages they have mounts.” His men were so well paid that “When he passed through Cairo, historian al-Maqrizi noted ‘the members of his entourage proceeded to buy Turkish and Ethiopian slave girls, singing girls and garments, so that the rate of the gold dinar fell by six dirhams.’”

After the fall of the empire (circa 1670) much of its territory was lost but the government focused the economy even more strongly on slavery, capturing and selling its own people and those of neighboring kingdoms to western slave traders for transport to North America, the Caribbean, and Europe. It has not apologized for this nor ceased the practice of enslaving large numbers of people, some 200,000 of which are still enslaved today.

The important thing about the United States is not that it had slavery within its borders but that abolition was a part of its rationale from the beginning, so much so that it fought a war to permanently end slavery in the United States. Some 750,000 soldiers (on both sides died in the conflict (over half of those from the North) including some of my own ancestors. Things are never as simple as they seem and *never* as simple as people using the Drama Triangle to make their point make them out to be.

Drama Triangle. A concept elucidated by Stephen Karpman in the Transactional Analysis (TA) community (from work by Eric Berne). It is a specific kind of “game.” (In TA, one of the major forms of human interaction (transactions) are games, the purpose of which is to gain strokes [units of attention], release pent up anger, and avoid intimacy.) There are three players: victim, persecutor, and rescuer. Interestingly, any person in any position can easily move into any of the other positions since all three positions are in essence identical under their apparently different surface layers. In fact, no position (or player) can exist without the others. Crucially, it is not possible to gain resolution of any psychological, personal, cultural, or social problems while in the Drama Triangle itself. For the harder the game is played, the more players it creates from the community around it (who usually start out by feeling victimized). The only way to win is not to play, to find a path outside the game and that path must involve the common humanity of all the people involved. While the Drama Triangle is a common game among people irrespective of culture, some cultures are more serious players than others, the United States among them.

I hate it when the Luddites are misrepresented, they weren't anti innovation but anti-destruction of artisans' livelihoods, of artisans as a class, of the loss to the community of artisanal work as an aesthetic contribution. The world is discovering how right they were. Again.

Second hand burnout? Inherited burnout? Will the madness never stop? (Probably not)

There was a time when the US actively went after nations that offered financial secrecy to their depositors. In part this was because of money-laundering by organized crime, including drug cartels and also to prevent tax avoidance so the IRS could obtain monies due. A number of laws were passed; other nations were forced to open to US examination. The oversight? The US was not included in any of those laws. And to the US is now the number one location for those wishing to hide their assets, including organized crime and the obscenely rich who do not want to pay taxes. Some of the worlds most terrible people have money hidden in the US. Specifically in (in order of degree of protection): Wyoming, South Dakota, Alaska, Delaware, Nevada. We are now the world's financial hub for dirty money. And Congress has no intention to put a stop to it. We have become what we once deplored.

There is no longer all that much difference between the US, China, Russia. Each has taken on characteristics of the other, forming a strange hybrid with ever increasing surveillance, unrestrained capitalism, declining civil rights. Of the three, the US is in collapse; China is in ascendance, Russia coming back from its own collapse. And those two are seriously pissed at the US and here we are in the middle of meltdown and potential civil and governmental collapse as the oligarchs and Republican party struggle to take over the country permanently (with Democrat participation).

NEVER drink coffee and take Philips Milk of Magnesia together no matter how much cheese you ate yesterday. Just an FYI on that one.

I don't know why (in movies) people go into a house but never close the front door after them, even in winter and storms. It constantly bothers me. I keep saying, "close the door, close the door!" And they never do and then I keep thinking of all the heat going out and the house getting cold.

That is almost as bad as a movie scene in a cold, winter environment and no one's breath has any vapor fog when they talk.

In the Wizard of Oz movie they used asbestos flakes to simulate snow. A lot of movies did back then. Scientists rarely know as much as they think they do when it comes to the safety of chemicals or any kind of substance really. They said asbestos was perfectly safe to use this way.

Trust is an easy thing to lose and a very hard thing to re-establish

Follow the science? In 1850 that would have been that all melanin-gifted people were less intelligent than the melanin-challenged, that women were less intelligent than men. Why does *anyone* think that science does not have the same problems now as then?

Our task as writers is to undo damaged language

*It is not the world's job to change itself to suit us
It is our job to live the times that are our own
To remain who we were born to be*

*In that deep and mysterious chamber
Where our secret self sleeps
Only one may gain entrance*

*It is you who bears the kiss
which awakens the sleeping self
But it is the refusal of the world to change
that opens the door to the bier upon which you lie*

At a lecture once, I told the audience to imagine smoking a cigarette. Then, to look at all the judgments that arose in their minds about it. Then, to examine those thoughts and see if they could track where they came from; were any of them their own thoughts or were they the thoughts of others? Later on I heard one of the people in the audience tell another person that Stephen Buhner said everybody should start smoking again. Totally irritating.

I have done that exercise with a number of topics about which people have adopted a fanatically moral stance. Every time that is how it goes. I am unsure how to convey the importance of the point. If you do not know where your thoughts and beliefs come from, if you have just accepted them as foundational truths, taken them willy nilly from the crowd around you, you are not a reasoning being. Pretty soon you are going to be saying things like the problem with the world is the Jews. The process always occurs exactly as it has with smoking and the moral stance people now have about it. It is a matter of tribal purity, of getting rid of the impureness among us. It is not so very far from stopping all people from smoking (as an act of moral and physical purity) to stopping people from using certain words or saying aloud certain thoughts in public. The inability of so many members of my liberal tribe to reason, to self-examine, astonishes me. They are not in fact any more intelligent or thoughtful than those on the right that they castigate. That they are unable to see this is not just shameful, it is dangerous to democracy, to the survival of this country.

I really hate moral purity campaigns and the smug look the unthinking get on their faces as they pronounce, loudly, the way everyone should behave. I got enough of that during my childhood in Kentucky being surrounded by hypocritical Christians.

Ultimate trivia: searching for “penis evolution” on Google Scholar returns 98,000 results, while “vagina evolution” yields 87,000. Question: Do these figures come from males searching or females searching?

The argonaut octopus has a worm-like detachable penis which swims off alone and mate with females. No knowledge yet as to whether or not the octopus has an orgasm when his detachable penis ejaculates.

Kangaroos have triple vaginas, sperm goes in the two side ones, the baby comes out the middle one. And yes, the males have two penises, one for each side.

human penises are unusual in that they are smooth, most are not.

Female dolphins and female humans have identically structured and appearing clitorises (clitoriti?).

New (stupid) term: kleptoparasitism. Means taking food from a predator who has acquired it. (As in Eagles taking rabbits from hawks, bears taking elk from a pack of wolves.) So, query: a child taking food from his mother’s plate? Yes, the little scamps are indeed kleptoparasites. ALL

parents know this, they just don't say it out loud.

The alarm clock was invented in 1787, by an American who needed to wake up on time in order to sell clocks.

Isn't it odd that those who are most insistent about gender fluidity engage in binary thinking? That is, there are only two perspectives: either you are for and understand gender fluidity or you are a heterosexual bigot.

Wokeism is ideology in the service of cruelty.

The highest paid jobs in every state in the U.S. are in the medical industry. This the first of two reasons why medical costs in this country are so high. The second is unrestrained pharmaceutical pricing. And the reason that those in the medical industry make so much money?

It is a monopoly industry that has convinced the country that it is the only type of medicine that is legitimate, that has actively worked to make all other forms either illegal or suspect (i.e. continual accusations of quackery), that has for more than a century paid immense sums to legislatures to make sure laws remain in their favor, and which limits the numbers of medical practitioners who can attend medical schools each year and so be licensed in this country (we have one of the worst physician to patient ratios in the industrialized world).

Hospital conglomerates continually buy up rural hospitals and then close them allowing higher charges at the ones that remain. Medical doctors and hospitals continually explore the use of arcane coding (yes, there are workshops on this) in order to inflate prices that the people who use the system have to pay. Pharmaceutical companies make sure that many drugs which work for specific conditions are not allowed in this country so that higher priced, different, drugs can dominate the market. They also make tiny adjustments to existing drugs allowing them to gain new patents, then stop manufacturing older, just as effective, drugs which are cheap so they can raise their rates. (Every year this kills diabetic patients who cannot afford the higher priced insulin drugs that remain on the market.) And they actively prevent the import of the exact same drugs from countries where the prices are far less than they are here.

The truth is, the primary motivation for the medical system is not, and never has been, patient care but money, power, control, and prestige. If its primary rationale was patient care, then prices for both services and drugs would be low; more rural hospitals would be opening rather than closing. *Everyone who works in the medical industry and makes a living doing so, including all physicians, is collaborating in this process irrespective of how nice they are. There are **no** exceptions.* Sooner or later, every one of us has to come to terms with the social and ecological impacts of our professions. Then, as Bill Mollison once did, we have to make a decision about who and what we are going to be. (Mollison was once an old growth tree cutter; permaculture was his response and his penance.)

The chemicals used in agriculture are understood to be ecologically dangerous but when those very same chemicals are called pharmaceuticals and used for people that understanding is gone.

People sometimes ask me why I continually go after the medical system. I have seen too many people damaged by that system to remain quiet (including those who were killed or permanently disabled). I am unwilling to be complicit in its actions.

I don't think movie critics know anything about movies any more. Pauline Kael has been dead a long time. **Here she is, for a moment, once again:** "A good movie can take you out of your dull funk and the hopelessness that so often goes with slipping into a theatre; a good movie can make you feel alive again, in contact, not just lost in another city. Good movies make you care, make you believe in possibilities again." **Or:** "There's no way I could make the case that *Animal House* is a better picture than *Heaven Can Wait*, yet on some sort of emotional-aesthetic level I prefer it." **Or:** "After one of those terrible lovers' quarrels that leave one in a state of incomprehensible despair. I came out of the theater, tears streaming, and overheard the petulant voice of a college girl complaining to her boyfriend, "Well I don't see what was so special about that movie." I walked up the street, crying blindly, no longer certain whether my tears were for the tragedy on the screen, the hopelessness I felt for myself, or the alienation I felt from those who could not experience the radiance of *Shoeshine*. For if people cannot feel *Shoeshine*, what *can* they feel?"

I read a story about a woman the other day who reads stories to her children every night. She hastened to mention that science approves of this. WTF?

I don't like Paul Newman's spaghetti sauce even though his foundation is really kind. I've noticed that before about other foods. Environmentally sustainable chips taste terrible. And most vegan cookies are like cardboard. I *want* to like them and I really really try sometimes but they just taste bad. (All this moral purity stuff . . . there's always a yucky side to it, isn't there?)

Have you ever noticed that all plastics are single use? I mean none of them can be recycled really, even if you use whatever it is for four or five years.

Did you know that Americans throw away 73 *billion* plastic water bottles a year? What's up with that? Why not just have city and town water be better? It would be cheaper *and* better for the planet. Not really rocket surgery, is it?

In silver city where I live, the water is *very* hard. In consequence everything that the water flows through, over time, gets crudded up with mineral deposits. That is why habitat for humanity has scores of toilets that only a fool would buy and install. (Guilty.) How come the city doesn't just add a water softening process to its treatment plant? People would be glad to pass a bond for something that useful. And besides, I am tired of putting salt into the water softener.

There are a great many books published that suck. I have bought too many of them. They all have the same thing in common whether fiction or nonfiction. They suck. The last one that sucked said it was the best book of its sort since *Silence of the Lambs*. Well, only if you understand that the author is eating your brain *with* fava beans and a little chianti with every sentence you read.

You know that sinking feeling you get when you suddenly realize that you have taken too much mushroom just as the phone rings for the interview? Yeah, me, too.

When our son was born we decided to use cloth diapers. Better for the planet, his skin, our peace of mind. We wanted to hire a nanny because we both worked (at home) but he didn't like that, he wanted to go to school. (Yeah, yeah, I know, but he was just insistent on *input*, he always did get bored easily.) So, we found this great Buddhist, eco-friendly place to take him in the mornings. They made us stop using cloth diapers, too much trouble for them. (That's why our son has issues. It always comes down to poop, doesn't it?)

There really isn't anything like being depressed and coming home to a dog who loves you, is there?

I have been colonized by mexican, thai, japanese, moroccan, indian, cajun, and french food. I tried to decolonize myself and go back to my own culture but it turns out I really hate velveeta.

Here's everything you need to know about integrity in the television industry: Lassie was a boy.

I am tired of all the voices in my head that when I am down tell me I am no good.

[Too bad]

Stop it!

[Blow me]

Quit it!

[no]

I mean it!

[no]

I am in charge here, you have to do what I say.

[no]

Now!

[no]

Hey! Look! Over there, a kitty!

[What? Where?]

I've been thinking about this for awhile and I have decided I really don't like intestinal cramping.

Watching the current uproar and meltdown around the Black Lives Matter organization is Deja Vu all over again. Those of us in the 60s (and who were later involved in NGOs, however minimally) have seen the same processes occur time and again. There are always people willing to take personal advantage of social upset about an injustice. What they seek is always the same: the accumulation of money and power and fame – and as well, for some of them, a certain feeling of moral purity and superiority. (All those bad feelings about the self go away for awhile.) But all the while the injustices remain unaddressed. (The hurricane Katrina housing Brad Pitt had built – and which the current homeowners paid for – is filled with black mold, rot, and dysfunction; they

lasted less than ten years.) Woke activism, which focuses on attacking people for inanities such as improper word use or failure to adhere properly to ideology, does nothing for the lives of the people who have to deal with poverty, poor housing, decrepit schools, and no work on a daily basis. Having seen this all before, the only question I have when I see the process play out again is: who benefits? It is certainly not the communities who are affected. After all this social posturing and righteousness are things better now? Or not? When I look at the herbal community the answer is clear. It's not. Melanie Carpenter (and others) let the predators into the chicken coop, predators dressed in social justice clothing, predators who cared nothing for the well being of the community but only for a transitory sense of power and that heady feeling of righteousness. The historical amnesia of the young, their lack of understanding of the baser elements of human nature, and the unwillingness of the current progressive left activists to listen to the warnings of those of us who have been through this before is and has always been a recipe for disaster. And of course, I think, too of all those white "allies" who merely got their "I'm a good person" fix through the mouthing of platitudes and maybe giving a little money donation here and there. You been had, as we were long ago. True social justice activism involves a far different kind of activism. It involves a continual focus on who actually benefits, on "does this behavior heal rifts in community or make them worse," on bringing all people, irrespective of their differences, together, on redemption, on healing, on actions that truly do alter the conditions in which those most affected live every day of their lives. Maybe you will figure it out. Most don't.

There was once a woman who attended a large week long workshop, about 300 people were there, all sitting in an auditorium. At one point in the workshop, beginning at the front and continuing on until every person had responded, people were asked to say one secret that they had never shared with anyone before. A big secret, one that troubled them.

When it gets to the woman she says, "I often sunbathe in the back yard naked. My neighbor's dog often comes by and one time he began to lick my clitoris until I had an orgasm. After that, he began to come over more often. I have never told anyone this before."

From across the room comes a voice, "*That's* why he's over at your house all the time!" It was, of course, her neighbor who had, without her awareness, also attended. Both of them apparently laugh about it now.

Some people will think that story is funny (I do and did when another participant at the workshop first told it to me). Other people will be offended at what they think of as bestiality. Others outraged at the sinfulness of it. Others will find it interesting and not all that abnormal, primarily because they know a lot about human sexual behavior. (Marty Klein's blog is a great source for the reality of American sex – only go there if you really want to know what normal sex is.) Others, most likely women, will wonder how good it really feels and will imagine doing it. And so on and on – a thousand different responses, some similar, some not. The truth is humans are sexual beings and as Masters and Johnson once told me, sex is just sex; there is no right or wrong to it (assuming both people consent). I would presume from this that the dog consented and that bestiality, in contrast, would by definition entail lack of consent. I am not a christian and so sinfulness is not an issue for me here. (There are other kinds of sin that do trouble me – such as

christians killing those who do not believe as they do or forcibly converting children by taking them from their parents, cutting their tribal hair, denying them their language, and whipping them if they disobey).

I read recently about a woman who was sexually turned on by her male sex partners cumming on her stomach. After she married she asked her husband to do so; he was enraged. “it is demeaning of women to do that,” he insisted and refused. He accused her of taking on the patriarchal domination of women, of false consciousness, that she could not possibly be turned on by that. I found the whole thing simultaneously interesting and her treatment by her husband to be outrageous. There is no one way to have sex, there are as many variations as there are people. This kind of shaming is why people keep sex so secret. The really disturbing thing about the event however is the cruelty of the crossed transaction. The woman revealed to her husband from the vulnerable and open part of her what kind of sex she enjoyed. He responded from a closed, mental position, imposing an external morality on her desires. He did not respond from a vulnerable and open place but from a closed judgmental one. I don’t hold out much hope for the marriage. Crossed transactions like that one never end well. Over time the cruelty becomes the dominant characteristic. What is more probably accurate is that the man felt scared (for whatever reason) but instead of being vulnerable about it and sharing how he felt from an emotionally open place (I feel scared about that because I have been told that if I do that I am demeaning women and I don’t want to do that, I don’t want to be a bad person and for people to not like me and feel badly about me) he just berated her. I really hate that kind of thing and I think that people who spread that kind of thinking in the world don’t do people any good by doing it; they just perpetuate people feeling shamed about their sexuality and what excites them.

Patriarchy: unrestrained tumescence

Racism isn’t actually everywhere
 The starfish in the sea doesn’t care
 It has no idea what you are talking about
 though it probably does have feelings
 about what you are doing simply because you think
 humans are more intelligent than all other species on the planet
 And that fantasy of yours
 about your troubles being what makes the seas swell
 and the moon traverse the sky
 instead it spends its time thinking starfish thoughts
 and living a starfish life
 which has in the end, very little to do with you.
 But, if you let yourself think starfish thoughts
 for just a little while
 you would find that while racism isn’t everywhere
 you yourself contain a speciesism that really is incredibly unsightly
 and dangerous to every life form on this planet

There is, in each of us, the capacity for compassion, for understanding the pain of others, for understanding the difficult journey other people are on. In each of us there is the capacity to not engage in dehumanizing vitriol, to decide to not follow the mob today. In each of us is the capacity to be more than we were yesterday. In each of us is the capacity to become wise. It's not easy to do these things but it does give me, every day, something to work toward. Some who have made that journey before me and left the tracks of their passage in the words they wrote helped me to understand this, gave me models to emulate. Some of them were my ancestors, my great-grandfather and his daughter, my grandmother were the first. They were not perfect human beings but in my own life I could take the best of them and try to be *that* as much as I possibly could. They loved me, wanted me to do well. They saved me from what I would have become without them. And those people in all those books that I found? They saved me as well. Their words? They were not Black words or White words or Gay words or Lesbian words or Transsexual words or Russian words or . . . they were just words, words filled with meaning, with goodness, with truth. Each had given their allegiance to something that I intuitively recognized by how it felt. It had something in common with what those ancestors of mine had given me. I knew the right, the good, the wise, the numinous soul when I encountered it. I knew it because those attributes were in what my ancestors gave to me when I was a child. And I have followed the scent of that golden thread all the days of my life.