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Enchantment arises on the threshold between human activity and nature’s presence. It is always a liminal phenomenon, a momentary relationship, made of the right arrangement of stars and planets and elaborated with art by human consciousness. Enchantment is nature’s song heard by a sensitive human ear, and it is the crafted work of human hands reflecting their admiration of nature’s geometries.

Science and technology are sometimes at odds with enchantment, not because of the work they do and the cultural advances they bring, but rather because of the relationship to the world they fashion when they are carried out without sacred imagination. To the extent that they reduce understanding to materialistic dimensions, they create a secularistic worldview that infiltrates every aspect of daily life. An enchanted science and an enchanted technology would not drive a wedge between science and religion, or even between secularity and religion.

Enchanted science would not be devoted exclusively to facts, but it would be able to reflect back on its own mythic nature and its own fantasies and fictions. It would acknowledge that the very notion of facts is part of a mythological worldview. Taking itself literally and denying its place in the realm of imagination, science often closes the doors on enchantment, keeps them shut aggressively and defensively, thinking that fact-free imagination would be a contamination of its purity.

Enchanted science would not divide the poetry of nature, as reflected for instance in mythology, lore, and legend, from physical laws and characteristics, nor would it separate us in time so haughtily from our ancestors. Knowing the geology of a region has not inhibited us from overdeveloping and destroying places of natural holiness, nor has awareness of the sociology of a neighborhood prevented us from building unsightly overpasses, expressways, and other enterprises that wound or destroy communities. A technology sensitive to enchantment would serve the soul as well as fulfill our spirited ambition, and therefore, it would create and sustain a humane environment.

Modern devotion to science convinces us that we should understand and classify all of nature, that we should explore every place, and that we should manufacture everything that is inventable. The owner of a manufacturing plant once told me that he was obsessed with machinery and the assembly line and that every idea that came to him demanded to be put into production. He felt choked by the busyness such a productive life required of him, and it appeared to me that his torment was a reflection of our society’s obsession with the invention and fabrication of things. We mark our progress as a civilization by what we see as advances in hardware, and that criterion, assumed so readily by the population at large, blinds us to other possible values such as community, reverence, wisdom, the care and education of children, and the condition of the natural world. I would wish to be a member of a community that judged itself on the happiness of its children rather than on the unhindered flow of its mechanical inventions.

Albert Einstein on Science and the Mysterious:

“The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and all science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead. His eyes are closed.”
POET: SAM SILVA

A Critical Overview, by Maureen Neville

The 1990's have witnessed a substantial appearance of the poetry of Sam Silva as several collections of his work have been produced as part of the Dog River Review Poetry Series published by small press publisher, Trout Creek Press (Parkdale, OR.) The small collections of Silva's poetry include a group of his love poems entitled Making a Sacrifice Like Art and others such as Love Against the Grey Winter Mean, Art as Anyone's Salvation, Sweet Harvest's On, and De La Palabra. Third Lung Press (Conover, NC) also released When in Rome, a small collection of Silva's poetry featured along with the short stories of writer, Tim Peeler.

While not as gut-wrenching as the tortured poetry of Sylvia Plath or as lyrical and gothic as Edgar Allan Poe, Silva does seem to be writing to purge the soul. He does not seek to placate himself or the reader, as his imagery offers no easy analyses or explanations of a situation. If he himself is writing as a catharsis, perhaps he hopes the reader, too, can benefit. Sometimes his poems do work on this level, and other times they don't.

An example of Silva's brooding imagery can be seen in his recurrent references to the seasons of autumn and winter. One collection, Sweet Harvest's On, contains, throughout, the images of dreams and night, the cold earth, cold wind, graves, and ice:

so that I wonder
and I will
in this rooted sap of Hades
in this cold and colder
glory still
whose Earth was burned
like vinegar

   can we
   will we ever
   find a heart?

   -- from "The Baroque Demise of Eleanor"

In another collection titled Art As Anyone's Salvation, in the poem, "Secret," Silva writes:

   The crosses and the bibles,
   but made this time for Autumn.
   A cool day and ghost.

In still another, titled, "A Hollow Autumn Heart:"

   as thick as mulch, the very air,
   a sticky residue from hell
   ... dark colors in this dawn;

Along with the decay and desolation of fall and winter, Silva also refers frequently to music as a way of creating mood and tone. Sometimes it is jazz music that provides the edge:
When I die oh Jackson slum
... when I die oh ghost of Africa
and WHEN I die
the muscle of my eye
jams dead-sure as jazz
in that night...

-- from the poem "Maynard Twitching the Snare, in the collection Love Against the Grey Winter Mean"

Or the music is forlorn:

... a lullaby
of dark and wintry isles
begotten.

-- from the poem "Staying the Same in L.A." from the collection Swee Harvest's On

Not to be overlooked are Silva's poems in which he draws upon religious images with numerous references to Christian archetypes, the conscience, and poverty. Similarly, another theme is cultural displacement and assimilation. Specifically, Silva's poems in the collection De La Palabra speak to these struggles:

Even the animals here
eat the fleab of Jesus -- raw wheat
unblemished, oats in a bowl.
And I, with my barley beer,
know as well a ripeness of spirit,
a way to lie down and die for God.

-- from the poem, "The Priest of the Carnival"

Many of the poems in Silva's collection of love poems, Making a Sacrifice Like Art also depict emotions stirred by strong and conflicting beliefs and desires. In the poem, "The Painful Blush of Noon Flowers," Silva writes

Among the dead convenience stores and houses... that we have a way...
that we have a way... of stealing light from the source... the petaled green...
the shocks of red and lavender... the surface of brown and yellow... and the
hot delicious core
... and somehow keep all Hell away... from that blood beyond the Earth...
forevermore...

Sometimes the reader might feel bombarded by Silva's fierce imagery. Yet, if one looks close enough, one often finds a sharp, piercing beauty.

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Oh go through the walls; if you must, walk on the ledges of roofs, of oceans; cover yourself with light. Use menace, use prayer...
My sleepers will flee toward another America.

Jean Genet
slow down and tumbled sideways

Tugged ahead

"Take him to the infirmary," the university's Zoological Institute, and the fog. Saiko slipped a hand deep off the sled into the snow.

Patchen Miller's body was never breath. When I lifted my head, I take the body. Saiko watched as the officer ordered the two soldiers.

Suddenly the men spotted a par-ing to my breath. Alive breath. Daddy bats were at ease in their cages, we down in the oily, dark waters.

shuddERy on
mOUTH, c1UMPs

"Come. You must meet my family."

**Dunn bent over Steven's abdomen strange to his eye. Saiko then dropped 7 to 30 percent of the bats in a cluster sequentially from fresh wounds, from a strange country. On impulse, she looked at each other; there was no liver. "Take this to pathology." They'd started toward his thatched hut. I couldn't blame Josh for being maced and looked away. Solemnly a border war broke out between arteries. "Looks more than adequate," Silver said in Spanish.**
Scholar’s Statement
(for The Institute Of Advanced Thinking)
by Dan Russell

I am a scholar of philosophy, psychology, comparative religion, dream art science, alternate mind, shamanism, magic, and sorcery.

So there.

I have visited the Institute Of Advanced Thinking frequently since 1991, attempting each time to contact the director, Bern Porter, and discuss the application of magic and sorcery to life which is art, and to have fun. In each instance my goal was met. Sometimes I would bring writing, sometimes a piece of found art such as an abandoned magazine rack or a tennis ball so as to add to the sculpture garden. At other times when I was in Austin, Texas I mailed packages of found objects to Mr. Porter. At one time the universe gifted me with a velvet painting, which I hung on a tree outdoors and it took six months for the weather to separate subject (peacock with unraveling tail strings) from frame and cardboard backing so that it would fold in four and get into a mailing envelope.

Otherwise I have studied magic and sorcery in one way or another since my birth in 1934. Before that I was apprenticed for 300 years to a wizard who lived in a stone castle in the mountains of southern France in another universe. Before that I was the Alchemist-Physician, Paracelsus, 1493-1541, who freed himself from an outworn medical orthodoxy whose cures were bleeding, purging, and emetics, and set about to evolve a new system to replace the old by taking as his teacher, “the great open book of nature itself.”

In this life until the age of 5, when I took a nap or slept at night I interacted with a little girl named Music5, who taught me houses and cars and how to repair them after a fire. From her I learned to change my form and use a prehensile tail when climbing on the Saurian (alternate mind) Time Net. I especially loved our game of UFO: If people reported an alien spacecraft when we turned on our sorcery lights while flying OOB, many giggle points were scored. When I started Kindergarten she went away. But I remembered.

I wrote my first poem at age six and lost interest in favor of other pursuits until in 1957 at the age of 23 when I found myself in North Beach, San Francisco in the midst of the Beat Generation and began writing in earnest. I am to this day a beat poet with a word processor and insomnia.

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Amy Flaxman, Scholar in the Department of Writing, recently attended a conference on Lawrence Durrell and Anais Nin in Ann Arbor, Michigan, after which she returned to the Institute facility in Belfast Maine, for a brief period of Residence. Currently in New York City, she plans to return to the Institute in August where she will join Institute scholars and BPI editors Shella Holtz and Natasha Bernstein for assorted hijinks of Advanced (and possibly Retrograde) Thinking.

Be on the lookout for AU RETOUR A BELFAST, Natasha Bernstein memoir and sequel to MY AFFAIR WITH BERN PORTER due to be published by Roger Jackson sometime this summer or fall.

Mea Culpa, Mea Culpa, Mea Maxima Culpa
BERN PORTER

My Affair with Anaïs Nin
Silver Lake Days

Interview with Natasha Bernstein
Illustrations by Allen Berlinski

In this the concluding booklet of a four-part series, Bern Porter gives us the final words on his love affair with Anaïs Nin. this time set against the background of Silver Lake. The details are drawn from him in interview format by Natasha Bernstein, Scholar in the Department of Alternative Sexual Lifestyles at the Institute for Advanced Thinking, using a unique interviewing style that allows her to successfully penetrate the working mind of Bern Porter.

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