

40. Spreading the Word

Authors are supposed to be craftsmen, not farmers. Spreading manure is a routine chore in February. Some farmers look forward to it, a chance to combat cabin fever. When there's not much else to do, fertilizing snow may seem lame. But it melts down into and warms sod, so, in May, hay grows quickly. Just as soon as a few days stay dry, you can cut, winnow, bale, and put up hay in a barn, so cows have something to eat besides expensive feed. Spreading shit is another way to get rid of it, too. Works on a lot of levels. Gets it away from homestead, redistributes it where it can do some good, thins its stink. Feeds microorganisms, keeps worms busy, and results in aerated, healthy loam. Regenerates life, thereby completing cycle.

Exposing people's laziness, pettiness and ugliness is just like spreading shit. It smells to high hell at first, but soon mellows and mends as it melds into soil. If you never talk about what bothers you, you become melancholic, neither grow yourself nor grow mutual relationships, petrify, stagnate. How can people connect? Only by shared joy and pain. After near death incidents patrolling streets at night for pay, then suffering through years of disapproval, his real being got sacrificed. He steered clear of any possibility of causing offense. But why become a *martyr to caution*? A guarded soul may be safe but will never be caressed. People who harp about safety often have selfish ulterior motives of monopoly and profit. They'll use it to support otherwise untenable arguments. Deal a few child-death cards, and their hand resembles a winner, reasonable to many, transparent manipulation to him.

Al took a lover once and she spoke to him, told him things he didn't know, too far beyond his naïveté. You have to know how to play in order to play together. There's darkness and light in all life's experiences. Those who attempt to whitewash darkness with optimistic platitudes deny the beauty and inspiration of crepuscular indefiniteness, of black bile, imagined phantoms, mists and mystery, shadows in shadows. Art is born of shadow, of not knowing. Darkness is the source of all imagination and improvement. Truth is revealed as man steps from darkness into light.

Some books exist not to entertain, but to record ideas. They become sourcebooks for new expressions, or codify intellectual departures. Works of Emerson, Marx, Paine, Ruskin, Thoreau and numerous others were never made into movies: not enough action. But, like chert on iron, did spark social upheaval, which then was

made into countless books and movies. How much upheaval has the *Bible* caused? Is causing? When he spoke to people, they thought him affable and easygoing, salt of the earth. When he ground his writing axe, he turned hostile. This is the fault of writing itself, which, just like motoring, reverts you to a autocratic, dogmatic predator, hunting along well defined lines using iron rules. Buddha, Christ and Mohammed never wrote anything. Under capitalism, you may only do things for commercial gain, which precludes all unmarketable self-expression, and thus preserves its illegitimate precept that exist to extort and tax everyone. Capitalism strips power from an individual author by obscuring visions of what could be. If getting and spending are so obdurate and sacred, you'd think they'd make them inalienable and universal. No, it's only an illusion worth maintaining if in your veins there's only a lode of cold, dry gold and nothing much else in life interests you.

Writing a book is a gritty, pathetic undertaking but better than nothing when you're alienated, cut off, on your own. If not trying to make a buck, all any artist need do is share 1 exemplary piece of work. If you don't let your book go, you'll constantly tinker with it until only you are satisfied. Artists regret everything they do, which never quite represents their initial vision or jaded hindsight. Books, gatherings, rock and roll are better, surely, than the banality of radio and less costly than great art forms of film or theater, which require complicit coalitions to exist, as Webster noted. Baring a soul twisted by social ills yields something as dark and sharp as obsidian, not in the least bit sentimental. Weapons were once made of this material, hard and untainted, just as truths can be turned into weapons by those who'd wrest power. Capture truth, then let it go. Do nothing about it, just let it steel your will to serve causes you can support. Nobody has sense or sinew enough to handle pure revelation. To buffer takes an entire population.

Ancient people revered active volcanoes, chasms chiseled by natural processes into structures as if pagan cathedrals, formations that resembled animal or human features, igneous outcroppings, mountain passes. This connection with what predated collective memory was spiritual. To revisit and touch places sacred and unusual gave those who touched them strength. It was a primal urge never completely eradicated but later formalized and turned into doctrine by erecting churches at intersections of lay lines. One might argue that this sense of oneness with planet's uniqueness manifested in select spots is the source of all spirituality. Buddhism was sold from a shady patch of dirt beneath a banyan. Judeo-Christianity sprang from a burning bush on a rocky mountainside.

From dust to dust is the journey all mankind shares, with a coarse maple cross or marble marker, as if that matters when you're gone.

If this World can do without religion, then why did communism fail? All these big words representing philosophies get people to do cement-for-brains things. It's mental shorthand that elicits knee-jerk reactions but not good reasoning. People hate to think; it takes too long to consider every implication of a decision, as numerous as pebbles on a beach. Traditions have to suffice, whether based on carved into stone paradigms or tried and true experiences, as if bridges whose piers can no longer support their own weight and likely will collapse at any moment. Without extremism, good ideas can be nice neighbors; happens all the time.

Saudis relinquished their embargo on oil exports in the 70's only after Doctor Kissygirl pointed out that USA was fighting communism in Southeast Asia, and, of course, communism was godless, therefore anti-Moslem. Weighing bragging rights of being the country with holiest sites of Islam against losing it all to World domination under a godless regime, Saudis decided to secretly relax their embargo so as not to anger any superpower. Besides, selling oil to Americans was fantastically profitable and transformed desert dunes into modern metropolises practically overnight. Arabia is a Moslem Italy when it comes to tourism. Yet all this introduced a sandstorm of strange new customs and ideas associated with foreigners offensive to religious bigots. To bolster devotion, they imported fanatic Wahabi clerics from Syria and Yemen, who, drugged on neolithic doctrines, draped themselves with a mantle of purity as conceited as any Baptist television evangelist, succeeded in whipping up Jihad against modernity. Now that communism is all but gone, Moslems are again enemies. When does this substitute-bogeyman scenario end? So much for legendary Moslem hospitality, something that can obviously work against you with threats from either extreme. Golden rule, indeed.

He didn't disagree that some modern things are downright ridiculous, but where do you draw the line? If viewers want to hang unsightly satellite dishes off their houses, as if a revenge of antennae, why care? If they'd rather flip through 200 channels of pointless programming at great expense during hours stolen from repose, it's their prerogative. Cars may carry surround sound stereos complete with scores of speakers and subwoofers, enough to deafen an entire auditorium. Status seeking teens trade energy and youth for technological toys that distract and put their short lives at risk. Cars shouldn't have radios at all, nor televisions, but such amenities help sell vehicles and lure drivers and families out of living rooms.

Some modern things are used evilly, like weapons, but, as with any tool, they can be used for good, too. With guns, you can hunt for food and ward off predators. Mass media and Internet can broadcast democracy, independence, spirituality; or disseminate technological knowledge on how to build aseptic water supplies, weather-proof shelter out of fabrics, metals from aluminum to zinc, and plastics; or engender healing, health, soil conservation, wholesome food production; or reduce allure of unsafe sexual practices that spread plagues; or standardize uses of iridium, medical devices, minerals and ore, plants as food and medicine. On the other hand, they give ideas to twisted bomb making anarchists, increase despair and suicide, shovel more coke into a blast furnace of unfettered passions that may destroy civilization. Knowing nothing is not bliss; it brings war which, for the masses, means nothing but death, famine, pestilence, and ruin. Religions replace ignorance with a bedrock of irrational thought upon which an entire system of petrified aggression is founded. Knowing everything isn't possible; trying to leads to lunacy, like crawling into a closet without a flashlight and a spring-loaded door snaps shut locked from outside. You can't kick your way out of a buried coffin. Adamantly restricting facts from flow results in retaliation: anarchy, black marketing, censorship, and endless forms of criminal behavior. Weeding out the last pocket of resistance through brutality just creates a lot more. Got to stop saying things that have already been said. Today's authors toss everything into manuscripts because ideas are so easily accessed. Ideas are just mental playthings, words nothing more than expressions of unreality. Effort, emotion, hunger and objects are real. People are naturally curious, experiment with substances, share findings. They advance as uniformly as bigotry, dogma and prejudice will allow. It always comes down to self-imposed limitations versus edicts that benefit a few rather than the masses, systems of thinking that throw a yoke over honest ambitions and harness energy inherent in human beings, as if whipping oxen hauling inconvenient boulders, a waste of lives.

A system is good if it provides order, but any has to be flexible and universal. Nothing concocted to date qualifies, only designed to work on local levels among biased groups. Instead, all alienate, disrespect foreign customs and individuality, polarize, and are rushing mankind toward annihilation. Better not to follow heroes with feet of clay, but to dig up your own organizing constructs, lay foundations, but not in concrete that crumbles, rather in mutually beneficial friendships that transcend continents and generations.

Media is a stony field that exists for both an author to unload upon and reader to harvest from, neither easily, neither without often having to replace plowshare. Library of Congress had tens of millions of titles, enough moldy leaves of paper to cover entire surface of planet many times over. There should be a book for every person alphabetized, categorized nicely, decimal systematized, and ensconced on a steel shelf, gathering dust, but never once taken out. Only in heaven, one supposes. It's not up to individuals to write their life stories, since everyone's is so similar and nobody needs to know such mundane details as what is eaten and how it will look in toilet tomorrow. Yet they gather hourly around cappuccino grounds or water cooler to make judgement calls on what's best, or yak about how their kids are progressing, minor medical tragedies, what's on sale at supermarket, who's doing what, who died. They revel in all things sexual men and women do to men and women, none of which is extraordinary, and succumb to aggression, condemnation, discrimination, hostility and veiled threats. As it turns out, banal details, gluttony, and venial sins are what occupy most people's minds most of the time, which is why they have channels devoted to each on cable.

It's said that feeble minds engage in gossip, greater minds in events, and heroic geniuses in ideas. Sounds grand, but isn't always true. Einstein spoke of happiness as needing nothing more than a comfortable chair, commodious table upon which to work, and earthen bowl of fruit. Much clarity and contentment can be harvested from understanding how to choose fruit at its ideal state of ripeness, heavy with juice, unblemished from rough handling, never canned, frozen, gassed, or otherwise preserved. It's just intersecting the space of the fruit at the right time, very relativistic, you must admit. It shows even Einstein could step back from an abyss of deep thought to react with the here-now on simple terms, enjoy. People all communicate in simplest terms. It's common ground, somewhere to bond, connect, form coalitions, transcend the banal.

One can only reach out to one's own readers; they will respond, provided one makes contact. For whatever sick twisted thing one's into, there exists at least a few who share this perversion. Could be bestiality, decapitation, domination, drug abuse, fetish, martial arts, near death fixations, necrophilia, pumping iron, seductive winking, subjugation, toad licking, watching or not watching but otherwise experiencing, and, who knows, things beyond what he'd been exposed to in print or on television that were totally unimaginable. Probably there's already a periodical devoted to them, one of those countless slick rags with clay coated,

slightly radioactive pages, or underground cult pulp pubs, but, unless imagined and sought out, how would you know?

Is it better to limit yourself to commonplace experiences unlikely to result in permanent damage or explore limits of the physical World and face death? Why base jump with bungy cords or parachutes? Stick your hand into a pit of black widow spiders or vipers? Surf among charcoal gray rays and sharks? Scoot along questionable tarmac? Unsafely mtb down mountainsides? One guy was severely mangled after attempting to set a bicycle speed record by coasting down flinty flank of a Volcano; got to over 200 mph before frame exploded. They might be giants who sang "Brain washing... Ground shaking... Mind bending, Soul Crushing dirt bike... took me by the hand/Now I ride," Downhill, he went nearly 60 mph often enough, and sensed just how fragile such attempts are. The self-propelled record on flat is momentarily 80.6 mph, highest average distance for an hour is only 47. Teens think they've mastered newfound mo-ves, make dares, play chicken, Russian roulette races into graves. Daredevils try to survive rides in barrels over Niagara Falls. Flirting with disaster helps to clarify just how precious life is, never to be taken for granted. But it can land you in a world of hurt, too. Arts encourage risky behaviors, when you don't really need adrenaline to safely reach a similar satisfaction.

There's a wall you hit while pouring out your mind. It's been called writer's block but that's too simple; giving it a name doesn't untangle any of its mystery. You can't force words out, they just occur to you. Speaks to the concept of revelation, doesn't it? Or is it compost, rotting fragments of decaying notions, that creates fertility? There's an actual point where there's nothing left inside, you've stretched fabric so thin it's invisible. You try to speak but nothing comes out. You try to concentrate but a big blank stares back, a dark echoing granite cavern, what you experience while meditating, though meditation is white rather than black and consequently less terrifying. If you're paid to produce, this is very bad but can't be helped. Once you empty your vessel, with what should it be filled? Perhaps adventures that strengthen, direct communication with others, exploration of human limits, or inef-fable things on the wild side. Maybe you just need to party more.

Rather be accused of being a self-promoter than a smug insider, not that either is something to aspire to. It's refreshing that there are still people who aren't ashamed to speak their mind, have nothing to hide, make a spectacle of themselves, risk ridicule. In some venues, people pay big for such amusement. It's been repeated to good effect by artists, cardiologists, fashion designers,

inventors, musicians, scientists, scribblers, sports figures, and throngs of other professionals. They pay publicists to hang onto privilege of celebrity, make themselves into someone to adore or hate, provide useful perspectives. They're no threat, well, at least, not to those with good intentions. They go in and out of vogue. If not for publicists, everyone would be equal; any osmotic flow of wealth couldn't be tapped. Resembles damming tides to harness its energy, something to glean from every ebb and flow.

Horn tooters annoy sulking insiders. Sulkers are so bilious and smug they expect your vote without having to justify themselves. They take credit themselves for work of silent volunteers. Sulkers acknowledge only insiders like themselves and thereby themselves. They bait hooks to angle for compliments, congratulate each other, imagine everyone thinks the same. They create enduring prizes that go exclusively to their own closed groups: Golden Globe, Grammy, Nobel, Oscar, Pulitzer, Volunteer of the Year. They repeat their lies so often people believe them as if doctrine. Double-e had their number, "Loudly for Truth have liars pled." It's all applied sociological logic, in other words, marketing. People are suckers for a snappy homespun catch phrases whenever life seems confusing and contradictory: "Read my lips..." or "There you go again..." If lying were a criminal offense, every politician would be in jail. They'll enshroud you with a poor marl of platitudes. Spading entire philosophies down into transplantable epithets, like, "Live well, love much," expresses practically nothing to those who are looking for actual advice. Live how? Love whom? Too completely open to interpretation, which is to say, "Figure life out for yourself." Reality includes fears and hopes of countless others, now and someday. It's chaotic but not irrevocably dysfunctional. Italy persists despite dozens of parties and successive collapsed governments. Anarchy might be preferable to a status quo designed to drain you totally by keeping you alienated and disorganized. He had never been represented in Congress to his refined satisfaction. How could they?

Many small thoughts come to mind but never major revelations. Television puts an emphasis on graphically viewing and mentally absorbing what transpires in 30 second commercials. There's almost an unwritten language of faces, poses, stereotypes, set dressings. Ready mixing stereotypes becomes a shorthand for rationalizing situations. They'll describe a craggy, multifaceted person like a character from a popular television program, as if a few matching chinks or cracks make up that person, and one doesn't require a unique character analysis. Games shows emphasize instant response and quick recall. Slowly reasoning through all

options isn't an advantage for commodity conglomerates, who rely on your quick decisions, as if their durable goods can't survive scrutiny or shelf life. With inventory taxes, only imposed on domestic makers, they literally can't. Fast turnover increases cash flow from which profit is mined, shoveled like coal into hell's furnaces.

You can watch TV, but don't expect to do anything beyond consume and die. Ushers everyone through a harmless life. You see characters, fictitious or real, indulge in adventures heavily covered by insurance. With laws against everything, how can you do anything but? Instead of making people more proactive, TV makes them think they already experienced something so as not to try: cowboy west, foreign war, heists. No, you don't come close to war watching from a totally safe distance. There's no blood, dung, fear, mud, regrets, sobs. It's unreal. If you watch enough films you become immune to the point of participating at all. You may be shown a ball going over wall and thrill for your team, but you won't understand if all you do is watch. How do you appreciate the score if you've never hit a homer or slid through red soil spray to tag that house shaped, stone cold pentagon? How do you sense the unreality of a cowboy stuck for days in a saddle without actually riding a horse? Despite obvious similarities, bicycling is better than horseback riding. With paved streets, why subjugate another creature because you're too inconsiderate and lazy to propel yourself? And why complain about broken pavement which always beats dirt?

Not quite having what it takes fails both ways: customers and providers, patrons and performers, readers and writers. Interaction is a 2-way tarmac. Takes a level of intelligence on both sides, great until one side gets sick and would rather die than face more pain. How does anyone do it? Who was he to say anything you might find useful? On this plane he was humble sediment, silt deposited onto an alluvium of illiteracy; on another he might be a fabled hero carved from Carrara. Okay with what might have been, he'd given it his best shot, worked every single day, tried to make rational sense. When there are seven billion others on earth eager to be heard, how can one voice be valued? Merchant caravans once spread common sense. Christ's teachings have dominated western morality for 2 millennia. Mere mortals Paul and Peter successfully spread the word. Don't ever expect such success; do chip away until sand is separated from statue, but not until all is dust.

