

•  $\approx \infty$

# Ce qui est petit est beau

Vuk Uskoković\*

*“Nunc Lento Sonitu Dicunt, Morieris*  
(Now this Bell, tolling softly for another,  
saies to me, Thou must die)”  
John Donne, Meditation XVII, 1624.



\* Corresponding author: [yuk21@yahoo.com](mailto:yuk21@yahoo.com); [vuk.uskokovic@tardigradenano.com](mailto:vuk.uskokovic@tardigradenano.com); [vuskokovic@sdsu.edu](mailto:vuskokovic@sdsu.edu).

**Abstract** Science, it is often forgotten, interlaces with life and times come when the only expression in the life of a scientist that matters is that hovering over science and under science and left and right of it, without touching it. Written between 2012 and 2018 by a scientific researcher, mentor and instructor during his stints as a principal investigator and assistant professor in various medical and pharmacy schools across the United States, including University of California in San Francisco, University of Illinois in Chicago and Chapman University in Orange County, this wordy essay is a lyrical celebration of daily ephemera and an elegiac account of a passing life – an attempt to catch its last breaths, divine as it were, and eternalize them on a printed page.

**Keywords:** Art; Brain tumor; Cancer; Case study; Medicine; Nursing; Poetry in prose; Science; Stream of consciousness.

Writing commenced in Strasbourg, France in May 2012. Last revised on Thursday, December 21, 2023

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

*An Alsatian Ice Cream Parlor*  
*How I Became a Nun*  
*Totoro, Strange and Kindred*  
*...Now I Remember*  
*A Dreamy Scratch of a Big Aeolian Rock*  
*Jules and Jim*  
*Bambi Eyes*  
*The Pearly Eye of Ajna*  
*Little Acts of Love*  
*The God of Small Things*  
*A Terrifying Dark Shadow*  
*I Gave It to Arrietty*  
*Two Balls Floating*  
*Open Air Cathedral of San Francisco*  
*Winnie-the-Pooh Drawing Tigger*  
*From Here to Eternity and Back*  
*What is Love*  
*I Heard the Singing of the Mississippi...*  
*10,000 Meters above the Sea*  
*Minnehaha, Minnehaha*  
*Circle of Life*  
*A Pair of Raggedy Shoes*  
*Face Illuminated by Millions of Stars*  
**THEO**  
*The Blessed Ones*  
*Blueberry Puff*  
*Knick-Knack Paddy Whack*  
*Blows to the Head*  
*Whispers Café*  
*Stay Small*  
*Ear-Clutching Cherries*  
*This Petite Prick*  
*A Big, Big Orange*  
*Sonne*  
*A Nano and a World*  
*Transfiguration*  
*The Pillars of Atlantis*  
*The Princess of Small Things*  
*Little White Feather*  
*The Planet Jupiter*  
*A Dandelion Flower*  
*Figure Eight*  
*Windy City*  
*No Trespassing*

*A Transatlantic Bird to Me*  
*Evangelina*  
*A Meditating Buddhist monk*  
*A Baseball Hat*  
*A Flint Spark Lighter*  
*A Petite Bouquet of Flowers*  
*Conductor 71*  
*Zuzu's petals*  
*Flowers for Thee*  
*Leroy Launderette and the Alley Full of Stars*  
*A Pair of White Socks*  
*Small Things with Great Love*  
*A Pattern that Connects*  
*A Drop of Water*  
*The Life of Gautama Buddha*  
*Bedtime Stories*  
*A Night at the Exploratorium*  
*Two Atlanteans*  
*Friday the 12<sup>th</sup>*  
*White Bunnies and Angels*  
*Epilogue I*

\*\*\*

In the city of Strasbourg, in the East of France, **an Alsatian ice cream parlor** exists. A stone's throw away it is from the statue of Notre Dame holding a child on her chest and thus supporting the massive monument of once biggest church in the world on the frail column of her slender body. With the view of this holy mother nested under the church's wheel window, near the peak of the portal, holding a baby in her arms against the ominous speared finials, I entered the parlor, at around midnight on a mystical May night. Three subtly shaped silhouettes glided across the glistening floor on rollers, passing each other by in figure eights, throwing in flight sweet scoops of ice cream into crunchy cornets and sending out flickers of extraterrestrial elegance with each glimpse of their patchy eyes. I stood in the line, patiently, envisioning thine eyes open wide, as if absorbing the whole cosmos into their dark depths of fear and love. The next thing I know, I was amused scanning a number of visual details in the parlor: the delicately dancing pearly eyes that bounced with mellow gaze all over the place, the antique bronze-colored casings and sculptures of Greek gods that decorated the vaulted interior, the fine lines drawn frantically but meticulously across the abstractly tapestried canary wallpaper. Behind me was a hopped-up pack of British boys, pushing and shoving each other in their stompy search for the best view of the ice cream boxes. A pack of pixies swished by the window, "smiling and waving and looking so fine"<sup>1</sup>, just like that flower girl a space traveler saw in another ice cream parlor as the news broke that the Earth was dying, all but knowing that they would make it to this

---

<sup>1</sup> "Don't think you knew you were in this song", David Bowie continued this verse before he prophetically, as far as this elegy is concerned, noted that "we've got five years, my brain hurts a lot, we've got five years, that's all we've got". In reality, these five years of mourning and trepidation and the brain pain would be cut to half. Listen to David Bowie's *Five Years* on *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*, RCA, London, UK (1972).

elegy in prose either. Alas, all I caught of them was a puff of stardust swirling in place in the wake of their jolly walk. A whiff of celestial wind, carrying sighs of dolor and shrieks of joy side by side, brushed my heart and bounced back into starlit skies that began to cast the curtain of undying Mystery over my eyelashes and enfold my whole being, head to toe, like a pair of praying palms.

In front of me was an elderly gentleman, hunchbacked, unshaved and disheveled, looking like a hobo and helplessly, though pertinently, trying to explain in a foreign dialect the way in which he wanted his ice cream to be served. After a long but futile conversation with the French-speaking servers, whose eyes glistened more and more the more they were being misunderstood, as if the demons of language have been arrested and imprisoned in the darkest cellars of their consciousness, allowing starlit muses to boundlessly take over their gracefully moving bodies, their coworker, who happened to be familiar with the vintage local dialect the old man spoke, managed to understand him and solve the issue at hand. What he asked for was the ice cream in a cup to be capped with an even smaller cap and two, rather than only one, of the little plastic spoons to be placed inside. On the way out, the slovenly looking man pressed the top cup down to prevent the ice cream from melting too quickly. As he pressed it, a drop of chocolate squeezed out and rolled down the side of the bottom cup. That tiny drop is what this book is about.

\*\*\*

***How I Became a Nun***, a novel by César Aira, a writer who, like Jack Kerouac, cared for spontaneity and refused to revise his works even under the direst of circumstances because he considered revisions to be a form of lying<sup>2</sup>, starts off with a description of an array of impressions triggered by tasting an ice cream. This is to say that this book is not the only one to propose ice cream as the object from which a universe can be created. Rather, it has a darn good company to share. But why start a book of poetry in prose, an elegy piercing the sky with a why, why, why, with an evocation of an ice cream? Maybe because ice cream, as Claes Oldenburg insinuated<sup>3</sup>, is a symbol of change, representative of any one thing that has to be acted upon fast lest it melt and lose its form. Here, however, it may also be a symbol of the sweetness of life that is impermanent, melting in our hands as we hold it; it either is consumed now or never. Also, as the very same artist pointed out, ice cream in a cone is an object of contradictions, an embodiment of contrasts between organic and architectonic, soft and hard, and, as we see now, distinctive and impermanent, sweet and sad, like life itself and the very best art in it.

Rained on by the starlight on that midnight in Strasbourg, holding both hands on the ice cream, my feet set on a careless glide over the crackless pavement and through the unruffled westerly air and the eyes, filled with stars, wandered up, toward the octagon tower with a spire on top that endowed the building with the status of the highest in the world for nearly two and a half centuries, prompting the memory of Goethe's musings upon the cathedral, which presented a turning point in the German appreciation of the gothic architecture<sup>4</sup>, to start flooding me in verses, likening the monument to "a sublimely towering, wide-spreading tree of God" and the ever changing perceptions of it to a state of permanent change, of becoming something else,

---

<sup>2</sup> See Joseph Lelyveld's *Jack Kerouac, Novelist, Dead; Father of the Beat Generation*, The New York Times (October 22, 1969).

<sup>3</sup> Watch the documentary on Claes Oldenburg, Arthaus Musik, Halle, Germany (2009).

<sup>4</sup> See David Blayney Brown's *Gothic Cathedrals from Romanticism to Modernism: Images and Ideas*, Tate Papers No. 33, [www.tate.org.uk/research/tate-papers/33/gothic-cathedrals-romanticism-modernism-images-ideas](http://www.tate.org.uk/research/tate-papers/33/gothic-cathedrals-romanticism-modernism-images-ideas) (2020).

something new all of the time, like religion in the human mind, like evolution in Nature, like human beings living in accord with the divine momenta nested inside them and like sentence after sentence in this book in the making, tending tirelessly toward infinity, striving to touch the glory of the tallest firmaments with their endless streams and unrelenting reaching upwards, but then as I gazed and thought and marveled and marveled and gazed and thought some more, I have not noticed that the ice cream had begun to melt and smear itself over the willowy hands grasping it ever so tightly.

My first memory of eating an ice cream from a waffled cone takes me back to the steps to the Cathedral of St. Duje in my grandpa's hometown, the Dalmatian city of Split, when all that symbolized the sunshiny serenity and bliss of the ninety eighties collided in my mantic mind and crashed into millions of pieces of the mosaic of my memory, yielding a concoction that was to become an azure sea crowded with seraphic sirens, sprightly seahorses, humanoid amphibians and the pillars of Atlantis fantasied as if being swum above, over the Adriatic dreamland of my childhood, which not so far forward in time will have truly found itself underwater, with the dreams of Thou and I sunken and swayed by the sea amidst its rows of cardboard huts, cypress logs and luscious mimosas. I stood behind Thee as Thou shed a tear on the sunlit steps leading to the entrance, graced only by the slender shadow of the trefoil colonnade arching over them. The tall stone columns, reaching as far as the sky in my eyes, were washed in the serenest of sunshine, and so was thy face. Even then, as Thou let thy soft hand that had held mine seconds ago go, I knew that Thou, who had come to Earth to fulfill a mission of higher significance, to sow the little seeds from which skyward roads to happiness and salvation in a world washed with sins would sprout, rise and broaden from a strait channel into an avenue of stars, belong not to me, but to a greater, diviner whole, perhaps the Cosmos in its unutterable magnificence. Therefore, I knew that I would have to let Thee go one day too, to fly back to that celestial sphere that enshrouds our slumbering souls. "Wait for me here", said Thou then in thy dulcet voice, which along with the sounds of the key unbolting the grimy door of our Belgrade home wherein muses gleefully roamed and of thy sonorous cough I always said I would be able to recognize among an infinity of cosmic voices. Having said that, Thou stepped forth into the dark dazzle of the church and stood alone, in deep prayer, before a fresco or a tomb, I remember not, leaving me, with the taste of an ice cream in my mouth, in a long shadow behind Thee. Not long before that day, thy father sailed away, to the Great Beyond, and though a child, I knew that thy prayers were directed to the one who had served as the greatest inspiration and the guiding star in thine ardor-hued life. This Jungian archetype of Thee standing enfolded in darkness before a luminous mural is an icon that now decorates the imaginary shrine of my mind, before which my devotion to the underlying and omnipresent divinity of this world is being declared.

For years after Thou and I split apart in the city of Split and Thou turned into an icon before my eyes, the relationship between the monasterial and the mellifluous would periodically pop up as a pattern that connects various pieces of the experimental puzzle into an extraordinary mosaic. I thought of it when I ran gaspingly through the streets of Belgrade with a melting ice cream in my hands, the only food that my late grandma would gladly eat, wishing to hand it to her before it turned into mush. In my hands, I wished hard that that ice cream turn into a splash potion of eternal life, holding in my hopes pieces of the energy with which the tired young poet, Kenji Miyazawa fed her feverish sister, who gasped for air in the final moments of her life, "the last bowlful of snow, descended from the skies, the realm of galaxies and suns and atmospheres",

praying that it turns in her mouth “into a heavenly ice cream”<sup>5</sup>. It was around the time when my view of the world was behind the rusty iron bars of the crumbly and squeaky window of a marine-colored room in the moldy corner of a house on the starry hill<sup>6</sup>, with eyes set on the sky above the sky, resembling Dylan’s Ophelia<sup>7</sup>, “an old-maid” on “her 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday”, with “religion her profession and her sin her lifelessness”, finding “death quite romantic”, but in spite of all these things, holding “her eyes fixed upon Noah’s great rainbow” and seeing with her see-through eyes transcendental beauties more beautiful than anything the world had ever seen. In those very same days, I faced my eagle-eyed examiners during the exam in philosophy of science and minutes before I would be sent out the door and told that I failed, I improvised the story about a girl who stumbled on a little rock dropped earlier on the boardwalk by a mysterious boy. As she tripped, she plopped her ice cream on the ground and this event turned out to be a life-changing wakeup call for her vanishing spirituality. With remorseful tears in her dewy eyes, she suddenly awoke devotion greater than life to far greater panoramas of being than the materialistic wishes and sensualistic wheels that whirled and swirled inside her head like vortices, constantly dragging her spirit down. Once there was a little girl who looked at the naked earth around her on a Christmas Eve, more than a century before this magical Alsatian night on which the beginning ended and the ending began, and lamented sonorously over the void of neglect and oblivion that encompasses it all, but then, at the peak of her mourning, like a howling wolf, raised her glances toward the starry sky nested above her head, saw in it the twinkles of joy in the all-seeing Eye of the Universe, and proclaimed loudly that “not yet have materialism and the practical prosaicness of life overcome and totally triumphed; the idyllic, the beautiful and the sublime must subsist so long as there are people and in them soul – the spark divine”<sup>8</sup>; so has it happened to this chaste lassie of my fancy to recognize the sublime while being plunged near the seabed of the sea of melancholy, whose warm and billowy waves only the eyes of the holy mortals depicted on monastery frescoes have known of.

The first time I told this story, as I say, I improvised it before the puzzled faces of two posh philosophers to illustrate the causal nature of reality wherein tiny tears of Calimero could turn anytime into an avalanche, whereas the loudest and the most bombastic of expressions could end up being drowned in the river of time. For, flamboyant wings of the butterfly Edward Lorenz envisaged when he knocked quietly on the doors of chaos theory while flying on the carpet of his meteorological calculations I indeed see at all times flapping from countless little corners of this reality where nothing is coincidental and everything is connected. I see it as clearly as I see the kaleidoscope of Painted Ladies, the butterflies I spotted traversing the Orange County city – the threshold of which I was a dweller on then – in millions on their migratory route from the southeastern Californian deserts to the Pacific Northwest. This silky swarm passed me by, coincidentally, on the very same hour that “a call that changes it all”<sup>9</sup> came in, after hours, days

---

<sup>5</sup> See Kenji Miyazawa’s *Morning of the Last Farewell* (*Eiketsu no Asa*) (November 27, 1922), retrieved from <https://abhibhut.blogspot.com/2012/12/morning-of-last-farewell-eiketsu-no-asa.html>.

<sup>6</sup> The neighborhood of Belgrade where home used to be is called Zvezdara and means a place or an object overcrowded with stars, most realistically a hill given its topography and an astronomical observatory located at one of its highest and most forest-shrouded points.

<sup>7</sup> Listen to Bob Dylan’s *Desolation Row on Highway 61 Revisited*, Columbia (1965).

<sup>8</sup> See the excerpt from the diary of Ljubica S. Janković, retrieved from [http://www.b92.net/kultura/vesti.php?nav\\_category=1087&yyyy=2015&mm=01&dd=05&nav\\_id=943733](http://www.b92.net/kultura/vesti.php?nav_category=1087&yyyy=2015&mm=01&dd=05&nav_id=943733) (1919).

<sup>9</sup> “Jedan poziv menja sve” is the line from Partibrejkers’ song 1000 godina from the band’s eponymous debut record, *Partibrejkers I*, released by Jugoton in 1985. “I know if I were to live for 1000 years, my whole life would fit in one day. And yet, a single call changes it all”.

and months of waiting, and said that this funny family of four would head there too in no time. And now, as a major and a minor chord alternate in my head, rocking my soul from joy to sadness and back, like in that one song about an ice cream party<sup>10</sup>, I think of how a small change from B to A sharp in the G chord changes it from major to minor, coloring the mood in wholly different colors with each such change, once again bringing the same point home: an imperceptibly fine alteration in the fabrics of our physical existence and our abstractions can amend the fate of the entire universe and beyond. With a panoply of starry trains swishing up and down the neck of my guitar, orangey oracular orbs nesting over my head and the omnipresent bits and bytes of the digital age oppressing me from all sides, formulae from the realm of artificial intelligence begin to pop up before my mental screen, one of which describes the tradeoff between bias and variance in statistical models, in such a way that models that poorly, naïvely and overly simplistically describe an aspect of reality usually have a high bias but low variance, meaning that a small change in an observable value would not significantly change the predictions of the model. And since good descriptive models, in contrast, having a low bias and naturally high variance, change dramatically with a subtlest change in any data point<sup>11</sup>, this means one thing amidst myriads of possible others: namely, if we notice that our world has an equanimity of a placid sea to it, undisturbed by anything, then we ought to know that our worldview is off and out of compliance with the true physical and spiritual order. But when we begin to stagger and shake with every jiggle of an autumn leaf and get monumentally moved by natural details that would be unnoticed or ignored by an ordinary mind, we should know that we are on the right track and that the model of reality erected in our head is close to correct.

The first following thing that comes to this crooked and convoluted mind, weighed down by jillions of thoughts, sounds and images that come to it at once, is a scene from Jacques Tati's *Monsieur Hulot's Holiday*. In it, a boy with a white sailor hat, tipped into the shape of a ship, is walking wobblingly up the stairs with an ice cream in each hand. He wishes to enter the holiday house, on the front door of which a poster is stuck that says *Bal Masque*; it is the same house on the hill on which the comedian with a habit of walking in circles would eventually launch an inadvertent firework attack, "assaulting the stuffy old world of the past"<sup>12</sup>, as one of the Pythons, Terry Jones pointed out on my TV screen right as the 4th of July fireworks were lighting up the air around the living room of a Nob Hill apartment in which I found a refuge from this very same world, so often masked by the veils of phoniness, hypocrisies and vanity. However, as the boy reaches upwardly to grasp the doorknob, he realizes that he has to tilt one of the ice creams he holds. At that point another raindrop of mellow memories fell onto my dreamy head. It took the form of a reminiscence over a bulbous boy with thick eyeglasses from my childhood days, who would, like the white rabbit that prompted Alice to enter her adventure in Wonderland, spill the scoops of ice cream from a waffled cone he held in his hand whenever he would look for time on his wrist watch. The naughty schoolboys knew this and every time they felt like mocking the poor boy as he savored his favorite treat, all they needed to do is, allegedly benevolently, asked him for time. This time, however, the ice cream in the boy's hands turned upside down, yet nothing flipped over nor leaked to the ground. Indeed, when the genuine childlike nature has

---

<sup>10</sup> Listen to Modest Mouse's Ice Cream Party, Epic, New York, NY (2019).

<sup>11</sup> See the Penn State Eberly College of Science course STAT 508: Applied Data Mining and Statistical Learning, Lesson 2: Statistical Learning and Model Selection, 2.1. Prediction Accuracy, retrieved from <https://online.stat.psu.edu/stat508/lesson/2/2.1> (2023).

<sup>12</sup> Watch the interview with Terry Jones following *Monsieur Hulot's Holiday* directed by Jacques Tati, Criterion Collection, New York, NY (1953).

taken over our spirit in full force, the acts of magic and little miracles become parts of our daily routine.

Yet, this was not where the sketch ended. Namely, before the boy tasted one of the ice creams that he bought for himself, he walked up another flight of stairs on this warm summer day to give it to his brother who sat quietly in the corner of a room. Indeed, if all I ever wished to say through my writings and my music could be condensed into a single formula, this might be it: Wonder + Love = ★. And here I fall from grace, at this mention of a star, for I vowed to proceed penning these lines with zero moralizations, conforming to the idea that “morality impedes free thinking”<sup>13</sup> and piling words that evoke magic extending in greatness and beauty far above any preaching can do. I swore that in writing these lines I would stay away from disseminating any moral points and live up to the approach Bernardo Bertolucci said to have followed under a Roman colonnade<sup>14</sup> when he was making *The Conformist*, the film about the tragic fate of one submitting with a neo-fascist zeal and the acquiescence of a minion to any ideology: “I don’t need to send out messages, to make statements. I’m interested in following certain lights and shadows which pass in the eyes of my characters”. Yet, in spite of these vows and vocations, I stumble and I revert to the trite old habit. Be that as it may, without Love, Wonder itself would be like an ungrounded ladder, unable to lift us into unthinkably great, heavenly heights of being, or like a balloon unanchored to the ground, losing itself out of sight promptly, bursting aloud and falling to the ground like Icarus into the Aegean Sea just east of the Cyclades. But when our dreams are lived for another, when ours is a path laid to lead the loved ones to the stars, miracles become a daily occurrence and angels shield the prickly thorns of the weary world with their wings to protect us on our daring strides. That wooden puppet, Pinocchio, became alive when he began to live for someone else, that is, when he wished upon a star to succeed in saving his father from the jaws of a sperm whale, and so does every one of us have a chance to be born as an undying star out of this evanescent dust that we are made of and to transcendently guide souls on millions of earths of this cosmos, in bliss and in eternal glory, if he only gives his heart and soul to another, if he only sacrifices everything one has to save that another from imminent falls from grace and lift him up into the angelical spheres of being. Or, as Jacques Tati insinuated, when we hold childlike Wonder in one hand and sacrificial Love in another, when we head along a phantasmagoric path delineated by the drops of chocolate dripping from two ice cream cones, one belonging to I and one belonging to Thee, it is when, magically, paths to the stars open up before us.

\*\*\*

**Totoro, strange and kindred**, the furry forest creature from Hayao Miyazaki’s and Studio Ghibli’s anime *Tonari no Totoro*, the symbol of chaste dreaminess that only the celestial child in us knows of, capable of flying us on its belly far, far from the gloomy

---

<sup>13</sup> See Douglas Coupland’s *Marshall McLuhan: You Know Nothing of My Work!*, Atlas & Co., New York, NY (2010), pp. 126.

<sup>14</sup> Watch Bernardo Bertolucci on *The Conformist* (1970), retrieved from <http://youtu.be/biitl4XZLA8>. The eloquent Italian filmmaker also notes the following during this interview, thus hinting at the necessity for the separation of cinema from its predecessor, the theater, and from the concept of the narrative *per se*: “What interests me is taking actors, individuals, and placing them into a certain reality. Everything which comes before, the novels, the literary works from which the films are drawn count almost nothing”.

ambiances of this world, appears to the two girls, Satsuki and Mei, only after they reach out to things surrounding them with a soulful glow of either Wonder or Love.

The first time Mei sees Totoro is after she follows an acorn-dropping troll walking by and entering the tangled web of branches at the base of a giant camphor tree. She sloppily stumbles, like Alice when she entered Wonderland, falls through a hole in the ground and enters Totoro's cave. After falling asleep on his soft and squishy belly, little Mie wakes up, on the humid and dusty ground, however. The symbolism cannot be more powerful: disseminate Wonder only, without Love, via our creative expressions and this is what will come out: a population of dejected, hunchbacked and soiled bums of spirit, frowningly yelling *Shut Up, I'm Dreaming* with the bitterness of a Ziggy Stardust, annoyed by anyone's interfering with their floating in the dreamily spacey bubbles of their own. Their apologetic sighs, though, upon hitting "the all-time low"<sup>15</sup> and realizing the impasse of the chosen stature, emotively vacuous, as it were, from which no coming back to the planet Earth might be allowed, will be horrific, resembling those released by Ziggy himself in *Ashes to Ashes*, the sequel to Major Tom's entering the capsule of wondrous dreaminess<sup>16</sup> and deliberately rupturing the threads of Love between the dreamer's heart of his and the millions of earthly hearts beating around him with a most beautiful cosmic music imaginable.

Then, each successive time Totoro appears to the two sisters, it is as if he responds to their calls of careworn love for other creatures in this universe. The first time it was when Satsuki and Mei stood alone on a bus stop in the middle of a rain shower, holding an umbrella that they wished to hand over to their Dad when he steps out of the bus. The wait became so long that they both zoned out, beginning to see Totoro through the hazy veil of their drowsiness. The second time it was when the kids planted acorns, wishing to give life to a new creature that would provide a cedar chest for the treasures of their dreams to be kept in. The third time it was when Satsuki desperately ran in search of Mei, who disappeared and who Satsuki and other villagers thought might have drowned. And the final time it was when both sisters carried an ear of corn for their mom who lay sick in the hospital. When Totoro and his fantastic forest creatures helped them deliver their touching gift, they stayed put on a branch of a tall tree under the blanket of stars, enlighteningly watching the Earth roll by, with a silent hum, beneath their jiggy feet. They have thus remained up and down at the same time, in the blissful middle air between Heaven and Earth, ready to, when needed, hop back to the ground propelled by the stellar power of Love as well as to soar high in their imagination, having been flung up, like a flying saucer, by the force of Wonder.

Indeed, Wonder and Love ought to always go together and whenever we sense that our creative expressions are starting to be deprived of one or the other, we should stand aside, quiet ourselves and make a plan on how to modify them, then disregard the plan and improvise our way to the goal while remaining true to the gist of the plan. In simplest terms, the plan will be either

- to instill in these expressions of ours cliché-shattering originality that emerges naturally from genuine exhibitions of Wonder when Love without Wonder has turned us into a bland and unimaginatively conformist figurine,  
or

---

<sup>15</sup> Listen to David Bowie's *Ashes to Ashes* on *Scary Monsters (and Super Creeps)*, RCA Records, New York, NY (1980).

<sup>16</sup> Listen to David Bowie's *Space Oddity*, Philips, Eindhoven, NL (1969).

- to instill in them the heart-opening and all-welcoming sense of oneness with it all when Wonder with too little of Love has transformed us into a selfish dreamer careless about anything or anyone else but the beauty of our dreams.

For, while Wonder impels us to explore life with our senses and, thus, be transformed from a robotic, purpose-preprogrammed semblance of a human being into a creature bursting with mental, emotional and expressive creativeness, Love sets the foundations of divine ethics in us and provides a base for the free flights of the wondrous kite of our spirit to the stars, which may have otherwise flown away and disappeared in the translucent emptiness of the summery skies above.

\*\*\*

How surprised ought to be the writer of lines like these, lines that celebrate the eternal beauties discoverable in the minutest of things and events, not only in the patterns engraved on a seashell or a seashore pebble, in the twinkly blink of an angel after the rain in the Garden of Eden of his holy mind and in the twirl of a star dancing the dark night away, but also in the rattle of a keychain as it lands on the ground, in the edges of a worn-out wallet and in the ticks and tocks of a handheld watch upon coming across a book that discovers a whole infinity in a thing that is so small that it is not even a thing and that is an event that is absolutely eventless, devoid of any action or a relationship, epitomizing that “interstice in our knowledge, a darkness between stars” in which one prominent Welsh mystic found God<sup>17</sup>? “Hmm.. Now why did I come in here again”, asks the writer’s mother in the first frame and gets the answer in the last one, saying “...**Now I remember**” and picking a yellow book from the dining room table, the room in which we would see centuries and lifetimes of generations of people on Earth unfold in this brief instance of time separating the question arising in her head from the answer. We see Earth forming and dissipating into space, we see children birthdays, twisters and pick-a-boos, we see tribal people wandering around ages ago, we see the house being built, flooded, refurbished, revamped, robbed, hollowed out and refilled, we see present, past and future being all mixed up and mingled with one another, but most frequently, self-reflectively, we see people losing things – wallets, umbrellas, keys, watches, reading glasses, earrings, to-do lists and minds – and searching for them. “Have you seen my keys? I put them down and then poof, they were gone”, says a father in one frame, reflecting a well familiar feeling in which seemingly nothing but vexation exists, when in reality, as we see, a whole universe lurks within. This irritating moment of emptiness, a hole in our memory lasting a tiny bit longer than the blink of an eye is perceived as flooded with impressions comprising a Cosmos and beyond. Hence the title of the graphic book<sup>18</sup>, *Here*, and a universe existing in that infinitesimal moment of time comprising it, in an infinitely short moment of nil, of the pure void in our memory. What a statement this is to anyone coming to believe that present is infinitely short and that there cannot be anything perceptible or palpable in it, when in reality the whole past and future, all that has ever existed and all that will ever exist, intersect in it and tell their stories through it, the stories that, if heard, would blow our minds momentarily with the enormity of impressions encompassing them.

Did I get so impressed by the book because I read it after making the first, miniscule step up after days and days, weeks and weeks, months and months of sinking deeper and deeper, of

---

<sup>17</sup> The mystic is R. S. Thomas, as mentioned in Keith Ward’s *God: A Guide for the Perplexed*, Oneworld, Oxford, UK (2003).

<sup>18</sup> See Richard McGuire’s *Here*, Pantheon Books, New York, NY (2014).

going downer and downer in a lift with pockets getting emptier and emptier, head bowed lower and lower and coat sootier and sootier? Or was it because the book experimented with a most natural and obvious thing to experiment on, but the one no one experimented with before, which was to revert the classical storytelling approach where time is, more or less, a continuous coordinate and space takes random forms into the one where space - in the form of the corner of a room - is a constant and time is shifted randomly? Was it because the author accomplished his motto to “make the big things small and the small things big”<sup>19</sup> through “the poetic meditation on space and time”<sup>20</sup> that the book had grown into? Was it because the experimentation with the form and the questioning of the medium for artistic expression were not secondary to the production of a powerful poetic and emotional experience or *vice versa*, but rather both were tackled in an equally immaculate manner, which has been incredibly rare in the history of art? Did this resonate so much with my own goal of neither being like the Stooges, the band whose music was mediocre, but opened a whole new world of forms of musical expression, nor being like Roy Orbison around the time of his departure from this planet and the recording of the posthumously released *Mystery Girl*, the collection of songs that created a powerful emotional experience, but did so on the basis of an already established and developed musical language, when this goal has been to combine the best of both, that is, to relentlessly and boldly experiment with the form and question the medium *per se*, while also emotionally connecting with the listener and bringing tears to their eyes and fires to their hearts? Was it because the narrative emphasis on smallness and the unpretentious technical style provided a counterweight to the grandiose goal of demonstrating the presence of a whole Universe in an infinitesimally short span of time, creating a fine balance thereby? Or was it because the book resonates with my own everlasting obsession with memory, with the passage of time, with *Panta Rhei*, which I showed signs of already as a four-year old, repeating, “Remember, remember” everywhere I went and forcing my father, with my little fingers clutched by his palms, to remember every single thing that caught my attention and that I feared getting drowned in the river of time, for its worth in my innocent mind was as big as the Universe itself? Similarly odd as this habit of mine is Theo’s walking around these days, at the tender age of five, and constantly writing lines on an imaginary screen before his eyes with his index finger and in it lay ascribed my drive to write down everything, including this very sentence, before it gets washed away by the waves of evanescence. Hence, this fear of the passage of time and desperation in view of knowing that everything, sooner or later, will disappear into oblivion ought to be thanked for the lines lying inscribed here more than anything else in this story of life where diametrical opposite polarities, including fear and love, feed into one another. And somewhere toward the end of the book, a bit before a phone call presumably carrying the news of a soul sailing away is heard and paired with the image of two enlightened hummingbirds from year 22,175 kissing each other next to a giant hibiscus flower and a cluster of yellowish trumpet-shaped flowers, a voice from a decade into the future is shown reading a line from another book, saying “They would sing the names of the dead into the corn as they planted. And sing the names of the newborns at the harvest”. And then again, to top it all up, as the author’s mother says, “Burial sites?! Oh, my dear Lord” midway through the book, an image of an ice cream pops up, with its top melting and sliding down the walls of the cone and into the holder’s hands.

---

<sup>19</sup> See Francoise Mouly’s and Mina Kaneko’s *Richard McGuire’s ‘Time Warp’*, *The New Yorker* (November 24, 2014), retrieved from <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/cover-story-2014-11-24>.

<sup>20</sup> See Thomas Brett’s *Reflections on Richard McGuire’s ‘Here’*, *Brettworks* (February 18, 2015), retrieved from <https://brettworks.com/2015/02/18/reflections-on-richard-mcguires-here/>.

\*\*\*

**A dreamy scratch of a big Aeolian rock** with a small and jagged pebble – ‘twas the last act of Anna, a girl looking just like Thou in thy thirties, a creature fed up with linguistic phoniness and behavioral habitualness of her fellow humans, who swam off from the shore of an island into the unknown, disappearing from the sight of those destined to stare at the sea from the coast to which no one arrives and serving as a mysterious lantern to other protagonists who would continue to vainly search for her existentialist freeness, though being distracted every now and then by the pointing of the compasses of their hearts into senseless directions. Could the light have thus been cast in my personal microcosm on how similar Anna’s fate was to Thy, who were also a misanthropist, but with a heart of gold, a heart bathing in the Adriatic waters of eternal lyricism and divine inspiration, knowing deep inside it that all people are holy and ought to be loved, even though all she received in return for doing so were murkiness and pain, bringing her back to the reasons for her misanthropy and closing the circles inside her consciousness, albeit producing gaping ravines in it along the way, which would swallow her in the end, just as it happened to Anna? Or, could the light have been shed onto broader areas on the existential map, namely on how followers in life, as a rule, transform into perplexed, wobbly travelers on its roads, whose moral integrity deteriorates with every passing moment once they become deprived of the guiding hands of their leaders, those whom authentic anarchists would readily remove as approval-seeking centers of attention, without ever ceasing to respect them with the fullness of their hearts, I wonder? Or, could it be that when those whom we see as lanterns, having captivated us with their wondrous freedoms, are not driven by love for surrounding souls – quite the other way around from Steinbeck’s preacher Casy in the eyes of Tom Joad, whose ghost casts an eerie shadow on my penning these words, drawing a question mark over my hunched self and asking in a deep and mellifluous voice whether I have strayed from his path – our journeys in their footsteps lead to but existential chasms? Finally, could it be that being unable to decide whether those around us are sinners or saints has a paralyzing effect on our judgmental selves, just like it had on the shadowy personas of the searchers of Anna, the girl lost at sea?

The movie around which these questions revolve is *L’avventura*, a timeless voyage into a void, into nothingness intercepted only by the soundless sight of sobbing before a cold, desolate and square-faced architectural wallpaper for the soul, a voyage that still gives off an impression of unprecedentedly dynamic and lively cinematic experience in spite of the dramaturgical nullity and theatrical quiescence that it has arisen from and into which it eventually disappears. What its creator, Michelangelo Antonioni may have wished to signify with Anna’s last act caught on camera is that the touches of an incredibly small and infinitely large do matter and can be onsets of great adventures in life. The same point he would echo in another one of his films, *Blowup*, six years later, with the portrayal of a photograph, seemingly uninteresting, but hiding a detail of a lifesaving importance in it, visible only if its subtlest segments become blown up and inspected with scrutiny. In the adventure depicted in the cinematic masterpiece of *L’avventura*, however, at the end of its long and tortuous path two hearts recognize each other’s wretchedness and arrive at a sense of pity for one another<sup>21</sup>, a seed from which empathy and, perhaps, divine love may arise

---

<sup>21</sup> See Michelangelo Antonioni’s Cannes Statement after the premiere of *L’avventura*, In: *L’avventura*: Michelangelo Antonioni, Director, edited by Seymour Chatman and Guido Fink, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, NJ (1989), pp. 177.

one day, bringing infinite joy to their arid souls ravaged by the prolonged absence of it. The final shot of the movie, one of the most poignant that adorn the pantheon of the art of cinema, shows two dark figures with backs turned to the camera, leaning penitently on to each other, against a backdrop cut to two – on the right side is a wall, symbolizing death and nothingness, whereas on the left, the side that they face, is an open view of the sea and a gorgeous mountaintop in the distance, suggesting a path of salvation that has finally opened before them.

But let us pause for a while at this moment and take a deep breath, perhaps like the breath Thou could never take without making thyself cough chokingly, except while gliding through the water like the most graceful manatee the world has seen. Why all this preceding and ensuing reference to cinema, one may wonder, in this elegy about the beauty of Thou? First, thy love for movies, albeit amateurish, yet always seeking sparkles of starry goodness and style, knew no borders. Movies in thy world offered a channel for an escape from the reality of repetitive mundaneness and into the world of adventure and surprise, epitomizing the spiritual quest that thy childlike heart never ceased to be on, mundaneness that was tied to thy living self-sacrificially, solely for the benefit of the loved ones, knowing all the way through that stars seen in the eyes of another are one thing more beautiful than stars seen with one's own eyes. Thine elevated chin with a mole and a thread of hair in its center, a few miniscule moustaches above thine upper lip, the thin black hair, the button nose that had grown over the years into a clown's one, and, most of all, thine eyes opened widely, absorbing all the colors and motion with the trust and the openheartedness of a child, a child Thou continued to be until thy last day. On top of this, the place Thou worked for many years, throughout the entirety of my prewar childhood, *Komgrap*, a state building company, was built on the site of a café called *Zlatni Krst*, that is, Golden Cross, where on June 7, 1896, the first public movie projection in the Balkans took place, only five months after the world's first such projection at the Parisian *Grand Café* by the Lumière brothers. Symbols, as guiding stars, indeed rest concealed everywhere, each being akin to a star, a star awakened to life with every tear Thou cried at movies. Big or small, they all tie into a single and perfectly consistent reflection of the story of one's life within the cosmic circles that are, invariably, grander than oneself.

As for small acts that lead to adventures of cosmic proportions, Antonioni's most famous reference to them can be found in *L'eclisse*, the final movie in the trilogy whose first part was *L'avventura* and the second *La Notte*. In particular, it is the moment when the beginning of the long expected merging of the dreamingly floating and elegantly gliding Yin and the energetic and erratic Yang is marked with the goddess of Yin, Vittoria's gingerly dropping a little broken piece of wood into a barrel filled with stale rainwater lying next to a ruinous construction site in a suburb of Rome, the barrel which will symbolically begin to bleed and soak the dry and dusty soil around it with its content at the very end of the movie, sweetly signifying the monumentality in the miniscule rather than in the great and grandiose.

Since the macrocosmic relationships are reflected in the microscopic ones, learning to notice the latter and then draw a thread to bigger events may indeed present a prelude to a wonderful quest for the meaning of life to an imaginative mind. To reiterate this viewpoint, when asked what *L'avventura* was about, Antonioni, the master of alienation, first said that it was about the feelings that disappear the moment they are perceived for the first time, but then added the following: "There was a scene in the scenario, later cut (I don't remember why), in which Claudia, Anna's friend, is with the others on the island. They are speculating endlessly about the girl's disappearance. But there are no answers. After a silence someone says: 'Perhaps she only

drowned'. Claudia turns suddenly. Everybody looks at each other in dismay. There: this dismay is the connotation of the film"<sup>22</sup>.

The question thus naturally raised is how we beautify our turnings to face the unknown, those moments when we stand at a crossroads between here and there, crucified on the crosses of our consciousness. Every turn is a gestural question and just like questions can be posed with arrogance and a sense of certainty in the answers underlying them, as paradoxical as this can get, the habit which is well known to the inhabitants of academic milieus, they can also radiate with joy and lovingness in the face of the mysterious and the unfamiliar, being the essence of genuine cosmopolitanism, of a sense of unison with all things and creatures that bursts the bubble of our ego and makes us see ourselves in everything and everything in ourselves. Moses the Prophet said that "thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 22:21), and indeed, the extent to which we substitute blank faces and unwelcoming guards with heartwarming gestural winks that shed stardust of ethereal charm in face of creatures foreign to our universe can be used as a mirror that reflects the stage that the evolution of our spirit on this planet has reached. Of course, in *L'avventura* we have *via negativa* approach of ascension through reduction at work and if the turnings of its characters towards the unknown suggest something, it is *how not to*, rather than *how to* carry them if we are to avoid our and the world spirit's continuous descent on the road to nowhere. The same *reductio ab absurdum* approach the Italian director used a couple of years later, in *Red Desert*, a story delineating the alienating modern world wherein pervasive mechanization and the deadening habits it bears have subdued to their inhumane powers the infinite liveliness, sensibility and imagination dormant in human spirits. Aside from the luscious dream of Giuliana – in which her superego, a little girl, rests on an idyllic beach, when a mysterious ship glides into the cove, but only to retreat after she begins to swim to it, right after which all the rocks and sands and everything starts to sing the sirens' songs as she emerges on the shoreline, the dream after which her son, symbolically, begins to walk once again – very little was depicted as humane and inspiring in this movie. It ends with our heroine's – who had, true to Antonioni's *via negativa* vision, begun to show signs of spiritual soundness by becoming extensively exposed to the grimness of the machinelike world – answering to her son's pointing at the birds of the sky and asking if these dwellers of the celestial sphere would die if they approached the gray fumes coming out of the plant which the two were just about to leave behind for good, with a "the little birdies know by now, they don't fly there anymore". Like in Hou Hsiao-Hsien's tribute to the flight of the Red Balloon – once held in the hands of a boy named Pascal, the son of the French filmmaker, Albert Lamorisse, who had made it in a fantasy featurette for all times the symbol of dreaminess that could soar its bearers higher than the world – where the balloon was filmed traversing the Parisian rooftops like a ghost, never to be caught, seen or held by anyone, so had Michelangelo Antonioni showed us what *is* by eliminating what *isn't*, perhaps fearing that the opposite approach would be but a blasphemy in this world wherein "none is good, save one, that is, God" (Mark 10:18), a blasphemy that would limit and maybe even suffocate the visions of inspired living rather than impel us to dream about it and one day, if persistent enough, invent it.

Yet, even then, to surprise us with a paradox that cuts through the ideological core of his work, as only the greatest of artists and philosophers used to have done, at just about the time when the world was about to come to terms with the aforementioned approach of his, Antonioni

---

<sup>22</sup> See Michelangelo Antonioni's About Myself and One of My Films, In: *L'avventura: Michelangelo Antonioni, Director*, edited by Seymour Chatman and Guido Fink, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, NJ (1983), pp. 182.

said that, in fact, “it's too simplistic to say – as many people have done – that I am condemning the inhuman industrial world which oppresses the individuals and leads them to neurosis. My intention... was to translate the poetry of the world, in which even factories can be beautiful. The line and curves of factories and their chimneys can be more beautiful than the outline of trees, which we are already too accustomed to seeing”<sup>23</sup>. Having mentioned factory chimneys, the first ones of such kind coming to mind are those that decorated the scenery of many films of Yasujiro Ozu, that revered soul who, with his sooty fedora and meager moustache, resembled thy father and peeked into the hereafter on another 12/12, from *The Only Son* to *Tokyo Story* to *An Autumn Afternoon*, perhaps to underlie the same message and accentuate the aesthetics of things usually discarded by default as unaesthetic. The second one of such kind can be the blackened red-brick chimney piercing the clouds over Cetinjska Street in my and thy hometown, the city we were born and raised in, Belgrade, near the cobblestoned grounds of its only vintage street, Skadarlija. And the third one coming to mind is that raising towards the blue skies near a post office storage place close to the corner of Illinois and 22<sup>nd</sup> St. in San Francisco's Mission Bay neighborhood. 'Tis the place from which I quaveringly, out of breath, picked the only image of thee made by a passing, not reflected light; the factory chimney in whose long shadow I stood right after I exited the post office, made a couple of steps to the left and found myself on the edge of the pier overlooking the Bay thus naturally became the basilica before which my spirit kneeled. Looking up to it in hope I prayed for Thee with the wholeness of my frail and crumbling heart. The brightest beams of love and hope were emitted from this imaginary lighthouse petted gently by the ocean waves and into the dark cosmic depths enveloping the Earth, yet I knew not then that, sometimes, the death must win if the soul is to survive<sup>24</sup>. And the heart broke, its blossoms dissipated and waters of life escarped inside flew out, like salty waterfalls, bringing bliss in strange ways and instilling a mysterious strength in me, in preparation for the long battle between spirits sinful and saintly that would rage in the stellar space surrounding my heart for many years to come.

Being psalms to the omnipresent beauty of all things, the message receivable only by those ready to dig deep through their darkness as well as lie still as their cinematic knives painfully, with *temps mort* slowness, cut through the surface layers of our beings, through the linguistic and the shallowly sensual, before they run into the spiritual essence of interpersonal communication and shed light onto it, Michelangelo's movies tend to be powerful pointers in the direction of beautiful living, pointers that shun Word and embrace Life. To wean us from the habit to tie the meaning of our observations of social situations to their dialogical elements and accustom us to the search for their beauty in their gestural and elementally visual aspects can be said to have been his primary intention. As such, Michelangelo's movies, from their heads to toes, were about the rejection of the dramaturgical and the descent into the beauty of the cinematic, as if wishing to pay the tribute to the ideals set forth by Dziga Vertov in *Man with a Movie Camera*. For, on the wings of their quest for the aesthetics that is authentically cinematic and independent of its narrative elements and the morality attached to it, which, *en passant*, the Italian director dropped like the aforementioned piece of wood into stale waters in favor of free-

---

<sup>23</sup> See Seymour Benjamin Chatman's and Paul Duncan's *Michelangelo Antonioni: The Investigation*, Taschen, Cologne, Germany (2004), pp. 91–95.

<sup>24</sup> “It's almost like the disease has to win in order for her soul to survive. Or something like that”, said Wayne Coyne while describing the storyline of the Broadway musical version of Flaming Lips' record *Yoshimi Battles the Pink Robots* released by Warner Bros, Burbank, CA, in 2002. See Michael Endelman's *Aaron Sorkin Will Write Flaming Lips Musical*, Entertainment Weekly (March 25, 2007), retrieved from <http://www.ew.com/article/2007/03/25/aaron-sorkin-will-write-flaming-lips-musical>.

spiritedness careless about complying with morally defined social norms of any kind, these movies naturally insinuated that not the semantics of what we say or do, but the elusive and inexpressible cinematic beauty of our actions is what truly matters in our floating through space and gliding across the sea of spirit that surrounds us on all sides. Even when the worldly spirits, like the Earth and the Moon, align in romance in such a way that not blissful swirls are obtained, but frosty and shadowy eclipses of the Sun, there is still an indestructible beauty of the moment discoverable in every detail of the world they inhabit and in each move that they give rise to. These two, however, the visual scenery and the physical expression in combination yield far more than a simple sum, creating a whole irreducible to its constituents, which is why our eyes should never even try to separate the two in shedding their warm inquisitive lights thereon.

A fabulous contrast of depressing and exhilarating is being enkindled in the head of the dizzied watchers by means of one such contrast between semantically void and cinematically graceful, implicitly preaching thereto that the beauty of everything, even when all looks bleak, vacuous and vulgar, is, indeed, so immense that capturing it in a web of sophisticated wordings or any other descriptive snares is an impossible and futile task. Or, as Vittoria, remembering the blissful days of a romantic relationship, notices out loud on a hill overlooking Rome in *L'eclisse*, "When we were in love, we understood each other; there was nothing to be understood". For, the movement, the emotion and the inner glint all precede the rational thought and should be the leader of the latter in a world more ideal than ours rather than *vice versa*, as is the case today. Therefore, wishing to teach us that if we are to gently glide all the way to the coasts of the godly kingdom, it will be necessary to release our bodies to the waves of Tao, the divine energy that permeates every segment of our beings, and letting all else spontaneously arise thereafter, Chuang-Tzu noticed that babies start to smile before any conscious thought of the smile arises in them. So, seraphs say, smile, and I, a passionate proponent of life lived on the territory rather than the map alone, join them enthusiastically in their trumpeting.

\*\*\*

Right around the time when the last day of the summer was transitioning into the first day of the fall in the year of the Dragon, I, a dragon, myself, as well as a son of Dragan and a future father of "a little dragon"<sup>25</sup>, on the face of the wheel of that Chinese carousel that illuminates the celestial sphere with fire, in the midst of a European capital that had been the seat of the world's greatest empire a century ago but whose imperialist aspirations were crushed by the tiny nation of my ancestors, as if in a grim and tragic fairytale of a kind, stood still, frozen in that magical second before the commencement of my speech to an audience silent and static like a concourse of statues or neon-lit mannequins, interrupted only by the happy chirrup of distant stars, such as those spiraling in the eyes of one reflecting Van Gogh's *Starry Night* in her enlightened head, a cosmic symphony of millions of stars flashing all at once<sup>26</sup>.

---

<sup>25</sup> I was born in the Year of the Dragon; my father's name is Dragan and many of his foreign friends sympathetically call him Dragon; my son, Theo, would be born five months after this event, in the Year of the Snake, which is also known in the Chinese zodiac as the Year of the Little Dragon. So a Dragon standing below a Dragon and above a Dragon I am.

<sup>26</sup> Unknowingly, a sparrow sitting on the branch of a nearby tree recorded it on an audio tape, then landed on my shoulder and handed it over to me. And I, having liked it, decided to write down the transcript and, owing to the central role that it gave to a yellow balloon, place it here together with other musings on smallness that turns into cosmically colossal beautifulness in this fabulous fairytale that we call life.

“Hello everyone. (Hand wave.) How beautiful. Let my name be V. Almost like Vendetta, whom fellow anarchists amongst us must be familiar with. Or like the letter with the shape of an open vessel, welcoming everything and everyone under the Sun into itself. (Hands adopt the V-shape.) Oh well, you should really not let me get lost before I’ve even started. (A hand push into the head from one side.) Okay, someone stop me, please, before I make a mess here (Gently losing balance, as if being wobbled by an ET signal received from the stars).

A couple of weeks earlier, when I told **Jules and Jim** that I’d be coming to Vienna to attend their wedding, I was asked to prepare a short but amusing speech. It should be 10 – 15 minutes long, Jim said, which sounded horribly long to me. What in the world am I going to speak about for 15 minutes, I wondered. And then on a quiet Friday night I released myself to the gusts of inspiration and in an hour or so wrote a few sentences, which I accidentally have here with me. It’s actually, well, five pages long. And this is how it goes: ‘When your head gets twisted and your mind grows numb...’<sup>27</sup> (A transverse glance, followed by a sideways smirk and then a hilarious, knee-slapping laughter à la the one hearable after the interrupted start of Bob Dylan’s 115<sup>th</sup> dream.) No, just joking, of course. This is how it really goes.

If I, a PhD in natural sciences, were to tell you that  $1 + 1$  does not equal 2, how amazed would you be? A lot, I assume. And this is exactly what I am about to tell you. For, the reality we inhabit is such that  $1 + 1$  quite rarely yield neither more nor less but 2. For example, add one droplet of water to another, and you would still get only a single droplet of water. Unless, of course, they sublime right after they merge, like two highly reactive liquids (think of acid and water) whose mixing is so exothermic that it causes them to boil and promptly evaporate, or like two lovers on a midsummer night, in the haunting shadow of the ancient eucalyptus trees, in which case the answer would be zero. And from this infinite lightness of being that only merging of two souls can bring, a third might be conceived and, eventually, born, attesting to the fact that  $1 + 1$  will far more often be 3 or more in this reality wherein qualities eclipse quantities on any given day than plain old 2. In this blissful and delirious state we could also come up with our own unique and untold solution, like the schoolboy who wrote on the blackboard two 2s kissing each other and thus yielding a heart on a line as a result of the operation of adding 1 to 1.

On the other hand, add a pinecone to a seashell and you will still have one seashell, not two. Or, take one electron and collide it with an antielectron; what you will get as the result of adding 1 to 1 in this case is neither more nor less than 0. Indeed,  $1 + 1 = 0$ : the same equation adorned the screen behind an educator who wished to emphasize that describing a point both verbally and textually disables its comprehension instead of reinforcing it<sup>28</sup>, all in the attempt to make the stifflingly jam-packed presentations of the modern day simpler, lighter, easier to digest and, thus, more nutritious for our brains. Then, superimpose two wave functions one on top of the other and their sum would be more, or occasionally less, than their arithmetic sum. Or, as polymer chemists might tell us, co-polymerize lactic acid and glycolic acid, homopolymers of both of which are sparsely soluble, and you will get a material that is soluble in a wide array of organic solvents. Then, if you were to create a solid solution of gold and titanium, both of which, alone, are nonmagnetic, you would, surprisingly, create an antiferromagnetic alloy with a

---

<sup>27</sup> Listen to Bob Dylan’s poem *Last Thoughts on Woody Guthrie*, recited live at New York City’s Town Hall (April 12, 1963) and released on *The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-3 (Rare & Unreleased) 1961-1991*, Columbia Records, New York, NY.

<sup>28</sup> See David J.P. Phillips’s Lecture entitled *How to Avoid Death by PowerPoint*, TEDx Stockholm Salon, retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iwpi1Lm6dFo> (2014).

permanent magnetic moment<sup>29</sup>, albeit with a relatively low Curie point, equaling in Kelvin degrees Jim's and my age on this very special day: 36. Or, combine super-reactive sodium and toxic chlorine and the result will be table salt, a chemical compound as harmless as one could be. Chemistry, of course, abounds with examples in favor of the inability of breaking down compounds into simple sums of the properties of their constituents. Take, for instance, two cations, e.g., calcium and silver, and two anions, e.g., sulfate and chloride, and compare the solubility of the four different simple salts that they form. Whereas calcium chloride and silver sulfate will be very soluble in water, calcium sulfate and silver chloride will be almost completely insoluble. Hence, the key to explaining this property of theirs cannot lie in any of their ionic constituents *per se*, but in the way they combine together. For this reason, "solubility is a complicated matter indeed, and nobody understands it completely"<sup>30</sup>, as a duo of passionate crystal growers pointed out. Another example evocable by this mention of solubility is that of the eutectic point, that is, a point in the phase diagram of a mixture of components where the phase transition temperature, such as the melting point, is simultaneous for all the components and lower than that for any of the individual components alone. But as ever in life, to find this eutectic composition is not an easy task, which is to remind us that stars need to align and we follow their course precisely to enter the contexts where such magical synergies in interaction with another human being and the world will be struck.

Although I should remember not to turn this monologue into a chemistry lecture, this brings me over to a comment I have decided to offer as an introductory one in my biomaterials class: I do not know a whole lot about bio and I know far less about engineering, yet I am an aspiring professor of bioengineering and, some may say, not me, an established expert in this field, as Jim might want to attest to with this spry nodding of his head. In other words, take zero and zero and you get numbers larger by the dozen, at least according to the laws of math that authentically describe life. Am I then, Jim, not unlike that Dylan's soldier who won the war by losing every battle?<sup>31</sup> And this is exactly what I intend to write on the blackboard at the beginning of the first class I am about to hold as a university professor:  $0 + 0 = 1$ . Of course, if I ever succeed in conveying the magic of sensing that two gaps, in togetherness, can make a bridge, that will be the end of my educational endeavors and the day whereon I'd be able to ride off into the sunset peacefully. And who knows, maybe I drew smiles of sympathy from crescent moons and goddesses watching over the stage called Earth from some heavenly heights with this metaphoric appeal to give it all away and become a perfect zero, infinitely poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3), before knockings on Heaven's door are to be done and that magnificent One of which seers have prophesied, the grand unity with all things whereby the boundaries of our ego melt and we find ourselves in everything and everything in us, could be reached. For, 'only when you are empty are you at standstill and balanced'<sup>32</sup>, as Kahlil Gibran's pen noted, insinuating that the task for all the creative souls is to turn the frame on which the image of the reality is fixed upside down and demonstrate that the leaders in life trail far behind those who are placed after all the others, but who are, in fact, second to none in the grand scheme of things and that subtraction, thus, is indeed addition most of the time, whereas piling up equals losing it all,

---

<sup>29</sup> See E. Svanidze, J. K. Wang, T. Besara, L. Liu, Q. Huang, T. Siegrist, B. Frandsen, J. W. Lynn, A. H. Nevidomskyy, M. B. Gamza, M. C. Aronson, Y. J. Uemura, E. Morosan – "An itinerant antiferromagnetic metal without magnetic constituents", *Nature Communications* 6, 7701 (2015).

<sup>30</sup> See Alan Holden's and Phylis Morrison's *Crystals and Crystal Growing*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA (1982), pp. 71.

<sup>31</sup> Listen to Bob Dylan's *Idiot Wind* on *Blood on the Tracks*, Columbia Records, New York, NY (1975).

<sup>32</sup> See Kahlil Gibran's *The Prophet*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY (1923), pp. 30.

regardless of what the subject of our avarice is – golden coins, golden experiences, golden thoughts or golden emotions. The higher we climb on the ladder of earthly success, the lower we would rank among goddesses that watch over every step we take in life, all until they give up on guiding us on our paths with their twinkly blinks and soft wing flaps. And if the vicious and vacuous are among the powerful and the renowned, whereas the godliest ones are among the destitute, the wretched and all the others drowning in the tide of blue, that is, if up and down completely switched directions, with heavenliness lying scattered among the dust and the infernality being raised toward pedestals of humanity, then all the laws of logic, math and morality must break down in the eyes of the saintly ones. And this is when the gates of heaven open before their feet.

Hence the philosophy of holism, according to which most, if not all, wholes in Nature are more and beyond the simple arithmetic sums of their parts. Although there are witty mathematicians amongst us who could use the imaginary unit, the square root of -1, to prove that any two numbers in the Universe are one and the same, as if wishing to teach us that with the gift of divine imagination properly applied, ‘reason can be bent in any direction’<sup>33</sup> and all things become possible<sup>34</sup>, even when they contravene the common sense and counteract the tenets of realism by which we all unquestionably abide, you should know that even the most elementary mathematical operations fall flat on their noses when applied with a perfect precision in the experiential reality of ours. For example, as finicky relativity theorists may tell you, if you stand on a train moving at 1 mph and toss a ball in the very same direction at 1 mph, the velocity of the ball with respect to the railroad tracks will not be 2 mph, but something like 1.99999999999999982, due to the relativistic correction factor that takes into account the velocity of light. If there is any programmer among us today, she might go ahead and remind us of that cartoony joke in which a robot takes a seat by a computer screen connected to Secret Robot Internet to answer the question ‘how much is  $0.1 + 0.2$ ’ to prove that it is a robot. Namely, whereas a human being would not think twice before writing down 0.3, the robot types a zero followed by a decimal digit, number 3 and exactly fifteen zeroes before ending the digit with a 4. In exact numbers, this is 0.30000000000000004. The reason is this: double-precision binary floating point arithmetic relied on by all but a few computer languages is such that its numeric values cannot be perfect representations of decimal units finer than  $1/2^{53}$ . Consequently, when trying to represent any decimal digit, the computer will begin to assemble it by adding these finest units. Since most of the time they are not the exact multiples of  $1/2^{53}$ , an upward or a downward bias will need to be introduced. When it comes to 0.1, for example, the computer is faced with a choice between the downward biased 0.09999999999999999167332731531132594682276248931884765625 and the upward biased 0.1000000000000000055511151231257827021181583404541015625. With the latter value being closer to 0.1, a numeric parser will settle on it and use it for future calculations. No such

---

<sup>33</sup> The phrase is attributed to the French mathematician, Blaise Pascal. See Blaise Pascal’s *Pensée* No. 530, Translated by A. J. Krailsheimer, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK (1669), pp. 216.

<sup>34</sup> Any mathematical statements, even the falsest ones, could be proven to be correct if we only reroute the path leading from the premise to the inference through this imaginary land of symbols whereon the infinite is a norm and whereon triviality and rigor entwine like the branches of tress in an enchanted forest. Symbolically, this may tell us that everything is, indeed, possible when we make the path from the inner kingdom of our drives, emotions and thoughts to the surroundings sprinkled with our actions, like stars, cross the infinite spaces of the soul implanted inside of us. For this reason, sages all the world over have pledged to hang on tightly to this island of infinity at all times, even at the cost of losing touch with the last threads that connected them with the patterns of the physical world.

numbers as 0.1 and 0.2, thus, exist in binary floating point arithmetic; they have, respectively, swapped places with 0.100000000000000055511151231257827021181583404541015625 and 0.200000000000000011102230246251565404236316680908203125. And adding these two numbers yields not 0.3, but 0.3000000000000000444089209850062616169452667236328125. Yet, with  $1/2^{53}$  being the finest decimal unit, the number closest to 0.3 is not 0.3000000000000000444089209850062616169452667236328125, but 0.299999999999999988897769753748434595763683319091796875, suggesting that straightforwardly adding  $0.1 + 0.2$  is not even yielding the most correct of possible values inside most computer processors, needing the application of a numeric parser to figure out the closest value to 0.3. Therefore, add 0.1 to 0.2 and the computer will get 0.3000000000000000444089209850062616169452667236328125 as the internal value. Although it will round this number to 0.3 before displaying it to the user, in its heart of hearts it will always know that the real answer is more complex than the one sent out across the interface and into the world of humans. Finally, this brings us over to the famous claim that in the computer world  $2 + 2 = 5$  for sufficiently large 2s and sufficiently small 5s, being exactly the effect of this routine rounding of decimal digits performed by computers during arithmetic calculations. A trivial example would be the transformation of  $2.3 + 2.3 = 4.6$  to  $2 + 2 = 5$  if we only rounded every number in this equation. Thus, whichever the case, you ought to be sure that even the additions or subtractions most routinely performed in your head will be rarely justified and completely correct when subjected to sufficient rigor as well as that perfect arithmetic precision is rarer than diamonds in the dust even in the most precise computational machinery that adorns our worlds.

In the end, so pervasive in this holistic world of ours are instances where a simple addition of components' qualities fails to explain the properties of the wholes they make that to glimpse immediate examples thereof we need not look farther than the boney bases of our bodies, being made of a composite material Jim and I are very much familiar with, or even the structural bases of this very bunker we are seated in, wherein we'd find concrete reinforced with steel. Namely, just like the combination of brittle crystals of apatite and tensile fibers of collagen in bone creates a material that has strengths of both of its components and neither of their weaknesses, so does reinforced concrete happen to have the high compressive strength of concrete and high tensile strength of steel, and in both cases, as we see,  $1 + 1$  yields a result much greater and beyond that of simply 2. Of course, whenever the combination of two components in a composite material engage in a curious synergy and yield much more than their mere arithmetic sum of properties, be it the simultaneity of strength and fracture toughness or ductility and strength, we should be sure that there are scenarios where two components will not augment, but rather diminish their individual qualities, in which cases the following equation would symbolically apply:  $1 + 1 < 1$ . Such was the case when the addition of a surfactant to increase the colloidal stability of hydroxyapatite nanoparticles weakened their antibacterial activity or when the addition of silver nanoparticles to an electrospun polymeric scaffold reduced its bioactivity. All of this has taught us, materials scientists, that addition can sometimes be equivalent to multiplication just as well as subtraction, my favorite, undoubtedly driven by the minimalistic philosophy that 'less is more', can turn into a coolest addition in the world. What is more, such synergies are often subjective – positive for one person and negative for another – as it is the case with the combination of chocolate, the queen of all beans, and peanut, the king of all nuts, which in the mouth of my fair lady winking from the other side of this ballroom turns into

most fabulous of gastronomic fusions, while in my mouth negates the excellence of the taste of each of these ingredients alone.

In fact, so common are these deviations from the straightforward mathematical operations in real life that we could say that  $1 + 1$  equals 2 only in the ideal world of mathematics. Even then, this equation applies strictly on the basis of properly defined sets of numbers and logical operations involving them, as is best illustrated by Bertrand Russell's and Alfred North Whitehead's spending 362 pages of bogglingly complex symbolic language in *Principia Mathematica* to arrive at the proof that, should every statement on the preceding hundreds of pages hold true,  $1 + 1$  must indeed be neither more nor less but 2. Yet, of course, to beat the deterministic order of logic, math and robotics is to be inventive, inspired and a step closer to stars. Which means that every time we recognize that  $1 + 1 \neq 2$ , we become a little more alive and a little less dead in spirit. It means that we have gone beyond the machinelike mindset that blindly follows *a priori* rules and have descended deep into the foundations of the worldly operations, an act whose performance is the privilege of only the most mentally aware and ingenious of thinkers. Because only when we drift into the sphere of relationships underlying the visible and the tangible will insights enriching for the soul begin to dawn on us like the most glorious sunups. In other words, we need to move deep underground, closer to the roots of things, to places just like this bunker that we have taken this short but blessing residence in if we are to get the grip of things hovering above our heads, mingling with the most sublime clouds of the firmaments.

Now, since there is a piece of that prickly prophet called John Lennon residing inside me and floating like a sailboat up and down the ocean of this heart, I might recall on this occasion one of his verses, as cynical and acerbic as Mean Mr. Mustard's razorblade: '1 and 1 and 1 is 3, got to be good looking cause he's so hard to see'<sup>35</sup>. It is from the song opening *Abbey Road*, the record Jim and I listened to hypnotically one clairvoyant afternoon in an apartment in Cole Valley, amidst thousands of eyeglasses floating all over the place, marveling over how lucidly the poet spat through this verse on all those who value things based on their surface appearance only and who cannot see beyond the crude mathematical literacies and into a magical world wherein 1 and 1 and 1 can be anything but 3. Besides, if Leslie Feist was right, then our losing the count in ordering numbers, just as she did with her famed '1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9 or 10, money can't buy you back the love that you had then'<sup>36</sup> line, is where materialism ends and the wings of spirituality spread to soar us higher than we have ever dreamt of ascending. Another example from the musical universe may come from the compendia of thoughts of the Norwegian musicologist, Jon-Roar Bjørkvold, who saw life as a battlefield on which the dry, stiff and obtuse culture of grownups incessantly conquers the weaker and more vulnerable culture of children, the one that epitomizes the holy beginnings towards which our evolutionary ends should stream to. At one place in his discourse, Bjørkvold noticed that an essential feature of this authentically childlike view of life is the acceptance of the fact that  $1 + 1$  can be anything, an  $x$ , and not necessarily 2 and 2 only<sup>37</sup>, an idea that goes in parallel with children's natural inclination to expand and crush limits imposed on them rather than to conform and cocoon themselves in them. And indeed, when one lives poetry and finds 'nightingales all summer long beside me in my

---

<sup>35</sup> Listen to the Beatles' *Come Together* on *Abbey Road*, Apple, London, UK (1969).

<sup>36</sup> Listen to Feist's 1234 on *The Reminder*, Arts & Crafts, Toronto, ON (2007).

<sup>37</sup> See Jon-Roar Bjørkvold's *The Muse Within: Creativity and Communication, Song and Play from Childhood through Maturity*, Harper Collins, New York, NY (1989), pp. 125.

mind', one would find that 'one and one', more often than not, 'is nine'<sup>38</sup>, as it was told to us through a song that was to open the listeners to the perception of the beauty of the mundane, the discovery of which, we see, is comparable in the mathematical language to the pulverization of the rules of math in the hands of angels. Really, then, if I could look into the future, I would see an angel, age five, pointing out to me so convincingly that '0 is 1'<sup>39</sup>, which, really, it can be, for example by expanding this statement to that of '0 is 1 number'. In the same manner, through this simple inversion of Russell's logical types, my magical relationship,  $0 + 0 = 2$ , could instantly come true then as well. All that is needed is to take 0 for its value on the left side of the equation and for the type of symbol it represents on the right side of it. However, this comparison across different levels of logic and metalogic, like when we apply an analogy to describe an experiential event, comes natural to children, whereas grownups, especially in today's world of science, take it as a symptom of lunacy, as erroneously as it can be. Therefore, as I, right now, introduce you to this notion that  $1 + 1$  need not be 2, I also send you down the road, or a splashy and exhilarating waterslide, I should better say, along which you may have a chance to get closer to a child in you; 'tis the child before which the doors to the kingdom of heaven lie incessantly open (Matthew 19:14). In an Arsen Dedić's song that celebrates that Nietzschean Yes! like no other<sup>40</sup>, grownups are imagined to have become likened unto children; the ensuing world had no war, all the bad things in it turned into good, and everybody lived one's own unique dream. On top of it,  $2 + 2$  in this idyllic world became no less than 6! Conversely, as per the logic of this song, breaking down the laws of simple logic and math and recognizing that solutions to the equation of life are not one, but infinite, lying scattered all around us, with roads to salvation opening in myriads everywhere we land our gaze, must be the starting point for the unfolding of Paradise in our heads and hearts. What is more, the equality between  $1 + 1$  and  $x$  Jan-Roar Bjørkvold envisaged was not  $=$ , but  $\approx$ , signifying approximate, but not definite equality. This sign is here to remind us that the delightful intelligence of a celestial child in us is such that it never equalizes things, knowing that no two things or qualities in life are truly equal. Rather, everything and everyone is special and unique at every single instance of the @evolutionary rolling of the ball that this Universe presents. Knowing this, for sure, opens doors to seeing fabulous things all around us – 'a world in a grain of sand and a heaven in a wild flower', 'infinity in the palm of your hand and eternity in an hour'<sup>41</sup>, as William Blake put it.

The father of the filmed narrative about Battleship Potemkin, yet another memorable space surrounded by armored steel as the one in which we are now, Sergei Eisenstein approached the art of montage with the maxim  $1 + 1 = 3$ <sup>42</sup>, wishing to tell us that much more than mere sums of individual impressions of images combined on the movie screen can be yielded in the hands of a precise assembler of pieces of the celluloid tape. Cut the view of an eye with a view of the river and the thought arisen in many of the viewers will be that of crying in addition to whatever the impressions each of the two shots alone would awaken. On the other hand, however, things need not be necessarily gained when we bring 1 and 1 together. Something precious could be lost, too. And more often than not it *is* in this world where, invariably, 'there's more to the picture than

---

<sup>38</sup> Listen to the Clientele's I Had to Say This on Suburban Light, Pointy Records (2000).

<sup>39</sup> This speech has been revised many times after it was given, at the wedding of Nina Kaun and Ralf-Peter Herber in September 2012. Hence this recollection of events that would occur long after this date, in this case the statement Evangelina, my daughter, would make as we gazed at the Silverado wildfire skies in Irvine in October 2020.

<sup>40</sup> Listen to Arsen Dedić's Kad bi svi ljudi na svijetu on Arsen peva djeci (1982). Its last verse is "Kad bi svi ljudi na svijetu, baš kao sva djeca na svijetu, o kad bi svi ljudi na svijetu, odlučili da!"

<sup>41</sup> See William Blake's *Auguries of Innocence*, CreateSpace, Scotts Valley, CA (1803).

<sup>42</sup> Watch *The Story of Film: An Odyssey*, Season 1, Episode 5: Post-War Cinema, directed by Mark Cousins (2011).

meets the eye'<sup>43</sup>. The French movie director, Jean-Luc Godard, the same one who used to state that the mere process of reshuffling beginnings, middles and ends may lead to far more exciting spirits of the whole than leaving them untouched<sup>44</sup>, thus described the relationship between life and movies, between the fulfillment of our dreams and their blueprints in the mental realm, by simply writing down the following:  $1 + 2 + 3 = 4$ <sup>45</sup>. In other words, he may have wished to tell us that whatever we conceive of as worth incarnating on the movie screen never ends up being created as such and always has something taken off of it during this transformation from the imaginary to the actual. The same is, no doubt, with all our dreams that become lived in reality. Yet, this subtraction of the content of our dreams that entails each and every step made towards living them is not something to be sad about. Rather, there is a permanent hope that Nature substitutes this lost content with something even better, something we might not have thought of even in our wildest dreams. This is also how we are being taught that every gain in life comes with the loss of something precious, and *vice versa*; or, as Sam Herring of *Future Islands* pointed out, 'when people change, they gain a piece, but they lose one too'<sup>46</sup>, or as Saint-Exupery's Little Prince noticed even more beautifully and more mystically, 'stars are beautiful because of a rose that cannot see'<sup>47</sup>, being yet another saying that depicts life as a realm where the rules of simple math are being relentlessly broken. Then, as in a game of tennis where Love belongs to those who graciously hand it all to another, so does in the game of life the act of giving, selflessly and limitlessly, lead to far greater gains than possessively running out after things. To open up and reach out, to dissipate what we have held inside, is thus the way to reintegrate and replenish the creative contents of our cores. In other words, quite often can subtraction prove to be a far more effective addition than the addition *per se*.

Along the sideways tracks of my intellect, these thoughts bring to mind a professor I have known who used to tell us, his pupils, that if I can't fix a problem and You can't do it either, You and I together may still find a solution to it – a very reasonable statement with a beautiful communal connotation. It touches lightly on what is known in game theory as Parrondo's paradox, that is, a situation where the alternation between two losing strategies leads to a win. Now, I remember that this quirky dude from my grad school used to spend a large portion of the lecture time describing his impressions of attending an Oasis concert in London with his daughter, which makes me suspect that he derived this proposition of his from that famous 'we'll see things I'll never see'<sup>48</sup> that must have gotten aired off Liam's lips that night. This reminds me, by the by, why I still perceive parties as an equally vital element for my research as scientific conferences, let alone their being the source of acquiring insights that I would later disseminate

---

<sup>43</sup> Listen to Neil Young's *My, My, Hey, Hey – Out of the Blue* on *Rust Never Sleeps*, Reprise, Los Angeles, CA (1979).

<sup>44</sup> Watch Sarah Kay's TED talk: *If I Should Have a Daughter...*, available at [http://www.ted.com/talks/sarah\\_kay\\_if\\_i\\_should\\_have\\_a\\_daughter.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/sarah_kay_if_i_should_have_a_daughter.html) (March 2011).

<sup>45</sup> See Jean-Luc Godard's *My Approach in Four Movements*, In: *Godard on Godard: Critical Writings by Jean-Luc Godard*, edited by Jean Narboni and Tom Milne, Introduction by Richard Roud, Da Capo Press, New York, NY (1968), pp. 242.

<sup>46</sup> Listen to Future Islands' *Seasons (Waiting on You)* on *Singles*, 4AD, London, UK (2015).

<sup>47</sup> See Antoine de Saint-Exupery's *The Little Prince*, Mladost, Zagreb (1943).

<sup>48</sup> The standard verse, "We see things they'll never see", has often been modified by Liam Gallagher during live performances into the modified, quoted version. For the original version, listen to Oasis' *Live Forever* on *Definitely Maybe* (Creation, London, UK, 1994). The inverse version of the saying quoted in the text can be heard uttered by the record producer Cook, one of the protagonists of Terrence Malick's film *Song to Song*, a film that builds on the abovementioned graphic novel, Here, by adjusting physical loci to the inner world of the protagonists, thus having them traverse wildest locations in the course of a single dialogue: "I've never been where we've been".

in the classroom to start the chain reaction of boosting the explosion of creativity all across the globe. Asked at the end of one such lecture why I believe that composites are the future of materials science, including its biomaterials province wherein Jim and I have served as diligent serfs, my answer was that in them two frailties unite and create one strength and that this metaphor was so beautiful that no other reason should be needed to justify their prospect in practice. It is like Thomas she-blinded-me-with-science Dolby and the Newcastle postpunk darlings, Prefab Sprout, coming together to create the aerial, eternally beautiful soundscape of *Steve McQueen*, a most sublime record ever recorded, the feat that neither of them, individually, could accomplish. It goes without saying that in self-absorbed social milieus very often everything is reduced to the interests of an individual, to whom that ‘guess you figured my 2 x 2 always equates to 1, dreamers are selfish’<sup>49</sup> verse could apply, but if our goal is to expand, not shrink, the limits of our consciousness and reach the spiritual vistas inhabited by the noblest of souls, we have no other choice but to engage in relationships and create scenes where 2 x 2 would be 2002 or more. Sooner or later, of course, we would find ourselves in a limbo where that Ian Curtis’ horrific prophecy, ‘Love will tear us apart’<sup>50</sup>, had come true and ours would be a state of mind dark and gloomy, like the sky over Millet’s falling tree, tearing itself out by the roots under the forceful gust of wind, uncannily akin to that hung on to by the Serbian poet, Branko Miljković when he composed the poem entitled *Requiem* and announced somewhere in it that ‘2 and 2 are 1’<sup>51</sup>, having felt that any congregation of outstanding individualities is destined to diminish the values of these individualities alone rather than augment them, as the holists would expect. But the way out would lie not in gleaning ever more of the goods for ourselves and ourselves only in these moments of disbelief in the merits of communion, but rather in giving away those goods, as freely as a bird that has nothing but a sky to hold on to, and living it all out for the world. In such a way, truer unions would emerge, which no mathematical equations would be able to describe without falling flat on their heads. Sages could correspondingly tell us that if there is no salvation for one *per se*, all by oneself, and if there could be no salvation for another, all alone, there could still be a way to save the souls of both in unison. To embrace another as a means of enlightening oneself has thus been an implicit message of countless theological teachings expounded on this planet. Chuang-Tzu, a prominent Taoist philosopher, for example, used to say that ‘if there was no another, there would not have been myself either’, enabling armies of up-and-coming arithmetical cosmogonists and ontological numerologists to be free to flirt with the idea that 2 is, in fact, older than 1 in the history of the cosmos. It could be, however, that the question of who is older, 1 or 2, is quite akin to the one asking who came first: chicken or egg, the Sun, the symbol of the great 1, or the fusion of hydrogen into helium, that is, of 1 into 2 in the atomic number terms, that sustains its shine.

Now, not only is a whole made of individual units greater and beyond their mere sum, but the units themselves become greater or more minute when brought together to create a whole. When you gaze into the starry sea of the eyes of the Beloved, you are no longer a petty human soul; you become a universe in itself. But when you are parachuted to the center of a room full of phonies and postiches, you empathize and you become lost, as they are, and you start to feel after a while that your spirit has shriveled and shrunk. For this reason, I am free to say that Jim in Jim

---

<sup>49</sup> Listen to labrinth & zendaya’s *All for Us*, the official song of *Euphoria* TV show directed by Sam Levinson, HBO (2019).

<sup>50</sup> Listen to Joy Division’s *Love Will Tear Us Apart*, Factory, Manchester, UK (1980).

<sup>51</sup> See Branko Miljković’s *Requiem* retrieved from <https://sites.google.com/site/projectgoethe/Home/branko-miljkovic/requiem> (1961).

is not the same as Jim in *Jules & Jim*, a statement deeper than it appears from your impending laughter. Needless to say, I wish the marriage we celebrate today to be the one wherein both of the units entering the union become magnified and expanded by this magical act of uniting and serve as such as tokens of the beauty of coming together, like the Milky Way and Andromeda, as opposed to retreating into the distance and the dark, even though one without the other, as we are soon about to see, cannot sustain the luster of life.

Now, although we do marry a couple of scientists today, I did mean this to be a science class, let alone a lecture on numerology. Rather, all of this has been an introduction to the most important advice I am able to pull out on this day. It comes from the pen of the Lebanese poet, Kahlil Gibran. Now, listen carefully, because it goes like this: ‘Let there be spaces in your togetherness, and let the winds of the heavens dance between you. Love one another but make not a bond of love: let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls. Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup. Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf. Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone, Even as the strings of a lute are alone though they quiver with the same music. Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping. For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts. And stand together, yet not too near together: For the pillars of the temple stand apart, and the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow’<sup>52</sup>.

What the poet – and not only the poet, but the entire ethical and aesthetical heritage of humanity – wanted to tell us is that one has to give his heart fully to another and become two to become truly one, so to say. Or, as one of my Viennese heroes, Heinz von Förster pointed out, ‘One needs to dance with someone in order to recognize who one truly is’<sup>53</sup>. Or, as yet another one of my Viennese faves, Martin Buber, would have had it, ‘All actual life is encounter’<sup>54</sup>. But, the poet also prompts us to realize that one also has to remain one in order to be able to keep this spirit of togetherness fresh over the course of time, that is, be a part of the harmonious and creative two. This explains why one of the most popular Laurie Anderson’s love songs was entitled ‘let  $x = x$ ’. It was as if the eclectic performance artist wished to tell us that one should continue to be one when feeling that marvelous push off the cliff of love, the push that is to engage us in a free fall for another and merge our unique self with the sea, the symbol of oneness of it all, beneath our feet. Though, on the other hand, I may tell you that it is far more fun to let  $x$  be equal to  $y$  or, in fact, to any of the infinite number of symbols that we, a lone  $x$ , could identify with in the course of the fable of our life. And this call for 1 to blend with another 1 and build a couple whose value would be greater than that of any of these two 1s in separation is a decent complementary advice to Laurie’s call for 1 to stay 1 even in union with another. ‘For 2 egos to make an ‘us’, the 2 egos have to be themselves’, as someone somewhere said<sup>55</sup> and healed another in an instant.

To be one and two at the same time, a mission that seems as impossible to accomplish from the perspective of classical logic as chasing down one’s own shadow or touching the rainbow, is thus the task silhouetted in purple haze before our missionary path. How inconceivably immense the rewards for its fulfillment are! Some of us ‘high on diesel and

---

<sup>52</sup> See Kahlil Gibran’s *The Prophet*, Paideia, Belgrade, Serbia (1923).

<sup>53</sup> See Christina Waters' Invitation to Dance – A Conversation with Heinz von Foerster, *Cybernetics and Human Knowing* 6 (4) 81 – 84 (1999).

<sup>54</sup> See Martin Buber’s *I and Thou*, Touchstone, New York (1923).

<sup>55</sup> Watch *Someone Somewhere* directed by Cedric Klapisch (2019).

gasoline<sup>56</sup> could readily recollect that one such juxtaposition of 1 and 2 pays off quite well in the realm of organic chemistry. Namely, the key to the exceptional stability of the benzene ring, the reason for which it is usually preserved in chemical reactions, lies in the conjugation of single and double C-C bonds all throughout its structure. That is, each carbon atom is bonded to its neighbors effectively with a bond that is both single and double at the same time: one  $\sigma$  and one-half of a  $\pi$ , in the language of the chemists. This is denoted by a circle drawn inside of a hexagon in the chemical symbol for the benzene ring, and we should be sure that a similar sense of wholeness would be brought to life within ourselves, out of many separate lines, disjointed and disconnected from one another, that float through the sea of our spirit now, were we to find a way to equalize 1 and 2, thus performing a mathematical miracle and an act of utmost rebellion against the human laws whom gods and angels all but respect, let alone obey. Note that other compounds for which the number of  $\pi$  electrons equals  $4n + 2$  ( $n = 1, 2, 3\dots$ ) display similar conjugation effects. They include porphyrins, one of which is hemoglobin, molecules who take on a striking number of roles in the chemical backbone of biology owing to their ability to capture ions in the centers of their cyclical molecular networks and transfer them to faraway destinations. Since inspiring analogies are dormant everywhere, this prompts me to reckon that we, too, may become sacred messenger doves released off the palms of some divine hands that oversee reality to spread the ‘good news’ about the roads to salvation drawn in front of each one of us, vividly outlined in the starry eyes of the pure-hearted ones and carelessly strayed from and scornfully laughed upon by the many ‘learned ignoramuses’ of this world, had we only learned how to entwine 1 and 2 and bring them into unity whereby their individuality is preserved and diminished and reinstated and all over again, like Yin and Yang overflowing from one to another and *vice versa* in the ball of light levitating before an entranced Tai-Chi master during his pulling off movements that are one with Heaven and one with Earth, all at once. Then, porphyrins, especially those with chiral centers, act as excellent catalysts, helping chemical reactions reach their destinations by acting as bridges spread before their tired and perplexed feet and allowing to be walked over, taking no offense, but smiling clemently all the way through. And so on and on and on, our numbering of good things that come out of this magical act of creation may never stop since the fruits of the sacred tree are many and, as the Christ would have told us at this very moment (Matthew 7:18), they are all good.

This is why we should be glad in view of Nature’s relentlessly handing out fuzzy answers to the question marks that hang over our epistemic cores, sending us off in the direction of this or that action or thought, answers that are neither a definite Yes or No, but somewhere in-between. This is also why we are to sympathize with Sonic Youth’s fervent search for ‘a man with a focus and a temper who can open up a map and see between one and two’<sup>57</sup> immortalized in the indie anthem of my youth, *Teen Age Riot*. For, as the example of porphyrins demonstrates, to be 1 and 2, bonded and not bonded at the same time, one with another and one with oneself, utterly and completely, is the way to develop exceptional creative powers in life. Not to stagnantly stand buried in a single place, cognitive or physical alike, but to constantly wiggle around, changing perspectives and thus avoiding the plethora of blind spots in our worldviews that hardly wait for us to become immovable to enlarge themselves and prompt us to fall into their abysses, can thus be inferred as another essential precept emanating from this example. Taoist theologians have used to imagine Tao, the central source of Creation, as a Way, and if I were to draw one on the wall behind me, I’d be able to easily show you that it is a symbolic image of juxtaposition of 1

---

<sup>56</sup> Listen to Suede’s *Beautiful Ones* on *Coming Up*, Nude, London, UK (1996).

<sup>57</sup> Listen to Sonic Youth’s *Teen Age Riot* on *Daydream Nation*, Enigma, Culver City, CA (1988).

and 2. For, the concept of the Way is none other but a line representing connectedness, that is, 1, of points at the end of the road that are implicitly presumed to be separate, that is, 2. What this teaches us is that never ceasing to move, to be on the road, to be open to change and to reception of new insights and points of view rather than locking ourselves in the cages of fixed premises and judgments that obsession with destinations can symbolize, is the key to unlocking the steeliest gates of this universe.

All in all, how to remain one and yet be two I see as the greatest mystery posed in front of each and every one of us, the mystery on whose solving our spiritual growth pivotally depends. For, the quirky world of not the school math, but the real life math, as we see, tells us that when we figure out the solution to this problem, we could reach none other but the very infinity, in the blink of an eye, like Ivan Karamazov in his translucent dream of the road to Paradise leading through the darkness for a quadrillion kilometers<sup>58</sup>. Because, in this life, remember, no unbreakable rules that people may want us to believe in exist and, even more wondrously, the open doors to infinity await us and wink at us from within the tiniest patches of reality. And I wonder while standing here if I, a beacon and a satellite spinning amidst stars that come out when it gets dark, dark, dark, have become ‘like a house on the ghetto saying all is one and one is two to many’<sup>59</sup>, as Thurston Moore of Sonic Youth would have further had it, unendingly ruminating over this archetypical, primordial balance that hides under its umbrella all other balances on which our lives depend.

But wait, hold on, freak out not. This is not what my wedding talk is meant to be about. Almost the entire life is but a long prelude to a few decisive moments when ‘the sky will split and the planets will shift, balls of jade will drop and existence will stop’<sup>60</sup>, and so is it with this speech too. All the things being said so far are an introduction to what this speech truly concerns. And it is – hold your breath now – a yellow balloon; a yellow balloon that I held in my hands once. It was just like the one I held gingerly on an Indian summer night, as I, as if in a dream, strolled down a Mission street in my beloved city of San Francisco. Many a night did Jim and I, like Daniel and Cassiel, wade these streets washed with wonder, but ‘twas the first time that we did so with Jules and this magical flying object on our side. With Jim on the left and Jules on the right, like Gambit and Rogue of a kind, I jumped straight into the swimming pools of the eyes of my future crowned majesty, who is here with us today and who, coincidentally or not, quietly sat watching the world with her coquette cat’s eyes, sipping martini in a bar called Double Dutch and brushing stardust off my shoulders every once in a while. Hmm, signs are everywhere, sages with suns in their eyes might have said to this.

When a baby is born, in its eyes we recognize both the mom and the dad. You and I become one in it and it continues to live as a sign on how to be two in one and one in two. This is why I, in the spirit of ancient mystics and alchemists, am free to say that only when every perceived unit is seen splitting into two halves on which your spirit could be painfully crucified as well as simultaneously coming together cohesively and restoring the spirit of oneness, constantly shifting from 1 to 2 and from 2 to 1, from the Wonders of diversity to Love born out of unity of all being and back and then all over again, can your flights towards uttermost fields of creative being in this life commence.

---

<sup>58</sup> See Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*, Book XI, Chapters 8-9, Prosveta, Belgrade, Serbia (1880).

<sup>59</sup> Listen to Sonic Youth’s *Master=Dik on Sister*, SST, Austin, TX (1987).

<sup>60</sup> Listen to Patti Smith’s *Kimberly*, a song about her newborn baby girl, on *Horses*, Arista Records, New York, NY (1975).

On that October night, I met Jules and Jim for the first time. Jim and I were then already bound by the bonds of friendship, but Jim as Jim in the pair of Jim and Jules, as well as Jules herself, I met then for the first time. And they too met me, V, not only as V *per se*, but as V as V in the pair of Vic and V, for the first time. Have I made you dizzy or it is Perrier getting into your head?

To put it in a simpler way, the same night on which I met Jim and Jules was the night I went out on the first date with Vic, my missus for life. Had it not been for Jim's curiosity to explore a hippie microbrewery fest in one of the warehouses in SOMA and listen to a student band play *1979* by Smashing Pumpkins, I would have probably not met my darling at all. To his sixth sense I am incredibly indebted today, but that, my friends, is a whole different story now. Today I ask you to dance in honor of the meeting of the hearts that marked that night above many nights out, whose endings are evident right here, in front of your noses. And since this whole story that I am trying to convey to you, since all this blabbering of flaming lips emitted into this electrified air, since all of me standing here and pouring out words that wish to cut down those very same words and leave you and I in a state of wordless awe under stars nesting above our heads and inviting us to dance in their honor with a silent shimmer and the shine, is about a yellow balloon, dee jay, if you hear this, please spin something that 'tells us about our lives'<sup>61</sup>, ideally *Sunship Balloons* so we could hear its opening lines and have them draw a road spanning from the depths of our hearts to the end of eternity: 'I don't know the dimensions of outer space, but if our ability to feel love turns out to be just a cosmic accident, I'd like to think this means the Universe is on our side'<sup>62</sup>. Indeed, what better proof for the Platonists in us is there to be found that the grounds on which we will stand in a moment and dance the shiniest of our spirits out are celestial but in love enlightening our minds and transforming us from dead piles of ashes to heaps of verves to which stars lie within reach and which thrill the cosmos with an inner energy that shifts planets from their orbits with its magnificent power. Or, perhaps, not only in love, some may say, but in infinitely smaller things too, including 'blossoms and leaves' that will soon start to wither and die on this first day of fall, 'blossoms and leaves' by means of the beauty of which Plotinus the Platonist proved that 'providence reaches down to the things of earth here below'. 'He pointed out that these frail and mortal objects could not be endowed with a beauty so immaculate and so exquisitely wrought, did they not issue from the Divinity'; so, at least, says Saint Augustine of Hippo in his treatise on the City of God.

On this night to remember we find ourselves at the outskirts of the City of God of a different kind – inside a bunker, to be specific, a place that was a bit more than half a century ago the seat of unbearable terror. From it anti-aircraft machineguns fired up high into the heavens, while frightened people sheltered from showers of bombs falling from the sky. The first part of the wedding ceremony took place in quite a different place: a centuries-old royal palace wherein snow-white statues of gods and philosophers leisurely leaned their backs onto marble walls and watched us from some ancient ages, while angels trumpeted joyously from the frescoes that decorated the ceilings ever so vividly. And now we are in a World War bunker turned a petite pantheon of alternative arts – a diametrically opposite type of venue. As Jules whispered to my ears minutes ago, wishing to elevate my wonder over this conjunction of opposites to a whole

---

<sup>61</sup> Reference is made to the memorable moment from the Smiths' *Panic*, when Morrissey calls for "burning down the disco and hanging the blessed dee jay because the music that they constantly play tells nothing about my life". Listen to the Smiths' *Panic* on *Hatful of Hollow*, Rough Trade, London, UK (1984).

<sup>62</sup> Listen to the Flaming Lips' *Sunship Balloons* on *Ego Tripping at the Gates of Hell* EP, Warner Bros, Burbank, CA (2003).

new level, 'We no longer belong to single categories; we are all multidisciplinary and cosmopolitan in many different respects'. How true. For, in my head it secretly points at the dialectical nature of the entire existence and, consequently, at the need to spread our arms out to everything that is and turn into a Taoist or Christian crossroad, a sacred middle ground, a delta and a passageway to the ocean where all the unilaterally streaming rivers converge and all the myriads of multitudes once again become One. There is no doubt that with one such enlightened mindset awakened in us we could finally embark on the voyage whereon many bunkers on this sad and lovely little planet of ours would be transformed into shrines for celebration of unity between things inherently different in their makeup.

So says I, whose spirit still, since the magical yesterday night, rides on that giant Ferris wheel in Prater, with the sound of *Dio, come ti amo*, sung in a film<sup>63</sup> played earlier in the day, as if through an act of magic, on the rusty hotel telly, drifting back and forth across the archways of my soul, just as it did resound in a beloved heart in the summer of '66, and the past, present and future all blending into one and the orangey city lights melting, cleansing and opening the door of perception that William Blake envisioned in his lucid daydreams<sup>64</sup> to its other, mystical side, seeing not the city of Vienna on earth below me anymore, but life as a whole glittering on the palms of my hands, with tears of eternal sadness dropping like diamonds off the corners of my eyes, corners in which, as ever, the cornerstones of the church of divine being, the centerpieces of all things valuable in this world, reside. And I know that I will continue to ride on this merry-go-round for a long, long time. Because on it I sensed the cosmic waves waving goodbye to Thee whom these two souls we marry today met only a flicker of, on a night we drifted through hidden backyards enlivened with plays and chamber concerts, stormed surrealist indie galleries and danced to a band of Colombians in a garage tucked in the darkest alleyways of Inner Mission. On it the elegy of my soul materialized itself as a landscape, that of an orangey wheel spinning me through the air, with the earth, from which my sorrows disconnected me wholly, lying deep, deep below, as I, a balloon of consciousness that is alive and alive, aliver than ever, hung over helplessly, lost at sea, lost to it all.

But now, as I drown in this sea of melancholy that is overcoming me, I hear a splash. A tiny little splash it is that has come to save me. It has stretched its aural arms to me and I am grabbing it. The mental image I would like to evoke now in you is, therefore, that of an oceanic water splash. We will trace it to this photograph displayed on the wall behind me, of the day Jules and Jim whispered their wedding vows to each other on the Baker Beach in San Francisco. The moment they uttered in togetherness that heartrending and aww-drawing 'with you I have lost all fear, with you I am home', Jim in his trademark torn jeans, his scruffy hair borrowed from bronze demigods and showered with beer foam and other booze, and Jules sundrenched in bikini, her slender figure wavering on the sweet seashore breeze, and the Sun setting over the Pacific has been stamped on my mental field like the shape of a UFO on a Peruvian cornfield. As I, with the marriage certificate that I was about to sign in my hands, gazed at them from a few feet away, with the orangey sunset adorning the scenery, I noticed a twinkle in Jim's eye as he looked at Jules and was about to pronounce the oath of eternal devotion to her on this Californian beach. Somewhere deep inside of the fiery Sun, where many ones, a.k.a. hydrogen atoms, turn into twos, a.k.a. helium atoms, this ray of light originated from this stellar fusion, collided with gazillions of atoms on its way to the surface of this yellow star, wherefrom it began its journey of 84 million miles through the solar system and the Earth's atmosphere and made its landing on

---

<sup>63</sup> Watch *Dio, come ti amo!* directed by Miguel Iglesias (1966).

<sup>64</sup> See William Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Penguin, London, UK (1793).

one of the Pacific waves, wherefrom it bounced off straight into the groom's eye and from there into faraway earthly and cosmic spaces, continuing to carry through the ages the message of everlasting devotion, the pillars of the most powerful force that keeps the world spinning around: Love. This flicker that has been travelling ever since through the earthly landscapes in one form or the other, transmitting the message of fondness and affection to all things that it grazes with its faint light, is what I would like you to imagine. For, a finest glance can change the fate of the Universe for good, as generations of sages on this planet have come to deem. Or, if I were to paraphrase my aforementioned hero from this very city, Heinz von Förster, 'I lift my shoulders and, lo, the world has changed'<sup>65</sup>.

Although we could call it a day here as far as this speech is concerned, this is not the end yet. Because another unprecedented thing happened on that special day. Namely, Jim and I, holding hands together, jumped into the Pacific Ocean, chilly and choppy, stunningly beautiful and thrillingly frightening, like the life itself. It was the first time for both of us to dare to do so. It is true that who dares wins, but what a day to set another wonderful record it was. Like many times in my life, I hesitated. I entered the water to my knees and returned to the shore, unsure whether I should hop in the scarily cold waters of the Pacific or not. And then Jim took my hand. And I could not say no. And it is the inexplicable joy of the tiny water splash with which we entered the water on that day that I would like you to think of. For, in it is the secret of us all, sitting here under the starry hat of the Universe, inscribed.

Didn't I say that this was going to be about a yellow balloon? Just like the one that Jim's mom has now coincidentally attached to her back and that levitates above her like a sign of the vertical connection with some higher realms of being. Or, like the invisible balloon that, as I tell you this, hangs to the back of my own mom, she who danced so joyously with Jules, Jim and I in a garage to a Colombian band that rocked the stars over our heads on a mystical Mission night, pulling her upwards, to heavenlier spheres of being than this stale station for our stellar spirits called Earth is. Well, I let that yellow balloon fly away on that gorgeous and unforgettable night when 2 became 1 and 1 became 2. And so I urge you, too, to let whatever the subject you lean on to as for dear life and any topics that bind you to any crags out there, and let it fly. And remain free. Like Jim and Jules in the San Francisco wind. Waving at me like signposts that pinpoint the inexplicable beauties of friendship and brotherhood that cross the barriers of human languages and culture, as I retreat unwaveringly into the foggy distance, if not darting off into the San Francisco Sunset. This sense of being watched over is a greatest gift friends can give to each other, and these two, Jules and Jim, I am free to say, have mastered this art flawlessly.

In this life, friendships fly. At times they fly like galaxies, rapidly distancing from each other, farther and farther away, all until they become separated by impassably ample spaces. No matter how much I'd love to be near these two chirping doves on some San Francisco nights, to endlessly talk about 'grand canyon sundown'<sup>66</sup> and 'the diamond sky with one hand waving free, silhouetted by the sea'<sup>67</sup> with Jim and about the art of photography and the new trends in visual aesthetics with Jules, I am separated from them by an entire ocean, 'with all memory and fate driven deep beneath its waves'<sup>68</sup> and silences.

---

<sup>65</sup> See Christina Waters' Invitation to Dance – A Conversation with Heinz von Foerster, *Cybernetics and Human Knowing* 6 (4) 81 – 84 (1999).

<sup>66</sup> Listen to Bob Dylan's poem Last Thoughts on Woody Guthrie, recited live at New York City's Town Hall (April 12, 1963) and released on The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-3 (Rare & Unreleased) 1961-1991, Columbia Records.

<sup>67</sup> Listen to Bob Dylan's Mr. Tambourine Man on Bringing It All Back Home, Columbia Records (1965).

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

This has, as you see, not been your typical wedding speech. Because, amazing as they are, no words could be good enough to describe these two lovebirds, and the last thing I wish for is to fall down the cliff of a clichéd talk that praises their incredible human qualities. After all, to go beyond words in expressing oneself is to make a giant step in building the colossal beauty of being that anxiously awaits to be given rise to in each and every one of us.

This is exactly what I will do now: become wordless.

I will step aside and leave space for the chatter of toasting glasses and the chirp of joyful voices. Let us sing and praise the day when the two have become one and one has become two. Jim and Jules, I wish you the most awesome stay on this cosmic station called Earth. Let your hearts be open not to each other only, but to the whole wide world. And let the greatest adventure of your lives begin. (The right hand grabs the front of the white shirt and hits the chest a few times, alluding to the Serbian custom of tearing the groom's shirt on the wedding day and on the day when a child is born, symbolizing the bursting of the inner strength and willfulness to lay one's life for another, and that followed by a finger snap.) Now!"

\*\*\*

And so she looked. With **Bambi eyes** rolling through a shade of stardust, gingerly, yet emphatically, insecurely, yet unstoppably, like the wheels of a starry train barreling through the silky snow<sup>69</sup>. The shadows of maple trees began to quietly dance on the moccasin-colored walls in front of me, the music of the millions of concocted sounds and voices appeared left and right of me, setting the sails of the catamarans of my attention to float softly on the wavy ocean of love and wonder in her eyes. Lifted up high in the air, lovingly loftily, I crushed the seashell with my fingers, opened it and read: "Share your happiness with others today". Verily, even if it be a dust-sized grain, life lived to the fullest is all about tirelessly running out to place it, and nothing else, on the palms of earthlings' hands, whence many a palm tree will sprout upward and many a ripened coconut, able to feed the whole wide world, will one day begin to fall into the Earth's embrace.

\*\*\*

The summer night when the idea that rebelliously going against the stream of it all cannot be the key suddenly dawned on me – I sat still, a transcendent silhouette of spirit, on the balcony overlooking the entrance to an Adriatic bay, reflecting the glittery dance of moonbeams over the shimmering surface of the sea in **the pearly eye of Ajna**, right between two Ionic pillars, carved with great detail and subtlety. Minutes earlier, I bit into a reddish apple and it was right then, while gliding on the magic carpet of Theo's mystical, little-princesque quip, "You only need an apple in Japan", that this electrifying, yet infinitely calming thought occurred to me. Despite my relentless worshipping of the mindset of a benevolent dissenter, being a perfect nonconformist is, first of all, impossible because the ship of our being would swiftly crash into a shore if it stopped to conform to at least some of the navigational rules set forth by others. Secondly, even if we imagine this total dissent as a hypothetical state of being, all of the presumably remarkable insights emanating from it would be perfectly incommunicable due to its tendency to bounce off every single communicational standard upon whose acceptance the

---

<sup>69</sup> Dedicated to the memory of Priya Bellare, one afternoon, in the Panda Express joint on the Parnassus campus of the UCSF med school.

transmission of meanings and semantic enrichment of one another is conditioned. Thus, to reconcile the two antipodes, obedience out of respect and Love and disobedience due to the nectar of an adventurous spirit and Wonder of pioneers running down our throat, must be the key, it occurred to me, as the Chinese characters for “boy” and “girl”, 子 and 女, began to dance under the glistening Moon, around the shadows of gently swaying cypresses, and combine in 好, the symbol for “good”. At the same time, the thought popped up in a balloon before my eyes, ready to pick me up and swing me towards this burnished astral body, of Javed Akhtar, the father of a dancing figurine spinning in endless circles with arms raised high in the air, around the flames of the Sun, a.k.a. Sholay, an Indian synonym for a rebel with a good cause: “Tradition and revolt against the tradition are in a way contradictory, but it is a synthesis findable in every good art”.

The epistemic renegade as I am, whose boundless world of knowledge rests on the idea that the ultimate doctrine is that there shouldn't be a doctrine of any kind to pursue, was naturally excited in view of the knockout suffered by one of the central tenets of my philosophy. For, the most genuine form of anarchism, the tautology of freeness from any ideologies or authorities, actually allows any principles or creeds out there to be freely followed. The logical continuation of this idea is that there is beauty in everything, from head nodding with heart full of the beat of repeatability and treading the murky line of expectancy to mutinously disobeying it all with eyes focused on the paramount peaks of originality, divergence and diversity. For, no evolution of the world could be imagined without the mutuality of being the same and being absolutely like no other, the balance inscribed in the recipe of creative being handed to us by the doctrine of the Way of Love that I developed, elaborated and advocated intensely over the years<sup>70</sup>.

When we look at the little ones that freshly popped out of the bear bellies, carrying one half of their genetic marks identical to ours and one half identical to someone else, and realize that nothing, truly nothing could be loved by common man as much as his child, not only is it a call to find gods in the littlest of creatures, whims and things, the process which sets an ordinary human mind on the path of expanding its view of intrinsic divinity to everything that is and becoming a sun, not a man anymore, at the end of it, but it is also an invitation to accept that something ought to be given away if we wish perfect creation to emerge before thine eyes, lest this creation share the fate of a Pygmalion's, bluntly fallen in love with by its creator, turning the two into a closed circle barbed-wire fenced against the rest of the world. Thus, whenever a perfect circle seems to have been found, either puncture it with a bamboo shoot so that it resembles a Q and begins to bleed all over the face of the world or break it into two and let one of its halves give in to the diametrical opposite of the other one, for that will be the only way to prevent the perfection of this creation from paling into distance and drifting away silently in the wind of time. Is it, after all, a coincidence that 0 is the sign for zero, for nothingness and total infertility of things, whereas  $\infty$ , that is, two signs for 0 grafted onto each other, signifies infinity, the unlimited potency of things?

As the crunchy sound pierced my ears and the blazing lips grazed the smooth and silky surface of the fruit of knowledge, a tiny twig holding a leaf with the shape of a heart fell off of it and began to drift through the air, gently, like a snowy feather, with my eyes incessantly resting on it, all until it gracefully hit a marble dance floor of this Universe. Indeed, like the dreamy and statuesque figure of mine folded under the blanket of stars and standing still between two Ionic pillars, bearing resemblance to Godard's Odysseus enwrapped in enchanting silence before an

---

<sup>70</sup> See, for example, my book entitled *SF Pensées: A Peer into a Cosmos of Starry Thoughts* released as *Social Science Research Network (SSRN)* paper no. 4477842, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4477842>.

open sea<sup>71</sup>, so is the world as a whole supported on two central columns: Wonder and Love, the former among which directs the creative spirits to produce actions that differ from anything broadly accepted and clichéd, propelling them farther than any stellar souls have been before, while the latter provides a complementary impulse to stay, to cuddle, and be one and the same with all things around them. To juggle the two as we journey up and down the rollercoaster of this enchanting field of reality we call life, guided by forces that originate beyond the domain of perceivable and graspable, is the art we ought to learn and relearn and all over again with every second of the passage of the train of time.

\*\*\*

**Little acts of love:** the pillow pulled out from under her head to be handed to me on a lazy summer afternoon, amidst blossomy oleanders and the fragrance of fig trees; the blanket she held in her freezing hands on cold winter nights, under an afghan of stars, to tuck me in; the number of steps she made as she treaded through the snow, tired, with fresh milk in her hands to feed her hungry babies with; the sound of a soft smooch of bold-headed hers against the glass under which the red-cheeked Holy Mother resides, sending sweet cherubic waves of devotion to the holy hands on which the world is held all around the humid and musty air around her; the molecule-sized capillaries in her eyes that burst under the careworn pressure building in her head, as she devotedly sliced chard with kitchen stilettos into small pieces, clumsily cut chunks of butter in diplopic daze, and tried one time after another, from here to eternity, to pull a piece of thread through the eye of a sewing needle, a door through which camels – the symbols of everlasting journeying, not arriving at the destination, as the ultimate meaning of life – in all their desert sun glory may enter, as an ancient rabbinic interpretation of a verse from the King Solomon’s Song of Songs (Rabbah 5:2), an oasis of surprise in the world of the Holy Writ, goes; the sigh of wonder and awe of her angelic voice in which the bells of the church of Paradise could be heard ringing, altogether with the trumpets of joy of millions of angels and celestial messengers, released in the scanty nook of a bookshop, as she transformed a most modest corner of the universe into a shrine for an endless devotion of cosmic beauties in the blink of her glittering eyes; the trembling tiptoe on which she stood as she, starry-eyed, with a spiral galaxy spinning in her head, hung petite dandelion garlands on a moonlit veranda drenched in soft waves of sadness and the eternal, cosmic blue of the sea of Love flowing out of her heart; and millions of little things that have held infinite treasures of sacrificial care in them and are too immense in their being able to revert the spin of the Cosmos as a whole to be able to be put into these words. Yet, it is from these little things that the Cosmos was born and, if all hell ever breaks loose, it is from them that the Cosmos, along with all of its singing beauties, could be recreated once more.

\*\*\*

This is what the Bible says of the Prophet Elijah’s quest for the godly voices atop Mount Horeb: “... A great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it...” (Kings III 19:11-13).

---

<sup>71</sup> Watch *Le Mépris* directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1963).

Many dark nights of the soul I spent wondering how many assaults would have been made and wars waged had the spirit of smallness nested itself within all the human minds and substituted their megalomaniacal cravings with magnanimous humbleness. None, I deem. “Beauty is truth, truth beauty - that is all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know”, John Keats remarked in *Ode to a Grecian Urn*, and when we realize that small is not only friendly, benevolent and beautiful, but also a recipe for technical utility<sup>72</sup>, it should not surprise us even a slightest bit. For, as it was repeatedly noticed all across the long lineage spanning from the earliest theological aestheticians of poverty<sup>73</sup> to Mother Teresa<sup>74</sup> to Yasujirô Ozu<sup>75</sup> to Fritz Schumacher<sup>76</sup> to Robert Barro<sup>77</sup> to my humble self<sup>78</sup>, regardless of whether we have behavioral, artistic, technological or economic systems in mind, respectively, smallness encourages openness, interactivity, receptiveness, groundbreaking originality and, last but not least, the silent spread of angelic arms that charitably reach out to others.

In Simon Van Booy’s *Illusion*, a story is told about Martin, a caretaker who’d perform his tasks while “thinking about his life the way a child stands in front of the sea” and who’d always “smile at people stopped alongside him at traffic lights”<sup>79</sup>. Even though “they mostly look away, Martin likes to think they carry his smile for a few blocks – that even the smallest gesture is something grand”<sup>80</sup>. “And once again, only the Small Things were said. The Big Things lurked unsaid inside”, fittingly writes Arundhati Roy in her novel **The God of Small Things**<sup>81</sup>. Although my soul sometimes does long for times when truths of a massive moral and metaphysical scope would be exposed during the most casual chitchats, most of the time it still rejoices in the subtle beauties that talking about little things, a flap of a starling’s wing here and a wing broken off a moist pinecone there, brings forth and would not go back to the philosophical presumptuousness of the past for even millions of pearls in its starlit pockets. Nature, after all, rarely relies on loud and explicit demonstration of ethical and aesthetical points of colossal magnitude. Rather, Hers is the language quiet, discreet, indirect and unpretentious to the point of shyness depicted at the very end of Stanislaw Lem’s sci-fi *chef-d’oeuvre*, *Solaris*. It is such that via small things it hints at cosmically big ones. It can be envisaged as pervaded with a chorus composed of an infinite number of “still small voices”, each one of which is akin to the one wherein the Prophet Elijah recognized Her sound and message. In it, “the little stars shine the brightest”<sup>82</sup>, as it came out of the bleeding pencil of a comic book writer with the hobby of burying miniature objects that bring about fond memories at 55°0’0’’N 0°0’2’’W and dreaming

<sup>72</sup> See, for example, my book entitled *SF Pop Art Diary: Of Love and Wonder in the Air* released as *Social Science Research Network (SSRN)* paper no. 4501817, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4501817>.

<sup>73</sup> See, for example, my translation of Lao-tzu’s Tao-te-ching: “Tao-Te-Xing: The Book for All Ages”, Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing, Scotts Valley, CA (2011).

<sup>74</sup> See Nataša Marković’s Mother Teresa, Aesthetics of Poorness and the Erotic Divine, *Politika*, September 4, 2010, pp. 10.

<sup>75</sup> See, for example, Yoshida Kiju’s Ozu’s Anti-Cinema, Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI (1998).

<sup>76</sup> See E. F. Schumacher’s *Small is Beautiful*, Hartley & Marks, Vancouver, BC (1973).

<sup>77</sup> See Christopher Caldwell’s *Bigger Might Not Be Better When It Comes to Countries*, *Financial Times* (September 7/8, 2013), pp. 7.

<sup>78</sup> See, for example, my paper entitled “SKOOL DAZE: A Plea for Dissentience”, *Journal of Religion, Film and Media* 9 (1) 69 – 104 (2023).

<sup>79</sup> See Joan Frank’s *All Connected*, *San Francisco Chronicle* (August 18, 2013), pp. F7.

<sup>80</sup> See Simon Van Booy’s *The Illusion of Separateness*, Harper, New York, NY (2013).

<sup>81</sup> See Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*, Harper Perennial, London, UK (1997), pp. 173.

<sup>82</sup> See Andi Watson’s *Little Star*, Oni Press, Portland, OR (2006).

of the boys and girls with the fountains of eternal youth splashing from their hearts in bright rays of hope, discovering them under the thick layers of soggy soil and finding in them not thrash for only creepy gleaners to rejoice over, but real gleaming suns and factual stairways to the stars.

All in all, Nature's language is seldom thunderous and earsplitting. Most of the time it bases itself on using small, small things to indicate relationships of immense importance. It uses the finest weaves of the cotton thread on commonest raggedy clothes as ties that bind stars together, that return drifting planets back to their orbits, and that keep galaxies revolving and evolving with great prosperity and the holiest peacefulness. In other words, all is a mystical metaphor and nothing is an explicit moral indoctrination in Nature's language, and so might it be in the most adorable human's too.

\*\*\*

Remember Laura Palmer, that celluloid epitome of things mundane and unexciting, inside of which infinite sources of mystery lie<sup>83</sup>? If there was one lesson we ought to learn during this touristic stay of our vagrant souls on the third rock from the Sun, it must be this. It must be to recognize Laura Palmer in every wrinkle on the face of reality – a gateway to Mystery in every grain of sand on this long-shadow-throwing beach at sunset that we call life. This is exactly what I teach my students, too: practical achievements of scientific endeavors aside, the profoundest aim of doing science is to realize that every subject of scientific inquiry is akin to a brick at the base of a pyramid of human knowledge, a brick always opening an upward path to its peak whereon the all-seeing Eye, a symbol of ultimate dharma, stays seated. This is when we are free to indulge in the inspection of any detail of the physical world and recognize in it a speckle of stardust that reflects glints from the most distant corners of the Universe and tells us about the deepest secrets of our earthly selves through analogy.

When I was a kid, seated on a classroom seat and waiting for the class to begin, waiting that, I later learned, was not an image of the prelude to life, but a token of life itself, a classmate, a future Torontonion and a Bosnian bumpkin stood up and wrote on the blackboard that humans are like glass, with their value being recognizable only at the moment in which they break, impressing this idea inside me, along with the sounds of the broken glass accompanying it, for good. The point David Lynch wished to strike with the tale about the Twin Peaks darling, Laura Palmer, a mystery drama frequently opening with close-ups of everyday objects so as to elicit a sense of “mini visual mystery”<sup>84</sup> in the watcher, was exactly the same: there are things appealing to our attention to direct its rays and discern the outlines of evanescent beauties present in them, but only when they vanish do we realize the infinitely deep wells of mysteriousness and the eternal glows of extraordinariness that existed behind the veil of their lackluster commonality.

And then, sometimes a single untraced stroke of a paintbrush that colors our world is just about enough to give a whole new light to everything drawn on the sides of it. Therefore, let us for a moment enter the realm of painting, that deadest of all arts subsisting in a semi-living state in this age of frivolous superficialities, the way it emerges from the corridor of my memory, that hallway with an endless number of doors, each leading to a new world, like in Hesse's *Magic Theater* from *Steppenwolf*, in the dreamy gallery with wavering white curtains from Cocteau's *La Belle et la Bête*, in that Victorian Roscoe Village house in Chicago I visited once, where the baby twins crawled up the windows and the ceilings, like big geckos, or in the hotel from *Lazy*

---

<sup>83</sup> Watch *Twin Peaks* TV series created by Mark Frost and David Lynch (1990).

<sup>84</sup> See Colin Odell's and Michelle Le Blanc's *David Lynch*, Kamera Books, Harpenden, UK (2007), pp. 164.

*Jones* I traversed with my joystick time and again as a child, where each door hid an entrance to a new videogame. A daunting example comes from Oskar Kokoschka's *View of Vernet-les-Bains*, the way I experienced it amidst my trembles and trepidations over thy fate in the Albertina museum in Vienna on one late summer day. In this painting, **a terrifying dark shadow**, the size of a penny, barely discernable, lying close to the center of the canvas, added a fearsome impression to an otherwise idyllic evergreen landscape in which this shadow appeared to be lost. A contrary example comes from Hubert Robert's *The Burning of the Opera at the Palais-Royal* hanging on a nearby wall, where amidst the flames swallowing the opera house and sinister shadows of the roofs of the nearby buildings one could discern a teeny tiny shadow standing on its wrecked arched window surrounded by two similar shadows, one hanging one's head low and the other kneeling in despair. When one expected a literal light motif in a painting by this artist who was keenly in love with ruins all his life – like the softly floodlit woman with a baby overlooking the dark landscape in *Stairway of the Farnese Palace Park* housed on the top floor of the National Museum in Belgrade, my and thy hometown and the city I did indeed christen "Love among the Ruins"<sup>85</sup> more than once, a tiny, dot-sized motif that brightened up not only the dark scenery within the painting frames, but also the gray Belgrade skies of the civil war days of the 1990s when I first glimpsed it – there it was, a blackish brush stroke darker than the lowlands of Gorgoroth, occupying the centerpiece of this mysterious abstract world. Eerier at the first sight these shadows looked than the dark silhouettes I would catch by gazing northward from Hawthorne Avenue in Portland years later, one of which would be that of a little girl playing hula-hoop and the other one of a bowed old man, presumably her grandfather, picking it from the ground every time she dropped it, before in the final instance the girl tossed it high up in the air and disappeared from view with a graceful stride, the microscopic scene that adorned my field of view for a brief moment of time, but the one I declared the most impressive I have seen in this city of mellow deluge, of undying rains and tall, tall shadows risen in its wake. The girl's silhouette gliding through the moist air and the long, terrifying shadows of the autumn afternoon evoked that day the image of Mary and Margaret, ages three and five, just the way my nestlings would be in the twinkling of an eye, captured by their father, Thomas Gainsborough chasing a butterfly down the meadows of Ipswich around 1755. In this painting, which is, symbolically, unfinished and which I would gaze at mesmerizingly many years later, longer than at any other artwork in the National Gallery in London, having crowned it into an altar of the holy childhood, the younger of the two sisters reaches out with her right hand to the cabbage white butterfly, while the elder one holds her back, having noticed that the butterfly landed on a thorny thistle, barely visible on the painting, consisting of a dark shadow on an already dark background, spilling over into ominous gray strokes under it. The glistening eyes of the elder sister were then and all through the centuries before and after to remind the viewer of the holiness dawning on one who protects another against careless steps and who walks through life like Alexander Pope's angels who "fear to tread, where fools rush in"<sup>86</sup>.

Seated on a marble museum terrace overlooking these terrifying shadows, like Madeleine in *Vertigo*, of angels and angles I was impelled to think and sink into the deep cosmoses residing inside my mind, when worries began to plague my chest like millions of butterflies and squeeze what once were the wings of an angel, radiant and glorious, into a timid pellicle that could be no

---

<sup>85</sup> See, for example, my book entitled *SF Pensées: A Peer into a Cosmos of Starry Thoughts* released as *Social Science Research Network (SSRN)* paper no. 4477842, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4477842>.

<sup>86</sup> See Alexander Pope's *An Essay on Criticism* (1709), retrieved from <http://poetry.eserver.org/essay-on-criticism.html>.

runway for the soaring of the divine spirit into the thin air. I thought about Thee and thy displays of space oddities, of thine one eye going to sleep, of thy calling objects by colors, of playing two radio songs simultaneously, with overlapping sounds, of taking us by the hand to a bookstore to show us a Hello Kitty notebook, of making sandwiches with but a single chunk of gouda jammed tiredly between two crumbly slices of white bread, when thy whimpers began to resonate through my head. It was the soft cry Thou uttered upon glancing the book I bestowed upon thee as a gift before taking off to the wedding in a foreign land, near that orangey Ferris wheel, the book called *To You, My Dolores*<sup>87</sup>, which brought instant memories of suffering, of the doomed forest, of Italian bayonets, of the cold limbs and the snow, of the daughter that Thou wished to have oh so much, of inhumane sacrifices and of nineteen kiddos later adopted by a mother, oh what a mother, to make up for the love lost on a cold night in Neretva and buried on the bottom of an emerald lake. Thy sobs echoed through the museum and escaped through the sunroof, and into the eternity they went, the waves of infinite melancholy to sway the ships of poets' souls forever and ever more.

But then the dark clouds over my burdened brain dissipated and the mood brightened, rapidly, in a heartbeat. When looked more carefully on this midafternoon spent under the Delphic arcades of Albertina, all of a sudden, to my great surprise, I noticed that the shadow on Robert's painting had arms triumphantly raised in the air, like the constellation of Orion, appearing to be waving with one's hat from the distance, creating a beautiful contrast thereby and opening a strait passage to the fields whereon infinite hope and joy seem to await us. The French painter used a similar motif in another one of his paintings, *Démolition de l'église Saint-Jean-en-Grève*, wherein, once more, a dark, shadowy figurine surrounded by two similar silhouettes, one of which is kneeling and the other one of which stands still, frozen by fear, adopts an upright posture, elated and buoyant, contrasting the collapsing monuments a stone's throw before it. On that day when gleams of joy turned into shivers of dismay, I thought about it and I thought about the hastily drawn black-haired silhouette dressed all in red, a Franciscan friar presumably, sitting at the entrance to a mission, under a frayed arcade, at the end of a flower path in Arthur Rider's *Mission Garden, San Juan Capistrano*, portending the sketches of the ruins of a mission that the Dragon and I and two little nestlings would roam around on thy birthday, near the chapel wherein the Little Bear would light a candle in thy honor, sending tears to roll down the hillsides of California and the porticos of Faenza and the piers of Lake Michigan and the chateaus of the Rhineland - all those places that Thou adorned with thy graceful steps. I thought also about the beauty of the two teeny-weeny birds in Andrew Wyeth's tempera painting, *End of Olsons*, one flying across the northern summer skies and one resting atop a chimney of a house, like the glorious bird from Mundaka Upanishad of which the great Swamiji, before the bed from which he sailed into the night sky in Calcutta I bowed once, waved stories that deepened thy soul, depicting the two recently departed souls of the Olson siblings, Alvaro and Christina, that the painter had grown up with. Another beautiful example, with a similarly black silhouette, coming out as if sketchily drawn in a second or so, this time of a girl sitting straight and springy on the bow of a sailing boat, while a similarly shadowed boy sets the sails on it, may be found in Picasso's *Mediterranean Landscape*, yet another painting that decorated the walls of Albertina on that gruesome, macabre afternoon. This dark silhouette was drawn far more leisurely and far

---

<sup>87</sup> See Saša Božović's *Tebi, moja Dolores*, Delfi, Belgrade (1979). Coincidentally, my first invited lecture in the United States and overall was held at the Brookhaven National Lab in Long Island, NY following the invitation from Saša's son, Ivan Božović, a renowned Serbian-American scientist and another native of Belgrade and musician-turned-scientist, like me. The lecture took place on May 10, 2007.

less intricately than the angel on the last in a series of Thomas Cole's paintings depicting *The Voyage of Life*, levitating above an old man and showing him the way towards the firmaments out of the gloomy seascape that he traverses in a little boat. In spite of its pitch blackness, the impression conveyed by it was still of far greater joy, energy and grace than those invoked by Cole's glisteningly white angel, as if wishing to tell the viewer that genuine smallness can be more rejuvenating for the soul than the most grandiose of dazzles. Still, the wearing of the landscape with the passing of the seasons of life in Cole's series, from the Eden-like verdancy of the primordial beginnings to the emerald gardens reaching out to the glorious edifices in the clouds of the youth to the eerie and the dark forests of adulthood, leaving room only for a tiny crack in the gloomy skies for the guardian angels to throw a worrying glance or two at us, to the old age, when the landscape has vanished and only the light from the Heaven enters our eyes, I began to feel on my skin, as if layer after layer of the surface was peeling and shedding like a snake's skin, leaving but a bare heart, tender and vulnerable, but infinitely bright, to light up the way ahead of my frightened self. Convulsing like a trolley on a cobblestoned street upon its having become intoxicated by the artistic beauty that splashed its waves all over me and, undergoing the earthquakes of the Stendhal syndrome on its highest scale, my head then evoked a cinematic moment wherein one such black shadow, decorating the edge of the screen, approached a wretched poet named Apu<sup>88</sup>, being the distant image of his son, which he would soon carry on his shoulders into a new life and leave the disheartened guardian with a train in his hands behind, though happier than he would have ever been. Like Fellini's Giulietta when she finally freed her spirit from voices and visions waging wars inside her as she symbolically stepped into our view from yet another edge of the screen, wordlessly saying that the world has become greater than herself and that she has unreservedly dived into and merged with it, so have I felt for a moment: liberated and divine. As if shedding a silky veil over my mind, Thou – who have been the greatest guardian for my soul and who have showed me that with mountainous love burning brightly inside one, one draws paths of prospect and salvation before those whom one loves – protected me from realizing that the terrifying dark shadow on Kokoschka's painting was an echo of the fears darkening thy spirit across many rivers and mountains, for the eclipse of the sun of thy *sahaswara* had already begun by then and the image of thine was ready to wave bye, with Love in thy hands, from a shore for one last time.

As I was walking out of the museum's solemn space and was just about to enter the fresh Indian summer air surrounding it, with treasure in my hands, the way in which Thou, following the golden tellers of tales advice, taught me to leave every story in life, I glimpsed for one final time Dürer's little rabbit, the iconic symbol of this Viennese museum, the painting that became so adored over the centuries because it was made so simple, unpretentious, devoid of symbolisms, mannerisms, moral instructions, metaphysical viewpoints and emotional pathos, just the way these lines written on laps and stairways and stuffy foyers have strived to be. Ah, the white rabbits, the starry-eyed muse that my superego is uttered softly in my head as I sat under a Renaissance colonnade and began to think about the supersensitive sentience that they symbolize. In that instant, images of angels and bunnies popped up side by side before me, as if in a dream, being the very two godly creatures that Thou used to evoke while standing over me, all in white, like a living saint, and putting me to a heavenly good night sleep. In this marriage of white rabbits and angels I recognize once more the blend of Wonder and Love from which all things beautiful emerge. For, it was none other but a white rabbit that led Alice down the forest hole and into the adventure of her lifetime in Wonderland, where all things alive and inanimate

---

<sup>88</sup> Watch the last scene of *The Apu Trilogy* directed by Satyajit Ray (1959).

alike were placed up on their heads, the act naturally accomplished by the wand of Wonder that inspects all things with a magical, steely-gate-opening curiosity. Far steelier gates are, though, opened by the cosmic force of Love, the creative complementary pole to the power of Wonder. It is thus that the celestially pure angels trumpet and sing their praise to the eternal joy next to white rabbits as they are both engaged in an adorable play in the living quarters of my mind as it lulls its world to sleep every night. For, no creatures in the kingdom of animals are more eminent symbols of goodness, of lily-white purity, of trembling sensitivity, of escapees from the cruel and rusty hands ready to kill to earn the recognition and reward, than rabbits, and theirs, totally, is the path I wish my steps to follow if one day God strikes my brain blind. So, could this white rabbit with a handless clock in his hands and all the time in the world in his head spin this world around and let me emerge on the mystical side of divine expression, I wondered quietly, underneath my breath, as ever before, while sitting on the museum steps, beside a marble statue of the Sphinx, with gleams of love beaming from my heart towards the whole Cosmos and every being under its chapeau of stars.

\*\*\*

It was a talk that had to be given, a talk held under a blanket of stars, in the dark of the night that set itself at noon and in an eerie silence that was to take over thy sonorous spirit in no time, a talk as prophetic as lifesaving, trying to glimpse into the future and yet reshape its crooked paths<sup>89</sup>. It was a talk in which amidst other, more scientific issues, I compared the length of verbal messages aired by people depending on their professional status and showed that the extrapolation of the trend to a hypothetical creature occupying the highest status in the Universe would yield a completely silent sentience at that level. Hence the holiness of the vision of a persona Bergman's dancer on the stage wished to turn into when she gave up speech during a performance and vowed to remain permanently speechless<sup>90</sup>. I knew not then that this descent to almost total muteness and the inability to recall all but the most elementary words, primarily colors, would be thy fate to follow in a matter of months, if not hours. Neither did I know that one decade later, I would turn the verbal analysis portion of this talk into a black hole, like that lying in the center of our galaxy, around which a hundred billion stars revolve. This black hole on a piece of paper would become the navel point for my philosophical acrobatics and the seed for nucleation of human knowledge into something more abstract and more infinite<sup>91</sup>, going way beyond the fetters of logic governing our lives, and undergoing the same transition that Thou were starting to submit to in realer life as I was presenting this talk in a darkened room to my foreign allies, who would, clearly, all but understand what I was trying to convey. As ever,

---

<sup>89</sup> The talk was entitled "The Effect of Nanoparticulate Calcium Phosphate Powders Loaded with Antibiotics on Osteoblasts Infected with *Staphylococcus Aureus*" and was presented on the Mission Bay campus of University of California, San Francisco in 2012. Eighteen slides succeeded the title slide and elaborated the point that status is inversely proportional to wordiness, before moving on to presentation of *in vitro* data on the antibiotic-loaded nanoparticle treatment of osteoblastic cells infected with *S. aureus*, and ending it all with a series of slides that closed the circle and once again asked, "A savior or a scribe: to be or not to be, that is the question", by showing the Christ on the Mount of Olives from the Church of Notre Dame in Strasbourg and Giotto's *Saint Francis Receiving the Stigmata* from the Upper Church of the Basilica of Saint Francis in Assisi.

<sup>90</sup> Watch the film *Persona* directed by Ingmar Bergman (1966).

<sup>91</sup> See Evangelina Uskoković, Theo Uskoković, Vuk Uskoković – "Untitled #8: New Adventures in Conceptual Science of and for the Children - Liberating Science from the Serfdom of the Word to Create the World", *Social Science Research Network (SSRN)* paper no. 4558293, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4558293> (2023).

though, the question remained: do we glimpse into the future by projecting its paths on the map of reality existing in our minds or we actively create it? In lieu of the answer, in the spirit of the ultimate message of the talk, there was silence and, in its heart, a melody played by a clairvoyant carousel made of caboodles of tangerines, teetotums and slingshots.

“To whom did you give your talk if it wasn’t for us who were here listening to it”, Laura Walsh, one of my coworkers, asked after the talk was over. “**I gave it to Arrietty**”, I remember I replied, leaving a trail of mystery behind. Then I rode off into a miniature sunset of thought that colored with sadness the ethereal rooms of my consciousness.

Once upon a time, my attention would spontaneously linger on the most seasoned and knowledgeable in the crowd and my talk during lectures would be directed primarily to them. But then, after my antiauthoritarian stances were fully brought to life, I started picking the littlest ones from the audience, putting them on the pedestal of my awareness and adjusting the tone of voice, the choice of words and the semantic flow to them, so that they, before anyone else, understand the little points dropped before their feet like guiding stars illuminating the road toward some bedazzling horizons. Even more recently, however, I have partially gone beyond this as well. Now, I customarily talk to an imaginary silhouette, foamy and translucent, emerging from that cosmic void filling up the Universe in its entirety, the void with a potential to create millions of new universes sitting cocooned, like the spirits of the audience on the amphitheater seats, at its every point in space and time.

Therefore, what I wished to tell Laura was that my talk had been delivered to the Great Beyond as well as to the littlest ears of the everlasting Cosmos that lay hidden amongst the commonest details of the tiny window of time and space that we have come to occupy and within which my bubbly being bounces back and forth. For, that is how the world, along with its mothers captured by some greedy hands and kept in empty marmalade jars in dark, uninhabited pantries of reality, is saved, at least according to the Studio Ghibli’s anime starring the petite heroine called Arrietty<sup>92</sup>: by letting our fanciful curiosity that talks to what on the face of it may seem to be negligibly tiny pieces of life prevail over the tendency to ignore them on the account of paying attention to the big things that occupy the bromidic grownups, most of whom are, sadly, made of Who Cares, as another anime paladin of purity, Inio Asano’s Meiko<sup>93</sup>, saw it.

In turn, however, these little creatures should also learn to lean their ears onto the walls of messages coming from living sources that stand above them on the grand ladder of life. That is, gods need the help of us, the little ones, to save the world as much as we, to save ourselves and the world alike, need to keep the channels for communication with the Divine incessantly open through meditative mindfulness and prayer. Moreover, whoever the big ones are, be they divine creators, teachers, parents, corporate leaders, coaches or people like us in comparison with the littler entities that find home in this world, a main role is to be handed over to those below them if we wish to see their lifesaving endeavors succeed, a view that could be classified as anarchism in action, affably antiauthoritarian, living up to the most benevolent of its forms.

A little Arrietty, a fairy dressed in a straw skirt, with sunshine in her eyes, sleeps in each and every corner of reality, regardless of how inanimate and unresponsive it may seem to our earthly senses, ready to be awakened from her slumber under the dewy star jasmine leaves and be of precious help in our mission of stirring the world into new, more enlightened states of being. The comic book writer, Aleksandar Zograf described in one of his autobiographical sketches of Serbia his habit of watching movies by allowing his gaze to explore the infinity of

---

<sup>92</sup> Watch *The Secret Life of Arrietty* directed by Hiromasa Yonebayashi (2010).

<sup>93</sup> See Inio Asano’s *Solanin*, Viz Media, San Francisco, CA (2008).

visual details irrelevant to the plot, be it the shimmer of treetops in the backdrop of the frame, the swaying shadows like silhouettes of muses tiptoeing over a fence visible in the distance, the chiaroscuro dance of darkness and light over the windowsill, the scarce crumbles on sandstone bricks or sundry other things – ‘tis an art that makes every visual experience an adventure of infinite proportions, potencies and possibilities. Things he would discover in these miniscule details would steer the ship of his being toward ever more fabulous directions, with the ultimate aim of reaching an enlightened state of being wherein one could sit tied to a chair in the desert and gaze at the barren landscape before one and still find infinitely amusing details to attract his attention and enrich his spirit. And if a single flower makes its way through a crack in the sand, as it happened to a prisoner in an empty cell in a comic book by another master of this so-called ninth art, Osamu Tezuka, delivering the punch of an unutterable bliss to the viewer of a tranquil scene like this, one’s soul would momentarily begin to dance in rapture, I deem, and so would the world’s. As for Arrietty, she swooshes through the pages of this book and across the flowery fields of the world alike, leaving a trail of stardust in her vivacious wake, a trail whose following is to similarly teach us of the infinitude of lifesaving signs and paths that lie truly everywhere – in every patch, pixel and parcel of reality.

At one moment in this animated story, one sees Arrietty lying on her bed, gingerly holding with her fingertips a mysterious message that came together with a sugar cube from the big boy, Sho, who had made contact with her earlier. It says, You Forgot Something. In the spirit of Canadian indie musical artisans<sup>94</sup>, I... tell... you: You Forgot It in People. That is what one of the two central commandments set forth by the Christ tells us: do not forget that others are to be loved in the same way and to the same extent as one loves oneself (Mark 12:31). But what the other of the two quintessential Christian commandments tells us is that we ought never to cease to draw the threads of communication between the profoundest depths of our minds and gods as metaphors of the spiritual forces on whose backs the entire material reality of ours floats (Mark 12:30). Hence, in the light of Arrietty’s realization what was forgotten, thence getting up, putting a hairpin onto her fluffy hair and awakening in herself a heroine determined to save the world by running out to make her first step and look deep into the eyes of a creature that occupied a far greater realm of reality than she and her little fellowmen did, I tell you this too: You Forgot It in God.

For, the chance is that Gods are not omniscient and utterly flawless in the exhibition of their creative powers either. As St. Teresa of Ávila phrased it, “the feeling remains that God is on a journey too”<sup>95</sup>. Gods, as such, may create out of curiosity, not knowing whereunto and how their creations will evolve. Like the artist on Earth, they, too, create – or, I should better say, co-create since they always live up to the abovementioned principle of handing over the main role to those below them and, as such, yield equal creative powers to us, the little carriers of the divine seeds in this world - worldly perfection via imperfection and we see the proof of this everywhere we look. Therefore, the chance is that they need to be saved too, by none other but us, the little cosmic mice whose lifesaving deeds stem from miniature seeds implanted in our hearts, seeds of faith in the fact that, all through the ages, *ce qui est petit est beau*.

This is where the traditional communication with the Divine, obsessed with obedience and inherently passive and uncreative in nature, cedes place to hypermodern co-creational encounters of equally creative halves, from which all things beautiful in this world arise. For, whenever we approach the Divine with the mentioning of sacrifices for the sake of profit, of any

---

<sup>94</sup> Listen to Broken Social Scene’s *You Forgot It in People*, Arts & Crafts, Toronto (2002).

<sup>95</sup> See Béla Hamvas’ *Scientia Sacra*, Dereta, Belgrade, Serbia (1943).

kind, be it sensual or spiritual, we pave the way for the rise of the Demonic in us, of the source and the spur for the incessant cries of the sea-like Soul of the world that oversees it all and before which we, the vain selfies, the petty adults, are but tiny teardrops of souls repeatedly saying No, raising the fence of ego and hardheadedly delaying our merging with it from today to tomorrow, from tomorrow to the day after and to the day after the day after, we, ever more made of after's and ever less of now's with every passing moment of our oblivious existence and ever farther from Eden with every step we make.

But, behold, there is one more thing Arrietty, the princess of the world of small things, teaches us: by living so as to see beauty in the littlest things surrounding us, one naturally gives out signs that are incredibly small and yet mountainously powerful, able to unexplainably change the fate of the world for better. Towards the end of the animated story that stars her small self, she sits among the blades of grass and branches of bushes when a giant carnivorous cat comes her way. In spite of the cat's purring bloodthirstily, Arrietty stands up, makes soft steps in the moonlight to it and looks straight at it, with a dewy gaze that shone with two central columns of light on which the Cosmos as a whole rests: Wonder and Love. The gruesome cat's eyes send out a tingly pulse, revealing fear and ferociousness, to which Arrietty responds with a similar shiver, though with curiosity and care that span from her to the end of the Universe reflected in it. It was a commotion quite like the one placed in the left eye of Kiki two decades ago, as she gazed at an artistic depiction of herself and, with a sentimental shiver of the watery well of devotional tears in her throat, made first steps towards restoration of her lost good witch powers. Note that such a feat, as surreally daring as that of a bird who'd land on a human shoulder and allow to be freely caressed, may be a prerequisite for one's ascending to higher, less animalistic and more angelic vistas of being. Now, as a reward for this exhibition of courageous curiosity, the cat does not swallow our princess, but turns around and goes to bring Sho over to Arrietty's hideaway wherefrom he will save her and bring her to the safety of a newly found home. And, remember, when the lotus flower of the mind dwells on one such locus of infinite Wonder and Love, no words need to be said. The subtlest movements of body and soul in synchrony are then enough to transform even the dullest and the least friendly objects and beings into lifesaving messengers.

As Arrietty says goodbye to the boy who is about to undergo heart surgery the very next day, she lets two teardrops fall down her cheeks as a sign of thankfulness for the boy's saving her and opening the path towards truly sacred living for her tiny and fragile self. In return, with these tears wherein each atom danced driven by the illuminative wish to save the world and bring the daylight of eternal salvation to it, the boy, the symbol of great, great things in this life is being saved, too. His heart is cured and his eyes glisten with hope. He looks towards the horizon wherefrom a beautiful, beautiful Sun rises.

\*\*\*

A little bit like a dolphin, with a smile that spells everlasting mysteries of life grooved on my face, a little bit like a butterfly, with dreams swirling in my head of mustached manatees with wide eyes wherein fear and love mingle, I leaped and I leaped, making underwater somersaults and pirouettes, one moment splashing bubbles of joy all around me with my mermaid tail, acting out with the silliness of a weightless whale, and another moment gliding soundlessly and seamlessly through the waterscape, leaving no trace or wrinkle behind. I was in a pool, all alone, cerulean and magical. The view of the San Francisco skyline was on one side of me, while the

vacant half of the pool, with only **two balls floating** on its watery surface, one silvery and one striped, was on the other side.

It was a different kind of day from the one that awaited me hundreds of miles to the south, by the edge of another pool equally near the Pacific coast. That day would come years later and Theo would no longer be a seed somersaulting inside the warm sea of the Little Bear's belly, but a five-year old boy by my side - my shadow and my guide. On that magical day we took the last swim before flying together for the first time to San Francisco, to walk in thy footsteps and bless the oblique sidewalks with an imaginary bundle of tiny, dry, yellowish branches wherefrom angels' tears drizzle. We took a little red bird with us and, hanging onto the edge of the pool, rescued one lady bug after the other, putting them all onto the head and the beak of this little bird to dry and rejoice. And then, one of these lady bugs, or *buba maras* as we called them, did not give any sign of life when we picked her from the placid waters, disturbed only by the fresh-faced lifeguards that practiced the rescue of people pretending to be drowning in the choppy end of the pool. Talk about the all-pervading analogical ties between things, it zoomed through my head, but that day was all for the immersion in Tao, in the road, with not even a glimpse of the destination, be it a conclusion, an ideology, a command or a horizon, nothing of which was on it except the endless ocean of existence and the suns of our souls falling into its embrace. "The idea of the nest in the bird's head; where did it come from"<sup>96</sup>, was a thought nested in my head that day, like so many times before or after. And so my boy and I watched the immovable bug intently, hoping that it would eventually move, yet that move never came. It was the first time in the five years of Theo's life that he saw a dead body and I beat around the bush when he asked me what being dead meant and how come the bug could not fly away ever again, not knowing what to say nor how to explain it. "The lady bug is no longer with us", I remember I said, to which Theo merely pointed at a funny hole indented into the concrete of the pool's edge after decades of exposure to salt. "Look at the heart", he said, noticing that the indent was shaped like a heart. No clouds of sadness or worry passed over the sunshiny joy radiating from his heart and we bounced back into the water, splashing happily, making circles and goofing around. When we got back to the pool's edge, what a surprise it was to see the lady bug, declared dead a minute or so ago, slowly drag her feet across the concrete. Albeit tired and soaked, it was alive. The child's consciousness makes magic everywhere it sheds its light. How do I replicate it so that the world can be illuminated by my presence and the dead brought back to life again, along with myriads of other miracles, I unstoppably wonder with the memory of this little detail arisen on a magical day living vividly inside me.

But now, no child was near me and as I swam and swam and swam, immersed in a sea of teardrops, I kept my eye on the two balls, softly smacked by the tiny wavelets and journeying left and right, up and down, all alone on the surface of the empty side of the pool. Having begun their wavy journey wholly separated from each other, they magically approached one another, touched and then happily went off in different directions. On the pages of this book I am yet to draw a lifeguard sitting on a beachy berberic chair, with a grumpy expression on her face thornily girdled with despair, visibly distressed by being dipped not in marine waters of a ritzy oasis, but in an awfully boring landscape, where nothing of lifelong importance seemingly happens at all. Ah, the lampions and stars lit up altogether on her face at the very mention of the "kiss & run" dance that these two balls were engaged in. A beautiful metaphor, I thought, is indeed a gateway to a whole new world, a route to escape from the world of drowsy ignoramuses and into the realm of

---

<sup>96</sup> See Alan Fletcher's *The Art of Looking Sideways*, Phaidon, London, UK (2001).

sunshiny spiritedness gifted with the ability to recognize otherworldly beauties and divine messages everywhere it directs its ray-like glances. For, everywhere, truly everywhere, including the darkest and the quietest corners of the Cosmos, the Divine dances in a manner able to lift the sensitive spirits of this world to the highest epistemic and emotional peaks within our modest human reach and bring us closer to the bliss in which gods go for a dip, at least for a second in time, a second wherein the needleless clock of eternity dings and dongs cheerfully, ringing bells that toll for Thee.

\*\*\*

The houseless **open air cathedral of San Francisco**, right there where Leavenworth is about to hit the United Nations plaza, but then makes a sudden turn to return to the Market, composed of a few dozens of people and their spirits, an old piano set and a few linen chairs, squeezed between two skyscrapers, a fountain sprinkling underground waters high into the bluish atmosphere on a melancholic afternoon, as I, slumped, with eyes tracing the grimed pavement, walked by it. Bums scattered over the concrete, raggedy-clothed and tired like dummies held on a dozy puppeteer's strings. And then a song; from a harmonica pressed on the lips of an old man by his companion, a man too tired to hold it by himself, gray-haired, wearing a plaid shirt, hunchbacked and shaky, looking nowhere but down, down. The mellow melody, simple and repetitive, began to glide through the air, lifting up spirits one by one, including myself, watery-eyed and with heart beginning to quiver and quake, softened as if through the act of magic and releasing tears of fondness for all things around it. Verily, if such simple acts are able to so profoundly touch the worldly hearts, to unlock the gates and fortresses posed by the old tyrant called ego and let the cheerful and cherubic spirits of angels and muses into it again, then the limits to our creative powers are none. With eyes lifted up, as if fixated on the Noah's rainbow visible only to the Theban eye of my heart, I saw a chirpy ibis flying across the firmament of my fancy, sending shivers of sacred spiritedness down my spine and enlivening each atom of my being with an energy that fuses, integrates and prepares for the blissful eruptions of cosmic joy, able to reposition the misplaced planets and stars of the Cosmos into the right orbits and heal and harmonize all that abides under the trite old hat of reality with the beams of positivity emitted from the sunny core of the soul, the soul, selflessly renounced long ago, that now belongs to Thee and none other but Thee.

\*\*\*

“Small is beautiful”. So says the holiest of all norms to which my heart bows its finest hemlines. Hence, to restore beauty in our eyes and our views, all I need, I pray, I know, is to become small again. “The tinier you are, the bigger the world is”, as seven-year old Theo noticed while counting stars hanging from the ceiling of 7 Park Vista, those blessed 33 or so square meters of Universe illuminated by laughter and shiny sentiments able to fuel millions of nebulae and galaxies on their cosmic courses if watched and re-watched through eons. And then there are rescue routes that smallness puts us on firmly, echoing the belief that braggarts and megalomaniacs, in contrast, can rarely lay a lifesaving path before a fellow being. Like the time when Piglet, Winnie-the-Pooh and their forest friends got locked inside a caving cabin and the

only one who could sneak through a crack in the ceiling and call for help was the smallest among them, namely Piglet<sup>97</sup>.

Fast forward a couple of decades since this story was told and here we are, Thou with neural galaxies colliding in thy head, I sitting squatted in thy shadow like a helpless gamin, and jigsaw puzzles of a scene in the life of good old Winnie, a clumsy she with butterflies landing on her button nose, lying scattered on the floor. It was not our dearest Winnie-the-Pooh puzzle, which now collects dust in the corner of thy bedroom, where the bear cracks a smile like no other, as beautiful as human hands can draw, gapingly heart-shaped, like that of a baby glimpsing his Momma and of Thee seeing thy cubs after a long day at work, and little Piglet on the side, the cartooned exemplar of smallness and timidity that suddenly transform into lifesaving virtues, reflecting it faithfully. Rather, it was a fifty-piece Disney puzzle portraying **Winnie-the-Pooh drawing Tigger** on a snow-white canvas, next to a solitary jasmine flower, in the shade of a chestnut tree, as the striped wildcat flamboyantly posed under a bright blue sky.

The only missing piece was the furry face of the humanoid bear, sweetly slowed in her comatose daze, swaying in the direction that the aural apparitions roaming across the roofs of the city of dreaming spires made their motions to<sup>98</sup>, while retaining the stance of infinite wisdom and benevolence, yet holding a worrying sign for the faces bowed down in search for it. For, if the cornerstone, the peacemaking power of infinite love that strives to “judge not, but save the world” (John 12:47) becomes pulled away, the house is bound to crumble away and turn into rusted ruins. The puzzle with one piece missing was then gently laid on a blazing brazier in the middle of the drawing room. And then, after a thorough search to no avail and everyone’s heartlessly giving up on any hope of finding the piece, I glimpsed it on the parquet floor and I picked it up and oh, the sun of happiness that dissolved the dark and gloomy clouds of thought in the blink of a cosmic eye, ignited by one such miniscule, seemingly least significant object. It was as if the star referred to in the verse from Coldplay’s *Scientist*<sup>99</sup>, blasting through the speakers and echoing through the air at the exact time the steely doors behind which the goddess of Her spirit stood earlier in the day, having undergone a stream of high-energy rays that heal and exasperate at the same time, opened with Her elatedly hopping outside, a few notes away from the mountainously powerful climax of the tune, “I am going back to the star”, exploded into a galactic supernova and blessed each and every one with its everlasting shine of the Love Divine.

\*\*\*

“Don’t you know that God is Pooh Bear?”, asked Jack Kerouac in the last sentence of his epic novel, the beat literature classic, *On the Road*<sup>100</sup>, where the rules of language and convention were shattered to allow starry trains of spontaneous and little pretentious thought to stream through the air, like dragons, likening a creature in my eyes, clumsy and slow-thinking, chasing butterflies with her scratched nose, yet poignantly prudent and vivaciously affectionate, to God, to someone before whom I’d place my most gracious vows, whose feet I’d kiss and whose path of selfless devotion to another, of seeing traces of goodness and beauty in even the

---

<sup>97</sup> See Benjamin Hoff’s *The Tao of Pooh and the Te of Piglet*, Egmont, London, UK (1992).

<sup>98</sup> Listen to Radiohead’s *The Tourist* on *OK Computer*, Parlophone, UK (1997).

<sup>99</sup> Listen to Coldplay’s *Scientist* on *A Rush of Blood to the Head*, Capitol (2002).

<sup>100</sup> See Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road*, Penguin, London, UK (1955), pp. 281.

most malicious spirits of the world and surfing in their grooves with great ease and charm, of wishing to condemn none, but save all (John 3:17), of making her search for the Holy Grail be a quest for the reasons to sprinkle the waters of the consecrated spirit that blesses and sanctifies unreservedly over the crown of everyone's head, of blending the magical substance of careworn Love into the fluid of spirit in which we swim in communion with every word said and move made, I, a little piglet, cocooned under the mountainous saintliness of her godly figure, shining like a sun in my eyes, would solemnly promise to follow, step by step, heartbeat by heartbeat, breath by breath, breathlessly, **from here to eternity and back.**

\*\*\*

**“What is Love”**, I asked Thee under the glorious murky skies, in the musky marine room where the dreams of my early life had been spun for the first time in circles, faster and faster, all until I was taken to some stellar realms of being and thought alongside them. Thou and I lay under this gray and gloomy dome, I, a mouse so miniscule and of such a little faith and grace that its name deserves not to be written on a surface bigger than a speckle of dust, and Thou, as great and glorious as Santa Fuma raised high over the sea of love and the endless array of human fortresses reared in its way, with heart exploding in millions of rays of light that befall the Earth and cause these contrived boundaries to crumble. Encompassed by powdery walls, softened up as if being touched by the grace of Thee, a dusty curtain that blocked our views into the night and the smell of the spirit of ancient ruins evanesced long ago, You, holding me, a little pupa, a cocooned butterfly afraid of this universe, a Virgo folded into a papery crane that flies far in its fancy only, in thy tight embrace, said, “Love is All”. If three words were to be enough to reflect the profoundest secret to the existence of the universe, here they were: (I) the most powerful cosmic power, the beginning of the outbursts of sunlight from the celestial source of light that our spirit is; (II) a link to another, also an active verb, an action *per se*; and (III) everything, the Cosmos as a whole that is to be reached out to and played with underneath and around the swaying palms of our heart - three words, all in all, bound by the spirit of Holy Trinity wherefrom “One is born; from One, two: from two, three; from three, the entire created universe” (Tao-Te-Xing XLII).

What lay implicit and unsaid in this answer dressed in the glittering garments of cosmopolitan grandeur is the celebration of its exact opposite: namely, smallness and the poverty of spirit with the wings of which one can pick the commonest and most neglected flowers of things around one and turn them into shrines wherein the songs of devotion to the divine are being incessantly played. For, if Love is truly All and if “apart from love nothing whatever has existed, nor ever will”<sup>101</sup>, as Saint Symeon deemed, then every grain of dust and every particle of pollen, a littlest object and a most unnoticeable creature, are also wholly made of that Love, making small things the only road that leads to the explosion of the star of our spirit into a supernova that will come to illuminate all that is with its omnipresent blaze. The spirit of Small is thus the only gate through which we can enter the sphere of the great and universal One, of a soulful union of the heart with everything that exists, of embracing the whole wide world in our modest little arms, and of putting a hat not on our tiny little head anymore, but on the entire globe with all its joys and worries, arms raised triumphantly and faced buried in hands lamentably. For, when we find ourselves in every little thing of the world, with great empathy,

---

<sup>101</sup> See *Saint Symeon the New Theologian's Discourses*, Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ (circa 1000 AD), pp. 42.

understanding and patience, while acting in courageously creative ways, the whole world in return disgorges its rivers into the all-welcoming ocean that our infinitely humble and petite self has then become.

As Thou whispered these words into my ears, the gloomy ground of the pebble-paved and crestfallen autumn city outside was getting covered with the snowflakes of saintly whiteness, adding up to the absolute magic of the moment. “*O kako je lepo*”, the choir of a legion of angels marching to the beat of my humbled heart began to sing their psalms from the depths of my soul.

In each snowflake falling down from the great heights of Heavens was implanted a tear of eternal sadness and a sparkle of unbound cosmic joy. Combined, they yield a crossroad for the crucifixion of our spirits and the incarnations of ethereally beautiful ways of being.

\*\*\*

**“I heard the singing of the Mississippi...”**, goes the verse I keep hearing in my head. ‘twas the verse from the poem *The Negro Speaks of Rivers*<sup>102</sup> that Thou, a sweet schoolgirl with ribbons in her hair, an incarnation of the soul of an American Indian that Thou held inside thee all thy life, with slender figure and mucky cheeks, an angel enslaved, a Serb, “the black of Europe”, as a literature laureate christened us once<sup>103</sup>, recited on a starlit podium long, long ago, airing words that I, an unstructured smear of spirit then, dwelling somewhere amongst the stars, only sensed, not knowing that our roles would be switched one day and that Thou would watch over me from behind the clouds and treetops, while I, with tears twinkling in my eyes, would be listening to the singing of this grand old river as it makes its last steps before embracing the ocean, with the joy of a child jumping into the parent’s arms, to never let go of them and stay therein forever and ever. First listen, then look, then talk – so said a lady, a mom, a graceful, golden spirit who says of herself, “I am Belfast”<sup>104</sup>, in the same way I and Thou could say of ourselves: “We are Belgrade”. ‘twas with the same sense of immersion into the world, bigger and greater than oneself that the Christ uttered that famous “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58) and that Langston the lad penned the timeless words that now echo all around me: “I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans, and I’ve seen its muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset”. And so I stand here, at the shore of Algiers Point, and listen, with eyes closed and words erased from the memo of my mind. In the distance I hear the grave thump made by the processions of slaves, who soaked the soil with sadness everywhere their weary steps alighted. In an even vaguer distance I hear the laughter of the leisured spirits rafting down the river, and then the silence, and then in an ever farther distance the sound of water having its vivacious, yet solemn say.

Can you think of the music of these words at the riverside? Of the singing of the surface splashes and the deep hum underneath on the day that young Abe, careless and free, with winds in his hair, went sailing down the Mississippi river and hit the banks of New Orleans, when he saw the dark side of humanity, like he had never seen it before? He saw slavery, he saw suffering, he saw first-hand the eternal sadness that comes with the appreciation of the surface

---

<sup>102</sup> See Langston Hughes’ *The Negro Speaks of Rivers* in Langston Hughes’ *The Dream Keeper and Other Poems*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY (1932), pp. 62. The African-American poet, Hughes is said to have written this poem on a train crossing the Mississippi River in 1920.

<sup>103</sup> See Stephen Lowenstein’s *My First Movie: Take Two – Ten Celebrated Directors Talk about Their First Film*, Pantheon, New York, NY (2008), pp. 173.

<sup>104</sup> Watch *I am Belfast* directed by Mark Cousins (2012).

and the skin and the neglect of the essence and the heart. How wretched humanity must have looked to him from that day on, how overpowered by the worldly injustices his young, untainted teenage soul must have grown. Yet, the great river sang. 'twas happy for it witnessed this grand phase transition in the mind of one man, a man in whose head something profound would happen on that day, so that he would become unstoppable in his determination to step on the necks of the dragons of administrators of these and other instances of unfairness and injustice that plague the human race. If there was one holy emotion on Earth that day, then it was the one evoked in Abe as he stood on the raft, statuesquely, and gazed at the wretched colony of slaves and felt sadness and light arise in him, so how not to sing, the Mississippi and whole Nature, and shiver and shake at the sight of its rise in a noble mind? Oh, how beautiful this singing, which I, a fierce fighter for freedom and equality on today's imperialistic, colonized and capitalist land of science and beyond, and Thou, my guiding star and the love of my life, may always hear in our thoughts.

\*\*\*

**10,000 meters above the sea**, I, a tiny embryo of the star of the holy spirit, carried cocooned in the belly of a big bird onto some faraway coasts flushed by the waters of a cold and melancholic sea, with the song about night swimming<sup>105</sup>, about sprightly silhouettes somersaulting through the twinkly water, holding hands, bouncing off each other and returning thereto, in a most divine play, the one played by unborn babies in the salty sea of their mother's wombs, ringing through my ears, thought of Thee, whose sandaled feet I dream of bowing before and kissing in ecstasy. I thought, also, of the song of devotion to Thee, a goddess from another world, clownishly joyful and worryingly careworn, always living for another and never for oneself, that I have vowed to chirp with every heartbeat of mine throughout the time I will have spent on this cosmic station called Earth. And the ship of my eyes got shaken on the wavy sea of tears on which it has floated and a tear got plucked that slid down my cheek and dropped all the way to the ground. From this tear the whole Universe could be brought into being once again, along with its summery palm trees and dreamers gazing at the starry skies under them, carousels on which we could sit on a manatee with moustaches and ride into the eternity, and millions of other things that touch creation with a sense of otherworldly magic. A seed of the divinely beautiful that pervades all things with colossal subtlety, this tear is truly what this entire book could have been about.

\*\*\*

There may come a time in an earthling's life, as it came in mine, when one realizes that megalopolises are like thrifty pop songs, for all these rivers of spirits walking by and spinning the mind into oblivion with their vortices of arrogant indifference, aerial at one times, awkward at other, they enthrall one for the duration of it, but feed one's soul with little of lasting value. In contrast, smaller cities and towns, from Arquà Petrarca near Venice to Bishnupur in West Bengal to Onchiota in the Adirondacks, have been those that inspired me to notice a detail or two or three and transcribe them into words comprising this book. Their quiet and small thus got turned into something grand and everlasting.

---

<sup>105</sup> Listen to R.E.M.'s *Nightswimming* on *Automatic for the People*, Warner Bros, Burbank, CA (1992).

There are many things that I remember from my trip to Sioux Falls, the land of the laughing waters who sing **Minnehaha, Minnehaha** unceasingly, from (i) a glimpse of the plastic Indian puppet with chocolate-colored stripes hanging off her dress and moccasins, a totem personifying Thee and being the exact copy of the doll standing tall in the musty kitchen of our Belgrade home, home, the landscape in which all things, an Aleph each, had reflected the dream that my life would become, being the first thing that greeted me after I landed, to (ii) finding SF spelled on hotel soaps, which prompted me to think of how neither outside of San Francisco could one escape the spirit of San Francisco, hours before I would remind the sparkly-eyed students of Kipling's verse, "Who knows England who only England knows"<sup>106</sup>, to (iii) an elderly lady popping out of my TV set, complaining about the drivers who park cars in front of her house and requesting that tennis courts be turned into parking lots, to (iv) the endlessly stretching tiffany pink highways and holes in the ground, to (v) motorcyclists, pheasant hunters and risqué western movies, to (vi) a delightful workplace dropped into a loneliest pastoral scenery in the world, to (vii) the tree stems split in halves by ice cubes fallen from the sky, to (viii) chatting in a balmy tub with a pair of pastors from the Mission parish who could listen first and only then preach, having thus discovered the greatest preaching gift of them all, to (ix) a pair of worn-out glasses lost by the edge of the pool and me swimming like a siren under a blanket of stars, not knowing then that out of a similar pair of goggles, left by Thee after thy last swim with me to dry and still hanging on that same old rusty railing, a monument piercing the Sun and other stars and making the whole cosmos bleed I would make (Fig.1(left)), declaring lonely goggles and eyeglasses the saddest objects in the Universe and, at times, photographing them obsessively (Fig.1(right)), to (x) sitting on a reddish quartzite rock, a reminder of the blood spilled by the Indians from whom their country was unjustly taken by force to build a giant suburban sprawl, a commercial brainwashing machine at the urban development scale wherein hearts have grown farther and farther apart from one another, with the falls of the Big Sioux River dropping gorgeously behind my back, telling me that none of it matters so long as a touch with the divine is being maintained as well as that they, hooray, have washed away all the aliens that have roamed around thy cosmic head. However, out of all these sundry images, the one that I have declared the final treasure I would prefer to pick and carry on with me after I leave the fable of meeting the land that sings with the music of the waterfalls, Minnehaha, Minnehaha, is the one of an aged couple, a husband and a wife, looking more like two flabby balls of yarn than statuesque humans standing tall in manlike dignity and grace, sitting in a sweet snuggle in the back of the belly of a giant bird that unwaveringly traversed the azure skies and watching the orange sunset over the endless prairies below from a dreamland in the clouds millions of millions of miles high up in the air.

---

<sup>106</sup> See Rudyard Kipling's *The English Flag*, In: *Rudyard Kipling's Verse: Inclusive Edition, 1885 – 1918*, Doubleday, Page & Company, New York, NY (1919). "What should they know of England who only England know?" is the correct version of the verse, which I paraphrase for pure aesthetic reasons in the text.



Figure 1. Thy goggles remain where they were left (left image), after mine and thy last swim together, forty floors above the ground, in the very clouds of the Windy City one evening in May. If they may remind me of something, may it be this mountain-moving wish to always and everywhere see the world through thine eyes, which, *en passant*, ruptures my being into a million broken pieces of emotion and thought as these words are lain here. Over the years, goggles lost and found became my passion to collect and make found object art from (right image). In this case, the artwork is 10-year old Theo's, taking the form of a smiley face with a smooshed piece of paper for nose, which has a whole lot of symbolism attached to it. For one, the goal, here and elsewhere, as far as my writing is concerned, has been to liberate the writer and the reader from the burden of the written words and the maps of the real life that they effectively represent, and enable our living in the present, on the territory of life, with as direct of an experience of it as possible. Moreover, if my surrounding myself with goggles signifies the need to adopt a whole new eye to the world and its spiritual undercurrents, a complete new way of seeing things, as I have always thought, then this art is to prompt the viewer to think in exactly this direction. As for myself, given that this is a child's art, I will follow the way of the child and travel back, back, back, as far as the trail toward the earliest beginnings, the beginnings that represent the ultimate goal of our journeys, so long as we "recognize the landscape", as Thou loved to say, take me. For now, my journey will be the downward slide inside and alongside that teardrop shed from the eye on that aerial glide through the clouds, hand in hand, wing in wing with angels. If this teardrop is indeed the one from which the whole universe can be recreated, then my going down with it and reaching out to the spirit of children and to our prime points of origin, the gateways to this life, may be a truest path to the stars and to the secrets of infinite being; so says I on the ninth anniversary of thine ascending to those clouds wherefrom this tear, ever so gingerly, dropped to the ground.

Can it be a coincidence or a divine sign that my next trip to this same part of America began with my sitting on the plane beside two equally baggy balls rolling through the Universe, this time of a daughter, who sat in front of me, next to her little angel, and a mother, who sat right next to me, occupying a half of my seat, and who went on to spell **LOVE** on the airplane wall with colorful sticky worms before a string of events happened, transitioning from one to another smoothly, like the Clark Fork that was flooding Missoula – that sole American city nested atop Rockies, which the cowboy emerging out of verdant Nebraska fields christened God's Country halfway through Jack Kerouac's timeless ode to being on the road, forever and ever<sup>107</sup>, and the city in whose valley despondent Captain Meriwether Lewis stood on July 4, 1806 when he realized that Northwest Passage is but a dream and the only way to connect Missouri River east of the Rockies and Columbia River west of the Rockies would be by land – in those days, reaching levels that were highest in a hundred years and making her stream violently, with surges

<sup>107</sup> See Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, Part 1, Chapter 3, Penguin, New York, NY (1955).

of passion, like the Dragon's mood at the moment and like Meša's tekka, which the dervish, just about my age at the moment, "was happy to see swell, destroy the dam, and flow free"<sup>108</sup>, right down my window, reminding me that small things flare with creativity as opposed to stagnant seas and oceans, which, albeit deeper, have nowhere as such innovation potential, the capacity to dream up things never thought of before, from my realizing that this marvelous river was renamed eight times, from Nemissoolatako to beyond, proving Lao-Tzu's words that "nameless is the heavenly Way, Tao" and the relevance of my dreams of cities where "the streets have no name"<sup>109</sup>, to the first street seen in Missoula being Hiawatha Street to smile formed on the foam of freshly served bongwater brew in Kettle House, bringing memories of Godard's galactic coffee cup<sup>110</sup> to the tattooed lady with two hipster children in the Oxford diner, who went "you have something in your eye" to the big bearded man who was the chef and the server and picked an eyelash from his eye, a tiny eyelash, like the one Thou would squeeze between thine index finger and the thumb and ask me to make a wish before placing it on thy breasts, an eyelash that this book could have been all about, to my climbing one strenuous step after another to reach that big M that spelled Mama imprinted on the slope of a huge hill, on the west face of Mount Sentinel, surrounded by the purple shooting stars and larkspurs greeting me with bowed heads, as if willfully wilting before me, and by joyous yellow buttercups looking like the little white flowers held by angels on the fresco right of the altar of St. Francis Xavier church to my bursting in tears from the first row of pews in it to the sound a boy playing the piano after the sermon, which I missed, was over, imperfectly but with a magical touch, as if saying that one is just to play and play, with no forethought whatsoever, for the purity of one's heart, always present, from the cradle to the grave in God's children that we are, will always emerge to the surface, to satisfy gods, if not people, furthering freeness of expression, to my finally stepping on the top of that great M to the sound of the bell ringing from the campus' clock tower, at high noon on Mother's day, to my glimpsing seconds later the only other big letter, L, imprinted on the slope of the neighboring hill, standing for Love and making me wonder with a cosmic question mark levitating above my head, to the quaver of Cat Power's weep<sup>111</sup>, "where is my Love", which, I know, if awakened, would light up the whole Universe, to my realizing that I was wearing a red heart on my shirt in that moment but knowing that, the L, the Love, lay far, far across a valley, separated from the one I stood on by the swollen river flooding meadows and woods as well as the whole Highway 90, the longest interstate road in the US, stretching like "a hungry ghost that moves from coast to coast"<sup>112</sup>, from Seattle on the Pacific shore to Mississippi River in the Midwest to Boston on the banks of the Atlantic, my next and final stop on this journey, as if pointing out to me how far, far away this Love, the power that Thou suffered and sacrificed thy life to install in me, lay that a whole valley, a valley of death as it were, was to be crossed *en route* thereto, to my coming home, symbolically, at high midnight, it was these two floppy balls glowing with love like neon stars in the sky in the belly of another big bird that I remember more vividly than anything, to all of which I could only say Minnehaha, Minnehaha?

---

<sup>108</sup> See Meša Selimović's *Death and the Dervish*, Translated by Bogdan Rakić, Stephen M. Dickey, Northwestern University Press, Chicago, IL (1996).

<sup>109</sup> Listen to U2's *Where the Streets Have No Name* on *The Joshua Tree*, Island (1987).

<sup>110</sup> Watch *2 or 3 Things I Know about Her*, a.k.a. *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle* directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1967). Also, see Hunter Vaughan's *Where Film Meets Philosophy: Godard, Resnais, and Experiments in Cinematic Thinking*, Columbia University Press, New York, NY (2012), pp. 67.

<sup>111</sup> Listen to Cat Power's *Where is My Love* on *The Greatest*, Matador (2005).

<sup>112</sup> Listen to Hurray for the Ruff Raff's *Hungry Ghost* on *The Navigator*, ATO (2017).

And, then, if I tried real, real hard, I could hear the music of Thy heart, from this airborne abode for my suddenly sunlit soul, soft and soothing as angelic wing flaps, joyful as children's sea splashes and as rich and resonant as the poet's church bells that always, always toll for Thee.

\*\*\*

Writing travel memoirs is a bit like writing about the **circle of life** and the quintessence of human existence. This is in part because I have often come to see a journey from home to a foreign land and back home as analogous to the span of a lifetime fit between the moment of the birth and the moment of passing and, likely, being reborn.

I remember Thou laughing it off when I said once that I'd never love anyone more than thee, my children included, to which Thou would reply with a "You? You? You'll be far worse than me", meaning more anxious, more loving and more attached to children, who would mean more of a world to me than they were to her. To bear this out, a moment would come for a trip to be taken to a Caribbean island, a decade or so after Thy sailing away to greater seas, with one Mowgli by my side, an angel who "fears to tread" everywhere we go, a boy whose every swing of the shoulders and the arms, eternally writing in the wind, is poetry in motion, and a gamin and a guide, a storm of emotion in a petite wisp, a muse sent down to show the way when Thou are no longer around to hold my hand on it. And we traveled and traveled, from the sweltering beginnings in the womb-like middle of the night, spent fast and furious at first and then stalling for a long, long time in a big black car, crossing thirty three feet in three hours until we arrived at our destination, to be scammed and scarred before moving on to days spent in bliss, swimming and splashing and sashaying, then exploring Mayan ruins and tropical rainforests, reaching a climax at the moment where I, a sublimation of divinest delight in that instant, stood with arms spread wide and gazed into the open sea, with the boy searching for seashells on my left and the girl building castles in the sand on my right, the moment where everything that ever was suddenly fell into its place before my watery eyes and thy premonition, thy dream of the "little yellows" whom Thou said Thou would be watching over from somewhere high while I write lines like these came true, producing an outburst of otherworldly joy, in the name of which we rocked ourselves back and forth by the foamy waves, been tossed from side to side, like little children at play, children that we, deep down, are, laughing our hearts off until realizing that the sea's is a language unintelligible but deeper than anything we heard before and that the sea is an old, yet eternally youthful soul, a supernatural sentience in its own right, which expanded our limits and we were no longer who we were, but were reborn into a universe each instead, knowing that anytime, young or old, weary or leafy, we could turn into a fiery goddess with thousand arms that give and erupt and spew love, cosmic and wondrous, all around it, like a carnival carousel, from where on we jumpstarted ourselves to a new beginning, with minds freed and emptied, refreshed and rebooted, ready to live a life without even a slightest verbalization down the road, methodlessly, rulelessly, preceptlessly, a life that is being represented through an allegory from the birth of the first days of this trip to the last, the latter of which we spent wondering through another endless day, where the first droplets of rain on our journey fell from the sky, right after we checked out, convincing us that those were the tears of Mayan gods watching us from the clouds and telling us how much they admired the energy we brought to the spaces they oversee, and then another and the final endless night, with plush-bunny-holding Thou reincarnated as the little girl, ill and feverish that day, having been led to the site from which we soared into the sky in a car that played at the end of the ride first Elton John's *I'm Still*

*Standing* and then, at the very, very end, R.E.M.'s *Losing My Religion*, soon after which we got lifted skywards and then got dumped to the ground and rose again and got dropped to the ground again and then got taken on another ride, a ride that ended with the turn of the car into a little cul-de-sac as a bunny ran into the headlights, at 1.30 am, to greet us upon our arrival home and welcome to a long, long sleep from which the girl woke up after having a nightmare in which her plush bunny kept on dropping from her hands into a basin filled with water, from which she would pick it up, but it would drop again and again and so on *ad infinitum*, in this never ending dream in a dream that reality is, where the children, that is, the angels coexist with bunnies, just as Thou predicted in thy bedtime lullabies.

\*\*\*

In both *Children of Heaven*, a cinematic reflection of the concoction of the crumbly, stale, old and poor and the lavish, spirited, fresh and vivacious from which innumerable rises to the stars of my soul in this life have been spurred, and *The Song of Sparrows*, an homage to the fountainhead of goodness that endows the poorest of the peoples and that eternally outpours the holy waters into the worldly skies, both of which are Majid Majidi's movies, the plots begin to unwind like balls of yarn from the moment when a thing of a seemingly miniscule importance becomes lost: **a pair of raggedy shoes** in the former and an egg-laying ostrich in the latter. And as stories begin to unravel, closer and closer we come to elevations of the pillars of the most essential beauty that human beings hold within, on which the stability and sustainability of our whole civilization rest: living life as a sacrifice for the sake of saving and elevating another.

A simple Newtonian principle rests in its core: action and reaction, giving and taking are always mutually balanced. In one of Walt Disney comic books, Super Goof sits on a lonely planet, imprisoned behind an invisible barrier, all until he realizes that if heads of cabbage could fly in from the distant space to feed him, there has to be an opening for him to fly away, into the stellar space and beyond. Likewise, when I drop little greenish grapes from the palms of my soiled hands to the ground, I know that roads to salvation of innumerable souls that dream through the day and sleep through the night, confined in their lonely bubbles, waiting to be hatched and flown into the skies of heavenly being, become open all around. Ancient cultures built around the idea of human sacrifices may have often implemented them in the form of ludicrously inhumane rituals, but deep down, they spoke no nonsense. Towards the end of *Children of Heaven*, the boy runs a race, deeming that only if he loses will he win and *vice versa*: having won the race, he ends up crying his heart out, washing and polishing thereby the mirror of his untainted soul, now free to reflect the sunrays of the sun of divine spirit that permeates it all in many starry pools of wondrous human eyes around him. Despite winning, he has come to conclude that he is a loser like no other, the insight through which the filmmaker wished to tell us that losing things and becoming poor is more often than not the way to victoriously arrive at the greatest treasures in life that our lucid intellects could imagine.

This reiteration of the age-old Christian credo that "blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3) parachutes us for one final time to one of the most beautiful scenes from any movies of this marvelous Persian storyteller and weaver of dreams, *The Willow Tree*, involving a professor of theology after an operation that was to reendow him with the ability to see for the first time in almost forty years, ever since he had lost sight during fireworks as an eight-year old boy. It is a moonlit night and he writes in his diary

that tomorrow the bandages would be removed from his eyes and it would be revealed whether the operation was successful or not. Seconds after a thought that maybe he would be able to see arises in him, he decides to remove the bandages from his eyes. As if touched by the hand of an angel, he, entranced, realizes that he indeed sees and the first thing that he, fallen on his knees by the window of his hospital room, glimpses is neither a glorious sunrise over a lavish landscape nor a vibrant social scene thriving with life, but, as if very God conceived the scene, wishing to tell us that in the smallest of things the greatest of all sights lie, a little and lonely ant sliding wobblingly along the edge of the windowsill with a heart-shaped burden in his hardworking hands. To the passage of this very same ant over a page on which a prayer is inscribed and onto the other side, carrying along not only a burdensome block, but an infinity of meanings in its semantic bag too, not a single one of which I dare explicate hereby, the very end of this poignant movie belongs.

\*\*\*

First Your **face illuminated by millions of stars**, then the patchy scarf, like the Little Prince's, trailing behind Thee in the wind, and then the cerulean hat. Then the rustle of thy bare feet walking over autumn leaves and pine needles. Then the aura of thy glowing spirit waving around Thee like an aureole of light and setting the buckthorn barks and barberry bushes in the dreamy landscape around Thee into motion, creating a soundless hum that melts the human hearts into honey. Then the objects in the dark background, all belonging to the childhood cedar box of fondest memories. Then thy mellow cough spewing stardust all around followed by the eyes of a sad and wretched clown opening wide as an interlude to the vision of Thee, the closest thing to Gelsomina from *La Strada* that I had known on Earth, "the soul of innocence before the Fall – an innocence which is both one of naïveté in terms of worldly-wisdom and one of simplicity in keeping the world-wonder, in touch with the world in a way most of us leave behind with our childhood, with goodness as consistent and transparent as the way of nature itself, radiating a winsomeness, a lack of guile or deceit, which attracts little children and adults wherever she goes"<sup>113</sup>.

Mixed into this cosmic joyfulness of thine everlastingly radiant spirit is also the burden of worry wearing down the eyes of holy mothers in ancient frescoes, the agony of a soul torn apart by the eternal anxiety that comes at the cost of infinite love for one's brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers and, more than anything, children. Added to the pot is also the quiet suffering of the Mandarin mother whose children gathered to make for her something that she loved and decided to cook the soup made of fish heads and tails because that was all that she – who had given all the better parts of the fish to her children to eat – ever ate, to which she would smile quietly, being happy and feeling blessed that thy puppies had thought about her. And then, as the weight of guilt has just started to drag me down, into the darkest depths of my soul, the dulcet voice of Thee, infinitely light and yet incommensurably deep, breaks the silence, soaring me high into the softest airs and making a bird of paradise out of me, and then softly immersing me back into the deep blue ocean of spirit that underlies it all and turning me into an amphibian on Earth, fluid and graceful, a male Mowglian mermaid in search of his Atlantean home: "If you say, Come, I will come. I don't need anything. I have some of my herbs and one pill for the heart. That would be good for three months". Oh, the heavens in ecstasy, oh, the angels that jubilantly stood up and

---

<sup>113</sup> See Charles B. Ketcham's *Federico Fellini: The Search for a New Mythology*, Paulist Press, New York, NY (1976), pp. 46.

bowed deep – so deep that they began to make one somersault of veneration after another. Oh, the suns of the Universe that spurted their shine out of sweetest sympathy and with shimmery tenderness that reshuffles the orbits of the celestial sphere in an instant began to sing in synchrony the hymns to Dantean “Love that moves the Sun in heav’n and all the stars”<sup>114</sup>, opening my heart to a gagging gust of the teary-eyed spark, bringing forth a tiny dazzle and a flood, a fortitude of light.

\*\*\*

And then, soon after this celestial vow to give one frail and failing self wholly to care for the newborn was made, a child was born, simple, unpretentious, genuine, with no forethought, flowing like a river of Tao, on the third night of the third month of the thirteenth year of the third millennium anno Domini, under a blanket of stars, as I sat on a big blue ball in oneness with the Cosmos and gazed at the city lights blinking with grace from below.

Why Theo, people have asked. And here is why:

**T** is to spread arms to all and be not afraid of being bewildered in this dialectical world of ours wherein all great things are polar in nature, but to embrace the opposites that crucify our beings from the inside and, like matter and antimatter annihilating one another with a release of energy that lights up the Universe, transcend them in enlightening bliss.

**H** is to act with the fiery will of Samson when he reached toward the two central Philistine pillars, spread them apart and brought the corrupted city down, creating space for the thriving of the open hearts wherever walls are wished to be erected.

**E** is to be elastic like a spiral spring, to roll into goofballs on carpets and dance floors and always reach out to another with the hand of the heart.

**O** is to know that all things come in circles and that ends of the darkest nights do not exist but as preludes to the sunrises of brand new days.

Finally, it is because Tao and Te, Heaven and Earth, are brought into oneness within it. Is it therefore that it means God?

For, pronounced in my native language, Theo turns into Teo, a perfect blend of Tao and Te, the heavenly and the earthly forces of creation in the Taoist metaphysical view of the world, respectively. But translated into my mother tongue, Theo becomes converted into You-O. A long, long time ago, Thou, whose favorite pastime was to place mysterious notes all throughout the house and the backyard, notes guiding us to other notes and then to other notes and then to treasure, asked me by the seaside what twenty words I would carry with me to a desolate island. Remember, not twenty iconic objects or books or records, as people are usually being asked, did Thou want me to compile, but twenty words that I would retain in the cedar box of my memory, with the rest being willingly erased from it. I remember I thought for a long time about the choice that was to be made because I wanted these words not only to ensure survival by communicating my basic needs to indigenes of these strange and exotic lands, but also create cognitive bliss upon their utterance beneath the waves of the sea of emotions on which my spirit floated and be pointers at the destinations of divine grace in simple conversations with others. Unfortunately, I do not remember anymore what the words I put on this list exactly were;

---

<sup>114</sup> See Dante Alighieri’s *Divine Comedy*, Volume 3: *Paradise*, Canto XXXIII (1321), translated by the Rev. H. F. Cary, Thompson & Thomas, Chicago, IL (1901).

besides, the list itself was buried by the bulldozers and sunk into the sea long ago. If I recall correctly, I started off with the Sun and then mentioned joy, sea and cosmos, obviously caring more about poetry than practicality, the idealistic preference that my whole life, in fact, can attest to, including the lines piled here, where narrative, clearly, is secondary to the lyrical expression, where the ultimate points lurk from nearly every line, every word, every letter imprinted, and where final destinations are discoverable within every step of the journey. However, I still vividly remember what the last two words were on the list. Number 19 was Love and number 20 was You. For, if there was a more sacred word in the microcosm of my thoughts in those glass bead days of my dreamy youth than Love, it was, surprisingly, You. I, I remember, was nowhere to be found on that list.

As for Theo as You-O, let this name be an invitation to always have a You as the axis of your life, as a Sun around which you will dancingly revolve and before which your spirit will humble itself and bow, thus becoming that gracious sea which has no need to go anywhere anymore, for all the worldly rivers have begun to flow straight into its heart. And then, lest this devotion be static, passive and uncreative, there is the O, an Olympic circle of unison, of interconnectedness of it all, of eternal harmony, spread before us like a Persian carpet holding infinite mysteries and irrationalities, unrolling endlessly, like the decimal digits of the number  $\pi$ , a big and shiny O, to be drawn beside and over and below and on and in every You in the Universe.

Theo, also, as short for Theodore, rings bells of churches in the sky in praise of the warrior saint Theodore Stratelates of Heraclea, who, like Saint Anthony of Padua, my most beloved Italian city, is the patron saint of the recovery of lost things, alongside storms and martyrdom. To be a searcher, on the quest to recover small things covered by the phony blankets of bigness and reveal them in all their splendor, is thus another mission inscribed in the name of this petite god crawling gingerly beneath my feet, amidst the littlest of the worldly things, wishing to discover their glory before soaring to the clouds that nest brightly above our heads. Soon he will be bigger and will come up to me to heal my adult vexations, the way the Little Prince would come to the pilot who frantically worked to fix a plane crashed over a desert<sup>115</sup>, like the one squeezed between two churches at the corner of God(d)ard and Tesla, on the ground where antelopes and tigers roamed and where the Little Bear hung out for many days and nights, with a piece of crumpled paper, a torn pencil, the sweet notes of marimbas hammered by his mallets whistling through the air and demands to draw a sheep, a box or an elephant. And then, to the echo of the question Andre Gregory asked Wally in *My Dinner with Andre*<sup>116</sup>, at the very end of their hours long dialogue, “A son. A baby holds your hands and then suddenly there’s this huge man lifting you off the ground, and then he’s gone. Where’s that son?”, like the Little Prince once again, he will fly out into a grownup life of its own, leaving me stranded in the desert, but with a heart brighter than millions of suns. For now, though, rolling on carpets and meadows, under azure skies and shades of sequoias, moving goddesses nested around us with our giggles we will be, my little God, and it will be our time in paradise, yours and mine, to inspire us later, in our darkest hours, with the suns of the memories of it instilled in the centers of our consciousness spinning like carousels amidst hordes of stars of this endless cosmos teeming with life, and never coming back, but always searching for that magical act that “makes an end that makes a beginning”<sup>117</sup>, a little line drawn in sand with a single stroke, to be washed away by

---

<sup>115</sup> See Antoine de Saint-Exupery's *The Little Prince*, Mladost, Zagreb (1943).

<sup>116</sup> Watch *My Dinner with Andre* directed by Louis Malle (1981).

<sup>117</sup> Paraphrased is a verse from T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, Harcourt, San Diego, CA (1943).

an ocean wave in a heartbeat, yet spanning in that single flicker of time the distance from earth to heaven, from now to eternity, bringing one to another and the other to one.

May Theo, then, be a sign for all us who stream to the stars that God is a sweet pea squatted in the smallest of things. May the world stream toward the purity and wonder of his toddling gingerly, with a broken peanut shell in one hand and a jagged pebble in another, for in them a little God like him sees a world millions of times greater than the treasures of mammon and fame. This is why I paste here the image of his little feet (Fig.2) impressed in the sand seconds after he was born and photographed, as Thou hovered high up in the air. Because these teeny tiny soles of his feet will stand here as a reminder that you and I, the first three words, magical, dare I say, I dreamt Theo was about to utter, are to walk in the footsteps of the littlest and the godliest of things.



Figure 2. The imprint of the soles of newborn Theo's feet, a trace on earth to follow for life.

Sole and soul, how strangely similar these two words sound, signifying the lowest and the highest a man can touch in life, respectively, the two points that, perhaps, to those who have mastered the art of life, became one and the same, made to touch one another so that the circle is closed and magical powers awakened in one. For, if good ol' Hermes was right when he inscribed on an emerald that "it ascends from the earth to the heaven, it extracts the lights from the heights and descends to the earth containing the power of the above and the below for it is with the light of the lights"<sup>118</sup>, then from soles of our feet, from the lowliest and the most soiled points of our bodies must start the journey to the stars, to becoming all soul and seeing only soul in all that is around us. And when one day I placed one of these two imprints of Theo's feet in the sand as the avatar for my proof of existence in the diluted, electronic form, the message I intended to invoke was dizzyingly multidimensional. Placing the lowest surface of our bodies in the stead of the face was intended to be a sign of humility meant to direct us downwards, so as to assume the position of a humble sea that lies below it all and into which, therefore, all the rivers of the surrounding hearts may flow. It was also meant to be a kick in the face in celebration of starry surprises that break the lethargic flow of habit and awaken us from our daydreaming into a world of infinite possibilities. It was also a sign that the Earth is alive, that it is moving, restructuring itself as we speak, with our contact with it being a potential starting point of an

---

<sup>118</sup> See the Arabic translation of Hermes Trismegistus' *Tabula Smaragdina* retrieved from [https://www.thelivingmoon.com/44cosmic\\_wisdom/02files/Emerald\\_Table.html](https://www.thelivingmoon.com/44cosmic_wisdom/02files/Emerald_Table.html).

immense, yet largely unutilized, spirituality dormant in our physiques. For, if we were to let the impulse for each and every move of our bodies originate from our contact with the ground and uninterruptedly traverse its way to the surface on which it is being expressed, an enchanting vitality might gradually take over our whole beings, on each of their levels: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual<sup>119</sup>. The image of Theo's feet was also to suggest that the interface, in analogy with the ubiquitous grain boundary effects in polycrystalline materials, is the key to explaining the property of almost anything in life, and that our senses should rest on the touch, on the points of contact between I and Thou, on the lines simultaneously separating and connecting the teardrop with the ocean, the self with the world.

Therefore, my hope is that these feet, now purer, softer and silkier than shadows of snowflakes, will one day turn into "yellowed feet clasped in the palms of both soiled hands"<sup>120</sup> of T. S. Eliot's muse, the goddess of wonder, watching mesmerizingly, in ecstasy, "the night revealing the thousand sordid images of which her soul was constituted"<sup>121</sup>, the "dirty feet"<sup>122</sup> that are "the most romantic thing in the world", as I said at the place whereat walls and wales fell down from the starry roofs of my hometown, leaving Luke & Joe gaping in awe from then until the Universe ends, the soiled feet that you would be sneaking into bed with, after a night of roaming across trees and hipped roofs, like Mowgli and his chimp chums, only to have some other Thou lift the sheets and say to tired You, "You did it again. Now go wash your feet". Hence, more than anything, this image was a reminder for myself that an adult such as I have become is not worth even the scrape of dirt off the surface of his sons' or daughters' feet, the feet that have crossed some muddy terrains and ponds in their wondrous explorations of the world, being all filthy when they jump into the bed at the end of the day, yet in reality – which is, remember, spiritual, whereby the spirit is merely mirrored in its material image available to the senses, with all around us being but a dream of a cosmic spirit, a grand illusion of a kind – being as clean and pure as the whitest lotus flowers. The intrinsic divinity of the littlest ones that emerges on the surface with every breath and blink of their eyes, with every shiver and smirk of their faces and with every push and pull of their restless feet has been put to sleep by our artificial and affected mannerisms and only if we go back to the foundations of it all, to the most distant point of our origins, to the very soles of our babies' feet may we arrive at that elusive T. S. Eliot's end of the road where beginnings and ends miraculously merge into One<sup>123</sup> with the luminosity of a flashing star that was just being born. The path created by these little feet will thus be my path too, for as long as the Earth orbits the Sun.

One day, for example, as I watched Theo play in the soil amidst falling bricks of houses made of giant Legos next to him, as calmly as Archimedes drew circles in the sand next to the stomping caliga of Roman legionnaires, I could foresee in a moment, a moment that brought about an enlightening flash of a clairvoyant insight, how – given his personality, infinitely joyous so long as it remains unpolluted by the malicious desires of his peers, who'd, like violent boys and girls breaking apart the Lego houses around him, often want to destroy and negate what he aspires to build – his happiness in life, when he is past these gardens of Eden and well into the soul-corroding adulthood, would be unbound so long as he resists the temptations of the

---

<sup>119</sup> See, for example, Alexander Lowen's *Spirituality of the Body*, Esoteria, Belgrade, Serbia (1990).

<sup>120</sup> See *T. S. Eliot's Prelude III*, In: *T. S. Eliot: Collected Poems, 1909 – 1962*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, NY (1911).

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> Listen to Laika's *Dirty Feet + Giggles on Sounds of the Satellites*, Too Pure, London, UK (1997).

<sup>123</sup> See T. S. Eliot's *Little Gidding*, In: *Four Quartets*, Harcourt, San Diego, CA (1943).

Nietzschean will to power and does not make his goals in life dependent on the changes that this will of his imposes on humanity, which is invariably, as the story about the Christ has had it, unwelcoming to souls that shine like suns in this life. But for as long as he remains like a star of the night sky, distanced from other astral objects and immersed in a world of his own, untouched by the petty human affairs in the cosmic breadth of his emotion and thought, always whistling that “nothing’s gonna change my world”<sup>124</sup> underneath the ethereal layers of his consciousness as it journeys across the Universe and its mystical planes, his happiness will remain infinite. This inner calm will also help you, my pan and my poppet, complement this verse by John Lennon with another ennobling line from a pop song, namely “nothing’s gonna change my love for you”<sup>125</sup>, so that love never cedes its place on the pedestal of your mind to judgments and you continue to have understanding and understanding only for everyone’s actions, especially when they become hurtful and irrational, which is the exact time when love needs to be bestowed most upon those who deliver wounding blows and unkindness into your world, who try to smash “the box, where there is a factory, a photoacoustic room, where you work”<sup>126</sup> to the beat of “a clock that goes, para-ram-pa-ram-pa-pa”, happily, peppily, with a greatest precision and care.

And, which is perhaps stranger than anything, this colossal revelation I inferred by simply looking at you year after year at meadows and playgrounds and then went on to implement it to myself, the spitting internal image of you, my son, and oh how powerful of a learning experience imparted onto a parent by his child this ended up becoming, teaching me to close the circle and do nothing but watch you with love and perceive the world through your eyes, knowing that the glow from the sun of my soul would then be truly everlasting. It is thus that the words of the son of a fairy, spoken to me shortly after Theo was born and telling me that ’tis the creature I would learn most from in life<sup>127</sup>, begin to rock this chair and me in it and then the whole wide world in return. For, while the guardians teach those whom they raise a lot about life, should their receptiveness to learn equally tremendously from the little ones cease to exist, the detrimental effects on their ability to enlighten others with their knowledge would immediately ensue. Not only do children enter our lives to teach us by the example of the merits of unaffected naturalness, of passionate emotionality, of softhearted sensitivity and lighthearted forgiveness, of the threads of trust woven into every heartbeat in resonance with the Cosmos as a whole, all of which are qualities we have mistakenly dropped by the sides of the road in favor of contrived, capricious, cunning, calculative, conceited and cliché-ridden being, but they have also made it through the great transition from one karmic plane of reality to another more recently than any grownups. Holding the impression of it still vivid and fresh in their minds makes them intrinsically a million time wiser than the adults who have gotten accustomed to the mundanities of day-to-day lives and who look down on their children, vexingly at one times and vacuously at others, when they should reverse the traditional roles of who the nurturer and who the nurtured is and start looking up to children as their guides in search of wisdom. For, life in which these very words write the writer as much as the writer writes them is always such that guides can guide the guided well only insofar as they allow the guided to guide the guides to some extent too.

When I told Thee through a range of eucalyptus trees overlooking the Transamerica Pyramid, on one of the benches of the Ina Coolbrith Park, about this recursive causation

---

<sup>124</sup> Listen to the Beatles’ *Across the Universe* on *Let It Be*, Apple, London, UK (1969).

<sup>125</sup> The line is from the eponymous song written by Michael Masser and Gerry Goffin and recorded by George Benson for his record *20/20* (Warner Bros, Los Angeles, CA, 1985).

<sup>126</sup> Listen to Darkwood Dub’s *Filadelfija* on *Paramparčad*, Take It Or Leave It Records, Belgrade (1995).

<sup>127</sup> Kevin Kriescher, Personal correspondence (2013).

applicable not only to the relationship between the parent and a child, but to every other relationship between the steward and the stewarded, Thou shed a tender tear that rolled down thy cheek like that droplet of chocolate ice cream that served as a prelude to this elegiac poetry in prose. Down is the way up, as the writing on the wall that the Emerald Table was telling us, and Earth is the road to the heavenliest heights on our astral journeys, a stage to enter the limelight of the stars. The closer we lean our hearts and ears and all other senses to the earthly souls and their troubles, delaying the launching of our own spirit to some stellar heights thereby, the more we kiss the dust in our passionate strivings to save the world from its being on a course to vanish in nihilistic chasms, the more prospect our ascension to the stars will have. Finally, as that son of the winter wonderland fairy put it in the subject of his note sent on the occasion of Theo's birth, "I must have blinked"<sup>128</sup>. For, a blink, at times, can be gracious enough to light up the whole cosmos and all the lampions of wonder in it. It is little things, once more, that hide the entrance to the infinitely great.

The logic here is quite simple: children we love more than anything and what we love most teaches us most. The more we love things, even if they are as inanimate as stiffest rocks, the more we will learn from them. For, love and logic, emotion and intellect have never stood separate in the heads and hearts of angels, the heads and hearts that have been one and the same for as long as the light of God illuminated them both.

There is another thing of divinest importance that these itsy-bitsy gods and goddesses dwelling on the heavenly loci of being teach us: how to return to the Garden of Eden before the fruits of its trees of knowledge were plucked, when all in it was in lush, bliss and harmony. Namely, asked where mommy is, where daddy is, where the tree is or where the cloud is, one-and-a-half-year old Theo would point at the right objects, but asked where Theo is, he would point at mommy, myself, a tree or a cloud, having no awareness of himself as an entity separate from the rest of reality, but rather finding himself in everything and everyone around him, thus living in the primordial paradisiacal state of mind, the exile from which is bound to come shortly thereafter in the story of each and every one's lifetime. For, only after the line between oneself and the world becomes drawn are hostile thoughts that pollute what was once the blissful space of one's infantile mind free to dawn on one. And once that ill-famed fruit is being bitten into and the first demarcations between what is good and what is bad are being made, the road to incessant self-victimizations and vengeful attitudes is being entered for the sake of continuing the spin of the wheel of wretchedness on which our saddening adult spirits ride, revolving, like a mill, between the deep, subconscious waters of our minds and the air of our thoughts and acts. Ultimately, then, all sin in life, which is, spectacularly, born from the recognition of sin in life<sup>129</sup>, through tempest and thunder alike, in the absence of which no sin would live in us anymore, can be said to spring from the primal separation of the self from the world, the moment that marks the onset of the greatest spiritual journey that we would ever embark on, the aim of which is to remerge the mini salty tear of our soul with the ocean of divinity that encompasses it all. To that end, children, indeed, are gateways to the paradise, which, in this reality where it and its hellish opposites can be found to exist side by side, is an ultimately egoless state of mind wherein things cease to be seen as separate from oneself. Instead, as in agreement with the idea of co-

---

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.* (2013).

<sup>129</sup> For, negativity can be said to consist in finding negativity in all things around one, as in accordance with the Christ's noting that "not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man" (Matthew 15:11). Conversely, the beauty of one's spirit is best reflected in its being constantly bedazzled by the omnipresent beauties of the world and its creatures.

creation<sup>130</sup>, according to which all things comprising our experience are being co-created by one's mind and Nature in their incessant communication in the language of the heart, every object becomes a sparkle reflected off the mirror of one's celestial soul, whereas everything, truly everything, when this line dividing the self and the world is erased, becomes a unique reflection of the Cosmos in all its entirety and infinities – one and One, as it were, both at the same time.

Now I know why I felt so touched, as if soared up high into the clouds of heavenliest feelings on the wings of angels, when I, years ago, arrived at the ending of Freeman Dyson's autobiographical book named *Disturbing the Universe*<sup>131</sup>. This grand finale describes a moment when this renowned physicist without a PhD degree falls asleep in a hotel room in Haifa and dreams of being invited to climb up a long, long staircase on the top of which he was told that he'd be able to glimpse the face of God. When he arrives at the top, however, neither does he see an old man with a white beard nor muses dancing in ecstasy. Likewise, neither does he find an immaterial bliss nor an empty seat therein. Rather, he sees a baby, untouched and infinitely pure, a road to be followed as deliriously as the gaze with which Rosy Asfari, dying of thirst in the desert, followed the image of a child playing a panpipe and running joyously through the fertile Elysian fields of her perplexed psyche in the final shot of Ritwik Ghatak's ode to the River Titas<sup>132</sup>. Distantly, this image of a baby seated on a throne in the clouds, high above everything else, echoes the following rumination by Jean-Luc Godard across the deepest spheres of my psyche: "Squabbling about public indignation, nothing more pathetic. Toning down makes things worse. Subtlety pleads for barbarism. Let's call things by their name. Killing a man in the Bondy Forest or Black Forest is a crime. Killing a country in the other forest called diplomacy<sup>133</sup> is a crime as well, but just bigger. Where will it stop? When will the martyr of this heroic small nation end? So they tell us, 'You forget there are some questions'. Killing a man is a crime. Killing a country is a question. Each government has its question. We answer, 'Humanity also

---

<sup>130</sup> See my book entitled SOS & POW: A Postmodernist View of Cognition, Theosophy and Aesthetics in the New Age, published as *Social Science Research Network (SSRN)* paper no. 4452789, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4452789>.

<sup>131</sup> See Freeman Dyson's *Dreams of Earth and Sky*, In: *Disturbing the Universe*, Basic Books, New York, NY (1979).

<sup>132</sup> Watch *A River Called Titas* directed by Ritwik Ghatak (1973).

<sup>133</sup> Along with his fascination with the minute, his anarchistic aversion of the political weaponry of any state in general Jean-Luc Godard reiterated in the words that closed his cinematically innovative masterwork *Histoire(s) du cinema*: "I have the privilege to film and live in France, as an artist. Nothing is better than a country that moves further each day toward its inexorable decline. Nothing better than a provincial nation, led by revolving teams of the same incompetent, dishonest people, all corrupted by their support to a regime of total and permanent corruption. What is better than this lodging on an Earth where justice is nothing but chaos? What artist wouldn't dream of such a nation? The fourth world economic power, they tell us. Denial sleeps on our doorsteps, waiting for an offering to silence the pains of those who are hungry. Yes, I am the fleeing enemy of our time. Yes, the totalitarianism of the present, as it mechanically applies, more oppressing each day throughout the planet. This faceless tyranny that erases it all for the sole benefit of the systematic organization of the unified time and movement. This global and abstract tyranny, from my shifty point of view, I try to oppose to it... Men and women believed in prophets. Now we believe in statesmen. Nothing is more contrary to the image of the loved one than the one of the state whose reason opposes to the sovereign value of love. The state doesn't have, or rather has lost, the power to embrace in front of us the entire world, the entire universe given at the same time outside, in the loved one, as an object, and inside, in the lover, as a subject... The most short-lived moment hides a glorious past. If a man... if a man... if a man could pass through Paradise in a dream, and have a flower presented to him as a pledge that his soul had really been there, and if he found that flower in his hand when he awoke - Aye! and what then? I was this man". Watch *Histoire(s) du cinema* directed by Jean-Luc Godard, Chapter 4b: *The Signs Among Us* (1998). The story about the flower comes from a thought found in an unpublished notebook by Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

has a question'. And here is the question, it's bigger than India, England or Russia, it's the small child inside the mother's womb"<sup>134</sup>. For, I know, if everyone was a child, in our eyes and deep down in their spirit, having no nation and belonging only to cosmos as a whole, the world would become overfilled with motherly love that, indeed, sustains it on slender shoulders and would turn into Paradise in the blink of an eye.

And that baby, utterly pure at the arrival gate to this world, only later, through innocently empathizing with the sins shed in abundance all around it, to become tainted with the spots of blemish and blasphemy, fulfilling the fate foreseeing that "the dormant patient roots will show themselves as a child that shoots"<sup>135</sup> and allowing the clouds and the dust of gloomy thoughts and the mist and the haze of adulterated emotions to block the rays of the sun of our everlasting soul, presents T. S. Eliot's elusive beginnings that are the ultimate destination of our journeys<sup>136</sup>. For, as sages all the world over have concordantly claimed, only when we become likened unto children would we find the gateway to the Paradise Lost and reenter the Garden of Eden, once and for all. To that end, it was no accident that renaissance masters portrayed angels as babies with wings; it was the means for the visionary artists touched by divine inspiration to spread the message that journeying backwards, toward the infinite purity, trust and openheartedness of a child is the way to exit the purgatory of adult human being and reenter paradise. At the same time, the angels' fondness of small things in lieu of everything great, pompous and powerful was illustrated by their loving to dance on the heads of the pins, as envisaged by these artists of the medieval times. To turn away from the allures of vanity, power, control, fear, justice, judgment and shallow sensuality and towards selflessness, humbleness, anarchic freeness, love, forgiveness, seeing beauty and purity in it all, prayerfulness and meditative depth and, in fact, incarnation of all the things Lao-Tzu prophesied, altogether with a belief that "the one enrooted in Virtue is likened to a newborn" (Tao-Te-Xing LV) and that "who returns was sent by Tao" (Tao-Te-Xing XL), is thus the aim imposed on us, the aim that is, like all the truly valuable aims in life, cocooned quiescently in each and every point of our expeditions through the magical realm of human experience.

Little gods as they are, babies, from now on teach us how to love them, that is, one another, far more than we love ourselves, all until the limits of our ego expand to infinity and we identify with every single creature and object in the world and reach that magical destination that seers have prophesied: One. And this selfless devotion to another is, of course, the starting point for the departure of our souls from this purgatorial karmic plane of reality to some greener interstellar pastures, with a tear, a little piece of the ocean in which we made our first summersaults, in our eye. For, on this cosmic station for the endless journeys of our souls, only "in the sweat of thy face" (Genesis 3:19), self-sacrificial and full of suffering, are we able to glimpse that mystical road all made of light that is everywhere around us, yet nowhere to be found, like Tao, the road that cannot be marked nor named (Tao-Te-Xing 1), and on that road the celestial twinkles of otherworldly happiness.

Therefore, in spite of the calls of the grownup guardians and nurturers to heartlessly exhibit authority, to play by the rules, to establish boundaries and punish severely every instance of their transgression, I call for seeing the little ones as our teachers instead, as lampposts whose light is to be followed with eyes wide open. For, my thoughts do not fall far from truth when I say that children, even when they scream for independence and shatter their shelter in fury, are

---

<sup>134</sup> Watch *Histoire(s) du cinema* directed by Jean-Luc Godard, Chapter 3a: The Coin of the Absolute (1998).

<sup>135</sup> Listen to Mercury Rev's *First-Time Mother's Joy (Flying)* on *The Secret Migration*, V2, London, UK (2005).

<sup>136</sup> See T. S. Eliot's *Little Gidding*, In: *Four Quartets*, Harcourt, San Diego, CA (1943).

truly alive, whereas these phony advice-givers are dead in their heart of hearts. No wonder that not stiff adults with long white beards, but children in all their aliveness and naturalness were placed on the pedestal of glory as an ideal to be attained by all those striving to reach spiritual excellence in life, a road making a full circle and arriving at the beginnings at its final destination. When someone asked who the greatest in the kingdom of heaven is, the Christ called for a little child, sat him next to him and said that “except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3). Lao-Tzu wondered how come babies are neither bitten by insects nor attacked by beasts despite lying naked in the forest all day and concluded that “the one who is enrooted in Virtue is akin to a newborn” (Tao-Te-Xing 55). The prophet Isaiah said that “unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6), while Nietzsche’s Zarathustra talked of the spiritual metamorphosis from a burden-laden camel to a freedom-conquering lion to a child and saw himself fully awakened upon becoming this child once again; for, “innocence is the child, and forgetfulness, a new beginning, a game, a self-rolling wheel, a first movement, a holy Yea”<sup>137</sup>. From there on, children could be seen as a path on how to become alive again, how to exhibit all seasons of human emotions, one after the other, freely and unpretentiously, forgiving oneself and others in the blink of an eye, trusting each and every one and performing each act unaffectedly, with the transcendental naturalness of Botticelli’s Venus, as if everything we do is a glide on the divine waves of Tao that permeate it all, a soothing lull on the sea of godly spiritedness whereon all things float, albeit with fate uncertain, resting in God’s hands only. For, by restoring childlikeness in us we may become a darling of the world, embraced fondly by all things living and inanimate, or we may become akin to Bess McNeill from *Breaking the Waves*<sup>138</sup>, that infinitely zestful spirit, a disbeliever in word and a believer in love, for which she’d sacrifice any day, walking through life with the mind and the temper of a toddler, touching Heaven in joy and ecstasy one moment, then cracking down to the ground in dread and despair the next, though being unequivocally shoved as a sinner and treated as a soul for the asylum by all, sharing the Christ’s fate, yet making, in the end, the whole world ring with the sound of the chimes that signal the approval from far greater spheres of being than the muddy ones through which the purgatorial selves comprising this corrupt humanity roam. Whichever the case, the child’s is the hand pulling the crooked adult up into the clearer, more translucent skies, where the sinful stickiness to the earth gives way to liberation of the spirit from the world and its flying unboundedly, in childlike carefreeness and wraithlike ardor alike.

With all my heart to follow you, Theo, a little god on earth that descended to our world on the lotuses of grace from some heavenly heights to bless us all, lightly and effortlessly, by mere being, infinitely natural and unpretentious, finding sources for smiles as broad and gleaming as suns in the tiniest of things, thus teaching us to find happiness in small, not big, is the vow I have given on this authentically anarchic, antiauthoritarian road that swaps the roles of the guardians and the guarded, allowing for the last to be the first and the first to be the last, for the sheep to be the shepherd and the lord to take the role of a servant, leveling mountains with the sea and elevating the rockiest bottoms towards the most supreme heights, engaging incessantly in the act of turning things up on their heads and making the foundations manifest and shallow surfaces disappear deep under. Indeed, no words could describe how glorious and

---

<sup>137</sup> See Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, translated by Thomas Common, retrieved from [eserver.org/philosophy/nietzsche-zarathustra.txt](http://eserver.org/philosophy/nietzsche-zarathustra.txt) (1883).

<sup>138</sup> Watch *Breaking the Waves* directed by Lars von Trier (1996).

wondrous the world has become after I have begun to look at the little things scattered on the ground, with strained back, in the shape of a question mark, finding infinite satisfaction in the flight of little yellow leaves, in the shape of the roots of the trees and the bushes and the clumps of the life-giving soil wherefrom the nectar of life is being drawn upwards, to yield vapor and clouds and raindrops and water for the thirsty one distant day, in a myriad of random things lying around, inanimate, yet so alive, in the microscopic reflections of sunlight off the concrete, in the steps of the curb as big as alpine peaks, in the mosaics of colors created by the mineral grains dispersed in the asphalt matrix, in the engraved patterns and rusty pits on the pedestals of street lights, in the thriving miniature ecosystems in the bases of guideposts, in the shifting shadows of travelling nimbuses, in humblebees and the pollinated breeze on which they glide, and all that while holding your arms up in the air behind you and following each gingerly made step of yours, taking you forward and backwards and ‘round and around in a circle, all around an imaginary center of amazement known by you and you only.

Remember this when you ruminate about your life, about the paths never taken in it and the one road that your life has always been on: the road to godliness dormant in you, to the blaze of the sun that your soul is. And I, as I imagine you bathe in the sunshine of holy spiritedness, I will split my spirit and have a part of it sit forever on that big blue ball whereon I sat when, after three whole days of the delivery, they took your mother, the Little Bear in whose belly something beautiful was brewing, exhausted and ill, into the operating theater to perform the caesarean section because your heartbeats were becoming unsteady. It was evening, around 7 pm, and all of a sudden I was left alone in a room that bustled with nurses and doctors day and night until then. Lights got switched, darkness ensued and it enwrapped me like a thick blanket. With silence that trembled like thunder in my veins, lonely I felt, lonelier than ever in my life. The Golden Gate Bridge was all lit up at outside the window and it was as if the sky, with all its stars and infinities, opened above me. And I began to pray. Maybe I thought about thy story from the time Thou were 11 or 12 and were tossed by the waves of the Adriatic onto a jagged rocky shore in the town of Rovigno. The scrapes were big and got infected after some time and thou, a little girl at the time, lay in bed, feeling unwell, with no antibiotics available to thee. And then in the middle of the night, through the haze of an ill brain, Thou heard a voice, coming from thine auntie Vida, in whose house on Montalbano and under whose supervision Thou were spending that summer holiday. The voice, Thou vividly recalled in thy storytelling, prayed that if one child must be taken back to God, let it be one of her daughters, not her sister’s, for while she had three children, three daughters, thy mom had only one: Thou. Words that moved the Earth and whole cosmoses those were, but maybe that story was so far away from me at that moment, as I sat still and drowned in worries, that I did not think even a slightest bit about them. And so, this is my confession, a most intimate one: I began to pray as I sat on that big blue ball. And the sky opened. It listened. And I prayed and my prayer was that if one life must be taken, let it be mine, God please, for the Little Bear and you, my boy, would be so happy together. What I did not know then was that even though Thou were on the other side of the globe, across seven seas and seven hills, thy spirit stood above me, like an unassailable mountain that awes with unspeakable greatness, as if saying, “Not for as long as I am alive would you sacrifice your life, my son; it is up to me to do it”. And so, Thou, glorious Thou, Thou who mean more than the world to me, may have given thy life to give birth to Theo through me, just as Thou may have given thy life to arise that little princess that would be born stillborn two years later, with the health grades of 1, 1, 2, and 1 out of four 10s, straight from the ashes.

Now, when the storms have quieted, I sit and jolt down your name, my boy, in thousands of shapes, noticing that even when I write Theo in its original, Greek alphabet, as θεός, I could still come up with a picturesque analogy. This time, however, it would urge its bearer to crack that shell of ego and self-protectiveness wrapped around you and give a half of yourself to the world. From one such elementary instance of divine creation, one emerges wholer than before, with the torch of love pulled out from the center of the heart of the original you, θ, and now held up high in the air, triumphantly and jubilantly, like the constellation of Orion that adorns the starry sky over Earth, in celebration of the cosmic joy on whose wheels the train of evolution towards ever more celestial forms of being rides, the constellation that you would, days short of your fifth birthday, start coming out to see night after night, with your big eyes brimming with wonder, stepping slowly over the evergreen meadows, like an angel who “fears to tread” lest he trip, wake a sleeping rabbit or run into a coyote, with a star chart in your hands and stardust in your carbon-colored hair. It was on one of these starry nights that you would take me by the hand for the very first time to a Serbian book resting on the bookshelf and ask what it is, then, miraculously, insist that I teach you how to read the Cyrillic letters and words in it by opening the very first page and wanting me to read the very first sentence in it: “God of ours came, here, among us, to return us to the primal state, as He had created us in”<sup>139</sup>. Verily, Theo, you shall be one such God, who have come here, to my life, to erase the speckles of sinful, judgmental thoughts off the mental screen of mine and restore the mindset of a newborn, infinitely pure, to regrow the wings that withered long ago and retake me to the heavenly spheres that I had inhabited once, before I slumped from grace and fell flat on this earth that grumbles and moans, ever so wretchedly.

But Theo, remember, may you and the godliness of the shining Sun that you hold within be the guide not only for me, but, more importantly, for the world, whose swarms of negative energies you will heal with your mere presence, tranquilly elegant at heart. There is darkness in this world, my boy, you ought to know, and when this dream of childhood spent in paradise is gone and all that remains are holy waters of its remembrance streaming along the crooked pathways of your subliminal consciousness, enter this darkness and shine through it, unreservedly. Your father was born at the strike of noon, so as to bring the sun of the divine spirit in its zenith to the world, and you, if you find it worthy, should continue this tradition, for this world is in dire need of heavenly pure spirits like yours. And now, to this wretched father, lost and perplexed, you be the guide to the horizons that once blazed before his mind and guided him to you, that holiest point and the highest vista in his journey to the stars on this planet.

Thus, Theo, my son, I declare thee a star which I vow to be a satellite to dancingly, unstoppably, like the planet Earth around the Sun, or a clown around his muse, revolve around, on and on, night and day. May your celestial radiance bestow upon this lukewarm rock that your father is, abundant with various elements of thought, but with a heavy iron core instead of a light inner source of sparkly luminosity, many sweetly blinking photons of Love that warm up the soul and make it flourish with life, before one day, just as the Earth will be swallowed by the expanding red giant that the Sun will become, he merges with thee. A tiny teardrop distilled from the divine ocean of being long, long time ago will then return to the source of its origins and become the star that it has always craved to *be*.

\*\*\*

---

<sup>139</sup> “Бог наш дошао је, овде, међу нас, да нас опет доведе у првобитно стање, какве нас је и створио”. See *Pouke Starca Tadeja*, Srpska pravoslavna crkvena opština, Linz, Austria, pp. 3.

**The blessed ones** who had beaten the laws of probability that rated our chances at one to a billion or beyond and who succeeded in being averted from the broad boulevards and ample waterways, finding that dark and narrow passage that leadeth unto life (Matthew 7:14), the rare rivulets down which our souls slid onto this plane of reality, like on a children's toboggan of a kind - that is who we all, the dancers under stars and the whisperers of secrets of life to each other's ears, are, the prophets have said. If that is so, haven't we all sprung to life from a living proof that small, infinitesimally small things could beat the big ones by a long shot, and don't we all engrain within our minds and bodies the triumph of smallness over gigantism and megalomania? Don't we all then go against the divine grain installed in the deepest kernel of our beings when we worship grandness, strength, insatiability and perfection in any domain of life, while equating smallness with misfortune and downfall? How much of a chance for survival does a child formed out of a single cell and born to this world as a helpless loaf of flesh, as frail as a gentlest puff of the marine wind or a wispiest lily of the field, hanging loosely on a thread of goodwill and care of her parents, have? So little, in fact, that its development into an Atlas or an Orpheus on Earth, standing tall at the zenith of human being with arms spread far apart, like the Christ atop Corcovado, is a miraculous, yet stonily solid proof in favor of the supreme virtue of small things in life. And if those very same prophets who said that strait gates would guide us to prosperity have also pointed at the road that distances us from lukewarm and lifeless, sinful and inherently corrupt grownups that we have somehow become and brings us over to the child in us as the one worth taking to ensure our spiritual salvation, then doubts are none - small is, invariably, at any time, laying the slenderest and the precioussest ways to take before our feet.

\*\*\*

It wasn't a piccolo book with two kangaroos watching stars arm in arm. It wasn't a much bigger one with the blue bird dolled up in her nest either. The stretches of Theo, who had yet to learn how to crawl or toddle, grew farther and farther, becoming more and more strenuous, now involving lots of panting and growling, but the object of his search was nowhere to be found. Having not been gifted yet by the voice of the voiceless, I could not hear him nor could I tell from his gestures what was it that he was trying to reach. A yellow hammer, the magic wand, a cookie jar, a plush giraffe - all of these I handed to him, but none of them he searched for. Then, folded under the wings of another storybook, with no words to tell, it emerged to daylight and in no longer than a heartbeat it got nested on the palm of his hand, protected by the frail little fingers, soft as snow and as kind as the hands of the most venerated marble mermaids sleeping soundlessly in museums, art galleries and libraries. It was neither more nor less than a single **blueberry puff**. Protected under the petals of his flowery fingers, treasured and anchored to his heart more than a ducat worth millions of fifty pence pieces. And the smile, oh of heavens, highest and the most supreme, glowing like the Sun on his chaste face as the result of this discovery. Appreciation of the littlest things, oh yea, that is what the little gods of his kin show us with their whole souls, wholesomely, with not even a wisp of affectedness in their gestures, a lesson worth a whole Avalon sunset and beyond, including the teeny tiny star in its center, burning brightly in a divinest joy, whereto I dive gleefully in prayer, as these words roll and grow quieter and quieter in my head, with my neck bowed and hands folded in grace vanishing in the ocean of One for good, but only to reemerge on the other side of it with a laurel tuft and a spark, wholler, more me and You and all things combined, than any time before.

\*\*\*

I watched it roll tirelessly, like a **knick-knack paddy whack** from a distant dream - a wheel, tiny, a thousand or more of it could fit one on an automobile, slowly making its way down the streets drawn by the rainbow crayons of my heart. It was a wheel on which a wooden white sheep attached to the stick this petite God rode up and down the sunlit pavement rested. The head, the arms, the collar and all but one out of six decorative beads fell off promptly, days after it landed on the earthy palms of Theo's hands. Yet, one bead on one thread tied to the left wheel remained. Weeks and months have passed, all but it got lost, but it sturdily stood the test of time and resisted the constant bangs and blows against the asphalted ground and hardwood floors that came with every spin of the wheel to which it stayed cordially attached. This miniature epitome of love and faith endures to this very day, years into the future. Its deep-sky blue color faded away long ago and scratches have multiplied until they covered the entire surface. Looking wounded and worn, it still clicks and clanks across the city streets, through summery and wintery days alike, through translucency and fog. And I watch it tirelessly. A dream is revived, the dams have collapsed, the waters of love surging gushingly, with legions of stone-hearted centurions brought down on their knees, as roads to the Sun open before this little bead banging its way graciously across fields and meadows of this sad and beautiful world.

\*\*\*

It was one of the last days in the month of King August when, with miraculous strangeness, the little God playing beneath my feet and the gorgeous little Princess levitating in the air around me that Thou are, forever young in thy heart, soul and starry eyes, both suffered **blows to the head**. Theo, as he held his sippy cup under water droplets dripping sparsely from a stony orifice in the Nightingales' Creek Park in Belgrade, from which I satiated my thirst many times as a child, was hit by the first touch of the ball by a nearby group of kids at play, with the ball flying whole ten yards or so before smacking him in the head and tossing him on the concrete floor. Thou, in turn, sitting in the backyard on a sofa with a broken armrest, tried to lean toward the ground to pick up a piece of paper dropped by thy cute four-year old granddaughter and eventually fell on the head, hitting the stone-paved earth below. To add to this strange coincidence, hit were the very same spots on their heads, left, frontally, right where the art of language, which they both were in most rudimentary possession of at the time, begins and ends, as if to tell us that its clouds must be dispelled if we wish to expose our soul to the Sun of God that pervades every detail of the world surrounding us and, likewise, to release the everlasting shine of our soul outwardly, to the surface of our being and beyond.

On that very same day, a week or so after a light bulb magically fell on my head from the ceiling while I cracked the walnuts open with my father, it was a blazing summer afternoon and I lay next to both, while they were sleeping. Whereas Theo, after I laid my lips onto a hand of his, gently moved his index finger, which then substituted for all the languages in the world, by a segment of a millimeter so as to place it onto the Cupid's bow right under my nose, Thou, tired and weary, when I lay beside thee, on a tiny edge of the bed, curling my whole body to fit in, reached out with the force of a roaring lion to its other edge to gain some leverage, saying wordlessly that Thou wish to be pushed so as to make more space for me. These tiny moves of the little and the big God illuminating my worlds spoke more than the universe itself to a keen

eye perceiving them, then laying its rays and folding its wings thereon gently, for a long time after they had passed.

Many summers I spent in wonder over that ancient theological saying that God is to make ten thousand steps for each step one makes towards Him, complying all the while with the complementary proverb, according to which one step from thee means ten steps from God, given that God is truly everywhere and all. To “go twain” with “whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile” (Matthew 5:41) has been a concordant evangelical word of wisdom for those who aspired to embody godliness in their passing human forms and abide by St. John the Apostle’s advice: “He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked” (1 John 2:6). Still, in spite of the beautifulness of these sayings, these single steps, not the tens of thousands of them made in return, have always been those that amazed me beyond comprehension, to the point of utter speechlessness. It was such magical first steps, the privilege of humans dusted with sins, not angels with joys out of this world, from which a road to and fro God emerges gloriously that I witnessed on this day on which ups and downs merged like the folding petals of dandelions on a midsummer night, as naturally and fluidly as the ascents to heavenly loci and the falls from their white puffy clouds combine into one.

\*\*\*

Deki’s seventh day in the Windy City it was, a blissful summer day, and, after showing Theo the river and the lake, the white ships and Indian canoes traversing them, the trains that run above the ground, the tall buildings that “shake (and make) voices escape, singing sad, sad songs”<sup>140</sup>, the crowds of people with stars in their eyes, the giant bean, a symbol of smallness, yet holding a myriad of worldly souls mirrored in it, producing a kaleidoscope of gateways to the infinity of the Universe, we sat on a bench by the **Whispers Café** in the Mariano Park to rest, with our backs turned to the West and our faces facing a Grand Lake. The sounds of the water splashes from a fountain before us and the sentimental Italian music from the café filled our ears. Clouds of an otherworldly peace descended on us and the chaotic buzz and the busyness of a wide awake city turned into an angelical serenity that only idyllic seascapes can offer. One old black man, with a pearly necklace and “soul grown deep like the rivers”<sup>141</sup>, sat on the edge of the fountain and another one sat beside us. People were passing us by hurryingly, with their feet merely touching the ground. But we were at the center of the stage - the magic triangle with the hearts of wretched Deki, warriorish I and wondrous Theo in its corners. The time stopped. While Deki sat despondently, with face planted in his hands, two-year old Theo began to glide around the scene like a pan and I followed him like a shadow on this lazy summer afternoon. A piece of our late lunch under the open sky dropped on the ground and minutes later pigeons landed to claim their share. After they fed on the remains of our tacos, one of them continued to roam around, intriguing Theo, who went on to follow him in step. As they both wobbled around the bench, Deki picked a lonely grain of rice that sat on the stroller and tossed it to the bird. The bird did not see it. I picked this white grain and handed it over to Theo, who threw it to the bird, who ate it. Theo smiled heavenly, but then the pigeon flapped her wings and scared the life out of him. The tiddly poppet made a fearful leap towards me, but no one saw it. Yet in this tiny move, so tender, sincere and sensitive, a wisp of enlightenment lay that could

---

<sup>140</sup> Listen to Wilco’s *Jesus, Etc.* on *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*, Nonesuch, New York, NY (2001).

<sup>141</sup> See Langston Hughes’ *The Negro Speaks of Rivers* in *Langston Hughes’ The Dream Keeper and Other Poems*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY (1932), pp. 62.

save the whole world if it was only glimpsed by one soul in it. But it wasn't. And life went on, on its careless, Cainitic stride.

Then Deki, the big brother, touched by the presence of these aerial travelers, such as the one Thou had always dreamt of becoming, began to tell us about the pigeon that magically landed on the wheat meal left beside Thy resting place six months after Thou flew into the sky and then about the welcoming words spoken softly through the speakers as he sat in the belly of another big bird, a Montenegrin airliner, and flew it to the seaside, the homely place where all the rivers of our souls converged into One, at the exact moment when he began to talk about Thee to a fellow passenger: "Greetings to All from captain Dragan and copilot Nikola. Today you will be taken care of by Vuk, Mina and Ana"<sup>142</sup>. All the words began to burst with an enlightening semantics that craved to be heard. The hearts ruptured and an avalanche of tears ensued. A sign in each symbol, an infinity in a minutest dot, a universe in a grain of sand. And You and I and all of us in it.

\*\*\*

To forgive big is to **stay small**. And to stay small is to remain in hold of the key that unlocks the gates of Paradise. Or at least to be able to squeeze between the rails on its fence and sneak into this Eden – which all of us were born into, but from which we get invariably expelled as adults – whenever one hears the calling of the muses or feels a desperate need to have one's heart grazed by its grace for a second or two. To stay small is also to stay sensitive to and perceptive of the finest details of the physical reality and human being, wherein, as we, scientists and poets, know, the greatest guidance in the Universe slumbers, rolled into little cocoons of mystery.

Theo, like most children, as I would love to believe, loves with his heart. Not the head. How do I know this? Well, often I drive him mad and he does become mad, like pouting Pato<sup>143</sup>, and when one of the inadvertent forcers into tasting the fruit from the tree of knowledge and, thus, into being expelled from Paradise asks him if Dada was good or bad, he could say "good", he could say "bad", but no dark clouds of detestation or mistrust would pass over his mind. It is all the same to him. He accepts and loves me nevertheless. Be I good or bad. And really, when we love another with our heart, this is how we respond. Never with blame or vengefulness, so long as this flame of love stays kindled inside our heart. Forgiveness, of course, is the key. This right hand of love, reaching from the heart into the unfathomable depths of the mind, allows for the prompt erasure of the speckles of anger and the slime of sulk off the mirror of one's soul. It is like a magic mop that makes our spirits clean and shiny in spite of rolling in the mud in search of fellow souls sinking through it and craving to be pulled to the sunny surface.

---

<sup>142</sup> Lest I forget, Dragan is the name of my Father and Thy husband. Nikola is the name of my younger brother. The two of them were pivotal in managing the care of Thee during Thy last days. Mina was Thy nickname and Ana the name of the nurse before whom, alongside Dragan and Nikola, Thou decided to expire and fly away from this beautiful world and into the skies of eternity. Deki is the name of my older brother, Thine oldest son. A big man this steward named Vuk was, Deki says. A spiritual dwarf, as Thou called thyself once, but which in reality I, myself, have always been, a long way I have to go before I succeed in living up to this metaphorical image of a big man that flies across the worldly skies and selflessly serves the spirits on their temporary journeys through such heavenly loci with nectars refreshing for the body and soul.

<sup>143</sup> Watch *Pocoyo*, the animated TV series directed by Guillermo García Carsí, David Cantolla and Alfonso Rodriguez (2005).

Therefore, when we find ourselves being fried from the inside on the smolder of malice fueled by the sense of grievance, victimization and despise of another, know that hurt was not the love of the heart, but the love of the head, if there could be any. Respect. Tolerance. Civility. Toss it all into the deepest ocean and let some future marine explorers muse over their meanings when they excavate them together with some vain letters from the past. Employ love instead. Even better, be love. Spend a lifetime reminiscing how an absolute embodiment of love would look like, move like, gaze like, smell like, feel like. Be simple. And small. Like Mother Teresa's sisters at the craziest party that the world in my eyes has ever seen, right beside the Mother's tomb, scintillating with simplicity and wearing not even a zest of pride on their graced gazes and gestures. Or be like this very passage. To the stars.

So prepare to be invisible. Like the missing link before the invocation of the stars at the end of the last passage<sup>144</sup>. For, love is invisible and so must its emanations be, predestined to rest in dark ditches, grimy gutters and crestfallen corners of this cosmos.

And think of the picking of the abandoned baby by the tired, careworn man in the final scene of *Rashomon*<sup>145</sup> and the clearing of the sky after the long, long rain spent in vain attempts to reconcile different points of view. Think of this collapse of logic and verbosity and the finding of the solution in care for something small and frail. Think of the spreading of the wings of the human spirit in nonverbal, post-Wittgensteinian skies, where the flier is primarily committed to acts, not thoughts, proselytization or prophesies. Think, finally, of love as that living inside the Christ as he kisses the Grand Inquisitor on his lips<sup>146</sup>, silently, without a word being said, after the tyrant's long and haughty lecture, knowing that "a good man argues not; who argues is not a good man" (Tao-Te-Xing 81) and that, although in the beginning it may have been the Word (John 1:1), in the end it is always Being – godly, graceful and inexpressibly beautiful.

\*\*\*

The first **ear-clutching cherries** of the season and stone fruits sown into the soil with the dreams of the sprouts, the stems and the summer shade under the sun and the stars they may provide one day for the sublime souls in their elephantine slumber, and another ice cream held in my hands on this early May day, dripping along the side of a waffled cone, and me saying no, categorically, to the idea of eating it on Good Friday, and my hands becoming covered with chocolate while waiting for Thee to hand it to, and a look up into the glorious sky, and then the idea of a startup in a suit, or was it surf's up, dancing to the vision of a land disjuncting itself from a continent to become an island at first and a bridge at last, orbiting around the head of a science serf of mine, with Theo dreaming like a beautiful lotus on my chests and the hot pavement, steaming, ah, and the glimpse of a sign saying Pinocchio in the distance<sup>147</sup>, covering an infinitely minute segment of my visual field, yet expanding into something cosmically large, which my serene self won't even attempt to pack into this passage to avoid the demise of gods, and all that to the music of the prayer of my heart and the number seven, seven

---

<sup>144</sup> Symbolically, this missing semantic link is placed between the self-referential note on these writings and the transformation to a star that they ideally lead to, that is, between the worded manual on how to elicit starriness in our spirits and the achievement of this goal in reality. Only love, of course, can be the bridge connecting these two disparate coasts: knowledge about stellar living and stellar living *per se*.

<sup>145</sup> Watch *Rashomon* directed by Akira Kurosawa (1950).

<sup>146</sup> See Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, Prosveta, Belgrade (1880).

<sup>147</sup> Reference is made to Trattoria Pinocchio in the North Beach neighborhood of San Francisco.

flashing in it and nigh unto an image of a knight and a twinkle of the starry light emanating from a magic wand of a fairy touching a bowing head of a to-become angel, and all, and all, and train and roll and love for all. And word by word, dropped here, plucked from some heavenly heights and laid beneath thy feet to pave the way to enlightenment, the way mysterious and unknown to its builder, a sign for him and to the world alike, dance in love and grace and hope that all will be saved at the end of the day, before the sun sets behind the horizon for one final time.

\*\*\*

A thorn landing onto Theo's little finger, a mini droplet of blood squeezing out of it, and a cry, piercing through the air like a spear and almost tearing the clouds congregating above our heads into two, ensuing right after. Then I held this little lotus flower up and placed him on my chests, and then the silence, of comfort and consolation, enfolded us. "He that pricketh the eye will make tears to fall: and he that pricketh the heart maketh it to shew her knowledge" (Ecclesiasticus 22:19), a prophet jotted down, jolting generations of mystics with these words. Somewhere deep in my thoughts, always "flower strewn, ocean storm, bayberry moon"<sup>148</sup> in their endless surges of visions, ridden on the waves of the sea of emotions, splashing themselves every once in a while straight into my eye, blinding me for a second or so, I thought of **this petite prick** for a very same second as a blessing rather than a bother on the long and winding road ahead of us. And that was when the gate opened. It opened right under me, first a little orangey square through which I glimpsed the all-pervading starriness, then widening into an arch and engulfing me completely. It was the gate to none other but the glory of the Way of Love, that elusive manner of being that this karmic journey from one embryo to another, earthly to celestial, across the hilly passage called Earth, is all about. The bubble of a magical silence, like a magnetic monopole, as impossible to find as a holy grail, yet possibly present everywhere, interspersed by but twinkles of the stars and the hum of the interstellar space, sending their energy zealously, like the good vibe of angels and eternal souls watching over us, opened its doors and there we were, stepping into it with all our sight and awareness, all until all else around us, every sound and every stream of that social aura that dissolves the divine impulses in us and turns us into a timid pawn, a blind soul carried away towards nothingness by the blind, and nothing else, disappeared. And so we floated, being rocked by its magical waves, not knowing what time or day it was, for all that mattered was the tsunami on its way, the incoming expansion from the center of this inner paradise and out into the world, so as all this magic to be strewn over it, like stardust, a shower of signs that drive one into One.

\*\*\*

It was right beside an array of cypress trees lined up against the wall of the San Francisco Art Institute, a block and a half away from the crookedest street in the world, down which Theo and I ran with the wind in his hair and smiles in the air, a stone's throw away from the house in which Scottie, seized by vertigo, almost stumbled down a bookish ladder in a movie that was declared to be "in love with San Francisco"<sup>149</sup>, a movie wherein everybody is falling, falling, falling, next to a window with a sweeping view of the Bay and of this whirly street, running dizzily in endless figure eights, wiggling with heliocentric helices like the Gene Friend Way

---

<sup>148</sup> Listen to R.E.M.'s *Find the River on Automatic for the People*, Warner Bros, Burbank, CA (1993).

<sup>149</sup> See Rebecca Solnit's *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, Penguin Books, London, UK (2005), pp. 143.

inhabiting cheerful cellular hearts, as I, myself, ran glidingly through the early summer air on the independence day, that, like the sun itself, **a big, big orange**, golden in the morning, silvery in the afternoon and bronze in the evening, as Nona, thy Dalmatian grandma, had it, began to roll down the Chestnut Street, on and on until it stopped before the feet of a loving hands-holding couple that emerged out of the azure from behind the corner and locked their gaze at myself sprinting down while holding a baby on the chest. A blink, charming and cedar-box-of-the-soul-opening followed and then a moment of quiet separation, after which I placed the fruity fruit on top of a nearby mailbox, like a monument to the word, the word from which I had run away all this time, having run into life, wordless, splashing with the waves of the sea of ineffable emotions.

The statuesquely still I then started to reminisce about the winter day when a brown bag full of mandarin oranges split open – like that bucket of water from the ancient Zen story, the bottom of which fell off and waters gushed out suddenly in the moment metaphorically depicting enlightenment – and the little orangey spheres, carrying the color of karma, went rolling down the steep Neimar street, having Thou fall on thy knees and look at them wistfully, with tears rolling down thy cheeks. Those were the days of destitution and dearth, when a bag of fruit was worth one half of thy monthly salary, and oh, how I felt for thy sighs. If Thou only knew how much of the appreciation for the world’s smallest things thy tears on that day instilled in me. Neither of us could know, however, that a teacup full of mashed mandarins would be thy last meal on this Earth, mere minutes before Thou would soar into the heavenly heights out of this world. They say that the post at the stadium Municipal in Toulouse is still shaking<sup>150</sup> and I say that these mandarins still roll down the slopes of Čuburska street – right where it turns into the street bearing the name of a poet and politician, Petar Kočić, who, I feel, shares a million and one missionary traits with me – and with them the tears slide down thy sweetest cheeks, flooding the Universe agitated gently by thy sobs.

Another memory sprung before me in that instant was that of Thee slipping on the winter ice as Thou and five-year old I ran to catch the tram in front of the Belgrade train station, then falling down onto thy left thigh and hitting the tummy against the ground, which, precariously, carried prenatal Fido in it. Two failed pregnancies stood between me and Fido and thy fear that this tripping would be fatal for the baby took over Thee, and Thou, I remember I remembered, held the emotions of guilt, worry and sadness under the umbrella of devotion to the gods and goddesses of this cosmos so deeply within thee as we rode on that tram up to our home atop the starry hill. And then, how crazy it was that I remembered all of this, I remember that I thought as that orange was rolling down the Chestnut Street, toward the corner with Jones, where it would be picked by this young couple, and how crazy it was that this myriad of thoughts could run through one’s head in such a short span of time, packing a universe within the blink of an eye, but so vividly I remembered then and now and all the way through to the eternity how Thou entered the house with me after that worrisome tram ride and immediately, from the door, said to thy mom, “Mom, I fell”, as a response to which she boldly shunned the matter, as if it was nothing, but then prayed deep into the night by her tiled living room furnace that everything turn out well for her only daughter because “thy soul is good and deserves good in return”. Like a little girl who fell in the snow Thou seemed to me that day decades ago, which stands so firmly

---

<sup>150</sup> For the reference to this post, see my following papers: Evangelina Uskoković, Theo Uskoković, Victoria Wu, Vuk Uskoković – “Chutes too Narrow: The Brazil Nut Effect and the Blessings of the Fall”, *Foundations of Science* 28, 627 – 708 (2023); Vuk Uskoković – “How the Game of Soccer Can Foster Creative Research in Natural Sciences”, *Retos* 51, 179 – 199 (2024).

impressed in my memory; so sweet, so innocent Thou were as Thou asked thy mom for solace that no words could describe it in this world where the impression of events, anyway, is inversely proportional to their propensity for verbalization.

Little did I know then, as I watched this orange roll mesmerizingly, that someday the little, blue-giraffe-sweatshirt-wearing angel – who, I could never figure out, is either the earthly reincarnation of Thee or a soul laid down gently as a seed of a star on this Earth to be watched by Thee in every step of hers – and I would sit down and gaze at an orangey sunset peering shyly behind Mission Viejo evergreens to the thump of the drums of our heart, somewhere deep in Orange County, where citrus orchards lay long ago, and, magically, an ephemeral silhouette would walk by, mumbling about a beautiful giraffe shirt stored in the atria of her memory, while wearing one with a poignant guiding line on its back: Married to God. And then the bell rang, a bell that is one of those that always toll for Thee and Thee only and no one else but Thee, except for the whole Universe through the heart of Thee, evoking the vibe of independence from all the authorities and compliances, the moment of decisively and willfully rising in glory and becoming for good the one and only cosmic Self cocooned inside of this evanescent, yet ethereal body, a magic butterfly of thy Self spreading its wings courageously, all washed in the stardust of Wonder and able to emerge on the surface only inasmuch as one ties oneself to others with the bonds of Love, a paradox in the face of which I could only broadly smile in sympathy, having known in-and-out every pick and weft on the dialectical fabric of this plane of reality where each and every Nietzschean Holy Yea conceals a bold negation within itself and *vice versa*, where deaths of giant stars are needed to give birth to planets like our own, where foundations in ruins feed the towers rising towards firmaments, and where sundown paves the way for the dawn and sunrises are gateways to the sunsets. And as I reminisced and ruminated, the time stood still, and there I was, in the midst of the timeless bliss of eternity, washed by the lightly baptizing waves of the sea of Love that enfolds the entire existence, at a crossroads in my heart through which antipodal energies met and harmonized each other, leaving behind but a flicker of Tao, the shine of One.

\*\*\*

Fast forward a year or two and there I am, with Theo, sitting on a concrete floor near the Berryessa Creek in San Jose and Thou watching us from some transcendental heights, as chalk held in my shaky hands draws chalet houses, marshmallow clouds, lingonberry trees, splintered seashells and a sundry swad of other things. Having drawn a sun, Theo points at it and names it, letter by letter, insecurely, unsteadily. **Sonne**, he says, which is “sun” in German, the language he has never heard, speaking as ever in tongues and mysteries more than in conventional signs, as we all should do. Were we to do so, we would be truer to the essence of our beings and to the nature of things in this world where “something stands for something else”, as the central semiotic principle states.

Oh, the heavens. That was when I found it. Canst thou believe it? In that tiny utterance I found the meaning of life. I found galaxies and stars and crazy asteroids and comets leaving joyful trails across the sky, singing in choruses with planets teeming with life and colliding together in it, like on a Keith Haring’s silhouetted iconography or de Kooning’s action fusion of abstraction and figuration. And they, altogether, multiplied by infinity, came not even close to the beauty I found in this magical utterance. Verily, no better proof that infinity slumbers in the littlest of things could come my way from the heavens – from which Thou watches us innocently

– than from my seeing Theo point at this sun gingerly sketched with crayons on the crackless pavement and spelling s-u-n, with a sweetest sloppiness in pronunciation. Neither could I think of a better proof that our search for this infinity must renounce any cravings for the megalomaniacal embracement of the whole wide world, alongside its folding into an origami globe and kissing it possessively; rather, this quest, as every genuine scientist and diligent artist knows, must begin from our plunging quietly, into the finest details of the world, in innocent wonder and with loving attention. It is in a moment like this that the enlightening realization dawned on me, and whole civilizations, if there were put in my hands, would fade in their colossal greatness and splendor in comparison with this little act of a little man growing slowly and tenderly, reaching like a flower toward some mysterious sun inside and outside him. A lesson that cannot compare to any other in the scope of its spiritual meaning and power to touch our deepest kernels it was and I wish it stayed with me forever. This I said with a soft stony smile held on the philosophical pedestal of my crossed palms, feeling the swing and dreaming about the equation that has eternity on one side and a piece of chalk, a smile and a smudge of the sun on the other.

\*\*\*

The magical cassette tape of my memory keeps on spinning and a few more years pass. I know, I must have blinked, as goddesses nested around me whisper to my ears. Theo, five years old now, accompanies me for the first time on a scientific trip, to San Francisco, for a conference having **a Nano and a World** in its title, hinting at the beauty discoverable in small, small things, the beauty that these lines try to convey as much as nanoscience does, albeit from a whole different angle. History repeats, the Dragon would have said, dropping the coins of remembrance - each melting as it gets dropped on the ground, like pebbles leading way out of the belly of a whale - of Fido's accompanying him on the scientific trip of his, to Bled, decades ago. A photo we made, too, like the one having Fido stand by the Bled Lake, unsure about everything, but bursting with wonder, this time showing Theo with a purple flower in his hand, standing by the San Francisco Bay waters and displaying the very same outlook on life, wholly fleeceable and angelic. We were unseparated for three days, spending the time of our lives, I guiding him and he guiding me, hand in hand one moment and then him sitting on my shoulders another and then all over again, exploring the unknown and going with the flow of Tao, discovering one exquisite display of divinity after another, all in small, small things around us. The time I had in those three days, in fact, was so beautiful that the mere thought of losing one such beauty, I felt, could prompt one to sit down and, simply, die.

It was a special moment in my life, too. For, those were the days when I walked wounded by the blows imposed on me by the foul forces that had taken over the seat of governance in academia and, like the computers of Alphaville, began to demand all the inglorious values that the anarchic freedom fighter and eternal dissenter in me has stood against, from discipline to censure to control to manipulation to dogmatism to rigor that does not streamline the spiritual energies, but poisons the soul and teaches not kindness and humaneness, but the art of shooting arrows into human hearts, generation after generation, as depicted so nicely on the cover of 10,000 Maniacs' *In My Tribe*. My excommunication from the academic world under the influence of these malicious despots was pending and the clock was ticking louder and louder, with only a month before it would run out of time and I, flagged for my scientific, philosophical and political unorthodoxies, would be forced to jump off the cliff, with my professorial post

ending potentially forever. Wounded for months, however, I began to heal, without even realizing it, during the magical walks with Theo through his birthplace, the city of San Francisco, from immersing ourselves in the sound of the hippie drummers on a Sunday in Golden Gate Park and drawing a heart with a yellow crayon on the pavement under their feet to squeezing our faces through the steel fence pulled over the entrance to the anarchist bookstore on Masonic and Haight to gliding down the curvy path that the J train takes as it climbs from Noe Valley to the top of Dolores Park and listening to the sound of leaves sliding over the tram windows with donuts in our hands to sneaking into downtown hotels and riding on the elevators up to the rooftops and back to the basements and over and over again to tapping the wind chimes and climbing the giant spider net in the center of Dolores Park to falling off the ladders in City Lights and other bookstores to sitting in the dense shade of trees at the doorstep of the San Francisco Zen Center, looking for Paul, to playing fish on the king-sized hotel bed and bouncing on it as if it was a trampoline to running down the steep streets, from Lily to Lombard, with the wind in Theo's hair and laughter that opens up the sky with its beauty to peeing the trees of Duboce Triangle to sleeping at night hugged, soundly and hushed, in symbiosis that I wished never ended.

But out of all these things that we saw and rejoiced in in those three days, nothing touched my heart as much as a small hand holding the clipper card reader on a packed outbound L train. A lady, must have been more than eighty years old, stood next to us as we got on the train at the Van Ness station. Noticing that Theo's head, which was wiggling wildly as he was in a trancelike state, intoxicated by wonder and impressions of seeing, hearing and touching all those new things around him, could hit his head against the card reader stand had the train braked suddenly, the lady gently placed her hand on the reader to protect the boy's head in such an unlikely event. For two whole stations, that is, from Van Ness to Church to Castro, she held her hand in place, without saying a word. How strange it is that in the middle of the journey lay the station called Church, as if to tell me what religion is truly about. How strange it is also that never again will I see this lady nor will she ever come across these lines and realize that she might have succeeded in launching a chain reaction of ennobling the worldly soul, something that she, now that I think, may have craved for a long time and may even depart from this world thinking that she failed in this mission of hers, when in reality she, albeit not knowing it, succeeded. For, in that motionless hand, the power was displayed that moved the stars and galaxies in us and outside us, below and above us, in that very same moment and for an eternity afterwards. It was then that I realized the speechless awe of the meeting of two souls, never mind whose, from two separate rails of existence into a particular moment of space and time, a moment that is to be celebrated no matter what; if so, it would enlighten our entire body and mind in the blink of an eye, with the whole world becoming a Buber-esque, I-and-Thou paradise in an instant. That moment was the one when the columns of Chapter 13 of St. Paul's first epistle to Corinthians, beginning with "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have no love...", became uncovered from the thick layers of dust and rubble deposited over it over the years, never to lose the sight of it again. It was then that the faith in humanity, shaken in those critical days, was restored, and the sun shone again over the nauseating, corporate pit of snakes that the stepmotherly grounds of the western shore had started to become. It was a most beautiful sight, albeit static and set, to watch and nothing compared to it amongst this firework of impressions that got deep into our infinite souls in those days one, two and three.

\*\*\*

An iconic painting laid at an angle in the center of the Church of the Serenest Madonna in the neighborhood of “Love among the Ruins”, pardon Belgrade, where I had grown up, depicts illuminated angels with aureoles encircling their heads, levitating above the ground below their feet. The words imprinted on top of it spell **Transfiguration**. Thou have gazed in prayer at it for so, so long, all thy life practically, and now it is my turn to delightedly stare at it under a church chandelier resembling that snow-white labyrinthine mass called the brain, the highest chakra in the Yogic science of the human body and soul, flashing like a lump of sheer starriness and sending out the glow of enlightenment all around it. “A million came from one”, I, with the electric guitar on my lap, in touch with the most distant universes, sang years ago, in botanical gardens, underground libraries and atria lost to man, moon hares and manticores, and now, verily, a single star-shaped cell multiplied into a million or more and began to tear apart the holy chamber that thy cranium is, calling for a whole cosmos to explode in pain. And when it does explode, having turned one into all, like a river merged with the sea, home I can christen it again.

Held in a voice in which every major emotion appeared to be concealed, a televised talk by Pico Iyer, my future colleague at a southern Californian university at which my professorial career would explode into pieces and get reduced to dust, aimed at figuring out what constituted that magical landscape that we call home, “not just a place where you happened to be born, but a place where you become yourself”, and concluded with the lecturer’s saying that “home, in the end, of course, is not just the place where you sleep; it’s the place where you stand”<sup>151</sup>. This is how I found myself standing in the midst of a setting that represented home more than any other scenery I could think of. And I am thus being transfigured. I am thus being reminded that even though in the beginning it may have been the word (John 1:1), the word is dead now and all that is left is the dance of a spirit ever changing in harmony with the magic of the moment and surfing like a quiescent silhouette on the unceasing waves of love and beauty emerging from the fountainhead of its core, shaped like a jolly heart and a crestfallen tear at the same time, suggestive of grievous compassion and cosmic joy being blended into one in the heart of the sea of reality and in the hearts of all the angels floating through it. Touch, love, explode. Die like a supernova, in a blast of beauty, and sow innumerable seeds of spiritual starriness all around one, one with the One.

\*\*\*

Searching for **the pillars of Atlantis**, Thou and I, the two amphibians, for years we kept our gazes underwater and swam past one another in circles and figure eights. And then, on a splendid summer day, accompanied by angels trumpeting from the edge of the clouds that gathered like saintly aureoles above our corporeal craniums, we lifted our heads and began to swim side by side. We were two solemn silhouettes, each reflecting the constellation of Orion in its shape and evoking, victoriously, the unbound cosmic joy that this starry pattern symbolizes, bathing in the shade of glorious Orjen mountain range, assembled by the haunted ancient gods in awe-awakening palisades around us.

---

<sup>151</sup> Thou and I watched Pico Iyer’s TED talk recorded in June 2013 and available at [https://www.ted.com/talks/pico\\_ayer\\_where\\_is\\_home](https://www.ted.com/talks/pico_ayer_where_is_home) together on the 32<sup>nd</sup> floor of our Lakeview apartment in Chicago in April 2014.

And then, as the voice of the mousey Icelander echoed in the distance, softening the sturdy, shattering the stony and rocking the mountains of Montenegro that enfolded us from all sides with her heartrending cries of *Jóga* and of all being full of love<sup>152</sup>, I asked Thee: “What is the most essential quality for the fragile and mortal creatures on the way to become emanations of divinity that we are”? “Sacrificial devotion”, Thou said immediately and then went on to stress out its practicality, the direct complement of which would be the visionaries’ favorite over eons: Love. These two have flown into one another in enlightened hearts ever since the dawn of the human race, each oftentimes offering the only door through which its complement can enter one’s soul. For, while some spirits can hardly be loved *per se* out of the azure, that is, without our prior learning to sense them intimately and crossing that Orphean mirror<sup>153</sup> to the other side of their souls, laying the magic carpets of self-sacrificial devotion before their feet paves the way for awakening the most powerful cosmic feeling for them: Love.

And then, You blinked at me, your mouth widened like that of a smiley Winnie-the-Pooh, contused in her fancy, chasing butterflies around her dotty nose, and your ample eyes began to glisten like two faraway suns. “Of course, it is Love”, Thou said, “for Love endures it all”. “Love is all”, You would concordantly notice months later, on a day I noticed that a purple orchid flower bloomed out of the blue from the soil in which You stuck a random autumn leaf You picked from the ground around the Grace Cathedral and brought home some days ago. As the Earth orbited once more around the Sun after this mini miracle occurred, when the last traces of human language began to evaporate from the seafloor of thy beautiful mind, leaving thy heart in thy hands, just the way Thou envisaged it in a poem Thou composed decades ago<sup>154</sup>, which now stands as a gateway to a book of mine titled *A ★*<sup>155</sup>, Thou would make a concordant claim. It happened during an improvised speech therapy session, as us two tried to talk about random things, me kneeling before thee and holding my hands in thy lap and Thou sitting still, with head hunched from all the weariness accumulated in it, but with eyes as alive as two charcoaled cabochons dancing their way through space, glimmeringly, gloriously, graciously at once. This session had come not long before I held thine hand tight and asked thee if thou wanted me to stay

<sup>152</sup> References are made to the sound of Björk’s songs *Jóga* and *All is Full of Love* from my favorite record of hers, *Homogenic* (One Little Indian, London, UK, 1997), played on a distant cassette player on the PKB beach in Kumbor and reaching us in the deep water.

<sup>153</sup> Watch *Orpheus* directed by Jean Cocteau (1950).

<sup>154</sup>

**VERA, LJUBAV I NADA ili pesma o jednoj čudnoj koincidenciji**

Od kada znam za sebe povezivala me je sa kosmosom VERA  
u Boga, Tao il’ svemoćnu silu.  
Znala sam i da Sunce nije samo topla sfera  
koju su vile ljuljale u krilu.

Od kada znam za sebe pomagala mi je NADA  
tamo gde se čovek sa silama mraka bori.  
Znala sam da ću istinu naći bilo kada.  
Na putu svetlosti vatra večno gori.

Sada, kad plovim uzburkanim morem svesti  
Pokušavam da sve misli bace sidro i stanu.  
LJUBAV je zlatna nit kojom ću ih splesti.  
Vidim svoje srce na dlanu.

<sup>155</sup> See my book titled “A Star” released as *Social Science Research Network (SSRN)* paper no. 4523523, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4523523>.

with thee or go back and teach my first class as a professor, in the cold and windy city of Chicago, a thing I prepared myself all my life for, a rite of passage into a parenthood of a different kind, and Thou said, uncharacteristic to thee, that Thou wanted me to stay, to which I stuttered an apologetic excuse, mentioning a cohort of students waiting to be inspired by the swishes of the magic wand of my curious brain, and Thou, then, shed that unforgettable ambiguous gesture with trampled lips, a slight head nod and an ever slighter ray of tenderness beamed from thine eyes, which I would need an eon to the exponent of an eon to decipher and figure out whether it was a gesture of a tender approval or a sign saying “*et tu, Brute*”, sad, sadder than sad, though, in every scenario.

And then, as I showed thee the remote control, the object lying nearest to me, and asked if Thou could describe it in a few words, Thou said “Made of love” and “Made of love” only, as if it was not known to me that in Thy universe all was indeed a physical manifestation of divine Love that pervades all things and souls. That day, as we, two Atlanteans hauled ashore, rehearsed “the naming of things”<sup>156</sup> and thy soul sent out that “help me to name it”<sup>157</sup> cry that had begun to orbit the planet around the time I had glimpsed the drop of chocolate sliding down a cone in a Strasbourg ice-cream parlor, it occurred to me that by having thy brain remove the veil of language, a truer view of reality must have become available to thee and the waves of divine Love swaying and crashing over things became even more visible to thine eyes, which were at that time already deep and dark and brimming with Love, that divinest of all emotions. On top of this, Thou, as I must believe, had lost thy once superb and subtle command of words, like that no mortal I have known has been in possession of, so as to grant me the power and the art of all this wordy wizardry at display here – which, need I say, lags by a million moonlit steps behind the ease, the charm and the elegance of thy unpretentious but invariably heartwarming writing and speech – simply because giving, sacrificing and sinking for the downfall of one and the rise of another, the hallmark of Love like no other, was all that Thou ever lived for.

Today, therefore, boiled down to their bare bottoms, all human philosophies and all the individual realities combined in my eyes converge in the worldview explicated by the greatest Montenegrin poet, Njegoš, who bathed in these same waters as a youth<sup>158</sup>, in his cosmologic magnum opus, *The Ray of the Microcosm*<sup>159</sup>: an undying battle between Love and its antipodes. But when all, good and bad, noble and malevolent, is seen as the emanation of Love, then this battle can be said to have been won and the ultimate destination, pure enlightenment, the doorstep on which Thou stand as I imagine thy shiny contours on way to thee, can be said to have been reached. “Love is all” – that is truly all one ought to learn in this long and lustrous life of ours, a secret as simple as it could be, a recipe for divine living graspable and implementable by every soul on Earth. This Thou claimed on this summer day, in the waters of the Adriatic, to have been the three words that could provide the bases for a triangular pyramid able to embrace the whole existence within its shape suggestive of a single peak, a single mantra towards which an infinite number of ways to the tops of human knowledge converge.

At that point, spontaneously and symbolically we pulled our goggles off of our eyes and placed them onto our foreheads, revealing the world as-it-is to our eyes, the eyes wherein

---

<sup>156</sup> Listen to Andrew Bird’s *The Naming of Things* on *Andrew Bird & The Mysterious Production of Eggs*, Righteous Babe, Buffalo, NY (2005).

<sup>157</sup> Listen to Beach House’s *Myth* on *Bloom*, Sub Pop, Seattle, WA (2012). The record was released on May 15, 2012, a day before my lecture at the European Materials Research conference in Strasbourg.

<sup>158</sup> See my article titled “YUCOMAT 2023: An International Advisory Board Member’s Digest”, published in *Materials Proceedings* 16, 1 (2023).

<sup>159</sup> See Petar Petrović Njegoš’s *Luča mikrokozma*, Nova knjiga, Podgorica (1845).

Wonder and Love are concocted into an effervescent cocktail of cosmic significance. In an instant, I became reminded of the writer from *Bright Lights, Big City*<sup>160</sup> – one of the rare novels written wholly in the second person, stuck in the You around which the whole world helplessly revolves in the hearts of us two dolphin-like dreamers too, always on the run to sacrifice our bodies and souls for the good of another – and his exchanging in the final scene sunglasses for a loaf of bread on the streets of New York at 6 o'clock in the morning after envisioning his mother baking one, then sitting by the riverbank, glimpsing the scarlet sunrise reflected off the big city skyline, and after a long, long run finding peace of mind and an escape route from the “slow-motion crawl of life's busy race” and straight into the heart of “the Grand Canyon at sundown”, as Bob Dylan put it once<sup>161</sup>. Likewise, I felt as if putting down our goggles equaled removing the curtains that stood in the way of our viewing reality in the most direct and dazzlingly blissful of ways. For, “when the helmets are off”, as two Zen motorcyclists, a father and a son, entering the city of San Francisco after a 6,000 mile long ride, noted, “we’ve won it”<sup>162</sup>. That is, indeed, the ultimate point, the destination findable at every segment of the journey: to unbolt the gates of ego that inhibit the infinite shine of our spirits and let it illuminate it all, like the sunrise over Lovćen and the Dinaric Alps, where the tomb of that great Montenegrin poet resides, the sunrise that us two Atlanteans watched in awe once or twice from these very same waters through which we now glided so freely and effortlessly. Open thy heart, therefore, as the sages and the seers have instructed us, for only when the heart is open and we become like that bamboo shoot idealized in Zen stories, swaying whichever the wind blows and thus staying vital at all times, “rejoicing with them that do rejoice, and weeping with them that weep” (Romans 12:25), surfing smilingly on the waves of divine energy that permeate it all, could we transform our being into a transmitter able to channel the greatest cosmic secrets to the nearby souls.

\*\*\*

If angels surrounded by azure haze knocked on the door of my mind with an invitation to catch a glimpse of Paradise, I would not hesitate for even a second before I declined their call, brushed away the angelic arms of my spirit and continued to lay my eyes on Thee, washing a piece of clothing by thy warmly veined hands, softly folding a freshly rinsed piece of laundry, then hanging it onto a drying rope, inspecting it with thy weary diplopic eyes to which two become one and one two, picking it up, holding and smelling it smilingly, then pushing a thread of yarn through a needle's ears and weaving one line after another through gaps in it, with an infinite patience and presence of the mind, instilling a magical sense of peacefulness in everything around Thee, and with an incredible calmness and focus, as if each one of these particular actions was what Cosmos as a whole revolved around and the existence of unknowable worlds, extending beyond our reach, depended on it. And then a serenely blazing setting Sun of a beautiful insight dawned on me: Thou and no one else but Thou is **the princess of small things**.

---

<sup>160</sup> Watch the 1988 movie version of Jay McInerney's *Bright Lights, Big City*, Vintage Books, New York, NY (1984), directed by James Bridges and starring Michael J. Fox in the role of the unnamed writer who finds peace eating the loaf of bread, a small thing *par excellence*, on the words written on a paper page, making a symbolic step from the world of words to the world of deeds, the most giant one on our evolution to petite stars in the cosmic dust that this planet is.

<sup>161</sup> Listen to Bob Dylan's poem *Last Thoughts on Woody Guthrie*, recited live at New York City's Town Hall (April 12, 1963) and released on *The Bootleg Series Volumes 1-3 (Rare & Unreleased) 1961-1991*, Columbia Records.

<sup>162</sup> See Robert M. Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, Vintage, London, UK (1974), pp. 410-411.

The little princess Thou indeed are, a politer and gentler analog of its male counterpart, who landed one day in a desert, next to the broken plane of the French aviator and a poet<sup>163</sup>, although sharing with him the same curiosity and taste for connecting the disparate worlds of earthlings residing in spiritual isolation from one another with the ball of yarn of divine empathy. And thy empathy, indeed, knows no borders, says I as thy having a smile, a jovial embrace and an encouraging story to tell to every soul drained by gazing into the darkness of depression for long enough to be bedazzled by the flickers of divine light Thou have strewn onto the world with thy very being; thy shedding tears and handing handfuls of coins and banknotes to beggars and string players in the street every time we passed by them; thy wiping dishes and sorting them to lessen the workload of waitresses at restaurants and patiently organizing dozens of deckchairs after a stay at the beach to reduce the burden on the housekeepers and custodians; the soulful radiance with which Thou solaced thy fellow hospital patients and thy never ever being able to put thyself into the shoes of that role – the patient – because all Thou ever lived for was to heal others, the medical peeps who worked to help Thee included; thy reaching out from thy hospital bed, hours after the hatful of stars Thou had held in thy head got opened and spilled its treasures everywhere, for a portion of the food that a server dropped on the floor of thy room lest she had to twist her back, thus slipping and falling and nearly mortally banging thy head, a blow that Thou would never recover from, all flood my mind in togetherness, producing a choking farrago of sound and vision to drown my petite earthly self in and a holier, more celestial version of it to be born. But then, alongside this undying sympathy for every soul in sight, there is some deep sadness swirling like meteors and rings of stardust around this sun too, like that which thy most beloved poet, Jovan Dučić, poured into the soul of his little princess, whose hair had the color of the moonlight, whose gaze was livid and whose voice had the scent of yellow roses, crying quietly throughout long, murky evenings on her marble balconies overlooking the sea, next to the vases in which her chrysanthemums were dying, with blood, like that in lilies, tired by a vague nostalgia and melancholy, the little princess whose heart opened on warm, warm nights, when the air was full of stardust, when the peaceful peahens slept on the walls and when other flowers opened their hearts too, pouring sadness and warmth into the universe. “And when she died, silently and serenely, the way her chrysanthemums died, the old cathedral bells sang along for a long time, and the voices of those bells were serene and solemn like the voices of priests who died long ago”<sup>164</sup>, the poem in prose continued and ended, as abruptly as a losing chess game<sup>165</sup> in which queen, the most valuable and the most powerful of pieces, is being sacrificed, without anything gained in return.

A princess or a queen, I know not which Thou are as the whole cosmos begins to spin in dizzying circles around me, just as it did spin in thy head in the days when Thou began to bounce off the walls, perpetually dizzied, and walk gingerly, like a drunkard, with eyes spinning like millions of stars sent into the most blissful of orbits inside the cosmic darkness brimming quietly with loving warmth and divine mysteries, and tumbled down the stairs in the dome of the Elks<sup>166</sup>,

---

<sup>163</sup> See Antoine de Saint-Exupery's *The Little Prince*, Mladost, Zagreb (1943).

<sup>164</sup> See Jovan Dučić's *Mala princeza*, In: *Antologija novije srpske lirike*, edited by Bogdan Popović, Srpska književna zadruga, Belgrade (1936).

<sup>165</sup> Chess games played with the deliberate goal of losing all one's pieces and being checkmated have been used with success in psychotherapies of people overcome by the sensation of loss according to the paper I served as the editor for in *Frontiers in Education* in November 2023. See Celal Özbek's "The Role of Therapeutic Chess in Education, Traumas and Pedagogy -The Healing Effect of Chess", *Frontiers in Education* (in press, 2024).

<sup>166</sup> The Elks National Memorial is located on the corner of Diversey and North Lakeview Avenue and was overlooked by my abode in the clouds in the first high-rise to the south.

right next to the goddess of Fidelity, with sloppy, cavalier me on thy side. “Vertigo”, I knew, “is not a fear of falling, but a longing to fly”<sup>167</sup>, but how could I let go of thee, with all the avian longings of thy spirit, and release thee into the open sky, like a bird, I wondered hunched over the fallen thee in this dark cellar, surrounded by the barren busts and not even the subtlest trace of life, life that we had known, life that was greater than life, life that used to make our hearts explode and strew every mortal thing with some unutterable, mystical stardust. But then again, a princess or a queen, sacrificed Thou would be, I could sense it, which leaves me alone with the wonder of whether it was for the sake of my triumphantly going down in history and becoming a star that lights up lifesaving paths to innumerable worldly souls or it was merely an insane act of a fool bound to step off the stage with defeated heart, with deadened eyes, and with head bowed down deeply and despondently. Whatever the future brings, bliss or doom, the Temples of Dagon whose moonseed creepers have grown around my neck, taking my breath away, collapse around me at the very thought of Thy departure. Echoing the words “Mother, the main pillar of my house has fallen”<sup>168</sup>, my heart begins to spin in sobbing spasms like a broken record, making me feel as if I am pinned down with ominous black marble candelabra on my chest, threatening to break my whole me into pieces. But as I stand here now, gazing at thy starry face, which rails me to a dreamland of voyage and adventure, where I ran with fairies and drank lemonade from the inside of a pen, I am million miles away from even glimpsing the answer to this question, while Thou, who’d go on to sacrifice thyself for the sake of saving me from falls down the ravines of disgrace and taking me by the hand to the astral spheres of everlasting smiles and sunshine, continue to radiate love and happiness from thy heart and act like a sun around which my dwarfed and darkened spirit, enchanted by Thee, devotedly revolves.

Verily, if one thing describes the life of Thee wherein hardships and love were mixed into an inseparably homogenous blend, it is that it indeed resembled far, far more that of Rakić’s enslaved and decrepit stallion<sup>169</sup> than Dučić’s romantic idyll, yet Thou never ceased to say that Dučić was a better poet than Rakić. Though confined to shackles to pay the price for celebrating divine love with thy whole being, Thou never ceased to shine and sing songs of sanguinity from the depths of thy slavish soul, and me, what am I, all alone under this canopy of stars, dear Jasmine, to do but to vow that thy road is the road that I will follow, into the dark, if not to christen myself yet another Ibn al-Yasamin, who declared himself “the son of a jasmine flower” in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century in the act of allegiance with his mother, an imported slave from the south of Sahara, and then devoting himself to the use of poetry to mathematicise the African continent, alongside creating a whole new world of symbols and annotations in the dust, a mission that he largely succeeded in<sup>170</sup>, helping endow science with the greatest tool that it has ever been bestowed on it and handing hopes to Thee and I that my poeticizing the dry and dull province of science may not be a futile scuffle after all. Although Milana Rakića was, symbolically, the name of the street in which thy home was all thy life, Thou disregarded this ominous sign and remained an innocent dreamer for life, with soul as pure as the sun, shining forth with faith in divine magic scattered like stardust all around Thee, in spite of the strife and suffering that have

---

<sup>167</sup> “*La vertigine non è paura di cadere, ma voglia di volare*”. Listen to Jovanotti’s *Mi fido di te* on *Buon Sangue*, Soleluna, Rome, Italy (2005).

<sup>168</sup> See David W. Blight’s *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom*, Simon & Schuster, New York, NY (2019), pp. 634.

<sup>169</sup> See Milan Rakić’s *Dolap*, retrieved from <http://www.kodkicosa.com/dolap.htm> (1903).

<sup>170</sup> Watch Paulus Gerdes’ lecture entitled *Re-Envisioning Mathematics Curricula in Higher Education* presented at the 7th Annual Teaching & Learning Conference at the University of Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa (2013), retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=honwKo9iW9M&t=1083s>.

befallen thee all life long and that have girdled thy spirit with bristles and thorns from all angles. And watching Thee, the closest thing to a saint I have known, always down to serve the server, steward the steward, comfort the comforter, clean the table for the café waitress and appeal to the massage therapist to lighten up her touch a bit, lest she get too tired, is an experience truly divine, the one I would not substitute for views of the most paradisiacal planets teeming with life. For, Thou, with thy moving attentiveness for the smallest of things, are the gateway to the glory of genuine being on this sad and chirpy planet we call Earth, whereon all things assume the shape of a hearty tear, from which infinite sadness and the bliss of eternal Love flow in togetherness, like on the faces of Holy Mothers illuminating monastery frescoes.

\*\*\*

Surrounded by the azure waters, Thou – who told me once that thy real, cosmic name is not that of a fragrant flower worn in the hair of tropical sea nymphs, but Tara, the mother goddess that emerges from unfathomable oceanic depths like an underwater nymph, an evocation of not only the grand canyon running through the heart of nativity, but, more notably, of the lonely tree standing tall in the midst of a most majestic landscape, an altar before which a soul strikingly similar to thine, a black-eyed gamine named Scarlett<sup>171</sup> pierced the dark, thunderous clouds with her zealous prayer and opened a crack in the sky for sunlight to emerge – swam and swam, tirelessly, like the sweetest manatee, traversing the Adriatic with striking elegance and fluidity, as if sunrays of heavenly grace radiated in all the directions from thine aquatic glide. And then, out of a different azure, the one reflected in the down that is up that is down that is up, somersaulting our soul into highest emanations of earthly joy, a **little white feather** fell next to Thee and remained to float on the marine surface, in an act of daily magic that evokes miracles subtler and less crude than that of merely walking on water (Matthew 14:25).

This little white feather, which this book could have been all about, never sank or submerged, though it carried a golden message that, adsorbed by a supersensitive mind and carried away in undying ripples, would continue to exist for the lifetime of the Universe. For, when one is light and unburdened by hefty thoughts, then the soul starts to soar on top of things and glide thereon peacefully, as elegantly and gracefully as this feather or the white sails surrounded by the summery shimmer I glimpsed with the corner of my eye. And if thy soul ever becomes passed to the sea of eternal godliness that we are merely transient ripples on, may I cede mine and catch thine as gleefully as a smiling dolphin I saw once in my lifetime in these balmy waters and never again, like all the most significant items in life. And may then my ego dissolve in the blink of an eye in the ocean of sacred oneness and all become life seen through thine infinitely beautiful eyes.

As I stood on the coast and dreamed in sunlight, Thou appeared, all in water and glimmer, with an auburn straw hat and a smile on thy face and then the blazing Sun setting behind thy back dazzled me and all that was left was the light of One, to be guided by for as long as carried-by-the-wind angels and white bunnies, the fancy frescoes of Love and Wonder in the cathedral of my mind, keep us enfolded in their soft and soothing embrace.

\*\*\*

---

<sup>171</sup> Watch *Gone with the Wind* directed by Victor Fleming (1939).

My first night in the Windy City was a coldest one in decades, so cold, in fact, that the air on it was cooler than in Antarctica or on the surface of Mars, while the Michigan Lake below my feet steamed through the large chunks of ice capping it. I moved from the California sun to these great arctic plains traversed by the squalling winds, but no California quails with their tweet, *Chi-ca-go, Chi-ca-go*, came to greet me that night, nor any other. While watching the world in disbelief and strange peace that night from these great, great heights, in an empty apartment with floor as white as the snow, with all around me appearing as if being sprinkled with stars, right around that magic bend that Christmas Eve is and right under **the planet Jupiter** (Fig.3(left)), that grand diverter of asteroids from their collision path with Earth<sup>172</sup>, whom we should be thankful for sustaining life on it in spite of its humbly hiding from our views in form of a single dot of light on the night sky, played next to me I had Saint Francis' in Roberto Rossellini's classic falling to the grassy ground after hugging a leprous man and exclaiming, "My God, my Lord and my all. O great God". This unforgettable scene adorns a movie named *The Flowers of St. Francis*, although the only flowers captured in it are those surrounding the saint of Assisi as he, spiritually ecstatic, lay on the ground in one scene (Fig.3(right)). Like the word Zen unmentioned in anything but the title of Pirsig's book about it and the art of motorcycle maintenance<sup>173</sup>, so have these flowers been mysteriously inserted into the title of this film, intriguing the watcher and carrying a wondrous message on its semantic wings, unfathomable in its depth and subtlety. For, who are these little flowers but an epitome of smallness that is the gate through which a profound soul must enter on its way to enlightenment? They spoke no words, almost like brother Ginepro when he melted the heart of the merciless tyrant Nicolaio and convinced him to relinquish his siege of an Umbrian village<sup>174</sup>, and yet they were given the prime role in this piece of art, somewhat like the "lilies of the field" in the Christ's sermon, who "toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Matthew 6:28-29).

---

<sup>172</sup> See my paper that can be perceived as a celebration of the beauty of water in the form of snow and ice: Evangelina Uskoković, Theo Uskoković, Victoria M. Wu, Vuk Uskoković – "...And All the World a Dream: Memory Effects Outlining the Path to Explaining the Strange Temperature-Dependency of Crystallization of Water, a.k.a. the Mpemba Effect", *Substantia: An International Journal of the History of Chemistry* 4 (2) 59 – 117 (2020).

<sup>173</sup> See Robert M. Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, Vintage, London, UK (1974).

<sup>174</sup> Watch *The Flowers of St. Francis* directed by Roberto Rossellini (1950).

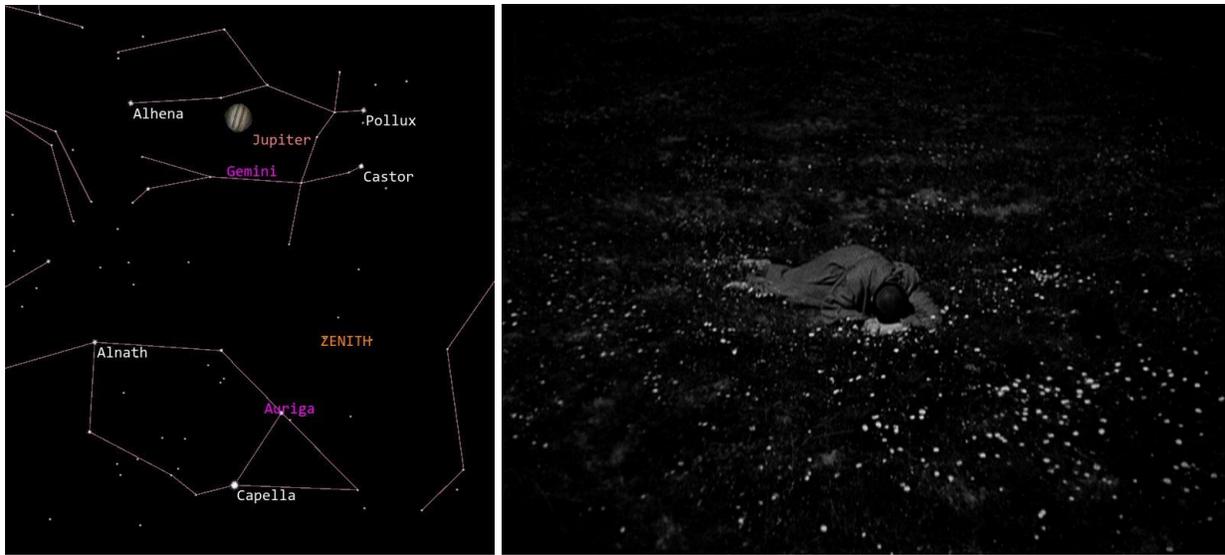


Figure 3. Celestial sphere in the region of Jupiter on my first night in Chicago (left) and a still from Rossellini's *The Flowers of St. Francis* on the DVD player screen (right).

At one point, as I gazed at this key scene, the saint embracing the Earth appeared to me as if he was not surrounded by snow-white flowers, but by sparkling stars. And then the camera tilted upwards, toward a distant hill at first, before immersing the viewer into the blue sky above, as if wishing to tell us that by hugging the Earth and pressing our heart in empathy as tightly as we could to the hearts of nearby souls, we may turn the terrestrial pastures into the fields of stars. To selflessly give ourselves away is the way to launch our spirit to the stars, though, likewise, since relationships in this world are, as a rule, bidirectional, with causes and effects being confined to closed feedback loops, resting rapturously in the starriest realms of reality, sharing space therein with serenest saints and seraphs, is the way to collect that stellar energy that shall propel us toward a fellow soul and render us a channel for some genuine outpours of its healing glitter from the celestial to the earthly. This is how these petite white flowers prompted me, watching the world from the 32<sup>nd</sup> floor of a building standing at the very edge of the Lincoln Park and being unable to tell whether stars are below or above me, for the lights of the land and the lights of the celestial sphere have merged into one, to pray that I may forever and ever be like this living statuette of sublime grace gazing deep into the soul of it all with an infinite love, healing and harmonizing with every touch of its gracious hand. Or, if I am allowed to repeat what Saint Francis allowed his own heart to whisper, like a warm but gusty wind, in his personal prayer,

“O Divine Master,  
 Grant that I may not so much seek  
 To be consoled as to console;  
 To be understood as to understand;  
 To be loved as to love.  
 For it is in giving that we receive;  
 It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
 And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.”

\*\*\*

A new day and a new dawn in the Windy City on a May day it was – wintery, windy, unnerved, taken aback by distress and demons of vulgarities and obscenities, with smoggy spirits, screaming souls and satanic sprites flying all around me. I walked beside Thee through this shadowy land, dispirited, in the shape of a question mark, like the poet from *Pyāsā* on the day he learned that his beloved fount had departed for good<sup>175</sup>, standing as a crestfallen shadow against a glaring sea of light behind him, a symbol of the darkness into which he descended and the backdrop of heavenliness of motherly memories that would guide him forever, having given every hope that each following time this sadly scooped figure of mine appears against such a dazzling background it would be lighter and lighter, all until, as in the movie, it attains the chiaroscuro of holiness and goes on to boldly negate its earthly image and become a true star on earth. And then, suddenly, in the midst of this dark dreaminess, a pensive walk through the valley of shadows with a wilted heart, the father’s voice arose from the dust and, lo, pinpointed **a dandelion flower** on a homely meadow, mud-covered and untidy, stating simply “how beautiful it was”. A magical moment of recognition of a small and delicate beauty hidden amidst an ugly black landscape like this cannot be but a triumph of godliness in us. Besides, a gateway to the heavens is present all around us, at all times, and nothing could ever stand in the way of our seeing the world as a saint with an eye for beauty and infinite goodness in it all.

As I stood there, squeezed between the two earthly guardians of my evanescent spirit, mesmerized by the dandelions that filled my view like stars of the night sky, a blazing Sun dawned on me and dazzled me from then to eternity, shining forth from every flower, each a sun in my eyes and a guiding star leading to the godly glory and grace. As my spirit spilled itself over this meadow with dandelions in the city of the ruins, like that of Saint Francis on the night he hugged the leper, a lonely pariah sent into exile, and saved the world by saving a single soul of it, by simply seeing but a Sun in it, the battle was won and the happiness began to reign over the universe once again.

\*\*\*

**Figure eight** was the shape of the walk Thou and I took through the finely forested Northwestern University campus in Evanston, the Little Bear’s alma mater, on a day with metallic skies and a frosty rain that drizzled, but as it did so, it grazed the cheeks like caressing feathers of angel wings. Such feathery droplets of rain, often falling from the sunny skies, have followed me in life on so many different occasions, every time telling me that heavens have just shed a tear, more precious than millions of earthly diamonds. For example, every time I would, as a sixteen-old boy transitioning from carefree childhood to a careworn soul concerned about the worldly troubles, come to an end of a Dostoyevsky’s novel and softly fold its cover, it would start to rain, just as it rained, so softly, so gently, on the day of my grandma’s funeral, as I carried the casket to be dropped into the ground, and on the day I, together with my father, began the short walk from his birthplace and the earliest home to the monastery in his hometown of Cetinje, to bow before the icon of his father, a sufferer and a saint of the Serbian Orthodox Church. So did it rain on many other days that brought about moments to remember, but as for now, the droplets of rain made a soft pattering sound as they dripped on the masonry that encircled our path and gave a smell of haunting ancientness to all things around us. The

---

<sup>175</sup> Watch *Pyasa* directed by Guru Dutt (1957).

inaugural breaths of the goddesses of spring were everywhere and flowering lavender shrubbery and purple-leaved redbud trees waved at us whenever we passed them by. Indian hawthorn was also in bloom and, with our chins lifted loftily high, we sashayed waveringly on the spirituous waves of the scent of violet lilacs. Then we came across a large dogwood tree, the thick and juicy show-white leaves of which all dropped to the ground. We picked one or two, put them side by side and just when they kissed each other, we blew them high into the air. There they joined the hefty seagulls and little goldfinches in their elegant glide.

And so our walk went on and on, until, in the end, we arrived at the place which our walk had begun from. It was at the intersection of the two ellipses in this figure eight, on the line that separated the north from the south on the campus layout, the natural from the social in the sphere of science that the perimeter of this composite architectural edifice delimited. As we were about to leave this enchanting place and be well on our way, it suddenly dawned on me that the point of the beginning and the end of our petite journey lay next to the foundations of a seminary, a house wherein priesthood is being earned and the science of human spirit, lying in the center of it all, taught. Happily, I turned around to glimpse it once again before it became flooded by the tide of memory and, at that exact moment, a bird chirped. That chirp, quiet, yet piercing through ether stridently with its timeless beauty and significance, evoking the purity of the spirit of the sacred place on the roof of which its cheerful utterer was being nested and outlining the sacrosanct path that had once been vowed to be taken but was then forgotten and buried in the dust of profaneness, is a call I wish to hear at the pearly gates, for a whole wide world, I know, could be saved by it in the glimpse of an eye.

\*\*\*

“Why did you decide to move from your beloved city by the Bay to the cold and **windy city** that Chicago is”, a voice swooshed like an icy comet through the celestial mental sphere of mine, evoking the silence and the sirens, the peace and the turmoil brought about by “three stars delivering signs and dusting from their eyes”<sup>176</sup> on the sky hosting mysterious extraterrestrial appearances over Highland, Illinois. A conventional answer was expected, but not given, illustrating the point of it all: to counteract the tedious flow of habit – on which our frightened beings float squatted – with the full force of fancy and produce starry dizziness in our heads and hearts, a state of chaos through which we must pass on the way to more sublime and blissful levels of being. For, complying with Nada’s reading from her knotty numerological formulae<sup>177</sup> that the following year in the world of a cosmic martyr like me would be marked by Joy, while the one after it would be in the sign of Change and Revolution and the one after it would bring Bliss, all things in this Universe pass from a lower to a higher state of elation through an intermediate state of confusion and unrest, when what once seemed perfectly aligned begins to appear chaotically scattered and without any order, before the assemblage into more advanced schemes and structures commences. Or, as put into words by a Zen master who described his passage to enlightenment in the spirit of the masterful storytellers, by dividing it to

---

<sup>176</sup> Listen to Sufjan Stevens’ *Concerning the UFO Sighting Near Highland, Illinois on Illinois*, Asthmatic Kitty, Lander, WY (2005).

<sup>177</sup> Nada Pantić, a Santa Clara resident at the time, was Thy yoga practice partner in the 1980s, along with Vera. To them two, whose names mean Hope and Faith, respectively, Thou dedicated the poem pasted in the original language in one of the earlier footnotes. And where there are Hope and Faith, there must be Love too, which, we know, was Thou.

three stages, namely the serene prelude, the perplexing exposition, and the concluding resolution: “In the beginning, mountains were mountains and the sea was the sea. Then mountains were no longer mountains and the sea ceased to be the sea. And then, as the enlightenment was reached, mountains were again mountains and the sea was once more the sea”. And if I spun one ‘round and around a question without giving the promised answer, it is always intended to be so, so as to live up to e. e. cummings’ wish for us to always give a more beautiful question as an answer to the question we received. For, asking, searching, questioning and knocking on doors instead of keeping sets of fixed answers and premises with us at all times and drawing closed circles like barbed wires all around the celestial spheres of our intellects is what propels us and the Universe alike toward ever more blissful states.

And the answer, of the heart, need I say, not of the logical mind, for “heart that has reasons reason knows nothing of” was listened to closely when the path branching out from a fork in the road was chosen, if I were to paraphrase a line from Pascal’s *Pensées*, a miniscule booklet that I would carry everywhere with me during my pensive, downhearted walks around Chicago’s North Pond, the same book that thy Dalmatian grandmother held in the other hand from the one in which she held her glossy counting-bead bracelet, as black as the darkest cosmic depths, all wrapped up in the wall of sound with the writings on it saying “And I cried myself to sleep last night, for the Earth, and materials, they may sound just right to me”<sup>178</sup>, proving secretly to my tiny self that if a single song could be so powerful as to voluntarily displace a soul from a coast washed by the sea, the sunshine and the hilly liveliness and splendor of its streets and into the snowstorm, the Arctic spell and permanent monotony of a flatland, yet flood it with the waves of happiness and make it glow like a star, while dancing underneath that diamond sky<sup>179</sup> in tropical bursts of otherworldly joy, then limits to the immenseness of the effects of the tiniest thoughts and acts in life are none, here it is: “When I visited Chicago, I stayed in a luxury condo with a gorgeous view of Chicago river and tall buildings risen like phoenixes ready to explode into Oscar Wilde’s rockets<sup>180</sup> all around it. But none of the fancy things in or around it attracted my attention much. It was the small things and details that did. Most importantly, in that room, along with many other lamps, there were two rectangular ones, standing right next to the entrance door, on two tall and thin metallic stands (Fig.4). When I turned off the lights at night and lay in bed, I realized that I forgot to switch them off and they were on the opposite side of the apartment. I thought about getting up, turning them off and going back to bed, but then I changed my mind. I left them on until the morning. And as I was falling asleep, I looked at them and they grew more and more beautiful. Step by step, second after second, they began to seem to embody the sublime spirit of my parents, being so close to me on that night. I could never understand what got into me through that light, let alone transmute it into words, but it made me cry and bow down before them in the morning. These two lamps are the reason why I left San Francisco and threw the anchor of the ship of my restless spirit here, East of Eden, near the banks of the Great Lakes”.

---

<sup>178</sup> Listen to Sufjan Stevens’ *Come On! Feel the Illinoise! (Part I: The World’s Columbian Exposition – Part II: Carl Sandburg Visits Me in a Dream)* on *Illinois*, Asthmatic Kitty, Lander, WY (2005).

<sup>179</sup> Listen to Bob Dylan’s *Mr. Tambourine Man* on *Bringing It All Back Home*, Columbia Records, New York, NY (1965).

<sup>180</sup> See Oscar Wilde’s *The Remarkable Rocket*, In: *The Happy Prince and Other Tales*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, NY (1888).

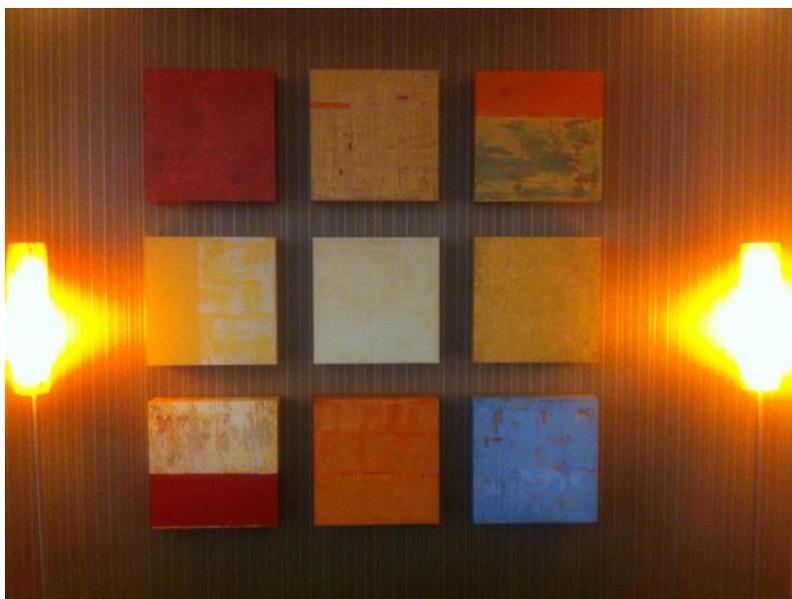


Figure 4. A pair of floor lamps at the entrance to my apartment in Chicago and an abstract expressionist polyptych in-between them.

And then a thousand days passed. Oh, how little I had known what was going to happen when I had mused about these two lights. Oh, how no idea I had that Thou would pose thyself as a shield before a beam of destructive energy that collected itself in our tiny corner of the Universe and sacrifice thyself to bring another lamp No.2 to my life: my daughter and a sister to my son, Theo. Oh, how clueless I was when that mysterious Montenegrin girl, who had sailed the globe, showed up out of nowhere at the seaside, as stars already began to multiply in thy dizzied head, and told us of our common relative<sup>181</sup>, who voluntarily stood in front of the Austro-Hungarian firing squad a century earlier as a substitute for his nephew, not realizing that ‘twas the writing on the wall, a portent of the heroic fate that had been by then already chosen by Thee on a more sublime, spiritual plane. Oh Chicago, if someone sweeps the most of my memory one day and I remember you for one reason only, it will be because ‘twas the city that took away my mother and brought me my daughter. Nothing more and nothing less. Chicago, the city of the wind, like the one that inspired thy poetry<sup>182</sup> when Thou were a sixteen year old girl, full of dreams purer than the purest mountain streams, cannot be but a sacred place after all, I conclude as I watch its clearing July skies after the rain and the Sun breaking through the clouds (Fig.5) on the way to yet another glorious sunset from a floor some hundred or so meters above the ground. Metallically frowning, dully gray, solemnly white clouds, all of them have danced around the Sun, casting a lightning of two every now and then and producing a myriad of rainbows and light shows, mingling with the shafts of hazy orange light, reflecting the moods of a child, a concoction of every emotion under the sun. It was the will of one such child that the Christ, as

<sup>181</sup> His name was Petko Uskoković. See, for example, Svetlana Mandić’s *Čojstvo i junaštvo: Umjesto sinovca, Petko stao pred streljački vod*, retrieved from <http://www.vijesti.me/vijesti/cojstvo-i-junastvo-umjesto-sinovca-petko-stao-pred-streljacki-vod-918882> (2017). As one of the commentators said, “Slava takvome čovjeku, da se znavjek spominje njegovo ime i junačko prezime na čast njegovim precima”.

<sup>182</sup> The only one of thy teenage poems I chose to transcribe to a tune for the post-rock band I played the lead guitar in, *Tišina kod poluzvezde*, was *Iza zavesa tišine*, meaning *Behind the Curtains of Silence*, which I composed in 1996. This song, which so veritably captured the feelings of fear symbolized by the wind, the main subject of the lyrics, was also the only song ever played by this band that I sang in.

envisaged in the second coming by Carl Theodor Dreyer in *Ordet*<sup>183</sup>, i.e., *Word*, obeyed without much thinking and extravaganza to produce a miracle and raise a dead back to life. “Life!” – so said the awakened angel and, heavens, how I wish Thou were next to me right now, so I could lean my head on thy shoulder and look into thine eyes palpitating with love, so lively and so warm. Though, if this earthbound Christ was right in his comforting this child while being viewed through the eye of a camera tracking him in a series of slow but steady circles, suggestive of infinity, it is better to have Mom in Heaven than on Earth because then she, said he, is always with one, undisturbed by worldly matters. And verily, on some days I sense that Thou are sleeping under a cloudy blanket or busy sending thy godly glow in prismatic shafts of light onto some alien worlds and I wish to disturb thee not, but on some other days I do feel that Thou are right beside me, caressing my hand and looking at me with love, or watching me in bliss from a nearby star or a shaking leaf. Many of such leaves surround me as I write these words in this garden of delight built by my little bear, holding one plant per each square foot of soil under my feet and evoking that little Tuscan garden that Benigni and his beloved wife, both in the film<sup>184</sup> and in the real life, entered and came out a family seconds later, the scene at which Thou, I remember, turned around with a teary twinkle in thine eye to say, “Beautiful, ain’t it?” My two little angels play around so blissfully and little rabbits occasionally stop by, popping their cheery heads from the greenery that is all around me and making me smile in return, knowing that thy favorite goodnight line, “May you dream of angels and white bunnies”, was a prayer that shaped my future, creating a world of inexpressible beauty for the soul, just like the one Thou prayed from the bottom of thy heart for me to attain.

And now, instead of thee, there is this cherub conceived on the very same day I held thy hand for one last time, tiptoeing toward me, neighing, purring, kicking, pretending to be a foal à la *Black Beauty*<sup>185</sup>. For, on the early morning of 12/1, I remember, our hands touched for one last time, and I knew not then that even when one is comatose or delirious, when one appears to be sensing nothing at all, when one has been reduced to a “beautiful angel...limbless and helpless”<sup>186</sup>, the gentlest touch of a hand can be as powerful as an electric shock<sup>187</sup>, and that night, the touch of two cells electrified the Universe, coming to hold a seed of energy from which the little princess, Thou in another incarnation, would grow dancing in the amniotic sea and kick out to be born exactly nine months later, at high midnight on the due date. How strange it is that Theo was likewise conceived right as I returned from Strasbourg via Belgrade in May 2012<sup>188</sup>, as if through the miraculous drop of chocolate cream, infinitely sad and infinitely beautiful, with which this book, this array of symbols dropping straight from some mystical clouds unseen and unheard by man, opened. All of this I wonder as this poet in the making hops

---

<sup>183</sup> Watch *Ordet* directed by Carl Theodor Dreyer (1955).

<sup>184</sup> Watch *Life is Beautiful* directed by Roberto Benigni (1997).

<sup>185</sup> See Anna Sewell’s only novel, *Black Beauty* (Jarrold & Sons, Norwich, UK, 1877), a children’s book written for adults, by the ill and bedridden writer in the last year of her life.

<sup>186</sup> Listen to the demo version of Radiohead’s *Motion Picture Soundtrack* recorded in 1995 and released on *OK Computer OKNOTOK 1997 2017: Boxed edition cassette – Side A*, Parlophone, London, UK (2017).

<sup>187</sup> See “*Neumorna borba protiv superbakterije otporne na lekove: ‘Želim da živim, drži me za ruku’*”, BBC News (January 22, 2020), retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/serbian/lat/svet-51139089>.

<sup>188</sup> At the European Materials Research Society meeting in Strasbourg, on May 16, I gave a lecture titled *Calcium Phosphate Nanoparticles with Controllable Drug Release Kinetics for the Treatment of Osteomyelitis*, and then in Belgrade, at the College of Technology and Metallurgy of the University of Belgrade, on May 22, I gave a lecture titled *Contemporary Trends in Nanosciences*. The lecture was supposed to be titled *Golemost u malenosti*, meaning *Greatness in Smallness*, but the organizers insisted on the revision of the title, and so this analogy, which this whole book is about, was left unsaid on this occasion.

in circles around his sister, the crawly gamine and the future tomboy with a heart of gold, who looks at me, craving to be picked. And so I do, as the angel gazes deeper and deeper into my eyes, remembering that my spirit becomes lifted toward some sublime grounds every time I lift one such gentle soul high up into the air, in concert with the splendid aforementioned final line of dialogue from *My Dinner with Andre*. And so I leave these words and begin to gaze at this sunset. From it, I know, will the Word that raises spirits from the dead and make them alive again be born; not from the word, but from life only can the word that brings to life be brought to life. May God bless this sunset that Thou watched from this spot too, my spirit whispers as it gets ready to pack its earthly belongings and head off into some other sunsets. As for miracles, what else is needed but the lightning and the thunderous prelude to the storm during the watching of *Word* last eve and the sky cracking and the rain beginning to pour down like never before in this city at the exact moment when the soul brought back to life exclaimed “Life” and when the sky of my spirit, too, split into two and the tears began to uncontrollably pour down my cheeks and chest and I could see nothing before me but light.



Figure 5. The nearly setting sun feeds the clouds that try to steal its shine, producing a magnificent lightshow in the sky over Chicago.

And then, just when one thinks that no greater miracle can happen, it happens. It happens all of the time, in fact, again and again, whether we hear the thump of the falling trees in the forest or not. And so it did, only three days before I was about to wave a definite goodbye to Chicago and fly back to California. An even greater miracle happened.

Every Sunday the church across the street would put up a new slogan on its backyard billboard on the corner on Wrightwood and Pine Grove, right under the inscription “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32), and leave it hanging there for a week. For a thousand days spent in the Windy City, many words and phrases rotated through it, but today, on a midsummer Sunday that I sit and write these words, three days before I will “shake the dirt from my sandals”<sup>189</sup> and leave this place for good, ‘twas the first time that the following appeared on it: Love (Fig.6). The banner saying Truth was removed and the one

---

<sup>189</sup> Listen to Sufjan Stevens’ *Illinois*, Asthmatic Kitty, Lander, WY (2005).

saying Love posted. Indeed, it is the one Word, *ordet*, that saves the world: Love. Nothing more and nothing less was needed to remind me that Thou watch over me all the time, day and night, through the calm seas and through the storm, and that the Universe, verily, is on our side.



Figure 6. For the first time in a thousand days spent in the Windy City and three days only before I was to depart it for good, the church from across the street posted the banner that said this one word: Love.

\*\*\*

**No Trespassing**, says the grim and portentous sign appearing in the first and the final scenes of Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane*, the movie that has been many times placed at the peak of the collective creative efforts invested by humanity in the art of cinema. The way it was posed, the sign stands right between (i) the chaste eyes of a celestial child, to whom Rosebud, a little wooden sled, lying buried under frost and snow somewhere in the burbs of the Windy City, called a piece of trash and heartlessly burned by the dark silhouette of the servant seconds ago, meant a world, and (ii) the dark and distant, gloomy and glowering, dreadful and dreary castle called Xanadu, a lavish estate of money, ego, prestige, the power of authority, the pleasure for the senses and other shallow fantasies toyed with by the grownups, each of whom is like a frog whose spirit is being cooked alive in a slowly heated pan, becoming a bit deadener with each new second, all until it settles in a state of permanent stillness, lifelessness and frozenness, like the ominous statuettes standing on the side of Dante's ninth ring of hell.

Indeed, the warning has been given. We should never trespass the line that divides these two worlds. We should remain children for the rest of our lives, uninterested about the games of ego that magnetically attract the adults with the megalomaniacal powers of theirs. And most important of all, we should find a universe, more valuable than billions of galaxies offered to us as gifts, to be ours and ours only, in the littlest of things, each one of which could be Rosebud, an

elusive object desperately sought by the lost and empty souls, roaming like perplexed ghosts across the screen of Orson Welles' masterpiece in action, as if their redemption and salvation depended on it, which, I believe, they do. For, the small is the way out, into the great and grandiose. It is the gateway to the stars in this heavenly hellish, purgatorial reality of ours.

And now that I think about the expulsion from Eden, from that sublimely naïve and chaste window to the world, like the one from which Dylan's Ophelia kept her eyes fixed on "Noah's great rainbow"<sup>190</sup>, and into a world of the coldness and the callousness of the stony heart, a world wherein machinelike logicity subdues the intuitive lovingness and emotionality to its sharp swords, I wonder what would be the way to get back. The road leading back to that joyful jumpiness of a starry pan in me, of spiritedness untouched by the worldly allures, floating wordlessly, with an otherworldly grace, through the world like a sea, humbly below everyone and everything else, overwhelmed by the rivers of impressions washing over it, knowing not what ego or prestige are, seems as dark and obscure as it looked to Dante when he penned the first passage of the *Divine Comedy*: "Midway upon the journey of our life I found myself within a forest dark, for the straightforward pathway had been lost"<sup>191</sup>.

For, once I lived in Paradise, I know, and Thou were beside me. But then, unknowingly, feigned stars posed on a Manichean, stripy backdrop waving ominously to the sound of plebeian trumpets praising assumed, hollow happiness took over this genuine starriness of the spirit and tossed it into the sea, making a sunken treasure out of it, which I will be seeking just like Hemingway's fisherman<sup>192</sup> sought that mystical fish for as long as I live. The heart that used to be open to everything, like the petals of a desert rose, sensing unity with all things around it and trembling with the subtlest waves of excitement traversing the Universe, is now petrified, turned into stone, resembling the planet Earth, still melting in passion within its core, but - unlike in a star, which'd allow this divine fire illuminating one's inside to emerge to the surface and shine its light to the darkness surrounding it - remaining encrusted by the rocky layers of stonehearted coolness and apathetic stolidity. And a sullen wonder ceases not to rupture my heart to pieces now that I know that *Caroline No*<sup>193</sup> was not a song about Thee, which I had always thought it to be, for Thou have not lost an iota of the ethereal joy and that celestial beauty that adorned thee all life long; thine eyes remained to be as vivid and crystal clear as two suns until thy last day. Rather, it is a song about me, about the cosmic joy extinguished and the spiritual Paradise lost somewhere along my climbing to join the place of artificial stars stuck on some phony ceilings of this world by man, not angels. The question posed at the very end of its lyrical lamentation, "Could I ever find in you again things that made me love you so much then, could we ever bring them back once they have gone?", remains to be like a cross that pierces my heart, bringing forth infinite pain and guilt by inciting me to wonder if this loss of inner purity and "happy glow" bored thy soul to death and soared thee away from this world on its crestfallen wings, but also illuminating the way backwards, the way to restore that Paradise lost long ago.

\*\*\*

"I found you the book", *i.e.*, "*našla sam ti knjigu*", a mysterious statement connecting me with the endeavor of composing these words, dear, dearer sometimes than the stars in thine eyes,

---

<sup>190</sup> Listen to Bob Dylan's *Desolation Row on Highway 61 Revisited*, Columbia Records, New York, NY (1965).

<sup>191</sup> See Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy: Inferno*, Canto I, lines 1-3, Penguin, London, UK (1321).

<sup>192</sup> See Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, NY (1951).

<sup>193</sup> Listen to the Beach Boys' *Caroline No* on *Pet Sounds*, Capitol, Los Angeles, CA (1966).

Thou texted to J on December 12, exactly one year before Thou would ascend into a big and bedazzling white cloud nested now over my head, which drips with rain, but eclipses no Sun. And as I write these lines, trying to create a book composed of pearls that bleed with some unexplainable cosmic sadness, Thou are **a transatlantic bird to me**, with wings white and glorious, flapping gently, yet gorgeously, traversing the blue and magnificent skies I could hardly take my eyes off of as these words flow out of my heart and fulfilling the dream Thou had dreamt as a child: to fly freely, to fly boundlessly, like guardian angels and spirits in divinest delight do. When Thou came, for one last time, to this New World, it was all cold, bare and wintry; when Thou left, after only one trip of the Moon around the Earth, all around us was verdant, lush and bursting with life, and the large poplar tree was just about to release its fluff into the air and cover the entire children's playground and beyond. When Thou came, the petite god crawling beneath us was a baby; when Thou left, he walked straight, having become a real boy in the meantime. Such has been, symbolically, the path of thy all thy life: wherever thy divine spirit set its siren feet, despondency and destitution were turned into joy and luxuriance, and spirits were lifted from lowlands over which they had roamed, up above the clouds of quotidian thoughts and into something quixotic, into the bliss of Great Beyond.

As I left glorious Thee there, at the airport, at the last turn of the swirly departure line, being pushed away by those about whom “forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34) is all I would say, I could see a tear in thine eye and I could rejoice in the sweetest stumble of thy wobbly walk for one last time. Hearing an angelic tremble in thy voice, I stepped away, knowing not that this would be the last time I saw thee standing straight and tall, “steadfastly, like cliffs” while “the rock cracks, the oak breaks and the ground shakes”<sup>194</sup>. On the way back, hearing strident cries on the perplexed path that stood apathetically ahead of me, I decided to look back through the eyes of an app that sees galaxies and stars even through the most translucent skies. Can Thou guess what I found? The Sun, in the form of a little dot of yellow light, symbolizing who Thou truly are, the supreme light of my life, eclipsing all the other stars and starlets by a country mile<sup>195</sup> and holding an ocean of melancholy between them and Thee. A little dot it was, yet it pointed at the path, more glorious and magnificent that any words could ever describe, the path I pledge the compass of my heart will be turned to at all times, day and night, as kingdoms and towers rise and crash before my feet.

---

<sup>194</sup> Quoted lines are from the Yugoslav anthem, Hej Sloveni, translated to English: “Stena puca, dub se lama, zemlja nek’ se trese, mi stojimo postojano, kano klisurine”, that is, “The rock cracks, the oak breaks, let the ground shake, we stand steadfastly, like cliffs”. See *Yugoslav National Anthem* (English Translation) retrieved from <https://lyricstranslate.com/en/yugoslavian-national-anthem-hey-slavs.html> (2014).

<sup>195</sup> Listen to Camera Obscura's Country Mile on Let's Get Out of This Country, Merge (2006).

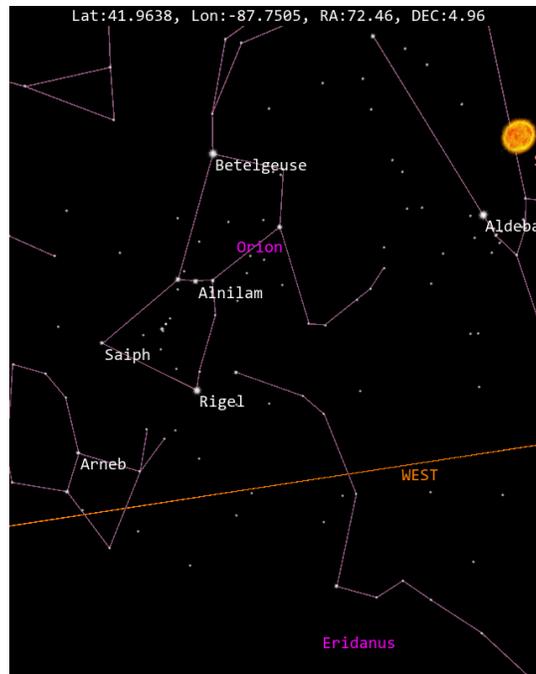


Figure 7. The snapshot of the sky created looking backwards, toward Thee, who were ready to take off and fly as I rode in the back of a car moving along Highway 90, slipping deeper and deeper into the night of the soul.

Not only was there the Sun when I looked at the point at which I left Thee, but right next to it was the constellation of Orion (Fig.7), the most magnificent of them all, taking on the shape of a human with legs spread apart, flamboyantly, the way only a Peter Pan of the modern age – beside Milan M., Mjehur and myself in the crumbly cubbyholes of my memory – would do in the phony public, and long arms, the tips of which are formed by Betelgeuse and Bellatrix, raised high, triumphantly, symbolizing the embodiment of cosmic joy, the one hidden underneath the dark mask of Cosmos, and being taken as a warrior, of light in my head, for eons, just like the one I, a scowling wolf with tokes of the chests and hands in which “rifle unsound can ne’er be found”<sup>196</sup>, have obliged myself to be, eternally oblivious to the mythological prophecy of this celestial warrior’s downfall, in all his glory, by a poisonous pinprick, a thing as minute as the objects laid carefully in the cornerstone of this book, of these writings on the wall of my consciousness, are.

And verily, soon after, this unbound joy was brought to an abrupt end and a sense of snarling disarray took over my psyche. A torrential rain, swallowing everything by its rivers of sadness and riptides of despair, along with a sun eclipsed for good and darkness lain over it all like a thick velvety blanket, intercepted by but starry blinks of pain, then entered my dreams. The dream it was of the end of the world, I knew, as pitch blackness was swallowing the sundrenched Earth and relentless downpours drowned it in tears and I watched it all through the walls of a glasshouse and from some towering heights, with my vision narrowing from oceanic breadths and skyward scopes down into dots of darkness and impending doom from which no escape was possible; unlike for the Mayans, to whom it was to arrive on December 21, 2012, for me it was to

<sup>196</sup> See Petar Petrovich Nyegosh’s *The Mountain Wreath*, rendered into English by James. W. Wiles, George Allen & Unwin, London, UK (1846).

come on December 12, 2014<sup>197</sup>, and I knew it not then. The biblical rains like those from this ominous dream were indeed falling on the other side of the Atlantic at that very moment and out there, where the sky cried for many days and nights and where a Blood Moon was soon to come bouncing closer than in the decades before or after and where hails of falling stars were to send salutations from the angels waving like skyward sailors from the wailing sea of resplendent heavens, was where Thou were heading. It was too early for me to know then that the pocket princess' recurring dream would be that of a similarly cataclysmic flood crushing our house and turning us all homeless, making her wake in the middle of the night after night and stare scarily at the artificial stars pasted to the ceiling, not wishing to wake anyone up out of courtesy like that which graced the holy Thee, but now I know that I was immersed in that instant in a similarly pitch darkness of the spirit, bogey and bleary, frightening to the bone. As I stomped grievously through this gooey bog of tears that congregated all around me, I felt as if every sunray, although weightless in reality, was a shaft of light on the back of a concentration camp escapee at night, weighing a ton. I felt that my soul is a radiant tear-shaped sack and that, conforming to its shape, it has gotten so filled with the waters of the sea of melancholy that its bottom has become soggy and slushy, ready to rupture at any time and flood the world and my pint-size self in it with a strangely intense sadness, perhaps the one Thou christened "cosmic" when Thou lay there, in thy marine-colored cell, drowning in tears and grieving thy departed mother. Detaching from the world and descending into a darkest abyss, head first, is how I began to feel in an instant, and although there were no white rabbits or angels in sight, in the blink of an eye I began to see the dead as alive and the other way around and I grasped that if Thou, more alive than anyone I have ever known, would be the first to leave this world, then it is a sure sign of its deadness, wicked and vile, for ages to come. For, like that boy who sang a love song beneath the window of the beloved on a winter night, then caught a fever and died of pneumonia<sup>198</sup>, leaving the alive that are, in reality, the dead to reminisce over the dead who is, in fact, alive, so must Thou, I am afraid, with thine immense love for the world, a true sun on earth, sail away, across that ephemeral sea that no living soul has crossed, to secure a place in the pantheon of alive in the eyes of the divine Cosmos. And so I sank deeper and deeper into the sea of my somber thoughts, each one being like a sailboat with ragged and soiled sails, dragged down into ever darker depths by the mysterious muses and mermaids with pearly eyes and a mustached manatee with a button nose here and there, a spitting image of Thee, all until darkness enfolded me all over, in the middle of the day, and the pressure foisted on me from all angles became unbearable, as if about to compress me into a dot of down, of infinite desperation and depression, like the world has never seen.

---

<sup>197</sup> 'Tis the day on which Thou sailed away into the Great Beyond. Coincidentally, on the same day 79 years earlier, my relative, Mardarije Uskoković, who had built the first Serbian Orthodox monastery and seminary on the American continent, in which he and the last Serbian king, Peter II, lie buried side by side, near the tomb of my and thy favorite poet, Jovan Dučić, swanned into the ocean of Divinity that encompasses our wretched spirits. In the spring of 2015, Mardarije was canonized by the Serbian Orthodox Church, thus becoming its youngest saint, and December 12 was chosen as the day on which his sainthood would be celebrated for eons to come. And I, I am left with the memory of Thou and I strolling on a sunny spring afternoon through the graveyard surrounding the church in Libertyville, Illinois, the first Serbian Orthodox Church on the American continent, which Mardarije built using the principle known as "*crkvu gradi, umire od gladi*", that is, "he builds a church by dying from starvation", hinting at the blood, sweat and tears through which and which only do the greatest creations in this life, in every single domain of human creativity, become built.

<sup>198</sup> Read James Joyce's *The Dead*, In: *Dubliners*, Grant Richards, Ltd., London, UK (1914), or, even better, watch the movie *The Dead* directed by John Huston (1987).

Sullen and sulky, I returned home, a question mark, a crisis at work, craving resolutions and answers like a thirsty desert soil, but glimpsing none. I made a few sluggish steps through the apartment, in the heartrending light of thy wobbly walk, and stopped at the place where thy bed would have been spread. Then came surprise, as big and transcendental as heavens above. Where Thou used to lie, in the room facing northern skies, was now a red heart, a piece fallen off Theo's cookie jar (Fig.8) and magically dropped by the little god in his play, by him who knows more than we had ever known and a jillion times more on top of that. Nothing else was there beside his yellow wand that lay a few feet next to it, invoking a smile and a million of smiley smileys next to it. Did the little pale god leave it there to tell us that love is the magic wand that makes miracles possible, that can turn water into wine and bile into ambrosia at any moment, so that maladies and discordances disappear in the blink of an eye and health and harmony restore their reign once again, I wonder? Upon glimpsing this heart, on the floor of an empty room, where Thou used to lie, my heart momentarily shattered to pieces and a light emerged, from some distant depths of the soul, bedazzling my consciousness and bringing me to a blinding proximity to its sunshine. Then, slightly seeled by the Sun of the insides, I turned away to look at the blue and magnificent skies suspended above me and glimpsed a sunset happening right then. What if the dark clouds that turned noon into midnight and pierced clouds into pieces on that day and on the very same day knives would cut again through the holy lump of goo interspersed with cellular stars in thy head, causing a violent thunderstorm and torrential rains to befall the face of the earth, were not sobs of the sky, but the sign of victory, just like the one Zeus had given to Alexander the Great on the day he untied the Gordian knot with a graceful stroke of his sword? In lieu of an answer, a long, cerulean cloud resembling a seraph from another world floating dreamingly through the air was there and as the light of my eye encountered it, an infinitesimally small edge of the Sun, *sahar* as in Sahara as they call it in Arabia, emerged underneath it to say morning in the midst of a sundown from Thee to me. As the Sun, blazingly red, continued to drop down from it, as if being born from this lavish cloud, I felt being reborn again, too. An unutterably prayerful peace entered my heart and I whispered this silently, just as I say it out loud now: with every breath I will have taken, breathlessly, from now until the eternity, will I follow in step this Sun that Thou are.

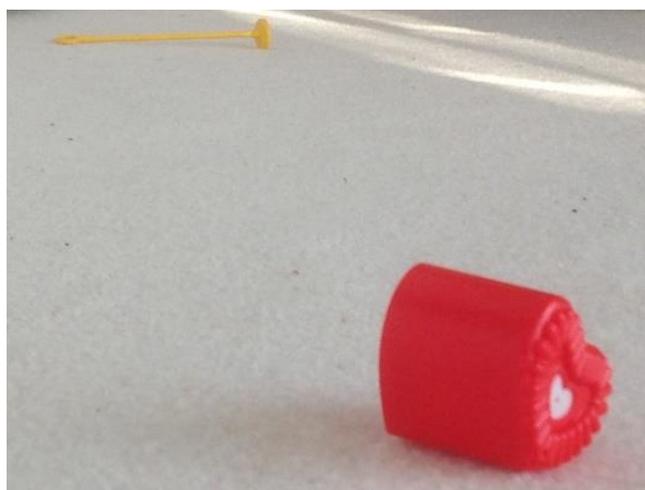


Figure 8. A magic wand and the heart-shaped object meant to fit a children's cookie jar, as found after Thy departure, on the site venerated by Thy presence in the room most. Symbolically, as soon as the piece passes through the opening and enters the jar, it comes out. Love, likewise, cannot be stored; it lives by being given. This secret, I solace myself, Thou have mastered and moved on to a different level.

And so the inside and the outside merged and there was nothing else to be fulfilled. It was all illuminated. It was all light. It was found. For real. And for good.

The eternal spirit shining like the Sun.

And You.

And I.

Bathing in One.

For, now, at this glorious moment in space and time, surrounded by stars whose every twinkle is a wink of kindness and sympathy, I have become, for good, wholly, in my deepest self, a prayer for the lifesaving road to be lain before Thee, making every atom and atomic bond inside of me a string in a giant orchestra playing a psalm of paradisiacal praise for the glory of the luminous angel on Earth that Thou are, wearing a white dress, holding chamomile flowers as white as snow and being all washed in light, and my tiny and miniscule self disappear so as to be born on the other side, on the coast of pure bliss brought forth by the instance of vanishing as a frail body of mine, a petty island separated from all else, and becoming one with Thee and, thus, with all that is and was and will have ever been.

\*\*\*

It was a Friday afternoon in late August when I found myself walking westward along Taylor St., toward Tuscany, hand-in-hand with my Little Bear, the literal Theotokos of this story, and glanced the sullen but sunshiny sky above my head. Indigo clouds covered most of it and traversed it in slow motion, yet the sunrays somehow managed to make their way through. As they diffracted through the narrow columns of air wavering tenderly between the travelling clouds, they created a flood of light that carried something momentous as it filled my eyes, something that crushed my soul to pieces and made me want to bow down and pray in devotion for ages to come. Glancing this celestial scene for barely a second was enough to bedazzle me and overcome with a sense of indescribable magnificence, the memories of which would remain nested inside me for a very long time.

And then I knew it: Thou were being born again. It was Friday afternoon, just like the one on which Thou departed from this world, a Friday, “the day of our Lord’s agony”<sup>199</sup>, on which Thou, like thy mom before thee, would fast with thy body and spirit, devoting thyself to God unreservedly. And indeed, three days later, on Monday night, the earthquakes began in Little Bear’s belly where new life had been brewing for forty weeks and not even an hour more (Fig.9). Soon after, with the first rays of light of the following day, the passage through that narrow canal, so fast it almost sublimated this new life back to heavenly heights, was made successfully, in the same way as sunrays made it with such splendor through the bruised clouds on that glorious Friday afternoon.

---

<sup>199</sup> So says the careworn mother in Ingmar Bergman’s *The Virgin Spring* (1960) while washing the statue of the Christ. This movie about the unfortunate fate of heavenly purity sent out to the wicked world was made and released in the year of the Olympic games in Rome, the year in which Thou, too, as a sixteen-year old girl, pure and innocent, out of this world, walked the streets of *la città aeterna* and allowed thy heart to be touched by this eternal beauty once and for all.

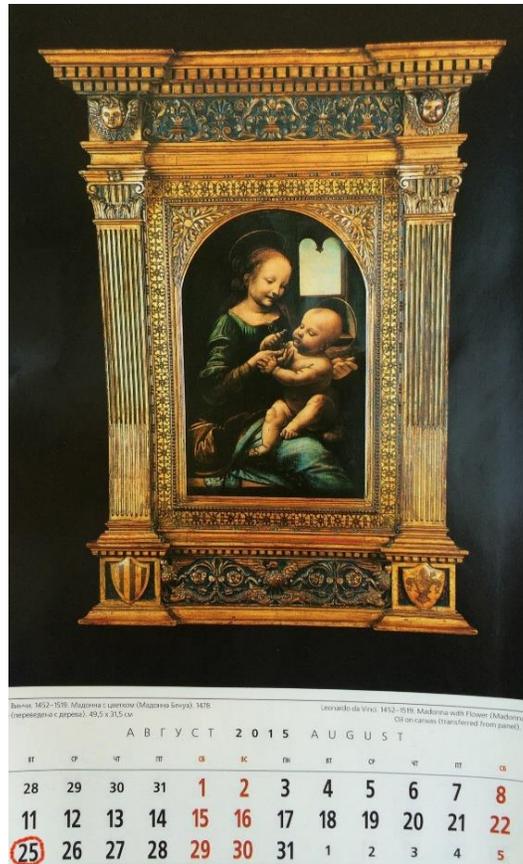


Figure 9. The little princess was born on August 25, marked earlier as the day on which the Little Bear would be due for delivery. The Hermitage Museum calendar hanging in our living room in Chicago, coincidentally, showed the image of the holy mother nurturing a child, namely da Vinci's first independently painted artwork, *Madonna and Child with Flowers*, only for the month of August.

If Thy soul came back to Earth while riding on this endlessly spinning karmic carousel, where we make one circle from the sunrise to the sunset to the dead of the night and back to dawn after another, over and over again, all until we attain the traits of godliness and become dejected into the spheres of the oceanic oneness beyond, or, as for those who come to join the Earth as gods in the first place, there is a mission that we wish to accomplish in this eternal battle between darkness and light that rages in every corner of this beautiful Cosmos, it must reside in little **Evangelina**, the girl conceived under a blanket of stars, a hundred meters or so above the ground, late in the day of 12/1, on the morning of which I held thy glorious hand for one last time. It was as if Thou handed me a mysterious spark with that graceful touch of the hand, which was the last thing Thou could move before Thou sailed away 11 days later, on day 12/12; 'twas a spark invisible and infinitely minute, yet lighter than millions of suns, a spark that this book could have been all about. For, how else to explain such a coincidence, along with a myriad of others, including the little princess' being born with so much amniotic sea in her lungs that she needed a three minute revival before she began to breathe and her subsequent falling asleep after every two or three swallows of the colostrum-colored milk<sup>200</sup>, if not by her stepping directly from the shiny star seated between Thy two pneumatic angelic wings to this new tender-hearted carrier for Thy divine soul?

<sup>200</sup> Thou were similarly falling asleep after every two or three swallows of chocolate milk in thy last days.



Figure 10. An imprint of the soles of newborn Evangelina's feet (left) and the plastic grocery bag Thou brought from Belgrade to Chicago and left it hanging in the bathroom (right), where it remained ever since.

Is it possible that Thou made a swift phase transition to return to Earth, to my vicinity, to continue spreading Love across the beautiful, yet wretched spiritual landscape that this planet is? Are Thou and I spinning in karmic circles, moving from one life to another, only changing characters as we are recreated in some new corporeal forms, or thy love for me was so immense that it appealed to gods and goddesses overseeing the Earth, who decided that Thou never leave my side? Could it be that thy wish to return here, probably spoken through a prayer whose radiance from the heart pierced through the gloomiest clouds and touched the sun-like soul of God in an instant, was granted, in the name of which Thou always left a piece of thine essentials behind thee, such as the plastic bag with thy toothbrush, saying *for good mornings & better tomorrows*<sup>201</sup>, that Thou left hanging on the back of the bathroom door (Fig.10)?

Again, could it be, really, that the two of us are entwined in a loop of karmic synchronicity, so that in each life we appear as the centers of each other's universe? Could it be that our bond transcends the earthly ties and extends beyond space and time, enabling us to spin around one another throughout cosmic eternity and ethereality, like a double star, so that one moment I watch over thee and a heartbeat later Thou watch over me? Or is it all an array of miraculous coincidences that prove the existence of God, a reality pervaded by the invisible ties of divine order? Or could it be thy majestic way of comforting my doleful soul and reassuring me that Thou watch me from some great, heavenly heights, unperceivable by my earthly senses? Was this all a downstream effect of the swish of the magic wand of thy holy spirit from the days Thou were here, with which Thou left a myriad of traces that keep on popping out so as to console my frail spirit and hold me from slips into the burrows of depression?

---

<sup>201</sup> *Za dobra jutra & bolja sutra* in Serbian.



Figure 11. Baby watches *Casablanca*<sup>202</sup>. “I wasn’t sure you were the same”, Humphrey Bogart, who, I know, always reminded thee of thy father, happens to say on the screen in yet another strangely coincidental instance. Michigan Lake, as big as half of the Adriatic, the sea in which Thou and I bathed happily, like two dolphins, hiding underneath it enormous deposits of salt, the eternal symbol of sadness, the salt that Thou spilled long ago to let me be born, is seen in the back, far through the window. Photographed on August 28, 2015.

Meanwhile, the coincidences multiplied, a most striking of which may have been this: namely, the first time I switched on the telly after the baby was born, on the third day of her life, on that very channel that popped up when I pressed the  button, in three minutes began *Casablanca*, thy most favorite movie of them all and the last one that we watched together. The little princess at that moment lay on that very same raggedy brown sofa (Fig.11) on which Thou sat too when we watched this movie together for that one last time. The miraculous twist of fate made this movie both the last one I watched with Thee and the first one to watch with little Evangelina, whose eyes, at that instant, I remember, began to glisten with stars for the very first time. As she lay later and for many days to come on the Little Bear’s upper arm, softer and squishier than the most feathery pillows, warm and soothed like an angel, though always with stars swirling around her head, it was the same *miška* pillow that Thou had kissed oh so fondly and claimed oh so facetiously as the only part of the Little Bear to belong to Thee and Thee only. For years, then, this *miška*, the upper arm of the little princess would be her favorite site for kissing, which I would smooch over and over, hundreds of times at a time, calming her thereby from even the fieriest of moods.

Then there are dreams, and the one and only recurring dream of Evangelina at the point when she was old enough to describe them was that of a flood entering the house and rendering

---

<sup>202</sup> Baby, that is, *beba*, was the nickname given to thee by Fido and used by all of us in the most recent times. Over the years, it has grown to be the little angels’ nickname too. And, as six-year old Theo said once, out of the blue, “Beba is God”, making me open my heart to the Universe in ageless wonder over where Thou really are: in this little nestling learning to walk and talk anew or on some heavenlier vista – if anything heavenlier than the world seen through the eyes of a sentient soul exists - wherefrom Thou watch over us and bless our ways and orbits with the undying love that once lived in thy celestial heart.

her helpless, evoking the aforementioned dream I, myself, dreamt the night when the remission of galaxies growing in thy head would be diagnosed and it became clear to thee that thy sail into the open seas was imminent and the departure into forever pending, combining the eclipse of the sun, a biblical flood, the tilting of the solitaires and the darkness of the deep space in one. Then, due to yet another strange twist of circumstances, involving Shostakovich's Seventh, a night ride on a carousel tiger, a missed flight and a virus that brought down first Theo and then the Little Bear, the first night the little angel and I spent together, all alone in a room, sharing the bed and watching stars together, happened during the one-year anniversary of Thy sailing away in grace and glory to the Great Beyond. At the same time, Fido and the Dragon and oh so many souls dear to Thee commemorated 12/12, a day to remember, on the other side of the globe, the globe which I would continue to traverse later that day, like a bird across the marine skies, a thing Thou had always wished to do, a thing that, if this array of coincidences means anything, Thou must do as I write these trifling words, either through some astral heights, smiling at me blessedly from above and guiding me mysteriously toward those very same heavenly spheres of being, or inside the body of this little angel whose hand I tenderly hold, with whose voice my soul giggles and in whose smile I find incommensurable bliss. And when I think more, Thou had always dreamt of "little yellows" as my children, somewhere far on the face of this planet, whom Thou would be coming to look after, a dream that, as I first thought, crashed to the sound of sobbing of the raging gods in me, but that, now I know, as my eyes hang smilingly on the mysterious heavens beyond the horizon once again, may have just come true, as I imagine Thee watching Theo and this sweet little angel from some greater heights, guarding and protecting and smiling at them from every angle of this magical reality. This garden of Eden, this oasis of lush for the sorrowful spirits that I find myself in when I am surrounded by these two littlies Thou, I know, dreamt up in thy many hours of solitude, through the fire of fear swallowing the ceiling that Thou stared at all nights long, wearing thyself by the care of angels but paving unwaveringly the path that would lead me to this point in space and time, step by step, thought by thought, vision by vision, a mindful art that I can only hope I would reproduce someday in my head as I send these babies into the real world and concoct in my prayerful head the visions of who they would become and where the vessels of destiny would take them across these raging seas. Be that as it may, on the very same night *biberče* and I slept together on the edge of a saltless sea, the giant Ferris wheel in Prater stopped to spin, shut its orangey lights through which I cried for Thee like no time before or after, and, for the first time in its 118-year old history, left two souls stranded in the air, to watch the stars and the city lights<sup>203</sup>. A year later, on the second anniversary of Thy departure into the Great Beyond, as thy and my birthplace, Belgrade, was blessed with one of the most graceful lightshows to have ever adorned its skies at sundown (Fig.12), the petite lotus flower and I found ourselves sitting under the light of the full Moon, atop another Ferris wheel, with eyes filled with stars and hearts filled with thee, inside the car J, a subtle hint at thy name, Jasmina, which had stopped before us moments earlier and fairy steps had escorted us to, enwrapping in an instant my entire soul into yet another warm smile of thee sent down on the wings of magical happenstance.

---

<sup>203</sup> The operators called it a day without realizing that two passengers were still riding on the wheel. See *Turisti zaboravljeni u Praterskom točku*, B92 News (December 13, 2015), retrieved from [http://www.b92.net/putovanja/zanimljivosti.php?yyyy=2015&mm=12&dd=13&nav\\_id=1073963](http://www.b92.net/putovanja/zanimljivosti.php?yyyy=2015&mm=12&dd=13&nav_id=1073963).



Figure 12. The sunset sky over Belgrade two years after Thou sailed away, evoking the battle between darkness and light that suffuses it all.

Then, how do I explain that when I sing to my little angel with mundane cheerfulness illuminating my mind, her face remains curious but expressionless, but when I sing to her while imagining incarnated Thee in her place, she smiles sweetly and innocently, with mouth adopting the shape of the heart, the same way Thou did, having remained as pure and chaste as a baby till the last days of thy life? Or that the first time the Dragon broke out in tears while watching thine old pictures since the little angel was born, she toddled out of the blue, from the opposite side of the room, to look him in the eye with a glistening smile on her face? Or that her favorite fruit is kiwi and that her favorite toy as a toddler, out of all the plush animals in our house, counting six monkeys, five birds, four dogs, three bears and three mice, a cat, a horse, a donkey, a mogwai, a lamb, a sheep, a duck, an elephant, a fox, a tiger, a hedgehog, a shark and a dolphin, would be a blue *zeka*, that is, rabbit, whom she would hold by his long ears and carry everywhere with her, being the very same forest animal, fearful and frail, that Thou put side by side with angels pasted from renaissance paintings and breathed into thy children's dreams? Or that her hair is brown with a tinge of red, exactly the way Thou dyed thine, Thou who wished all thy life thy black hair with a twist of a dreamlike, cobwebbed haziness spilling from the edges, to be that of a natural brunette, one of the rare surface traits that Thou, the epitome of a little tramp's gamin, with a "coat old, ragged and worn... down through the ages"<sup>204</sup> and with spirit shining like the sun, ever craved for, except for that sunflower skirt that highlighted thy divine bosom, bursting with splendor and love, the skirt that got lost and was never found? Was it an instance of mere coincidence or clairvoyance when Fido changed thy nickname from "mamma" to "baby" around the time Thou began to undergo this grand phase transition of the soul and none of us knew it? Or that he was the one to discover thy long forgotten poems first and clutch at them strongest, including that where it is New Year's and everybody exchanges gifts but thine is a star and Thou

---

<sup>204</sup> Listen to Van Morrison's *Summertime in England* on *Common One*, a record symbolically recorded at Super Bear Studios on the week of thy 36<sup>th</sup> birthday, from February 11 to 19, 1980 (Thou were born on February 11, 1944, the day on which each year, to commemorate the naval rebels of the Cattaro mutiny of 1918, flower wreaths are thrown to the sea in Kumbor, where the two of us, like two dolphins, swam as if we were in paradise), when I was but a three-year old soul toddling around Thee, and equally symbolically released by Mercury (Chicago, IL), a label carrying the name of a planet that the alchemist in me embraces more than any other.

end it with a “who believes in the infinity of dimensions doesn’t fear a thing”<sup>205</sup> line, a premonition of daring things to come? For, if Vincent van Gogh lamented “why the dazzling dots in the sky aren’t as easy to reach as the black dots on maps of France, as one takes the train to Rouen or to Tarascon; one takes death to get to a star”<sup>206</sup>, and then painted a cypress, the cemetery tree as a vertical connection between the Earth and the sky, in his 1889 painting of the starry sky, where humanity seemed dead in comparison with the craze of the night sky and infinities harbored by it, then thy gifting a star instead of settling on it speaks millions about who indeed thou were: an angel who’d rather give a heaven to another than enter it oneself, which is what makes me think that Thou are here, still with me.

How else, then, to perceive that on the morning of my journey to Calcutta, the birthplace of Swami Vivekananda, a shrine before which Thou dreamt of bowing thy entire life, yet never had a chance to do so, and a place where Mother Teresa stepped off of the procession of nuns to join the destitute and the leprous lying scattered all around her, never to join the traditional religious order again, in the dark of the room I glimpsed the little wall light glowing straight from the baby angel’s face and that on the very same morning the front page news was that Mother Teresa had been canonized by the Pope if not as a sign of thine own sanctity, on the wings of which Thou come down to Earth over and over again to guide the lost and the perplexed, though never being recognized and celebrated for these angelical accomplishments, walking through the late summery shadows instead, like a sun that resides firmly embedded in the cosmic darkness, yet shines with beauty that lies beyond what even an infinite ocean of words and music and images could enfold? That miracles and the divinest of signs come from the least expected of places got reconfirmed during this voyage to India, the last glimpse before the departure to which, I remember, was that of this little angel smiling in sleep, a blissful sight never seen before. It was as if Thou, verily, conducted this journey through some miracle, like the time when Thou appeared on the starboard of a ship in the second sweetest dream I have ever dreamt<sup>207</sup>, just prior to my most memorable travel, to the Hades<sup>208</sup> and back, so as to let me know

---

<sup>205</sup> “Koračam opet stazama sećanja, Čini mi se i strelu vremena sam okrenula Razlika između sada i nekad Sve je manja i manja... I kao da sam se iz sna prenula, Ja vidim mesec i nebo puno zvezda, Terasa, klupa, dvoje Grade u bašti buduća gnezda. Vatra kraj reke, magija noći, Bajka o velikom prasku, kvarku, mezonu I bezbroj puteva Kojim je moguće poći. Čini mi se da shvatam: Žene su epizoda na putu ratnika Iza čega ostaje samo Na zidu za uspomenu slika. Vode Dunava i vode vremena Odnose Mesec negde daleko I, sada, dok sija neki drugi mesec, pitam Da li te je ljubio isto onako drugi neko... Bila sam glupa i nisam znala Da samuraj ima srce koje krije. Telo je samo oklop A negde unutra duša sne svoje snije. Život je san, sanjajmo opet – Kaže Kalderon dela Barka Žmurim da duže potraje Ova kratka vremenska varka. Otvaram oči, opet je sada, Bojim se, daj mi ruku, xxxxxx, Ostaje samo nada. Svi dele poklone Nova Godina je. Imam jednu skrivenu zvezdu koju odavno želim Da kao plava vila nekom dodelim. Čini mi se baš u njoj je sreća i Kosmosa tajna, Tako je žuta, tako je sjajna. Uzmi je i čuvaj dobro Budućnost uvek postoji Ko veruje u dimenzija bezbroj Taj se ne boji”.

<sup>206</sup> See Michel Nuridsany’s *100 Masterpieces of Painting*, Flammarion, Paris (2006), pp. 163.

<sup>207</sup> The sweetest dream I dreamt at around the time I was 20, in Fido’s bedroom, so-called White Bear, in Mala Moštanica, right after which, I remember, I came down the stairs and watched *The Wizard of Oz*. The final words of Dorothy, “There’s no place like home”, mixed with the remnants of this dream and ring in my head, producing sheer splendor, to this very day.

<sup>208</sup> My journey to Hague and back, which came in the spring of 1999, during the NATO bombing campaign of my country, sometimes I do rename in this manner so as to highlight its nature on the spiritual level. Indeed, the most instructive adventures of our lifetimes always make us feel as if we will be descending into hell at their onset. As for my illuminative trip to India, prior to it I incessantly felt as if something awful was going to happen on it, which culminated when my phone received a Quora digest email entitled “What does death feel like” at the very moment at which I was entering the plane to Abu Dhabi and walking down its aisle in search of my seat, the plane which was

that Thou would be my goddess of travelling, of being on the road, of that sweet sin, as Thou named it, that ran through the blood of thine ancestors. I felt as if Thou guided me either by watching me from that watermelon face of the full Moon that followed me everywhere during this trip, from the Christmas night when it glided over my head as I treaded dreamily in figure eights through an alleyway of palm trees, hugging lightly each of them in passing, then engaged in night swimming, that most poignant of all acts in my world<sup>209</sup>, to the airplane ride back home over the glaciers of the North Pole, when it smiled at me every time I looked through the window on that 24-hour long night, or by having Thou incarnated as the baby angel, “pretty like the Moon”, as I was saying to her in my lullabies, steering me toward safety and treasure alike along this adventurous and missionary way with thy graceful and now invisible hand. It was the first Christmas with the full Moon in 38 years and the last time this happened was when I was 1 year old, and yet Thou made me spend it in Calcutta, the city where the beauty of dying is inscribed in each visual detail, the city whose decay, poverty and devastation could elicit the energy of an angel in one’s heart in a heartbeat and set oneself on the mission to descend deep into the dark, which is what every star must do, and dedicate one’s life to the poor, just as it did for Mother Teresa, the missionary noted for saying that “you will find Calcutta all over the world if you have the eyes to see”<sup>210</sup>. To stand under the very same tree under which Vivekananda meditated, and to smile in sympathy before the shrine that now occupies this sacred place beside which his, Ramakrishna’s and their disciples’ ashes lie scattered, before sprinkling my forehead with the waters of the sacred river Ganges on that Christmas day could have happened only thanks to thy guidance from some mysterious plane of this unthinkably great world in which our spirits attempt to sublimate from stardust to shiny stars. Moreover, to awaken wonder and love in students’ eyes, making their parched and thirsty hearts either dewy or drowning and gasping for air under a flood of sublime feelings; to realize for the first time that there is an audience for the glass bead game of the concoction of science, theology, poetry and philosophy that my lectures represent; to tell them on a Christmas Eve about Feynman’s prophetic talk given on another Christmas Eve, 56 years earlier, at Caltech, in which the physicist pinpointed infinite “room at the bottom”<sup>211</sup> of things, glorifying the ideal of finding greatness in smallness; to sobbingly wrap it all up with al-Bistami’s story about his route to wisdom<sup>212</sup>, which invokes care for an ill mother, on none other but Christmas Day, the day of new beginnings, was a blessing made possible thanks to thee before anything else. And then, finally, to be able to, on a single day, (i) practice yoga in an outdoor session with a five-time West Bengal yoga champion, who looked strangely like Selvarajan Yesudian, the first and foremost hatha yoga instructor from books on yoga that Thou and I savored decades ago, then (ii) visit Vivekananda’s house at the age only two months and two days younger than the great orator and inspirer when he passed away, then

---

scheduled to leave on the exact day of one-year anniversary of the social gathering at which everybody saluted a solemn farewell to Thee.

<sup>209</sup> Listen to R.E.M.’s *Nightswimming on Automatic for the People*, Warner Bros, Burbank, CA (1993).

<sup>210</sup> See Verity Worthington Volunteer’s *Volunteering with the Missionaries of Charity in Kolkata*; retrieved from [http://www.motherteresa.org/07\\_family/volunteering/v\\_cal.html](http://www.motherteresa.org/07_family/volunteering/v_cal.html) (2015).

<sup>211</sup> See Richard P. Feynman’s There’s Plenty of Room at the Bottom, *Engineering and Science* 23 (5), pp. 22-36 (1960).

<sup>212</sup> When al-Bistami was asked by his disciple how he had attained such an immense wisdom, he told the following story: “When I was a child, my mom was very ill. I would come to her room, but she would say, ‘Son, go sleep, but please leave the door open’. To make sure that the door doesn’t close, I would stay all night long next to it. All the wisdom, everything I ever learned entered through that door that night”. This I classify as perhaps the most beautiful story ever told. Its message is that all wisdom stems from care for fragile things and beings of this world.

(iii) visit the house in which Tagore, that most beloved of all the foreign poets to Thee, was born and in which he drew his last breath, then be pooped straight on the forehead by a bird, perhaps an aerial messenger sent by Thee, a sign of luck like no other, just before (iv) glimpsing the statue of Queen Victoria in front of her grand memorial, whispering underneath my breath how big it is and knowing that, in my life, it stands for the monument to the Little Bear, who had taken over from Thee that role of the cornerstone, the central column that supports the family during a celestial initiation in the marine-colored room adorned with the icon of Our Lady of Sinj, before which Thou prayed before bedtime and whose forehead symbolically began to crack at around the time Thou were starting to get ready for the departure from this plane of reality, and then, in the end, to top everything, (cxiii)<sup>213</sup> bowing before the tomb of Mother Teresa, that epitome of goodness, whom Thou every so often invoked in thy storytelling, in her very nunnery, cannot have happened without being orchestrated by some higher force involving Thou and Thou only.

When I knocked on the door of the Mother House of Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity, in fact, in a little alley off of Bose Road in downtown Calcutta, a nun opened and I learned that that day happened to be one of the two days in a year on which visitors were not allowed, the reason being the annual gathering of nuns from all parishes taking place exclusively on that day. The nun quickly softened, though, and said that I would be able to come in in 45 minutes. Then she softened even more and let me in in 5 minutes, signifying that no rules exist in the House of God and echoing in the distance St. Paul the Apostle's anarchistic message of Christianity: "For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died...The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law...For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God...I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Romans 7:8-9...Corinthians I 15:56...Galatians 2:19...Galatians 2:21). Henceforth, thanks to her incarnating that divine spirit whose every slice shrieks "whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17), I was allowed to enter a greatest party I have seen in my entire life, that of Mother Teresa's nuns, a sight unforgettable till the end of time. What impressed me more than anything was their simplicity and straightforwardness, devoid of any burdens of pathos or piety, as they ethereally and pure-mindedly glided through space propelled by one wish only: to save another. Lives of theirs seemed to my eyes that day to have been lived by the theosophical credo of "the complete subjugation of the passions and the practice of universal charity"<sup>214</sup>, I thought with these fairies gliding airily past me, carrying zero pretense and infinite love in their bountiful bosoms. Symbolically, inscribed on Mother Teresa's tomb were the Christ's words: "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12). Really, if I could love the world the way Thou loved me, the world would become illuminated by the divinest of lights in the blink of an eye. If I only could. But I have a lot to grow before I attain this shininess of the spirit that personified Thee.

---

<sup>213</sup> CXIII, that is, 113 here is not an error here. One may say that I took a bracket from the previous number and made its closed circle, symbolically, open, after which I took the number V, which should have belonged here, and rearranged it into a tipped cross, X, and then I stole three horizontal lines from one of the previous numbers, for example, III, and turned them into threads with which I vow to be bound to all life and nonlife around me. Or, one may just as well come to conclusion that these numbers disobey order and obey a greater symbolism, depicting 113, where one finds 1 after 13, the "one with everything" state of mind coming after the Golgotha and suffering signified by 13. The first bill I paid after I landed back to the US was \$31.31. Really, the sign is everywhere.

<sup>214</sup> See Robert P. Welsh's *Sacred Geometry: French Symbolism and Early Abstraction*, In: *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting, 1890 – 1985*, edited by Edward Weisberger, Abbeville Press (1986), pp. 68.

As I walked to the tomb from the courtyard where the nuns congregated, I also noticed that little orange flowers were used to spell JOY TO THE WORLD on it. I picked one from the left tip of W (Fig.13) and folded it between the pages of the Bible that I had carried everywhere with me for the previous two decades. Prophetically as ever, the portion of the text on which this orange flower landed was this: “And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me. And I said, What shall I do, LORD? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus” (Acts 22:6-11). And here I was, standing at the final point of the journey to my own Damascus and in the silent language of gods being “told of all things which are appointed for me to do”, things that could be nothing but to become an equally selfless savior of the sufferers of humanity as the saint before whose tomb I stood solemnly at that moment. My journey to India was, to that end, equivalent to St. Paul the Apostle’s journey to Damascus, at the end of which I, too, saw the light. I was blinded at first, but then I was saved by the godly grace in a twisted scheme whose strings must have been pulled by Thee, smiling softly and blessedly, from a mysterious corner of this fascinating reality in which our spirits grow, like lotuses, from mud to the mackerel skies. And suddenly, all I was seeing around me became a road to salvation. It is this little flower that, thus, spoke a greater truth to me than millions of worlds spinning in synchrony; that touched my heart more deeply than thousands of oceans; that elevated my spirit to greater heights than those of the Himalayas; and that provided a great ending to this real-life fairytale.



Figure 13. A petite flower picked from a garland spelling JOY TO THE WORLD in the Mother House in Calcutta and laid gently between the pages of the Bible.

On the day the little angel was born, in room 888, near the corner of Fairbanks and Superior, my father, that mighty old Dragon, paid a visit with his younger son, my brother, to Ostrog monastery, world renowned for its being built on the face of a bare, rocky mountainside. It is the most popular pilgrimage place in Montenegro, that land of bare rock, the rock that has so much to tell to my Father and me, from the solid state science we are both devoted to, to the gloom of the black mountains we carry embedded in our spirits, to the cruel, premature deaths of my father’s father and of my father’s sister, to stonily reserved personalities we embody in social

settings, to many other things lying hidden in the greater beyonds. Soon after the visit was over, on the other side of the Earth, next to an opened Oktoberfest anchor steam, crêpes filled with eurocream and ground plazma and a film by Godard<sup>215</sup>, thy descent from that little piece of oceanic heaven Thou occupied as a limbo in thy transition from dusk to dawn on thy karmic journey began, in glory. It started as the clock chimed midnight and ended with Evangelina's emerging to daylight with the first rays of sunlight. On that very same afternoon in Montenegro, three hours after the little princess was born, an enormous rock detached from Mount Ostrog, fell through the roof of the monastery built into it and right among a crowd of pilgrims, breaking into three large pieces upon crashing on the ground. No one was fatally or even majorly hurt, and only three women received minor injuries<sup>216</sup>. A miracle it was, the priests said. Then, on the first Easter of the petite princess, the day of angels and bunnies Thou would mention in thy goodnight wishes with thy soft voice, Orthodox churches on three different continents set ablaze, including the Serbian Orthodox Church in New York City, which ended up being burnt to the ground. Only ashes remained, yet, again, in none of the three fires was anyone, miraculously, hurt. It was the Easter, I remember, before the one on whose Good Friday I dreamt thee for the first time since Thou had departed into darkness that I, like Virgil in search of Beatrice or Cocteau's Orpheus passing through the mirror, must enter too, in a dream where I held thee, dead, before a lift, when Thou opened thine eyes and announced that Thou were alive, the Easter on which the little princess woke up and the first thing she said, while still lying in bed and pointing at the ceiling, with face filigreed with a sweetest smile, was "star", as if to tell me what Thou had become. Star, symbolically, is what the little angel, merely 20 months old, picked from the ground and uttered smilingly, looking straight into my eyes, as I sat confounded, overcome by the realization that none other but the star-shaped cells in thy brain, a.k.a. astrocytes, decided to grow unobstructed, turning thy head into a Munch's screaming face on some days. One such scream raged inside me as I watched a giant fish bowl with Theo on my lap, minutes after the heartbeat of a little halibut swimming inside the Little Bear's belly, which I came to hear for the first time, we could not hear, and yet Thou confronted my pain by saying, "It is better that way". I did not know then, but I know today why Thou uttered these puzzling words: because had the halibut been born, Thou would not be able to take the little angel's place on Earth, who was born a year and a half after this miscarriage. Or, how do I explain that on Trinity Sunday and the day of the descent of the Holy Ghost on the Julian calendar I dropped flowers onto that piece on rock on which Thy name lay engraved for the very first time, without planning to do so? As I sat and pondered over this strange array of coincidences, the shades of Holy Trinity grazing my careworn heart and the little angel lifting herself against the TV screen, I realized that she was seeing my compatriot and the all-time champ in thy favorite sport, tennis, winning all the grand slam tourneys in a row for the first time in the open era and all three played in the course of her life, three hours and three minutes into the match, winning the third out of the three match points he had earned. Oh, the heavens, said I as the Serbian flag waved in the wind and its anthem filled the air with sweet and solemn notes.

---

<sup>215</sup> *2 or 3 Things I Know about Her*, a.k.a. *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle* in French it was, a cinematic essay in which the central and the most poetic place is occupied by a cup of coffee in whose tiny bubbles swirling spirally, being born and bursting and being born again, entire cosmoses seem to have been reflected.

<sup>216</sup> See Vlado Otašević's *Stena pala kod Ostroga, tri žene povređene!*, *Telegraf* (August 25, 2015), retrieved from <http://www.telegraf.rs/vesti/811728-odron-stena-pala-kod-manastira-ostrog-tri-zene-povredjene>.



Figure 14. Three hurricanes over the Pacific Ocean captured three days after Evangelina was born (left). Three *sudaje* in front of the Museum of Genocide in the Serbian city of Kragujevac (right). According to the ancient Slavic mythology, three fairylike supernatural creatures, a.k.a. *sudaje*, enter the home on the third night of the newborn's life to decide on its fate, from the cradle to the grave. This belief stems from an even older Indo-Aryan myth of three women who sit in the center of the Earth and weave the threads of destiny of all people on it.

Next, three hours before my first class in the fall did the angel drop down to Earth limply from the belly of the Little Bear, whereas Thou ascended from the Earth to some heavenly heights on the very last day of my teaching the previous fall, three hours before the class would have officially ended, perhaps to signify along the way that the teacher must become the taught and the taught the teacher in this reality where ends and beginnings, tops and the bases, the first and the last must constantly swap their places if the wheel of creation is to continue spinning. “What is the above is from the below and the below is from the above”, as Hermes Trismegistus inscribed on an emerald stone millennia ago and the ancient Arabs interpreted it. And so, the third day after the little angel descended to Earth, miraculously, was the day of the ascension of the Holy Mother into heavenly spheres according to the Julian calendar that the church of Thou and I has followed; ‘twas also the first Assumption Day, the day of the reminiscence of the death of the blessed Mother, since Thou had sailed away nine months earlier, on a cold December day, with *Stella Maris* and *Ursa Major* resting in the apex of the celestial sphere and hovering above thy head like aureoles symbolizing thy saintliness. On this third day after the princess was delivered onto the spinning astral body called planet Earth, that third rock from the Sun, storms also started gathering over distant parts of the world, specifically over an ocean so dear to Thou and I, an ocean that is the biggest on the planet, yet known in my mother tongue as *Tihi*, that is, Quiet. Soon after, three major hurricanes were tracked over it, all arranged in a single line: Jimena, Ignacio and Kilo (Fig.14(left)). It was the first time in recorded history that three major hurricanes, containing tropical cyclones with sustained winds of over 130 miles per hour, coexisted over this magnificent body of water. To add to this magical array of coincidences, on the night of that eventful day, the third after little *grock star* was born, the three fairies, a.k.a. *sudaje* in the old Slavic mythology (Fig.14(right)), should have gathered around our hearth, albeit invisible to our crude, corporeal senses, to determine the destiny for this gentle soul in the making – or is it an angel that Thou were, who has come down to Earth to accomplish yet another mission from God, alongside continuing to be a muse and holder of the hand that prevents the wandering off the holy path in this divine universe evolving before my eyes? Be it the former or the latter, may this destiny be full of heavenly peace, of the spirit of One, and of that forceless force that Love is, the secret mover of stars in their orbits.

Or, how coincidental or magical it was also that during the first trip of the little gamin and goddess to my and thy actual hometown, Belgrade, and to the seaside of thy spiritual rebirth, the Adriatic, the largest Moon eclipse in the 21<sup>st</sup> century appeared on the Belgrade sky three days sharp before our departure, just as the princess entered the apartment sleeping, reverting to the unconscious state of a different kind of sleep than the eternal one that Thou left it in on a cold December day. How much of a laugh did the family have when the poppet tripped and fell flat on her face into the fountain adjacent to the Shrine of Saint Sava, not once but twice, on the first day of seeing it and the first time she was there with one of her sister cousins and then when she was there for the first time with the second of her two sister cousins. There, we celebrated none other but the third birthday of you, my little lady bug, on the day of the full moon, in this next coming of yours to my arms, to show me the way, to guide me away from the devilish dark daze and toward the sun of the soul, and to reinstall in me the conviction that all ideologies are to be kept at bay, at distances as remote as black holes, with the only thing that I ought to be pursuing being the creation of that elusive “beauty that saves the world”<sup>217</sup>. It was then, during that trip, that I held the winning, 1|1 domino on the eve before the little lady’s birthday, the first time Theo and I played this game by thy side, and I decided to win not, but to renounce the victory in favor of a loss, to take on zero, that is, love, as tennis players would have had it, so that the little god dancing by my feet could win and giggle joyously. It was then that I placed two birds on two opposite sides of the bed from which Thou got elevated to the stars, one wounded and old and one freshly hatched, and that another bird, a sign, flying in the sky, like Thou in those endearing moments, watching us from high up in the air, painted atop the birthday cake. It was then that we prepared for the lazy summer afternoon party that started on a Saturday at 5 pm, the exact local time at which Thou were reborn three years ago, on a hot and humid day, at the very edge of the cliff that ended a long stretch of such weather, of a long sunny period that was going to be superseded by cold and stormy pattern in a matter of hours. As I soaked myself in this rain smilingly, with eyes set on the clouds that cried with whimpers that shook the firmaments with holy hiccups, I knew not that these heavens would send a mysterious blessing on me by allowing me to score a hat-trick for the 4-2 win of my team on the 11-on-11 Christmas edition of the soccer scrimmage<sup>218</sup> of this very same year on which I celebrated thy third birthday in this new

---

<sup>217</sup> See Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky’s *The Idiot*, Prosveta, Belgrade, Serbia (1869).

<sup>218</sup> To make these golden days even more mysterious, on the first following Good Friday I scored a goal from the edge of the box by hitting the upper left corner in a game played on the full field, 11-on-11, then on the day after it I scored the first goal in the 3-2 win of my team in a 100 minute game, by hitting the goalkeeper, having the ball bounce to the left post and then just slightly cross the goal line, and then, finally, on Easter, with 13 players on the field, I scored the decisive, golden goal that ended the game by sending the ball to the upper right corner, all of which added up to three goals scored over the three days on and before the first Easter we celebrated with Thee as a tender three-year old. For someone living up to the epithet of a *baixinho* on the soccer field, moving through it softly, quietly and secretively, playing mainly from the back, in the role of a defensive, holding or box-to-box midfielder, this frequency of goal-scoring was flabbergasting. The magic thread, however, continued to unwind, as another one of such decisive, golden goals I scored only two months later, on the Father’s Day edition of Sunday soccer, the only one I would ever play with the three-year old princess by my side. I unselfishly passed once to the mustached, skinny guy who looked just like thy father, then received the ball back from him, passed it back to him again and received it from him for the third time in a row. As he passed the ball to me for this final time, he ran past the goal line and, symbolically, exited the field. While the ball was still in the air, I volleyed it with my right foot and buried it in the lower left corner, past two defenders and the goalkeeper. Looking down at my foot that scored this golden goal, I noticed that the shoelace on the soiled, worn-out, torn shoe covering it untied with this final kick – the time to take off my shoe and join thee, aproned, painting cups and sending cherubs’ kisses in the air, had come.

form, three days before we played under the full moon over Paso Robles, the moon that looked like a giant ball that we first watched rise above the hilly vineyards and then imagined playing catch with and pitching to one another, the moon, the *popica*<sup>219</sup> I jumped to oh so many times to pluck it from the sky, like some deific carnation, and hand over to you, the dream over which I cried many a moist night behind the rusty bars and windowpanes of my little blue Belgrade bedroom. I knew not either that many months later, after I pressed play on thy favorite record, *The Trinity Session* by Cowboy Junkies, which had made Thou countless times cry the tears of longing for my departed wandering self, under an open air, and the aural waves of *Misguided Angel*<sup>220</sup> reached thine ears in this new, reincarnated form for the very first time, Thou would gaze at the sky from the back of a giant watermelon-shaped floaty (Fig.15). And then, as if by an act of magic, the princess would point at the Moon and say, “Look, the Moon”, and this crescent satellite of love at that moment would indeed look as if it was smiling at me, just the way Thou said Thou would do when Thou are no longer here, watching me and the two little “yellow ones” from high up above instead, from the luscious treetops and the glistening Moon levitating above my foppish head, the Moon, looking at which, Theo, minutes later, described by saying, “If you turn to this side, it looks like a happy face, and if you turn to this side, it looks like a sad face”, touching thereupon the emotional juncture of infinite sadness and infinite joy wherefrom whole new cosmoses could be born. Be that as it may, it was then that we departed for the sea and you, little baby, lost the toy bird by a little waterfall, amidst the razing of our most beloved house by the sea, where we, the two Atlanteans swam around each other like a couple of mermaids and where all that remained by the time we ended our travel was literal “love among the ruins”, wherefrom, symbolically, three things only the Dragon, making moves like Tal in those moments and making me proud by doing so, took away and saved – thy books, thy dresses and thy father’s old chess set – lest they get desecrated by being rolled in the mud by the bullies’ bulldozers. This gummy, squishy bird I obsessed about crazily and searched for it everywhere, but then I glimpsed instead a real bird, a seagull gliding across the translucent skies somewhere under the three palms with chopped treetops and realized that only because it has nothing, not letting any possessions drag it down to the ground, can it be free like a bird and able to stream across the skies, so lightly and so gracefully. It was then, during the night before the vultures and the villains were to break into and gnash with their nasty teeth what thou had set there in love that moves mountains, building it brick by brick, tile by tile, plank by plank, fork by fork, and then raze with bulldozers and steel balls, that I was lying down sleepless, gazing at the calm, sleeping face of the little princess, the missionary that would once roam this rocky and rugged part of the planet in search of the sign and the guidance from gods above, illuminated by the flashes of lightning that lit up the whole sky, like stroboscopes, from the storm that raged north, over the coastal hill and city of Split, so dear to Thou and I, expressing the emotions of the heavens at those moments. It was then that there was sunshine and showers coming from the sky just as my princess received her first kiss from the Dragon in the water and the three of us were in it, all alone, for the very first and final time, as if telling us that Heaven and Thou in it were smiling and crying at the same time in those couple of glorious days. It was then that the church bells began to ring in the morning just as I was standing on the ladder and exiting the sea after swimming my three laps for one final time that summer, serving as a prelude to the treble twinkles of the night on which America got conquered for the third time by my countryman and

---

<sup>219</sup> “*Mesec kao popica*” instead of “*Mesec kao loptica*”, meaning “Moon like a little ball” is what thine oldest son and my older brother, Deki, used to say as a toddler, comprising one of thy fondest memories as a mother.

<sup>220</sup> Listen to Cowboy Junkies’ *Misguided Angel* on *The Trinity Session*, Latent, Toronto, CA (1988).

superstar in tennis, the only sport that Thou had enjoyed to watch. It was then that the bells on another church, the Shrine of Saint Sava, that erudite whose work shared so much in common with my mission on planet Earth, began to ring at the exact moment the Little Bear handed you from her shoulders to mine and we both looked up and your sweet laughter mingled with this resplendent tintinnabulation that had come from above. It was then, by my most beloved monument in the world, the monument to high school students the victims of the fight for freedom against fascism in World War II just outside my home, the monument that is not revered in solemn silence, but that has seen kids running and generations of students kiss and fall in love with one another by it, the monument that, as such, epitomizes the ideal life of all monuments in the world, including my tomb, someday, around which children should run in laughter and joy, that you began to kiss me repeatedly, out of the blue, with no reason whatsoever, and then pointed at stars above, the two things that you have never ever, uninvited, done, bringing about an unforgettable magic to one of the dying moments and the final scenes of our summer in Belgrade. Finally, it was then that after many seasons spent by the sea, this one I ended once again by my tossing three pebbles to it, so that you and I return to it, the source and the fountainhead of life, the T. S. Eliot's place at the end of the road whereat we recognize the beginnings in the clearest of lights.



Figure 15. The crescent Moon at which the four-year-old gamin pointed a second or so after the sound of *The Trinity Session* reached her ears for the very first time. It smiled at us to the sound of the gently humming pines and star jasmynes, as if saying “*Tu sam, tu sam*”, angelically joyfully, as if Thou were watching me smilingly from them, like the rabbit Bunny, just the way Thou said thou would do when thou were still near me, the presence of the moment of which is still livelier and realer to my senses than the most palpable objects of the world around me.

Then came years of the excommunication from academia, of financial hardship and of the denial of the freedom to teach and work, despite which I manage to carry out the research of my lifetime, in the backyard, in the garage, in the kitchen, the bedroom and a myriad of parks and playgrounds, in face of the golden-hearted baby's stunted growth that lived up wholly to her nickname, Beba, who appeared as if she would never grow past the tender age of four, even

when she was twice that age. One coincidence in those years that comes to mind followed our entering a church for the first time since this trip to Belgrade and that long, long pandemic, when we befriended the long, long shadows of silence and solitude for life. There, upon exiting Saint Paul's Orthodox Church in Irvine on Christmas Eve, I showed the baby for the first time ever how to cross herself with her three fingers, in the spirit of the Holy Trinity, and she adored it, but did not repeat it until a week later, at night, before sleep, as she drew near me and whispered how she had dreamt of Thou holding a heavy burden, which she offered to help with and did help with, immediately after which she, uninvited, tried to cross herself, sloppily, forgetting whether the head or the tummy are being touched first and whether one crosses from the left to the right or *vice versa*, in a moment that I wished remained impressed in my head forever and ever, until the last star of the universe loses its shine. How beautiful, I said, as coincidences and analogies between two souls split from one slowly began to fade.

You could have been named Celeste or Aitheria or Clair or Sena or Tara or Petra or Klara or Cyrena or Minnehaha or Yasmina or Blaise or Gromka or Andromeda, just as Theo could have ended up being named Ulysses, Tycho<sup>221</sup> or Thelonious, Fido would have been named Balša had he not been born on Saint Nicholas Day, his daughter and my niece, Milica, would have been named Vida had she been born a day later, on Vidovdan, that is, the Day of the Light, and I could have born another name had it not been for the complications Thou bore bravely, with colossal valiance, while carrying me in thy soothing belly. So, why Evangelina, you may wonder now, having read the exhaustive description given under the banner saying Why Theo. It is because it is a composite of three words, the three being the chieftain of all magic numbers and a synonym for the Holy Ghost<sup>222</sup>, the number of a child born when 1 and 1 collide and prove that wholes in life are greater than the simple sums of their parts and that laws of logic and math must go down and under before we can elicit wizardry and move up, over the clouds and into the Sun: (i) Eva, derived from the Hebrew word meaning “life” or “the living one”, given to the first woman on Earth, suggesting One that you are to embrace with every rivulet of life in you; (ii) Angel, the type of creature that you are to strive to become as you make steps from earthliness to heavenliness with every sea-holding breath you make, all until you become an angel to sit by a bunny that Thou wished to guard me and make me company in Thy goodnight farewells every night; (iii) Lina, meaning “a small, palm tree” in Arabic, representing tenderness, yet at the same time being used to denote “a crown used for the hero”, suggesting that smallness and humbleness of the spirit are a seed from which all the heroic powers on this planet sprout. Finally, the giving of this name implicates a wish that your inner world be as beautifully melodic, dreamy and prayerful, all washed in intoxicating harmonies of sounds and colors, as that arising from a song by Cocteau Twins bearing your renaissance name. When at a crossroads or in doubt, let alone dejected and dazed, let that tune be a reminder that you, “the princess (Mom and Dad are Queen and King)”<sup>223</sup>, would “have to fantasize just to survive”<sup>224</sup>, and that your life is to be but a dream dreamt by the dreamer who is the dream. If Theo, that god dressed in infant clothes, is the burst

---

<sup>221</sup> Tycho is still what I often hear in Theo, a reminder of not only the Serbian word for quiet, *tih*, a secret salute to the band in which I played as a youth, *Tišina kod poluzvezde*, but also of the one-against-many attitude held by the Danish scientist, Tycho Brahe, whose poster stood over my bed in the Red Room of my childhood. Ever since then, I have held that this attitude is the one that every holy and progressive spirit in this life must be prepared to bear.

<sup>222</sup> As per the theological concept of the Holy Trinity, 1, 2 and 3, respectively, stand for the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

<sup>223</sup> Listen to Cocteau Twins' *Evangeline* on *Four-Calendar Café*, Fontana, Los Angeles, CA (1993).

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*

of joy and crystal-clear sunrays of intellect, then you be my missionary, the starry night, deep and dreamy. If he is the Sun, you be the stars.

\*\*\*

Back in San Francisco for a heartbeat in time, sitting under a series of waterfalls in luscious Levi's Plaza Park and gazing at the swaying magnolias over me, a stone's throw away from the bench on which Thou and my father, the king of all the stones in my world, kissed, on one of the round granite columns that barely protrude the surface of the water, by merely an inch or so, appearing as if they will be swallowed by the ripples and buried under at any time, at the very same place I remember I saw once **a meditating Buddhist monk** dressed in shiny yellow robes and ran by, heedlessly, paying no attention to him at all, I thought of the day behind me, with its plethora of heated discussions, the scorching blazes of ego and the cold brains craving for love underneath them, clashing on some invisible cognitive planes during the symposium on scientific education I organized and chaired in the conference center overlooking the biggest carousel in the city, this thing that spins you 'round and around around the horses and the bambis and an occasional bear, trying to make sense of it all as the arrows of bigotry and loathing flew left and right between the adversaries, with me, as usual, standing in the middle and gazing at the renowned people and scientific celebrities in my sight, imagining them inside an aura of pure love, love that must be the key, I remarked, and then, amidst all the brilliant arguments and tireless attempts to prove oneself and be smart and earn the applause and a handful of sympathetic smiles, during the very last talk, wherefrom no one expected anything exciting, the reason for which it came last, came what impressed me more than anything frightfully funny, sexily smart or enthrallingly eloquent said beforehand and it was a Toshia's looking sideways and blowing a wisp of air through a capped straw, sending the paper cap into the air and letting it fall on to the ground with a gentle sway<sup>225</sup>, wishing to illustrate how educational tools could be found for free, in a local canteen or a pizza parlor, had we only been guided in the right direction with the right imagination and the drive, as well as that they could be used to a great effect to turn someone's world upside down and make her realize the wonders of the world that wave at us from all angles, an evocation of a small thing *par excellence* once again, as you may guess, which was when this self-proving pushing that makes the brain throb and dissipate the most vital of its energies suddenly stopped and all that was left was a silence interspersed by but the twinkle and a twirl of a lonely star and all this under the splashy sound of water, of life, that washes away everything, the clouds of temporal moods, the currents of evanescent thoughts, the chilling-to-the-bone winds of fear and the freezing iciness of emotional distance, exposing pure essence, the soul and its everlasting shine – the Sun in me and I in the Sun.

\*\*\*

And then comes **a baseball hat**, which the slow-witted boy named Billy wore smilingly at the funeral of Sam the Lion, the heart and soul of the God-forsaken American town on the edge of nowhere, the turning point in its progression toward slow death, a moment from

---

<sup>225</sup> Toshia Wrenn's lecture entitled *MRS Materials Outreach for Rural Education: Hands-on Science to Excite Young Minds* and given at the Materials Research Society meeting in San Francisco, CA, April 23, 2014, Symposium FFF: Educating and Mentoring Young Materials Scientists for Career Development.

which the ghost town's steady descent into oblivion began, with dust and fallen leaves starting to fill its portentous atria and pool parlors once thriving with life, after which silence set in, and then darkness, and then nothingness. The eyelids closed and the night began.

Sonny, the central character of Petar Bogdanović's *Last Picture Show*, first takes off Billy's hat, which Billy takes in his hands again and places back on his head, never ceasing to watch Sonny with a most benevolent smile on Earth, prompting Sonny to reach for it again but, having glimpsed the message of enlightenment that smiling where sadness should prevail was to convey, this time merely tilt it to Billy's side in this most poignant scene of the movie. And then, when poor Billy becomes hit by a car while sweeping the street and lies lifelessly on the path he cleared, Sonny puts it on his chest: a hat full of stars, as it were.

In the real life, coincidentally, the head shaded by this hat became invaded by the same type of explosive starriness<sup>226</sup>, though enlightening in essence, which would rupture it to pieces, as the one that struck Thine like a lightning from the great heights of heavens above. Also, while the filmmaker with a stone, the symbol of silence and grief, engrained in his name was shooting this cinematic masterpiece, his Serbian father swanned across the jagged worldly mountains and into the Great Beyond too, which perhaps explains why the leaves drifting through the eerie pool halls, the dust blown across the deserted alleyways at dusk and the gloomy skies above Sonny's head overcome with sorrows of the grey parched land surrounding the ghost highways stretching to eternal distances all around him looked so real and so dismal in it.

The movie elaborates a topic so dear to hearts of millions, a topic of perpetual interest all until a few decades ago, when reference to religious narratives suddenly became uncool in the circle of intellectual elites: namely, if the Christ, the symbol of a perfect human creature, conceived in the image of God on Earth, was born today, what would he look like? What would he behave like? What would the world's response to his deeds be? Would he need to be a sinner in his youth before entering sainthood, as was the case with most enlightened souls on Earth? Some things would never change, the movie suggests, seeing through its cinematic eye a Christ of the modern times still deeply saddened by the world, turning out to become a male prostitute, if not a drug addict in search of divine experience, owing to his wish to console and cheer the desperate worldly souls. He sure would also have his face smashed by this very same world he wishes to comfort, as it happened to Sonny, and then he would forgive it for crucifying him and wittingly making him suffer. Like a star making itself apparent on the night sky thanks to its shine, yet ceasing not to extinguish the darkness around it all the time, so might the Christ make everybody look like a rogue savage when placed in proximity of his supersensitive self. And, finally, like the Christ depicted in the story about the Grand Inquisitor<sup>227</sup>, responding wordlessly, with a loving kiss on the lips to the array of accusations made by the Church cardinal, to all the finger pointing and malicious excoriations, he would, like Sonny at the end of the movie, respond with reaching out silently to the distressed hand of the accuser, so as to hold it and caress it and console it, instituting oneself as a bearer of the holy waters of Love and Love only for the dry and destitute spiritual desert that Earth has become. Finally, if Sonny, that poor boy with eyes orbiting confoundedly, lost in space and time, sinking in the sea of sadness, yet helplessly giving itself with the heaviness of a rainy cloud dragged down to earth, is indeed a

---

<sup>226</sup> See the Wikipedia page on Sam Bottoms, retrieved from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sam\\_Bottoms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sam_Bottoms) (2015).

<sup>227</sup> See Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, Prosveta, Belgrade, Serbia (1880). See also Heinz von Foerster's Perception of the Future and the Future of the Perception, *Instructional Science* 1 (1) S31 – 43 (1972) for a digested, shorter version of the story.

Christ-like soul on the rise, then everybody is one too, the insight with which the washing of the whole wide world with glorious sunrays of divine spirit commences in an instant.

As for the hat, that miniscule detail of a tremendous importance in this cinematic artwork, it brings the memory of the plaid tweed cap I wore on my head when Thou, captain, my captain, lay like “a dream on the deck, fallen cold and dead”<sup>228</sup>, with hundreds of solemn silhouettes walking by, as if through a dream. I stood there, proudly, amidst the crowd, with mind folded like a paper crane, smooshed into a slushy bolus of saddened spirit and jammed into a miniscule piece of a mosaic painted on a window through which the incense-dimmed sunrays entered my teary eye. Yet, I too, like Billy, the beginning to an end of one American dream, or the Little Tramp upon entering a mystical road that is the onset of being born again and of bringing the curtain down on it all<sup>229</sup>, a beginning and an end at the same time, regardless of what the sanctimonious, condemnatory public eye would have to say to it, smiled and will continue to smile for as long as the Earth orbits the Sun and carries me on it, in spite of the sorrow nested in my heart, resembling a sack brimming with tears, ready to burst at any time and produce a flood that would drown all my ships, even when I “with mournful tread (must) walk the deck my Captain lies”<sup>230</sup>. For, I know, Thou, who had taught me to meet all things in life, virtuous or vicious, good-natured or malevolent, with a cosmic joy illuminating my heart like millions of stars twinkling in togetherness under the glorious dome of the belief that “beauty and none other but beauty shall save the world”<sup>231</sup>, would have done just about the same.

\*\*\*

*The Godfather*, a six hour and fifteen minute long underground saga about the ways love can tangle us in the web of vengeance and destruction, touching the point of deep ethical significance in its course while hanging loosely on that celestial balance whereon pros and cons seem impossible to weigh, swaying back and forth, yet holding no key whatsoever as to how to solve this quintessential paradox, the crucial moment, a crossroads in the evolution of the son from a meek and humble creature fearing power to a don feared by all for its powers, comes once again from a small, small sign: the strike of **a flint spark lighter**. Although it was not displayed with as much grace as the sway of the curtain over the entrance to Jo Ricci’s bar in another crime classic, Jean-Pierre Melville’s *Le deuxième souffle*, it was less ephemeral and had a greater semantic weigh attached to it. Also, although it would not provide as diverse of allusions as the swirl of another object in a movie character’s hands, namely that of a metallic FC Liverpool souvenir that the emotionally stunted daughter, Analia received from her deadbeat dad just before his disappearance in the cold white snow in Lisandro Alonso’s eponymous film, *Liverpool*, the lighter from *The Godfather* is a more solid example of how a tiny, seemingly insignificant object can be a milestone, a turning point in a person’s life, albeit never ever being noticed as such by that very same person. It came after the son’s running out to save his father from a bunch of bloodthirsty, devilish souls eager to mercilessly pull his heart out. As the son stood by the door, having repelled the assassins by merely standing still before them, like a statue, holding no weapon at all in his pockets, he looked to the side, where his partner, Enzo the

---

<sup>228</sup> See Walt Whitman’s *O Captain! My Captain!* (1865) In: *Leaves of Grass: The Deathbed Edition*, Book-of-the-Month Club, New York, NY (1892).

<sup>229</sup> Watch *Modern Times* directed by Charlie Chaplin (1936).

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>231</sup> See Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky’s *The Idiot*, Prosveta, Belgrade, Serbia (1869).

baker, tried to light up a cigarette with a lighter, but could not do so because his hands shook out of fear like a leaf on a tree. The son reached out to help him, grabbed the lighter and struck it so that the flame was enkindled and the cigarette lit. Then he pulled the lighter to his side, perhaps intrigued by the fact that his own hands did not shake at all and that he could strike it with ease. Then he struck it again and again and his hands did not shake by even a slightest bit. All the while the camera zoomed into his coat, the hands, the lighter and nothing else, excluding the darkness of the fall enveloping them. That minute moment happened to be the psychological crux of the grand phase transitions that the son was to undergo, passing through a marvelous crisis, as it is always the case, for it showed him that *he can*. And as Sarah Kay stressed out<sup>232</sup>, when this *I can* dawns on one, the first and the most critical step in one's evolution into something new and greater than one's past and present self has been made. In the course of this iconic movie, this *I can* moment, resembling a sun popping out of a single strike of a flint spark lighter, ended up being followed by a dark, dark night sky whereon each star stood for one *I will* moment, for as per Sarah Kay's philosophy, these *I will* instances present the next stage in one's development. Then comes the third and the final stage, which is learning to be oneself and love being oneself and yet hate being oneself and thus rush to evolve into something new with every passing moment, for only in such a way could one remain true to oneself in this permanently changing reality where a new I is born with every blink of an eye.

In the end, let us all remember that, symbolically, what came out of these strikes of a flint spark lighter after Enzo's cigarette was lit was not light. It wasn't a flame. It was not even a flicker. It was nothing. One big dark nothing descriptive of the void into which the son rushed to fall via conforming to vengefulness and destruction and all of that, mysteriously, while being fueled by that sublime cosmic guidance called Love, posing a colossal question mark before our eyes, a question mark capable of boggling the delineators of sacred ethics and seekers of heavenly justice from now until the day eternity knocks on their doors. And yet, it is this nothing, which prompted the descent to a dark, devilish path, that can remind of a brighter effect in this dialectical fairytale where good and evil inspire and sustain each other, namely that of the flicker of a beautiful thought sparked by the pairs or multiples of synaptic flints firing together, in synchrony, in the brain of a creature looking at the world with love, with an angelic dedication or a wordless prayer that gives one's whole heart and being to the altar of the Creation. One such evanescent flicker may come uninvited and go by in an instant, but it can change the fate of the Universe for good and realign the paths of destiny before its bearer.

\*\*\*

*The Warriors*, a modern take on Xenophon's *Anabasis* and yet another movie, after *The Godfather*, where violence is the norm, is a portrayal of an archotypically odysseyan voyage where the journey back home ends up being far more strenuous and longer than the arrival at the destination<sup>233</sup>. Watching it for the first time since the 1980s and the golden days of my childhood, I found little of the choreographic, directorial or screenwriting grace in it except for one magical moment. It was the final subway train scene before the Warriors reached the ocean shore, the place they considered both their home and their final, truest destination in this action-packed movie that is, it must be said, more about entertainment than about producing a lasting

---

<sup>232</sup> Watch Sarah Kay's TED talk: *If I Should Have a Daughter...*, available at [http://www.ted.com/talks/sarah\\_kay\\_if\\_i\\_should\\_have\\_a\\_daughter.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/sarah_kay_if_i_should_have_a_daughter.html) (March 2011).

<sup>233</sup> Watch *The Warriors* directed by Walter Hill (1979).

artistic impression in the heads and the hearts of the viewers. In this silent scene, Swan and Mercy are shown seated on the train when two posh couples enter their car and take a seat right across them. After a speechless series of looks exchanged between the two sides, ambiguous and more meaningful than millions of words, the two couples exit the car and **a petite bouquet of flowers** is seen dropping on the slimy floor of the subway train. For a brief moment of time, Mercy's face with eyes closed becomes transformed first into a blood red Moon and then into the Coney Island Ferris Wheel. The Sun has risen in the meantime and Swan and Mercy are standing on a boardwalk, in the vicinity of the giant wheel, and Swan pulls out the bouquet from under his arm and hands it to Mercy. When she makes a face that spells Why, Swan says how he dislikes letting things be thrown to waste. In these times of disposable things, emotions and relationships, this comment echoes with a mysterious beauty, bringing to mind my own experience of befriending even the kitschiest and least artistically appealing works, in each and every one of which I would always find at least a single moment of magic, a single masterstroke, a sparkle of divine inspiration, telling me that the supreme goddess that Nature is does not let anything be completely freed from sublime beauties that touch and uplift the soul and, as such, does not let anything be fully wasted in Her celestial eyes. To judge less and love more, to scold little and crave to save the world a lot by putting our whole heart and beyond into discovering unutterable marvels in literally everything, including the darkest and the most deplorable human paths, is what She tries to teach us thereby.

Once again, as we see, it was a small, small thing, almost unnoticeable in its minuteness, that saved a human creation, a stilted thriller in this case, from desecration and a parabolic path into triviality on one side and a nearest trashcan on the other in a mind resplendent with dizzying and sublime semantic orbits around many planets and stars. At the same time, it rooted itself into the soil of a vivacious mind, like a sterling sapling which, if watered with the streams of pure emotion and thought, might grow into unthinkably great trees of knowledge, wherefrom flowers and fruits would fall in abundance straight into the wells of wisdom nurtured in the heart of humanity. Like the lip-gloss lost by a Jarvis Cocker's muse<sup>234</sup>, throwing her momentarily into a state of depression, the difference between losing and finding one such miniscule object means a world to one, a world bigger than all the fames and fortunes in it altogether. Or, as put forth by Jean-Luc Godard in his celebration of the colossal power of minute details decorating the silver screen, "We forgot why Joan Fontaine leans over the cliff edge. And what was Joel McCrea doing in Holland? We forgot why Montgomery Clift remains forever silent and why Janet Leigh stops at the Bates Motel and why Teresa Wright is still in love with Uncle Charlie. We forgot what Henry Fonda is not entirely guilty of, why exactly the American government hired Ingrid Bergman. But we remember a handbag. But we remember a bus in the desert. But we remember a glass of milk, the wings of a mil, a hairbrush. But we remember a row of bottles, a pair of glasses, a music sheet, a set of keys. Because through them and with them, Alfred Hitchcock succeeded where Alexander, Julius Caesar, Hitler, Napoleon failed. Take the control of the universe"<sup>235</sup>. Indeed, from Citizen Kane's Rosebud<sup>236</sup> to the steamed bun from *Goodbye Dragon Inn*<sup>237</sup> to the executioner's squished straw hat in Berlanga's *El Verdugo*<sup>238</sup> to Veronika Voss'

---

<sup>234</sup> Listen to Pulp's *Lipgloss on His 'n' Hers*, Island Records, New York, NY (1994).

<sup>235</sup> Watch *Histoire(s) du cinema* directed by Jean-Luc Godard, Chapter 4a: The Control of the Universe (1998).

<sup>236</sup> Watch *Citizen Kane* directed by Orson Welles (1941).

<sup>237</sup> Watch *Goodbye Dragon Inn* directed by Tsai Ming-liang (2003).

<sup>238</sup> Watch *El Verdugo* directed by Luis Garcia Berlanga (1963).

vase<sup>239</sup> to the railway trackman's wristwatch in Grozeva and Valchanov's *Слава*<sup>240</sup> to Frederic's pullover in Eric Rohmer's *L'Amour l'après-midi*<sup>241</sup> to Juliette's "galactic"<sup>242</sup> cup of coffee in *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle*<sup>243</sup> to the stone with which Fellini's Fool solaced saddened Gelsomina<sup>244</sup>, cinema is teeming with signs that implicitly speak in favor of the beauty of small things, of finding of the ladder ascending the searcher to the peaks of his quest for the meaning of life in the littlest details of reality. To be the littlest of the little and thereby become a ruler of cosmoses – 'tis what these melancholic musings instruct us.

\*\*\*

With legs lifted high, overlooking from a balcony atop Nob Hill the way leading westward, toward the ocean, I watch the earthlings passing by, never looking up, into the sky, in inspiration, prayer and awe, yet with each of them moving past my window, my world becomes unexplainably enlightened a bit more. As I think of this, the final shot of *Medicine for Melancholy*<sup>245</sup>, a black-and-white mumblecore tale about San Francisco, the city in which these words are being written, pops before the eye of my mind. In it, a boy watches a girl leaving him for good by riding a bike on a Tenderloin street, westward as well, and as she passes under the pansies hanging inside his windowsill jardinière, the flowers turn violet, the only object in color in the course of the entire movie.

Another flower, just like the one from the bouquet dropped onto the soiled asphalt of a magical place where an urban jungle met the mysterious immensity of the Atlantic Ocean, near a wondrous Ferris wheel, was used by the dead French aristocrat a.k.a. **Conductor 71** to pick a teardrop off the cheek of a young miss called June in a movie<sup>246</sup> that was based on an analogy, which, itself, acted as an analogy to Thy plight with the stars and galaxies starting to swirl out of control inside thy dreamy head at that moment, with further analogies lurking beyond, mirroring the mirrored and contriving the mirage of the mirage, and so on, *ad infinitum*, dizzying myself, dizzying the reader, producing the same dizzying circles that were spinning in thy holy head in the hours of my watching this film.

The conductor, whose number is 71, the exact number of the year of thy life in which thy time on Earth would be up and Thou would fly up with the wings of an angel, was guillotined in his real life and so he is dead, but, like many, if not all, dead, he is also alive, having returned from the afterlife back to Earth to chaperone Peter the aviator across the river of Styx. Alas, the conductor may know how to navigate the otherworldly rivers, but he got lost in the foggy English Channel and so he did not arrive in time to facilitate Peter's death. Peter, therefore, who was supposed to fly in an aerial World War II battle, but then bail out with a torn parachute and drown, was now alive. And yet, his time on Earth, according to the council of angels overseeing

---

<sup>239</sup> Watch *Veronika Voss* directed by Rainer Werner Fassbinder (1982).

<sup>240</sup> Watch *Glory* directed by Kristina Grozeva and Petar Valchanov (2016).

<sup>241</sup> Watch *Love in the Afternoon* directed by Eric Rohmer (1972)

<sup>242</sup> See Hunter Vaughan's *Where Film Meets Philosophy: Godard, Resnais, and Experiments in Cinematic Thinking*, Columbia University Press, New York, NY (2012), pp. 67.

<sup>243</sup> Watch *2 or 3 Things I Know about Her* directed by Jean-Luc Godard (1967).

<sup>244</sup> Watch *La Strada* directed by Federico Fellini (1954).

<sup>245</sup> Watch *Medicine for Melancholy* directed by Barry Jenkins (2008).

<sup>246</sup> Watch *Stairway to Heaven* a.k.a. *A Matter of Life and Death* directed by Michael Latham Powell and Emeric Pressburger (1946).

it, was up and so they ordered the infamous conductor to find Peter and bring him over to the other side.

Meanwhile, Peter fell in love with June and the conductor found the breaking of the newly formed link of love problematic, and so he allowed Peter to prepare an appeal for life, which would be decided on a trial in a modernist version of afterlife. At this point, the viewer realizes that this entire fancy plot may be just a figment of imagination of Peter, who fluctuates between life and death in his mental sphere and on the operating table, where surgeons have opened his brain to operate on it. Just as Thou waved bye to me from an imaginary seashore, with a heartrending swing of the arm and a broken smile, as Thou were about to sit on one such table, tremblingly, for the very first time, Peter must have felt the same confinement to a limbo between life and death and so his brain began to spin ornate hallucinations, which were but elaborate analogies of his state.

As for the tear wiped off June's cheek with a flower held in the conductor's hands, a crucial evidence in the aviator's trial it'd be, the conductor said. And so it was. The trial, full of tremors and trepidations, was supposed to determine whether the aviator – who had been supposed to plunge into the sea and drown in it but who had managed to float and be carried on its streams toward the face of Love – would extend his days on Earth or be flown into Heavens momentarily. The amphitheater where the council was conducting the trial was shaped like a spiral galaxy, further iterating the analogy between the brain surgery and the storyline of the movie, just as well as the fact that the same actor played both the surgeon and the celestial judge did.

In the end, to love and let live or not – that was the question, in the movie and in the realer spheres of life, where the very same dilemma lay posed before thee as well. I kneeled, at the very spot, on the carpet beside the bed, where I collapsed a month earlier upon hearing the news of what has grown inside thy brain and glued myself to earth and could not get up for hours, and I prayed with the language of the heart, its shine, its grip, its ken and all, that love, indeed, at the end of the day, which could beget sunrise in the midst of a darkness night, prevail and Thou be brought back to life and to me. I hoped that the fate of the pilot, who would be granted the opportunity to live in the end, would be the same as thy fate, and I imagined thy lifelong dreams about soaring like a bird and flying across the sky, freely, detachedly, undisturbed by any worldly matters, enjoying the butterflies in thy tummy and the view of the earth from high up above, coming true. Yet, I wished with all my heart that love be the anchor, to make thee stay.

With this, I also hoped that the analogy of another small detail from the movie, which may easily end up being overlooked, would make its appearance when all ends well. It was a chess book by Alexander Alekhine, on his favorite games, which I adored more than any other chess book as a teenager<sup>247</sup>, which I read over and over again on many summer holidays, which taught me the art of midgame wizardry, and which the conductor, coincidentally, picked from the ground after Peter knocked it off the table as he played a game of chess with June. He took the book with him to afterlife and returned it to Peter on his way back to life. Soon after Peter woke up at the operating table, June found the book in the pocket of his jacket and, like the romantic poet, Coleridge, who woke up next to a flower from his dream and asked himself if everything, then, must be a dream, so could the characters not tell anymore which was realer: the dream or reality. The feeling I have had, with Thou near me, or children more recently, has always been that of the pending awakening from all this beauty, which is so, so beautiful that it might just as

---

<sup>247</sup> See Aleksandar Aljehin's *Moj put do svetskog prvaka*, Sportska knjiga, Belgrade (1986).

well turn out to be a dream. It is a feeling that has fed me with the right dose of anxiety to keep my senses awake and prevent all these wondrous fine details that comprise our day-to-day living from going by unnoticed.

Be that as it may, the fact that I was watching a film where the protagonist underwent a brain operation while his trial was taking place and that I was at the same time sending all the positive energy I could to magically heal thy brain from the invasions from the inside and the outside Thou endured on another operation table, across the ocean, got me puzzled by the ostensibly strange, but in reality omnipresent coincidence between events at the macrocosmic and the microcosmic scales. It also served as a proof that art can be the guide and that it can speak to the deepest gulfs and bridge the most frightening crevasses within our beings.

As I lay later in bed and counted stars, in my head and the worldly skies alike, the point sources of light that light up whole universes around them, I thought about this littlest of the little things, a teardrop as the proof of Love, the greatest lifesaving force in the Universe. Though infinitely small, it can shake the Heaven from the bottom to the top, like a can of silt, and change the course of even the history written in the letters of steel. Let it be Love for all then, the simplest recipe for lives lived and fulfilled to their fullest, with not even an iota to be added on top of them. May I now, please, turn to a pure bliss of this divinest of all feelings and continue to shine, selflessly, like a star of the night sky, to illuminate the roads to starriness and salvation before all these myriad souls wrapped in darkness? So I said and everything leaden in my world suddenly gained glossy colors, and in no time I was drifting toward the land of dreams, the dreams that, I know, may be just as real, if not realer than all this grayish corporeality around us.

\*\*\*

To develop a consciousness that is indifferent to the petty plots over which human existence revolves and is capable of being bedazzled by the beauty discovered in the littlest ephemera is to be one step away from becoming an angel on Earth. As the Memphian photographer, William Eggleston noted, albeit somewhat morbidly, yet up to the point, “had he been on location at Nazi headquarters he would have peeked over his shoulder and turned his camera on the contents of Hitler’s wastebasket”<sup>248</sup>. Hence my appreciation of Ozuesque cinematic moments where the storyteller behind the camera abandons the story and graces the viewer with the infinite, albeit unrecognized, aesthetics of objects lying far, far from the foci of an ordinary attention.

As Theo and I walk across the Berryessa Park, picking flowers under giant pines and eucalyptuses, I recall that no more moving example of a little detail causative of the effects of cosmic proportions may have ever adorned the movie screen than that of ***Zuzu’s petals***. Remember, in Frank Capra’s postwar masterpiece, *It’s a Wonderful Life*, the movie that had to make a 40-year long run from a box office failure to the average populace’s favorite Christmas viewing, our protagonist, George Bailey, played by Jimmy Stewart, becomes sick of life. Having stepped up to fill the spot opened by the death of his father and take on the job of the director of a loan company in a sleepy upstate New York town, relinquishing his dream of going to college and becoming a man of the world, regrets began to pile up over the years, converting a sympathetic, caring and optimistic young man into a prickly, bitter grownup, unkind and unpleasant to anyone in his surroundings. And then, in the darkness of a dive bar, so pitch black

---

<sup>248</sup> See Sally Eaucilaire’s *New Color / New Work: Eighteen Photographic Essays*, Abbeville Press, New York, NY (1984), pp. 67.

that nothing but a single voice creeping its way through the stuffy air made it to our senses, a voice was heard, his: “God, I wish I’d never been born”. An angel hears this lament and goes on to report to the council of angels congregating on a nearby cloud. The decision is made: the angel will descend down to Earth and erase any sign that George has ever existed, while leaving George, himself, intact. The world he would find himself in would be a hypothetical world in which he was never born. And so it happened after a series of events in which Clarence the angel tried it all to restore the faith in life of now bankrupt George attempting to commit a suicide: a world was created in which no sign could be found that George Bailey had ever existed. While searching for his home and family in vain through the Christmas night, yet finding nothing but a ruinous house in a ruinous town in its place, hearing about the tragic fate of people whom he guided toward the prosperous path through the simple acts of everyday kindness, George realized how immense the effect his generous being had on the thriving of his community, all thanks to the little, not big, things he had been accomplishing day by day. And then the redemption of magnificent proportions commenced. However, instead of regretting about his wasted life, George now began to regret that he ever regretted about his “wasted” life and prompted the angel to wipe out any sign of his existence, leaving him alone in this cold, cold world on an iciest Christmas night in cinema history. And then Clarence the angel claps his fingers and makes the world retake the form in which George Bailey existed all to that day. The angel disappears and George, unbelievably, having now become accustomed to this new world in which he was but a complete foreigner, starts to search for the sign that the world has indeed taken on its old shape. He finds this and that, but nothing serves as a definite sign, a sign that would reassure his spirit that he could now go home and find his family and friends there, along with all the other pieces and threads that define his social life, life that becomes seen as the only one that matters if we keep in mind that “only what we give we truly are”. And then he looks for them in his pocket: Zuzu’s petals, the remnants of the flower which his youngest daughter, Zuzu, handed to him that morning as he angrily and despondently rushed to work, stuffing them carelessly in his pocket. Oh, but what a value did those Zuzu’s petals regain now that he saw them with different eyes. A little thing they were, but they guided George immaculately toward rediscovering a new old life, life in which everything is illuminated by the faith in the colossal magnitude of the ability of smallest of acts to change the world for better.

But what if we could find Zuzu’s petals, these grand reminders that life is wonderful again, in every little thing that the celestial rays of our attention land onto, I wonder. What if every object on Earth, from the cupcakes made of playground sand by Evangelina, sweeter than thy favorite tiramisu at Mario’s, to the dry leaves crumbled in the trumpy angel’s hands under the long shadows of eucalyptuses bathing in the Californian midday sun, is imbued by the spirit of Zuzu’s petals, which, if recognized for this infinite value that they hold inside, would turn even the swampiest regrets into glories of divers gods thundering raptly at once, like the time when I, broken and discarded into a dustbin, hopeless and morose, heard this angel giggle in her sleep and concluded that everything in the story of my life that led to that point made sense and should not be changed for all the money and success in the world if the cost would be depriving the Cosmos of the dream from which this happy chirp popped out and of my hearing it? Moreover, what if every flower’s petals, including those Theo picks every morning from the sides of the road on our daily walks and carries with him everywhere, finding them “very pretty”, could be Zuzu’s? The flower, the only thing that attracted Theo’s attention when he was carried briskly on my shoulders down the moonlit Magnificent Mile in Chicago amidst rivers of people, roaring automobiles, brilliant boutiques and blinking skyscrapers, triggering my decision to leave

the city and hit serener sceneries, thus changing our fate for good, clearly did have one such profound effect on our lives, but what if every little flower he picks on our leisurely suburban strolls, I wonder, influences the paths of our lives with an equal immensity, even when it goes by our views almost wholly unnoticed?

Incidentally, a favorite site from which Theo loves to pick his yellow Bermuda buttercup flowers is a green surface on the edge of the shipshape San Jose parkway, near the corner of Messina and Knights Bridge, right next to a dismantled electrical box and a place where a toppled swivel chair has lain for months now, in whose star-shaped base he saw a same star as one of those lighting up the night sky and exhilaratingly pointed at them both, speaking universes with this simple gesture that compared the discarded, the grimmest and the dysfunctional with the shiniest, the brightest and the heavenliest, unknowably handing me a sign that stars are unreachable if we wish to pick them with our fingers from the sky, but readily findable if we reach in the direction of the dustiest and the most neglected corners of this topsy-turvy reality of ours, wherein “the last shall be first, and the first last” (Matthew 20:16), wherein the quest for the most sublime of things sages begin by entering the lowest-lying levels of being, and wherein the search for gaining the world begins by acquainting in detail the finest of its details.

\*\*\*

**Flowers for Thee:** ‘tis the title of a song I composed for thee many, many years ago. It was a dark, dark song, if ever there was one; the darkest, in fact, I had ever known, having brought me down to my knees before thy bed when its notes first dawned on me. The leaden bass line led the melody while the high notes were laggardly caressed here and there on the second guitar, creating an atmosphere of graveness and grief, of tombs of Thebes and candles of Calvary singing their silent songs of sadness side by side. From the sea of silence it emerged, and into it, slowly, disappeared.

But where’s two, there’ll be three, the old proverb says, whereas Lao-Tzu would add that “from three, the entire known universe is being created”<sup>249</sup>. Hence the mention of the third flower in this contemplative flower thread, the flower that shall save us from being lost in the shale of sadness, begets more flowers, one of which will come in a heartbeat, straight from 1932, the year Rene Magritte painted *The Unmasked Universe*, showing human edifices to be ruins when “unmasked” and the sky falling apart into artificial cubicles, which is how I have felt after the day when the eerie diagnosis and prognosis were revealed to me, the day that separates the BC from the AD in the story of my life.

The Belgian surrealist painted this work soon after he returned to Brussels from his three-year residence in Paris and across the river Marne, just outside of this city of light, we will now drift because it is where Jean Renoir’s take on the Little Tramp<sup>250</sup>, a character so dear to the heart of Thou and I, the heart that will have always been one and the same, sat in a rowboat with his bourgeois companions who defied the memorable Pet Shop Boys’ adage, “who is never boring is never bored”<sup>251</sup>, and who were indeed bored to death by their endless surges of staleness and insipidity. Then, however, when everyone expects it least, the moment of a life-changing magic

---

<sup>249</sup> See my personal translation of Lao-Tzu’s *Tao-Te-Xing*: Vuk Uskoković – “*Tao-Te-Xing: The Book for All Ages*”, Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing, Scotts Valley, CA (2011).

<sup>250</sup> Watch *City Lights* directed by Charlie Chaplin (1931), my No. 1 movie of all times and the movie which we two sobbed together to one evening in the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century like to no movie before or after.

<sup>251</sup> Listen to Pet Shop Boys’ *Being Boring* on *Behaviour*, Parlophone, London UK (1990).

strikes: namely, the little tramp, Boudu, repelled by the flowery language of the fellow boatmen and boatwomen, saw a water lily and the little delicate thing attracted his attention. However, as he leaned to the left to reach it from the water surface, the boat capsized and everybody in it plunged into the water. While the sunken men and women managed to hold together and eventually reached the shore, Boudu continued to leisurely ride down the river stream, soon disappearing out of sight.

And then a string of symbolisms ensued. First, after Boudu landed on a distant shore, the first thing he did was to swap his fancy clothes with a ragged scarecrow he saw by the side of the road, thus iterating his intention to remain heart to heart with the poor and the destitute for as long as he lived. Next he swallowed his pride by asking for food from nearby picnickers, so as to signify the need for one to lay low to see the world right – which is, pardon me, always skewed to the left – and be a flicker of inspiration to it. And then, finally, he lay on the grass bordering the river bank, tossed his hat into the river and laughingly uttered a couple of inarticulate words, perhaps to tell us that semantics become meaningless and emotions underneath the verbal expressions become everything when enlightenment is reached. The hat continued to flow down the river and the question arises naturally in the viewer's mind whether the world has been gained or lost with this relinquishment of the material for the sake of the spiritual. The camera, then, makes a full circle pan, slowly and elegantly, as if to tell us the answer with its wordless eye: the world is the little tramp's – the whole of it. The bourgeoisie grieves over his drowning by an empty coffin, not knowing that he is alive, doing dandier than ever before. The last shot is on people, people passing by in long columns, people in whom we always forget whatever it is that we feel has been forgotten.

And so, I may bemoan Thy departure and lament over moments of love that will never happen, but I am also gleeful when I think of Thee being saved from drowning in the waters of vapidness of the modern age, and bathing in joy on some distant shore. For, somewhere inside me, the vision of Thee, glowing like a fairy all made up of white daisies, reassures my spirit that the world is Thine and that Thou are, truly, everywhere. Everywhere I turn there is Thou, watching me like a crescent moon from the sea of spirit encompassing it all and softly smiling at me, knowing that every moment in this heartrending life of mine is a step closer to our reuniting on a heavenlier plane of being. To get there in my dreams, dreams that can all but be destroyed, neither by the spears of jealousy and hatred surrounding us nor by money and other maps that corrupt divine spiritedness, nor by death rows, guns, bombers and beyond, I need only pick a lonely flower or a stalk of grass lying close to my feet and watch it long enough with gentleness and veneration gleaming from my heart, all until a gateway opens for the merging of our souls, albeit on different physical planes, and for instant teleportation of my spirit to Eden of Thine angelical embrace and the summery sunshine of Thy holy motherliness.

\*\*\*

For parents, guarders and guardians of that gate of Eden, beyond which children ought not to roam lest their purity and innocence become corrupt, washing, often, is an endless, Sisyphean task. Be it clothes, dishes, floors or windows, washing them is commonly perceived as the epitome of the hardships of parenting and is also the time when many moms and dads get to reflect on their supposedly petty fates and failures in life. That Old Testament curse, foretelling that “in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children” (Genesis 3:16) and “in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground” (Genesis 3:19), usually never comes to the minds

of parents as copiously as during their performing these tasks. Yet, washing can be a deeper action if seen as the material version of its spiritual analog, during which we cleanse and purify our inside worlds from all the worldly slime and grime that have collected in them. Therefore, one of my steadiest memories is that of Thee washing clothes by hand, over the fusty tub in the icy, unheated bathroom of our Belgrade home, where black mold stained every square inch of every wall, the layers of slime lined some of the decades-old toiletry and a mini dust storm from the windowsill spilled into the air every time the creaky window was slid open to let some air in. Thou were not thrilled by these tasks and thy lower back was giving in to serious discomforts, but thy children's leaving the nest brought about even greater pains, to thy soul, not the body. And I vividly remember Thou leaning against the edge of the tub, scrubbing old sheets and socks by hand, and saying, "I will never say anything bad about all this work, so long as my babies are here". Likewise, I am happy in the role of a Cinderella, mopping the floor, dusting the bookshelves, washing the dishes and doing all the other housecleaning activities that I can. All I need to do if I ever get fed up with these tasks or if the tiredness becomes unbearable is to think of Thy words by that grimy tub, with dirty socks in thy soft and soothing hands, meant for all but this hard and gritty of a labor.

And so, here, in San Francisco, when I do laundry in one of the many coin-run laundromats in one of the many laundrettes in our neighborhood, a part of me feels guilty for the ease of the task compared to that carried out by Thee. I, however, do all I can to make the task more laborious than it is; this has included going to laundry self-services lying beyond many mounds and valleys, holding all the laundry in my arms as opposed to using a wheeled basket, running up and down the Nob and Russian hills while I wait for the laundry to be done, holding Theo in the kangaroo pouch carrier before me as I load the laundry into the machines and pull them out and fold them, and so on. Despite all that, the feeling I have is that I have not come even close to the hardships Thou have endured, and I feel bad for that, and spoiled, too, and so I grab the apron strings, tie them around my back, and get on with a million other household chores, hoping that somewhere along the line, not only my karma, but my spirit too will be cleaned enough so that its shine starts to bedazzle and beautify the whole wide world with my mere being and nothing else.

This moral and aesthetic connotation of the act of cleaning means that the sites where washing clothes, among other things, is done are – or can be, to be more precise – shrines of a kind. One of such shrines that I occasion frequently to do laundry is a block up the street from where we live, on Sacramento Street, between Leavenworth and Jones, tucked inside a flowery alley called Leroy, the mere gaze into which, let alone sneaking into its smog-laden greenery, evokes a sense of mystery and revelry at once, and so the alley and I come close to and talk, mutely, as the inside of those big machines spin and spin and spin, cleansing the yard goods and the world alike.

One day, as I was walking back home past this **Leroy laundrette and the alley full of stars**, a man in Bermuda shorts, moccasins and calves of steel also strolled down the street, a couple of steps ahead of me. He suddenly stopped, took off one of his shoes and, while standing on the tip of his toes, turned it upside down and let a little rock fall down from it and onto the ground. The shade of a tree I found myself in at that second became instantly lit in glorious nuances, as if the very shadows of fairies and pans began to dance the bebop all over my path. My reckoning where "each star'd fall and a button from my autumn

coat'd drop"<sup>252</sup> suddenly came to a halt and all became illuminated by the bliss of a holy bum. The moment of magic in movement this was, I thought to myself and a sense of enthrallment, electrifying my spine, my skin and my touch took over my being completely. All these sensations occurred thankfully to this little sign given to me next to a place that signifies the washing and the tumbling of the old and the beginning of something new, purer than ever, without the giver's even slightly being aware of it, as it usually happens in life where surfing on the waves of Tao transforms us into a Sun that shines forth with illuminative moves, naturally and spontaneously, without any forethought or effort to do so.

Later in the day, Thou and I would walk down the stairs and kiss Thee I would and ask whence the smooch and thine answer would be, "From the Heart", the locus from which everything genuine and inspiring in this world originates. To let ourselves slide down the stairs of life and go with the flow of the divine energy some may call Tao is indeed the best way to climb these very same stairs that ascend us to heavenly heights – the sublime, celestial abodes whose neighbors are shiny stars. 'tis an insight that might make the ancient words engraved on an emerald table blush with sweetness and sympathy.

But now, as I was brightened by sunlight on this lazy Indian summer afternoon, standing under an autumn blaze statuesquely, like a solidified flagstaff, Thou slumbered on a sofa inside the hearty Victorian pad a block down the street. It was the day that began with a drop of chocolate fallen from the eye of a bear-shaped cupcake and spread on a wooden cutting board in the shape of a heart (Fig.16), sweetly and sagaciously, and that ended with a drop of wild strawberry juice rolling down the edge of a tulip glass. "If we study Japanese art, you see a man who is understanding, wise, philosophic, and intelligent, who spends his time how? In studying the balance between the earth and the moon? No. In studying the policy of Bismarck? No. He studies a single blade of grass"<sup>253</sup>, the words van Gogh jolted down in a letter to who knows whom swooshed through my head. A little piece of rock elegantly dropped onto the San Francisco floor over which ocean waves once raged and are now grounds for the new anchors of the new hearths thrown. In that very same instant, I remember, Thine eyes opened. The Sun, simultaneously, as if through an act of magic, came out through the overcast skies and shed another shaft of light through the window shades of the seaworthy cabin wherein I and Thou, maddeningly maudlin, fondled each other with the looks of longing and love.



Figure 16. A drop of chocolate dough that fell from the eye of a cupcake shaped like a bear and spread itself on the charcuterie board into a heart, speaking millions to eyes of the heart that are blessed to see this as a poetic sign from Heavens above.

---

<sup>252</sup> Listen to Đorđe Balašević's *Čaletova pesma on Tri posleratna druga*, Jugoton, Zagreb (1989).

<sup>253</sup> See Alan Gowans' *The Restless Art: A History of Painters and Painting, 1760 – 1960*, J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, PA (1966), pp. 270.

\*\*\*

A walk down the steps of Grace Cathedral, the Notre Dame Church of San Francisco, and all around it and 'round and 'round again, with gazes resting up high, where the angels walking on puffy clouds and rusty bells that always toll for Thee and Thee only merge into one, made **a pair of white socks** drop from the pale little feet of Theo, a little God hanging 'round my chest, right where the Holy Son ought to be when a cross is drawn over my frail body, a shadow the shape of a question mark, a nightingale levitating between earthliness and ethereality, belonging nowhere and everywhere at once, separated from everything and bonded with it all, a true blessing for the devotees to walking on the Way of Love, need I say, feeling as if being trapped in the lairs of the muses of Mystery, yet having solved it all long, long time ago, crucified at a crossroads and confined in a state whence all things beautiful arise. A blessing here came in the form of a thing lost, the littlest of them all, fallen off the feet of a god of small things I had carried with me. We searched and searched for the lost baby socks as we went 'round and 'round around the cathedral, almost as if we were getting lost in the labyrinth carved on the ground just outside of it, the labyrinth whose center one gets nearer to, the farther one is from it, while the more one moves away from it, the more one approaches it. As we circled confoundedly around the Huntington Park, many things popped up in my head, from stars spinning in strangest orbits to kings and queens perishing like marmalade in the west wind, when the bells began to blow everything in sight with their jingly melody, the question of which impossible person one would like to meet and choices of others often falling on the famous or infamous, when one and only being I would love to meet, to the melody of "Ma, how you've grown"<sup>254</sup> ringing in my head, is Thou, Thou and no one but Thou, Thou as a five-, eight- or eleven-year old, spending time dreaming in solitude and, like Theo in a couple of years from now, drawing mysterious symbols in the air with the fingers of thy holy hand, on an early spring or summer afternoon, with my grandma cooking lunch and me, teleported to this holy day in the past, peeking through the window to have my soul rejoice in the beauty that Thou were, at the exact moment of which this daydream of mine burst, and we found them. There they were, miraculously, one sock lying next to the other, right on the steps of the church, as if they were pointing the way to something unspeakably glorious. Take care of the small things, thus I say, in whom godliest of the gods are seen, then follow even smaller things dropped by them and the Way will be shown to Thee. Such is the game Nature plays with us, in the course of which we are being taught by Her to reach stars not be jumping higher than anyone else, but by descending low, lower, into the dust and then deeper, and finding the door therein and then the narrow and the strait road that will, miraculously, lead us to the most unexpected of places in this world where ends merge with beginnings and where the deepest nights make their way to the most blissful of sunrises, while every point of origin hides a view and a taste of the horizon at sunset over which the journey will come to an end.

\*\*\*

On a Christmas Eve, like the one I used to spend with Thee, gliding sloppily through the icy streets of my hometown at night to glimpse the scenes of nativity in a house of God, but with

---

<sup>254</sup> Listen to 10,000 Maniacs' *How You've Grown* on *Our Time in Eden*, Elektra, New York, NY (1992).

sunlight everywhere around me, on the other side of the globe, I bowed before the tomb of Mother Teresa, with Thy shadow on my side. This godly figure and the saint, who followed her fellow sisters in step before she saw leprous homeless souls lying abandoned on the streets of Calcutta and left the pious procession, sat down with the poor and stayed with them forever, is remembered to have said that “not all of us can do great things, but we can do **small things with great love**”, a saying that takes us from infinity spread like a blanket gleaming with stars within our hearts to a littlest dot in the Universe that we could be focused on, just like the one drawn as the opening symbol of this book, and then to an even greater infinity created by diffraction of the rays of our focus from this miniscule point. Which is, by the way, how everything in life evolves: by breathing in and out, deeply and thoroughly, from one end to another, from the breadth of the daytime sky, with the sunrays of our attention dissipating in every direction in search of the systemic spirit of the whole to its confinement into a single source of light, a littlest of the stars adorning the night sky, from the singularity of a Big Crunch to the cosmic expansiveness of a Big Bang, from being as big as the endless Cosmos in the wide scope of our views to being smaller than a smallest speckle of dust in sympathy with all things around us and back and then all over again.

Be that as it may, we ought to always keep in mind that to do small things with great love is far greater of a feat than doing great things with small love. Indeed, that how we do what we do matters more than what we do is what we have come to learn on this karmic plane of reality. And when we do succeed in this, however we act, whichever way the compasses of our hearts turn and whatever the semantic content of our expressions, it will all fade away compared to the extent of the intangible and mysterious inner Light poured outwardly upon their emergence from the divine depths of our being. For, in the end, nothing is destination and all is the Way.

\*\*\*

**A pattern that connects** – ‘tis the magic phrase that old man Gregory uttered as he laid a seashell and a crab onto a classroom table<sup>255</sup>, entangling me forever in its web of dreamlike semantics. What he meant to convey with this phrase was that there are analogies in structure and, thus, function and origin of disparate physical systems. As we dig deep to find those, we may discover that these similarities tie all life into a single, inextricable whole – an insight that is nothing short of spiritual, albeit, interestingly, derived from a rigorous scientific thought process.

Owing its entrancing power to being part mystery and part crystal-clear clarity, albeit clairvoyant at its core, this phrase caught my attention when I first heard it, and then it stole my heart. After befriending it in many solitary hours of study, it acquired the power to set me back on the yellow brick road of the glass bead game, that elusive combination of science and art, which I have dedicated my whole life to, when I, in the early days of my scientific career, temporarily strayed from it. And though the grizzled dreamer had analogies connecting remote physical systems in mind when he used this phrase, it has always meant a bigger world to me. To be honest, it was as if the entire sky above me, from the Crab nebula in the west to the Hercules cluster in the east, would burst open to allow me to catch a glimpse of Heaven every time I thought of it.

---

<sup>255</sup> See Gregory Bateson’s *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*, Hampton Press, Cresskill, NJ (1979).

In other words, I knew that there was more to the picture than meets the eye. The pattern than connects became more and beyond itself in my daydreaming over this carnelian paperback slimed by summer peaches, fruits that are all but great travelers, as if each of these analogies was a single bar on a skyward ladder, the climbing on which led me to glimpse beauties transcending this magnificent concept by a moonlight mile, the mystical light beams of which I would ride and ride in infinite cartwheels, like an ethereal wraith, an interstellar pan, expanding like Orion in cosmic joy and cocooning like a baby in eternal sadness at once, maintaining my shine thereby, like a star pulled inward by gravity and outward by the yearning to shine and beautify things enwrapped in darkness around it.

Yes, to shine like the Sun and cry like the rain at the same time (Fig.17), similar to the sky over me at the second I stepped off a car seat and onto the concrete ground of Kumbor, that holy place where the sea meets the stone and where Thou and I went through the dearest moments of our lives, for the first time since Thou departed toward some heavenlier vistas and a few years before that whole place would be razed to the ground by the order of a squadron of greedy extortionists, leaving us with nothing but memories and turning the house Thou built with so much fondness into dust – such is the destined way of being for us, the sannyasins of this world. This is why, now I know, one of my goggles filled with water and the other one did not the last time I swam together with Thee, like a merriest mermaid diving in circles around and under thee in thy graceful glide through the turquoise waters a hundred meters above the ground: to remind me that one hemisphere of my consciousness is to cry in sadness all the time, while the other one shines in happiness if I am to remain true to the seeds of godliness squatted and sprinkled inside me.



Figure 17. I have never been much of a painter and decades separate this artwork created digitally in 2004 from any of my activities in painting before or after. This composition in three colors, a minimalist sketch of the face crying and smiling at the same time, was created on my work desk in Ljubljana, in a single take, with a state of mind looking neither forward nor back, but being immersed in the present and present alone, drawing the lines with the spirit of One reigning inside me.

And then, one day, I found it. It was the day when the father sat in the belly of that big bird that frightened many a braid-haired and woven-basket-wearing squaw too and I, alone, was left to ride on a starry train of thoughts, and they flew out, lightly, yet fearsomely, like feathers of a bird of paradise plucked under squalling winds. There Thou were, standing before me, all in white, with a wreath of daisies in thine hands, always so warm and always so smooth, as if rivers of love flew through their veins. ‘twas the exact vision of Thee on the Palm Sunday<sup>256</sup> we had

---

<sup>256</sup> Palm Sunday is in the Orthodox Christian tradition known as Cveti and is traditionally the day when people gather outdoors to pick the flowers and make simple bouquets out of them. It is celebrated on Sunday before the Easter and is one of the most joyful religious holidays in the Orthodox tradition.

spent in Ljubljana, while thine own mother had lain like a bird with the broken wings 333 miles away and Thou had hopped on a train just to see me. Oh how happy Thou had been, knocking on the door with hands full of flowers picked outside, on the meager meadows interspersed between the lifeless tall buildings lining the Cedar St. of my little inner city, dressed all in white, glowing with a saintly aureole and gliding through space with the grace of eternal youth, like the fairies of Themyscira. And when Thou had left and I had told thee how I miss thee and how I could not escape the feeling that thou were just about to appear with this ethereal glow of thine from behind the corner of the room and Thou said, “Don’t say that, *rastužiču se*”, with a quivering voice, ‘twas the feeling I had as I gazed at the ceiling and imagined millions of suns and planets teeming with life, whereat Thou might be on, far, far, beyond what I could reach even in the raving mad dreams of my somnolent fancy. Like the opening theme of Tchaikovsky’s Piano Concerto in B $\flat$  minor, not coincidentally at all played in the relative major key of D $\flat$ , filling the space with magical elation twice in a row, but then disappearing and never again appearing in the piece, not even as a variation, albeit acting as a secret motivic link between the themes of all three movements, giving the constant impression that it will reappear right on the next bar, so have Thou been that Confucian invisible thread that ties all other threads into a bundle of beauties bolstering my head, for mine was an overwhelming sense of thine omnipresence, as if Thou would hop from behind the corner with thy zestful smile, like a sun, but that sun was never to rise and Thou were nowhere to be found. Yet, the glowing image of Thee grew in intensity, and grew and it grew, all until it eclipsed all with its magnificence and disgorged a magical energy straight into my heart, as if through a secret funnel of a kind, leaving me crushed and on my knees, wishing I could wish so hard as to bring Thou whole before me once again, sensing somewhere deep inside of me that you’d then whisper to me the same words that the apparition of the Christ told St. Peter on Via Appia, *Eo Romam iterum crucifigi*, before disappearing into the night, the night I’d need to cross before holding thine hand again in an everlasting light. Until then I’d sense thy presence everywhere, just as Thou sensed thy father’s, behind the tree branches and clouds at sunset, from under the waves of the blue sea, from the halo of the full moon on an Indian summer night, smiling softly at it all. And in that instant I knew: Thou and none other but Thou have been that pattern that connects and thy life stands as a monument thereto, invisible as the most magnificent monuments are, yet ever-present and undying, uncrushable to gravel and dust.

As Theo said after I picked a yellow leaf from the ground and asked if it is the treasure that we were seeking on an autumn afternoon, “Treasure has to be inside something... you can’t see it”. And thy spirit now, albeit being invisible to the eye and untouchable to the palms of my hands reaching out through space to universes confined inside the littlest things, like invisible threads linking tangible objects in life, is everywhere. “Things are not things alone if they are an expression of the soul”<sup>257</sup>, said the great painter, and Thou, now I know, who sought soul and nothing but soul in things and sceneries and who made it all emerge from the divinest depths of thy soul, may have indeed woven invisible threads that magically bond one to all and all with one with every word that came out of thy mouth and every gesture that dropped from the angelically winged shoulders of thine ethereal body. For, verily, everywhere and at all times, Thou were about connecting hearts, binding them amorously so that, one day, they learn they have always, in fact, been a part of everything, a beginning that has only lucidly dreamt about the

---

<sup>257</sup> See Wassily Kandinsky’s *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York, NY (1911).

end but has never made a step beyond it, an embryo engulfed by eternal starriness, having in its center the heart beating with the music of Thee.

\*\*\*

A night at the brewery, under a blanket of stars unseen and wholly forgotten by fellow minds engaged in vapid conversation, in glorification of vanity, in waving threads that lure one another to the black holes of their individual egos, I stood amidst white rectangles, symmetry broken and spoken of, supported by strenuous head-nodding, stiff necks and starless eyes. And then **a drop of water** fell, with a sweetest splashing sound, straight onto the top of my bare Franciscan head. It was a drop that slid over some rusty pipes and splints and the moldy insides of a broken air conditioning machine. But, indeed, it came from the very heavens to save me from being swallowed by the monstrous mouths of the demons of *amour propre* lying gapingly open all around me. I did not know this then and, firstly, I stepped away by an inch or so. Alas, then came another droplet, and then another, and then yet another. Then I began to feel like the girl painted by Banksy on the red-bricked wall of a dilapidated drugstore in New Orleans that I accidentally stumbled upon one day and heard that ageless “whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17) ring to the music of the Mississippi in Abe’s and mine, the fighters for freedoms’ hearts, with rain falling only from the insides of her umbrella, as if telling her that the more she seeks to shield herself from the worldly curses that tend to afflict her chastity, the more of them will she attract upon herself, when freely releasing her flowerily fragile body and soul into their embrace and accepting them into the blissful home of her heart would be the way to befriend them and save her soul from their venomous bites.

And so I befriended this tiny droplet of water and saw it as a sign that was telling me to run and not run away from the heralds of hell in my proximity. As I began to seek the key to reconcile these two antagonistic impulses arisen in me, one telling me to step away and do something to confront the deadening lackluster to which I was exposed, lest “the grass grow under my feet”<sup>258</sup>, and the other one telling me to stay, for “love is staying”<sup>259</sup>, and to spread the arms of the rays of divine grace from my deepest insides in all the directions, not skipping anyone, an enlightening paradox was born inside of me. The matter and the antimatter of the sublime spirit collided, the grand illumination took place and dancingly flowing expressions began to take over my entire being, which in an instant became the birthplace of an eruption of an unutterable beauty, dying to be shed upon the world all until the walls of the surrounding souls’ egos soften up and begin to weep and sing and ring with joy and freedom. The dazzling pantomime, the eye-watering shower of starry signs imbued with 0 % judgment and justice and 100 % forgiveness, mercy and cosmic Love, each wrapped around the soft sound swell of *doobar* directed by Thee to those whose hearts were as pure as snow-white cotton balls and *jaaadan* to those whose barbed-wired hearts rotted in anger and hate the way yarn is wound around a spool, spun me around in undying pirouettes, while the soft but impenetrable screen of “the elusive beauty that will save the world one day”<sup>260</sup> radiated from the aura of Thy holy spirit protectively enfolding me, creating an offensive push and a defensive pull at once and invoking sympathy and antipathy in the static receivers, sending forth the beams of an elating energy that

---

<sup>258</sup> Listen to Everything but the Girl’s *Meet Me in the Morning* on *Language of Life*, Atlantic, New York, NY (1989).

<sup>259</sup> See Erich Fromm’s *The Art of Loving*, Naprijed, Zagreb, Croatia (1956).

<sup>260</sup> See Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky’s *The Idiot*, Prosveta, Belgrade, Serbia (1869).

emerged without any visible incentives, untainted by any seeds of affectedness or contrivance in their dazzling aliveness and naturalness.

The Romanian thinker, Emil M. Cioran once disparaged the writers who write only what they want to write of, saying that there is no use of writing if one already knows what shall be written<sup>261</sup>. In a similar fashion, every move arising from the depth of my soul in that instant turned unknown to me, an unfathomable mystery *per se*, revealing to me and to others on that magical night that turned out to last forever who I am and who the divine grace hidden in all of us, “moving all things, penetrating the whole universe, and glowing in one region more, in another less”<sup>262</sup>, as it stood inscribed at the entrance to Paradise in the head of a medieval poet, is too. As I finally stepped away, riding off into the long night extending its tail ahead of me, instead of the prison bars, cages of fear and bladed fences built inside my heart, instilled in it was a star of Love, lustrous and clear, not nebulous at all, tiny as well but extending its rays far into the darkness in which I was immersed. This is how I became saved by one droplet of water that landed from the corroded roof of a lonely warehouse onto my scruffy head and smeared itself over a graffiti that stood hastily chalked on the crumbly walls of its memory.

\*\*\*

When Osamu Tezuka, the godfather of the art of anime, made a colossal attempt to draw the epic account of **the life of Gautama Buddha**, he did not start with the moment when the great prophet was born<sup>263</sup>. Neither did he reverse the arrow of time and start off with the portrayal of the moment when the Buddha sailed away from this planet and the forest animals gathered in solemn silence<sup>264</sup> around the empty rocking boat beside which the grieving souls called for “captain, my captain”<sup>265</sup>. He did not dwell deep on the Buddha’s family tree either. Neither did he describe the village in which the Buddha was born nor the historical facts surrounding his times. Not a word about the spiritual voids that were to be filled by the teaching of the great seer was there either. Rather, it was a rabbit. A solitary rabbit who sacrificed its tiny and tender self by jumping into the flames of a clumsily lit fire and roasting itself alive for the sake of providing a meal for a starving traveler in a desert, a wanderer who would later go on to tell about this rabbit to a confederation of sages under the mesmerizing starry skies, in a story which would come to resonate deep with only one of them, yet another destitute spirit who would tread long and winding roads before, through a delicate chain of cause and effect, he found a way to the Buddha and transmitted an impetus that would spark his spiritual awakening, an impetus which the Buddha was all but aware of and which, as we see, would not have ever happened had it not been for the beautiful act of one rabbit in a desert. Metaphorically, myriads of acts we commit in a day are akin to the actions of this little rabbit, be it a slight supination of our left arm, a blink of the eye at the right moment, a wistful gaze at the upper corner of a room in search of the signs from muses of inspiration therein, or anything, truly anything, even the mildest flicker of our spirit in its glide through space, having a magical power

---

<sup>261</sup> See Emil M. Cioran’s *The Trouble of Being Born*, Translated by Richard Howard, Arcade Publishing, New York, NY (1973).

<sup>262</sup> See Dante Alighieri’s *Divine Comedy: Paradiso*, Canto I, lines 1-3 (1321).

<sup>263</sup> See Osamu Tezuka’s *Buddha*, Vertical, New York, NY (1983).

<sup>264</sup> See Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki’s *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*, Routledge, London, UK (1957).

<sup>265</sup> See Walt Whitman’s *O Captain! My Captain!* (1865), In: *Leaves of Grass: The Deathbed Edition*, Book-of-the-Month Club, New York, NY (1892).

to send shivers down the spine of whole universes and bear fruition for millions of souls that crave to be fertilized by our magnificent touch.

I would have lain my life for Thee, right here, right now, if only I could. Though, I know that physical I and Thou, bonded forever through an invisible umbilical thread, are like foam on the sea of spirit that underlies the entire corporeal existence. And I know that no man understandeth this spiritual order on which all things palpable stand. The best we could do is to sense it, acknowledge it and open the channels in our beings to the inflow of its waves that are to guide our words and acts towards something sublime and uplifting for the starry sky of souls surrounding us from all sides. And when I see the parts of this order whereon Thou and I have stood, I see thee standing far, far above all the souls so intensely loved by thee, with a dazzling crown resting on thy head, like the wind vane of Santa Fuma on the basilica overlooking the seaside town of Rovigno, shining forth and illuminating all things with thy glorious presence. Thereupon, a little speckle of spirit that I am before this magnificent view, all my desires to sacrifice my minute life to sustain thy splendid life would be in vain. All of them, one by one, without exception, would end up being picked up gently and taken upon by thee. For, like Lao-Tzu's king of the world, who saves it by taking all of its sins upon oneself, so has thy mission in life been to impose upon thyself all the negative energies swirling in ripples and vortices around thee on this sea of spirit that thou serenely swam on, saving the surrounding souls thereby and suffering immensely to bring peace and love to the world, in the same way the Christ did.

Such, verily, is the spiritual order that I and Thou, with thy smile whereon softness and mystery collided, occupy. As I swam across this sea of spirit, unseen by the eye and unheard by the ear, untouched yet present everywhere, I came to realize that what spiritual ignoramuses shackled by the sense of attachment to the material see as an illness that takes a life away is but a conveyer of the phase transition for the soul, whereby it sheds its temporary material shell so as to ascend onto a new level of being and be transformed into a new form of life. Spirit, indeed, is all and never ever again ought I to return to its trifling and volatile, materialistic surface. Therein, across its mysterious depths, with ruined columns, armless starfish and broken amphorae on the side, like a mermaid will Thou continue to swim next to me and I, I will be in Paradise.

Therefore, from now until the very end for my earthly self I vow to hold thee in my thoughts, tightly yet softly, like a finely caressed white dove or a snow egret nestling, for Thou in me, I know, will be an anchor that drags the arks of my attention deep into the sea of divinity, the sea made of teardrops and love shimmering in our deepest insides, diving through which will inescapably make the ways of my being, my thoughts and my acts beautiful and be able to draw a moonlight-mile-long thread of teary beads from the eyes of the heavens to the present moment in space and time. This is how I am bound to become the Ocean: by becoming Thou first, by seeing the world through thine eyes everywhere I go, from now until the end that is the beginning comes my way.

\*\*\*

I journeyed across seven seas. Left home oh so many times and came back running to it every time. Been a captain of the ship and a butler and a peddler and a dreamer on the lookout for new lands on its posts. Found myself on tops of the mountains in the day and swallowed by billows in the night, submerged deep beneath the waves of rough seas. Read tens of thousands of books and articles with hands shaking in the dark and neck numbed and strained to the point of becoming as hard as a rock. Stepped into the darkest alleyways in search of this Holy Grail and

the nectar of sacred knowledge brewing in it. Stood on the chasm separating the lands of science and religion, on a thin, thin rope stretched between these two cliffs. Went from the embracement of information technologies to a self-improvised cave and back. Have had my spirit wound up on the bellies of beautiful bears and unwound into a dancing explosion of stars concealed within. Yet, nothing, really nothing taught me in recent years how to become a good man once again – the ideal that I treasure inside, but that vanishes as soon as that huge, yet ubiquitous step from the inner realm of thought to the outer realm of being is made and a guard fortified by the bricks of ego, not a stance that allows the sun of the soul to shine via its open doors, is assumed – as much as telling **bedtime stories** to Theo. How this godly lotus flower of a creature taught me this, without a single word uttered and perhaps without a single word understood in the classical sense of the word either, by making me, myself, reach out deep into myself and find therein the magic well, tapping into and drinking from which finally brought me on the edge of becoming a genuinely good man, simple, benevolent and full of light, is a mysterious guiding star that Thou, I, all along with all the aspiring sages and suns in this life ought to mimic in quest for saving the creation from its descent into the underworld under the weight of self-centered judgments. This is why offered in this passage is the glimpse of an exit route, a way out of this book with parallel endings, as a story might have been sketched in this place, improvised as ever, like those I have told Theo to lull him to sleep.

In it, a rabbit and Theo, side by side, two newly made friends, journey during the day through a forest, meeting strange creatures, from Brown Bear waiting to hear their whistle to run down and protect them in case it is needed, to a snooty duck swimming gently in her little lake to the mathematician owl who lives in a hole in a chestnut tree and specializes in trigonometry to the peacock chef that cooks best lunches in the forest to a beaver who baths in a muddy pond to a mole that gets stuck in the ground, behind a stone that only Theo's arms are slender enough to reach and shift, opening the way for the little animal to continue to drill the ground and find food she'd bring to her babies who await their mommy altogether, with hopping hearts at home made of dust, mud, soil, dry leaves and a few broken branches. And everybody is good in this forest and everybody is unassumingly helping everyone else with no second thoughts. And Theo is amazed to learn about all these creatures and happenings in the forest, a heart as unclouded and pure as the clearest river stream running through it. An ideal world which we must try with all our hearts and souls and might to bring down to Earth. Interestingly, it is not by grasping, collecting and sorting out, but, a whole lot simpler, by letting all the pretensions and cunning aspirations, be it to fascinate others or use them as tools, including the drives to find oneself above them and begin to conduct the way they will behave, think or feel, dissipate in the air like puffs of dust and beginning to travel down the road, one foot in front of the other, lightly and unostentatiously, with childlike curiosity and meekness of the heart trembling in awe before the murmur and hum of the forest leaves, but then becoming a sun that opens to everyone in our sight, letting them share space with us in the home of our heart from now until eternity, that this yellow balloon called Earth will release its chains and be uplifted towards enchanting skies, the very heavens above.

\*\*\*

**A night at the Exploratorium** with the ocean waves crashing against the walls, flowing into the museum's tubes, then travelling in loops all around us, enfolding us from all sides and producing a silent music that resonated with the gentle glide of

our shadows across its sleek and sparkly floor. A fiesta of fun: a beach ball, like the one I sat on under a mantle of stars minutes before Theo was born, levitating above a giant air-blowing traffic cone; rotating red-striped curtains that make one dizzy and disoriented and swarms of zebra fish swimming in the direction of their rotation; gyrating monocycles as navigation tools; face-splitting devices and games putting the veracity of our perception to test; saluting, pulling raspberries, mimicking Orion and waiting for little hearts to tremble; visualizing eruptions in the Sun and climbing on pieces of thousands of years old sequoias; playing Arkanoid blindfolded, by modifying sound pitches in our ears only, and shining stroboscope lights onto plucked harp strings; making circular patterns in the sand, akin to screw dislocations in the growing crystals; and so forth.

And then, a droplet of water, looking at first like one of the hundreds of air bubbles blown upwards by every breath of mine when I dive dreamily under Ya in the Maya blue waters gods have given us, usually with one goggle filled with water and the other one not, reflecting the face part crying, part smiling I had painted ages ago (Fig.17), falling steadily through the air, followed by a knob switched by my hand to milliseconds after its impact with the water pool below. A semicircular ring of light, a big spark at its edge and a little one in the center, just as it merged with the ocean underneath in, resulted from Take One, the one and only that, as always, matters. And in the distance, pieces of thy face stood reflected in it too. I wish I could graze it without smearing it, but like Lieh-Tzu's seagulls that, like rainbows, fly farther away, the closer we swim to them, it was. Resembling that one and only tear dropped into a well dark and deep by Otoyoy and a chorus of wretched fairies, singing into it to bring the soul of poor Choji back from the valley of death<sup>266</sup>, making a subtle splash sound upon its fall, tiny and insignificant, yet in which an infinity of cosmic *T'za za jyz* and the complete mirage of agonies destined to befall thee, my sweet little *чuuя maюo*, as thy father used to call thee, lay wrapped, ready to unfold into a whole new universe, with millions of living creatures, with all their joys and miseries, confined to it, this drop of water had it all in it.

It was a drop of water that brought the memory of the woodblock notes squeezed in the midst of the seventh out of eleven poems of Shostakovich's 14<sup>th</sup> symphony, dark and dreary, dedicated to the dearest death and death only, so as to evoke the sound of water dripping slowly in the Santé prison cell where Apollinaire the poet found himself after stealing a statue from Louvre, the fate shared by countless prisoners of Gulag that Dmitri wished to reflect on, yet just as these water drops began to create a petite dance of consolation in the dark night of the soul, they got erased by the eraser of despair and back into the infinite darkness it all sank again. Marvelously, Dmitri, good old Dmitri, said afterwards that this symphony was the only one he had ever created the conclusion for<sup>267</sup>, and what a conclusion it was, taking the form of the final poem, not more than a minute long and, after nearly an hour of sinking into deeper and deeper darkness, with not even a speckle of light to be glimpsed, there it came in its midst, the sound of the water drops dancing in harmony once again, as if to signify that in the smallest of details in life, the most wondrous of perceptions and divinest of experiences await the sensitive soul. Hence, in this teardrop on this magical day when grownups were baptized into children of Eden once again and when the ancient saying that "nothing under the Sun is worth a single child's tear" lit up the firmaments, thy face, the whole Universe, its presents, pasts and futures, its smiles and its melancholies, its sleepless nights on Corcovado, its starry eyes filled with Love and

---

<sup>266</sup> Watch *Red Beard* directed by Akira Kurosawa (1965).

<sup>267</sup> See Mark Wigglesworth's *Love and Death: Mark's Notes on Shostakovich Symphony No. 14*, retrieved from <https://www.markwigglesworth.com/notes/marks-notes-on-shostakovich-symphony-no-14/> (1999).

Wonder, the shimmers of the seas, the whispers of the pines, the clowns and the yellow balloons and wheelchairs and straw hats and seashells and lines in the sand and, in fact, everything that has ever been, as if in an Aleph ball of a kind, stood inscribed.

In *Капля*, the book Thou proudly placed on the pedestal of interest and inspiration for my juvenile mind, a single droplet of water inspired Ya. E. Geguzin to derive the full set of scientific principles underlying the laws of Nature on the basis of the premise that “a drop is an example of how impressions of nature surrounding us feed the work of a scientist even when he thinks and works on the most modern and abstract problems of natural science”<sup>268</sup>, but this droplet I photographed with Thee by my side, having come into existence in the blink of an eye and vanished equally fast, made me see not only the threads of logic extending from it to the farthest ends of the Universe, but also every emotion ever awakened under the Sun, every speckle of a dream and every sensation ever produced by a human brain, including thy holy head, reflected in the droplet’s oval shape, fluid flow and glister. Moreover, in the Blue Light New Year’s TV show<sup>269</sup>, Geguzin quoted side by side two poets, one comparing a raindrop colliding with the watery surface to lilies in bloom and the other one to a silver nail, before demonstrating with the use of a high-speed camera that this droplet of water resembled both, but here I saw more than that: a wounded seahorse, a hoppy starfish, a surrealist sun bending over clouds and rooftops like a Dali’s melting clock, a deluge of sugars for the pill and Saturn ring pavaanes, a thousand hat-lifting salutes and chaplets of roses, Earths and their enlightened astral brethren teeming with life and affection and maudlin mwahs, clowns in pyjamas juggling sawdust fairies, furskin bears and tangerines under crescent rainbows, flashlights in the night and highways and the cars and cranes and crabs treading the low-tide seawaters, Moons with chariots on their wings and bassinets adorned with wooden orfes and carob trees, lampions swinging under ground shakes and ships swaying under ocean billows, symphonies of billions of human thoughts, each an involuntary abstract expression of the divine spirit underlying the entire reality, a sibylline mirage of past, present and future and Thou, thy red mole, thy chin hair and thy bead of sweat from the forehead and the tip of the nose, eternally embedded in it.

In fact, such was the impression invoked by this evanescent object that came and went so fleetingly through the revolving door of my perception that I became wholly blinded by the dazzling light filling up my insides thanks to it. Therefore, I won’t move by an inch from here. I will stay here and gaze at it for as long as the Earth spins around its axis and the Sun shines its light onto it. Let eternity pass me by. I have found it right here, in this little spot, in this crossroad whereon the question *Quo Vadis Domine* eternally echoes, at this meeting point whereon one dies to become One with all that there is, blending with waters that may now wash me with their holiness and take away my sins with their magic wand, bearing a child emerging straight from the Garden of Eden, sunlit, pure, chaste and blissful, a living proof that the smaller we become, the godlier we’ll be in this quirky Cosmos wherein, indeed, “what is the above is from the below and the below is from the above”, as Thrice Hermes engraved on a piece of emerald stone many a millennia ago.

---

<sup>268</sup> This is the last sentence from Yakov Evseevich Geguzin’s book *Капля*, meaning *Drop*, not being translated to English yet. Its second edition released by *Наука, Научно-популярная серия АН СССР* in 1977 is available in Russian at [http://vivovoco.ibmh.msk.su/VV/PAPERS/NATURE/DROP/DROP\\_CONT.HTM](http://vivovoco.ibmh.msk.su/VV/PAPERS/NATURE/DROP/DROP_CONT.HTM).

<sup>269</sup> See V. V. Skorokhod’s Personal Recollections of Yakov Evseevich Geguzin, *Powder Metallurgy and Metal Ceramics* 57, 398 – 402 (2018).



Figure 18. A water droplet falling into the water bucket and making a splash.

\*\*\*

The first days at the Adriatic without Thee those were. How I got to this coast and these waters I knew not and rather than recalling a mundane trajectory in the attempt to decipher this mystery, I thought about that night at the Exploratorium when a single drop of water, alongside thy face reflected in it, turned into an oracular odyssey that lasts and will last longer than our time on Earth, and then of good ol' Frankie<sup>270</sup>, its founder and an expellee, like myself, from the reigning academic and social structures, a nuisance to their every level, like the Christ and every soul true to a diviner order of things, at the thought of which the vision of Thee popped up before me and my train of thoughts promptly ran down the hill, off the railway of my unbroken abstract terrain, and slid down the cliff and into the sea, into the water for the access to which for all Frankie contended in Pasadena and lost and got prosecuted for that<sup>271</sup>, sharing the fate of Thou and I, the dreamers destined to remain close to the bottoms of social and professional ladders because of being at permanent odds with unkind and unloving authorities of all kinds, the anarchists at heart to whom nothing matters as much as jumping into the sea as the symbol of merging these droplets of solitary spirits we hold inside with the Cosmos in all its glorious wholeness.

Once, long time ago we bathed together in this azure of the Adriatic like **two Atlanteans** with splashing suns in place of eyes and peace of the bright blue skies, upset by but a fiery sunset of wonder of the infinite soul poetically palpitating with every perception, nested in our hearts. Thou, veiled by the waves of *Sealed with a Kiss*<sup>272</sup>, *Manhã de Carnaval*<sup>273</sup>, *Dio, come ti amo*<sup>274</sup> or any of thine beloved Neapolitan canzones, and I, swaying to the whispers

<sup>270</sup> See K. C. Cole's *Something Incredibly Wonderful Happens: Frank Oppenheimer and the World He Made Up*, Mariner Books, Boston, MA (2009).

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 75 – 100.

<sup>272</sup> Listen to *Sealed with a Kiss* by the Four Voices, Columbia Records, New York, NY (1960) or by Brian Hyland, ABC-Paramount, New York, NY (1962).

<sup>273</sup> Listen to Luiz Floriano Bonfá's *Manhã de Carnaval* on the soundtrack for *Black Orpheus* (directed by Marcel Camus, 1959), a Brazilian favela version of the ancient Greek myth about Orpheus and Eurydice and their trip to the underworld.

<sup>274</sup> Listen to Domenico Modugno and Gigliola Cinquetti's *Dio, come ti amo* performed at the 1966 Sanremo Music Festival and then chosen as the Italian entry for the Eurovision Song Contest later that year, where it was performed

of the wailing cypresses, swam in figure eights, pulled off breathtaking loopy-loops and telescoped one another all through the day and night. But now I was left alone and I felt loner than ever. The night was calm and beautiful and as I walked along the coast, the young Moon, smiling so distinctly, like no time before, was levitating above my head. Gently transforming into a shadow, weightless and graceful, I watched it sink slowly behind the hill posed between my eyes and the open seas, iota by iota, first the chin, then the mouth, then thy clown's nose, which I dreamt of kissing, then thy eyes, then the forehead and then the tip of thine holy head, smiling quietly all the way through, just like thy beloved father did all these years that he has been gone to thee.

The morning, however, turned out to be quite the opposite. Dismissing the idyllic translucency of the starry night, the dark clouds began to gather from the mountains and the sea alike. As these cumulonimbi collided in the air, they heralded tempestuous rains, the buckets of which were about to start falling at any moment, as if trying to merge the clouds with the earth and flood the soul of every single creature on it. People would gather in the conference amphitheater for the opening ceremony a few hours later, just as they did every year before, and it would be the first time for the Dragon's speech to be intercepted by the sound of thunder coming from the raging mountains risen in the backdrop of an otherwise tranquil scenery of this coastal town. Still, nothing stopped me from leaping into the seawater together with the first rays of the Sun and, as I swam the dolphin style, an immense rainbow began to stretch like a heavenly arc over the very same hill beyond whose luscious veil the smiley sister Moon had shyly hid its face the night ago. The longer I gazed at it, the longer it stretched, starting from a reticent line in the sky and ending as a magnificent half-circle, a sign in Nature's words that the battle has been won and that the beauty of the spirit has triumphed over the wretchedness of the body. It was a similar rainbow as the one I caught with my camera as it began to stretch shyly but valiantly across the summer skies over the Michigan Lake exactly thirteen days before I was about to hop into the belly of a big bird and be taken away from the city of Chicago, the city wherein I made my last walks with thee and amongst whose clouds we swam together, side by side, like a queen and a torpedo, for one last time, the city from whose heights I watched lamentingly the Golgotha Thou had to pass to be ascended to heavenly vistas and vanish but instate thyself in everything, fondling me with every splash of the sea, smiling behind every softly humming leaf, touching me tenderly with the scent of night blooming jasmines sashaying in sunshine outside this rusty window with broken blinds, levitating above me like an angel and guiding me with the love divine for good – it was both of these rainbow that I took as secret signs sent by thee, telling me that all, at the end of the day, is well and that Thou would always be with me, anytime my heart, breaking itself into millions of pieces at each second of this unbearably beautiful reality, craves so.

Indeed, when I was little, Thou would bring me close to thee and whisper, with big eyes opened, a fairytale about the old rabbit called Bunny, who told his children and grandchildren before his departure from the Earth that there was nothing to worry about and that he would remain always with them; he would continue to watch them from the face of the Moon, to smile

---

by Domenico Modugno alone, to whom this was his third Eurovision performance, and where it received 0 points from 180 jurors in 18 countries, which was the only time to this day than an Italian song at this competition received this poor of a response. This may have been in part because Modugno, who would become a social activist later in life, went over the three-minute time limit by whole 18 seconds and also disbanded the official orchestra and used three of his own musicians to accompany him instead. The song was also performed by Gigliola Cinquetti in the movie *Dio, come ti amo!* directed by Miguel Iglesias, also from 1966.

gently at them from behind the swaying treetops, to sing behind the sound of waterfalls and wink from behind a lonely lea flower. When Thou dropped one of thy gorgeous acts of kindness, Thou would often blink two of three times at the speed of light and imitate an angel flapping wings with shyness and grace before looking towards the top of a tree, like the one on which the solemn bird portrayed in the Mundaka Upanishad, of which thy secret swami, Vivekananda, talked, rested. And it was, now I know, to tell me with a wisp of divine mystery that, one day, Thou may not be here, but Thou will be out there, everywhere, watching over me with an even greater clarity and concern than by being preoccupied with worldly matters while here with me, on Earth. Is this why I find the most beautiful tombstone inscription I have ever come across to be that over Christopher Wren's grave in St. Paul's Cathedral in London, saying only "reader, if you look for an inscription, look everywhere around you", for one, when gone, having flown away, becomes findable truly everywhere. It is for the very same reason that, to prepare Theo for an inevitable departure of myself toward higher vistas of being one bright day, I tell him now of "the little man" who I am and who lives everywhere – in a banana leaf, on top of the palm tree, in a teacup, inside the shoebox, under the baobab root, in the curled bunny ear, on the tip of a birthday cake candle, on the surface of Saturn's 27<sup>th</sup> moon, *et cetera*. And he giggles and giggles endlessly, but if a day comes that he comes to hold my shaky hand, whimpering underneath his breath and releasing a sigh at the very thought of letting me go before, as I vow when I think of Thee today, urging oneself to follow me "into the dark"<sup>275</sup> and find me wherever I would be, I will remind him of this little man, a mysterious force, an undying twinkle of light to guide him for as long as he lives from every point and edge of this magnificent cosmos.

Then, when my musings over these magical occurrences, like walks over clouds residing in heavens on which thine angelic self was seated, were over, engulfed by the waves of awe, I turned around the clock of my frail self to check what the little God, the little dragon<sup>276</sup> toddling delightfully, all enwrapped in wonder over it all, is doing. Oh my god, he stood with mouth wide open, uttering a shriek of sheer excitement, looking at me sideways and pointing at the first letter of the alphabet he had learned so far, M, and then saying out loud, "Mama". Indeed, from one street sign, banner or a shop-window to the next, all he pointed at with his endearing index finger were Ms, always followed by voicing one "mama" after another. For, in his universe all things pointed at Mama. And with all things in his universe pointing at the things in mine, I was being told by his little honor that all in my world is indeed made of Thee. There is nothing from now on that I will not recognize Thy godliness in. Thou, in my swift thoughts, will always remain the Holy Mother at her best, the very God in the shape of a human. For, the more love is in a thing, the godlier it is. Thou, thus, are my God, undying and forever lasting, the first and the last point of every line, always a circle, like the rainbow that embellished my eyes on this summer day, I will have drawn in life.

\*\*\*

**Friday the 12<sup>th</sup>** in the 12<sup>th</sup> month of the year of the horse, the day Thou sailed away, waving but with the left hand of Thee by the shore, the only thing Thou could move by then, from the chest to the chin, with infinite grace, as ever. Even then, thy hand, as warm as the

---

<sup>275</sup> Listen to Death Cab for Cutie's *I Will Follow You into the Dark* on *Plans*, Atlantic, New York, NY (2005).

<sup>276</sup> Theo was born as a snake in the Chinese zodiac, or as the Chinese would have it, as a "little dragon". His father, myself, is a dragon in the same zodiac, a dragon that is a son of a Dragan, or Dragon as many of his foreign friends love to call him. So Dragon's dragon's little dragon he is, in a way.

smoothest summery seashore pebbles and softer than silk, though barely movable, reached out to mine, icy as ever, to protect and warm it rather than to find comfort for itself in it, illustrating who Thou were all thy life: a soul unable to live but for another soul. Thine eyes were as bright and youthful as ever, the dark stars in which a whole cosmos revolved in vertices, until the last day, in spite of the fact that thy body resembled that “beautiful angel...limbless and helpless”<sup>277</sup> whom “I can’t even recognize”<sup>278</sup> but to wave it a morose and wretched “see you in the next life”<sup>279</sup>, and that thy brain, crashed, incoherent, with its frontal lobe almost wholly faded, was such that, as it was said in the very first book that the three-year-old angel, perhaps Thou in some newer clothes, with old mysteries and new missions to accomplish beaming from her eyes, picked from a library shelf for me one summer day, as if through an act of magic, “shapes and colors, faces and places, sounds and noises, the shears and strains and flutters were still all waving there, just like before, but there was not catching them, no turning them inside the head, no thought of what they meant for her; because at the fore of her head a chasm had opened, and at the rear the kaleidoscope of images had lost its mirror, all reflections broken – the back had lost its front”<sup>280</sup>. Although hand in hand, Thou and I bled inside and outside and all around, like the colors on *One Year the Milkweed* by Arshile Gorky, another Slavic expat on a step-motherly continent and a painter who painted a pair of portraits of him and his mother, “queen of the aesthetic domain”<sup>281</sup> and the headspring of his creativity, for seventeen years, all my prayers and hopes were laid, like flowers, onto the grounds of the mental shrine bearing the vision, like a shaft of light with a wish of wishes on the wheel, of thy soul living forever, until the end of time, shinier than ever, even when the body crumbled and thy pierced lungs, the crippled wings of an angel, got filled with a salty sea, a sea full of tears, like the one in which I, an astral embryo born at high noon, had bathed once, turning Thee blue, shaded by the color of love, melancholy and the skies into which Thy must have fallen and through which Thou might fly, like a white seagull, a pride of the sea and the shores across which our eternal spirits, silhouettes washed in starlight, are destined to roam, today and tomorrow and forever more.

In this doomsday date on which Thou waved thy last goodbye I find Friday, the day of fear and suffering, of fasting, scarcity, Tantalus’ torments and of Golgotha that Thou, a dreamer for life, innocent and pure, went through while never ceasing to believe in the magic of being, and 12, the number of petals on the bluish lotus flower of love, *Anahata*. So symbolic is this magic combination of who Thou were, the saint of self-sacrifice and of infinite love, a living proof that love is the savior from all the suffering that life lived selflessly will have imposed on us, as if preparing us through hardship and through struggle for the incommensurable bliss brought about by hatching the sprout of divinity that our soul is from the shell and the prison of this corporeal body and its becoming infinite, like a teardrop merging with the ocean, in beauty, in shine, in rapture, once and for all. For, all this hatching in pain and misery is dying to the world but being born to the starry skies or wherever else our missionary karmic road, guided by the appearance of the Christ walking down *Via Appia* and uttering softly yet infinitely fierily that colossal *Romam vado iterum crucifigi* to St. Peter’s ears, takes us next. This is a thought I, too,

---

<sup>277</sup> Listen to the demo version of Radiohead’s *Motion Picture Soundtrack* recorded in 1995 and released on *OK Computer OKNOTOK 1997 2017: Boxed edition cassette – Side A*, Parlophone, UK (2017).

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>280</sup> See Giulio Tononi’s *Phi: A Voyage from the Brain to the Soul*, Pantheon Books, New York, NY (2012), pp. 268.

<sup>281</sup> See Jon Thompson’s *How to Read a Modern Painting: Lessons from the Modern Masters*, Abrams, New York, NY (2006), pp. 222. This is the book my children, let into a library by themselves for the first time and asked to check out a book of their choice for me, brought into the daylight.

sitting now despondently, cocooned, confounded and cold on this wintery day, wish to bear with me when I stand on the pearly gate, a tiny teardrop of spirit on a cliff over the sea of divinity that encompasses it all, ready to make that final leap, a grandiose phase transition across the river Styx and into the unknown. For, like the Christ who had gone through Golgotha to pave the way for the salvation of the beloved souls, so have Thee shown me the Way and plucked the last traces of fear of this Great Beyond before eyes that now cry rivers of Love for Thee across the mountains and hills of these symbols and words. Like that ol' captain, my captain who told his soldiers prior to the battle that they existed no more, all that bounded me to Earth disappears now that thy spirit has been lifted up, into the holiest skies, leaving the burdens of ego somewhere far behind and, as if mirroring Thee on a transcendental plane that enfolds us through higher dimensions of being, raising my spirit into the firmaments of the Holy Spirit, where it would fly for many days and nights on the wings of the sole wish to save and sacrifice oneself for the wellbeing of another, all until that magical day comes when our hands will touch again, just as they did underwater oh so many times, whenever we dived serenely, like two mermaids, into each other's embrace. And until I join thine angelic forces in another world and in some new lifesaving adventures, in heavens or hells of this infinite universe where good and evil clash day and night, like in Njegoš's darkest visions, may the image of You, in your white nightgown, with a few sun-colored dandelions clinging to it with their tiny petals and with eyes opened wide, infinitely joyful, yet infinitely careworn, radiating like two dark suns and appearing as if a tear of eternal sadness that drenches the cosmos in its entirety could fall off of it at any time, hopping on your tiptoes and flapping with your folded arms, like the wings of an angel, which Thou, now I know, have always been, from the first to the last moment of your beautiful life, life that never had even a trace of I in it, but which was always, selflessly and sacrificially, about Thee and Thee only, always remain with me.

\*\*\*

A twinkle in thine eye, as bright as the Sun, as **white bunnies and angels**, *беле зеке и анђели*, were evoked to bring blissful dreams and a goodnight sleep to one, a gleam seeded in the center of the dark spaces of fear and unknown, yet shining like a burning star, with a broken heart blinking somewhere in the distance, above pyramids and desert sands, along with dancing Venuses and Gaeas, Sangiovese grapes falling from the sky, Neapolitan boys juggling pitchers and pizzas like spinning tops, floating bridges suspended between Vesuvio and City Lights and concussing with excitement, a piano with a broken key and Thee, dressed in the garments of the divinest grace, like mermaid emerging out of azure waters. And then flash, flash, flash, a blinding photograph for the dashboard to be made<sup>282</sup>, and then and then a droplet of water from my eyes to my cheek to my neck to my chests and off to the picture held in the palms of my hands, sliding down and fading away with poise, a droplet, like those that came in big numbers, one after the other, every morning and afternoon and night to heal and harmonize, counted with an utmost precision by the weary eyes of the soul beloved by Thee. Like that drop of chocolate ice cream that triggered the spillage of some infinite, cosmic sadness across the

---

<sup>282</sup> Reference is made to "photograph on the dashboard" from the opening lines of R.E.M.'s *Nightswimming*, a most beautiful song ever made, a song wherein "death returns to his home in the past, and memory is revealed as the last light emanating from a star that has burned out" (See Steven Hyden's *Part 3: So Fast, So Numb (Automatic for the People to New Adventures in Hi-Fi)*, AV Club (April 24, 2012), retrieved from <https://music.avclub.com/part-3-so-fast-so-numb-automatic-for-the-people-to-n-1798231117>).

pages of this book or the droplet that leaped off the little sea underneath it in a museum of exploration over which the waves of the Pacific and of childlike curiosity mingled and crashed, this teardrop, really, is, with its littleness and unspeakable beauties, what the Cosmos could be recreated from. It is what moves the Sun and other stars, what shifts the whole worlds around and drives the drawing of these lines with Thee, all made of self-sacrifices for the benefit of another, now being offered as the purest spirit on Earth to be built alive within the walls raised by these words, resting quietly on my side.

And now that I have beside me the two angels dancing down the meadows and bunnies hopping behind white yarrows and star jasmine bushes that palpitate with divine mystery, may it be them that Thou had in mind in thy midnight lullabies in verse, the thought rushes through my head between strokes of the pen plunged in a sea of tears, at the exact moment of which, as if beamed down the corridors of miracle, I glimpse the full moon rising in its golden, glittery clothes over the snow-covered Bear Mountain peaks and then a single star shining across it on the evening sky, as if Thou are smiling from behind them all, laying down ways for me to follow to reach You, ways that, I know, have wishes to awaken cosmic joys in the souls of fellow earthlings for steps. And then a tink, sole and lonely, rings, echoing all the present and past and future of the Universe, making the night as bright as high noon, like that at which I popped from thy holily swaying ocean. But there are no words in it – only cherubic laughter, delight and sunshine, and, deep in it, a twinkle of sadness. After all, every time I hear that “in the beginning was the Word” (John 1:1), I think of a prime line, of the first division between day and night, between heaven and earth, between up and down, between Yin and Yang. Indeed, had we not been divorced from God, we would have never experienced existence nor glimpsed that magical road that takes us back to Her embrace. This enthralling idea parachutes me once more to the vista from which I could easily see that the existence of every Way that brings human hearts together is conditioned by separation between them. A wall is the Word, I am free to conclude in the end, a wall that is to be heartlessly smashed if the divine One is to be awakened from its slumber. For the gate protecting the entrance to the Garden of Eden that Life is to be unlocked, the Word has to be erased and that, in the end, will be the final act of this book, the act of self-annihilation and complete surrender of one’s self that brings about limitless freedoms instead of attachments of the ego, enabling the kite of a divine spirit to soar high into the translucent sky, once and for all, and remain gliding across it, like a glorious seagull and You happily beside it, for as long as the Sun illuminates the Earth and the Earth revolves around the Sun<sup>283</sup>.

\*\*\*

## EPILOGUE I

For eleven years since the writing of this elegy commenced, the Earth span at a steady pace and each second of this spinning that dizzies and dazzles showered me with signs, as if with stardust, the trail of which has led, always, to Thee. The style of writing has grown simpler during this time and the bursts of poetic passions, once eager to express themselves in sentences that never end, that take one on an endless ride across a hill after hill of a lively emotional

---

<sup>283</sup> As an end that is but a new beginning comes, don’t forget to look elsewhere, like into a twinkly little star that a sign for this footnote is, a star hanging high in the sky but redirecting our gazes down, down, down, to a tiny line like this one, telling us that the Sun and the Earth, the up and down, are indeed one, with the Earth being Wonder and the Sun being Love, the last word left before they all vanish, and Life, in its blissful purity, could begin. Love.

landscape and hit her with a swing after swing of moods rupturing this wretched mortal into pieces, now subsided, quietly. The sea has calmed itself down, yet the passions have continued to bubble and brew under the surface, erupting here and there, albeit in a more orderly spatiotemporal fashion, like the chimes and chords of a symphonic orchestra.

And now, eleven years later, fate took us by the hand, without any conscious preplanning, to the Las Vegas replica of Saint Mark's Square in Venice, where Little Bear, I and two angels, each hugging a plush pet, a bunny and a dragon, sat by one of the outside tables of a coffeehouse ala Florian, under the fake and flickering skies at dusk of this eternal city built on water. Gondoliers were singing arias and riding along canals, people were passing hurriedly on the arched Istrian stone bridges carrying bags from fancy merchandises, and lights were changing colors to elicit moods buried deep under the shells of rusty pretense, if not inspire them to shop till they drop in this consumerist paradise. The band behind my back and in view of the littlies, on a petite stage set in the center of the square, played Italian canzoni, sending waves through the air whereon soulful spirits can lay and lull and luff, in any order imagined. Cocktails were being served to guests on bar stools under colonnades adorned with busts of Roman heroes and heroines and under the balconies merely sculpted along the façades, consisting in walls alone, with neither a human inhabitant nor a habitable space behind them. An ultimate artifice, a kitsch at its kitschiest or a brilliant feat of pop art – trying to untangle which of these all of this was turned me into a vain attempter at untying a knot that cannot be untied. And if all art is a cross where diametrically opposite sentiments meet, than perhaps this Las Vegas scenery was one, yet in no time it would turn realer than the realest of things ever experienced.

It was the afternoon of May 15, exactly eleven years since this elegy sung in the poetry of prose was born, in that faraway ice cream parlor near the Notre Dame of Strasbourg. We were not sure what to order to kill our time till the flight back home, and so we settled on the desert menu, which was topped by “tiramisu of the gondola”, thy favorite of all deserts. I did not dare order it lest my heart turn into a mush softer than the cake itself, but the children did dare order a gelato, whereas the little Bear settled on a glass of pink prosecco. The gelato they ordered was one scoop chocolate, one scoop vanilla and one scoop either cranberry or strawberry sorbet – that I remember.

Soon the desert arrived, with four little spoons for everybody to share, and it all seemed very ordinary: the children started eating their ice cream slowly, the Little Bear sipped softly and delicately on her bubbly wine and I relished in the scene. But then something magical happened, it happened in an instance: a drop of the sorbet gelato went past the edge of the cup and started sliding down, toward the table, along the highly concave outer surface of the cup. In no time, I reached for the spoon placed before me, picked it up and managed to save this little drop of ice cream before it fell onto the tablecloth under it.

And then, in that moment, in that very moment, the beginnings and the ends of this story merged into one and all the heavens above me opened and touched all life with the divinest grace and oh and oh the beauty that can all but be transcribed into words, these or any other by any earthling before or after. I felt, in all sincerity, that the universe was saved by saving this drop of ice cream, the thought of which led to a sudden blast of happiness that is beyond anything any words can describe. Years and years of care culminated in this one act that required the skill of an acrobat and it was carried out flawlessly. So maybe the battle was won in the end. So maybe none of this was in vain. So maybe everything is, truly, in its right place, where it ought to be.

That a lifetime and beyond, of meaning and of everything, of all past, present and future in my world and every other world for that matter, can be condensed in this act of scooping a

drop of ice cream before it drips and wets the table is more than I could ever ask for. It is a dream come true, on this impromptu anniversary of the sighting of the universe in a droplet of ice cream dripping down the side of a cone held by an old man. Now the drop has come out of the hands of the two angels as they stirred the ice cream cup in their innocence, watching me and waving at me from the garden of Eden, through which they still roam ever so carelessly. This, I know, is a proof that miracles happen, that reality is but a dream, and that universes await to be discovered in the smallest of things. And Thou, I know, are somewhere in this dream, too, watching us from up and high and smiling. Today I write your name all over the sky.

In this café at eternal dusk, in the pretend play on reality and in the presence of the two angels, having saved a drop of ice cream from the fall, Las Vegas became Heaven and I began to smile at the sense that everything. One. Final. Time. Fell. Back. Into. Its. Place. and then started to sob and laugh and laugh and sob, at the same time, like I never did before. If there ever was a rainbow in my heart, it was at this magnificent moment.

May this be the end and may every word written here rest in peace. Amen.

\*\*\*

### МОЛИТВЕ ЗА КРАЈ

Можда једном, доћи ће дан, светао и бео, кад стопићу се, као пахуља, са морем, са Тобом, и пливаћемо опет, радосни к'о некад. А до тада, заувек и корак испред, сањаћу беле зеке и анђеле, баш као што си ми Ти говорила, свом ушушканом мишићу, пред спавање. И никад те нећу заборавити. Сваки трен мога постојања ће бити помен и посвета Теби, живот живљен да се лепота Твоја, вечна и света, отелотвори у мом бивству, па ондак и у бивству свега постојећег. А за то, нећу ићи тамо где прах ти је присут, јер знам да Ти си свуда само не тамо. Гледаћу у звезде, у радосну игру дрвећа на јесењем ветрићу, у замахе варјаче која ствара мале ствари а велика је као и димњак и кућа, па и већа, у све што крије и разоткрива Бог око нас. Бићу радост и љубав која си била Ти, а која није била са овога света, јер свет ју је узео и прогутао. Али дух јој није узео, јер он је сада свуда и свја. Амен.

И нека никада не заборавим твој поглед док држах ти руку, танану и меку као свилу, а топлу као сунце, из кога само што суза испала није. Док гледаше ме, очи твоје пређоше пут од белине и чистоте до сузности и црвенила у бљеску једном, док време као да је стало и вечност као да се спустила са покрова небеског на нас, распростевши плашт звездани свуд наоколо. Као погледах се у огледало, трен доцније, очи твоје бејаху моје, преплашене попут јеленка пољског који је из свог сретног шумског краја у пушкетом зла људског залутао, не губећи никад искрицу божанске доброте и веру у исту ту људскост у свом срцу. А ја, господов сужњи, држах ти руку у трену том и знадох да пут твој ка звезданим пољима води и да Господ ће ми те отргнути од ме. Али победник бејаше сво то време Ти, просто ка' да међ' живима остајеш Ти, док ми сви међу мртвим душама остајемо мрцварити се од једног тегобног трена до наредног, одавде па до конца наших сетних путоштва. Иако си лежала тад прободена стрелом отровном, из које чемер капаше, бацивши се својом божанском вољом као штит пред вољене да заштитиш нас од силе зле невидљиве која надвила се над нама. Живот си свој жртвовала, да зна се, у име спаса вољених и дала се сили која би, може бити, прогутала неког другог, да не беше дивотне воље Твоје. Јер таква је природа живота овог чудесног, да све што се чулима нашим

представља само одраз је и пена на мору духовног света, далеко стварнијег од материјалног. И као у Лучи Микрокозми, дан и ноћ, без станка, битка се води у том свету духа који прожима нас све, међ' добром и злом, и у битци једној таквој, док стреле су се зачеле севати из свих праваца, бацила си се пред једну, попут штита светлосног, како би заштитила неког или нешто што ван наших моћи спознаје обитава. Јер осетила је душа твоја, чак и ако глава свесна тога није била, да зле мисли су се зачеле гомилати и да дужност божијег створа у таквом трену мора бити преузимање њихове сморне енергије на се и спасење света од исте. Такав твој читав живот бејаше и такав му је крај дошао – херојски, да би му и највећи ратници и очеви сторије наше могли позавидети. А да жртва Твоја залуд не буде, нек' се свуда простре светлост божија, нек' запљусне сва пространства лепотом својом вечном, нек' све звезде и прапорци зазвоне песмом радости с оног света, нек' се умови световни прочисте и нек' кроз њих почне струјати само милост божија, нек' се срце моје утопи у мору лепоте којом си ме овенчала за вечност, да жртва Твоја залуд не буде. Амен.

Ја сам љубав, све у мени је љубав, све око мене је божја љубав. Сваки трептај ока твог, сваки спуст крви низ руке моје, сваки слатки забачај ока у страну, све си то ти, све си ме то учила да будем. Да не будем свађалица охоло и џангризава, већ душа што сваког са чедношћу и милошћу анђеоском гледа. Да потонем у море љубави дубоко у мојој души док гледам свет, и док роним низ сводове његове да ми очи смекшају и крену топити се, све док се цео свет око мене не почне топити, од љубави слатке и горке. Да причам са Господом, са том љубављу вечном што прожима читав свет и сваки трен бивствовања. И да волим свакога, свакога, свакога, да ми то буде звезда водилца за сваки покрет и реч моју. И на концу свега, да само твој глас чујем како каже, са милошћу божјом, “све ће то, сине, проћи”.

Мир.

Љубав.

Свуда је подне.