

Special Thanks

Dedicated foremost to beloved, long-suffering wife and wide eyed daughter who didn't complain much about being dragged around for decades while scouting routes to inaccessible places, harassed by unintelligible observations, and subjected to twisted perspectives, which are only a few of the many disadvantages of being born or married to a cycling obsessed idiot; Anita, another victim of insurance greed, who departed this vale of tears in Fall of 1999 and inspired much soul searching; staff of small local library, including cheery blonde, goth girl, grinning granny, miss prim and proper, petite redhead, and snappy bold brunette (you know who you are), through which the entire statewide collection of bicycling related materials flowed; a spiritual signpost in the form of an unlikely "Isolandish" chanteuse; William "Speed" Saroyan, who wrote the original chapter, "Phonograph", a generation ago as if a musical birthday card off which this memoir merely echoes; lastly, people past and present who amused, encouraged, inspired or nourished through deeds and words, pointed in good directions, posted anonymously to forums and websites, or supplied free bike parts, a list far too long to recount, but it would be a crime not to credit Albert Einstein, Claire Morissette, Daniel Berhman, Galileo Galilei, Giordano Bruno, Ivan Illich, Lao Tzu, Leonardo da Vinci, pals biblically named Joe, John, Luke, Mark, Matt and Paul, and Rene Descartes, fearless French dualist philosopher and intrepid founder of modern science, whose innermost being ran on 2 wheels. Lives as these and unsung legions defying conventions and dictators, opening their hearts and minds, and quietly sharing skills and talents make for a World worth living in. The rest can go to hell.

This book was written with black ink on scraps of recycled pulp paper, and/or directly keyed into an aged Apple® Power Macintosh® G3 tower using word processing software with automatic grammar features turned off.

Spellings were verified by sight comparison to *The Oxford English* and *Webster's Collegiate* dictionaries and/or verified electronically.

Once composed entirely from memory, some details were ascertained or cross-referenced using Internet's *Google* search engine.

It was published using Adobe® page layout software in 12 point Hoefler book text on 13 leading with 10 point Arial Narrow and 9, 10 & 14 point Gadget title fonts, postscripted, then compressed as Acrobat.pdfs in 56 chapters, 2 combined prefaces, a glossary and an appendix, 59 sections in all.

To offset energy waste and its effect on planet, electronic distribution, recycling, replanting and self propulsion were practiced to pursue a zero carbon footprint.

While researching and writing, no living animals were experimented upon or thereby harmed, excluding author. Some domestic and wild creatures were consumed as food for fuel with reverence, as few as necessary.

Any relationship to characters mentioned in this text with real people, dead or living, is purely coincidental and no inferences can be drawn.

Some profits from sales, if any, will go to charitable uses including activism, environmental conservation, and future foundation operations.

Preface

Start with facts. This is no novel. No, novels are fiction. New, yes, but not a novel. May read like one, mimic its style at times by making points wrapped in narratives, names changed to protect, but not so often; borrows just as much if not more from autobiographies, editorials, essays, exposés, gospels, manifestos, plays, poems, polemics, technical manuals, and so breaks the shackles of genre. Who can stand shackles, hardware of punishment and slavery? Written so it classifies under anything—anthropology, economics, ethics, history, religion, semiotics, sports, or traffic—librarians will be sure to hate it. Anything less would be cheating, contemptible pretense easily pigeonholed. All things are equally worthy of your attention, although writers want you to hear only their message. These days spun out in volumes is a lot of so-called nonfiction, nothing but highbrow hype, illogical opinion, and phony propaganda, mostly sucking up to those who'd consolidate power for themselves, petty dictators, slavers. Layers of control are very clever and subtle. The signpost between fact and fantasy has long been vandalized beyond all recognition. From tabloid journalism to scientific treatises by sanctioned experts, today's writing serves fiscal or political agendas. Integrity doesn't even apply to architecture anymore, never mind individuals. This contains only acerbic personnel observations from a nobody, bound to annoy more than anything. He annoyed himself. Facts are plentiful, bought cheaply or prodigally lavished. They practically give away dated encyclopedias and textbooks, make them publicly accessible on the Internet, sell them at a loss in bargain bins. Advertisers constantly force facts about their products on you. Facts aren't truths, but you must start somewhere. Truth is to secret schemes as warfarin is to rats, poison, if you can only get them to taste it.

Should one mention poison, rats, shackles and truth in the first paragraph? What did you expect, fastidious chatter and infotainment about bicycling? Ha! Books and websites abound to teach you how to dominate with a competitive edge, clean these endlessly filthy machines, eat right for stamina, and tighten muscles and nuts—some earnest, others comic. This wasn't written to entertain you. Opportunities to escape far exceed choices to behave responsibly. If you're like most people, you desperately need to be weaned off phony illusions.

If self vindicating anecdotes from head of the pelaton are what you're looking for, read no further. You're welcome to chase them. No one has seriously explored the mind warping effects of bicycling, until now. If a church of consciousness alteration is what you seek, you've stepped into the right pew. Sounds supremely offensive, no? You can't accomplish anything without treading on toes. Must break eggs to bake a quiche. Must kick ass to drive improvement. Real change is savage, they say, or is it?

He didn't owe anyone anything, had nothing to sell, paid more than his share, wasn't bought off, and would never care who he might offend: an explosive mix, a Molotov cocktail, volatile gas under glass as likely to burn sender as recipient. Arrived out of nowhere, dragging the baggage of a misspent life and uncertain kinship to Rene Descartes, a distant cousin stalked throughout adulthood by the Wholly Roaming Inquisition yet driven to uncover truths regardless of imprisonment or worse. Meant more to him now than during childhood. Could now somehow identify with Rene, who only lived to 53, his own age. That used to be a full life expectancy in those good old days people imagine, pre-Enlightenment era. Avoid Stockholm in Winter, by all means, unless to accept a Nobel Prize, if offered. Neither Rene's brilliance nor work ethic were inherited. Everyone he met already held him in contempt. What were many more adversaries to him? A memoir was long past due; if not now, when? When too worn out to begin? Had to get it out, unload despite shy revulsion. Get busy. What else can an unemployed wordsmith do?

But not just a memoir, something more useful than merely entertaining or serving self, perhaps a new genre altogether. Forget about framing a legacy. Too pointless and vain. Spent so much time on feeding his family, marching along with so many others, scratching out survival, and senselessly spending, he didn't have time to be influenced by or make friends or important discoveries, or read or write for pleasure. He had no legacy to speak of, stuck somewhere between really trying his best to please and revenging a society that made his life hellish. Internet searches irritated, reminded him he'd too long complied, dared to be whoever he wasn't, had missed entire art movements, intellectual discourses, and stuff he'd rather be doing. Reading is work to be avoided or leisure from which you're deprived by others. Discoveries are for twenty-somethings. Friends betray you. Besides, he was as dumb as a post, chronically lazy and negative, an insufferable know-it-all, stubbornly so, and would never amount to anything, or so he'd been told, repeatedly.

Do lies repeated often enough become truths? Out of spite, he wasn't going to repeat himself, so you'll have to pay close attention. One only lives once; there's never enough time to mollycoddle or smother in niceties. Of course, readers can ignore or reread a passage as many times as they find necessary or see fit. He, for one, believed in "truth in packaging", letting consumers decide for themselves up front, speaking his mind before misunderstandings and recriminations begin, but wasn't yet sure what Truth itself meant. Might simply mean grasping malevolence.

Isn't labeling a way of dismissing? He would not be dismissed. Didn't care if readers were repulsed past exclaiming, "Life's too short to waste on this!" Deficiencies in discipline or training never stopped any artist, prophet or scientist. He penned words like Pollack drizzled paint or Vermeer captured delicate frailties, at once unfettered and precise, wildly expressive yet cautiously meticulous, mentally rising in a lofty gyre while bodily bound to the bottom of a dank dark well by mortal chains of unredeemed sin. Admirable art is impossible to categorize, what makes it admirable to begin with. Why sugarcoat reality? Why waste time amusing when actually living is far more interesting? Begin at the beginning and fill it with whatever you dare, whether canvas, life, or pages. Novels are for delicately edifying or tickling fancies. This was for neither, more like a viral infection for the mind, edge bending jazz rhythms frighteningly odd yet not necessarily hostile. Writing novels, with its dainty practice of slap and flee, is so much safer than unearthing truths, which is baseline confrontational, toe-to-toe combat with danger of disembowelment. For wordsmiths, finished literature is an occupational hazard. Demigod publishers instantly drop any manuscript that gives off the slightest whiff of mania or rage as if it's roadkill. Yet in this mania milieu everyone is afflicted. Why not address it directly? If everyone's already insane, what can be done about it?

If you're already too offended, please find something else to do. Otherwise, fasten your 5-point harness, this thrill ride is about to turn vomit comet. It's no Sunday jaunt in the back seat of daddy's Buick. Every ride by bike is a liberating lesson in concrete, literal, solid reality. Last chance to close the cover lest everything you once believed spins out of control forever. *You've been warned.*

So, what do you feel? Anger? Fear? Frustration? Impatience? Are these feelings genuine? Are they really yours? Or are you being made to feel strongly about some issue that doesn't affect you so as to forget those that do? He once felt that way, too. As far as he was concerned, transgressional literature wallowing in crime, drugs and sex fell short of the real taboo topics: money and power. Is anyone totally free from institutional orientating, media brainwashing, religious proselytizing? Cults couldn't exist without. Publicists live for this, well he knew. Radio talk hosts feed these feelings, especially while you're stuck in traffic, totally enraged, vulnerable. Advertisers feed off it. Rap and rock lyrics rant similarly. Who pays their salaries? Does it matter? If your message corresponds to what the Power Brokers want, *conflict*, you become another cog in their machine, a crop to be harvested, a link in their chain, a sucker to be exploited. If not, you're silenced, tossed aside, or worst, executed in totalitarian fashion. Damn them all! You'll never see their daughters and sons on any front lines while busy dodging bullets yourself. All war is fought over economics by legions of lower classes to benefit a small upper crust. Why?

Success is simple: Try something; if it goes well, repeat. Dove-tails nicely with today's uncurbed corruption. Popular celebrities are all sellouts to mass incompetence. Suppose that's how democracy works. The inferior but pretty package is what gets successfully delivered. When the glow wears off, what's left? Integrity is a rocky road, only for clever bottom feeders and gleaners who marginally subsist from what's actually the oldest profession, hunter-gatherer (henceforth hugger), one who collects berries and nuts, coal fallen from trains, now loose coins in gutter or redeemable aluminum cans by roadside, garbage pickers, self published authors. Huggers increase as civilizations crumble. One man gathers what another man spills. Ask any banker. The sooner you get over, "Society owes me something," and start thinking, "What can I do to be self-sufficient?" or, better, "What can I produce that society needs?" the better off you'll be.

When was it people became more interested in their own thoughts than voices of experience? 19th Century Romanticism elevated individuals. Teenage rebellion makes people think their opinions matter. Don't, only to them. Thus the curiosity for what's in your own mind bursting forth for you alone. Only what's emerging didn't originate there. Everyone has been bombarded with nostrums, endlessly preached to, indoctrinated from infancy. It's impossible to separate what individuals think for themselves from what they're simply parroting, as if simians imitating higher beings.

“Pennies saved”—entails little risk—are not “pennies earned”—survived to profit. These reinforced restraints form dark labyrinths, well-planned journeys to dead ends or illusions that seem like dead ends, like those Galileo warned you not to wander into. Perhaps you can push through them, like a magic looking glass, but, by doing so, you’re forever altered, maybe rewired, and so avoid at all costs. For personal comfort and safety’s sake, do nothing, try nothing new. Do that, *and* make a living somehow, so you’re no burden, no parasite. How’s that possible? He obviously had no clue, substandard wiring not up to code. So he shut up and slogged along like everyone else for a very long time. You do what you have to, wait in long, slow moving lines to closed windows, as if Kafka’s citizen on trial.

Self-employment appealed, even started a marginal craft business. Should never be ashamed to create your own opportunities, however modest; never know where it might lead. But you need to know when to adopt a career suited to your best skills, cut your losses, move on before all your entire life’s a waste. Had some idea about writing the greatest novel ever, but he never had time with so much else to do and roles on teams to fulfill. Yet, the more he thought about it, the less worthwhile that seemed. One would have to compete with thousands of would-be novelists to get published—not his style, no ego boost to be selected when others weren’t. As Pascal said, “Everything that is written merely to please the author is worthless.” Without a moral compass, everything you do is worthless. Why bother skulking about with metaphors? Why guard facts in euphemism or symbolism? Sparing people’s feelings went out with the last millennium. If civilization relies solely upon etiquette, no substitute for ethics, it’s doomed. Who cares about characterization, episode structure, foreshadowing, imaginary or real settings, motivations, plot development, a protagonist who starts at point A and gets to point B, as if any of that actually happened during one’s lifetime? Been done, became a formula, don’t need any more like that. You can’t deduce anything about author’s beliefs, intentions, or mindset from a novel. Just a glimpse of real reality is far more fascinating than fiction. Let others do their thing; he’d do his. Instead of plots, he’d provide contexts for hundreds of novels, but would take no responsibility for groaning weight of them on bookshelves.

Life’s more like small repetitive loops out and back, as if ants to an anthill, or termites, accumulating needy stuff and dragging it home, huggers constrained on short leashes. Artifice interferes with any direct exchange of serious ideas: detours, gridlock,

potholes in a road. Readers don't want edification to detract from their gratification and vice versa. People only want to be titillated, find a scheme, or work an angle. Hardly anyone reads just to expand their consciousness. No, a better plan might be a series of half-baked chapters that posed more questions than answers, tugged at the fabric of reality, yet left room for readers to sew in their own comments with threads he'd teased loose. Encourages them to finish the thinking, nudges them along, provokes, tempts response to unravel tangle. Better than a rube cube, whose object is only to amuse or confuse. Why not engage readers, put these passive louts to work? They'd probably jump to conclusions before reading through anyway. He valued things unfinished, sculptures emerging from stone. Supposed he'd aim for less plot and more subtext, something seldom tried in any art form or genre, except perhaps Charlie Parker's saxophone improvisations. Details aren't subtext. It's not bricks of mud that are important, but why buildings are built to begin with: For life to survive, people to congregate, souls to worship. Form follows function. Space is dedicated to its use, not a vacuum, which is what makes it interesting. Screw details, faces, locations, names. Just chews up a lot of copy space to mention one specific place after another, which vanish into time as condos disarrange and highways dislocate. Blame whomever you want and spin your own plots, activities more suited for devious skulkers than virtuous stalwarts.

What did he know, anyway? You're told to, "Write about what you know." He knew what other people knew; hardly seemed worth repeating. Insipid advice, like "Be yourself," was useless as direction or incentive. Not quite the same as, "Don't try to appeal globally through sensibilities that are only understood locally," or, "Follow your own primordial instincts, stripped of civilization." Modern life had been standardized into a bland, grease stained uniformity, at least around him, landscapes inimical to life, mental and physical. Psychogeography may purport to study what effects environments have on an individual's behavior—how's this different from feng shui?—but anyone who listens to news media or reads novels gets primed and pumped to perpetrate copycat crimes, like in Carpenter's film *Into the Mouth of Madness*. Only islands, Jamaica or Rapa Nui or such, provided an isolation that gives rise to unique social anthropology and expression, Rasta music or giant carved heads respectively, but there's no real isolation anymore. Socrates, one of the greatest minds ever, said, "The only thing I know for

sure, is that I don't know anything for sure." With such a vast gray area, doesn't that liberate everyone to write about anything at all? There's logic in this, if not exactly Socratic. Who was any more an expert than the next at discovering purpose in life? Devoted to survival, his life must have held some meaning. Then why wasn't meaning something he could pull out of his wallet and show like a driver's license? Awards and degrees only mean someone unimportant approved of what you've said, not whether it was true.

He settled into writing about whatever floated onto his beach over time, however bright, dark or inexplicable. Why fear negative or positive? Hate, hope, love? Possibly others might gather some information or inspiration from his descriptions, like museum items cataloged and classified. But staying put provokes unfruitful experimentation. Movement modality is primal, occurs every time someone goes outdoors, is as essential to life as food, energy, shelter and work, so why not study it? Buddhist monks meditate on a simple object, a rock or twig, until they are totally intimate with its form. But does a fixed object in space over time make for an engaging tale? To another Buddhist, presumably, but who else? What if in the telling the secret to all existence was explained? Who can say? The more you focus on a single topic, the sharper it compares and contrasts with entire universe, which you've overlooked. If there's Zen in motorcycle maintenance, couldn't there be Zen in bicycling alone, as bicycles themselves don't require elaborate maintenance? Buddhists allude to Zen as something unspeakable, only for individuals to experience directly, never vicariously through another's senses. Bicycling must be like that. Like sex, some say talking about it spoils the ride. Therefore, telling does no good, only serves teller in some way usually unfathomed by observers, who are left to scratch their heads. Woody Guthrie sang, "I wrote down this song for my own self, and sing it now to my own soul. But if you'll sing songs of your dreamings, then you will reap treasures untold."

Who listens to roadside mumblers? Or are testimonies of cloistered monks or a disaffected nobody the only reality worth considering? Businesses constantly conducted costly surveys to collect personal insights as his, uncolored on his part, but not theirs, by any desire to sell a product or support a team. Used to send complaints to companies expecting a refund or at least some acknowledgment, but found that didn't happen. These days he'd only respond to surveys if there was some guarantee his time would be compensated, sent a coupon to try their product or something.

What makes companies and government think your opinion isn't worth paying for? They harvest something of value for nothing through questions skewed in their favor to justify or tailor efforts. "Don't let them do that to you." Herein, he, like a jeopardy host, could control all questions. It would be a lot cheaper for them to simply read this book, a veritable compendium of dissatisfaction with how most people conduct themselves, especially corporations, people en masse organized against you. He had declared independence, from a bad paradigm, corporate manipulation, slavery, and terrible policies, but not from humanity of which all are made.

Investigations as his had been pulled together and repeated at intervals since ancient times, whenever things get so confused someone feels inclined to speak plainly. Might be called a mid-life crisis, but he was far past that. He decided, "It's our turn to speak," slogan of the Paris '68 Situationists, but only now exercised his right, when he felt he could no longer take what they were dishing out. Fed up, he'd pick up the rant for awhile, then be pleased to pass along bullhorn. Writers are only links in a chain, stepping stones between tomorrow and yesterday. Books are bound to appear when many are displaced, mostly to justify why they've displaced you, and there are plenty who'd gloat over your humiliation and pain. "The dreams of sick men are sometimes amusing. Besides, if we should destroy all the dreams and visions of men, the earth would lose its form and colours, and we should all sleep in a dull stupidity," said a sated Roman in a modern novel by Anatole France. As the omnipotent Earth intrudes enough, people shouldn't have to look over their shoulders constantly for murderers and thieves among them. Restating the obvious is not at all a failing, especially when lies are so often repeated that obviousness compels. Too few ask the right questions. Humor breaks the ice, to be sure, and smiles are blessed. Pleasant diversions make life bearable; but not if that's all there is or they're used to cover up negligence. They who burn your food serve it with a smirk. The guilty grin while they irresponsibly claim, "I'm not to blame!" For shame!

You can confabulate, exaggerate so as to make Baron Munchausen blush, fantasize, spin yarns. Just don't ever tell the *truth*. If you even hint at it, you'll be interrogated, ostracized, ridiculed or slapped down. He forthwith *disavowed any insider knowledge*, which only puts unimportant faces and names with the facts of the human comedy he was about to describe. No point calling on him to testify, he didn't know anything, just conjectures, ideas, intuitions. Expressing oneself truly is like free falling alongside someone whose parachute won't open. You only have a mo-

ment to shoot over and help them untangle before you have to disengage and open your own. During descent, writers record life passages. Like snakes, they slough off a skin every so often, leave contacts behind, strike out in new directions, for that's a way to ease pain. Do shed skins matter? Should they be preserved in bibliotechs or museums? Or is this tantamount to sorting through dung? People adore art only because it makes them feel as individuals they're somehow special. Sadly, they aren't. It's merely an illusion they enshrine in secular temples, another flavor of dogma in a world of conflicting dogmas. Only life matters; survival, his and theirs, mattered. If you can't ensure survival, did anything else matter? He'd wasted precious time blindly consuming entertainment. Gravity takes over. Soon you plummet at terminal velocity.

Pretty pathetic, he grumbled, having to justify writing more than 1 paragraph at a time. In this impatient, 1-sentence, sound bite, succinct email society, it's the height of indecency to have an inner dialogue. Why? Conditioned by advertising? Attention Deficit Disorder caused by consuming too much sugar or inhaling lead paint dust? Brain plaque and neuron loss caused by free radicals and prions? Too busy pursuing greed or sensory stimulation? What do they call the millions of titles that fill libraries? Useless books by verbose kooks? Why were there so many? Not one up to the task? Libraries are where lies lay buried. A mind is cut down to a catch phrase. Were it that simple! Individuals are tangled webs of interwoven filth dripping with oozing goo from the pointless pain inflicted upon them. Doesn't anyone notice or admit? Dismissal is too simple. People only despise words they don't want to hear. Nobody wants to face unrepressed truth depicted in the fullness of its messy, sticky self, too much like payback for their sins. Most prefer primal screams muffled by bedroom doors or confessionals. They're spoiled by brevity.

If someone came to your door to give you a million dollars, you'd listen attentively while they made a 10-hour speech. Money means survival and that'd be \$100,000 per hour. If they've come to tell you your firstborn has been killed in a distant, pointless war, that'd be just too devastatingly long a sentence to bear. That's relativity. Society craves neat bundled packaging in all things, especially whatever's unprofitable to them. Psyches aren't like that. Because they can, teens leave desperate phone messages about nothing that go on forever. Recipients react to only the first 2 words, either calling sender back or immediately deleting message. Conversations are fine, but not monologues. Relationships are full

of give and take, assumed obligations, burnt once twice cautious, temporary setbacks, thoughtless gifts that get passed along or returned, time consuming details. Reality doesn't serve, it just is. You don't capture it, figure it out, or master it; it masters you. Reality precludes linear thought and logic, rather demands synthesis from a cyclone of input. Simplicity disappeared centuries ago as populations expanded beyond a few million into billions and science mapped more information than can be imagined. Glorious battles in history textbooks were small skirmishes compared to what could take place today for good or ill. There's a hell of a lot to sort out out there. It can't be addressed one issue at a time, or you'd never get anywhere. Bring it on, he thought as some song lyrics echoed in his empty cavern of mind, "I want to hear and see everything... everything!"

Tightrope walkers teeter on their wire, which once thrilled spectators with reckless abandon. He teetered on a line between fact and fantasy, between opposing realities, between unsettling contradictions. What was real? What was practical? What was self-destructive? This is the dilemma when you open your mind. What you once thought was solidly undeniable suddenly becomes mushily speculative. Why not face naked reality? Think for yourself. Gather data. Reach across gaps. Form bonds. Organize coalitions. Agree then monitor agreements. Move forward. Quit watching and actually walk the tightrope. People can measure their humanity by their ability to foster friendships despite distance. Instead, society seems determined to totally alienate everyone. Corruption gorges itself on innocence and isolation. Look, when you're forced back together because there's no more room for private luxury vehicles, you'd better learn to be agreeable and ethical. A bad attitude will get you killed on public conveyances. Just who do you think you are, anyway?

Surely, if mankind expects to survive this new millennium, it had better make contact, choose life, get together, and lose its chains of inhumanity.

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