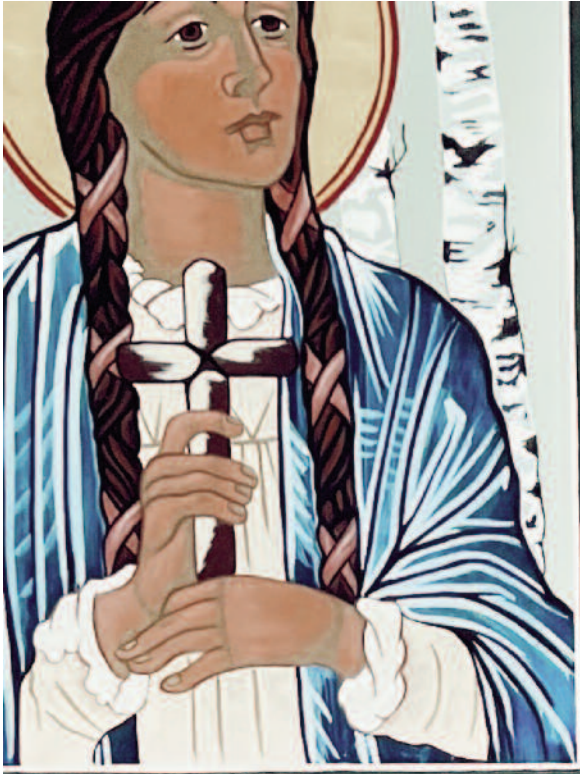


May 2024



ST. KATERI TEKAKWITHA



The Blotter

magazine

The South's
Unique, FREE,
International
Literature
and Arts
Magazine



ST. GEORGE



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COVER: Icons presented by Wende Lewis;
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The Blotter is a production of
MAGAZINE
The Blotter Magazine, Inc.,
Durham, NC.
A 501 (c)3 non-profit
ISSN 1549-0351
www.blotterrag.com

PROUD MEMBER



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“171,000 words and not a drop to drink”

I’ve been thinking about how it’s very strange out there. You know what I mean, and I don’t see the need to use a different word, something more specific, more revealing, than “strange” because you do know what I mean. I could, but I won’t. English is a big language. Lots of word choices. Some nitwit says there’s about a million words in it, but surely some of those are archaic, and some are slang, and many, many are technical terms (and probably a whole hell of a lot are names for medicines which are created on some app designed for such a thing, and run up a flagpole by marketing types that don’t give any consideration to the idea that for most of us the name of one blood thinner brand sounds perniciously like institutionalized violence, particularly without the luxury of a pronunciation guideline.) Yet, sometimes we have to use communications shorthand, so that we can more expediently move on and get to the crux of the matter. Or not, because all you asked me was “how you doin’?” and don’t really want to know what’s actually on my mind, or what my matter-cruX is. (There sure is a cultural attention-span deficit isn’t th.....?)

I appreciate talking (and writing) and sometimes just bring up topics and dive into them with people I know and those I just meet and sometimes with the butcher or the baker or the baristas at my coffee shop, and then tip them generously because they don’t tell me to pound salt or please shut up. It’s one of life’s daily little miracles, frankly, that they don’t.

I suppose the shorthand is helpful. I can say “it’s such a weird time to be here,” and that sets the table for just about any subject. I do this all the time (not really, a mindless bit of hyperbolic fluff) with my girls, and they nod and we move on. They do the same with me. So let us try it here, while at the same time attempting to tell you something I’ve been thinking. Let us see if we can’t clearly communicate.

I feel bad about it. It (italics mine, and probably difficult to see) being a lot of things – the world, how we live in it, how we aren’t able to get along. Bad. Generally speaking, that is. Bad being another of those nearly useless words (and the term “generally speaking” being even more useless. Or less useful. You decide.). I mean, I’m not in pain, except in that way that someone else’s pain is sometimes felt by you, inside you, because you want to understand and

help share the burden that is pain. Which still isn't clear enough, because what do I mean by pain? Physical? Emotional? Existential?

Maybe.

It is strange. We should feel bad. Share pain. Not ignore it. And how insufficient are our words? (A rhetorical question, this last.) The ones we most often use, I mean. How vague (and troublingly so) they are when we wield them, like blunt swords on a cluttered, noisy battlefield. We mean well (so we say) and have good intentions (I'm just saying this to get to a point completely my own, but it may or may not be so) and still our language (that is, our use of it) falters, stumbles, falls short. We've embraced (OK, maybe just air-kiss) a culture that rewards brevity, micro-ness, speed, multi-tasking, the tiny, all things flash. Ambiguity. (And yet we don't like editing, self- or otherwise. Go figure.)

But I guess I've belabored this obviousness (obvious and monstrosity, an atrocious amalgam of my own design) - quite enough. Moving on. Let's agree to agree. It's strange out there. Strange times. You feel bad, so I should feel bad. There is pain. In carload lots. It is real. There are things to be concerned about, have puzzlement towards, frustration and anger is real.

Here's the kicker (a term I haven't done the etymology on and can only guess through common use what I mean) – and stay with me on this, because I think it's a doozy: The oddity of life nowadays (for me) is in seeing how little it (that it we referred to earlier) all applies (to me.) Which sounds selfish and confusing, and unremarkable nonetheless. Who among us will deny that they aren't a bit relieved that they haven't had the misery of something going on out there happening to them? And that seems to be where I've landed of late, in that the things that go wrong on a daily basis for most people don't seem to be going wrong for me. Oh, I see the price of food and gas. I see the parsimony of those who have much. Violence. The lying and cheating. The ignoring of the lying and the cheating. And all the confusion.

I see the news, but it only touches me tertiarily (wrong word, but we'll put it in as a placeholder.) Why is that? Why am I so – what is the word? – solipsistic...? My empathy is on the fritz. I want to distribute my feelings freely, but I am having problems doing so. Has this happened before to any of you? A moment where you feel that, rather than being helpful, interested, touched by a situation, you

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CAUTION

a million miles away from you

“The Legend of Clyde Carson”

by B. Rosson Davis

Author's note (In the tradition of Mark Twain, and/or, a Wes Anderson movie . . .)

Famous during the California Gold Rush, Clyde Carson's tombstone read: rough-tough gunman, son-of-a-gun gambler, carpet-knight, one hell-uv-an hombre. Born in Climax, North Carolina, son of a Baptist preacher, Clyde learned to hunt like a Cherokee, drink like an outlaw, and shoot like wild Bill Hickok, and, one Phoebe Ann Mosey, better known as Annie Oakley—who performed in Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show where she shot cigars from her husband's lips, fellow marksman and performer, Frank Butler, also a crack-shot. Clyde knew Frank, Wild Bill and Annie Oakley only slightly.

Clyde's departure from the Tar Heel State, prompted by some shady moon-shine shenanigans, and the lure of California Gold, spurred him to go West, to get rich. A ripe sixteen, Clyde left Climax, and headed for 'Frisco! Well, Clyde didn't much cotton to authority, was indifferent to traditions, bemoaned Baptists, and distrusted women of all sorts on account of his mama, Maybelle, who abandoned him and his pa to run off with a gunslinger named Prentice Bell, who claimed to be

Maybelle's savior. It was a long time ago, and women to Clyde were only good for “lip-clap”, hood-winks, and “bed-swerving”. Clyde was no “key-hole whistler”, mind you, preferring the real thing any day, anywhere. He was “breed-bait” for sure—tall, charmin'. Good lookin', hard-fightin'. Fondly known by the ladies as a “carpet-knight”. (You see, Clyde Carson accomplished more on the carpet with these ladies-of-breed-ing, as well as those other ladies (of the night), than he ever did in gunfights with hustlers, rustlers, and outlaws. Passion was Clyde's middle name.

Now, Clyde lived outside the law, usually holed-up in some hole-in-the-wall cobweb hotel, edge of any town long forgotten. Once, he settled on the the outskirts of Placerville, California, which wasn't exactly a real town yet, despite the Gold Rush, and the frog-jumpin' contests, (Actually, the original Frog Jumpin' contest was at Angels Camp in Calveras County). Placerville was just a tent-full settlement of mostly male losers, drunks, swindlers, and murderers—all pannin' for gold.

Clyde became famous for his cocksure attitude and dead-eye aim. “Don't mess with Clyde” was the motto of the misbegotten who

found themselves pannin', crap-pin', and campin' beside Clyde—in Placer County. He was nick-named “The Grave-Maker” on account he boasted his own private graveyard, out back of his windy cabin, where he buried a multitude of annoying people, plus, ornery critters whose heads he shot off on the spur of the moment, or during hostile confrontations. Known for his nasty temper, bad manners, and lucky charms, Clyde became a legend in his own time—The Grave-Maker Legend (that be Clyde) overtook the “Legend of Joaquin”, that be Joaquin Murrieta—the Robin Hood of El Dorado, during California's Golden era, a man known for his crafty, violent revenge crimes against white-men who had whipped him to shreds, raped his wife, and murdered Joaquin's brother. Clyde and Murrieta never met, but Clyde admired Joaquin's audacious style and get-away tactics, mimicking them on occasion. Each man out-ran the law after many a side-winder-kinda skirmish.

When in San Francisco, Clyde often frequented The Cobweb Palace, a dusty saloon filled with crawlers, brawlers, gamblers, and the like. Down and out on his luck in the gold trade, Clyde wasted no time in “topping” the “skin-

trade”, dealing in fur of another sort . . . It was cold in the Sierras, in Northern California, the Russians had already cornered the fox, beaver, seal, sea-otter pelts, marten and mink fur trade, so . . . Clyde dived right in to the frenzy of the “fuzzy triangle”-trade, relishing the “pussy-nip” in pantaloons. The Parisian Can-Can, all the rage at the time, beckoned Clyde, (often drunk to the gills) thrilled to dance barefoot, along with the CanCan cuties, kicking up his heels, loosening his belt, often losing his pants. Oh, my. . . . The “grundy-grunts” at the bar howled at his antics, marveled at his lust for life, especially his nocturnal noises on the second-floor of this “johnny-raw” joint where Clyde got lost, time after time, in the fuzzy triangle—trippin’ the light & bed-springs, fantastic.

There was no escaping Clyde and his many talents! Often in the news, he was always taking the prettiest dancers upstairs with him to spend another “tiddlie-wink” muff-diving-night amongst sequins and satin sheets, lavender and lace. A legend in his own time, Clyde was, as I noted, marvelous with the ladies, always on the ready, good in a jam, and best with his gun! ❖



Like many arts, there are rules to painting an icon. There are certain steps a painter must take in their process for it to “officially” be an icon. The gold ‘halo’ around a person’s head represents the fact that they are an icon. A character in an icon painting without the gold halo is not an icon. Icon-painting is sometimes a community art; artists that are more advanced in one icon-painting aspect help other icon-painters to help pass on the culture of icon-painting.

“The Boy Who Drew Cats”

adapted from the Japanese tale originally translated by Lafcadio Hearn
by Garry Somers

Once upon a time (truly, it was only last Thursday, but such tales begin the way they are always begun) a boy was in class. He was perhaps the same age as you, and other than hair color or the size of his feet or the cut of his clothes, he could even be you. He sat in his chair, in the way you are sitting in yours, leaning forward so that the teacher will imagine you are paying attention to your work. Yet you are not. You are reading this story.

So it was that this boy was also not doing what he was supposed to. He was drawing pictures on a yellow pad of paper he had removed from the kitchen drawer at home and hidden in his school backpack. With the nub of pencil he kept in his pocket, he drew trees and flowers and animals. His favorite animals were cats, which he drew whenever the mood struck. Sometimes that mood came when he was at supper and should be eating. Or when he was given a worksheet with numbers to add up or subtract one from another. He knew there was a time for drawing and a time for schoolwork, but he

much preferred drawing over doing arithmetic or eating steamed vegetables.

The boy had taken the pad of yellow paper because he frequently got in trouble for drawing pictures on pieces of paper upon which he should not. Like on arithmetic worksheets instead of doing the work, which wasn't allowed, of course. Or in the margins of his schoolbooks, which was definitely not allowed. Or on

bulletin boards while standing in line in the lunchroom – still not allowed – where there were stapled menus listing what was available for lunch that day.

That day, which was today. His teacher caught him drawing on the construction paper behind the menu, which said lunch included a hot dog on a steamed bun with mustard, and boiled green beans, and a container of chocolate mousse. The boy had seen the



Illus. by Kason for Hearn translation, 1898

words chocolate mousse and thought that this was just spelled wrong, and probably very weird to eat. So he drew a cat, in order to chase the mouse away. Not allowed!

His teacher caught the boy just finishing his drawing and took him over to the quiet-section, where children who misbehaved must spend lunch period right next to teachers having their own lunches.

“There’s a time for drawing and a time for lunch,” said the boy’s teacher, when they were sitting at the table. “I’m sorry,” the boy said. This his teacher believed, because the boy was not a bad boy. “Why were you standing in line?” asked the teacher. “I don’t know,” said the boy. This his teacher believed, because sometimes children don’t pay attention. “Where is your lunch?” asked the teacher. “In my backpack,” said the boy. “Where is your backpack?” asked the teacher. “In the classroom,” said the boy. “Why didn’t you bring it with you?” asked the teacher. “I forgot,” the boy said. This the teacher also believed. The teacher wanted to send the boy back to get his lunch, but knew the boy wouldn’t get all the way there and return in time. “I will go get your lunch,” the teacher said. “It’s OK,” said the boy. “I’m not hungry.”

This the teacher didn’t believe, which was good because the boy wasn’t telling the truth. He was very hungry. He always brought lunch to the lunchroom. His lunch was always a peanut butter sandwich and carrot sticks. So the teacher walked the boy over to the lunch line and had him get a tray with a hot dog on a steamed bun with mustard and green beans and a container of chocolate mousse, which the boy now saw was like pudding. He got three paper napkins from the napkin dispenser, just in case. The cafeteria workers did not make the boy pay for the lunch.

“Hurry and eat,” the teacher told the boy. “There’s not much time left.” The teacher thought that the boy might fall back into drawing instead of doing what he ought to.

But the boy ate his lunch, and it was very good. When he was done eating there was still time because usually there was talking and fooling around with the other children, but today he was eating at the quiet-section table. He didn’t make a mess, either and only used one paper napkin. Then he remembered he hadn’t properly thanked the teacher or the cafeteria workers for the very good lunch. He carefully drew a cat on each of the two napkins he hadn’t used. When lunch was over, he

cleared his tray, and left one cat picture napkin on the quiet section table for his teacher and the other he tacked on the bulletin board next to the cat picture he’d drawn near the menu for the cafeteria workers.

That night, in the dark school kitchen, the leftover chocolate mousse came to life as a mouse goblin. The mouse goblin planned to make an enormous mess and gobble up all the school’s lunch food.

But the next morning, when school opened, the cafeteria workers found no mouse-goblin and no missing lunch food. However, they did find three cat pencil drawings on the floor of the kitchen, each with mysterious bits of chocolate around the cats’ smiling mouths. ❖



One goes to convents to learn how to paint the icons, learn the history of the icons, and the importance of the specific process icon painting requires.

PROPHET

DANIEL



“A Dream”

by Richard Van Ingram

Why were we stuck
this dream again
in elementary school,
fifth grade, both of us
too old for that the first time
around, but dreamtime,
adults, yet not older
as our bodies are now
— maybe late teens
You looked up at me
with dark purple
ultramarine blue
a touch of yellow green
around your light blue eyes
pleading
— was it make-up, I wondered,
or visible bruises of invisible abuse? —
and you'd shaved off
your eyebrows,
Nosferatu:
They would not let us leave
not graduate that hateful
place until we passed,
again, passed
a course which has no name
— all I wanted to do was run
deep into the forest, build a cabin,
a hermitage, to spend all days in
silence, God and books and art and me
while you were bound for far off
lands, fortune to smile golden
on each tanned footfall where
you belong, far, far from here —
but not until we passed,
and I was not staying

and you refused to go
so wisdom, between us,
revealed a plan: you took the class
and came to visit me in my
hidden aloneness, taught me
the lessons,
and then we both passed the exam
and wordlessly went away.
In time I took root,
outgrew the cabin,
up and through the roof,
out the walls,
an oak, thick and twisted
high, limbs waving,
silent voices rustling
on each wind as storms
approached before winter,
dropping acorns in torrents
as if to say:
Better to go around where I stand,
not under or through.
Better to go by some other route.
And my ravens came 'round
to croak of lands I'd never see
where you walked, tanned feet
on shores and through jeweled cities
beyond each and every fathomless sea.
I bent my head,
gently bowed to the high, merciless winds,
flashes of lightning my common crown,
thunder answered by my creaking boughs.
I, rooted in silence, you rootless, wandering
in beauty,
each freed from our old school of ruination
by a craft quietly shared in distances
never crossed, never seen,
distances not to be understood:
a mystery that lives in between.

7 February 2024

“Magic”

by Richard Van Ingram

Million miles ago
you never looked back
though that's one trick I've yet
to learn -
And I never bought a ticket
to your show:

I've seen a carnival,
walked the livewire, no net,
threw a mean Tarot,
cleaned the horse stalls
before I ran all the way
and the rails caught up
and I awoke on a boxcar
beneath the waning crescent.

No fame in it,
no cash – fast,
but never managed the lockpick
pickpocket, not for wallets,
not for all your chastity belts.
Good act, though, yours -
better than mine
ever will be
since I retired to die
and go to hobo heaven,
palm dice in paradise,
mislead while making
all my sorrows disappear.

As you know,
showgirl,
I keep them up,
not on,
my sleeve.



ST. KATERI TEKAKWITHA

More than just a painting process, iconography is a meditation that many religious and non-religious painters take part in. The art of painting can be religious, but it's not inherently religious.

It's a process of connecting with the icon you're painting (and to understand the full depth of what that icon actually represents/symbolizes and its history) and with the act of painting itself.

These icons were painted on slabs of wood rather than canvas or fabric.

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.

Sometimes there is a twist on the old "I'm late, and I don't have the right paperwork and I'm in my underpants" dream. The nightmare that's not really a nightmarish scene. Because we're not really frightened by embarrassment, just annoyed, or deeply so, right?

For me, that dream is the "I know the way, and this is it, but somehow, I'm still lost." And I can be of any age, but it mostly comes down to a childhood feeling, that home is sanctuary, and being away from it is uncomfortable, no matter where you are going. Birthday party, off to see relatives. It's not the same as being home, in your own living room, or kitchen, or bedroom.

So I tend to find myself recognizing the streetlamps, but not the street. The houses, but not who lives in them. The corners and intersections, but don't know which way to turn. I know I'm somewhere, but how do I get where I need to be. Isn't there a station nearby, and are the trains still running? Or did I used to drive from here? And that's a problem, because I don't have my car. Where did I leave it? At the station, in the parking lot? Rats.

CTG - cyberspace

continued from page 3

can't get engaged? Where you're not turning your back, but, facing it (again that ubiquitous term) you don't or can't let it in to be processed by your brain and heart?

It is strange that I seem to be able to muddle through. Strange that I seem to be able to muddle through, unscathed. Why is that? Why am I so little affected? Why isn't it the ubiquitous bad (useless generality) for me? It's almost as if I weren't paying attention, distant, entitled. I think I am, but to what end? Maybe I'm not. I want to talk about it, but to whom? Using what shorthand? I don't know.

In any case, as a human being, should I embrace the onset of some kind of inclusion in the suffering? Take my licks? Have a fair (that tabulation on the great ledger of life) amount of that which is coming to me? Stop being so...what? There are so many words that could fill in that blank. Let's go with lucky. And what is luck? Can we define luck without just pasting synonyms onto it? In any case, I don't ascribe to luck. (I could say I don't believe in luck, but luck isn't a belief system, is it? and you might just as easily say it doesn't matter whether or not I ascribe to it, it is.) And, according to the irrational rules (judgment mine - you can't be this, you can't do that. Knock wood, turn around and spit) of luck, in the very act of talking about it, writing it down, I am jinxing myself. Again, something I don't adhere to – the idea that with every consideration there is the risk of causality, however, there you are.

Ah, me. At some point, I'm going to give this all (life, heartache, the universe) more thought. In the meantime, I will go for a walk, eat a plum, smell a rose, sense my guilt.

Garry - chief@blotterrag.com

Contributors:

Originally from San Francisco, CA, **B. Rosson Davis** lives and writes in Greensboro, NC. A magna cum laude graduate, B.A. in Theatre & Creative Writing, from San Francisco State University, she lived a year in Spain following graduation. She grew up in Kailua, Oahu, San Mateo, also living in Mt. View, Los Altos, Los Gatos, Napa Valley, and San Francisco. Her poetry is published in literary journals and anthologies, among these: *Transfer*, *Choice*, *The Michigan Quarterly*, *Carolina Quarterly*, *The Southern Review*, *International Poetry Review*, *Ragnarok*, *Floating Island*, *Writers Choice & Vineland Poets*. An "emerging screenwriter", Rosson Davis' feature screenplay, "Sweetly Deadly", a coming-of-age drama, ranked in the top 20 screenplays out of 7,251 competing in The Academy Nicholl Fellowships Screenplay Competition. "Charlemagne" and "Cocksure" (cheeky comedy) were Semi-Finalists. "The Boy and the Pomegranate", her short story, was recently published in *HEMINGWAY* Shorts Vol. 6. Her O. Henry Ending pieces: *The Chili Queen*, *All That Glitters*, *How To Order a Hamburger in the South*, appeared in *O. Henry Magazine*

Wende Lewis is an iconographer, chef and musician. An avid reader, she lives with her husband Richard in Chapel Hill, NC.

Richard Van Ingram lives in San Antonio, TX, and is an artist, poet, essayist, illustrator and teacher.



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