

For Your Consideration

by John Olson

Consider these words a dream of azure. Consider these words as words and nothing more than words. Consider these words ideas folded into buffalo. Consider these words folded into Buddhism. Consider. Please consider these words. These constant companions. These throats these museums these elbows these pins.

Pin. The very word makes me want to put its syllables in my breath and pin it to a sentence. Pin an image to the air and let it hang there. An image like England. An Image like Boston. An image like roots. An image like light glowing through the panels of a Tiffany lamp. The black-veined wings of an orange butterfly. The cream white petals of a day lily with a yellow style.

Consider cider. Consider cypress. Consider Paris. Consider Gustave Flaubert. Consider the city of Paris in Februaury, 1873. Consider Gustave Flaubert sitting at a desk. Consider Gustave Flaubert writing with an implement designed for such use: a pen. A pen such as it existed in Paris in 1873. Which was probably a goose quill. The fountain pen would not emerge for another decade.

Consider a goose quill. Consider a man writing. Consider a name. Gustave Flaubert. Consider a stance. Consider an attitude. Consider the attitude of a writer writing among a class of merchants who do not care about writing. Gustave Flaubert wondered about the value of writing. Why does anyone write? "Why need one write," he writes. "A pen, ink, and some paper, nothing more... Literature, poetry, what purpose do they serve? No one has ever known."

Consider you. Yourself. Consider your eyes. Consider your nose. Consider your fingers and toes. Consider the weight of your body. Consider the furniture that you like. Consider the furniture that you do not like. Consider the computer. Consider the smartphone. Consider the glow of a screen. Consider the soft flutter of a page in a book. Which do you prefer? Which holds your attention best?

Consider food. Consider eggs. Consider bread. Consider strawberry jam. Consider eggs as they are stirred in a sauce pan

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and begin to congeal. Consider meat as it sizzles in its own juices. Consider an onion as it is diced by a knife into pieces. Consider scrubbed mussels steamed open in wine. Bread crumbs moistened with vinegar and pounded to a paste. A milieu of macaroni.

Consider your mouth. Chewing. Talking. What are the words that are coming out of it? Are they the words that you wanted to come out of it or are they words that surprised you as they came out of your mouth? Are they words that you take pride in? Or words that you wish you could pull back from the air and step on and crush like foul insects?

Consider words. Words propagating words. Words oozing words. Luminous words. Dark words. Silken words. Murderous words. Engorged words. Supple and tender words. A Picasso of words. A Pollock of words. A Vermeer of words.

Consider being. Consider existence. Consider non-being. Consider not existing. What is it to not exist? What is it to not have a nose, a mouth, a pair of legs, a pair of ears, a brain, a network of nerves, emotions, sensations, what is it to be without these things? Is it like being air? Is it like being wind? Is it like being a noise that comes and goes? Is it like being the smell of something? Do ghosts have odors? Do ghosts inhabit words? Ghosts most certainly inhabit words.

Consider contrast. Consider ruin and paroxysm. Consider serenity and lakes. Mountain lakes. The sky and its clouds reflected in a still mountain lake. Does it make you happy? Does it make you ache? The water is cold. So cold I cannot think how cold.

Are there places that words cannot go? Consider words going where they were never intended to go. Consider your words drifting like leaves or empty potato chip bags bumping and jiggedy jaggling down a street into the past. Consider the past as a place that is separate from the present. Consider the past a place like Cuba or Tasmania.

I do not think the past is a place. When I consider the past I consider it as a phenomenon that I have largely invented or recreated. A recreation. Like fishing. Like standing on the bank of a

river. A river of fast moving water. And finding the deepest stillest part of the water and tossing my line and its lure out to that place in the water. And expectantly hoping that something will bite. Something terrifically alive and slippery and speckled. And I consider this life. I consider this the practice of memory. Of being in life and trying to catch something in the past. Something I missed. Something that eluded me when I experience it. And still eludes me. As everything does. As all these words combined cannot quite capture. Cannot quite keep still as I hold it in my hand and say look. Look at this thing I've made. This study. This effervescence. This pulse.

