Why No One Writes Epics Anymore

by John Olson

No one writes epics anymore. Why? Perhaps it's because we no longer share mythologies. Once there was a shepherd, and now there is a Google bus loaded with pricks. Yes, you say, but they are good at math. Each and every one of them. And this is true. I envy them their competency at math. I wish I could juggle numbers in a way that led to fancy tattoos and a secure income. Or the kind of job that doesn't invite thoughts of suicide as soon as the alarm clock goes off.

And what about the driver of the Google bus? Or the Amazon bus? Or the Microsoft bus? Or the Apple bus? Or the Mr. Potato Head bus? The Mr. Potato Head bus has eight wheels, each one shiny as a silver bowl full of amphetamines, and is painted psychedelic colors. It is the opposite of the Microsoft, Google, Amazon and Apple bus. I have made it opposite in order to make a point. And the point is this: who, exactly, is Mr. Potato Head?

Mr. Potato Head was born in Indianapolis, Indiana in 1942 and rose to prominence as the first toy to be advertised on television. It is little known how much Mr. Potato Head disliked being a toy and, in fact, considered himself to be a surrealist poet trapped in the body of a potato.

The interior of Mr. Potato Head is full of carbohydrates and agitation. He sits behind the wheel of the Mr. Potato Head bus at Sea-Tac airport waiting to pick up Charlotte Gainsbourg, who arrives in a dark brown cashmere sweater and sparkly Balenciaga pants. “I love your movies,” he says. “Thank you,” she answers. “I also love your pants,” he further remarks. She smiles, but doesn't answer. Silence ensues. He loads her baggage into the bus and drives her to her luxury hotel. She gives him a generous tip. Afterward, it is time for lunch.

Available online at *«http://fictionaut.com/stories/john-olson/why-no-one-writes-epics-anymore--2»*
Copyright © 2014 John Olson. All rights reserved.

He goes down to the waterfront for some fish and chips and a strawberry milkshake. Existence, he muses to himself as he gazes down into the dark green brackish water slopping against the barnacle-encrusted pilings and stinking of death and fertility, always appears within the limits of human expectation. But I am not human. I am an artist. A potato, in fact. Yes, a potato, but a potato that is an artist, that thinks artistically, and drives a bus. Drives a bus, yes, but drives it artistically. That is to say, I concentrate on turning it smoothly, waiting at the traffic lights with patience, never entering into an intersection when I can see that the cars ahead of me are not moving, and blocking the other cars when the light turns red for me and green for them. I am congenial to the famous and affable to the anonymous. I am progressive in my attitudes and attire the facts of my existence calmly and rationally when a passenger recognizes me and wants an autograph.

And this is why no one writes epics anymore. Our mythologies are private, and formed imperfectly, like the pages of a book that has been left in the rain, and are warped in a solitude of spine and breath.