

SWIM

SUBUD WRITERS INTERNATIONAL MAGAZINE

Issue Number 8

April 2017



Editorial

I had no idea when I started this SWIM project that it would last as long as it has. Welcome to the 8th issue.

One of the joys of SWIM work is the discovery of talents hitherto unknown to me. In this issue there are excellent poems by Stefanie Brown, someone I'd never heard of. Turns out she's currently creating her first book of poems.

There's lots of good creative work from previous contributors in these pages. Serafina Harper's back. Adrienne Thomas and Maya Spall are back with strong poems. Michael Cooke sent a characteristically manic piece. Marcus Bolt has a great story, and there are some of the cartoons that he and Dirk Campbell did years ago, and which it's a pleasure to revisit. There are fine photos by Lucien Parshall and Emily Conyngham.

Issue 9 is already growing... God willing it will feature excerpts from "Braids", a novel by John Panopoulous, who died some years ago, and from a book by Hussein Rofé, which is being edited by Sharif Horthy. There'll be informal accounts of their work by a couple of Subud archivists. And, I hope, more wonderful art by kids. And creative work by second-generation Subud members, please.

I'm also considering the idea of doing a special themed SWIM about education.

Topics:

What is a human being?

How do we help kids become human beings, rather than simply citizens and/or consumers?

How can we help kids be ready for a world in which steady jobs are increasingly hard to find?

If you're a teacher/parent/student and have thoughts about these topics please send them to me, along with a short bio. You've got 2 months.

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Emmanuel Williams

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SWIM

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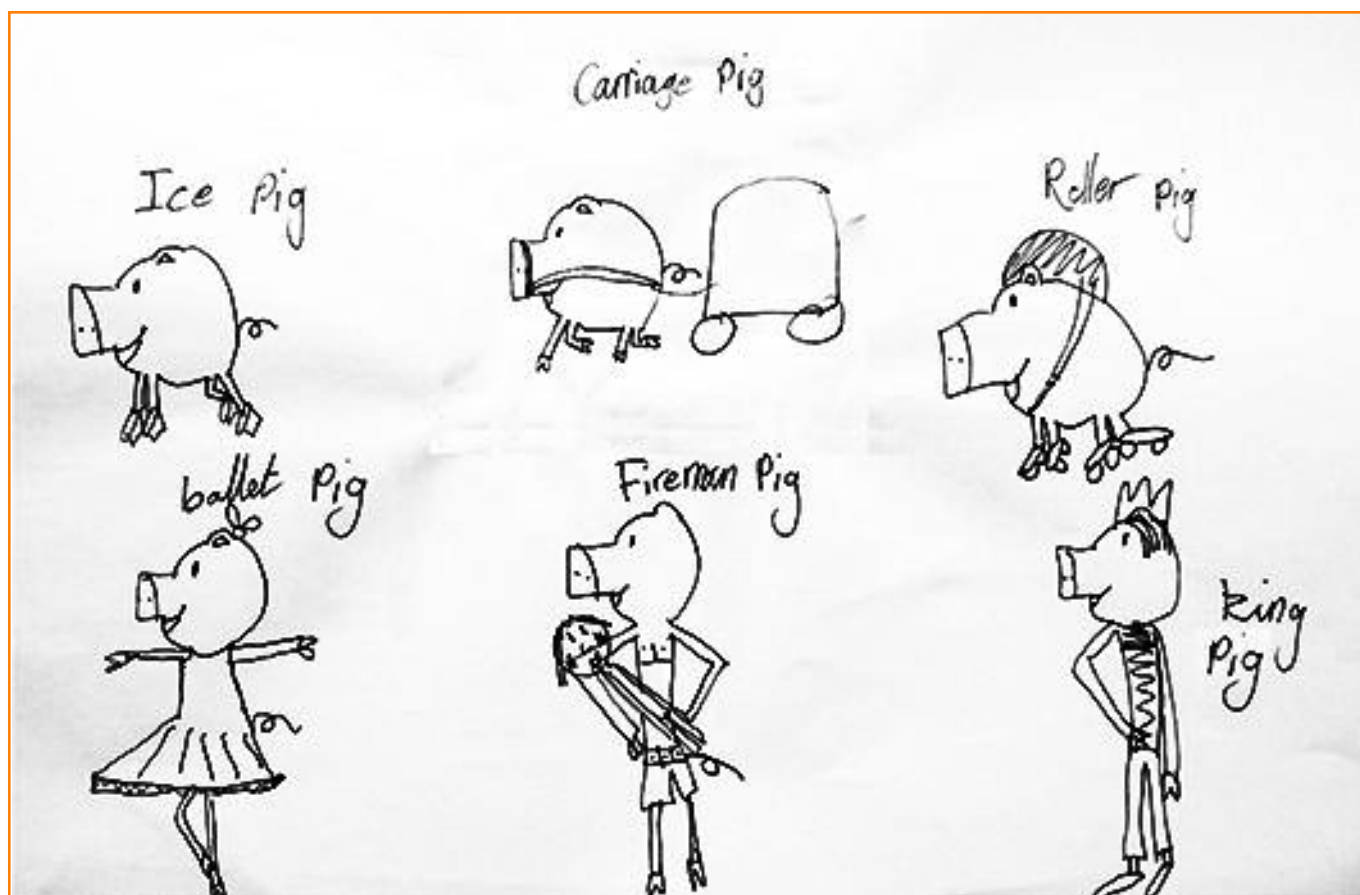
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Drawings by Serafina Harper



The Pigs



Trio

War and Peace

This is an ongoing conversation between War and Peace:

War: Peaceful people are dying out, you know. War is taking over!

Peace: I am Peace. Peace is what I stand for. I will always be around.

War: I'm always here, too. I am more powerful than you!

Peace: I am Peace. Peace is what I stand for. I will always be around. I care not about power. I am the starlight in the darkness.

War: Then I am the fog that covers the stars. I am more powerful than you! War defeats Peace! I will grind you to the ground!

Peace: I am Peace. Peace is what I stand for. I will always be around. I care not about power. Even if I am dust in the dirt, I will always be around. Always.

And so the battle rages on.

The violence never ends.

Peace will never fight back.

War will dominate.

All it takes is time.

Time will tell.

War will win some time fight itself to death, almost.

Peace will rule the earth.

Then war will be brought back.

And so the battle rages on.

The violence never ends.

Peace will never fight back.

War will dominate.

All it takes is time.

Time will tell.

The circle never ends.

And so the battle rages on.

The violence never ends.

Peace will never fight back.

War will dominate.

All it takes is time.

Time will tell....

Hani'a Hummingbird Hutoto



Equality in a Time of Hate by Loren Sloan (aged 11)

An Inner Experience of Bapak

By Carol, as sent to Hardwin Blanchard.

A few years before finding Subud, I had an inner experience that lasted about five days. During that time, I felt as though I was floating out among the stars, far from earth. In that place, nothing existed except God. But God seemed to be like a very faint light that was very far away.

Not long after I was opened, our group went to Skymont to see Bapak. The first night there was frightening. The sky was torn by terrible storms. The next morning, someone said that Bapak had said there was a war in the sky during the night, a battle between the lower forces and something like the angels.

During Bapak's first talk at Skymont, I could feel his words within me, but without any understanding of what they meant.

When Bapak arrived at the building for his second talk, he looked different and strange. He looked dark. He looked like a camera lens that was completely shut. Then he sat down and began to talk, and after a few minutes, I could see the lens opening and light streaming from him. He became a brilliant light that went everywhere. There was only the faintest outline of Bapak within the light. This lasted for a while, and then the light became less intense. Finally, he ended his talk and left the room.

I can't describe this light except to say that it was white and brilliant and alive. It seemed like the light that I had seen far away in the universe a few years before. But now it was here – it had come right here to this earth from the farthest place in the universe.

I knew this was what I had come to receive. After this experience, I felt that being near Bapak was as close as I would come to the light of God. I ask forgiveness for my inability to describe this more clearly.

A Dream

I found myself in an elevator with Bapak and a lion. Bapak and I stood side-by-side. The lion was facing us, drooling and snarling. The lion started to attack me, and I was very scared. I felt myself inwardly asking Bapak what to do, and instead of answering me, he let me feel how he felt inside. When I felt Bapak's inner feeling of complete quietness and calm, I began to feel the same feeling inside. The lion stopped his actions and sat calmly before us, and I realized Bapak had taught me how to be a lion tamer.



Country of Disability

"In my heart, I was free.
In my mind, I was unbounded.
And in my life, the journey was just begun."

Helen Straker (blind since birth).

What is being disabled, really? I'll tell you: it's a state of mind. Many people who are blind, for instance, are not truly disabled, in my opinion; while there are many who appear normal, but are in reality stunted by their own paralysis of fear: fear of death and fear of life, fear of losing and fear of finding: the world sits on their heads and crushes the spirit out of them. But there's always a new day for anyone who wants to grasp it.

I'm used to my blindness now. I still have my childhood memories – in living colour, I laugh to myself, even though since the accident (when I was 15) I haven't seen a thing. Well, correction: I imagine everything, in colour, shade and perspective, in my own way, in a way that enables me to relate to people and life the way they are to me.

Let me give you an example: all kind people, I picture as beautiful, as handsome and as young as Spring. People who lie and cheat, to me they're a picture of ugliness, older than Autumn. I'm being a little graphic here but its so you get my meaning!

Senses are automatic, aren't they? You know, you open your eyes and immediately you're hit with a million vibrations of colour and intensity that grab your attention. The 'seeing' is all done for you. It's all managed for you and you have nothing to do with it. You're sort of invaded.

I've developed a way of seeing, different from the way I used to see, when all was a romance of dreams, colours and first impressions. Now I 'see', feel, hear and sense everything in a complete, personal way, that gives me the information and art of life in a totally hands-on and useful way. That tone of voice – more than any body-language – that energy of personal vibration: it's there and a lot more than in 'living colours'; there's no false cosmetic picture of what's there: you're blessed, or you're protected, or you're informed; and you're dealing with real situations and real experiences.

You know, I'm sure that clairvoyants close their eyes every time because when you can see, all you see is 'lies'! The colours, everything – however lovely – are not the reality! Very often they hide the reality! I'm not being dramatic, just factual.

It's true, being blind does have its complications, and Nature obviously intended people to see the stairs, the trees and the passing traffic without 'collecting' them as well. Yet my life is rich, truly rich. Even if I could not hear all that wonderful music, the sounds of voices, the trees playing with the wind, I feel sure there would be something else to live for and with. No, it would not be easy having no hearing either.

You know, I often think – when people ask me about this – that we're children who've been given, let's say, six sweets. If we lose one or two, we feel dejected, there's a pain in our heart. But now I see it differently: I rejoice in being myself.

Extract from 'Journeys of a Stockbroker'

© Dahlan Simpson and Sentimental Bloke Publishing 1991-2017

The Choosing

Something wasn't right. Riku couldn't put his finger on it, but sensed things weren't quite as they should be, which was strange, he thought, because he'd been so happy these last five years since joining Seventh Heaven. He knew it wasn't nervousness; he didn't have 'butterflies', and he enjoyed interviews, usually did well... It was more a feeling of... foreboding.

'Basically,' he told himself, 'I've got the jitters.'

Riku was on the London bound express on his way to an interview at the Church of Seventh Heaven's National Headquarters for a position as Marketing Director. If he got the job, it would mean a virtual doubling of his salary and he'd get to work with like-minded people in the fastest growing church in the world.

'The chance of a golden future – so why am I feeling so weird?' he wondered, staring down through the window at the tracks whistling by, simulating a hard-edged abstract painting. He tried closing his eyes and surrendering the feeling – the C7H technique for overcoming anything considered negative emotion.

'What was it our founder said? "If you're not feeling happy and contented, you're in the grip of your base energies..." Maybe those energies don't want me to get this job. They always try to keep you small, confined, so I'm told. Yeah! That's it. They're what's making me feel scared. Well, I won't let that happen; they're not going to hold me back anymore.'

Continuing with the 'Think Happy, Feel Happy' exercise, Riku shifted into daydreaming mode and imagined buying that Alfa Spyder he'd always dreamed of, if he got the job, and the fat salary and the move to London and a new girlfriend, perhaps; a fiancée, a C7H wedding, many children, a for-ever-after-happy C7H life and...

'No – *when* you get the job,' he corrected himself.

He walked into the interview room and ritually hugged the two men and two women present – two hands on the other's back, head over the right shoulder, then the left – and took the chair indicated.

'Right, Riku – that's your Seventh Heaven name, I assume?'

'That's right – for over three years now I got it direct from Founder Visionary Elijah.'

'And you were initiated five years ago?'

Riku nodded agreement.

'And I see from your application that you are already a Parish Aid?'

'Yes. I've witnessed several hundred initiations so far.'

'Impressive for one so young...'

'Thank you.'

'What is the main precept of the Seventh Heaven Church?' one of the men threw at him.

'Er... Submission to the Universal Energy ruling all...'

'And what do we submit?' asked the other.

'Our negativity, mainly. Our dark emotions.'

'Such as?'

>

'Sadness, fear, hatred, criticism, self-denigration... anything that closes down that Seventh Heaven feeling of happiness and the joy of being alive – as a member of the Church, of course...'

'I see you read our Founder's talks...' the first smiled at Riku, who nodded back, feeling sheepish, but pleased with himself and his answers.

'And why do you want to work for Seventh Heaven?' asked one of the women.

'I like our people – we've all got so much in common; and I believe in the Church and know in my heart that it can change society for the better the bigger it grows. And because it's a force for good in the world and, of course, it's what The Spirit ordains,' Riku gushed. Then he shrugged and said. 'I'm totally committed and I just want to help Founder Visionary Elijah's mission in any small way I can, and be part of that worldwide outreach and spread, I guess. That's it, really.'

'Good answer,' the woman smiled.

After going through Riku's CV, they asked him if he had any questions. He hadn't, so they told him to step outside while they considered. Riku knew this meant they would quieten themselves, summon up the Seventh Heaven inner vibe and then ask The Spirit out loud, 'Is Riku the right person for this job?'

They would then observe their feelings – rising happiness would indicate 'yes' – any other emotion, including a feeling of emptiness, would indicate he was not the right candidate. This was the Church of Seventh Heaven's way of doing business and the basis on which it was structured, staffed, organised and run. Being guided by The Spirit in all things – a true theocracy they claimed, and liked to think.

'We are delighted to offer you the job,' they told him after summoning him back. 'When can you start?'

Riku's rise through the ranks was exceptionally rapid. Within a year he had graduated to being a Regional Aid, someone considered as an advanced spiritual being, and he was one of the youngest to have ever achieved such a position. Thus, when he got the call to attend a session to decide if he were to be further promoted – to National Level – he was not surprised. Neither could he sidestep the rather smug feeling that he would become one of the top six members of the Church's inner circle in the UK – a fully-fledged, Seventh Heaven Bishop with a capital 'B'.

'Next stop International, eh?' he smiled to himself. 'Yeah, maybe, one day. Correction; *definitely* one day!'

The opportunity came sooner than even he realised it could.

'You'll be attending the World Congress in the US, I assume?' one of his female Bishop counterparts asked a few years later as they walked towards the Worship Hall in the Church's National Centre, ready to lead the evening's free-form happiness session.

'Spirit willing.'

'Good. You know there's a vacancy on the World Council, and they're asking for nominations?'

'Yes. I heard.'

'Well, we're nominating you.'

'No – really? Are you sure...?'

Riku exalted inside. This meant he would be personally interviewed by Founder Visionary Elijah – the man who had created the church after receiving a series of visions and revelations some twenty-five years ago. And if successful, he would become one of the twelve World Archbishops, >

a member of the ruling élite.

And all within ten years of initiation...

His happiness session that night was the strongest and most worshipful he had ever experienced as he danced around the hall with a spontaneous chant of well-being and laughter bubbling from his mouth, harmonising with the congregation of over a thousand free-form worshippers.

The months leading to the Congress went by in a daze and each time Riku thought of the implications of being a church leader, a ball of happiness rose and detonated in his chest forcing him to close his eyes and to experience the elation in full.

'Power, travel, expenses, the wife I seek; and pure bliss, always the bliss, the joy. I was born for this,' he told himself. 'Chosen! Thank You, Great Spirit, thank You...'

The day came when, after a week at Congress, Riku got the call. Feeling nervous and unable to side-step the rising emotion, he was ushered into a darkened room to kneel before Founder Visionary Elijah to be examined.

Riku had seen Elijah pass by in the back of his Rolls Royce; observed him giving talks to the faithful in five-thousand seater halls; once been in his presence as part of a delegation, and was aware this well-built, but corpulent, clean-shaven Afro-American was swooned over by Seventh Heaven women worldwide, but he was not prepared for the sheer one-on-one presence of the man, the overwhelming charisma. Without thinking, Riku automatically prostrated himself on the floor in front of where the Founder sat.

'Riku, are you totally committed to Seventh Heaven? Will you dedicate your life to our Church?' Elijah asked in a rich, mellifluous voice.

'Yes, Visionary Founder, totally willing,' he managed to whisper.

'Get back on your knees and close your eyes. I want you to be very quiet and attentive. Ignore anything that goes on around you. I shall enter a receiving state in order for something to be revealed through me, to you; this will not be in words, but in feeling and understanding. You must weigh up what you receive, then make a life defining choice...'

Riku levered himself up as requested and, eyes firmly closed, became aware of Elijah's deep and sonorous breathing, then of the light levels changing in the room, as though all was pulsating and glowing. He sensed a presence all around him and within him, a grip on his emotional centre, then on his body, and he was transfixed, unable to move.

'This feeling...' he thought briefly. 'It's... it's – holiness...?' and he gasped with the realisation.

Wordless information began to flow into his understanding, interpreted through his thinking mind.

'We are the entity Aloi,' a voice seemed to say. 'We have no physical form. You cannot see us or touch us; you can only sense us. We exist everywhere and nowhere, but because we too need food in order to exist, we travel from planet to planet seeking out psychic energy as our sustenance.

'We infiltrate the inner world of any receptive, sentient being and, when we touch, are invariably perceived as a visitation from God, an epiphany, a receiving, a vision – whatever corresponds to that individual's cultural and religious mythology. We then allow that receptive being the power to create a movement, a church, a cult, along with the ability to transmit, to pass on to others a rudimentary contact with us.

>

'Thus we establish a bridgehead in preparation for our invasion...

'We sense your shock, but do not fear – our invasion is benign. We only take over the minds and inner natures of those who are willing to surrender their selfhood, those who are willing to allow us to reside in their body and to feed off their spiritual energy.

'In return, we give them the peace, happiness and certainty that all beings seek through their religious faith.

'All religion is simply a symbiotic relationship between an individual, or group, and ourselves. However, it is not a parasitical relationship as such, it is a true symbiosis; we do not kill or weaken our hosts; it remains in our interests to keep them alive, healthy, thriving and happy. For the more contented they are, the more untainted with fear and uncertainty, the more nutritious is our food.

'We now offer you a choice, as we have done to countless beings on innumerable planets since time began. Accept us, become us and throw off your human-ness with all its failings – its animal nature with coarse emotions, drives, desires and passions; its decline into illness, old age and death – and experience the life-eternal, the life of bliss with us, through us.

'Refuse us and the offer we make you, to be our emissary as a world church leader, will be rescinded and we will bother you no more. We will wipe your memory clean of this examination to ensure you make no attempts to inform those outside. Those few who have tried were met with ridicule and scorn. Be aware no one would ever believe you, so it is pointless to try.

'Now you must make your decision. Back to your old self and the whims of chance, the vagaries of fortune, or a guaranteed, glorious future as a leader of our church on planet Earth and life eternal.

'We will give you a moment alone to weigh up our offer...'

Riku, came to as he was momentarily released from the Aloï's spiritual grip, contradictory thoughts flooding his mind.

'So, it comes down to this. Seventh Heaven is an invasion from outer space... They want to take over the world. Horrible, disgusting thought – but they offer so much...

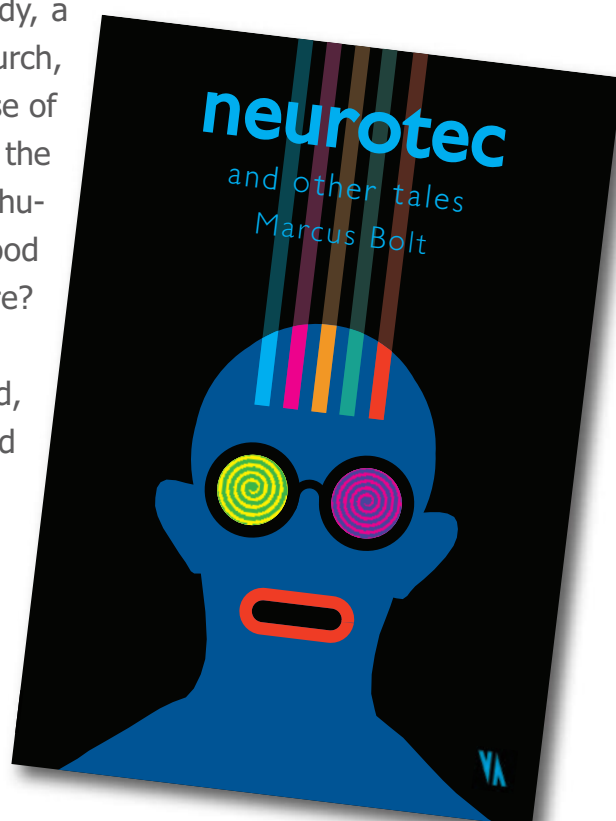
'Do I want to go back to being Dick Smith, a nobody, a failure? Do I really want to give up my status in the Church, my chance to be a leader? Lose my happiness, my sense of well-being – all I've achieved? Don't think so... But, on the other hand, could I, should I, give up my free will, my humanity, my birthright? Do I want to be a slave, a food source to these... creatures, spirits, whatever they are? What to do? What to do?'

Then clarity. Suddenly he knew what he really wanted, what was right; there was only one choice, and he lifted his head and cried out from his innermost depths.

'I... choose... Aloï...'

* * *

From *'NEUROTEC and Other Tales'* by Marcus Bolt
29 short stories with a psycho-spiritual, sci-fi feel,
available from www.lulu.com



Cartoons

Cartoons from 'The Great Laugh Force' and 'A Laugh Within a Laugh' by Dirk Campbell and Marcus Bolt. Their fourth book, 'The Great Life Farce' is still available from www.lulu.com

They hope to produce all four volumes as one (to be called 'The Complete Recorded Jokes') in time for World Congress 2018.

SUBUD INSULTS

HELLO OLD BEAN - HAVEN'T
SEEN YOU FOR YEARS AND
YEARS - YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED
AT ALL!



DARLING YOU LOOK LIKE
YOU NEED A LATHAN



IF DOING LATHAN IN TROUSERS
MAKES YOU MORE MANLY, HOW COME
IT'S NEVER WORKED ON MY HUSBAND?

Bapak wrote that a book dropped into his
lap and when he opened it, whatever
question he asked was answered...



Blimey! Sounds like he
prophesied the laptop and
Google...





Sisters

Sisters, my women friends
how I love that old, young,
bright and tired knowing recognition.
Sisters, how I love our scratchy anger
smouldering envy, moonshine dramas,
putting on the face, and troubled keeping of the faith.
How I love the fear of inadequate slow steps forward,
the harsh angry marching, fighting in deep, with the danger.
Women how I love the dance of 'Gloomy Sunday'
into defiant transcendence, singing into the present
the joy of I love you.



Photo by Emily Congyham

Maia Spall January 2016



Photo by Emily Congyham

Thank You

When you lie
you remind me of truth

When you seek to exclude
my heart grows wider and deeper

When hate fills your actions and words
you remind me of love

When you demean women
I am moved to honor and respect them

When you slam the door on your critics
I remember to listen with humility

When you create turmoil
with ranting and tweets
you remind me of quietness
where a smile awaits
and maybe some wisdom

For all this
I thank you

Emmanuel Williams

Lives and Life in the Nursing Home

by Melinda Wallis

Alice is old and very small, and her body is permanently twisted around, so that she can't look straight ahead. She peers up at others by looking up sideways. She has hands that are crippled up into claws – arthritis, I assume. But she's very bright and opinionated. She's pretty tiny, and scoots around in a tiny wheelchair. You have to be willing to sit still and listen carefully to have a conversation. She is kind and gentle.

Indra has dementia. She is speaking Pharsi to us. We don't understand her. She looks confused all the time.

Did I tell you about Lily? She is in her wheelchair, moving around constantly, following the next grab-able wall. She'll go down a hallway, and if there is an open door, in she goes, following the wall... then comes back out. Her body is twisted around so that she is also peering up at you... except that she does not appear to be interested in having any conversation. She used to do this with a walker, now in a wheelchair. What next?

Johnnie is a big heavy guy. Like so many others, he can't walk. He had a stroke. He doesn't seem to get it about "personal space". He gets into everybody's space and doesn't understand why people get annoyed. He's a nice guy, is kind and considerate, but still... He takes up a lot of space. "That was a great dessert!" he shouts across the dining room to the cooks. He'll wheel around in the crowded dining room, talking to everyone, getting in the way of our very busy aides serving the food. Memory? Don't count on it. Best to tell him several times what's scheduled for 2 PM that afternoon. "Tommy," I will say to him, "pull your shirt down, your tummy's hanging out!" He might say, "I don't care", and he might say "Oops!" and pull it down.

Did I tell you about Jane, whose husband shot her in the head? She lived, but with some severe physical challenges. Inside that body is a very sharp brain. Jane's tongue is swollen up and sometimes hangs out. It's very hard to understand her. How frustrating it must be for her! She's smart and clever. We've learned to say to her, "Can you word that differently?" when we're trying to understand what she's saying. Sometimes one of her arms will be sticking straight up, weaving around. You don't know if she's trying to get attention, or if some nerves have gotten tangled and her arm is just waving around. She's a winner – often wins at bingo, wins cleverly at "Kings in a corner", the card game we play incessantly. I have never heard her say anything unkind about anyone.

There's a Korean lady who is always well-groomed, but she mostly has a blank look... except that every now and again she gets really mad. The other day she threatened someone with a (dull) knife.

A few years ago, Matty would get somewhat grumpy but could relate to people in a fairly normal way. A year ago she would sit in the dining room and make mysterious negative comments about everyone else in there. One day she hit my roommate and threatened to kill her. The aides were instructed to keep Matty away from our room. Now Matty lives on her own planet, speaking about unrelated things, most often not understanding what she's being told.

Now, Matty's condition has deteriorated and she no longer remembers why she was mad. She is dour. What she says makes no sense. But the other days some relatives came to see her and she got so HAPPY!

All and then there is Olivia. She is a very good artist, and is so delightfully artistic with her clothing style. Piled up on her head is a turban, sometimes with a purple veil draped over it. Clothing gets layered on – a short skirt of one color worn over a long skirt, bright wild color combinations. A colorful personality whose appearance displays her unique thinking. She's quite paranoid, and thinks things are being stolen from her room. She thinks the director of the facility is out to get her. In other words she, like many artists, is a bit batty.

And did I tell you about...



Photo by Emily Congyham

The Stranger

My father is a long dead sailor
Resting on the bottom of the deep
And my sister hides behind convent walls
My mother moves so slowly
Only wishing to lay down and sleep
And my brother has no words to say
and never speaks at all

In my house are many birds and fishes
All longing to be free
And the pages in my books are fading
Though they still speak to me
In my room are tricks and shadows
from a candle burning low
and painted on the angry ceiling
are all the words I know

and a serpent lays coiled in the firelight
his tongue flicks to and fro; to and fro

my hand moves across the page and I listen in the silence
for a shifting in the wind
outside my darkened window
that tells me he is coming
with his wolf's eyes
and his snake's throat
and his hands like a raven's
and his shark's fin arms
and his back like black water

and he enters without knocking and asks for wine and firelight
and the serpent sheds its skin
like my father and my mother
like my sister and my brother
who are trapped in their own silence
I am surrounded by words
I am their wretched prisoner

Then the stranger smiles like razors and the serpent shrinks and dies
I am asking him a question
Which he answers with his eyes
MY NAME IS FEAR

Yet I make him warm and welcome and the ghosts gather round and smile
And my family breathes
They are awaiting my release
And I long for the world beyond words
Where I will fear no evil
For Thou art with me.

Adrienne Thomas

A Form of Nature

There's blood in my nose. And Thelonious with Trane are playing their gorgeous rendition of Thelonious's "Ruby My Dear".

Is there anything more? Quite possibly, but...

The exactitude of the meeting of one simple unadorned beauty of moment in conjunction with another – heaven: if taken place round all the clocks then we are in any and all form in content, as in within our within our self, the remove of the rum and rude of "the thing of it all".

"Tequila?" "Oh... nice, thank you. I'll pass... not because of the refusal of the spirit of the offer. Rather the spirit residing not within the drink itself but in someplace else - the spirit within to pass on the offer. Cryptic perhaps, a bit obtuse... but that's precisely what the point of it is."

Smell of fresh paint - the newness of it, the potential. Likewise the breaking up of concrete of sidewalk, pathways, driveways, blacktops to REVEAL the food earth of consummate foundation - The Good Earth.

Tart, rough, smooth, defined, undefined, the mastery of nature when the 'head' gets out of the way.

A friend said it with slight, very slight contributing note from me. "Put one step in front of the other - and don't think."

- early April, 2017, Michael Cooke

The way it's gonna be

Okay now listen up all you tingle-popping Mojo-baking wazzockers
you with yer straightups
you with your bossa-nova carpet beaters
let me tell you a thing or two
'bout the way it's gonna be

'cos we're gonna get the cotton-sock bad dudes outta here
We're gonna herd all the bojollies into the biggest Goddamn barge you ever saw
and we're gonna sail 'em away across the seven rollers
and make damn sure they never come back
that's right
not this century
and not the next
because if you wanna get the job done
you gotta have the right guy to do it
and I'm the guy

Who am I?

You're the guy

Yeah
I'm the guy

Emmanuel Williams

EDITH E

Readers were invited to write about this photo by Isaac Goff...

The Photograph

Nature is all ceaseless motion.
Around the globe, volcanoes explode
The earth quakes, winds swirl hard enough
To shift pebbles, clouds, sometimes buildings.

Water moves constantly, gravity-pulled,
From turbulent waves to babbling brooks.
Even a seemingly motionless frozen puddle
Contains crystalline contractions in its depths.

I look at a photograph, of lush vegetation;
Of a green blanket cradling a sea-less boat.
A perfect cyan sky overhead, broken only by
Brushstrokes of cotton-white cirrus.

This photograph is a snapshot
Of one single moment in time.
I see no movement in this picture.
But it is there nonetheless.

An invisible breeze entices the wisps
Of cloud across their canvas.
A darting beetle brushes unseen
Against an upright blade of grass.

The hurrying mouse dislodges a stone
As he scampers home to his nest, and
Particles of soil tumble down a slope
In response to gentle seismic activity below.

The marooned boat in the foreground appears static,
But only to the naked eye or closed ear.
Its planks creak in the heat of the unblinking sun
As the wood shrinks and settles and the paint blisters.

It is only the photograph itself which is still.
Or is it? Is there movement deep in the
Celluloid fibres of this paper image?
Life vibrating at microscopic level.



Stefanie Brown

Edith E

Men stood firmly in the cockpit, legs braced
Against the steep angle of their shifting floor
As the boat heeled in the swell. Vast granite
Clouds filled every corner of the sky, unleashing
Their unwelcome contents. Oilskins were
Fastened tightly against the unforgiving wind as it
Attempted to slice away every scrap of body heat.

They would not give up. The maelstrom beneath
Their feet paled before their jubilation at the sight
Of a teeming shoal of fish, frenziedly chasing
Smaller fry. Even through the popping water,
Its surface disturbed by violent, freezing rain,
The signs of life were unmistakable.
There was a good haul to be had here.

They had been on their way back in, empty-handed
When this gift had appeared before them.
The whipping wind sideswiped them unmercifully
Through the heaving waves, but the promise
Of justification, for going out today of all days,
Of money, of food, of glory, of stories to be told,
Pushed them onwards without a thought.

They never saw the boy slip on the rain-washed decking
Nor heard his cry as he plunged overboard.
He was simply gone.
His father cannot bear to set foot on the Edith E again
Nor his mother to set eye on any boat and so
This once-working proud vessel now lies
Abandoned in a field under clear blue skies.

Standing sentinel over the greed of man.

Stefanie Brown

Dear Edith

Dear Edith,

I know just how you might feel. Like me you've got the wrong stuff under your keel. Your timbers are worn, like me most forlorn, both of us peeling and both of us reeling and looking unkempt. There you sit, like me, utterly out of your element. We both are incongruously stuck in an alien landscape, perhaps a little embarrassed if passing persons stop and gape. Curious, of course, and quite, but not quite quaint, marooned against a massive sky. So there you are, you and I. Dear Edith E, not very dissimilar to Lawrence B.

*

But how did you get there? Did the tide go out and didn't come back? Did the moon, a most unreliable planet, play havoc with you and yours? Waxing and waning at will, getting Aquarians the world over in a dither. Perhaps dragged out by an errant sailor with a boat like you in every port? Probably a scurvy knave with no thought for a lady's dilemma. Did he drag you out there for what he promised would be a picnic.

A small yellow flower looked on! Then plucked up courage to speak.

"Hallo," said the flower, "you seem a bit under the weather."

Edith remained stoic, holding back a blush, fully aware of her blistered boards.

"Sorry," said the flower, who was a sensitive soul as most flowers are.

"All right," said Edith.

"Mind you," said the flower, "there's a lot of your sort left high and dry when they started to divert the water inflow of the Aral Sea. What was bound to happen was obviously a disaster. It has been called easily one of the biggest human-caused environmental bungles in history."

"I suppose my situation is also the result of a bungle, then," said Edith, suddenly miffed.

"Par for the course," said the flower, "worse things happen at sea."

Edith started.

"Sorry, just in a manner of speaking," said the flower, wishing it didn't make so many oratorical blunders. "The Aral Sea fisherpersons are the ones I feel sorry for. Imagine having your workplace trickling away from you. It's miles away from the villages by now and you can't commute in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Trying to reach it on foot would have been pointless because at the rate the water receded you might never have got there."

"I think I am more of a river boat," Edith said. "If you look behind my stern you will notice a strip of lush grass. It probably means the presence of water below ground. I suppose that's how I got here, when a creek was running."

"What does the E mean, following Edith on your bow?" the flower asked.

"Oh, that stands for Eddystone. It is my husband's family name."

"You are married to a lighthouse?" the flower said, astonished.

"Well, yes, you see even inanimate objects have life you know."

"But getting out to the rocks must have been ever so dangerous for a trim lass like you."

Edith blushed full and proper.

"I couldn't help myself. He was so tall and handsome and I suppose I was simply dazzled. When he switched on his lights at night my resistance crumbled."

"You do know that the lights are meant to keep ships away, don't you?"

"I know, but what was I to do? I begged for him to set up house with me in a nice sandy cove. But he remained unmoved. Men sometimes don't know when they've got a good thing going. I'll bet my barnacles that he has been replaced by radar by now."

>

The flower looked thoughtful. "Are you kidding me about being married to a lighthouse?"

"Just a joke," Edith said. "I have no idea what the E stands for."

"Still," said the flower, "we know each other now and can always have somebody to chat with." Then with a serious turn, "...as long as THEY don't show up."

"They?" said Edith who had picked up the feeling of the flower's sudden seriousness.

"I've heard them," said the flower. "One of them said that this was a good spot and that there was lots of nothing for miles around and they could set it off here."

"Set what off?"

"A bomb. They are always looking for places where they think nothing much could go wrong."

"But what about us? Then there are all of the other bits of grass and flowers and shrubs, and I'm sure there must be earthworms."

"Precisely. But there is one good aspect."

"Oh?" Edith said in askance.

"Since the world is round the bombers won't be able to run away for ever."

"I suppose one would call that geographic karma?"

"Absolutely," said the flower. "You can run away from all sorts of things, but sooner or later you will run smack into your own big bang."

"That makes sense," Edith said.

"You get time to think, living out here," said the flower.

Lawrence Brazier



And here's your prompt for this issue... see the cover for a larger version.

Send your writings to me at

Emmanuelriddlemaker@gmail.com

The Colour of Me

What colour am I? Today, I am green. The colour
Of Spring, of healing, of new beginnings. Nature
Is unfurling all around me, in this hopeful month
Of March, and I jump on her bandwagon
In anticipation of a free ride.

No matter how long and dark the winter, the
Return of green is inevitable. Dead-seeming
Twigs push out their tight leaf buds, a hint of
Unfurling colour barely visible against the
Nakedness of last season's hibernation.

Yesterday I was grey. At times black even.
Overwhelmed by sorrow, loss and longing,
Wanting you back. Grey still underlies
Today's green, but if I hang on long enough
Perhaps the grey will dissipate entirely, for ever.

Some days I am yellow. Shining like the sun.
Pouring out happiness, brightness and love.
Accepting the joy and fruits of life without question.
Basking in the warmth of motherhood, and the
Love flowing to and from my wondrous children.

I am rarely red. Red is the colour of anger
And rage. But it is also the colour of
Blood. Perhaps I am not red because
I am often drained of it, as the blood
Drips slowly from my pierced heart.

Pink, the colour of a blush rose, is sweet
And gentle, a colour of dawns and
Sunsets. I like to be pink.
Calm, measured, content.
The colour of a new born babe.

I might sometimes be blue - in its
Traditional meaning of sad. But
I prefer to be the colour of sky.
Or a Caribbean sea, lapping quietly
Against the shell-scattered sand.

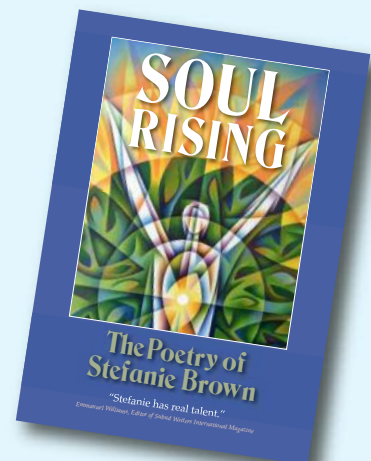
These colours are all shades of emotion,
Drifting across my personality and showing
In fleeting glimpses. The I that surrounds
Me, that is me but so much bigger than me,
Is pure, glowing, brilliant white.

In truth, I am all colours and no colour.
I am made of everything and nothing.
Subject to the visible spectrum of
This world, but not limited to it.
Earth, fire, water, air...and light.

Stefanie Brown



From *Soul Rising*,
The Poetry of Stefanie Brown
Available at the end of April
from www.lulu.com



Starting Again

Let's pretend I am starting again
how would I do it?

Round and round
excitement acceptance
feeding and quenching
experience seeping
folds of earth melting
walking in snow for just one more year;
round and round see the earth shining
then the leaves growing,
deep in the soil the shape of my feet,
see my feet shaping just one more year,
round and round forever turning
excitement, acceptance;

walk in the snow, see the earth shining
see the earth turning

Maia Spall

SWIM

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Bapak

Lost in the Amazon

and Other Tales

Adventures with Bapak
and Ibu Siti Sumari

Mardiyah A. Tarantino



This delightful little book contains a series of short, vivid sketches of events remembered from the years the author lived closely to Bapak and Ibu Siti Sumari when on the South American tours over 40 years ago. The book also includes snippets from the seven years when the family lived in Cilandak. It contains much spiritual advice and guidance given to her by Ibu as trust and intimacy built over time, up to Ibu's death in 1971.

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