

stay still

not here

yes

just there

.

.

.

ONE IMPERATIVE

*« It is only after you have come to
know the surface of things »,
concludes Mr. Palomar, « that you
venture to seek what is underneath.
But the surface is inexhaustible ... »*

~ Italo Calvino



Lucía Sbardella
The Quince Tree Sun
2024

Some Impressions on *The Quince Tree Sun* by Victor Erice
Lucía Sbardella

Victor Erice's film shows the creative process of the painter on a quince tree.

The task becomes impossible because the quince never sets, the fruit ripens and changes the tree until it dies.

More than a film about a man who paints, or rather, who tries to paint, it is an essay on time imperceptible to the eye.

In *El sol del membrillo*, I find three categories of temporality that threaten the painter's task:

The first is the painter's time.
Then, the time of painting.
Finally, the time of nature.

No time ever coincides.

All times coincide in that the film is an experiment on the relationship between documentary and fiction from the moment in which the painter is unable to reconcile an image that understands, in its complexity, the filmable reality and the filmed reality.

The one who films, repeats the shots as the painter recommences his sketch, again and again, on the real material until he finds an image that convinces him. Both will discover that both fiction and reality share a symbiotic relationship. Reality exceeds the artist's hand. Fiction pays tribute to reality because the work is never a copy of the thing "as it is".

The painter's method proves sterile for capturing time. And yet, after the last version, the images proliferate, multiply, reproduce themselves to infinity every day.

The consolation to our ailment is perhaps the answer that impossibility is the only possible form of the new, of astonishment and unpredictability.

The prefix *re* —which expresses the repetition of an action— exists because we are not satisfied with what we know.



Jeremy Fernando

a bowl of earth

2024

Searing. Under the jaguar sun

Jeremy Fernando

A spice, a pepper, a condiment, a companion, I go by many names.

Accompanying me, coming through lips during my travels through time. Over lands, seas, on the backs of horses, boats, goats, people. Making stops in bazaars, markets, souks, brought by traders, alongside empires, finding many a home, stoves, meals, meeting many who would me take for their own.

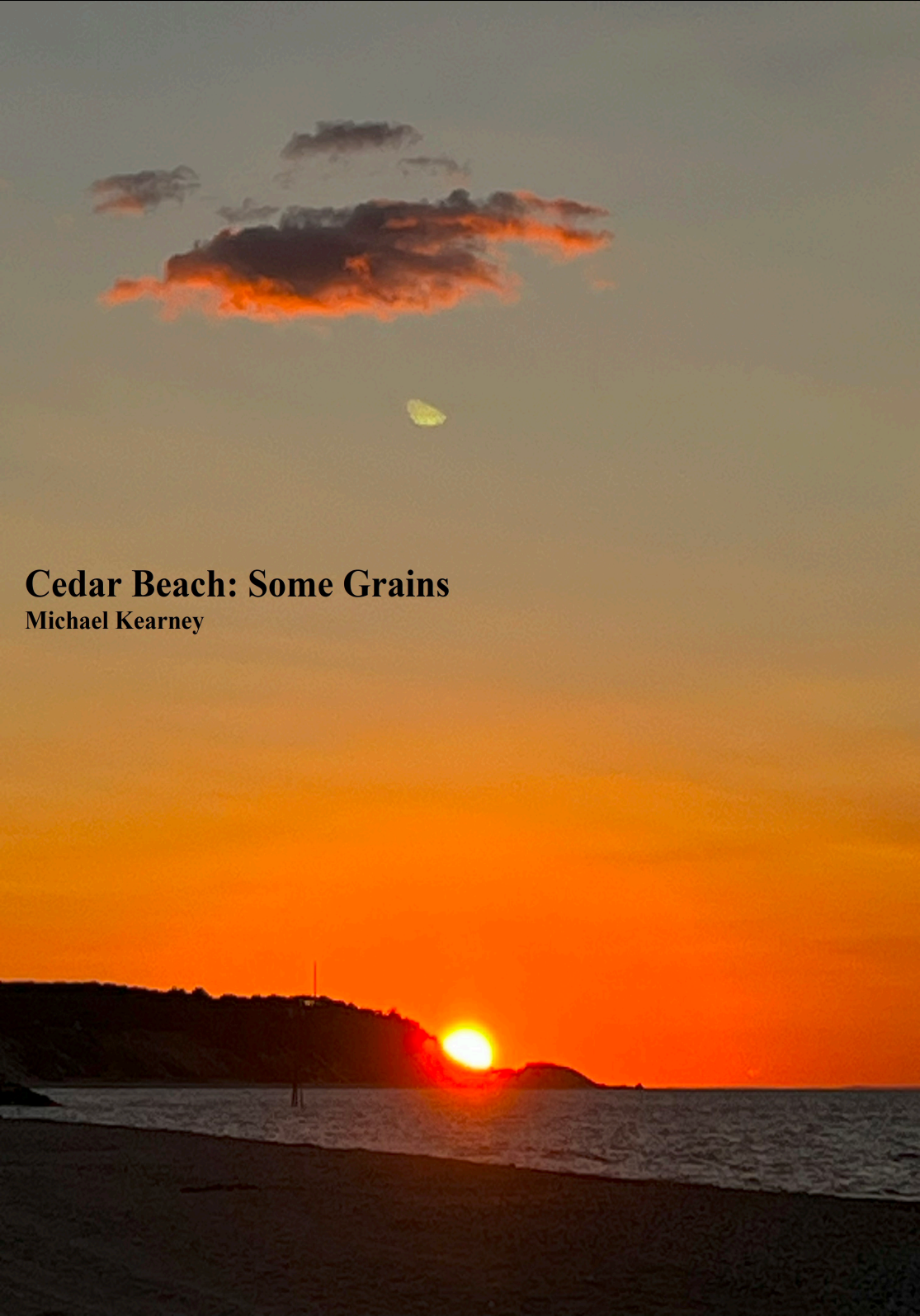
Defining their dishes, kitchens, writing the stories of their cuisines through me. As if I had always been here.

My piquancy, though, recalling a time of moon, memory, and muchness. Of searing. Under the jaguar sun.

Reminding their tongues this berry-fruit can never be tamed.

Neither painting nor drawing, nor art in general, can achieve anything. It is far removed from colonial appetites and does not even wish to beguile one's contemplation: art does not serve and there are no correspondences, intercessions, or contradictions to be found. This painting, this drawing, is entirely autonomous and engrosses the viewer in a vain search for analogies.

~ Hubertus von Amelunxen



Cedar Beach: Some Grains

Michael Kearney

a slight pulse

Sun ricochets off Sound

trees audibly ache

January is the coolest of months

De[a/e]r come to me –

severely timid

almost trusting

seeking ...

comfort, sustenance, quelled curiosity

Dey back off,

turn,

carry on

sensed my fleetingness

me at the verge of nothingness

a slight pulse before the expanse

Been Enough (or A Holy Day)

The day came to an end;
twilight danced around the bend of the Earth,
and a silent darkness engulfed all in my Being.

If only everyday ended in this peace,
the glare of the new Day's sun
would not strike me as so merciless.

But too many nights are filled
with a dread of the horrors
that might be upon the morrow.

Trite atrocities forced upon us
via systems contrived by
a few to placate their gluttony.

Existences marred,
destroyed,
by the greed of vain, petty, un-Zeusian brutes.

Pleas do nothing
but incite condescension;
evil mirth swells in the perpetrators.

No hope for a final resolution,
yet there is a warm solace
in evenings like this.

Just Left

Chipped scissors cut your Flesh
into awkward shapes

The pieces don't fit
A puzzle jumbled

Choose your meaning

Schrodinger's identity
Both – Either – All – Nothing

Nothing can be a nice place
just left
of nowhere

Yeah, okay.

Abstract ejaculations
of a horrified populous
trump all reasonable thought
when the aquifer has been salted
with spite driven greed

She's got a bottle of tequila
and gropey green hands

Almost restored to hope
through bargain solutions
to unreasonable problems

However not

Strophe, strophe, strophe your boat
feverishly across the fiord;
mercilessly, mercilessly, mercilessly, mercilessly
Being is just a scream

There is something in his voice that I did not hear at that time, a clamor which perhaps could only be grasped when the language was not our own.

~ **Christina Tudor-Sideri**

HUSH

Melli Pini Boland

This, is, the last
Dance of the night
hold me tight in your arms
And don't, stand, so close
You might hear my heart beat rapidly
And don't make me cry and

Don't say you'll runaway
Or say that I should stay
Hush my little darling
Don't use all of the words
To tell me how you feel
Just hush my little darling

Don't, breathe Don't think
too deep hold me in your embrace
And love, be sweet, so still
Always know that still waters run deep
And don't make me cry and

Don't say you'll runaway
Or say that I should stay
Hush my little darling
Don't use all of the words
To tell me how you feel
Just hush my little darling

/

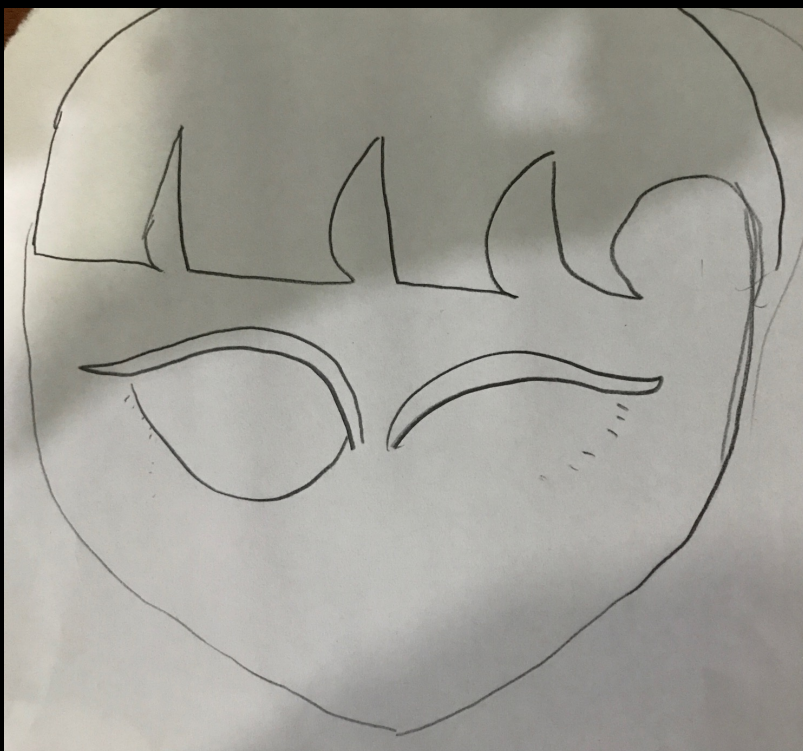
Music and Lyrics : Melli Pini Boland

Guitar & Co-producer : Joe Biancorosso

/

to listen to *HUSH*, please go to :

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHdqh_akzH8



Harriet Bikundo

Just practice only — I didn't finish

2023

Seen

The other day, you said,
to find my-self and my being
I had to reconcile the fate of the past,
with a destiny of a future
but I did not quite understand.
And when I peered
into a blank television
one night,
I saw a shadowed being,
looking unlike me.
Not realising then
that even shadows seek,
for the light to be seen.

The way those amber orbs
of yours light up when you grasp
my shoulders in your two large
hands... to gaze into mine,
beholding –
as if seeing,
as if gripping,
as if undressing,
as if devouring
the eye of the storm.
Just so at crack of dawn, one-
half shadow receding, revealing,
this being at last, seen.

Janice Sim
Brisbane
2024

Cave Crafting

Setsuko Adachi

Cave Crafting is a title I gave, which, I believe, captures the essence of Tono Dinski's works compiled here. I discovered "I Heard You Are Going to Be Stephen Hawking" archived in an online magazine, *Paralyzed Faery*. Upon my inquiry, Tono sent me the manuscripts for the "Postscript" and "Cave Crafters."

I Heard You Are Going to Be Stephen Hawking

Tono Dinski

Doctors had already told me my hands would never knead clay. I have lost my physical independence. I was paralyzed from the chest down. I was calm about it until Grandpa said humorously: *I heard you will be Stephen Hawking.* I lost it. I cursed at him, screamed, and wailed.

Tono, listen to yourself. Your brain is fine, your hearing, your eyesight, your speech—they are all fine. You do not have ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis) like Stephen Hawking.

I remember rolling my eyes. Grandpa hates it when I do that, but he said nothing. I said nothing. I closed my eyes. I fell asleep. I quickly gave up on being vocal, being emotional. I chose to sleep.

When I was given a computer that operated solely by my voice, it brought joy back into my life. I was thrilled and went through the stage of endlessly watching video clips as algorithms led me on. But shortly, boredom kicked in. I slept.

I was never fully awake. I remember listening to Grandpa asking if it was okay for him to wake me up in one of my half-awake states. The nurse told Grandpa that sleeping was a very human way of coping with his situation. *Tono is recuperating. Let him sleep.*

In hindsight, Stephen Hawking encouragement was the only thing that got any reaction out of me while at the hospital. On my last day at the hospital, in his effort to bring my spirit up, a doctor mentioned Stephen Hawking: *Tono, we live in an age where technology is developing quickly. You know, Stephen Hawking used the primitive forms of artificial intelligence to speak. AI will make it possible to meet your physical needs in the near future.*

Yeah, but at the risk of ending the human race? Didn't Stephen Hawking say so about AI? I snapped.

Tono, wake up. Grandpa taps my cheek with his bony fingers. I smell the clay. Sometimes, I can tell which clay he was using from the smell. Grandpa Kan is on Save Tono's Soul mission. The reason Grandpa launched this mission is apparent. I was bored and did not enjoy anything. I was bored and killed time sleeping while hospitalized. I was doing the same at home after I got back from the hospital. So, he is in my room again tonight.

Tono, wake up. He is gentle but unintentionally loud. It reflects his hard hearing. The man is seventy-six years of age. I open my eyes and hear him say, *Shh, do not speak.* I obediently remain silent, and my mind starts composing stories to write. I hear Grandpa in the distance: *I am going to go now.* It brings my mind back to him. *Do not let the caretakers know I wake you up at this time of the hour.* I smile and say, *I will not do that to you.*

When I hear Grandpa retire to his bedroom, I order my computer: *Wake up. Open the Word file.* Then I start telling stories. The computer screen spells out what I dictate to it. I get high writing. I love it. But Grandpa does not know this. He does not know I have come to look forward to the few hours of creative solitude after he leaves.

I loathed Grandpa's midnight visit initially. I am not sure how long, how many days he tried to wake me up. I was adamantly asleep. At one point, Grandpa's patience ran out, and he shoved my body; he was not used to handling my paralyzed body. Luckily, Grandpa's two strong arms—they knead large amounts of hard clay every day for him and his students at the Cave Crafters workshop—caught my sixteen-year-old sturdy male body from sliding off the bed. *Stay still, Tono.* The fear of falling off the bed did not help me stay awake. *No, Tono, do not sleep. Not here, when I am here. Stay still, but do not sleep.* He taps my face. *See all the works of yours displayed? Engage them. Let them speak to you. Yes. Work at it.* I do not remember exactly when I stopped going back to sleep. Now, I do not need Grandpa to wake me up. I look forward to being just there in my creative high zone. I used to experience a similar, if not the same, elation restoring broken ceramics.

Grandpa, you can stop your nightly visit. Grandpa, your mission is accomplished. It worked: I am so alive midnight-till morning writing—this.

The End

Postscript

I remember vividly sending the above “I Heard You Are Going to Be Stephen Hawking” in a state of panic five years ago. I rushed when I heard my caretakers looking into the possibility of removing me from Grandpa’s care.

Tono is rarely awake, but there is no reason he should not be. He needs to keep regular hours and start rehab.

Taking care of a sturdy sixteen-year-old with paralysis for a man in his seventies is not an easy task. If Tono is sound asleep, Mr. Dinski does not have to worry about Tono. That must be why every time we suggest waking Tono up, Mr. Dinski goes against it with: Let Tono sleep. He is recuperating. This environment is not the best for both Mr. Dinski and Tono.

I am forever indebted to Rose, the editor of *Paralyzed Faery*, an online magazine, for her quick reply: “Tono Dinski, Thank you for sharing your story with *Paralyzed Faery*. Your story “I Heard You Are Going to Be Stephen Hawking” will appear in our short story section next Tuesday.” I knew this resolved the situation. I was exhilarated.

When it appeared, I emailed Grandpa and my caretakers the link. The message got through to all the parties. Things changed, and we became a loving team.

I spent much of my loosely regulated hours in the Cave Crafters, our home studio, watching Grandpa immersed in his clay work. Grandpa was fortunate. Indeed, it was good to see him, for that matter, any human, fascinated like that.

Grandpa called it homo sapiential joy or creative highness. *I am glad you have reconnected to it, Tono, Grandpa said. When we were raising Aya, your mother, Alina, your grandmother, taught me to nourish it in a child. Shame some people do not take the time to cultivate it; in worse cases, they even make the effort to undermine what is our specietial privilege.* I loved how Grandpa took time to pronounce specietial correctly and would not use the word species with an apostrophe.

*If Alina were here with us, she would have been very proud of you,
and me. Alina was a beautiful soul.*

I am writing this Postscript because Grandpa is no longer
with us. He did not make it to my twentieth birthday.

May Grandpa Kan Dinski rest in peace.



Setsuko Adachi

Broken Chinese Ceramic Horse

2024

Cave Crafters

Tono Dinski

I do not think I will be there to celebrate your twentieth birthday, Tono. Grandpa Kan refused to be hospitalized and chose to spend the rest of his time lying next to me on my bed. My caretaking team said, “No problem,” and they did everything they could to meet his needs and wishes.

I wake up past midnight diligently beside him, order my computer to start, and open the Word file. I begin re-telling the stories, putting together what Grandpa has told me over the years.

I

Aya said, said Grandpa Kan, she was pregnant and, by choice, a single mother. Would raising the baby, who is you, Tono, in this household be okay or did Papa want her and the baby to find somewhere else to live? She asked.

I was delighted. I replied: Of course, you and your baby are welcome!

When the museum management heard from Kan, who was fifty-nine years old and eligible for early retirement, that he wished to retire to be a stay-at-home grandfather, they presented him with a condition: Kan's retirement day would be the baby's birthday.

Aya went into labor and Kan's colleagues were all excited. A museum chauffeur drove him to the hospital. The next day, Kan returned and reported his grandson's birth. Everyone wished him happiness and saw him out of his office. They loved Kan. He was with the museum for thirty years.

II

I was known as an expert in putting together excavated artifacts. Archaeologists brought shattered pieces to me to learn what the original looked like. People said I had that magic vision. It took time, but I would put them together in the end. I loved the job.

I was happy most of the time there. I commuted back and forth between our house and the museum and spent as much time as I could, absorbed in piecing 40,000, 50,000-year-old mammoth ivory pieces together. It was tough but quite pleasing. It was entrusted to me by a researcher who came across a mammoth ivory figurine put together by three enthusiastic amateurs; the researcher's eyes immediately caught the fatal mistake. The people that put them together had no concept of missing pieces. The frustrated researcher had the grit and the time to undo it. After a few years of studying the pieces and working on putting them together, a phone call was made. Mr. Dinski, I think this is worth your masterful eyes and hands. What we have might be a great piece of work. If you can bring out what it is . . .

I was fortunate. The researcher was correct; this Ice Age artist was good. I was honored to feel and trace the skillful and careful marks and designs left by the Ice Age virtuoso. It was, by nature, a tedious task but highly rewarding. My mind was on fire. It has become my passion. I loved my job. Piecing the mammoth figurine into its original shape was what dictated my life.

Save, I order my computer. I can feel Grandpa is awake. Grandpa, how are you doing? Was I too loud? No, Tono, this is wonderful. The best farewell. I understand why Alina had the bed installed in the studio.

And the next day, we repeat the same process and conversation.

III

I had an amazing experience as a parent, Kan said. Aya grew up shining, making her adventures. She became a thriving ceramic artist. Alina did that. I was not a bad father, but I did not see what Alina saw, nor did I spare the time for Aya like Alina did.

When we went to see her school's art exhibition, I was proud of Aya and her clay works, as a father should be of a seven-year-old. Her teacher said Aya was so immersed in making this that she missed the school bell. I chuckled and told them that happens to me all the time at work. Lucky you, Alina said.

Back home, Alina smiled at me in the living room, "Like father, like daughter." She pointed at a photo. It is still on the wall. It is one of my proudest early works. I restored a 14,000-year-old rope-designed pot. It should still be on display at the museum.

I resumed my routine of commuting between the museum and home. I was surprised when Alina said she was thinking of getting an electric kiln and turning the garage into a pottery studio. For me, Aya's clay exhibition and her teacher's words belonged to the past.

Kan, my dear husband, I looked for a pottery class for our daughter, but there is not one in this vicinity. Let her embrace her passion. What do you think?

I would never have thought of building a home studio for a seven-year-old, but I am proud of myself for saying I am all for it. She probably knew I wanted one: I majored in ceramics and specialized in repairing in college.

We decided to build a studio adjacent to the kitchen in the backyard; our garage had to be kept for our car! I made sure Aya's studio was good for professional use. Alina gave it a name: Cave Crafters.

IV

It was worth it. We had a happy, passionate daughter thriving in the studio. We considered ourselves the luckiest parents to be involved in her growth. Aya is a miracle, Alina and I said to each other. We did everything in our ability to support her pursuit. Aya shone in her ups and downs. Aya quickly absorbed the skills and knowledge I had. Aya experimented, discovered, and mastered.

When Alina learned she had limited time left, she had us place a bed in the studio.

V

A few years after Alina passed, the mammoth ivory figurine started to manifest its full shape. I called the researcher: you should see this with your eyes. It is a wonder. I will need another decade, maybe less, to assemble the rest of the pieces, but it is nearing completion.

Then, a powerful community of academics became animated. An affluent museum wasted no time offering a special exhibition featuring the figurine. The exhibition was to take place in two years, and the rich museum could not wait another ten years for Kan to complete the puzzle. The affluent museum's R&D department said innovative computer technology would be developed for it, and it was done.

The exhibition was a tremendous success. People were in awe.

Visitors loved the visual evidence from the Ice Age: Homo sapiens minds are fantastic; homo sapiens think of things that are not in nature!

Kan's dedicated contribution was cited. Kan appreciated the gesture, but in Kan's opinion, that was bullshit. Kan confided to his colleagues: *Depriving the creative joy of a person is the worst thing a human can do to another human being. It is a crime against the entire species.*

My birth had presented itself as a perfect time for Grandpa to retire.

VI

For Grandpa Kan, when he heard I was hit by a bus and hospitalized, it was a nightmare *déjà vu*. That was how I lost my mother. My mother died overseas in front of a museum that showcased her work. She was hit from behind by a bus, driven under the influence, that ran in the wrong direction, speeding while a TV crew was filming a documentary featuring her and her art. Grandpa was told it was an instant death. I do not remember much. I was four.

What I remember is the acute pain of dropping my mother's ceramic art. I was five. Grandpa pieced it back together. It was magical. Grandpa displayed it in my bedroom for me. I got into it. I would mold clay and ask Grandpa to bake it to break it, and I would spend hours repairing it.

When I wanted to repair works I had not seen before, Grandpa started The Cave Crafters' Workshop for my benefit. I was seven. I remember bringing the flyers to school, which is now on our website:

Welcome to the Cave Crafters' Workshop! Cave Crafters offers you a studio where you can nourish and flourish your creativity. Our priority is to provide an environment for your mind and hands to concentrate on creative activity. Our medium is, but not limited to, ceramics; shape them abstractly, figuratively, in whatever forms your mind and hands take you to. Cave Crafters also offers the art of repairing broken ceramics. No experience is required. Kan is an experienced artist who has worked with museums. He will guide you as needed. Cave Crafters holds two-hour sessions for a maximum of six people per session. All ages are welcome. We offer a trial. Come and engage in the homo sapiential creative joy!

The workshop went well. Some enjoyed making clay art. Some preferred repairing. Some wanted to keep their artwork. Some did not. The latter provided great practice pieces for people like Tono. Kan has set up a system: If people wanted to leave their work, they were to take photos of their work, then place their work in a cloth bag, drop the bag, and leave the bag with broken pieces on a shelf marked for Repairing Artists.

VII

I had grown into a happy, tall young teenager. I became a masterful repairer. I have collections of my works on my bedroom shelves that testify to my mastery. I excelled at sports, too. My junior high school coaches loved me because I read the game well and played creatively. I know it made Grandpa proud of me and of himself. He knew he had a hand in developing my mind that way. He joked looking up at me about my height, too. *That height did not come from the Dinski side, Grandpa would say; it must be from your father, whom nobody knows about.*

VIII

On the day of the accident, Kan was waiting for Tono to pop his head in the studio, which was what his grandson had been doing for over a decade when he came home. Kan had four people at the workshop: two elderly ones making ceramic objects and two young ones repairing. Tono was good with little children, and Kan thought these little ones could use Tono's tips. However, Tono did not come home; instead, one of the elderly ones drove Kan to the hospital.

IX

Grandpa suddenly opened his eyes and uttered: *is this me being dead?* I could not help it. I laughed, and then I realized he was dead serious. *Grandpa, you are still alive. Oh, I am?* Grandpa chuckled. He became very lucid. *Tono, keep on enjoying your life. Everybody deserves to be happy in their own way, and if AI can enhance your homo sapiential happiness, use it.* He closed his eyes, smiling. Time was running out. I held my tears and went back onto my computer. I desperately tried to get to the end of the Cave Crafters story.

But the more I rushed, the farther the end went. I was not even writing a story. I was jotting notes down:

- The best thing a human can do to another human being is to help them find paths to their creative highness and provide the space for it.
- What was Alina's medium? Ask Grandpa when he wakes up next.

... I was in a frenzy of distress, searching for my next words, when I heard Grandpa draw his last breath.

X

Grandpa has heard me draft, edit, and rewrite most of the stories in the above, and I feel the appropriate ending for this piece is to stop here and stop working on it. That it is not finished seems to be the point.



Jeremy Fernando

Bullet with butterfly wings

2024

One of my oldest crusades is against the distinction between thought and feeling, which is really the basis of all anti-intellectual views: the heart and the head, thinking and feeling, fantasy and judgment ... and I don't believe it's true ... I have the impression that thinking is a form of feeling and that feeling is a form of thinking.

~ Susan Sontag

Lost Postcards

Anders Kølle

I miss handwriting.

I miss words scribbled or doodled on paper.

I miss letters bending either left or right, swaying like palm trees on grocery lists, in diaries, notebooks and on postcards.

Writing by hand always meant a peculiar encounter. Somehow a peace had to be negotiated between the abstract and general level of language and the particularity and singularity of writing — an uneasy peace that would often keep its tensions on the paper. The hand and the pen were caught in a battle between law and chance, idea and concretization, that would have to be refought in every line — each time with an unpredictable outcome.

Legibility arose from this battle like a gift, a sort of peace offering: the marvelous gift of meaning.

Writing paper is the surface of a pond, of a lake, of an ocean.

It bends writing like water bends light.

There is always a refraction taking place, carrying writing away from its straight and linear path. In the meeting with paper, writing is displaced, disoriented, sent in a new direction.

Handwriting never goes straight to the point but must move through unknown territory: the land of the formless, the world of stains, of smears, of smudges. A pure and meaningless presence presents itself to the hand searching for form. It is a siren song calling the hand away from its letters and from its prefigured and predictable figures.

Painters know this song as well as writers.

Many modern masterpieces of art were born from this song and from these temptations: the pleasure of not knowing where you are going, the thrill of surrendering to chance, to accidents, to the promise of new adventures.

Words written by hand say more than the meaning of the words themselves.

There is a surplus of meaning residing in the form and in the shape of the written. The author is present in these shapes and in this surplus. He appears there together with his mood swings, his passions, his patience, and his impatience. Reading a letter, reading a postcard also means reading these emotions. The joys of being on vacation, the pleasures of the beach, the proximity of the sea, are the co-writers of the hastily written postcard. The bright light and the salty air bend the letters in their direction. Words suddenly grow taller and bigger and come to fit poorly on the limited space of the card. Something vaster and freer seeks expression. Or, there is the breakup letter with its shy and miniscule letters and with its frightful abundance of space — always more room on the page than the words know how to fill. A bigger silence, a greater void, already encroaches on the writing. One doesn't read between the lines to receive this meaning. It is always evidently there — at times almost too visible and too legible to be noticed.

When Nietzsche started using a typewriter he wrote faster and easier than ever before. He enjoyed the rhythm and the pulse of the machine which seemed to echo the rhythm of modernity itself and carried him like a locomotive across the paper. The typewriter and its swiftness invited him to make new word constellations, to play with words and with rhyme. On the typewriter he discovered that Nietzsche rhymes with *nichts*, that there was a negation, a nothing – a *nichts* in his name. The very self-conscious philosopher found this intriguing. Thanks to the coolness and the indifference of the machine an impersonal voice was born that erased the personal dimension of handwriting. The author that Foucault and Barthes would later famously announce dead started dying already here: in Nietzsche's *nichts* and in the impersonal force of the machine.

During my studies at The European Graduate School I had a teacher who refused to use email and would only reply to handwritten letters. At the time I thought it was a peculiar and rather purposeless request. I have since come to appreciate it: the time it takes to write a letter is not a wasted time but a token of appreciation and of dedication. It is a time and an effort one offers to the receiver of the letter as a gift. And it turns the words themselves into something they very rarely are in today's communication: a rarity, a luxury – something to be savored.

*Now I'm going to write wherever my hand
leads: I won't fiddle with whatever it writes.*

~ Clarice Lispector

twenty twenty-three

the only thing that
continues to surprise me
is that we are still

surprised that we still
continue to claim to be
surprised each time this

happens as if the
surprise would save us having
to acknowledge that

we would much rather
remain surprised than to not
devour prizes

peoples lands so *this*
is no doubt a perfectly
ordinary year [1]

*I wake up in the morning and I wonder
why everything's the same as it was*

~ Skeeter Davis [2]

Jeremy Fernando
Singapore
2023

Notes

[1] closing line to the poem ‘一九八九年’ by Yang Lian, translated into the English as ‘1989’ by Brian Holton.

[2] Sylvia Dee & Arthur Kent, ‘The End of the World’, single by Skeeter Davis, New York: RCA Victor, 1962.

*It's goodbye for now
but not forever*

~ Mae West