

11/30/00 Thursday's Rock, Giles Nagual

Sunset in the desert. Enfeebled by prolonged fasting, the hermit finds himself unable to concentrate his mind upon holy things. His thoughts wander; memories of youth evoke regrets that his relaxed will can no longer find strength to suppress, — and, remembrance begetting remembrance, his fancy leads him upon dangerous ground. He dreams of his flight from home, — of Ammonaria, his sister's playmate, — of his misery in the waste, — his visit to Alexandria with the blind monk Didymus, — the unholy sights of the luxurious city.

Involuntarily he yields to the nervous dissatisfaction growing upon him. He laments his solitude, his joylessness, his poverty, the obscurity of his life; grace departs from him; hope burns low within his heart. Suddenly, revolting against his weakness, he seeks refuge from distraction in the study of the Scriptures.

Vain effort! An invisible hand turns the leaves placing perilous texts before his eyes.

Gustave Flaubert
The Temptation of Saint Anthony
translated by Lafcadio Hearn

Sitting with Diva today, stroking her fur, thinking of nothing in particular for hours on end — a pastime that I am becoming blissfully accustomed to — I noticed that a certain wonderful kind of synchronization was occurring. Our breaths were not flowing in perfect unison, since the relative proportions of our bodies would put one or the other of us severely out of physiological kilter if that were to happen, but we were in harmony nonetheless, separated, as it were, by only an octave on the scale of existence, each of us following the same pitch sequence, while moving melodically, harmonically together with such an exact symbiosis that for some period of time — for who knows how long on the clock? — what I was as a human being ran parallel to what she was as a cat. A weaving of consciousness and perceptions was slowly intertwining in the most languid and relaxed way, but still with an edge of predatory alertness that I recognized as spine-tinglingly feline. The room took on different shapes, different colors, or rather colors that were pastel and washed out, as if the light of day were overly harsh. I squinted a little, and noticed that what I lacked in color awareness, was more than compensated for through an increase by several orders of magnitude in my visual apperception of contrast. Life movements were blaringly apparent: the movement of gnats whirling through floating dust motes in light shafts, of tiny spiders witching their wiles in unswept corners, of ants moving furtively along baseboards and across the grainy surfaces of the oak flooring. The world was an emptiness as far as concept was concerned, an absolute desert, but as far as presence was concerned, it was a squirming hybridized unity of pulsating silvers and ebonies. I was entranced. It was as if a primal awareness of the Principle Order of things were twirling all around me, emptied of everything, except

wonder. And yet my human mind, flowing beside this undulating flux, merging with it, then separating from it, kept wanting to understand what was happening. At last Diva turned to me, blinked her piercing yellow eyes very slowly and very deliberately, once, twice, thrice, and the magical book was closed. I had been allowed to see more than I deserved, and still the human voice in me was crying “more”.

G.N. — (sarcastically) Certainly the desert can be read like a book, but who will teach you the meaning of its signs? But the desert is what it is. You want to have an “experience,” to indulge yourself in some Neolithic romanticism. You want to add to the anonymous totems in the anomaly of rain. You want to walk head-down in the waste and find a raven’s skull, its big eye-socket implying acerbic innuendoes. These wastes are not pages. You should grow up. Your whole approach is ghoulish, childish, and comically so, unfit for a person of knowledge and of power.

R.D. — (indignantly) Well, these things, if they are not really happening to me, are happening to someone. Someone did add to the totems. Someone was almost drowned in the desert. Someone did find a raven’s skull in the desolation. Someone merged with a cat.

G.N. — (pointedly) And knowing that this someone somewhere exists in what way changes your habits of perception?

R.D. — (accusingly) There’s a persistent and domineering punishment in your tone, desert-like, in the sense that it’s uncaring. I come to you for training, for awareness, and I get these eccentric sorcerer’s opinions.

G.N. — (Socratically) Do you see this stone? Its eccentricity? Its scars? Wisdom and folly share some common themes. Both are unruly, aloof and even lewd.

R.D. — (disgustedly) Well, the desert is not glib. It may be hard-hearted, but it is never truculent. Your words can smear the most luxurious gold with the sickliest yellow.

G.N. — (carpingly, evolving towards imperiousness) So you want a numinous relationship? You want a desert guru, angelic and genteel. You should prepare yourself to accept things, which are seemingly less, but which conjure so much more: harsh beauty, emptiness, heat and truth.

R.D. — (scathingly) You drop words like those oviparous lizards that drop eggs, leaving them unattended to spawn monsters. Thank God for the discretion of the sun and the endless wiles of desert predators that keep these populations well in check!

G.N. — (with quiet and compassionate authority) You have read many books. So you have become urbane when you should be astute. Do you observe any lachrymal fluid, dripping from this or from any other stone?

“Stone.” That was the final word of our argument, and then the dusk ensued with tactful silence. Hospitable shadows quelled the desert heat. An inappetent languor pressed upon our hearts, making them draw nearer to each other. We felt nothing. Thought nothing. Wanted not one thing. And yet the stones wore saintly glorioles.

Week Six

12/1/00 (Preliminary note)

Every Friday, since Friday is the beginning of a new cycle of Rock Gazing, I must determine how or if I will continue my researches. I have options. I could return to the dishevelment of my habitual, albeit, abnormal life. No, this is my life now, my new habit, the sackcloth of a secular hermit dedicated to interminable mental meanderings. Or I could take the rocks out of their envelopes and allow them to intermingle. No, no, no, at this point, I believe such a course would be rash. This could lead to unbearable interactions between set times. Friday might rush forward or drift backward and meet with Wednesday. Impossible connections might occur, and the whole enterprise might degenerate into some abominable form of narration. I suspect that in the enclosure of the armoire, the paper of the envelopes is too thin a partition to prevent furtive and conspiratorial dialogues. I know that the interior lives of certain of the rocks have already bled into one another, and that if they do not yet directly converse, insidious premonitions are arising in their dreams. Certainly these premonitions are beginning to wear thin the fabric of the days, bedeviling their sequence, threatening their continuity, calling them to impossible congregations. Even I, poor I, the zero in the indecipherable deck, am beginning to see through the gossamer and into faraway times and distant places. This is unsettling. Strange vocabularies intrude, as if their words were native to my speech. I am possessed by the process, and must accede to those bizarre thrones of consciousness habituated by the demented, by shamans, by animals and by angels.

I arrived home from Alphretta, Diva greeting me at the door, her tail held straight up, but turned at the top like a perpetual question mark, bitchy as usual, because I was imperfect. I was not a cat. (Well, I was not often enough a cat.) I was, in short, not Diva, and it was an insult to her greatness to submit to being cared for by such an oaf. This was typical, yet this time she had something legitimate to bitch about. Her timed feeder (in spite of the fact that I had been with her the whole time), which I had left out for her in my absence, was covered with ants — and not just ordinary ants either, but those pesky fire ants that sting and leave a toxin in the body that can accumulate to the point of fatality. They had entered through the back of the kitchen cabinet, attracted by some unsavory fast-food containers, which I had foolishly tossed in the trash when I left town. Now there were armies of them, superhighways of pseudopodia, in fact, connecting all the edibles in the house, slithering into every room, where they found monuments of uneaten burgers, pizzas, burritos to worship and devour. Naturally I commenced a chemical warfare that threw up a cloud of toxicity enough to kill ants, me and Diva (the second time for both Diva and myself). It was trench warfare, a fight for every inch of ground, and no quarter asked or given, the ants nipping at my heels, and me dousing them in Black Flag. Finally, it was over, the whole of the disputed territory now corrupted into a vast killing field, unfit for habitation by Myrmidons or men, and in dire need of

rehabilitation. Naturally, Diva was POed. Naturally the ants retreated to their native lairs. Naturally. But I began to think of the vast numbers of corpses I had made, and to consider, if all of these concentrations of cultural poisons were really preferable to the pests I had destroyed. What was it about my life, about all of our lives, that demanded so much control and death, and that attracted so much hostility from the rest of creation?

Interregnum: Eighth Week's Summary

To be worst, the lowest and most dejected thing of fortune, stands still in esperance, lives not in fear. The lamentable change is from the best; the worst returns to laughter. Welcome, then, thou unsubstantial air that I embrace! The wretch that thou hast blown into the worst owes nothing to thy blasts. . . Oh Gods! Who is it that can say, "I am at the worst." . . . I am worst than e're I was, and worse I may be yet. The worst is not, so long as we can say, "This is the worst."

William Shakespeare
Tom O' Bedlam (a.k.a. Edgar)
King Lear, Act 4, scene 1.

I awakened Thursday morning — I guess that would be the 21st — among various other stinkards, moral invalids and poltroons inhabiting a holding cell at the local constabulary's. The charges were seven in number: assault, criminal trespass, malicious mischief, destroying private property, public intoxication, disturbing the peace and indecent exposure. (In my defense, I assert that at least three of these indictments, namely, malicious mischief, destroying private property and public intoxication were damnable lies.) Even here, in the pit of iniquity, however, I was able to maintain my solitude, if not my dignity, for the other ruffians in custody had proscribed an invisible but very effective barrier between our outcast persons. And no wonder! Of the wild men so incarcerated, I certainly appeared to be the wildest of them all. Rather too-casually attired only in the Gandhi-esque dhoti of a towel marked "Harris County Jail," my body, grotesque by any measure, was further distorted by the swelling of ant bites and the welts, bruises, claw-marks, grill-marks (yes, grill-marks) that I had sustained during an altercation with my good Republican neighbor, Lamar. I was smeared with mud and blood, my hair "elfed in knots" — as Tom O' Bedlam might have put it, with some chunks missing here and there, leaving bare spots the approximate size of Lamar's pudgy grasp. My eyes, blacked, were nearly swollen shut, while my mouth, a tumescent gash, was crusted over with dried, dark blood. I remember looking at a crescent-shaped human bite mark on my hand and wondering if I should get a tetanus shot. What had happened? My account must be provisional, for in truth, time has wreaked havoc upon me, and I can scarcely track how I spend any of it now. I do, however, distinctly recall the row, if not its aftermath.

After awakening in the pulsing ant pile, I set about conducting House War II to wrest the possession of my domicile back from the eusocial hoards. The War did not go well. With poisons and chemical cleaners I hobbled, staggered and careened through the

reeking ruins of my hostel, fighting, unsystematically (in contrast to my controlled fury of destruction) the angry red invaders. No warrior, however bedraggled, has ever addressed himself more appallingly to the fray. From the get-go, despite my chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction, the indefatigable Myrmidons had the advantage of me, both by way of numbers and by way of cunning. How many hours or days I squandered in this struggle, I cannot say. I remember only certain moments of abject humiliation: grubbing old burger remnants from the conglomerate of assorted garbage festooning the floors and walls or wetting myself uncontrollably in response to thousands of poisoned pincers simultaneously stinging my unwashed body. Meanwhile, next door, Lamar, the favorable (to him) conclusion of the presidential (s)election having triggered an alcoholic binge, began to incessantly trouble the air with the piteous cries of Country Western music, interspersed with sporadic arpeggios of gunfire and more SUV motor-revving. This human-generated din was accompanied by the continuous barking and whining of the lamentable John Wayne. Along toward Wednesday evening, (I am guessing on the time here) the combination of my losing battle with the ants and Lamar's pandemonium had goaded me to an excruciating apex of frustration. When I looked out the rumpus room window and saw the hairy shirtless blob of Lamar perversely tonguing hot coals from his barbecue and tossing them at the helpless staked Rott Weiler, his idle cruelty accompanied by gales of besotted laughter, I just lost it. Tearing out of the house, dressed only in my soiled Depends, I somehow managed to get my bloated body over the chain link fence — losing, I am now shamed to say, my only garment, which was left dangling, like a flag of surrender, on a malicious prong — and before the slow-witted Lamar knew what was happening or could defend himself, I cannonballed him amidships, mano a mano, Blubber to Blubberiffic, bringing us both down with a somewhat squishy-sounding thud. Now those fights that we see in movies and on TV where the protagonists belabor one another with fiercesome roundhouse blows, crashing through tables, windows, doors, slamming bottles and chairs over their unprotected sconces — these displays are the merest fantasies. In the real world, when two grown men go at it, there is only the briefest exchange of fisticuffs (if any) and a good deal more of absurd rolling around, some momentary biting and gouging, and then, after a few furious seconds of hostilities, the beginning of a long and humiliating aftermath of exhausted wheezing, whimpering and cursing. This is followed by trips to the police station and/or the emergency room and months of rehabilitation and/or court appearances. Lamar and I staged just such a backyard blitzkrieg. The whole thing lasted no more than 30 or 40 clock ticks, since as Lamar was going down, he reflexively grabbed his hot barbecue grill and smacked me upside the head with it, simultaneously bringing me *to* and knocking me *out of* my senses. (Hence the grill marks alluded to previously). What followed my opening salvo, which more or less took both combatants out of commission, were a series of slow-motion, girlish whacks and wallops. These exchanges, however enfeebled, would probably have ended in my death and dismemberment, since Lamar, drunk or no, was twice my size, and was roused to preternatural fury by my surprise, and (to him) unprovoked attack, had not something very strange, and for me, very fortuitous, occurred. John Wayne broke his chain, and leapt, not upon me, but upon his less than beloved master, and after tearing a gaping, but otherwise woundless hole, in the seat of Lamar's grubby Wranglers, the long tormented beast leapt the chain link fence and disappeared into the city night. The fight was over. I lay on my back looking up at the hazy Houston

heavens, and listening to some Country Western radio song of heartbreak and betrayal, while Lamar, blubbering like a green girl about John Wayne's unfaithfulness, lost himself in the cesspool of his own grief, effectively forgetting about his attacker. After I don't know how long a time, I saw, hovering between me and the night sky, the face of one of Houston's finest. There followed my arrest and the filing of the charges alluded to above.

But in spite of these rather histrionic events and the acquisition of my new identity as a scofflaw, the real mystery of the week concerns the texts of the Rock Gazing exercises, a mystery not primarily about their inscrutable contents, but about the fact that they were produced at all. Certainly, in my week-long stuporous assault on the ants, I do not remember transcribing them, and after several readings, they feel — how can I put this — not so much like fictions or projections, but like reminiscences. Recalling Serenity's trouble with the interloper veteran, or the evening in Athens when Theopompus thrashed his wife and slave, or the suicide of Amadée de Jois were not, to me, mere fictional diversions, no, they were, or are, experiences. And not just anyone's experiences, either, they were mine. Yet, just writing that word, "mine," now has a creepy and inauthentic feel. What was that grammatically eccentric phrase of that other scofflaw, Arthur Rimbaud: *Je est un autre*. I is another. That fits. That fits, when nothing else seems to. For surely, there is nothing left in the world that I can claim as a personal possession, save, perhaps this obese dump of my poor degraded body, and *that* I willingly, fervently renounce! All of the texts seem both impersonal and personal at the same time, and the wash of their episodes over my bereft consciousness leaves me gasping. The whole environment of my life seems like a fluctuating tide of energy currents that keeps spiraling me down — down towards some abysmal, but possibly illuminating, subsea confrontation. Well, why not? Am I not a wounded whale floundering between two worlds, both potentially hostile, and ready to crush me, in an instant, with the alien and formidable weight of their unbreathable atmospheres?

Interregnum: Seventh Week's Summary

That statute, in turn, requires that any controversy or contest that is designed to lead to a conclusive selection of electors be completed by December 12. That date is upon us, and there is no recount procedure in place under the State Supreme Court's order that comports with minimal constitutional standards. Because it is evident that any recount seeking to meet the December 12 date will be unconstitutional for the reasons we have discussed, we reverse the judgment of the Supreme Court of Florida ordering a recount to proceed. { . . }

None are more conscious of the vital limits on judicial authority than are the members of this Court, and none stand more in admiration of the Constitution's design to leave the selection of the President to the people, through their legislatures, and to the political sphere. When contending parties invoke the process of the courts, however, it becomes our unsought responsibility to resolve

the federal and constitutional issues the judicial system has been forced to confront.

The judgement of the Supreme Court of Florida is reversed, and the case is remanded for further proceedings not inconsistent with this opinion.

Pursuant to this Court's Rule 45.2, the Clerk is directed to issue the mandate in this case forthwith.

It is so ordered.

Per Curiam
Supreme Court of the United States
N. 00-949
George W. Bush, et al., Petitioners v.
Albert Gore, Jr., et al.
On writ of Certiorari to the Florida
Supreme Court
[December 12, 2000]

Only the seventh week of awareness exercises and I can already see that these interregnums have degenerated from rule-making, to confusion, to shoddy hermeneutics. The idea that the interpretation of texts can somehow free the ponderous mind from the confines of interpretation is a self-contradicting folly. The interpretation is perhaps the mind's attempt to stop, or at least slow, these words that are always moving. Now it occurs to me (ponderously, slowly) that the movements of these narrations are embodiments of Time, of what Foucault, or some other tedious French intellectual, calls *epistemes*. Their idea being — as best as I understand it — that words, specific vocabularies, are windows into discrete historical epochs. And that while sentences keep up a constant surface dialectical or narrative flow, the individual words, or even the individual sounds composing the words, like eddies, arrest that movement, and allow us the chance to see into the depths. The *epistemes* are windows, windows that we can not only “look through,” but literally “drink from.” That is to say, the words re-immense us in alien flows of time, not only in memory, but — in accordance with certain neurotransmitter activity — in actuality. We find ourselves re-experiencing fourth century B.E.C. Athens, or first century C.E. Briton, or Philadelphia in the years leading up to the American Revolution. A word from a novel by Proust thrusts us back to Paris on the eve of the First World War. These words, these *epistemes*, somehow stir the living descendents of those times, *i.e.*, our own brain cells, with life, or lives, the lives that were lived, and are still being lived, in the ocean of Time. The words resurrect the then and there to the here and now. But we (I) want to know about people, about events, or, in extreme moments of lassitude, about ideas. We (I) want to know about a personal immediate future, and not about an impersonal distant past. Words do not interest us, and, as such, we are their captives. We speak or write them, and they arise around us like imprisoning stones. Then we proceed to paint word-images on the ever-thickening walls and imagine ourselves to be free. And if a word arises that we don't understand, we

complain. We cast it out. We refuse to read it. And we beat our heads on the familiar walls in an all-too familiar and ever-recurring frustration. But now, I (we) think of those medieval copyists in their cloisters, laboriously writing scriptures with letters of gold, and painting vines and birds around those letters: the unreal and the real, the slave and the free, mixing together in the sacred book.

The Controlled Calamity

The back and forth fiasco of the presidential election had compelled me to alter my television-watching habits in the direction of a more astringent austerity. Now the mute button was no longer a sufficient filter for the news, I was also driven to dispense with the picture. Since my return from Alpharetta, I have squandered my days watching the distorted reflection of my poor dogsbody in the dark convexity of the slightly irradiated TV screen. I find that the news thus absorbed is more accurate than the preprogrammed fare. The imperturbability of the set reminds me of what the old Elizabethan cunning men called a skrying stone, and in this stone I see, or I imagine that I see — this distinction means so little to me now — the dark events of the future. Now, more and more, every surface in my world has become as physically opaque and as metaphysically transparent as the seven rocks that hold me in their thrall. My only contact with the outside world is through the newspaper, fittingly, I suppose, through words. My subscription has not yet exhausted itself, and I am too inert to muster the gumption to call the Chronicle and cancel it. (I no longer read the front page anymore, and make a deliberate effort to hide it from view, having already exceeded my physical capacity to absorb more lies. But still, I like to do the Jumble and to read the obits and the “personals” section of the classifieds.) Thus, it came to pass, that I discovered the news of George W. Bush’s selection as president through an extra-official news source.

How do these stories begin in Gothic novels? “It was a dark and stormy night” — actually it was — pretty much across the entire U.S., but in Houston, too, and I was sitting on the couch, Diva on my lap, watching the blank set, when I heard the pop of small arms fire and the yahoos of my neighbor, Lamar Schiller. In the freezing rain, no less, Lamar was bouncing his corpulent, shirtless, but excessively hairy body around in his yard, in a macho celebratory display. His cavorting included, in addition to the gunplay (not alas, for him, an altogether infrequent activity), the ritual revving of his enormous SUV and the repeated tossing in the air of his cowboy hat — the winter one, (felt, black), not the summer one, (straw, hemp), nor the dress one, (white, Stetson). Naturally this hullabaloo set off his Rott Weiler, John Wayne, whose miserable lot was to wallow in his own feces while staked to the infested, denuded gumbo clay of Schiller’s doodad-cluttered back yard. Lamar was infamous in the neighborhood for his fights with any one of his six ex-wives, his accumulation of motorized wrecks — cars, trucks, motorcycles, motorhomes, boats — and his penchant for general crudity and procrastination. In fact, the neighbors had coined a verb to describe his kind of behavior, *viz.*, “to schillerize.” Leave your Christmas decorations up until July — you’ve schillerized them. Let a broken tree branch hang from a tree for two months after a storm, it’s been schillerized, *etc., etc.* Schiller loved Dubya almost as much as he loved his gun collection, and it did not take me long to determine that the upshot of this firing

of weapons and burning of petrol had something to do with the supposedly undecided election. Well, as the old Pogo cartoon used to say, “Friday the 13th fell on Wednesday this month.” The Supreme Court had ruled (not the Florida one, the U.S. one) and Gore had made his concession, and I thought, as I sat in the schillerized hovel of my own life: ‘Let the cascade of catastrophes begin.’

Then something strange occurred: a possession that I call in retrospect “the Controlled Calamity.” In a kind of ritualized rage, I went through my house in a cold-blooded fury. No vandal ever trashed the premises of his detested victim with more creative fervor. I tossed fruit into the whirling ceiling fans. I slashed flour and sugar bags and whirled their contents around the floors and walls, not omitting to empty the contents of drawers onto the floor and to pour their newly vacant cavities full of whatever condiment was most viscous and repulsive. I tipped over the refrigerator and kicked the moldering contents into every corner of the house. I smashed unwashed dishes in the bathtub, slopped cooking oils, ketchup, salad dressings and honey into the flour and sugar; and I disgorged the contents of the medicine cabinet — which I wrenched from the bathroom wall — making a slurry-like vomitus of Preparation H, Pepto-Bismol, Kaopectate and various antacids and antihistamines to coat the carpeted floors. I tossed my clothes out of the closets and rabidly tore them to ribbons. I overturned mattresses and upholstered cushions, slashing out the stuffing and flinging it on the sticky walls like so much Xmas tree flocking. I broke every mirror in the house, including the one in the living room armoire, and with one possessed and well-placed kick, I imploded the cathode tube of the TV set. I concluded this orgy of destruction, by stripping myself and shredding my clothes, finally, jerking off my adult diaper, and making confetti of its chemical fabric, tossing it in the air over my head, as if I were some perverse hero dishonoring myself with my own one-man tickertape parade. I was as systematic as I was maniacal, and starting from the kitchen, I made a counterclockwise revolution through every room of the house, ending the spiral of terror in my erstwhile office (a.k.a. “the rumpus room — the house being built in the 50’s when rumpusing was considered a normal part of a family’s daily activities). I don’t know how many hours I was consumed in this ceremony, but at some point, I must have passed out from exhaustion. (Although the whole episode had awakened in my body an uncharacteristic and nearly superhuman physical strength — like that of those wild men who run amok when their wives leave them and cannot be felled by gun fire or persuasion or that of those frantic mothers who lift cars off their babies or that of saints who fling great stone crosses a country mile). I awakened some hours later — naked and sweaty, in spite of the freezing cold — with Diva staring at my gnarly head, and the whole house covered with a pulsing membrane of busy and contented fire ants.

Week Eight

12/15/02 Friday’s Rock, Moby Polyphemus

Although the identities we assign to make sense of the world invite us to think in terms of substance, experience itself is marked by constant transformation. From

hour to hour and moment to moment the world is changing, and we know firsthand that the mind that experiences it is changing as well. History changes; specific appearances change, moods and attitudes change. Features hold for a time and then give way, like ice dissolving into water. In the end, nothing endures. The impression of solidity that casual observation conveys proves to be something like the solidity we feel underfoot when we walk the deck of an ocean liner: It belies the movement beneath the surface.

Tarthang Tulku
Dynamics of Time and Space

While it is true that the metaphors which some adepts have used to describe their soundings have found their way into various “holy scriptures,” these “landings” are for the benefit of the lay public, or are merely dispersed as false scent trails to distract stalkers. We seldom speak of our probings in this manner when communicating with one another. We have work to do at deep levels of consciousness, and this work requires a high degree of coordination among our hierarchies. We need multidimensional contour maps, precise measurements of temperatures and pressures, accurate catalogues of encountered species, analyses of geophysical structures and warnings about hostile climates or predators. Oily emulsifiers like “love thy neighbor” are far too vague to help describe the real work, although even these exoteric platitudes are sometimes encrypted with genuine information for those who know the code.

The disciplines that we must master require an inconceivable fortitude, since we must unstintingly prepare the Consciousness Body to withstand the enormous pressures exerted on it by the deeper levels of reality. Some of our more advanced adepts sustain dives of up to thirty atmospheres, subjecting the CB to pressures more than 350 times greater than those existing at ordinary space/time coordinates. We explorers of the benthic realms must combine the brute force of seismic explosions with the delicacy of highly stylized psychical maneuvering so that both the physical body and the CB can compress millennia of evolution into a few connected lifespans. Often we must reconfigure our respiratory organs to sustain the anaerobic landscapes of the abysmal plain. The same is true of our other surface sensory receptors, which must be transmuted into chemoreceptors, electroreceptors, sonar receptors and other unimaginable cellular adaptations, so that we can collect the strange data found at the deepest soundings.

While some of our adepts construct Remote Operating Vehicles (ROVs) which gather information from hostile thermoclines, while the CB remains safely in trance at the surface, our more advanced explorers master shape-shifting. We develop CBs which would be outlandish, if not absolutely terrifying, to most of our stalkers, or, indeed, to any surface dweller. Some of us take on ctenophoric shapes, our CBs becoming transparent and jelly-like, propelling us with cilia through the mesopelagic zones. Some of us may acquire “gas bladders” whose inflation or deflation enables us to negotiate the more fluidic layers of understanding. In these shapes, we are conditioned to explore subsurface canyons, caldera, slides and submerged escarpments. Many of us become

full-fledged photophores, our CBs capable of emitting their own source of light. Our light-swarms often appear to beginning meditators, or to those who have ingested psychoactive plants, and are seen as entoptic dots, grids, mazes, spirals, rays or oscillating concentric circles. These phenomena are the so-called “phosphenes,” or more poetically, the “iridescent ballerinas,” which are generated by the excited optic nerve in the absence of external visual stimuli. Beyond these projected inner mappings, we float our plasma orbs, species of swirling diaphanes, which emit the information we desire to impart to apprentice adepts or stalkers. All of our phenomenon are readily perceptible, even by the most wayward of stalkers and skeptics, but still remain “hidden in plain sight” to those whose sense receptors have been obscured by the mad acculturation known as ratiocination. Explanations of our appearances abound as obfuscations, and we adepts are highly amused at the psychosomatic confabulations given by surface scientific investigators upon encountering our highly evolved CBs. For the most part, children see us more clearly and absorb our teachings best.

Our most advanced adepts explore the depths for such extended periods that they must not only adapt new sensory apparatus and novel methods of motility, but new digestive functions as well. Some of us become predators, developing “stinging cells,” or, more precisely, “nematocysts,” and with missionary zeal we seek out and devour the promulgators of false doctrine. Others habituate turgid currents where sediments, such as ordinary surface dreams or fantasies, flow downslope by means of their natural archetypal gravity. As these currents scour substrate, they dislodge nutrients, and some adepts have evolved digestive organs capable of extracting energy from these substances.

The risks that we adepts face are inconceivable, and a high percentage of us simply disintegrate in bliss in the upper reaches of these twilight realms, our granulated CBs creating a “snow” of consumable detritus, which constantly flutters through to deeper levels. Some of us scavenge this snow, becoming suspension feeders. And finally, the most prodigious divers nurse from the cold seep of the “gnomish mothers,” *i.e.*, that pap extruded from the deepest zonal rocks. These mothers slowly ooze metaphoric sulfides and methanes, which would be corrosively toxic to even some of our most advanced CBs, but which miraculously provide the dark milk which suckles our most exalted masters.

But, it would be an error to suppose that we adepts are only explorers. We are also builders and artists. We transect vast areas of the abysmal plain and weave fantastic bathyspheres from the effluent of our own discoveries. These translucent poli are connected by the “lines and chains” of ephemeral music emitted by our ecstatic CBs as we entwine in consort with our infinite dancing movements. Visions of these dance-structures sometimes intoxicate the imaginations of earthly artists, who, in their awestruck stupors, struggle to recreate them in poetry, paintings, plays, symphonies, operas and ballets. Indeed, some of the most proficient of these practitioners of the arts are the actual CBs of adepts whose work it is to connect divergent realms. A good deal of the pious imagery of heaven can be explained by this cross-reality seepage. These seepages, although rare in undisciplined minds, still occur frequently enough. But, in spite of the disparaging terminology used to catalog them, they are not to be construed as accidental. On the contrary, these seepages are the deliberate consequence of our

researches into ordinary realms of consciousness. They are the tracks of sojourns that our CBs take quite often in their constant search for “pillow time,” the R and R required by even the most advanced adepts to recover from both the deadly pressures and the extraordinary delights of the work.