

The Fool on the Hill

by John Olson

April 1st, 2013. 9:05 a.m. I drink five mugs of coffee purchased the previous week from an herbalist in the International District, which is strong as cast-iron and proves to be a fine substitute for personal existence.

9:20 a.m. I'm being followed by pillows. Big, paisley pillows and cushions the size of kangaroos. I shoot one with a double-barreled wheellock, a gift from Charles V, and the pillow drops to the ground, hemorrhaging xenogenetic slinkys.

10:17 a.m. There can be no question of easy faith. I study the plants at the window and realize that there is no empirical method for determining the molecular velocities of horripilating zithers. Even if I grant James Maxwell some justification for the Clausius virial equation that holds for macro-particles in an enclosed vessel will also hold for molecules, any zither matted with hair such as the one I used in my experiment will naturally tend toward cashmere. This includes the complicated charges and currents employed in the Chicago-style metaphor, particularly those employed on the south side, where the field of magnetism tends toward the space-time formulations of Buddy Guy. Transcendence is crucial when the scientific method fails. Here is where faith becomes an emancipation from the tyrannies of empiricism, and flexes its resistance to the banality of fish like a bicep on the arm of a Russian Bolshevik.

10:47 a.m. I notice my watch is upside down. The world is upside down. The kitchen and cat and bookshelves and neighbors and exhalations and exhilarations and napkins are all upside down. The floor is now the ceiling and the ceiling is now the floor. I revert to modes of perspective and horizon to stabilize my sense of hygiene. I turn upon the poles of incarnation and invocation. I try to distinguish between what is true and what is apparent. As soon as I collapse into sheer arbitrariness, the raging discord between art and truth thereby seems to cease. But how am I related to my body, is that not a continuing problem? It is. This is what I do. I move my

arms, I move my legs, I turn my head. This releases the unconcealment of Being. Being itself is determined by Being itself. If Being is allowed to reign in all its Questionableness, the roots draw up more water, and a fragrance reminiscent of hyacinths will pervade the atmosphere.

11:15 a.m. I drink more coffee. This is the way I see it: the world of experience is a standing invitation to deny or ignore my transcendence. But I will not do it. I will not deny my transcendence. I will not ignore my transcendence. I will, instead, seek attainable felicities, and pull meaning out of the world wherever and whenever time and space may permit such inquiry.

12:03 p.m. It is wonderful to talk to Mick Jagger in his hotel room. He is absolutely charming, and the women filling the room seem as natural as the sound of rain or the play of sunlight. We discuss the dynamics of gas, and confess a need to discover within our actual world a primal other world of ideality. Mick says he feels the same way, and begins singing "You Can't Always Get What You Want," and points directly at me. I blush. We converse until late in the afternoon, after with I stop at QFC, and pick up two four-packs of Virgil's black cherry cream soda. This is a new flavor, and a deviation from my usual root beer, but I like it a lot.

12:22 p.m. On the way home, I hear the singing of millions of ants. Or is it laughter? I cannot decide. Sometimes it sounds like singing, sometimes it sounds like laughter. It is ants who built the hill on which I live. Millions of ants toiling millenniums to create a hill of sand, grain by grain. Their laughter is an alloy of sand and plurality. It's the laughter of ants. It's the laughter of the marvelous.

1:01 p.m. The rest of the day is open, and serves as a common pasture for my thoughts. There are those that gambol, those that wallow, and those that suddenly take wing, and fly to other lakes and ponds and places of sweet reverie. Many dark and sleepless nights have I been a companion for owls, separated from the cheerful society of men, scorched by the summer's sun, and pinched by the winter's cold, an instrument ordained to settle the wilderness. But now the scene is changed: peace crowns the sylvan shade.

1:05 p.m. How fleeting is the peacefulness occasionally afforded us. My quiet is broken by Bronson, the asshole who rents the duplex next door, having a cell phone conversation within my hearing. He paces back and forth, blah blah blah, presumably dispensing information for his next tenant.

2:02 p.m. I feel peculiar sensations, like many creatures on earth at the approach of violent atmospheric changes. The atmosphere is evidently charged and surcharged with electricity. My whole body is saturated; my hair bristles just as when you stand upon an insulated stool under the action of an electrical machine. It seems to me as if my cat, my fond companion during these convulsive and ominous afternoons, the moment he touched me, would receive a severe shock like that from an electric eel.

3:05 p.m. I go for a run around the crown of Queen Anne Hill. The view is a majestic. I see an airship hover Elliott Bay, and what appears to a giant squid, a marine organism of tremendous size, its tentacles reaching for the airship, as the people look down photographing this anguished monster and its frustrations with their smartphones. A man leans too far out from the railing of the gondola and is snatched by the creature's beak and instantly swallowed. The glimmer of smartphones recording this for later YouTube viewing maddens the creature further. It crawls up Pier 57 and attaches itself to a giant Ferris Wheel, rides around five times, then slithers up Seneca Street eating pedestrians and leaving a trail of black, viscous bile. News at 11.

4:30 p.m. Ronnie returns home and we sit down to a dinner of Veal Soup, Veal Collops, and Bacon and a brace of Partridges, roasted, and Apple Dumplings. We watch a demonstration of skill on television, in which a man riding a Harley-Davidson motorcycle around the walls of a cylinder, lets go of the handlebars and leans back, wrenching the handlebars at the last moment to prevent a crash at the bottom. This is followed by a Lobster Quadrille, in which the lobsters, having been well fed, take their partners by the claw and daintily maneuver themselves across the floor.

7:05 p.m. I retire into my laboratory to do research on the effects of metaphor and magnetism. The existence of a pervading medium, of small but real density, consisting of nothing but sounds and letters, capable of setting the mind in motion and transmitting ideas from one part to another with great velocity, is irresistible in its application. Inasmuch as this medium can transmit undulations with exquisite power and invisible force, it is useful in a literary context, though not that of minimalist prose, which has become the norm in writing, the byproduct of Facebook and Twitter and a generation of people for whom literacy has become anathema. Today's poet must learn the hermetic discipline and approach of the medieval alchemist. Philosophy, as Karl Jaspers said, can nerve the thinker by reflection upon the conditions of thinking to dare to think that there is a reality which cannot be thought. In that case, Being can be experienced, indicated, attested, but not represented and possessed. It does not have the sweep of religious faith, nor the pliability of amphibology, but can, with the application of the right metaphor, extend into elastic spheres and become oblate spheroids like the earth, each one populated with tiny animalcules, and elves.

11:00 p.m. We retire to bed, and linger there in the dark until sleep arrives, and folds us into its easeful realm.

