

*Shut up & read! Marsha A. Temlock, Bowen Craig, Jason Sallinger,
Murrell Hebert, Phil Juliano, and The Dream Journal*

The Blotter

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MAGAZINE

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[c l m p]

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"You say disparate, I say desperate"

All too often, English (and other thoughtful liberal arts) degrees are dismissed as bordering on useless in the commercial world. Why'd you bother, we are asked, working so hard (ahem, reading) if there's no one going to hire you to do what you're good at (hrumph, writing)?

Here's my new theory, and you're welcome to print this out and attach it to your application for any job for which you're interviewing. It's a brand new world out there, and there are plenty of reasons an English Major is a useful arrow in the old quiver. First of all, many managers are being forced to work from home in the modern, flexible, workplace. Therefore, they have to do their own typing - of emails, texts, white papers, etcetera. And they can't always rely on spell check to fix what it can't see is wrong in usage. So they're stuck inveigling instead of unveiling. That's where you come in.

For example, someone made a decision to purchase the domain name for the A. G. Edwards investment firm. Any English Major could have seen that this was going to backfire almost immediately. www.agedwards.com

Here's how I imagine the conversation, with an English Major coming to the rescue:

"You do know that this says aged wards, right? Like we're ancient bankers out of Mary Poppins trying to take someone's tuppence."

Another example was brought to my attention. See if you can find the problem with this URL:

www.smithandjonestherapists.com

That's OK, we'll wait for you...

Secondly, the language is changing, well, if not daily, then pretty darned close to it. How can you communicate if you're not using the right words and the words right. There's the age old difference between what a word means and what it sounds like it means. Crudities are not crudites.

Crudities are not crudites.

Pedagogy is not pederasty. Not even close, actually. And you can't interchange penal and penile, although I suppose they can be dis-

tantly related, in a sort of disturbing way. And a lesson learned during the fiasco of 1968-1973? You can't be the leader of the free world, if your name has been co-opted as a...personal non-pronoun. As soon as protesters started shouting "Dick Nixon before he dicks you!" he was going, going, gone. Of course, a good English Major could have turned this around with just a little bit of humor. It might have been a hard sell, but here's the bumper sticker we always wanted to see:

"Dick for Dicktator"

And it's not just what you see, it's what you hear as well. Crudites are not crud-ites. If you're pronouncing "Penalize" as, well, "penile-ize," that may well be why you think the word is different than it is. English Majors are responsible people, pronouncing words correctly - and in the right order - every day. They know the power of this skill. What if our current President had someone with that background during his initial run for the White House? His name needed but a tiny lingual tweak, and suddenly he would be appealing to an entire additional subculture of...voters. "Hello, my name is Barack Ol' Bama."

Roll Tide, Yo!

So I'm stumped. Why are there no English Majors in the marketing departments of big PR firms? Isn't there anyone out there contacting the Syrian government to let them know that he may want to be President Ah-Sod, but every day public radio refers to him as President Ass-hat? Have mercy, he's just a quick pronunciation-fix away from being legitimate again.

Garry - chief@blotterrag.com

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CAUTION

*Back away from the window
with your hands in plain sight*

“The Eulogy”

by Marsha A. Temlock

Against her better judgment Caroline agreed to have lunch at Chang’s Garden to discuss her mother’s eulogy. In all likelihood, this is the last time Caroline will have to suffer the ubiquitous brown sauce, flaccid steamed vegetables and gummy rice.

Early that morning her mother called to find out if Caroline had a chance to read the eulogy. Caroline said she had. The fact is she’d read it twice and didn’t shed a tear although she wished she could. But, of course, she couldn’t say that.

Accompanying the eulogy was a note. Her mother had written: *Caroline, please make sure this is clear and feel free to make any changes you see fit* trusting that Caroline, as an English teacher, would pick up any mistakes.

Her mother had typed her eulo-

gy. She used Caroline’s old IBM Selectric, the one she used to type her themes and Masters thesis. The Selectric has interchangeable type balls that are mounted on top of the keyboard. Caroline knows the Ariel font has a tendency to pop up so that the *G* and *W* in the sentence “We cannot question God’s Wisdom” have jack-rab-bited above the other letters, and the *y* in the line “I really was content with the *simplicity* of my life” is double-struck.

Caroline promised to pick her mother up. She is coming from Connecticut. It is a brilliant cloudless day and the windshield glitters with shards of sunlight. By the time she crosses the Throgs Neck Bridge on her way to Flushing, Queens, her forehead is slick with sweat. She rolls down the window to let in some fresh air. A spring-like breeze cools her pale oval face

etched with tiny lines around her mouth, puffiness under her hazel eyes, and fans her auburn hair highlighted to camouflage the encroaching gray.

She makes one stop at the pharmacy to renew her mother’s prescription. On a whim buys two chocolate bars. This is the neighborhood where she spent most of her childhood. At one time Caroline could name all the homeowners on the street but a lot has changed since she went off to college and got married. A red tricycle and stroller are in front of what used to be the McCann’s house.

Her parents’ house is a tidy three-bedroom ranch purchased twenty years ago when the development was new. Her father would like to sell the house and retire to Florida, but now there is no talk of moving.

Death looms inside but has not touched the exterior. Tangled forsythia branches are bursting with buds, and daffodils her mother planted are boldly yellow. The shade trees are leafing

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out and the grass is a green carpet.

Her mother is standing behind the storm door watching out for her. She is bundled in a winter coat, a knitted hat pulled low over her ears. Handing her the paper bag, Caroline says too brightly, “I got you some dark chocolate. Dark chocolate is rich in flavonoids; it’s an antioxidant and supposedly good for the heart.”

Her mother scowls. “A bit late for that, isn’t it?” and goes into the kitchen to fill a glass with water.

Carolyn follows the high-pitched tone of a sportscaster into the living room where her father is sitting in his club chair watching TV. It’s the season’s opening game at Citi Field and the Mets are up against Chicago.

“Who’s ahead?” she asks.

“The Cubs are creaming them.” Her father waves her away from blocking the screen. “She’s been waiting all day. Where are you going?”

“I’m taking her to Chang’s.”

“I don’t know how anyone eats that crap Chink food.”

“Well she likes it and she needs to eat. She looks terrible.”

Her mother is a shadow of her old self. She was never fat, more on the pudgy side. When

Caroline looks at her parents’ old photographs she can see what must have attracted her father because her mother might not be beautiful, but at one time she was damn sexy looking. One day her aunt will tell her, “Your father was quite the Don Juan. He loved a lot of women and the women loved him. The problem is your mother loved him more than he loved her. I suppose he ruined both their lives when he seduced her.”

Caroline sits on the couch and waits for her mother who, when she comes back, stands in the doorway and calls out, “Okay. Let’s go.”

“We won’t be long,” she says to her father who grunts and glares at the TV.

Caroline bends down and kisses the top of her father’s balding head. Does he know about the eulogy? Sometimes it feels as if she and her mother are engaged in a conspiracy against him. All her life she has listened to their battles, at night staring up at the ceiling, wishing she had different parents. Now she oscillates between the two wishing they’d come together. But that hasn’t happened. Since his wife’s illness her father has withdrawn even further as Caroline has become more protective, more central to her mother’s existence.

The only other people in the restaurant are retirees. Chang’s is a foregone conclusion – the fur-

nishings are bone-tired, hobbled mismatched chairs, chipped cups and saucers, tea-stained tablecloths, some of the prices on the menus have been crossed out and new prices handwritten. The brown carpet is threadbare in spots. They select a booth towards the rear. It’s close to the kitchen and the air is heavy with peanut oil and soy sauce. It is eerily dark for daytime and her mother has an even more ghostly pallor. Above their table the blades of a ceiling fan waft faded crepe paper streamers and frayed tinsel festooning Chinese New Year lanterns. Somewhere a fluorescent light flickers, buzz, buzzes like a wasp.

The only healthy choices — steamed broccoli, bean spouts,



The Blotter

bamboo shoots and cloud ear mushrooms— are a la carte. Her mother points out the luncheon specials so she takes her cue and orders a combination plate.

Eventually they will have to discuss the eulogy. Her mother is anxious to know what improvements she should make.

Caroline takes out the envelope and puts it on the table. Her mother has put her heart and soul into what she has written.

“So what do you think?”

“I’m not sure what to say. This is very difficult.”

“I knew it would be difficult. I wouldn’t have asked only I need an outside opinion.”

Her voice rises. “The opinion of an *English* teacher. Are you forgetting I’m also your daughter?”

“Sorry. What I meant is....”

“I know what you meant.”

There’s an awkward pause. Caroline bites her lower lip to restrain her anger. There is no

point in arguing. She says tonelessly, “The eulogy is perfectly clear, Mom. I corrected one small grammatical error. I suggest you say ‘I want to thank everyone for *his* kindness instead of *their* kindness.’ I know it’s a nit, but you asked me to edit it.”

“I think it sounds better with *their*. I know the other is more correct....”

“Okay. Like I said, it’s a nit. No one says *his* anyway.”

“But the rest is alright?”

“Yes. It’s fine.”

Her mother breaks out in a smile. Relief floods her face. “I wasn’t sure when I put it down.”

“Of course, it’s hard to be objective about someone’s eulogy, especially when that someone is your mother.” This is the closest Caroline can come to honesty. Her answer is a repeat of the past which is to take the easy way out and say what she knows her mother wants to hear. And from the look on her mother’s

face, she knows she has not disappointed her.

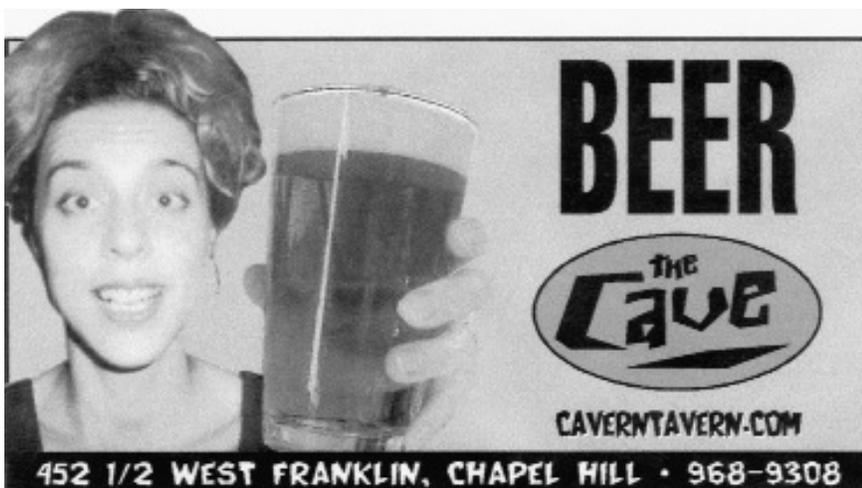
“I was so worried I hadn’t expressed myself properly.”

“Whatever you wanted to say came through exactly as you intended. Now perhaps we can talk about something else.”

Her mother picks up the envelope and hands it back to Caroline. “I have another request. When the time comes, I want you to read it. You will won’t you?”

Caroline dips her spoon in the egg drop soup. The strands swirl, attach, detach in the tasteless broth. She has no appetite. Her stomach is in turmoil. It will take great effort to get through the rest of the meal. She lifts her spoon to her mouth. It’s no use. She pushes the bowl away, swallows some cold tea and says with as much light-heartedness as she can muster, “Have you heard from Aunt Ellen? I hear she and Uncle Matt are getting back together again.”

When the waiter returns he removes their soup bowls and brings the combination plates. Her mother’s shrimp is buried under a thick gray gelatinous



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sauce; her orange chicken is glazed with canned pineapple bits and bright red maraschino cherries.

The waiter returns with hot tea. He frowns when he sees how much food is still on their plates.

"It no good?"

"The food is fine. My daughter will take it home."

Before she gets on the highway and heads back to Connecticut, Caroline stops and throws the take-away in a trash bin. She is tempted to do the same with the eulogy.

Her mother dies a month later. Dozens of friends and family assemble at the rented funeral parlor to pay their last respects. When Caroline is called to the podium to memorialize her mother, she entertains the congregation with an anecdote, describing the lunch at the Chinese restaurant when her mother asked her to edit her eulogy: "I guess she wanted to make the most of my education."

There is polite laughter that relieves the tension. Caroline takes a deep breath and unfolds the piece of paper. She does not choke up. Her voice is firm and assertive.

"I am not afraid of dying. Know I do not fear death and that I am glad to have the pain taken

away. As we all know man proposes and God disposes. That is the fate I have learned to accept. I have much to be grateful for in this life that ended much too soon. My life was simply, my demands few. My greatest joy has been my home and garden. I wish to thank everyone for their support."

When she's done reading Caroline bows her head and looks down at the stolid black coffin searching for approval. She is about to step down and allow the next speaker to take his turn when she hears her mother's voice channeling through her. She grasps the edges of the podium. The words are there. She listens intently, then repeats:

And while I never told her, I cannot leave this world without thanking my daughter Caroline for all her kindness and compassion in my darkest hours. Not once did she complain or disappoint me. Know, dearest Caroline, you have my eternal love and gratitude.

Tears stream from her eyes. She is trembling. More, there must be more. She glances at her father who is sitting stone-faced in the first row. God help her, she must say something. Caroline listens intently, but her mother's voice is still. Her final words for her husband are sealed in the coffin.

There is a rustling among the congregants. They too are impa-

tient to hear the rest of the eulogy. Caroline takes a deep breath and lets it out slowly. "And to you, David, my life's companion, I offer all my thanks for the wonderful years we had together. Thank you for your devotion, your loyalty, and your love. Bless you always."

When she returns to her seat she presses her father's hand. His eyes are moist. "Thank you," he whispers. "You knew exactly what was in her heart." ❖

The Dream Journal

real dreams, real weird

Please send excerpts from your own dream journals. If nothing else, we'd love to read them. We won't publish your whole name.

mermaid@blotterrag.com

I think the sunshine makes me squint, even when I'm asleep. I think this changes the mood of my dreams. Something can be going along swimmingly, but the sunshine from the venetian blinds not closing completely hits my face and starts sliding across my cheek towards my eyelids. Can I sense the light even before it is glare on my sleeping retinae? If I can, it must cause anticipation, nervous twitching. Then the happy tea party turns to mad hatters and scampering dormice.

Jo - cyberspace

Two short non-fiction pieces

by Bowen Craig

1) "WHAT I'VE LEARNED FROM MY MANY CAR WRECKS"

I'm a horrible driver, just an unbelievable, terrible, probably-shouldn't-have-been-given-a-license, frivolous, I-can't-believe-the-DMV-still-allows-me-to-operate-a- motor-vehicle bad. It's true. I'm an awful driver...and I don't even have a decent excuse like having only one leg, taking Yield signs at their word, or not being able to see the color green. I'm just a day-dreamer kind of guy who'd rather think about riding llamas, or sex, or the societal implications of women applying eye-liner at stop lights, or the Smurfs, or sex, or Smurf sex



atop llamas wearing eye-liner, really anything other than concentrating on driving. Consequently, I've been involved in a lot of car accidents. Car wrecks are terrible moments in a society as in love with our cars as we are, but you can learn from them.

My first car wreck happened on the very day I got my driver's license. It's not an exaggeration, it was that very day. I'd just gotten my golden ticket to teenage freedom, and was out running errands for my mother in the family wagon. I went by the grocery store and the post office, loving even mundane family chores since I could now do them by myself with only the aid of two hundred fake horses. I went by my little brother's best friend's house and picked the two of them (brother and

friend) up to take them back to our house. I was about to take a left across traffic on Walnut Avenue, the main street in my little home town, when I noticed the little blue/green Hatchback coming toward me from the left. It had its right blinker on, so I naively assumed that it was going to turn onto the road from which I was turning. It didn't. I pulled out. We collided. The family wagon did a one hundred and eighty degree spin. I crushed that Hatchback like a beer can at a tractor pull, but nobody was hurt and I learned a valuable life lesson—just because somebody says that he's going to do something, doesn't make it so.

After graduating college, I had a job in North Carolina doing environmental fundraising. It's a perfect right out of college job: you've got boundless hope for a better tomorrow, hot and open-minded hippie girls, and just enough of a paycheck to buy cheap American beer and pay your share of the rent.

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Anyway, I was out on a back road in eastern North Carolina, idling second in line at a stop light in my old, formerly white, used Honda Accord. I was changing radio stations from talk radio to classic rock when I saw, out of the corner of my eye, the light change from red to green. Green means go. I went. Unfortunately, the kindly mother of three in the grey minivan in front of me didn't. So, I rear-ended her. I must've floored it, since the impact was powerful enough to set off my air bag. They never tell you just how bad air bags smell. The woman and her three children were all unhurt and once again I learned two valuable life lessons—look before you put the pedal to the metal, and young mothers are vicious.

A few years later, I attended a lecture by medical doctor turned spiritual author/past life guru, Brian Weiss, in Atlanta. It was great. He's a good speaker and one of those guys whose life's mission lets you know that we're not alone, that the gods have a plan for us, all that gooey good stuff. I was impressed. He literally mesmerized the whole crowd.

After the talk, my friend and I went out to the parking lot, got in my Green Jeep Cherokee and started to leave. As I was pulling out, I grazed a burgundy, mid eighties Volvo, merely scratching it. I left a dent the size of a Chicklet, but, being a good guy, and having just left a New Age seminar about love and truth, I left a note with contact information (actually I left the note because I'm neurotic and guilt-ridden, but for our purposes here let's stick with good guy thing). I get a call from her the next day thanking me profusely for last night's honesty and telling me that I owed her twelve hundred dollars for a dent in her car that was so small that I could've made it with the flick of a spork. There was a lesson to be learned—being a good guy is freaking expensive.

My green Jeep was not a bad car. It wasn't great, but it did the trick. The gas mileage was awful, but you know that going into the showroom with your head full of hazy visions of hauling trailers full of crippled orphans up a mountain to be reunited with their birth parents, or performing manly feats of automotive power like they do on the commercial. But, I'm not complaining about the Jeep, and, after hearing this next story, you'll know why. The Jeep had gotten me out West. About a decade after my first car wreck, my brother and I moved out West, like our pioneering

forefathers, and taught spoiled European kids how to ski at a posh resort, much like Lewis and Clark. The resort was, predictably, at the top of a mountain. That's why it's hard to ski in Kansas. And, predictably again, the staff couldn't afford to live on the mountaintop. So, we rode up the hill in the morning and we came down in the night. My brother and I usually worked the same shifts, but, for some hand of God reason, not that morning. I can't remember if Ham was sick or if we just had different schedules that week, but I was driving the windy mountain road alone, thankfully. Just as the sun was rising through the orange and white New Mexico hilltops, I was wending through the little village at the base of the hill. Oh yeah, I should mention that I was hung-over as hell. Just past the town, I hit a tiny patch of black ice, the size of an regulation dinner plate. Although I couldn't see it from the car, I hit the one and only bit of black ice on the road. The Jeep did a 540 degree turn, one whole loop and then half of another, and I wound up smashing the passenger side front seat against the tree on the other side of the road, collapsing the entire thing. The tree branch stopped at the center console and would've certainly killed my brother if he'd been there. The insurance company settled quickly, which should've, in retrospect, been a flashing light telling me to sue



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the crap out of them. I mean it was a Jeep, a vehicle that claims to be rugged enough for even the crustiest lumberjack, but I was too naïve and simply put, too thankful to be alive, to contest it and ask for more money. The lesson here—advertisers lie...that's their job.

My latest, and let's hope final, car wreck happened just a few years ago. I was in stop-and-go traffic on a feeder state road that funnels onto an interstate. It was rush hour, so we were all inching along, doing other things to keep ourselves occupied. If I'd looked over at my fellow drivers I might've seen cell phones being talked on, lip-stick being applied, or children being spanked. But, I get bored easily, so I was reading. I'd read a line, move my sight-line up for a second, ease off the brake and scoot forward a few feet, then hit the brake and read another line. I can't remember which newspaper I was reading, but I must've just gotten to the good part about who we were bombing today, since that was when I

smashed into the sparkling white SUV in front of me. We were all still in the stop & go, so I jumped out and ran up to see if the attractive female driver whom I'd hit was OK (and not only because she was hot, well probably not). I told her that I'd been reading. She just smiled and said, "It's OK. I was texting. Don't worry about it." The lesson here—Just because all of the other people you hit were assholes, doesn't mean that everybody is.

2) THE BELIEVER AND THE CYNIC MEET FOR DRINKS...AND THEN WIND UP FORGETTING TO DRINK THEM

Anyone who's been to American college in the last fifty years has undoubtedly had at least one moment of pure possibility, one purposeful pause in the mini-series that is youth, a slice of time to reflect on the idea of a higher consciousness. What's it all about? Are there no razors in the afterlife or is there another reason that God

always has a beard? Why don't we all love each other? Who set these stupid rules for life anyway and why are we still following them? Why can't I just think like this all the time? When was the last time I actually ate food and why does it sound so gross right now?

I think you get the idea. But that's college.

Optimism comes easy when you're nineteen. A few years down the road you notice that the world pushes pessimism at you like it's something you *should* want...and the world has the freaking nerve to make you pay for it yourself. Luckily, midlife crises CAN be good things.

I used to blog for The Patch. In case you don't know, The Patch is a pale online version of "The Blotter," scattered with a slightly jaded newspaper from the 1960s (if it were published by the world's happiest feminist organization), smothered with heaps of doubt about the "official story," covered with pictures (it IS the Internet), and chunked with light opinion

Best In Show



pieces. A few years ago, I was assigned to report/expound on a live performance by Alex Gray, a painter/philosopher/professional hippie, who did some live painting (aided by some live trance music made by a computer and some guy with caveman dreadlocks), opined on all the stuff that's wrong with everything, and radiated love and psychedelic wonderment from the stage for the benefit of the college-town true peace-love-and-happiness lefties and the less-ideological 'shroomers who follow them around for a few years until they get venture capital jobs. The show was a spectacle, a needed dash of hope spice to the fiery cauldron of horrible shit stew. The man was part artist, part prophet, part chairman of the history department at the

Howard Zinn School for Completely Unacceptable to CNN Truth. I wanted to believe in Alex Gray and his message, but I also kind of wanted to throw explosive tofu at him. Even though it was a reporting gig, I never should have gone there sober. Damn you, middle-aged sense of responsibility! Without you, the believer would've KO'd the cynic in the first round. Anyway, it got me thinking...

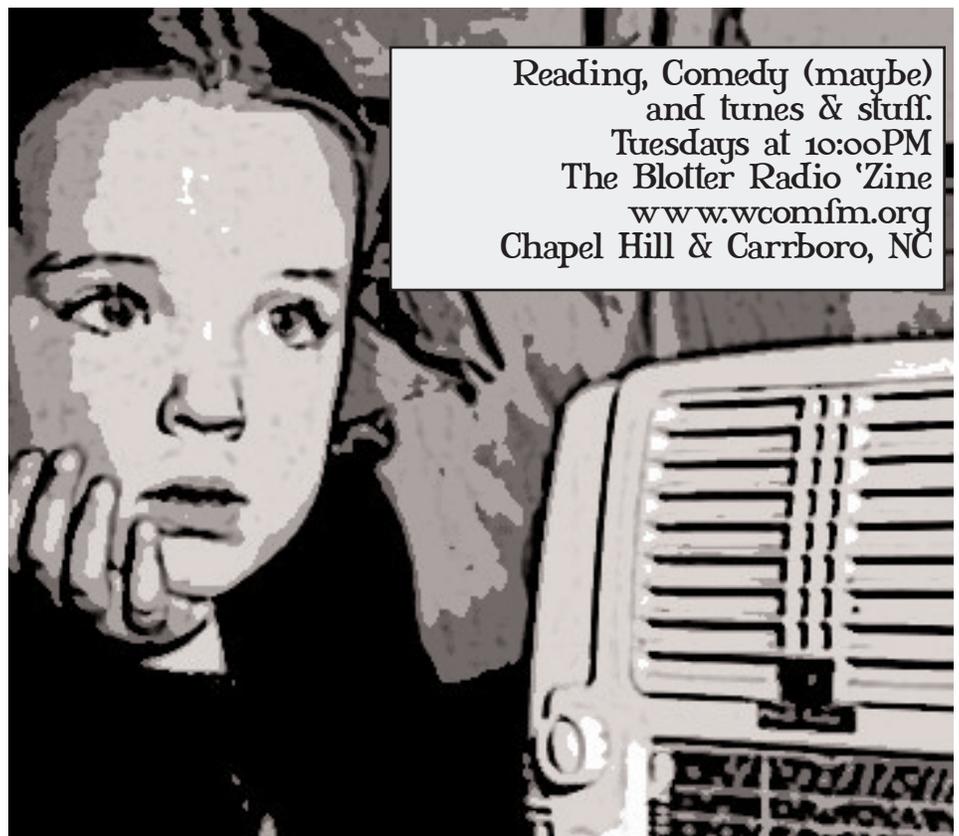
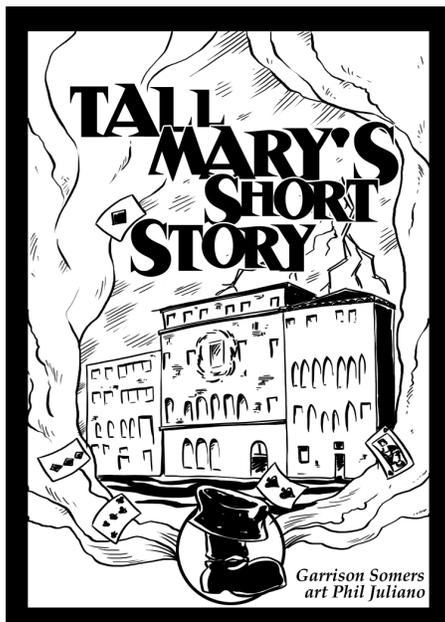
The believer chose the organic tofurky restaurant in the hipster district, the one with the abstract artwork on the walls made from the blood of Choctaw Indian orphans. The cynic swore that he saw a chicken truck pull up and dump a bunch of little formerly-boxed ex-con chickens being unloaded

out back, and that the chickens attacked a Choctaw Indian of dubious parentage before they made it to the kitchen. The believer laughed and passed out sugar plums to the other customers. The cynic made fun of the believer and insisted that somebody Googleprove his theory that sugar plums have been extinct since the early 1950s.

That's how I felt going to see the Alex Grey artspllosion event last Thursday at New Earth. It was a hotly contested battle between the believer and the cynic, both of whom live inside my head.

I want to believe in a collective consciousness, in a world where the spirit of love informs our interactions, our trading, and our national foreign policy, in a place where art is truth and

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truth shall set you free. I want to believe. It's just really hard to trust in those principles after you turn twenty-two. Luckily for Alex Grey, most of his audience didn't have the problem of being middle-aged and cynical. They just wished this guy was their crazy uncle.

Alex Grey is a psychedelic painter, and a prophet of peace, love and psychotropic drugs. Like a Terrance McKenna or a Ken Kesey, Grey preaches the gospel of existing on a higher plane with a little help from art, ambience and acid. In between trippy band sets and live painting, Grey, his white ponytail pulled tightly back, dressed like a second-rate grilled cheese vendor in a traveling jam band parking lot, and his wife/muse/fellow painter, led a group of entranced young people through the doors of perception and possibility with...a power point presentation. Up until that point, I think I understood the vibe. I was about to join his cult and embrace his philosophy, but as soon as he started with the power point, the cynic in me came out of hibernation, poked his sarcastic head around, saw its shadow and now we've got six more weeks of winter. He didn't kill the believer, but they did start circling each other warily.

From that point on it was just a battle.

This guy is teaching us about peace, love and understanding using power point?

Point to the cynic.

The kids are lapping up his knowledge. It's rare these days to see eighteen-year-olds listen to anything a sixty-year-old guy is saying, much less something that involves the history of anything other than rap music and college football. This is educational. Point to the believer.

But he's talking about drugs. And these kids were on drugs. How tough a sell is that? Tie. One point to each side.

It was a peaceful event and it looked like most people there were at peace, or at least not fighting. Point to the believer.

The guy is preaching love and charging a minimum of forty bucks for one of his paintings, at an event with a twenty-five dollar cover charge. Point to the cynic.

But the man's got to make a living. Can I really fault him for that? Don't I like getting paid for writing? (Not a rhetorical question—I do) Point to the newest entrant in our contest who came from out of nowhere, the jealous hypocrite inside me. Now it's a heated three-way race to the finish.

I love the artsplosion idea. I love the idea of combining multiple art forms in one place. The concept of making different art forms into a caserole of creativity is what makes Broadway great and why we still revere the Surrealists. Point to the believer AND to the jealous

hypocrite. The hypocrite is making this a race.

The race ended in a three-way tie. The hypocrite made fun of the cynic and the believer. The believer laughed. The cynic got mad at the believer and taunted him mercilessly until he crawled back in his vividly-colored, petouli-smelling, shell. The hypocrite and the cynic then went on a drinking binge, bar hopping and making fun of the believer until the believer came out of his shell and curled up in the fetal position, clutching his knees, rocking back and forth, sobbing to the heavens.

This is the world in which we live, people. Don't take the word of any of the three assholes inside of me (even that believer guy is a bit of an ass). But don't listen to me. Check out Alex Grey. Throw on some Jerry Garcia. Read some Huxley. Or, screw those guys and open your own damn doors. Decide for yourself if humanity is basically good or evil. ❖



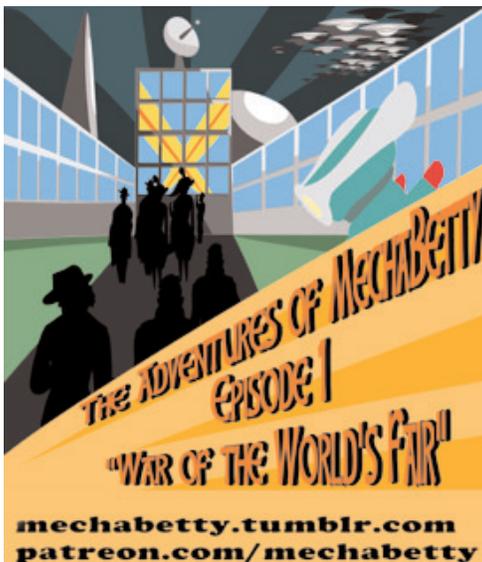
**NIGHTSOUND
STUDIOS**



“Again; From the Top”

by Jason Sallinger

Thrice upon a time
Pushing flat rocks uphill
And indebted to the regulatory commissions of our time,
The wizened sage
Offering words of heed
(And knowing they'd be unheard)
Served up some pearls.
I gave him the time of day
And he returned a minute in kind
And I'll be damned
If I haven't already forgotten everything he said.
No matter.
For some things we buy in life
We find ourselves paying
Over and time again.
I just hope I don't find myself
One day broke
And needing to learn this lesson
I'd already paid



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“Not Your Fault”

She said:

It's reefer madness, I'm sure of it. Head in the clouds; it's not your fault.
Nibbled a cookie, ended up with a cupcake.

He said:

Stop speaking in idioms. Numerator uno—
she's not a cupcake; she's my new girlfriend.

She said:

Low life. Can't be your type. Big lips.
Not vixen-puffy, like Angelina. Fleshy.
Spacious. Like an anaphylactic anti-hero.

He said:

Numerous Dos—
I only smoke on weekends
or holidays,
 especially Thanksgiving.
Smoke. No cookies. I'm old-school.

She said:

I wonder if her lips slap together when she snores?

He said:

She doesn't snore. I occupy
the indent next to her.

She said:

You snored. Sounded like a tiger.
Or an overflowing toilet. *Purr*. Little, snoring man.

He said:

You should move on. Find yourself
a cupcake of your own.

She said:

I'm a vegan. Gluten-free and paleo.
Lo-carb. Quinoa and roses. Sometimes flavored air.

Two by Mureall Hebert

He said:

All those grains
have warped your thinking. You're molting.
Or molding. Or whatever grain does.

She said:

I have perfect lips. Not flappy,
hint of a smile. Pleats at the corners.
You should give the quinoa
a try. Ditch the weed, the reefers,
your slap-lipped cupcake.
It causes madness, you know,
all that flesh. Mucus membranes.
It's really not your fault.

“Despite What You Think, the World Is Not Your Oyster”

This. That. He promised.

You are ____ (fill in the blank).

I want ____ (fill in the blank).

Do what's right, which we all know
is right, and what's right is
ever-changing but never-changing
because it's me and mine and I loved him best.

Dignity dropped from the hole
in the bottom of the purse a long time ago,
and the four-headed demon took over the puppet
strings and screamed *dance!*

even though the music stopped playing.

This. That. He promised.

Calling and calling until no one hears.

CONTRIBUTORS:

Marsha A. Temlock teaches English at Norwalk Community College in Norwalk, CT. She is the author of *Your Child's Divorce: What to Expect ... What You Can Do* (Impact Publishers.) Her poetry, fiction and nonfiction have been published by the *Weston Publishing Group*, *Chicago Suburban Women*, *the Write Room*, and *Airplane Reading*. She also contributes to various online websites dealing with family relationships. She was a columnist for the *Westport News* and *New Canaan News Review*. Currently she blogs about divorce for the *Huffington Post*. Marsha divides her time between Manhattan and Westport, CT.

Bowen Craig is a publisher and writer in Athens, Georgia. He is the author of *Keeping Away from the Joneses* and *A Look to the Future through the Eyes of an Eighty-Year Old Pirate*. His publishing company, *Bilbo Books*, has been around for ten years.

Jason Sallinger is a friend of *The Blotter*, and a friend of friends of *The Blotter*, and we had a great dinner with plenty of talk last fall, when a waitress pitched a pitcher of water on us. No harm, it was, after all, Saturday.

Mureall Hebert writes, “My writing has appeared in *Lunch Ticket*, *Crack the Spine*, and *Bartleby Snopes*, among others. I'm an MFA graduate from the Northwest Institute of Literary Arts, and co-editor at *Whidbey Writes*.”

Phil Juliano of Minneapolis, MN is a good *Blotter* friend. Follow his adventures on philjulianoillustration.com

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