

BLISS



PLENITUDE NOT ATTITUDE



BLISS 5 SUMMER 2006

SPIRIT

"It is in words and language that things first come into being and are."

—Heidegger

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

—Gospel of John

"Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end."

—Semisonic

"I do think beginnings are dead. "No art form," writes George Steiner in *Grammars of Creation*, "comes out of nothing. Always, it comes after." The post-structural theorists have clarified (or further baffled) this condition for us, arguing convincingly that any origin, any trace or any originary phenomenon or concept, has been visited and many times written over. Origins are lost. And the beginning is always already underway. It is in fact postscript. Modernism, Steiner says, might be defined as an exasperation with the cruel fact of posteriority.

—David Baker, from *IF: ON TRANSIT, TRANSCENDENCE, AND TROPE*

[LOOK FOR COMPLETE ESSAY IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF BLISS]



Only today
I heard
the river
within the river.

from BRAIDED CREEK:
A CONVERSATION IN POETRY
by Jim Harrison and Ted Kooser



a note to the reader: i asked **abraham anderson**, a professor of philosophy in cairo, to contribute fragments of automatic writing to bliss. i gave him a word so he could just free-associate. These are his responses. —leray

ETERNITY

Ah, now there you've got it, son!
I remember when things were eternal.
What a life!

TIME

Me haces loco hombre! Que se del tiempo? Nada! Estoy un tipo totalmente espacial

NOUMENA

"Noumena" in Kant means objects of thought, as against "phenomena" or appearances. He gets the term from Sextus Empiricus, the ancient skeptical author (or so I think); see *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* Book I chapter 4. I think "noumena" can also be contrasted with "aistheta" or objects of sense. Sextus says that the skeptic opposes phenomena to noumena to produce a suspension of judgment (isostheneia) about things themselves and thereby ataraxia or untroubledness.

For Kant, we cannot have knowledge of the noumena as such, since we cannot know things by thinking alone; we can only know phenomena, or things of which we can have experience (as opposed to just thoughts). This means that we cannot prove the existence of God, since according to Kant we cannot have experience of God, and since the attempts to prove the existence of God just by thinking (by thinking for example about 'the most perfect being', which has existence as one of its attributes) doesn't work. Nor can we prove that the soul is simple or immaterial just by thinking about it.

For Kant 'spirits', if they are immaterial and not accessible to the senses, are 'noumena', and I suppose Karma and soul memory would be too.

He has an early book called "Dreams of a Spirit-Seer, Explained Through Dreams of Metaphysics", which argues that the theosophical visions of Swedenborg, who claimed to see and speak with spirits, had the same source in human reason as the metaphysics of Leibniz; that Swedenborg's claims to prophetic vision had their root in a need of human reason to find intelligible order in things. Kant there suggests that the real pull of this wish lies in our desire for immortality.

SPIRIT

Is the world empty of spirit? There was a man in the seventeenth century named Balthasar Bekker, who wrote a book called 'The Enchanted World', making fun of people who believed in spirits. He argued there couldn't be spirits, since the idea of a spirit involves a confusion of mind and body (this is a Cartesian idea). But I think he actually ended up proving there were no people either, since the idea of human beings involves the same confusion.

THE BOX thinking outside the box

I looked out once,
it was scary,
so I went back inside.

MATTER

Could matter be the 'necessary being'? How can we tell whether there has to be matter, or whether it is just an accident that there is any? What does this question even mean?

PERFECTION

Yes! It's so hard to be imperfect.
I keep trying, and keep slipping into perfection.

WHAT DO WE CALL THE STATE OF MIND THAT ALLOWS US TO LIVE WITH NO ANSWER TO THE QUESTIONS POSED BY DAY TO DAY LIFE?

Good humor?

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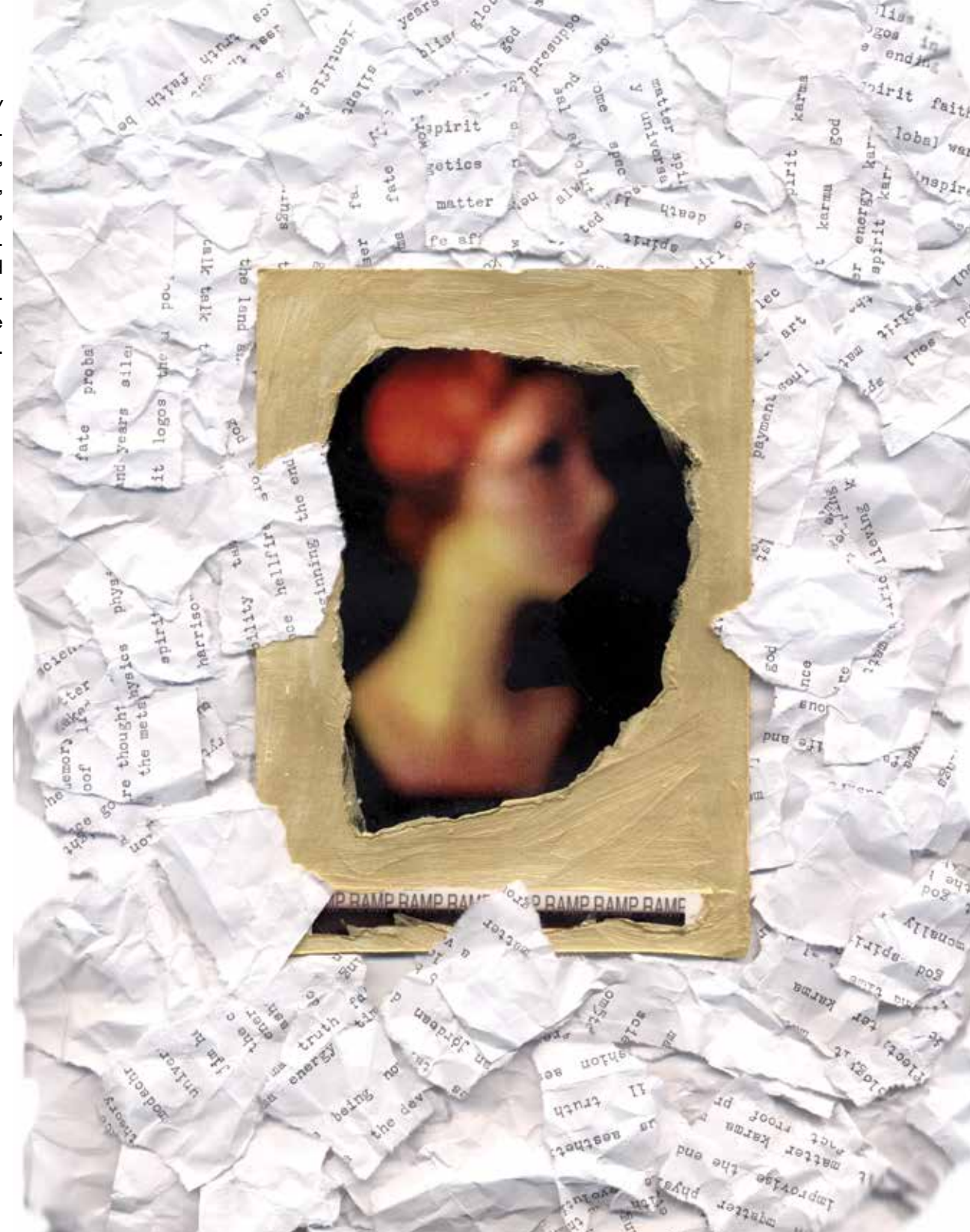
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Media turned reality
into a spectacle.
Life, matter, energy,
truth, fiction, news,
rumors, love,
birth, death, time.
All that is known and
seen is spectacle.
And besides spectacle
there is only Spirit.



I have tried to write Paradise.

Do not move.
Let the wind speak
that is paradise.

Let the Gods forgive what I
have made.
Let those I love try to forgive
what I have made.

—Ezra Pound, Notes for CXVII et seq.
The Cantos

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Letter to the Editor

Dear Sir or Madam:

A friend of mine in Santa Fe sent me the most recent issue of Bliss. It reminded me of the lifestyle, spirit and soul of Santa Fe.

I loved the magazine!

Bliss captures the true spirituality, artistic flavor and inquiring minds of Santa Fe.

I travel several times a year to Santa Fe, visiting art galleries and hobnobbing with real artists, particularly the Hispanic artists in the area. Your magazine reminds me of the best of the old New Yorker and Esquire magazines with great writing and gorgeous photography. Your interview with Craig at TADU Gallery shows that Santa Fe has become a true art center, which in many ways rivals the New York art scene. I look forward to reading articles in the future about Hispanic and Indian artists, who greatly contribute to the history, cultural values and ambiance of the Santa Fe community. Keep up the good work!

Very truly yours,
Robert G. André
Attorney At Law
Seattle, Washington

2/9/06

To the Bliss team

On behalf of the First Contact Street Outreach, I want to extend a HUGE thank you for thinking of our program when you were visioning your last issue.

The response that we have had from the article has been tremendous! Santa Fe once again has had an opportunity to rise up in community spirit and offer their support and imagination to the program.

We have been presented with a wonderful opportunity to collaborate with a local business committed to sustainability and the community. Many other people and businesses have come forward in an effort to contribute to the lives of the vulnerable youth that we serve.

It is with extreme gratitude that I wish to acknowledge the vision of Bliss Magazine, incorporating the many facets of Santa Fe—art, design, dynamism and community.

Thanks again for your support. I hope that success continues to visit you all.

Tamar Spatz
Program Director
First Contact Street Outreach
Part of Youth Shelters
& Family Services

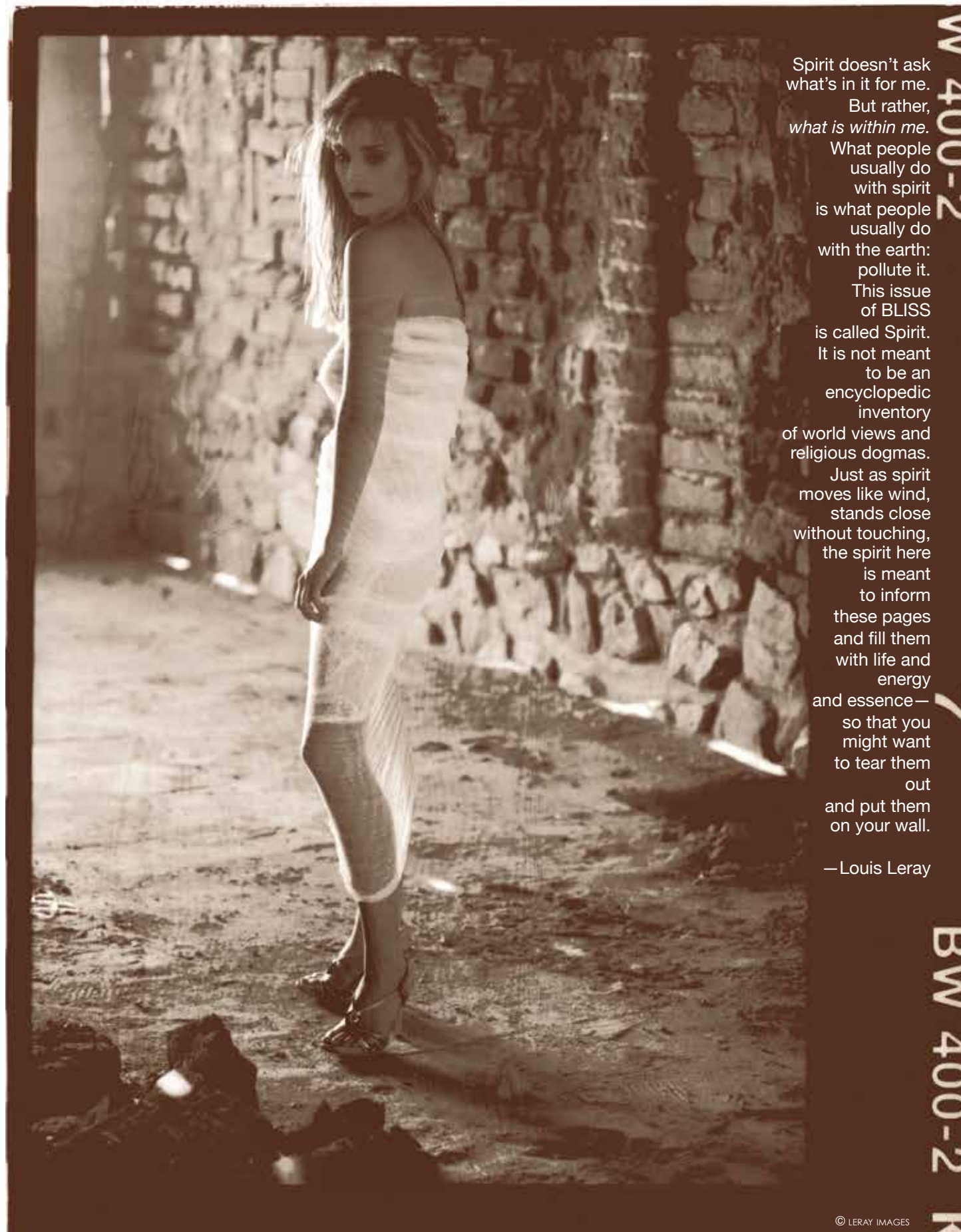
You want to eat it.

That's what I feel about the new issue. Just edible, like Viennese Saccor torte, gleaming with chocolate glaze, and dripping with raspberry filling. Incredible how sophisticated and at the same time, substantial, it's become. What a load of work you and Lindsay have taken on. And you've achieved so much. Congratulations! I'd like to talk to you about the myriad details, from the various interviews (loved the piece on Andrea the "Czarina", she's so bizzzar!, meaning my kind of person) which really beefs the thing up, to the new kinds of ads the mag is attracting, to Lindsay's literary section, which I found richly varied and stimulating. The interview with Merwin, one of my very favorite poets, was great. How in god's name did you get him to do it?

Love, and again
BRAVO!
Nia

LETTERS TO BLISS

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Spirit doesn't ask what's in it for me.

But rather, *what is within me.*

What people usually do with spirit is what people usually do with the earth: pollute it.

This issue of BLISS is called Spirit. It is not meant to be an encyclopedic inventory of world views and religious dogmas.

Just as spirit moves like wind, stands close without touching, the spirit here is meant to inform these pages and fill them with life and energy

and essence—so that you might want to tear them out and put them on your wall.

—Louis Leray

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the rabbi

Lindsay: I like what you said about Moses coming down from the mountain with his face shining but veiled so the people couldn't see it.

Nahum: In Hebrew the word for world, Olam, comes from the Hebrew root which means hidden or veiled. The world, that is, the physicality of the world, is God, but a veiled form of God that allows us to come in contact with the Divine, or else we would be overwhelmed. The light shining through creation is God's presence. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, he was so imbued with that light that he himself became brilliant beyond the ability of others to be near him.

Lindsay: When you fall in love and feel that drug of love coursing through your veins, is that kind of like being filled with the spirit?

Nahum: That's a wonderful question. Well, there has been a lot of work done recently about the role of the erotic in Judaism. The erotic not in the sense of the sexual specifically, but in terms of Eros, in terms of just aliveness, the joy, the juiciness, the light and the pleasure and sensuousness of life. God is life, and life is sensuous and beautiful and alive and erotic. So, in that sense, the full spectrum of one's experience of love from devotion to excitement, to the light, the joy, ecstasy, would be an experience of God, yeah.

Lindsay: What's the role of the self in relation to loving God, and the role of the self in relation to loving other people? How do you get away from your own ego and into a more pure spiritual plane?

Nahum: There's a commentary in the Talmud, where the question is raised, how do we love God? God says to the people, "Love my creatures, and love my creation." So I think the extent to which I'm feeling the aliveness of God's presence, I'm experiencing myself as being a lover in the world, and therefore the distance between myself as a contained ego and the other begins to dissolve and it's just an experience of God's love.

Lindsay: Is there discussion or argument about how one can prove or disprove that the Torah is the word of God?

Nahum: The word argument connotes something problematic. There's some kind of violence to the word argument, which is different than conversation. So there is certainly also argument, but there is also a healthy conversation in Judaism about in what ways the Torah is divine. And I both recognize the historical arguments that identify different literary genre in the Torah which indicate that the Torah is the combined work of several schools that have been brought together at some later point in time. And also there are verses in the Torah that are very troubling, and difficult and why would that be the word of God? And yet in a lifetime of studying Torah, when I'm in conversation with the text, I always feel like I'm in a conversation with something beyond. In traditional Jewish circles, the Torah isn't meant to be studied individually, between me and the book, but here's the book in the center of the conversation so that we're all taking part of the conversation. And I always find that the Torah can be totally transformative in bringing people to that place of asking the deepest questions and being challenged in the deepest ways and being pushed to their limits. So I would say that, the Torah, like so much of this territory, is a mystery to me. It looks like it's human, and it looks like it's divine, and I don't know really how to reconcile that mystery.

Lindsay: Would you say that you're not getting your faith from the word of God but from the world, almost?

Nahum: My faith comes from the gift of teachers who I've learned from, the Torah, and most of all, from working on my relationship with God for many years. I think that faith is less belief than relationship.

Lindsay: How do you know that that relationship is something that's really happening in the world and not in your mind?

Nahum: I don't. I mean, when you say, how do I know? I don't know. But how do I rest in comfort? That's a different question. Confidence in my teachers and in holy people. Not only Jewish holy people but holy people of all religions and all walks of life, great people we would all look up to and feel that there is something we experience in them that is real. A second thing, a really important step in my own spiritual development, is I came to the place where I felt if I couldn't trust my deepest sense then I was nowhere. In some ways, we're not brought up to trust ourselves,

the rabbi

we might be deluded, we might be deceived, and we really can't trust our experience, and people really go off when they trust their gut and that sort of thing.... and I was in a place in my life, at that moment, that if I can't trust that place inside myself, then I know nothing. So, it's sort of like an axiom ... axiomatically ... I trust that place of knowing within myself. And in that way, in that place of knowing, for me, I know of God's presence in my life.

Lindsay: It's true that our culture, especially in America, is oriented so that you can't trust yourself, you have to trust the news, you have to trust science, you have to trust the authorities, but you can't trust yourself.

Nahum: It's a dangerous place too. The corrective is community. If I had some thought, and everyone who I really respect said, "You know what, that's nuts, that's not God," then I would know I need to go back in and look again. And I need to test my sense of God's presence not only in the light of the teaching of my most immediate community, but according to the teachings of faith traditions around the world. I think there's a lot of consistency. One of my teachers said one of the ways that you look at faith as to its reality and legitimacy is its fruits. Fruits like love, kindness, generosity and service. Last night, I was reading the great Jewish mystic, Rav Kook. He was the chief Rabbi of Israel in the 1930's in a time when the vibe in Israel was this radical, secular, Marxist kibbutz energy, and Rav Kook was able to see God's work in them and God's presence in them. The other Rabbis were saying, "No, they're really off." Even atheism, Rav Kook said, is a part of God because atheism challenges us, pokes holes where we need to have holes poked. He was in that place of really being able to look at all creatures. I am challenged by his thinking. Can I look at figures in the government and politics I think are really wrong, and can I see that in my mind they seem misguided, but in some way, at some level, some aspect of what motivates them is God at work. That's really a challenge.

Lindsay: I ran across this idea Makom, or Hamakom. The author described it as God being in an unlimited, ever-present place of now. Can you talk about that word?

Nahum: So the word, Makom, or Hamakom, literally means, the place. But within Rabbinic literature, God is referred to often as Hamakom, The Place. God is the place in which you and I are right now. The root of Makom, is Kum, which means, "stand." We get our standing in God or we wouldn't be here. We're within God, this is the place, or we wouldn't be here. There would be no place for us to be. It's similar to, in the Torah, Moses asks God what his name is, and God says *ahyeh asher ahyeh*, which literally means, I will be what I will be. And later, What's your name? *Ahyeh*, means "be." And the name of God in the Torah is the Hebrew letters that represent pure being, and we don't know the vowels, so we can't pronounce it, which is a way of saying, the ultimate reality of God is a mystery. But it is the word for Being, in the future and past tense combined. So that, somehow, God is. All is-ing, is God. Even when people are doing terrible things, not that that is what God would want, not that they're doing God's will, but they are also moving within God, the energy with which they move, is also God. A great mystery.

Lindsay: That reminds me of something I read in the New York Times long ago when we were first bombing Iraq. There



was a man, who had lost his wife, son, and parents, with a bomb, and he was quoted as saying, "This is God's will." I thought that was intense, because he was so able to accept the world. I'd never be able to do that, to accept that. Is that what you're talking about? This is the world and you move through it, and you're always there, with God?

Nahum: Yeah, though I'd be a little bit careful, in that, I wouldn't say it was God's will that his family died, but given that his family did die, that this is God's will now. And in that way it is God's will. It's a strange thing to say but you see there is a difference. In Hebrew thought there's a difference in the same event before and after. So, before, God working his will would not be toward destruction, but after, this is the world that God has given us and God is now present in this reality. God is present now in this world where the man has lost his family. In Jewish tradition when we hear that someone dies, we say, *Baruch Atah Adonai Dayan Ha-amet*, Blessed be you, God, Judge of Truth. Which is: this is what is.

Lindsay: When you were talking about "the place" and before and after events, you're talking about time. How does the Torah address time?

Nahum: Oh gee, what a question. In Torah interpretation, there are 4 different levels for the 4 different worlds. The world of the body, the world of the heart, the world of the mind, the world of the soul. And so in the world of the body, there is a sense that the Torah is a story. In that story, there is a beginning, a middle and an end. And stories move within time. So that's at one level. But at other levels of Torah interpretation, there is no time. Both are true. In the physical world, we are living within time, you walked in, we're here, and you're going to walk out. Other worlds are not limited in the same way. And so with our minds we have a hard time grasping something like right now is forever. And anything that ever happened is still happening. And anyone that ever touched us is still touching.

Lindsay: Wow. That's so intense.

Nahum: I was in a men's group, up on Whidbey Island, and when my wife and I were leaving, one of the men said to me, "Well, have we been together here on the Island?" And I said, "Yeah, we've been together." And he said, "So we'll never be apart." And I thought about that and the truth of that slowly, slowly, slowly has moved more deeply into me. In psychology these days, there is a lot of interesting object relations. How do we learn our relationship to things? We know that a young child needs to learn object constancy. Peek-a-boo games, what objects will do over time. Even when we don't see them, they're still there. I think there is a spiritual way in which we're challenged to develop object constancy. Which is once we've met, that meeting goes on, we're all connected, we're in relationships in ways we can't see, so that things that look like they separate us, like space and time, are real on one level and on another level, they're not.

Lindsay: In Buddhism they talk about detachment which is a word I'm not crazy about, but I'm wondering how would you talk about how to love someone, to really give yourself to the world passionately, be in the moment passionately, while not losing yourself and while not needing a return. Does that sound like a weird question?

Nahum: No. It's a challenging question. Loving is an act of listening deeply into what the right relationship is with a given subject or person ... that's where the real work of spiritually is, developing the right relationships to those around you. One way of looking at your question goes back to our conversation about time. When we experience something precious, if we have a sense that we need to hold on to it because it's so sweet and so precious, then we ... it sounds trite but when I thought of it, it felt real ... we lose our sense of faith that the next moment is going to bring us what the next moment is really going to bring us. And so to be able to give myself fully to this conversation, and to feel the joy ... to let this moment be what this moment is, and then the next moment is what the next moment is ... I don't know if that's very helpful, but I think that for me it's about faith that God comes in the next moment however God comes in the next moment.

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the rabbi



Lindsay: When you are closest to God, are you closest to yourself, or furthest from yourself?

Nahum: I might look at it a different way. When I'm most wrapped up in my small self, I feel furthest from God. I feel most disconnected when I'm afraid, defensive. When I'm most connected to my deepest sense of self, I feel closest to God.

When Judaism came on the scene 4,000 years ago, it was essentially, in part, to bring forward the sense of a transcendent God who could command a moral order. One gift Judaism came to give is a sense of morality founded on a stable system based on one God who rules that this is good and that is bad. That's really an important achievement. But we don't want to stop there. That was 4,000 years ago and today our challenge is to stay in a relationship with that transcendent God but also to find God eminent. Many people have said, and I agree, that our environmental crisis is really a spiritual crisis. Many people look at the earth and see Other. They don't see that it is their own body, the rivers our own blood – it's all one creation. This spiritual alienation comes from the idea that God is up there in heaven, so we can cut down things here on earth. This is all God's eminent creation. We're all connected.

In the past, the environmental movement portrayed the destruction and devastation and danger that have been taking place. That can become a diversion. Many people came to the conclusion that when you communicate it that way, you are missing the relation and basis on which deep ecological action needs to take place. It's really love and connection and interconnection and relationship that need to be the motivating force, rather than fear and pictures of devastation.

Lindsay: How do you get rid of fear? Do you replace it with love?

Nahum: (laughter) I don't get rid of fear. I work on it. I do think that fear needs to be worked with, and that fear does distance us from God, and that being afraid is a call to go inward and find that connection to God.

Lindsay: I love how Judaism holds the paradoxical truths together ... walks right up next to the mysteries rather than trying to deny them ... we sense this fluidity of time, this way it's not linear, but we have no way to posit that ...

Nahum: Yes, in Judaism, paradoxes are central to our reality. We want to live with them, and to explore them, but not to grasp or collapse them. For example, it's not that light is a wave or a particle, and it's not like it solves it to say light is a wave and a particle, you have to keep the tension present. Just the other night, we were studying the most difficult story about Abraham taking Isaac to the mountain, and in reading the text carefully, you see that Abraham is both held up as a model and held up as not a model. It's both true that Abraham is hearing this transcendent voice that's really important, and at the same time, how can there be a spirituality that is outside the ethics of taking a life? And both are really true, so how to live with that ... I think there's so much in our modern culture that tries to collapse everything, to make it simple.

Lindsay: If God knows you, and God loves you, and God is there with you, do you really need anything else?

Nahum: No. And that's the part of me that is not afraid to die. Then there's the part of me that has a 10 year old daughter, a wife, and family, who I have passion for in the world, all these things. I think we all live simultaneously on lots of different planes. So on one plane, I'm with God, but I'm also in this body, and I feel pain ... it's all true. I am also interested in the other side of the question, "Are you afraid to die?" which is, "Are you afraid to live?"

Rabbi Nahum Ward-Lev is the leader of Beit Midrash, an intensive Jewish learning community at Temple Beth Shalom in Santa Fe. He is the founding director of The Meeting Ground at Ghost Ranch, a spirit-based, multi-cultural training center for peacemakers. He trains physicians in Spirituality and Medicine at the Northern New Mexico Family Practice Residency Program. He is a trained Spiritual Director. Nahum is a co-founder of the Jewish and Christian Dialogue in Santa Fe and the former Rabbi of Temple Beth Shalom in Santa Fe.

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Leray: How would you classify yourself? In terms of religion?

Lisa: A believer. That whole Denominationalist stuff—I don't buy that anymore.

Leray: You grew up in a Christian family. Was there a point in time in which you decided to be analytical and ask questions?

Lisa: Yeah there was a definite time. Okay, so you grow up in a Christian home and you see—now I can understand it a lot better than when I was growing up. Christians are no different than anyone else in terms of having their lives together or not having their lives together, in terms of their relationships or raising children or how to deal with crisis in their lives. You know, we're all human. I think maybe the difference between a Christian or a believer and someone who is not, is that maybe the Christian believes they have some tools to be able to deal with what life throws at you. So I grew up thinking until the time I was 17 or so, that you could say you believed one thing and live another. There was a discrepancy there in my mind between what my parents professed and what they lived out. Well, now that I'm a parent, I've realized how difficult it is to keep those things congruent. For Christians, who know the truth, it implies that we have to live accordingly, and that we have the tools to do what we think is right, like loving God, loving others, respecting others, putting others first, having a loving marriage. We're supposed to be able to do these things because God says that this is available to us. But sometimes you find yourself falling short. So at 17, I left home believing that faith was based on tradition and not on God's truth. And that's where the denominations come in, like if you're Baptist, you don't drink and you don't smoke and that's supposedly faith. And I remember thinking that that doesn't mean anything to me. I wanted to go away from home, as far away as possible, so I ended up in Winnipeg, Canada, and found myself alone, and without any authority over me, so I found myself having a lot of opportunities, some that were edifying and some that weren't. I could go either to the right or to the left. And I realized I had to get a handle on this for myself. So I started, actually it was my roommate, (I've found that God uses people as his instruments to actually inspire you to do one thing or another), so I had a roommate who's name was Karen and she said, "Well, why don't you just read the Bible." I remember reading Romans and Hebrews and I remember being amazed at how convicted I felt, that God did exist and that we are responsible to something outside of ourselves, and that I have to answer for things that I do and that Jesus is there, that there is sin and the sin matters. My actions matter and it's important to do the right thing. You

the christians



mentioned spirit and I think that God's word is his spirit speaking to us and I think that he was drawing me to him through his word and just bringing me huge conviction. I decided then, when I was 17, that my life matters, and God matters, and what I do matters. They talk about how God allows us ways to get rid of the muck and mess-ups in our life and being able to repair the broken relationship between God and man through Jesus. This was amazing and powerful to me.

Leray: Have you ever questioned whether or not God really exists or did you just grow up believing that?

Lisa: Sure you question it. But you take evolution, and you take creation, and they're both theories. Evolution is not a fact. It's not scientific. You can't go back and recreate the scenario where nothing exists and then wait around for a million years.

Leray: So as a Bible believing Christian you would also call creation a theory?

Lisa: Yes. Because you can't recreate creation. What's the first law of thermodynamics? Nothing can be created or destroyed. You can't create energy or matter and you cannot destroy energy or matter. We live in a closed system. Once it was created, it's done. So, you either believe that at one time it was all created by an intelligent designer, and then you have to decide what kind of name you want to put on that designer, or you believe that these things evolved by chance over time. Those are the only two choices we have as humans to explain how this all got here.

Leray: Could God have used evolution as part of his creative process?

Ron: I think he used microevolution, and all Christian creationists would

agree with that, and there's evidence for that. Things adapt to their surroundings, and things change over time, and nobody disputes that. But I haven't seen any evidence of macroevolution, where something actually changes species.

Lindsay: How do you think about free will versus pre-destination?

Ron: Well, free will, that's a difficult question. I think in the Bible you can support both sides: we were pre-destined but we have choices, and basically, the question there is will we believe in God or not believe in God. But then the Bible also speaks of our responsibility of faith and to believe in him and to search the Bible for its truth and accepting God on faith. I have a very difficult time discrediting all free will. I think there's an element of choice in our actions.

Lisa: I think it suggests that there is a beginning and a middle and an end, and when God created, he created everything that is, and all things hold together by him because he's the one who created them and he's holding everything together. He already knows the end of the whole story, and so what's left is the middle, how that gets played out. If he is the beginning and he is the end, and he's everything in between then what role do we play? Are we just puppets here? Because he's already determined everything that's going to happen? What role do we play?

Leray: Do Christians have less of a fear regarding the so-called end times? Environmentalists are concerned with the gas and oil burning and global warming. Are you thinking, Oh thank God the end-times are here? Do you want to just see it all go to hell because that's what it's supposed to do?

Lisa: No. I think that Hell is a real place, eternity is a very long time, and if things were to end right now a lot of people would go to Hell and that's not good.

Leray: So you literally believe in these places: Heaven and Hell?

Lisa: Yes. I literally believe that some people will go to Hell and spend eternity separated from God.

Leray: What about the people who have no proof that God exists. What they see today are Catholic priests molesting kids; abortion clinic bombings, which is similar to the

the christians

World Trade Center bombings, people saying, I believe this so I'm going to kill you in order to show the world what I think; in history they see the Crusades and all that violence in the name of God. Both Religion in general, and Christianity in particular are very caught up in all these reactive actions. How do you separate what's beautiful in Christianity out from all of this? Or even that woman who drowned her kids because supposedly that's what God told her to do. Is that Christianity?

Kristin T: You know the people who flew into the Twin Tower Centers and said they represented Islam? Well the Islam community rejected that. So the woman who says she's a Christian and then drowns her children—she doesn't represent Christianity. She's a freak. The people who flew into the Twin Towers, they're freaks. They don't represent anybody.

Leray: That's a good point. It seems a lot of these actions are tied up in the whole world of religion. We've disagreed on how, who, or what God looks like but the concept of a God or Gods is universal. Would we be better off without that? Is the world of science cleaner? Is that world without spirit a better world to live in?

Ron: I had a friend one time who said you know the problem with the world today is these religions and that people are willing to die for their beliefs. If we could do away with all of that then we'd be okay. And there was a protester in from the white house, with a sign that said, "Nothing is worth dying for," and he was protesting a war. But if you look at that, it means nothing is worth living for. If you take away the things that have passion and your beliefs then nothing is worth living for. And the things that you mentioned are definitely bad things, I mean the Crusades went bad, and there are people doing bad things in the name of Christianity and these people are definitely not representing what Christianity was meant to be, they are not living according to the Bible. Man has corrupted things, and they usually do it for their own purposes and their own gain. This goes back to the free will question. I think it's pretty evident that God has given us a lot of free will, and we all desire and want freedom and the ability to exercise that. People are promoting freedom around the world as if that is a good thing, and God has given us freedom and we often use that in wrong ways and this is why the world is the way it is.



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Lisa: The assault on Christianity is because within Christianity there is a right and a wrong. Read the ten commandments. It's pretty clear. Today, no one likes to have people say this. How can you say if abortion is right or wrong? If you have an opinion, and it's not the opinion that everyone has the right to do what they want, and to choose what they want, you're labeled extreme. It's the people who make a judgment call, who say this is right, this is wrong; they're basing that on their beliefs, that there is a God. That we are responsible. That there is sin. There are sinful actions and righteous deeds; the distinction is not that fuzzy. And to your point, freedom is hard work. To have self-government and a code of ethics that you stick by is incredibly hard work. People think Christianity is a crutch. That's a lot of crap. Christianity is the hardest code of ethics to live by. And all that can come out of it, if you do live by it, is good. For you, for your family, and for those around you. There is nothing deleterious by living by the ten commandments.

Leray: Do you advocate bombing abortion clinics?

Lisa: No. That's not a solution.

Leray: So what is it when people are over zealous? Is it a misapplication of a Biblical truth? What has gone wrong there?

Ron: Yeah, I'd say that's a misapplication. I mean if you ask the guy, he might say, well, they're killing X number of babies a year, and if I bomb them, it'll stop it. That's probably how he reasons it. But that's not the right way to deal with it. He's definitely not glorifying God by that action. Maybe that's a measure—is this glorifying God if I do this?

Leray: Christians are often blamed for thinking they have all the answers. I think that really irritates people. Do you think you have all the answers? Is there mystery behind your faith?

Ron: We don't have all the answers. There

are lots of mysteries about things we don't understand in the Bible, God and Christianity. God is infinite, and we're finite so there's no way we can know everything about God. But in the Bible there are answers to a lot of things, so there are a lot of answers in the Bible and they address a lot of the major issues that we deal with. We have pretty clear direction. If you take it as God's word, he's explaining who he is to us, and God is explaining who we are as people. We definitely have laws. It shows that we are sinful and we do wrong things.

Lindsay: What if you decide the Bible is not the word of God, but just a collection of stories, histories, genealogies and poetry? What happens to your Christianity, or your faith? To discredit Christianity, most people begin by discrediting the idea of the Bible as the inspired word of God. If God had not given humanity his written word, what are you left with then?

Ron: You are left with nothing. The Bible is the core of Christianity. The Logos was God. Jesus Christ is the living word of God and the Bible is the spoken and written word of God. So if the Bible is proven to be wrong, which I doubt it will be, then Christianity dies—because the Bible is God's message to us of who He is.

Leray: What about the reality of God before the Bible was written?

Kristen T: I was going to speak to that. If the scholars or whoever else manage to discredit the Bible, it wouldn't make any difference to me because the personal experience doesn't come from me. It doesn't come from reading the word. It comes from knowing that God has personally affected my life. So if someone takes away the words, God still exists. God is so much bigger than the Bible, and God is bigger than anyone's agenda to discredit him. It's so ironic that people spend so much time hating God and trying to prove he doesn't exist. Because if they don't believe he exists anyway, what a waste of time their life is and a waste of energy trying to prove that he doesn't.

RON—A MAN WHO ACTUALLY BELIEVES THE BIBLE IS THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD. LISA—A WOMAN WHO FACES THE PRESENT AND FUTURE WITH HOPE BECAUSE OF WHO GOD IS AND WHAT HE HAS DONE IN HER LIFE.

Lindsay: How did you go from being a Baptist as a kid, to being an atheist?

Fletcher: Well, I went to a Christian college.

Lindsay: That would do it, huh?

Fletcher: Yeah. I went to Rocky Mountain College in Billings Montana. And it was a Christian college. Every Tuesday, we had a religious service, and sometimes it was Baptist, sometimes Catholic, Lutheran, Episcopalian, Muslim—they'd bring in every possible religion that they could, and show us the essence of each religion. And then on Thursdays, we'd have a general assembly, and have a speaker from one of the various religious groups of Billings. So the idea was to expose us to a variety of religions. We even had black Christians from Ethiopia, places that the missionaries had done a lot of work. I went in as a very conservative Southern Baptist. I went to college, the first year, on a scholarship from the Church in Three Forks, Montana. It was required that we take a course called English Bible, two semesters a year, four years. So we had eight semesters of English Bible, where we studied the Bible in English—the whole thing, all the way through. And then we would go deeper. We studied the Apocrypha, the lost books of the Bible that didn't quite meet orthodox thought at the time, that didn't make it into the standard Bible. We read the Koran, and Buddhist literature as well. I even had a class called The Life and Teachings of Paul. And all though this, there was a guy named Dr. Pennypacker. He was Jewish and an ordained Methodist Minister, (laughter), who taught philosophy, and part of this English Bible. So I'm taking this class as a freshman, The Life and Teachings of Paul, and we get to where Paul was struck by a revelation on his way to Damascus, to persecute Jesus, and Dr. Pennypacker leaned back and said, "You know, that sounds like a sunstroke to me." And I thought, He's going to get hit by lightning! And Dr. Pennypacker said, "What do you think?" And everybody said, "Well, no." And he opens a book and reads, "Symptoms of Sunstroke," and reads the list. And Paul had all of them. So he got us thinking. And you know, I believed in the Virgin Birth. He looked me in the eye and he said, "That's silly." I said, "How can you say that?" He said, "Well, think about it." I said, "Okay." So, he just destroyed me. And there would be times when I'd stand up in class, and say, "No, that cannot be," and he'd say to the rest of the class, "Please excuse us while Mr. Fletcher and I go on about this." And they all loved, it, of course. They'd sit there, watching this kid get his ears chewed off. He'd tear me down in the daytime, and every now and then, there'd be a knock on the door at night, he'd come to my dorm, and take me for a walk, patch me together, so he could take me apart on Wednesday. And it finally began to dawn on me, all of this stuff was legend—there was some historical truth in it, but many of the stories were simply legends. I'd been taught the Bible was the literal "Word of God." Then I found the Bible had been translated about 15 times, from 12 different languages and now I see all these books that were close but didn't quite make it, and where they came from, and the inconsistencies of the whole thing. And then it just dawned on me. I don't think this is going to follow logically, but it was late, it was 1957, and a bunch of us were drinking

the atheist

beer, arguing about whether those two guys, Watson and Crick, had anything going on, talking about this DNA stuff, and we finally decided they did. From that enlightened moment, in 1957, I put all this religious stuff in one basket, and what I'd learned in science, in another. So the bottom line is, biology follows the laws of chemistry and physics. We know that to be a fact. And evolution follows the laws of chemistry and physics exactly the same way biology does. That's about all you really need to know. Evolution is so obvious, and yet, about once a week, I get one of those eureka, epiphany moments that shows me one more way how two or three things have evolved together, over millions of years, and it's just ... it's magical, even spiritual, to see how that happens. Evolution is probably the greatest idea that man has ever had, because it explains so much. And it isn't a matter of believing it or not. I can take you to a dog and show you how they have evolved under our guidance and tutelage. So, it's all around us, in every way, and we, too, are a product of evolution. People don't like the idea that we descended from an ape ancestor and that they may have an uncle who's a monkey. Well, I don't imagine the monkey is that enthused by the comparison either, you know. But you look at ... we think we're so civilized, that we're so above the evolutionary behaviors, and that sort of thing, it's ridiculous. The layer to civilization that we carry is so thin. You put people in stress, and it breaks down, and all of a sudden, you didn't know that person nearly as well as you thought you did. There was an article in Scientific American in 1988 about what body type of women attract men. And this was written by a woman. It says, if a woman doesn't have between 20 and 23% body fat, she can't carry a fetus to term. And if a woman has less than 17% body fat, she may not be having menstrual cycles. Highly trained lean women athletics, for example, often don't have menstrual periods. So when a man looks at a woman, and he can do it in a thousandth of a second, he knows if she has the body characteristics, enough subcutaneous fat disposition, breasts, etc. to be able to carry a child nine months, and his mind says, I desire her. It's an instant sort of thing. That's genetic. It's been there for thousands of years. We subdue all of these things, but they're still there. Our civilization veneer is very thin in a lot of different ways. We see it in war particularly. The recent scandals in Iraq about murder and torture illustrate this point.

Leroy: As Darwin said, It's a grand view of life. And it's grand the way you talk about it and it's beautiful. But can you comment on what you feel when you commit yourself to science, to the material world exclusively? Is there anything missing, are there any pitfalls in that? If you eliminate that whole invisible realm, does that create a conflict for you?

Fletcher: Yeah, early on, it did. But you and I have both used the word spiritual, and you might have to look a little deeper to see what that really is. Simply because I don't believe in God, doesn't mean that man doesn't have something, some intangible something, that other animals don't have, or have in degrees much less than ours. The ability to reason, for example. So, we're above other animals in that we do things differently than they do, for some reason. I think in a way that leaves us with the responsibility to do what we can to help each other. There's a school of thought, called Scientific Humanism, and I like that. A humanist is one who uses science as a basis for decision making, in the most part, but still has the characteristics of being human, having passion, compassion, an indomitable spirit, etc. So

there are pitfalls, but there are ways of looking at man other than just as a highly developed ape. I'll grant you, he's a little better, and I don't know why. We pretty well have unraveled the DNA and it's just a matter of putting the bricks together until we know as much as we need to know. We're already working on the different genomes, the different plants, animals, apes, humans, etc. The next step, what we need to understand is, you remember things, I remember things, my dog remembers things ... how? What is memory? How does the human mind work? Where do emotions come from? Recent research indicates there is a gene for fear. That's the next great frontier that we're going to look at. And that I think will help us to understand spirituality even better. When we understand the mind, and why we have certain emotions and how they work, what brings them on, they're going to be, trust me, they're going to be chemical and biological.

Leray: Looking at the world from a purely chemical and biological point of view implies a kind of determinism. It is a world determined completely by cause and effect. How do you then integrate that with the original concept of a chance beginning, an accidental origin? As opposed to the Christian idea, which posits a creative choice and design at the origin and then allows for cause and effect within that. Do you know what I'm saying?

Fletcher: I know exactly what you're saying, and you're absolutely right. The whole of evolution was a roll of the dice, and if the dice were rolled again things would come out differently. Little bitty changes at one time can manifest themselves as huge changes later. And if you didn't throw in an asteroid now and then, to knock off the dinosaurs, things would be vastly different. Evolution, the universe, and all animal and plant life was a roll of the dice. And as far as an afterlife, there isn't any. There is absolutely no evidence whatsoever for any of that stuff, an afterlife ... it's just opiate for the masses. People don't want to face the fact that you're here, and in a poof, you're gone. So get over it.

Lindsay: It seems as though almost all people in all cultures have the desire for, or an idea of, a kind of God, or afterlife, or soul. Why do you think we have evolved that?

Fletcher: It's in the mind. There's something there, yet to be discovered that is as old as mankind. There's even a book out called "The God Gene." This guy thinks some people have a gene that in some way manifests itself as a strong belief in the supernatural, or not. We're just beginning to approach how that works. But it isn't some mystical thing. We'll be able to explain it. We've come so far. I have a genetics book over there, and it's wonderful. I love it. I got it in 1956. It has the wrong number of human chromosomes in it, and they didn't find DNA until 1957. Today, you can't pick up a genetics book that isn't 90% DNA. So look how far

we've come. And that's how far we're going to go again when it comes to explaining these things. There's going to be ... it's like mother love ... there's an explanation for mother love isn't there? It's hormonal. It's a certain combination of hormones, after lactation, that makes a mother love her child. Otherwise, she'd abandon them and go away. It evolved in many animals and not just mammals. I remember once seeing a robin who had lost her young but the "mother love" was so strong she was feeding the goldfish in a tank nearby to her lost nest.

Lindsay: What about people who adopt?

Fletcher: They love them just as much, and you can actually trigger those emotions just as much by being around children. Most women who see a baby show a dilation of the pupils of the eyes. She's interested. It's inherited. In men, those who have helped raise children show a pupil dilatation when they see a baby. Single men don't. In women it's inherited, in men it's learned.

Leray: The scientific method is about the physical and biological and chemical world of cause and effect and there is no way, within that method, to come over here and discuss the world of the spirit or the idea that the world could have been created. The idea of an afterlife, or an idea of God when put in the realm of science, is silent. Do you agree?

Fletcher: I see what you're saying, sure. If you want to attribute what happened prior to the big bang to God, have at it. I have no evidence. Your thoughts on that are just as valid as mine, because I haven't got one single bit of evidence to support any thing other than just a hypothesis. And your hypothesis is probably just as good as mine. But after the big bang, it's a matter of chemistry, physics, and probability.

Leray: But in your own thoughts, in your own consciousness, are you ever curious about what we call the Big Bang. How and why did that happen? Sarte would say, the fact that something exists, rather than nothing, is the main philosophical question. Then he steps back one step further and says, It's not that things exist but that existence itself exists, rather than nothing, the fact that there is being rather than non-being. That's the first and main question there is. Everything else follows from that. Do you think about those things?

Fletcher: Absolutely. Cogito ergo sum. I think, therefore I am. It should be "cogito ergo cogito ergo sum." I think that I think, therefore I think that I am. I got out of college and I had a major in biology and a major in philosophy of religion. I've read a number of Bibles, Buddhist literature and the Koran several times. All

the atheist



the atheist

deal with the mystery of what our existence means. The guys that were in Jordan with me just looked slack-jawed at me while I argued with the cabdriver about what the Koran said. Then they thought it was really hilarious that an atheist was arguing with a Muslim about the Koran. Not arguing about whether it was true or not, but what it said and what it meant.

Leray: Is religion a bad gene? A glitch in humanity? Will it ultimately do us in? I have a lot of friends who hate religion for all the bad stuff it brings into the world.

Fletcher: Well, yeah, there is that, but on the other hand it can do a lot of good too. You might have to say a prayer, but down here at the Good Missionary Soup Kitchen, you can get a bowl of soup and a place to sleep. It's done by churches, done by Christians and other religions. That's how Hamas and the Black Panthers made their friends—with public works and service. And when FEMA was messing around trying to find themselves during Katrina, the Christians, the churches, stepped in and fed these people and gave them a place to sleep. How can you say that's bad? Certainly there are a lot of things done in the name of religion that are just plain stupid, all this business about terrorism for example.

Leray: Let's get back to the realm of science which can seem a lot more sane, and yet, what about this cloning and hatching fetuses in big rooms and the future of biotechnology. Is there anything scary about that?

Fletcher: You damn betcha. Science is neutral. Science is simply a method of approaching a problem. It doesn't care if it's going to blow you up or fix your refrigerator. It's totally neutral. Where it falls down, is, society and politicians take it and implement the findings and the more you have a free market, the more you're going to have the freedom to turn this stuff into anything you want. 99% of it, like satellite TV and global positioning units, are relatively harmless. But some of it has to be regulated. When man finally said, "Gee, we can split the atom," that's half the way to doing it. Once you know that it can be done, then you can figure out a way to do it. The scientists at Los Alamos split the atom, but the politicians dropped the bomb. It's things that we don't know ... for example, anti-gravity ... it's a lovely idea, just flip the switch and this thing would reverse the state of gravity and you'd float around, that we have no scientific facts to work with. I love the idea. But there ain't anything there. There's no kind of underpinning to it. It's just a thought.

Leray: Are you going to get your DNA preserved?

Fletcher: I haven't got anything in my DNA that's worth preserving. Good grief. If they killed off every human being on the earth except the Indians down at Tierra del Fuego, you'd still have 99.99 % of all the human genomes. There isn't anything special about my genes, or anybody else's. We're just a part of this

huge, random, roll of the dice. And it's been going on for literally millions of years ... and about half the genes I carry, that pinion tree out there carries too.

Lindsay: I love that. That it's all made of the same stuff.

Fletcher: Exactly, and it's just when the genetic switch was turned on or off that made it a pomegranate or a peach tree. But it's all due to the protein switches that the DNA directs that then turns things on and off at certain times.

Leray: What you're saying makes me think it's not my DNA but just the idea of DNA ... because you're saying there's just a small little part of it that differentiates what makes a human being or a virus or flower.

Fletcher: That's right. And the thing is, without viruses to affect the cell and change the way the DNA does its business, none of us would be the way we are. The beginning of life was probably a virus or bacteria infecting a primitive cell to make the mitochondria. So we're a hodgepodge of genes from vastly different sources. Creationists say the human eye is too complicated to have evolved. Anyone who has studied comparative anatomy knows that is just plain silly.

Leray: What about that tiny part of matter that the DNA is made of ... where does that come from in a big bang explosion? Is it not a different material altogether?

Fletcher: No, no, no, no. A guy named Uray, in the 1950's showed, for his master's thesis, that if he put a bunch of inert chemicals in a big bell jar, and shot lightning through it, and analyzed the stuff, he got the amino acid precursors that you need to make a protein, the building blocks of life. Just lightning itself, would turn inorganic compounds, which you find all over the place, into the precursors for these original amino acids—the precursors for life. So that was a real step forward in the thought—it can happen. Before Uray, the question was just what you said—"Wait a minute, where'd this stuff come from?" Well, the answer is this, if I stand here and I hit a golf ball at a teacup 250 yards down the fairway, what are my chances of hitting it? Damn slim. What if I hit ten times? What if I hit one hundred million billion times? It's inevitable that I'll hit that teacup. You say it's too rare to happen. I say it's absolutely inevitable that it will happen given billions of years of random trials.

DR. FLETCHER: "HELL, MY BIO IS LONGER THAN THE ARTICLE."

DR. FLETCHER HAS ADVANCED DEGREES IN PLANT PHYSIOLOGY AND ANIMAL ECOLOGY. HE HAS WORKED AS A CULTURAL RESOURCE CONSULTANT TO THE GOVERNMENTS OF FRANCE, INDIA, AND JORDAN. HE WAS THE CHIEF SCIENTIST AND CHIEF OF NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT FOR THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE OF THE SOUTHWEST REGION FOR 18 YEARS. HE HAS TRAVELED WIDELY OUTSIDE THE US AS A CONSULTANT ON ANCIENT ROCK ART PRESERVATION (INCLUDING RECENT TRIPS TO LASCAUX AND PETRA) AND AS A SPECIALIST FOR WILD CAVE PRESERVATION.





LOST AFRICA: THE EYES OF ORIGINS
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LOST AFRICA

THE EYES OF ORIGINS

A new book by Santa Fe artists Cyril Christo and Marie Wilkinson

AFRICA, the greatest show on earth, beckoned like an unfathomable heartbeat over thirty years ago. There is an abiding fever in the light where life and death, terror and beauty merge as no other place on earth. Africa is where Rimbaud grew a new skin, became a human hyena scavenging experience as the European powers plundered her soul for its riches. Despite the exploitation visited upon her she remains the indispensable continent for the life forms that still move in her shadows and for the songs her cultures harbor like joy born from the chalice that emerged from the birthplace of humanity. On September 11, 2001 Marie and I witnessed an ecstatic Ngoma dance at the base of Mt Ngairo, where Ngai, the supreme deity of the Samburu resides; we were mesmerized by the Bushmen trance dances in the Kalahari and in Ethiopia we were privileged to see a Hamar initiate successfully jump over his prize bulls and become a man. Everywhere elders gave us warnings about global warming; how the rains had altered; how things were better in the early days. One Turkana elder emphasized that the droughts had come only with the coming of the white man. All the elders agreed that God, the forces that be, were punishing humanity because we had forgotten how to pray, how to respect the elemental powers. If there are lessons to be drawn from that inimitable continent, the place we have ignored at our own peril, it is that Africa's lessons are our own. Her first peoples are the oldest on earth, her nomads are some of the last to wander the vast sands of the absolute horizon, which stands as our earliest memory. Her first peoples are among the ontological immune system of the human race. In her being resides a critical relationship to abiding on earth. Africa stands as the shadow of our beginnings, cradle to humanity, and great mirror to what we are in the process of becoming, a thirsting purgatory caught between origin and our common fate.

Marie and I continue to document the disappearance of the essence of Africa. In penetrating black and white images, LOST AFRICA is a tribute to the beauty of this vast continent and a song for a timeless Africa. —Cyril Christo

CYRIL CHRISTO is a poet, documentary filmmaker, photographer, and writer. His films include A Stitch for Time, which was nominated for an Academy Award in 1988. His collections of poetry include The Twilight Language (Canios Editions, 2001) and Hiroshima, My Love (Edwin Mellen Press, 1997).

MARIE WILKINSON is an architect, planner, and photographer. The two live in Santa Fe, New Mexico

IS IT HOT IN HERE ??

or is it just me?

Louis Leray talks to **Dr. Robert Gange** [A SCIENTIST WHO BELIEVES IN CREATIONISM] about the coming meltdown

Leray: As a scientist and engineer, how did you come to believe in a created universe? Did you grow up in a religious home? **Dr. Gange:** No—my home was not religious, although it did have a Christian heritage. I concluded the universe was designed and therefore created in my early years working as a scientist at the David Sarnoff Research Center in Princeton, NJ. The organizational complexity—especially of biological systems—had no other rational explanation. Even today the production of biological complexity is—apart from an unfathomable Intelligent Designer—a mystery.

Is it possible that God created the universe AND the mechanism of evolution to bring the human species to its current state? It depends on what one means by "evolution." Microevolution is not in dispute. It's a fact. Macroevolution is another matter. But the quick answer is, "Yes—evolutionary processes can, in principle, be the mechanism used for the production of biological structures, PROVIDED all of the information (biological specifications) were genetically programmed at the onset (prior to the advent of any life). The reason is that our First Law of Thermodynamics disallows the systematic production of information. Stated differently, our universe—albeit about 26 light-years wide and 13 billion years old—is simply too small and too young to have ever produced life. It's not possible for a system with complexity under 300 bits to create a system (man) with complexity of about 3 billion bits.

In the world of physics, what is spirit? What is the relationship between spirit and physics? Modern physics distinguishes between classical and quantum objects. The former is exempt from quantum laws, whereas the latter is in bondage to them. In this sense one can understand classical objects (an "observer") as "spirit," and quantum objects as the physical stuff ("body").



If you do get caught in the apocalypse, make sure you're dressed for it. Tara wears a silk strap dress by SINGLE. Courtesy of CHUPAROSA in Santa Fe.

Dr. Robert Gange continued

Is Global Warming as big a problem looming on the horizon as some scientists and environmentalists believe it is?

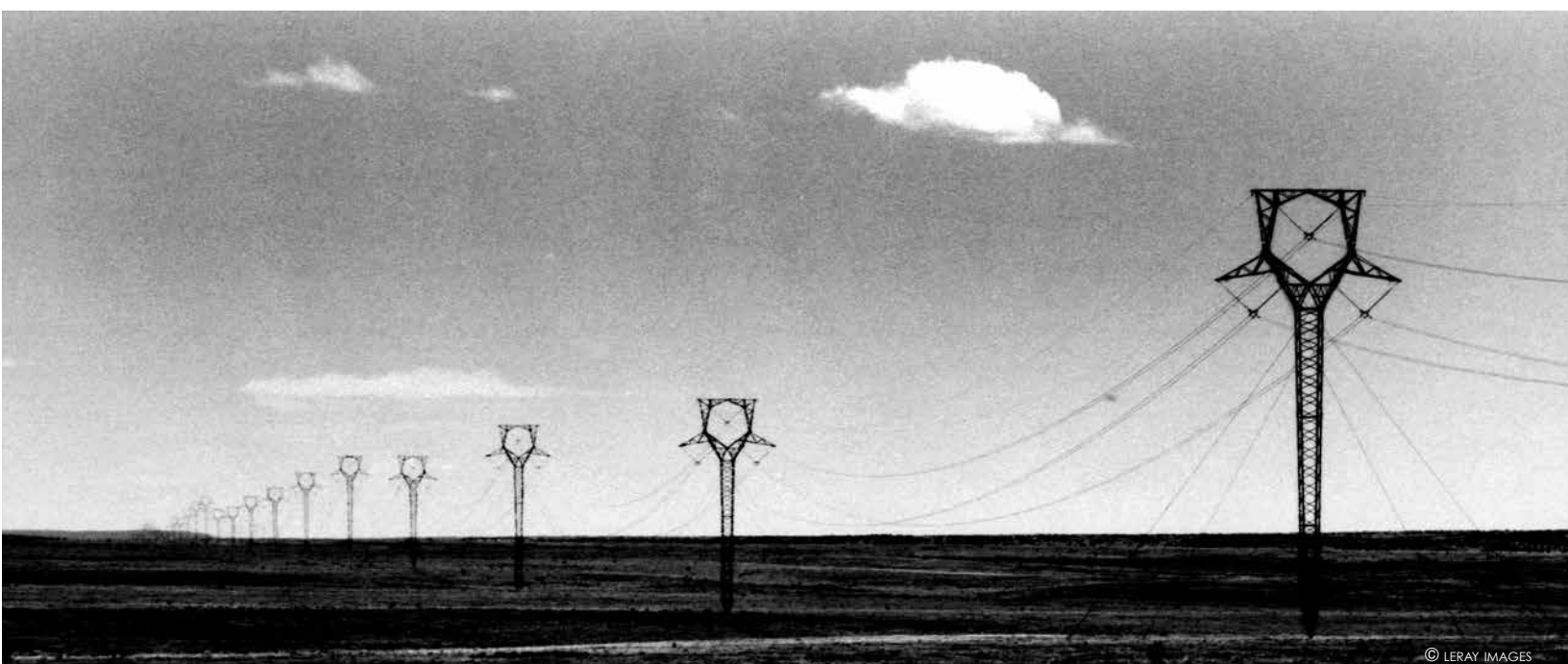
There are two questions here: (1) Is global warming real? (2) If so, what is our role in bringing it about? The first answer is, Yes—it appears to be real. However there is some debate on the second answer which seems to be that technology is creating chemistry that is contributing to a problem that apparently is also being exasperated by our solar system's location in space. Either way, the problem is significant and shall soon prove troublesome—especially for cities at sea level.

What do you mean by "our solar system's location in space"?

Our sun is one of about five-hundred thousand million stars in our 'milky way' galaxy. When viewed from above it looks like a huge pancake 6 light-years thick, 80 light-years across, and that consists of four (4) gigantic spiral arms. Our sun (solar system) is positioned 26 light-years from the milky way's center (which is thought to be a black-hole). This entire galaxy is drifting toward the constellation Virgo and billions of years from now will likely fall into it. However, within the Milky Way Galaxy our sun moves 12 miles per second (40,000 miles per hour). Earth is in orbit 93 million miles from the sun and thus traces out a 400 million mile spiral staircase each year. We are now at the start of a time period when our sun's motion is carrying it into one of the four spiral arms. This is thought to occur every 250,000 years. Since the sun drags all of the planets with it, collisions with debris within the spiral arm can be expected to adversely impact earth's climate, and has been implicated in the onset of past ice ages.

Sounds like a Hollywood movie. Are you saying it will also affect the global warming phenomenon?

The earth's 400 million mile spiral staircase trace is likely to encounter growing numbers of collisions as our sun moves further into the debris of one of the four milky way spiral arms. The thrust of such collisions will be an altered climate as a result of earth's orbital variations. These studies were pioneered by James Croll and Milutin Milankovitch, and the more or less periodic spiral arm insertions are sometimes referred to 'Milankovitch Cycles.' The basic idea is that variations in the earth's orbit influence climate by changing the seasonal and latitudinal distribution of incoming solar radiation. A continuous 500,000 year climate record of oxygen -18 variations from vein calcite in Devils Hole, Nevada



indicates these variations were likely caused by "internal nonlinear feedbacks within the atmosphere-ice sheet-ocean system"—a system that would be impacted by the kind of changes that would be expected to attend growing numbers of interstellar collisions.

Now this sounds like poetry if read at the right tempo. Thanks for offering your expertise on this subject. I'm wondering if, to use Bible language, we can speculate that the earth is approaching a kind of natural "hell" in which it becomes unbearably dry and unlivable.

Large ice sheets—the size of Rhode Island and Delaware—have begun breaking away from the poles (since about 1999), and earth has now lost at least 20 percent (likely more) of its snow cover in higher elevations. The result of these changes is growing weather instability. Warmer oceans mean larger, more energetic, more frequent storms. The computer models I've seen suggest one might want to avoid the Pacific North West (high energy storms) and the South West region

of the States (growing desert-like conditions). In light of our new understanding of what caused the recent tsunami off Indonesia, the deep oceanic ridges and platelet stresses off the California coast are ominous. See Luke 21:25-36.

Okay, time to switch topics and find out if time travel is really possible or is just theoretically possible?

Were time travel theoretically possible—it would be really possible. In fact it is and it isn't, depending on the details. As a practical matter e.g. going back in time and killing your father before you were conceived—this is not possible. But subatomic particles routinely travel back in time with no conflicts.

Now I feel I must ask what do you mean by "subatomic particles travel back in time ..."

In the same way that electrodynamics predicts the existence of time—reversed waves—in like fashion Albert Einstein's Special Theory of Relativity (published in 1905) implies that particles exist that have velocities greater than the speed of light, and that can travel backwards in time. These "faster than light" particles (known as "tachyons") cannot, however, decelerate to velocities less than the speed of light; instead their velocities must always remain above the the speed of light. As such, they fall into a category of subatomic particles that do not interact with particles that travel below the speed of light and, therefore, they cannot carry "messages" into the past. This means that subatomic tachyons cannot facilitate causality from the future into the past. Stated differently, past events cannot result from subatomic tachyon transmission of future happenings. Therefore subatomic particles can routinely travel back in time with no conflicts. Note: The existence of particles traveling faster than light and backward in time is no less surprising than our current belief that subatomic events are being mediated by particles that instantaneously come into and out of existence throughout the "vacuum of space;" nor is it any less unexpected than was the existence

of instantaneous communication between particles separated by distances of the order of light years as taught by EPR experiments that were first successfully achieved by Alain in 1984.

So if you could time travel, who would you want to visit, what person or place or time?

My desire would be to visit with Jesus Christ.

Why Jesus?

Jesus Christ is the incarnation in human form of the Intelligence who designed and created all that we see and are. As such, Jesus Christ is undiminished deity and unblemished humanity fused without mixture into one perfect Being. To this end the words and the deeds of Jesus are the words and the deeds of God. Therefore Jesus Christ is the only Person who can answer questions that have remained unanswered over Centuries. At issue in my desire to meet Jesus is not my faith in His existence—but His capacity to resolve mysteries that have remained unanswered since Creation.

about Dr. Robert Gange

DR. ROBERT GANGE IS A RESEARCH SCIENTIST, CERTIFIED PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER, AND ADJUNCT PROFESSOR. HE WAS ON STAFF FOR OVER 25 YEARS AT THE DAVID SARNOFF RESEARCH CENTER IN PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY. HIS EXPERIENCE EMBRACES GUIDED MISSILE TECHNOLOGY, HOLOGRAPHIC MEMORIES, COMPUTER SYSTEMS, IMAGE PROCESSING, AND ELECTRON DEVICES. EDUCATED IN FIVE UNIVERSITIES (PH.D. 1978 FOR EXTENSIVE RESEARCH ON THE APPLICATION OF CRYOPHYSICS TO INFORMATION SYSTEMS), HE HAS MADE PIONEERING CONTRIBUTIONS IN SEVERAL SCIENTIFIC FIELDS, HAS PUBLISHED NUMEROUS PAPERS AND IS A MEMBER OF SEVERAL PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES INCLUDING THE NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY ACADEMIES OF SCIENCE. DR. GANGE HAS RECEIVED NUMEROUS CORPORATE AWARDS, HAS BEEN HONORED NINE SEPARATE OCCASIONS BY NASA, AND HOLDS OVER THIRTY BASE PATENTS WITH FOREIGN FILINGS IN OVER TWENTY-THREE COUNTRIES. FOR MORE INFO SEE DR. GANGE'S WEBSITE: WWW.GENESISFOUNDATION.ORG

"And there will be signs in the sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves, men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken." —Luke 21:25

FALLING SKY

e-mail interview with

ENVIRONMENTALIST
BILL MCKIBBEN:
[TALKING ABOUT GLOBAL WARMING]

questions and images from louis leray

On Jan 31, 2006, at 10:51 PM, Louis Leray wrote to environmentalist Bill McKibben, NY Times best-selling author of *THE END OF NATURE*.

Leray: Bill, thanks for talking to us about the environment. Just a few simple questions until we get up to speed with what is most relevant. FIRST, how do we know that global warming is not part of a naturally occurring cycle, like forest fires due to lightning. If there were no cars or industry at all, could the earth's increase in temperature still be happening and just be due to natural causes? This seems to be the main argument anti-environmentalists cling to in their doubts about the relevance of global warming.

Bill McKibben: Twenty years ago, this was the question: the planet was clearly warming, but was it tied to human causes? In the time since, scientists have answered this through a wide variety of experiments, all concluding that the warming we now see lies way outside the natural band of variability

and cannot be accounted for by any other possible variable (sunspot activity, say). And the trend is now accelerating so quickly that really no one with any scientific credibility denies that a human-caused warming is underway. Some debates remain over how bad it will get—unfortunately, the findings there get steadily more troubling as well. The current scientific consensus is that the earth, without massive effort to change our energy system, will be on the order of four degrees F warmer by century's end—warmer, that is, than for tens of millions of years.

Leray: What daily human activities have caused global warming?

McKibben: It's the combustion of fossil fuels—coal, gas, and oil—in factories, cars, home furnaces, air conditioners and lightbulbs, you name it. Anything with an engine or a plug. Which of course means the solution involves enormous and unsettling change.

Leray: I would say that—knowing human nature—if this is really the case, there is no hope. People are not going to freely give up their luxuries. What do you think?

McKibben: Some of the change will be technological—if your hairdryer is plugged into a windmill, what do you care? Other change will need to be behavioral, but not in the direction of unhappy privation. For instance: I spent last year living only on local foods, things from my valley in Vermont. It saved an awful lot of carbon (the average bit of food travels 1,500 miles in this country) but it also tasted good, and more to the point, I made a passel of new friends in the process. So—are there possibilities? Yes. Easy ones, silver bullets? No

Leray: What kind of meditative state of mind does it take to go watch a glacier melt or move? The people who "get to know" glaciers, (like the animal watchers in Africa) must be an unusual breed of naturalist.

McKibben: The glaciologists come back each year to the same spot—and find that the ice has crept 70 feet up the valley, or 700 feet, or whatever. A very good account can be found in the recent book *THIN ICE* by Mark Bowen. The saddest watchers, of course, are indigenous people living in icy areas—who see the basis of their way of life literally disappearing around them.

Leray: Is environmentalism still struggling to get a foothold in the cultural consciousness? Is there a sense in which people just turn a blind eye to something until those topics become popular in the media? I'm thinking about how most of the environmentalists I cross paths with are on a desperate soap box to get their message heard, as if the sky were falling in or the world were about to come to an end. How do you foresee the "brand marketing" of environmentalism, with its various concerns: vanishing wilderness, global warming, animal extinction, draught and starvation in Africa, etc. How do you see the "popularity" of these concerns changing in the next few years?

McKibben: Well, the sky is falling, so don't be too harsh on the poor souls trying to spread the word. In fact, most Americans, polls show, have at least some green values, and are concerned about the environment, and prepared to spend more public money to save it. They get little leadership from a political and corporate elite more interested in the short term. I do think the visibility of global warming is on the rise—hurricane Katrina (and the ungodly string of storms that followed, shattering every record) may have begun to place a real face on this phenomena. We shall see.

Leray: While we humans are getting medicated for our bi-polar meltdowns, the earth's polar ice caps are also melting. Is global warming some kind of poetic metaphor announcing that hell is really on the way? What's more important, the survival of the human race on an internal, psychological level, or environmentally?

McKibben: Well, it seems to me that it won't do us much good to survive psychologically and internally, if externally we have ceased to exist. On the other hand, it's clear that summoning serious internal energy is one of the keys to the changes we need to make, in order, as you put it, to prevent our own small and tawdry hell.

Leray: So far, I have been asking you about global warming ... is this topic still one of your primary concerns?

McKibben: Well, it's where my work began. I wrote the first book for a general audience about global warming, *THE END OF NATURE*, way back in 1989. Since then most of my work has focused in one way or another on why we've had so little luck coming to grips with this magnitude of change, and how we might begin to get our heads and our policies wrapped around it.



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Books by Bill McKibben

WANDERING HOME—A LONG WALK ACROSS AMERICA'S MOST HOPEFUL LANDSCAPE: VERMONT'S CHAMPLAIN VALLEY AND NEW YORK'S ADIRONDACKS

ENOUGH: STAYING HUMAN IN AN ENGINEERED AGE

LONG DISTANCE: TESTING THE LIMITS OF BODY AND SPIRIT IN A YEAR OF LIVING STRENUOUSLY

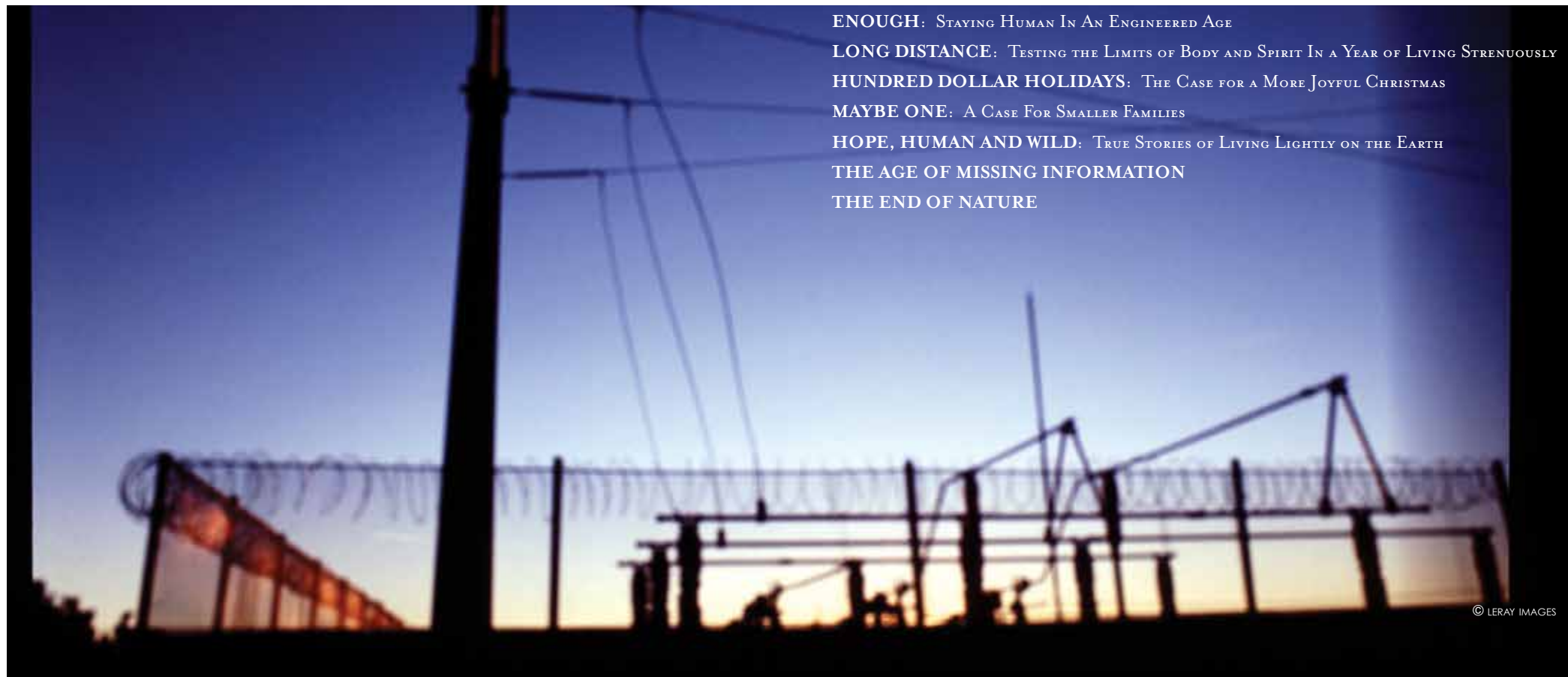
HUNDRED DOLLAR HOLIDAYS: THE CASE FOR A MORE JOYFUL CHRISTMAS

MAYBE ONE: A CASE FOR SMALLER FAMILIES

HOPE, HUMAN AND WILD: TRUE STORIES OF LIVING LIGHTLY ON THE EARTH

THE AGE OF MISSING INFORMATION

THE END OF NATURE



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The fiery hell that is approaching begins in the heart.
the impulse to control and dominate,
the will to power,
the insecurity of identity
that leads to consumerism and waste ...
This is a global warming of the soul
and the spirit of the age.
Hell is not "other people," as Sartre would say.
It is within us, burning outward.
—Leray



white strap dress with rivet snaps by August Mehalek



© LERAY IMAGES

handwoven pink wool and silk organza
halter top by August Mehalek

A GLOBAL WARMING OF THE SOUL

BLISS FASHION
FEATURING SANTA FE DESIGNER
AUGUST MEHALEK.

CONTACT THE DESIGNER
FOR CUSTOM ORDERS
august@mehalek.com

IMAGES/CONCEPT/ART DIRECTION ETC.,
LOUIS LERAY

MODELS: HELLA, ROSIE, ANDREA, LITA AND VAN

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all images shot on location in Santa Fe
during January and February of 2006,
the warmest winter we've known

“Our job as poets
is to bring the gods
back to life.”
—Jim Harrison



Many people have said, and I agree, that our environmental crisis is really a spiritual crisis. Many people look at the earth, and see Other. They don't see that it's their own body, the rivers our own blood—it's all one creation. This spiritual alienation comes from the idea that God is up there in heaven, so we can cut down things here on earth. This is all God's eminent creation. We're all connected. —Nahum Lev



White silk and leather halter with Swarovski crystals, Leopard print and tulle skirt by August Mehalek.

You are the ghost
of departure
this burned down house
on fire again.

The painted doors
are flung
open
the spirits let out.

A heart is silent
like ash
a place
no one goes.

The day never ends
the children
are shining
they play in ruins.

When they sing
they dance like butterflies
across the field
following you away.

—Leray

white silk dress with leather strap by August Mehalek



Find the true fire;
of which the fires of war are a Satanic
parody. Fight fire with fire.
The true teachers of peace are those who have
the highest power,
who can work miracles, who are masters of fire.
Therefore the Buddhas are called Jinas, Conquerors.

Govinda, Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism
—Norman O. Brown, Love's Body

Black silk
organza dress,
rubber arm wrap and
black silk antlers
by August Mehalek.
Handmade Venetian
Opera Masks
courtesy of
Fairchild & Co.

1)

I had been sketching
tall pink
heather,
her hat being the only thing moving

3)

But then, she's been a bohemian
all of her life ... black stockings
refusing to take orders. I sit
patiently, trying to tell her
whats right.

2)

She wore a feather
hat. Her favorite
color, a rush
of black, red and blue –
just like moments
before sunset.

4)

the goddess of vengeance: Nemesis



5)

She's the wrong woman,
she's a car wreck in a silk dress

6)

The air was thick with perfume and cigarette smoke and the
smell of whiskey and a lot of people. [sic] Delores and I didn't
feel out of place, not too much. I was wearing a thick flannel
shirt under a sheepskin jacket, peaked cap, khaki pants and
motorcycle boots. Delores was wearing a long beaver fur coat
over a nightgown that looked like a dress.

7)

My Cid has taken to wearing a goatskin bag (odra)
for carrying water. He is rarely thirsty but likes the
effect of it slung across his body like a gangster's gun,
and he is perfecting the knack of shooting water
from the goatskin into his mouth with one hand
while reading a map in the other as he walks.

8)

Will you believe me when I tell
you it was beautiful –
my left leg turned to useless-
ness and my right shoe flung
some distance down the road? Will you believe me
when I tell you I had never been so in love
with anyone as I was, then, with everyone I saw?

9)

crescent in hair, sea underfoot do you wander
in blue veil, in green leaf, in tattered shawl do you wander
with goldleaf skin, with flaming hair do you wander
on Avenue A, on Bleecker Street do you wander

10)

What more can I ask for? There's a revolution wetting my lips.

11)

She undresses
in front of me – dropping her cares, one
piece at a time, onto the unswept floorboards.

- 1) A Little White Shadow, Mary Ruefle
- 2) Landscape with Swallows, Curtis Bauer
- 3) For Hettie, Imamu Amiri Baraka
- 4) Scenes from my Scrapbook, A. Van Jordan
- 5) 'Round Midnight, Kim Addonizio
- 6) Chronicles Volume One, Bob Dylan
- 7) Plainwater, Anne Carson
- 8) Requiem, Camille T. Dungy
- 9) Ave, Diane DiPrima
- 10) Scenes from my Scrapbook, A. Van Jordan
- 11) Coming into Lexington, Virginia, Sebastian Matthews

Dispatch

Dispatch on the Lannan Reading/Conversation with Jim Harrison and Ted Kooser.

Jim Harrison and Ted Kooser visited Santa Fe on January 18th, 2006. They had a reading and conversation at the Lencic, sponsored by the Lannan Foundation, (you can hear their conversation on the Lannan web site). The Lencic is an old-fashioned movie theater downtown, ornately decorated, almost opera-like, Vienna-like, in a small town way. In the background of the stage was a black velvet curtain, and Ted and Jim sat on the two clear plastic chairs placed in the middle of the stage.



Ted walked out in an even stride—red tie, blue shirt, grey suit. He sat, his water beside him, a pool of light illuminating the chairs. Jim lumbered out with a glass of whisky, in a black shirt, tan pants, and a mismatched tan jacket. They began to talk, Ted in an even, clear voice, Jim with a slightly enjammed ragged voice. Jim began with an aside: he was talking to an Indian, and the guy says to him, “I don’t want to know what you white people call birds, I want to know what they call themselves.” And Jim continues, rambling about “the poet’s job” which is “to bring the gods back alive. This is work! Right Ted?” he finishes, sounding almost like he’s pissed off, combing his mustache and beard with his hand. Then he lights a cigarette. The smoke, slivery and grey, wisps up against the black curtain in a cloud over the audience. In our day, you know, public smoking is unheard of, so I felt like I was back in the 60’s, where cigarettes and whisky were only natural, and probably considered necessary. Ted and Jim read from Braided Creek, a series of short lines they sent one another, often luminous and beautiful, often funny and raucous, going back and forth, starting from the back.

Then they read from their own books. Kooser carefully explained his poetry, saying that he is very committed to writing about ordinary things. His first poem was about his wife, washing her hands. The audience loved him, and laughed at his stuff. A quiet drama streamed between the two men, so different, as men, as writers, as their voices merged and weaved. Kooser served as a ground for the audience. Jim’s mind was on fire one minute, rambling into the ethers the next, not to mention drinking and smoking right in front of them, making jokes about women, and saying he doesn’t know about the ordinary, all while rubbing

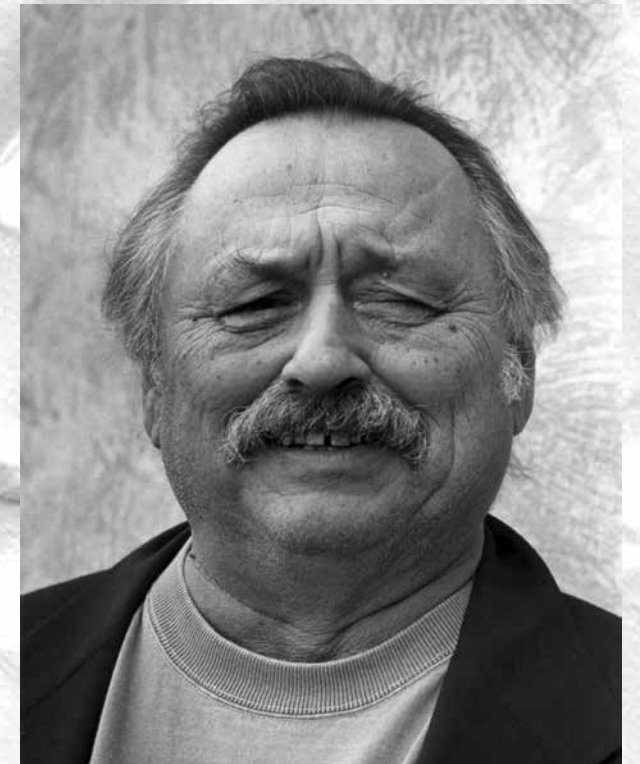
his hand over his face, cleaning his ears, and mentioning Lorca, Byron, Keats, and football. Ted spoke clearly, telling funny stories about his younger years, how he wore short pants and a black turtleneck, trying to get women by looking like a poet, before actually writing any poetry. This was obvious fun. Then they talked about journal writing. Ted said that for a while he wrote his journal in 3rd person to make it more interesting. Jim said that poetry is the green grass that grows up through the concrete slabs of one’s journal.

When I left their reading, I walked down a brick street with high walls through the cold night. In my walk, I could feel the way their voices interconnected, with each other, with the audience. I could feel the way their voices wove and spun through history, the way voices connect to each other, almost like the way the black sky and bright stars above were two different things, but the same thing too. —Lindsay Ahl

Bliss Lit

Jim Harrison - just a writer

Jim Harrison is the author of ten collections of poetry, seven novels, four volumes of novellas, two nonfiction collections, several screenplays, and a children’s book. His novels have been published in twenty-two languages, and many of them have been adapted to the screen as feature motion pictures, for example, LEGENDS OF THE FALL, with Brad Pitt, and WOLF, with Jack Nicholson.



Jim Harrison: I was in Santa Fe in 68 and 71 and I’ve noticed that it’s changed. Want me to tell you how to improve that town? You ready? You need more stray dogs, more Mexicans, more Indians ... ready? ... fewer streets lights. You need bars with dancing girls where people can smoke. You can get rid of all the non-native jewelry stores. There. Now you know. Though I will say there has been one improvement. Have you ever gone to Pasquals?

Lindsay: Yes. Isn’t it great?

Jim: I love that place. There’s a correlation with New York here, you know what it is? The arts and literature, they aren’t exciting anymore, but the food is.

Lindsay: I’m curious, because I interviewed Ted Kooser, he seems to be radically different than you and kind of on the opposite polar end in terms of an aesthetic. You’re Dionysian, so to speak, he’s Apollonian ... and yet you’re good friends.

Jim: Well, it’s always more likely that you’ll be friends with temperamental opposites. Quite often that’s true, anyway. I think that’s true in marriages too. Marriages in which the people are quite different tend to last. Marriages when they’re the same or have the same profession – I’ve known painters and writers that have been married and one thing that often broke them up is that one becomes more successful than another. It’s harder if it’s the woman who becomes more successful, you know, for cultural reasons.

Lindsay: I’m radically corrupting this idea of the Golem, but do you, as the creator of a text, if you made the wrong decision and forced the text to be something it wasn’t, do you ever feel like the text could destroy you or harm you in some way ... have you ever thought that?

Jim: Well, I don’t know. I’ve never been much for any form of demonology ... I do remember Golem from when I read Isaac Singer, whom I love. Faulkner talks about that daemon kind of thing that gets into you. But I think the spirit that concedes you with the book generally makes sure you don’t go in the wrong direction. You have to totally follow your heart, thumbing your nose at everything else but where your heart leads you in your fiction, you know.

Bliss

Jim Harrison continued

Lindsay: So if you're working in Hollywood do you feel like you have to compromise that or ...

Jim: No. It's a totally different genre. I never had any bad feelings when I was writing a screenplay. When I was writing screenplays I was writing screenplays. I mean, I'm 8 years away from it now. Certainly, it was difficult and sometimes I would have to quit a novel and go write a screenplay in order to support the novel. You see? But everybody does that. I mean, all in all, I don't think my Hollywood experience, as it recedes in the past, was as difficult as say, professors who teach creative writing and literature. I think that would be harder because in Hollywood you're up against not a very friendly situation so what you *are* is always pretty much in focus. I mean I can remember, and I put it up on my bulletin board in my studio, when a studio head screamed at me, "You're just a writer." You see what I mean? That's important. Whereas in collage, in the universities, they pretend they are friendly to the idea of the creative act, but they aren't really, they just pretend. Because the people who really know about it are the people who do it. Ted the other day quoted me something wonderful somebody had told him, this in Des Moines, Iowa, which is an unlikely place. They had said, Ralph said, (Ralph Crandon was a driver in New York), "They know the map but they can't drive the bus." You see what I mean? That's what you run into in the universities. I mean I've watched these people have to devour themselves at meetings. And now at many universities they have to be accessible to the students by e-mail, which is even more hysterical and abusive. So at least in Hollywood, I knew I was just a writer. They used to say that writers were schmucks that drove old Corollas, you know, that kind of thing. So it's full of many illusions. Like the illusion of the happy creative writing professor. In the year and a half I taught, all I could think of was that these parasites were sucking the blood out of me. That was out at Stony Brook and it was a bit of a hot place, at the time, you know in the 60's ... Philip Roth was there, Alfred Kazin ...

Lindsay: Speaking of the 60's, do you feel like there was a lot of passion and energy going on back then and that now that's not happening?

Jim: Well, it was a time of great social foment, cultural foment, though I don't know if it necessarily led to anything. But this is of course, a very different time. Cultures go through their cycles. For instance, we've been in a sort of 15-year cycle of insane greed in America. When I was growing up people didn't talk about money, it was thought to be impolite. Now both the New York Times and the New Yorker magazine tend to be mouthpieces for this greed. That kind of thing, without knowing it, with a gradual takeover that they've grown into. But that thing you observed about Ted and I, that I'm more Dionysian ... for instance, I don't even like paths, you know when I walk, it's like a friend said, "It's not the beer cans I mind, it's the road," you know? I tend to be more a free radical. Our culture is swinging too...

Lindsay: ... as though in waves from Dionysian to Apollonian ...

Jim: Well, I read, it was a few weeks ago, where a female teacher got put in jail for making love to a sixteen year old boy ... right? Well, that would have been every boys dream when I was growing up (laughter). But now she gets slammed in jail for it. This is, of course, nonsense. This is the corrosive aspect of Puritanism rising up in our culture again. It keeps reemerging.

Lindsay: That's a kind of gateway into this question I had for you. You talk openly about strip bars and lusting after women but you also seem to be a happily married man. Is that about a kind of revolt against Puritanism?

Jim: No. It's just biology. I know that women are much more choosy about who they feel affection for. But once they feel the affection, they're very likely to go ahead with it. That's just a statistical thing. Whereas the reason the species continues to exist is that certain biological wanton aspect of men that they share with male dogs, you know what I'm saying? But I don't think it's neither here

or there, because part of the social contract, in a marriage or any other place is that you can be feeling as crazy as you want inside your brain but you follow a certain code of conduct toward the marriage or it will disintegrate. But a woman is crazy if she worries about her husband going to a strip club. I think it's so funny ... I read on the Internet where you can see all these men working in an office, and they're all taking peeks ... and for instance there's a certain species of monkey, this was in the New York Times Science page ... are you ready? There's a certain species of monkey that will give up lunch in order to look at pictures of female monkey butts. So what are you going to do?

Lindsay: That's very funny.

Jim: As someone said, We're all chimps with car keys.

Lindsay: You know in your memoir, you have the Rilke quote: *There is a point at which the exposed heart never recovers ... did that ever happen to you?*

Jim: Oh sure. My father and sister were killed in a car wreck and I'm still dealing with them 40 years later. You know, that kind of thing.

Lindsay: I was reading that, and you mention it throughout your memoir here and there, and then there's this one paragraph where you bring it all home, lightly, easy, but with a few details: the drunk guy going 80 down the wrong side of the road, and I sat there, I was up at the ski lodge, watching over my kids, and I just had to stop reading, stare at the cement wall and plastic round table top while I broke out in goosbumps and started trembling, and I felt it, I felt it for like a week ... really disrupting ... and I was going to ask you ... one of my big problems is being too empathic, when I read, when I talk to my friends

Jim: I don't think you can be too empathic. It's how we get enlarged as human beings in a Buddhist sense, absolute empathy.

Lindsay: But do you ever have a problem separating yourself from the events around you?

Jim: Oh Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. You know it gets difficult. I think I was with some people, and we were eating dinner, and I broke into tears because I heard about that gay boy in Wyoming that got beaten to death. That kind of thing. Because if you're a writer, you have the optimum of imagination, you don't see the event in the newspaper prose of how it's presented to you, you completely visualize the event.

Lindsay: And feel it.

Jim: Yes, exactly. What did Goethe say? "Such a price the Gods exact for song." We become what we write. You know, we become what we write. That's the whole thing. But there's all this nonsense in our culture now where they talk about healing before the blood is dry on the pavement. All these phony books about redemption. I mean I've seen occasional cases of redemption but not all that many.

Lindsay: What's cool about what you're implying is that you're kind of standing there and you just end up feeling all of it.

Jim: Well, that's true. But that's your calling, you know. Lorca, one of my favorite poets of all time, said, "I'm neither all man nor all poet, but only the pulse of a wound that probes to the opposite side." That's a tough one, isn't it? (laughter) So that's just your calling and you knew when that happened, that that's the life you were called to. So it does become unpleasant and sometimes the vessel cracks, as it were. I remember when I was in my teens I read all of Doysoyevsky and I barely recovered. (laughter) I'm not sure I ever did.

Bliss Mit

Lindsay: You talk a bit about American Indians and you have them as characters in your books. I love that quote by that schizophrenic, “Bird are holes in heaven through which a man may pass.” It’s totally true, in a way, if you shift the perspective. Did you have much interaction with the American Indians?

Jim: Well, we lived for 35 years within 30 miles of a reservation. My father was an agriculturist and we knew the natives. And I had a cabin in the UP. So many people up there are mixed bloods because it was a big logging and mining area. I don’t deal with Indian religion ever, cause that’s not for me to handle. I very rarely have ever dealt with any pure bloods. But these were just the people I knew. And I don’t want to write about white people who drive white cars and eat white bread and drink white wine ...

Lindsay: So what’s the deal with the reading public these days? I feel like they have no clue. They all, like Kierkegaard said, “are lacking passion.”

Jim: Well, people in general, you can’t talk about. I mean Kierkegaard was a big passion of mine at one time, and the fact of the matter, the true fraudulence I see in these MFA programs is how poorly read both the teachers and the students are. I mean it’s all just unimaginable. These MFA programs are like the Ford Motor plants. The production in the country of literature is 99.9 percent not very valuable. But that’s always been true. And now our literature has this hygienic mentality about it, kind of post-Victorian. I don’t have to take it seriously because it’s not serious. They just think it is. I want art, I don’t want sincerity. You get sincerity from the modern loving pages of newspapers.

Lindsay: The theme of this issue is God or noumena or spirit. Did you take or keep anything from your Christian experience and how would you define God today?

Jim: I kept an enormous amount because it happened when I was very young. Just like I’ve kept a lot from my nominal practices over the years. It becomes embedded in your spirit. I think I said in my memoir, when I was a kid I read about this girl riding a polar bear cub through the snow, and there was a silver harness ... and I always somewhat believed that was true. So I don’t know, I think I have a more monstrous sense of God now, partly in response to science, whether it was the Hubble photos ... the human genome I mean if the flea has 22,000 indicators in each cell of what he is, I don’t have any problem, you know? I mean I don’t think it’s proper for the schools to teach God but I certainly know a great number of scientists who believe very much in a pattern. But it seems like the Bush administration would realize that putting God in schools sort-of resembles what caused the problems in the Middle East. We’re not intelligent people. In fact, I thought of starting a comic lawsuit. You ready for this one? We should sue Yale for graduating him. I’d even throw in John Kerry. The idea that they graduated either one of those bozos blows my mind.

Lindsay: You write a lot about fishing, like a lot of men I know. What is it about fishing?

Jim: It’s the only way I can erase everything. I used to be able to do it with bird hunting too, but not for years. But fishing on a river, I think it’s a Taoist thing. A river has such an acceptance of mortality, and it’s such an aesthetically overwhelming thing that you don’t think about anything else, and I know any number of writers who fish, I think, because they’re stopping time. It erases everything impossible in your life. For instance, the morning of 9-11, I watched the television for an hour and then I went fishing. That was the only solution. After watching the plane run into the building five times, I said, “I’m outta here.”

Jim Harrison

Dream Love

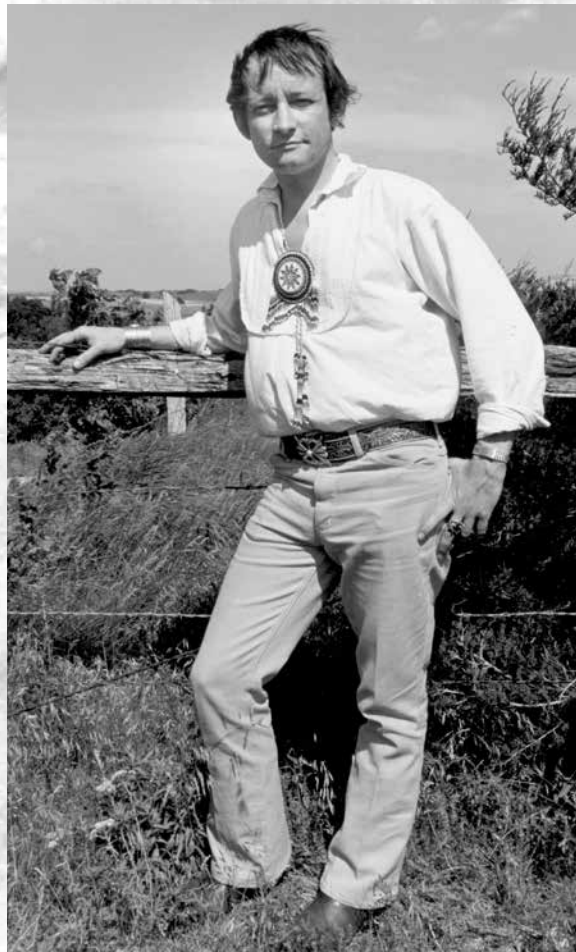
How exhausted we can become
from the contents of dreams:
long, too long nights of love
with whirling corrupted faces,
unwilling visits from the dead
whom we never quite summoned;
the animals that chased our souls
at noon when we were children
so that we wished to be magical dogs
running backwards off the world’s
edge into a far better place
than a hot noon with earth herself
a lump in our weary young throats.
In dream love we’re playing
music to an empty room.
On leaving the room the music
continues and surrounds those we loved
and lost who are at roost
in their forested cemeteries,
visible but forever beyond our reach.
They won’t fly away until we join them.

Older Love

His wife has asthma
so he only smokes outdoors
or late at night with head
and shoulders well into
the fireplace, the mesquite and oak
heat bright against his face.
Does it replace the heat
that has wandered from love
back into the natural world?
But then the shadow passion casts
is much longer than passion,
stretching with effort from year to year.
Outside tonight hard wind and sleet
from three bald mountains,
and on the hearth before his face
the ashes we’ll all become,
soft as the back of a woman’s knee.

Dream Love and *Older Love* from Jim Harrison’s *SAVING DAYLIGHT*
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Poet Laureate Ted Kooser



poet laureate Ted Kooser in 1974

Lindsay Ahl: My father recently said to me, "This getting old stuff ain't for sissies." You've battled cancer. How did that bring you closer to life, or to your writing, and how do you feel it changed your character or perspective?

Ted Kooser: First, it administered a huge dose of humility. Not that I was completely sold on myself before, but sitting in oncology waiting rooms with people from all walks of life, all struggling to stay alive, is a deeply meaningful experience. Also, when you are facing death, or think you are, you are likely to become very appreciative of even the smallest details. My poem, *Surviving*, is about that. I recently had a letter from an old friend who is dying of lung cancer and he was telling me how much he enjoyed just going to the office supply store to buy pads of paper.

Lindsay: In *The Poetry Home Repair Manual* you talk a little about the myth of the poet, and for a while, donning a black turtleneck and that kind of thing. Please talk about the cultural climate of the 60's, the beatniks, the idea of improvisation, the

way, as I understand it, there was an openness about art and poetry that reminds me of what you are interested in.

Kooser: To me it seemed that, like the beatnik, the poet was really an outsider during those years, a variety of beatnik, too, not institutionalized as many poets are today, within a creative writing industry/establishment. The poets were on the outside, looking in, not on the inside, looking out. There were, of course, a dozen or so noted poets established on campuses by that time, but there were not clusters of poets on every campus as there are today. And few creative writing departments. As to freedom and innovation, among the younger poets not then established, I don't recall there being the attempt to identify with "schools" of writing, such as are talked about today, like language poetry or new formalism. There were not many trade journals like the AWP Chronicle and Poets & Writers. Trade journals have a way of homogenizing activity and opinion.

Lindsay: That's an interesting correlation I hadn't made. And I suppose the creative writing programs promote that as well, either the homogenization or the cliques that seem to have an almost secret agenda. How do you feel about the writing being celebrated today? Do you feel we're more democratic than in the past? Is the good stuff losing its aura or not getting acknowledged in the huge sweep of books being published?

Kooser: We have to rely on the passage of years to sort all this out. I'm optimistic that the most meaningful poetry will eventually surface and that the rest will be forgotten. I am in no position to say what is good and what isn't. I am too close to what is being written during my years to make judgments like that. There are poets whose work I especially like, of course, because it has meaning for me, but as to how they will fit into literary history is something for time to sort out.

Lindsay: Can you talk a little about how your friendship with Jim Harrison or other writers has influenced your writing?

Kooser: I've been very lucky to have had some constant writer friends, Jim Harrison, Dan Gerber, and Bob King among them. I began a correspondence with Leonard Nathan 35 years ago, and he has been marvelous help by looking at my new work and offering comments. Each of these friendships is different. Jim and I don't usually offer specific comments on poems but rather general or overall impressions. Leonard is the kind of critic who will puzzle over a punctuation mark. These friends are all immensely helpful, and I hope I've been of some help to them from time to time. Personally, long-distance correspondences are preferable to me to having someone sitting across the table. With correspondence you can plan your time, with company you can't. I do think that young or beginning writers can benefit by being a part of a community, by staying up late and talking about art, and that's an important part of most writers' development. But with

maturity there comes a time when you do your best work alone, on your own timetable.

Lindsay: The quote you chose for the beginning of *DELIGHTS & SHADOWS*, "The Sailor cannot see the North, but knows the Needle can," by Emily Dickinson, points to a kind of undercurrent of design, fate, or trajectory that one chooses or finds oneself in ... can you talk a little about how consciously you chose your path or how it found you?

Kooser: As to my path in life, I am often struck by the randomness, how that if I had turned right instead of left at a street corner in third grade, everything would have come out differently. As to my literary career, if one can call it that, I have had lots of lucky breaks, some of them quite remarkable. There are dozens of poets whose work is as sound as mine who just haven't had the luck I've had. For example, when *Local Wonders* was published the U of NE Press took it with all their other 2003 titles to the New York book expo, and a woman happened along, opened it to a passage she was moved by. It was Jill Lamar, who picks the books for Barnes & Noble's Discover series. And she picked it. That was luck. There was no way such a thing could have been orchestrated, her happening along, opening that particular book at that particular page.

Lindsay: Do any particular poems, or any particular of your books have more meaning to you than another? Or if not, could you talk about how the process of writing took you someplace different for one book than another?

Kooser: I have always written in the same way, that is, the only willfulness about it is the sitting down to write, and I don't plan anything other than writing time. Thus I don't look at a book as a project but as the compilation of a lot of individual projects, or poems. If my books differ one from another, it's largely because my life has changed, that is, the environment in which each poem is conceived and written is different, shaped by the circumstances. Thus the poems in *WINTER MORNING WALKS* are colored by the cancer treatment I was going through at that time and the poems in *THE BLIZZARD VOICES* are colored by my interest in 19th century history that was being expressed for a time.

Lindsay: We've printed *The Blind Always Come as Such a Surprise*, and *Surviving*. Is there something you could tell us about these poems that would be interesting to the readers?

Kooser: *The Blind Always Come as Such a Surprise* was based on experiences I had in the elevator at the insurance company where I worked for many years. Whenever a blind person would get on the elevator, the people already on board would shrink back as if frightened. A couple of years ago I had an exchange of letters with the director of an agency for the blind who seemed to think I was disparaging blind people when I meant to be writing about the ignorant fear of the sighted people. *Surviving* is about the way in which I began to see the world when I was undergoing cancer treatment. I have talked to others who have had similar experiences while seriously ill. The world takes on a kind of vividness and every nuance of life seems worth celebrating. In a sense, when you're in a state like that, you are taking a last loving look at the world you may be about to depart.

Lindsay: Can you talk a little about what you are doing as a Poet Laureate?

Kooser: I've been doing www.americanlifeinpoetry.com as my big project. In addition to that I've done many public appearances, including poetry readings and talks about poetry, and many interviews with the press. In the past decade most of the laureates have been involved in outreach, trying to extend the reach of poetry, and most of us have been quite busy with that. My newspaper column is one such effort. One of the highlights of my first term was inviting the singer-songwriter John Prine to the Library of Congress where I interviewed him onstage about writing songs.

Lindsay: I recently read about how cartoonists, long ago, were not considered artists, they were employed to draw funny pictures to get more people to read the newspapers. I'm laughing about the idea of people reading newspapers less for the news than for the new poem of the day. Your *American Life in Poetry* site is wonderful, as is the idea that every newspaper now has free access to great poems. It's democratic and somehow poignant. How did you decide to do that.

Kooser: I have always thought that people's lives would be richer if they made time for art, and I suppose that enrichment happens to some degree as people listen to music on the way to work, and perhaps after work as they read something deeper than the daily news. I'd like to have poetry fit into an everyday life, and that's what I've been trying to offer through the column. It's what Garrison Keillor does so well with his *Writer's Almanac* each day.

Ted Kooser is a poet and essayist, a professor of English at The University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and most recently, The United States Poet Laureate Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress. His writing is known for its clarity, precision and accessibility.

Ted Kooser

Surviving

There are days when the fear of death
is as ubiquitous as light. It illuminates
everything. Without it, I might not
have noticed this ladybird beetle,
bright as a drop of blood
on the window's white sill.
Her head no bigger than a period,
her eyes like needle points,
she has stopped for a moment to rest,
knees locked, wing covers hiding
the delicate lace of her wings.
As the fear of death, so attentive
to everything living, comes near her,
the tiny antennae stop moving.

Surviving from Ted Kooser's DELIGHTS AND SHADOWS, appears courtesy
of Copper Canyon Press, www.coppercanyonpress.org.

The Blind Always Come as Such a Surprise is from FLYING AT NIGHT: POEMS 1965-1985, by
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The Blind Always Come as Such a Surprise

The blind always come as such a surprise,
suddenly filling an elevator
with a great white porcupine of canes,
or coming down upon us in a noisy crowd
like the eye of a hurricane.
The dashboards or cars stopped at crosswalks
and the shoes of commuters on trains
are covered with sentences
struck down in mid-flight by the canes of the blind.
Each of them changes our lives,
tapping across the bright circles of our ambitions
like cracks traversing the favorite china.

METAPHORS OF LUBBOCK

In the street, pigeons besiege french fries.
They are like women on a smoke break
outside a metal door at the gas company.
Full of hankering, they let their cigarettes ash
and ash, seeming to say, We are far from love.

The women look up. The corners
of the buildings are griffin-less.
One woman's brain feels to her
as dry as sheet metal.
She could cry out at any moment.

Yet, the sheet metal, from afar,
in the orange light of a windy late afternoon,
is like an orange detail
of a color field painting
by Frank Stella at MOMA.

Frank Stella, with his shaped canvases
of unremarkable colors and his parallel lines,
is like the father I never had.
The father I never had is my father.

—John Poch

ENOUGH

I want to sit down on these steps.
I want to put my head in my hands
and hold it there as I would a glass bowl
of cold water I set out for the birds to bathe in,
the stray dogs to drink.

The air is heavy here, it hums
with engines exhausting themselves,
rust-raddled lungs wheezing in this heat.
Even so,

I can hear our orphaned children
cursing each another; they carry their bodies
like weapons against us, as if they truly understood
what we don't know will kill them.

I am ready now.

I will untie my shoes
and walk barefoot over the glass

until I remember how to pray
the prayer that begins with O,

and ends there.

—Nick Bozanic

John Poch teaches at Texas Tech University. His forthcoming book of poetry is about northern New Mexico, *Ghost Towns of the Enchanted Circle*, and is a collaboration with the printmaker Ryan Burkhart.

Nick Bozanic's first two collections of poems -- *The Long Drive Home* and *This Once* -- were published by Anhinga Press. His recent work has appeared in *The Yale Review*, *Manoa*, *Dunes Review*, and is forthcoming in *Salmagundi*. With his wife and three sons, he now lives in Charleston, SC, where he is the Dean of Faculty at Ashley Hall.

the
beginning of
the end of
beginnings
and endings

A CONVERSATION WITH
DANNY RUBIN,
THE SCREENPLAY WRITER OF
GROUNDHOG DAY,
ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR
AND INFLUENTIAL FILMS
OF THE PAST 20 YEARS.

Leray: So talk about post-Groundhog Day. You were innovating a new, surreal narrative structure pre-Charlie Kaufman ... using repetition ... then Groundhog Day became a landmark film ... and it's the kind of film that can be seen many times.

Lindsay: Just like the film happens over and over, people watch that film over and over....

Leray: ... and then the dark side of that, once you get something right, whether it's a pop song or a movie, people want you to do that same thing over and over again ... keep making that same kind of movie ... do the Groundhog thing....

Danny: You're reciting the story of my life for the last ten years. It's true. I mean it opens doors too, so I'm not complaining, but people will say, this new script doesn't compare favorably to Groundhog Day, and I'm like, how do you know? You haven't made it yet. That's what you said about the script for Groundhog Day too.

Leray: You told me that in the original screenplay, you gave no context for the shift from reality into the altered reality.

Danny: There didn't seem to be any need for one. I mean we all know what the real world is like. We already live here.

Leray: That's kind of what Myra Dyren did with MESHES IN THE AFTERNOON, or maybe what we saw with MEMENTO. Basically, reality never constructs itself in MEMENTO. Base reality doesn't exist in that film, but the main character keeps going through the motions trying to get there. In GROUNDHOG DAY, there is a moment in which he wakes up and has entered the twilight zone, where the music

GROUNDHOG DAY BROKE NEW GROUND IN THE AREA OF NARRATIVE STRUCTURE WHEN IT WAS FIRST RELEASED BACK IN 1983. THE CYCLICAL AND RECAPITULATING NARRATIVE STRUCTURE OF DANNY RUBIN'S SCRIPT BECAME THE PROPHETIC TEMPLATE FOR A NEW WAVE OF RECENT METAPHYSICAL FILMS LIKE RUN LOLA RUN, MEMENTO AND ADAPTATION. MANY OTHER FILMS, INCLUDING THE MATRIX, BEING JOHN MALKOVICH, AND WINDOW TO PARIS, ARE ALSO THEMATICALLY LINKED TO GROUNDHOG DAY. ALL OF THESE FILMS ARE ABOUT A PROTAGONIST WHO GOES THROUGH A PORTAL INTO AN ALTERED OR ALTERNATE REALITY. GROUNDHOG DAY, HOWEVER, WAS WAY AHEAD OF IT'S TIME, IN THAT THE SCRIPT GAVE NO EXPLANATION AS TO HOW OR WHY THE PROTAGONIST ENTERED INTO THIS ALTRED REALITY—IT JUST HAPPENED. THE FILM'S EXISTENTIAL RELEVANCE HAS SUSTAINED IT OVER THE YEARS, SO THAT IT FEELS JUST AS RELEVANT NOW AS IT DID IN THE PAST.

DANNY RUBIN DRUMMING IN HIS STUDIO/OFFICE
PHOTOS AND GRAPHICS BY LERAY



changes, and the day repeats itself. But it's never explained.

Danny: Well, that was an argument with the studio. I didn't want an explanation, because to me, that would trivialize it. Whatever the explanation was, it would trivialize the idea of the experience we're all having. At one point, the developer called me up and said, they need a scene, they need something, they need an explanation. And I said, "Please, please don't make me write a "gypsy curse" scene." And he goes, "Gypsy curse, great, write that!" I said, please no. And so he says, write, it, we'll shoot it, then we'll cut it out, they'll never remember. Cause he got it, you know. But ultimately, they never even shot it, so that was good. They didn't notice.

Leray: In BIG, with Tom Hanks, they show how he goes into that alternate reality. It seems like people want that.

Danny: Maybe they want it, maybe they don't. Maybe they're always given it and not given a choice. You know, maybe some of the audience members get lost, and they say, wait a minute, what happened? And they're looking for an explanation, but that actually says more about them than about the movie.

Leray: I think that's why GROUNDHOG DAY is so powerful and has that existential feel, because you don't provide that easy answer.

Lindsay: I think it's interesting that you're operating off the assumption that we all do know what reality is, because so much of philosophy is assuming that no one knows what another persons reality is, so now the question is how do we establish that base. You're beginning with the idea that we all know this is a chair, so lets

danny rubin groundhog day

alter that without really talking about it.

Danny: Well, it's the lead-to and the discovery that's fun, and Harold Ramis, the director, wanted the discovery to be along with the audience. And chronologically. And honestly, that's something that came to me later. Harold promised me he wasn't going to mess with the structure, cause he liked it, but I guess he changed his mind.

Leray: *RUN LOLA RUN* is another film that repeats ... but it's about cause and effect ... what happens to the overall sequence if you change this one thing in your day.

Danny: Well, my background was in the sciences, undergraduate, not professionally, but I was thinking about it like an experiment. And it was ... let's keep everything the same except for one thing. If you repeated the day over and over again, Phil Connors is the only one who can remember what happened before, and because he has that memory, he can change his behavior with respect to the day. But he's the only difference in the day. For everyone else the day is identical—except for the changes brought about by Phil. So, it is an experiment, a kind of human experiment.

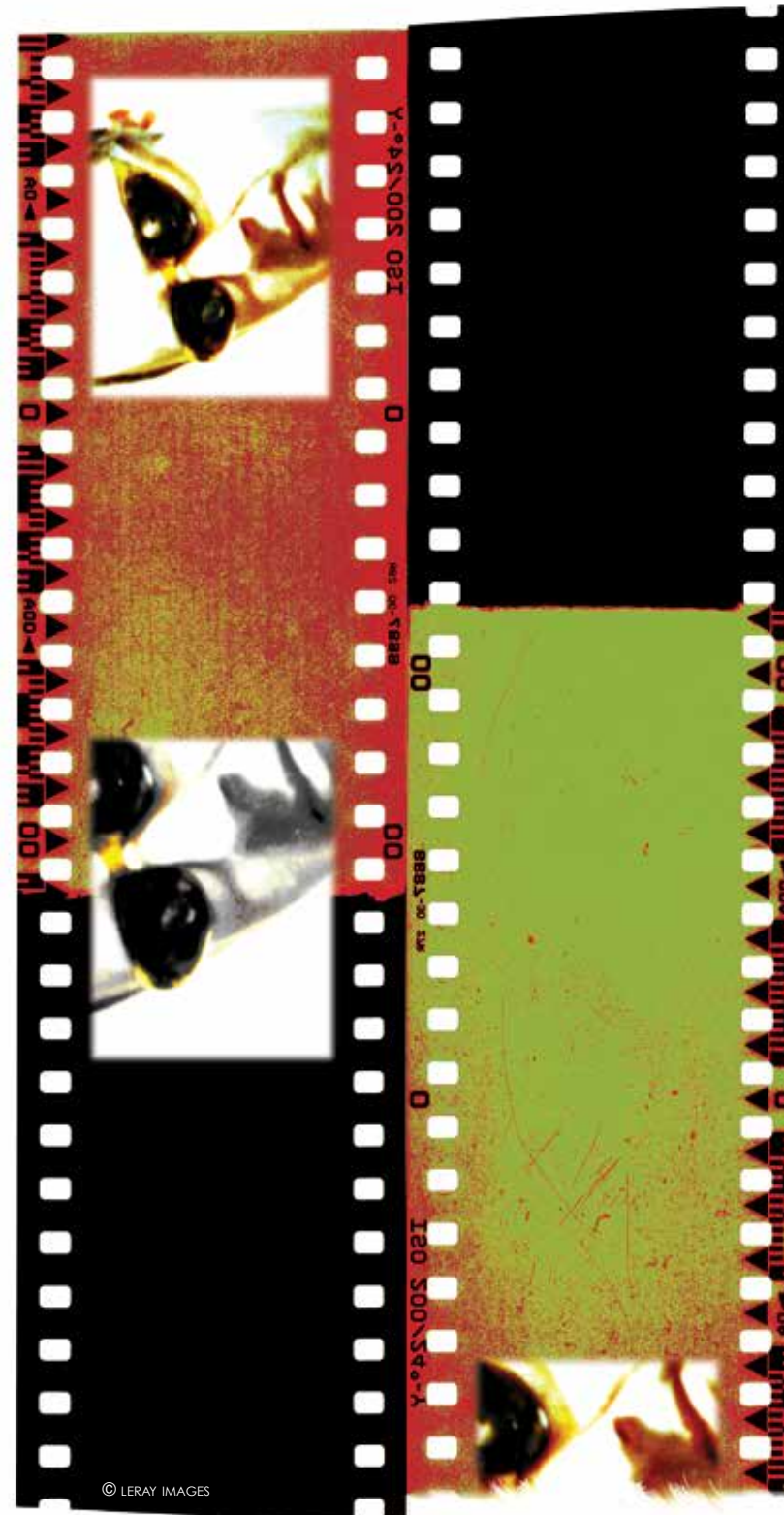
Leray: Where did that idea come from?

Danny: Well, you had talked about beginnings, and this is perfect because there are at least two beginnings. The first one is how some people can live their entire life and never change from who they are. They bump up against something and they can't get past it. So I was thinking, is one lifetime enough? Maybe two, for some people, or maybe three? If a person could actually live forever, through infinity, would they ever change, would they ever get past this thing that's blocking them? And so I was thinking about it like that, and I was thinking that's kind of interesting, but how difficult to create a movie like that because of having to deal with the French Revolution, or whatever. So I thought, well, that's kind of complicated, what if it all happened on the same day? So then, I had a movie. Every idea after that came very quickly. It had resonance, both comedically and dramatically, and character development wise, and spiritually. It seemed like it was all there. So the idea came from eternity being turned back on its tail into a circle. And I think the movie ultimately has resonance with people because the idea wasn't the high-concept comedy idea of repeating the same day; from the beginning it was a story of a man's journey through life. An epic that had happened all on the same day. And the other idea was a guy stuck in a time machine who repeats the same day over and over. This rich spiritual movie comes from those ideas. Basically, I had remembered this idea about a guy repeating a day while trying to solve my problem with eternity. So, those are my two beginnings.

Leray: What that's oriented around is this idea of change. Is it possible to change? Do people change?

Lindsay: I'd love to live several days over and over again so I could finally learn. It's really hard to change. Leray: In the real world it's always different, the way change is effected—it doesn't always happen in 90 pages. But it seems history repeats itself, so the world won't come to an end. And so we fight the same wars over and over again; there is this cyclical pattern, there seems to be a glitch. But in your own life, do you feel like you're able to change, what part of you can change?

Danny: I think you can change your behavior, and I think all of the things



that we experienced as we were growing up involve change. Changing the way you thought about things as a child more selfishly. Perhaps one idea of growing up is getting outside of yourself and realizing that other people are involved. And feeling that relational aspect of dealing with other people. So, yeah, I think that kind of change is change. The way I was thinking about it, is like, finding my way around Los Angeles. I lived in LA for about two years, and over that period of time, I went from being totally confused about how to get from here to there through all the traffic, to having a pretty good idea at which time of day, on which day of the week, it would be a good idea to take which path to which place. This is an amazing rarefaction of information. The only way it can be done is through repetition of mistakes. Oh God, I'm backed up in traffic, quick take a left on this and see where it leads so you can get around it. And you end up in a worse situation. And then another time you find yourself with the same thing, near that road that opened up, you take it, you're half-way down, through the turn, and you say, Oh no, I did this before; it's a really bad idea. So you go through it, and convince yourself, yeah that was a bad idea. And maybe the third time, you start to go through the opening and then you remember, Oh, yeah, that was a bad idea. And eventually you find your way, and you know the traffic patterns. What happens in *Groundhog Day*, is that he is faced, day after day, with the consequences of his behavior, and everybody else's behavior and everything that happens, and the things that aren't working start to add up, and he's able to see it. It's almost like you see something once, it's a ghost, you see it twice, it's a bit more solid, maybe it was there, but if you see something a third time you really do see an outline of the thing, you see it a fourth time, it's there, there's no denying it, it's there. You see it for the hundredth time, you're so used to seeing it there, finally, the reality that's there will make you say, Oh, I can change my behavior based on fact that I know that is true. That thing is really there. There's no getting around it. There's no alternative. This is the thing, right? So, it's accepting things for what they really are, and based on that, I'd say Oh, well, I don't want it to be that way so I'm going to change that thing.

Leray: This is a talent or a skill that's really waning in our society and I think about it in terms of semiotics. Like with *Columbine*, the signs were there, but no one could read them. The ability to see signs and to read them, you know, *AMERICAN BEAUTY* comes out with the tag line, "Look Closer." Our whole society is about looking and seeing and learning to see but in reality people don't see things.

Danny: Which is actually the subject of the film I'm working on now. It's about how everything you need is right there, you're just not seeing it. It's all about what we're paying attention to and what we see and choose not to see. What passes by without us noticing it. And I think *Groundhog Day* highlights that as well. Because there's things that he knows at the end that he didn't know at the beginning. But they were all there before. There's nothing different. We all have this blindness.

Leray: Like the captive spectators in Plato's cave, they are prisoners of their misperceptions.

Danny: I don't know if the point is to find out what's really true or what's really going on. But given what's in front of us, what we know, what we have, there are things you can do to change your way of looking at things, to get unstuck. That's the whole point of being an artist or screenwriter. If everyone else is looking at it from over there, I'll stand over here.

Leray: Time is a kind of common ground that we agree upon so that we can function.

danny rubin groundhog day

And a film itself, once made, becomes a constant like time. That's what we like about movies. They're always the same and yet everytime you watch them you're different, so you get something new out of them. Would you say *Groundhog Day* is about time?

Danny: Not so much. For me it was mostly just a device. I got into a great philosophical argument with this guy at a conference about whether or not the movie was actually about time or not. And he contended that it wasn't. And I contended that it was. But I think I was just being contentious. I don't know. The Santa Fe idea that consciousness is sort of compressed and everything that happened before and everything that's going to happen is all one thing and it's already right there, I think that's as legitimate a way of looking at things as linearly, and it's only a question of what you need. Or what your experience in life is. I mean if you're sitting here in this room with me, remembering something, or sort of planning something that you're thinking about doing, and you're also in the present moment with me, how relevant is it to think about time linearly? And if it's not relevant, who cares. Coming up with hard and fast rules about the metaphysics is not as important to me as what makes sense in whatever context you're looking at it. I mean, is light a wave or a particle? Well, what do you need it to be? Why look at it this way or that way. You find what's utilitarian, and you continue to ponder, how can this be, if it has these properties, and yet we're here, we're born and we die, whatever that means, we all agree on what we agree on. I don't think that the answer is the answer.

Lindsay: I love how you're implying that one has control over our perception of things, and further, that we could decide, okay, I'm going to use look at this, in this way.

Danny: Sure. I think my favorite workman fixes the toilet with a paperclip. Because at that moment, at that time, in that place, that's the most elegant solution to what the problem is. Was the paperclip designed for that purpose? Does the toilet manual say ... paper clip? (Laughter) You know, invention for what we need seems to be what we do. And so as a writer, I always try to find the uses of a paper clip.

Lindsay: Do you think of your thoughts as being as real as anything else?

Danny: Sure. Especially because I live in this business where the ideas that I have can be realized. I mean you take something that defies physics and defies all laws of science, like *Groundhog Day* did, by breaking a rule, seems to be the only way to reveal to us something. This guy showed me something really cool once. It works in the same way. He was a physicist. He took the Galileo drawing of the ball, the ball dropping.... here's the ball ... here's the ball ... here's the ball hitting the ground ... and it's going to bounce up like this, with the angle drawn, you know, very Galileo looking. And this guy got an animator to animate this. And so you'd see it fall, and it'd go up like

"Choose sides!
Draw a line!
Start a fight about it!"

that, right, so you could see it happen. Then he got an animator from Disney to do the same thing. And what the ball does, is right before it hits the ground, it kinda looks like it's reaching out a little bit, like a cat, then it kinda crouches up and pushes off. And what he did was, he broke the laws of physics, of how the ball would behave. And in doing so, he created character for that ball. There's something fascinating to me about that. By breaking the rule, he created a character that we could identify with. Cause it showed that it has some kind of will, or anima, a desire to do something.

Leray: This is interesting because so often we like to explain all behavior in terms of physical and chemical laws. It's about cause and effect. But on a human level, it's totally not the way we live our life. It's not how we perceive ourselves at all. The concept of spirit is over and against everything else that's out there, in terms of the structure of the universe, and how we deal with it and how we perceive it. Spirit is the breaking of the physical laws. And it's something that's hard to deny. If someone says the word spirit to you, what does that mean to you?

Danny: It usually means whatever they're saying it means. I find whenever you're talking about spirit or God it's a very confusing argument, because everyone's bringing a lot to it. I mean, it's like being in development for a movie. Your idea about the movie is very different than what the other guy's idea of the movie is. And you're all saying, I love it, this is great, blah blah. Go ahead and write it, we're all in agreement on these 12 points, and you come back after you write it and you find out we weren't even close to agreement. There's not even anything remotely agreeable about this idea because everyone did not articulate everything they were assuming when they brought it to the table, right? So with that professional experience to bear, I would say, first of all, I think I feel the same way about this and what we were talking about before. I have kind of a utilitarian view about it. Which is, people take it all too seriously, what the real answer is. Is it a particle or is it a wave? Choose sides! Draw a line! Start a fight about it! The spirit I encounter in specific instances and specific places in a moment where I realize that I have feelings different from just this feeling of physical or mental being, there's this other feeling I have, and I assume this is what other people are feeling when they are talking about spirit. Where does this happen for me? Most often in nature, more than anywhere else. And I've always found that I can divide religion and spirit in a way that religion has to do with the political entity and spirit is a personal point that strikes in different ways. In music, I feel it. Just moments with people, for whatever reason. And what's spirit and what is its nature? Is it a big thing that blows through everybody? Is it an intelligent thing which decides things for people? I doubt these things have anything to do with reality, and they just have to do with how people relate to it. The way it works for them. And whether we're dictated by scientific physics and chemistry? Clearly, more than we'd like to believe. If you put certain chemicals into a person they can all of a sudden be happy, or suddenly be upset, or disoriented. And all the neuropharmacology stuff that's happened in the past 30 years, clearly shows that there's a relationship between what we eat and who we are, so it's sort of an illusion that we are anybody. It's what we tell ourselves to get by, which is fine, because everybody does it. What's the real answer? Well, keep digging, keep asking, it seems to be part of our nature.

special thanks to Danny Rubin
interview by louis leray and lindsay ahl
photos and graphic by louis leray



Bob Weir

and RATDOG

The Spirit of
The Dead
Lives On

interview by
kristin kuhlman



Bob Weir and RATDOG perform
at the Lensic Theater in Santa Fe

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Kristin: It seems like during the time you are improvising, you lose yourself and become a part of something much bigger than yourself.

Bob Weir: Well we go there pretty much the moment we walk on stage. We become way more than the sum of the parts.

Sometimes when I create something, I can't even remember creating it; I feel like I have become a channeler.

Well yes. **That's pretty much the point of the endeavor for us—to open up that window in the heavens and let the music come through.**

Do you see it happening? There is a natural condition called Synaesthesia — where the senses get mixed up and one sees color and tastes sound — do you see your music?

When I'm playing, I go to a purely hallucinogenic realm. When I'm playing a line, I see a fluid line in colors that is moving to a landscape — some kind of other reality to begin with. Its just me, the observer, standing behind somebody that is actually telling a story. There is a character there. I'm way in the background observing this character and sometimes I can actually step into the character — I just sort of merge with the character and let him tell the story. I just provide the horsepower.

So, is this character timeless? Because songs come from your heart, your soul, your experience, and the other band members...

Actually, the songs don't come from my heart, my soul, or my experience. They come from somewhere else; from the muse. These songs are just issued to us by the muse. We serve her.

And where is she?

I have no idea. (laughter) If I knew she would move.

Does she look like something to you? Does she have a personality? Or, is she constantly changing?

I don't know that I can ascribe a personality to her. But I know when she is speaking to me. Although, maybe I'm slow on the uptake from time to time and can't hear her.

Does she tend to show herself at particular types of times?

In any innumerable number of ways. She grabs hold of my spine and basically turns it into electric energy. When you come to your senses for brief instances, you will find that you have been weightless.

She sounds sort of tricky.

No. Its me. Its my mind that is tricky.

A lot of your songs seem to be a lot about relationships

and love. Is that really this muse?

It's had to say what the message there is because love in fact is totally multifaceted to her — beyond multifaceted — its something else. There are so many facets of a relationship. It's like a kaleidoscope. Every time you turn the glass, the whole picture changes. You are painting a picture — but its almost like automatic painting. Oftentimes there is a story being told, but you don't know yet that you are telling it when you are writing.

So sometimes the story changes even as you are performing?

Sometimes I get the drift of a story of a song that I have written a year or two after I've written it.

The character is coming out of infinite space and it's nothing until it comes through you?

Songwriting for me is a mystical thing. That's why the muse uses people like me and the guys in the band. To make it into form and sense that people can grab.

Does she ever play you guys against one another?

I expect so. All the guys are different and that comes out when we are playing the song. The stronger the song, the more confusing and interesting the imagery. If you talk to people about a Dylan song — oftentimes he just nails it so archetypically that everybody is seeing the same movie. But even with Dylan and his band where they all know the words and they know what they are playing, there are slight variations and that creates clamor. That's what gives the song character. It makes it a little more 'grippable', so they can see the 'slop factor'; different people's grasp on the imagery.

Being chosen by the muse, do you ever feel like you have a higher purpose?

Of course I do. That's the whole business that I'm up to — since I was 16, 15 actually. It's all been an exercise in faith.

So many people look to you. Learn from you.

Telling stories is all I've ever been interested in doing. I'm telling a story with a guitar. And this guy back here is telling a story with his drums. All that laces and entwines together and forms the character in the song so that she can actually tell the story. Our offering meets the audiences' reception. This is where the character lives. It's way way bigger than the sum total of the guys on the stage and the people in the audience and the sound and the lights. That character is alive and breathing.

It could be said that the character is the universal spirit or God and that you are the preacher.

Josef Campbell called me a conjurer.

How does that feel to you?

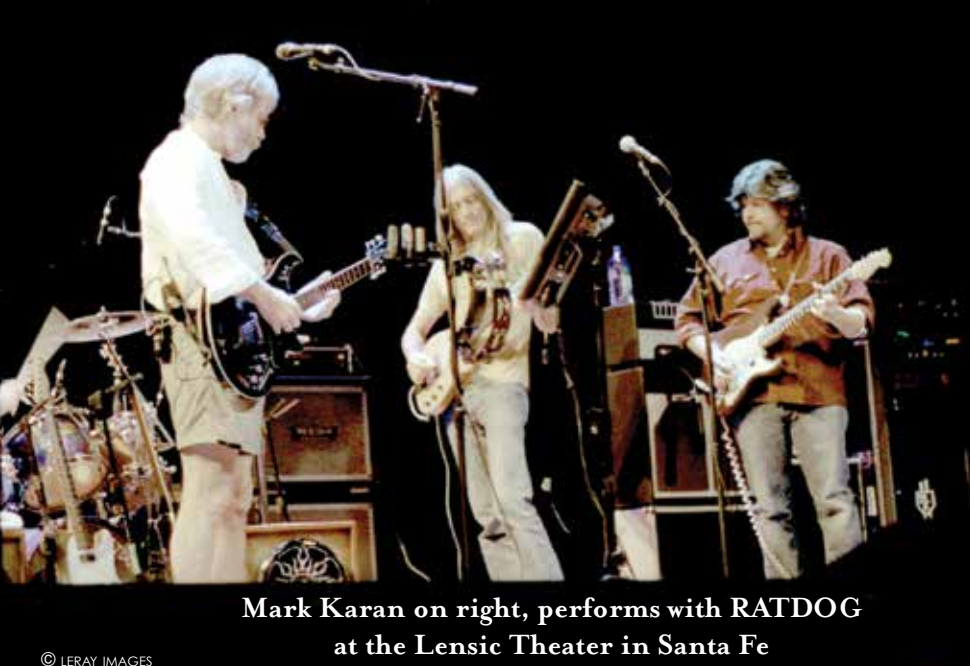
That's pretty much what I'm up to. I'm here to conjure this story.

I think that sometimes people who didn't follow The Dead take the word "follow" too literally. Being a Dead Head was not so much about saving up your tips to buy tickets or having enough gas in your car to get to the shows. It definitely wasn't about getting wasted or being defiant. Following, in the Dead sense, meant being a part of something much bigger than yourself. Following was a state of being—both inside and outside of tours and shows - where you knew you could trust your neighbor, share some food or wine, take what you needed, and give of yourself without consequence. I think for many, following The Dead was a kind of first communion. Unbeknownst to them, being a Dead Head reinforced what my parents worked so hard to teach me—be honest, be kind, be forgiving. Trust. Make mistakes. Learn from them. They had no idea. Much of the world had no idea. If they did, they would have been lining up to enroll their children.



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Listening to Ratdog took me right back to that Dead place—that state of being. I was completely taken by surprise by how profoundly it affected me. I felt 19 again. But at the same time, I understood the music in such an evolved way. It was like suddenly my whole childhood and adolescent life made sense in a way it never had before. In the past, I had needed the music, I think, to feel safe. I never thought about it. I just drank in the experience. Today I could sit back and appreciate it—the sounds, the notes, the instruments, the lyrics, the lives of the musicians, where I had been since then and what I had learned. I have become a bit more thoughtful—and with that, the emotional impact of the music is much more meaningful. Overwhelmingly, I just felt thankful—for then and for now. —Kristin Kuhlman



Mark Karan on right, performs with RATDOG at the Lensic Theater in Santa Fe



BLISS talks to Mark Karan, guitar/vocals for RATDOG

Kristin: Ratdog seems to have this very complicated relationship on stage. Is it a skill, an art, or an intuition?

Mark: It's all of the above. There are certain skills in just developing your listening abilities and your ability to pick out little themes, to hear through a group of people. But there is also a lot of intuition, or to take it a step further, even telepathy. That's kind of what group improvisation really is. Nobody is discussing anything. Nobody is deciding ahead of time what is going to happen. You get a certain amount of physical input—the sounds, the notes, that kind of stuff, and a certain amount of general input like the vibe from the audience and the vibe in the band that night—and it creates its own form of communication.

Lera: Music seems like the most powerful art form.

Mark: I don't think that the creating of it is much different, but I think that the receiving of it is. When you are expressing your art and not serving your ego, then you are channeling on some level. You are just channeling what the universe has to offer.

Kristin: That seems like receiving and giving become one.

Mark: Yes. Absolutely. Music becomes a real enveloping experience—a really large experience as opposed to a smaller, but not any less powerful, personal experience. Music is my life. And that means it's my job, and it's my joy, and it's my social life. It's all of the above. And I think so on some level music has become my meditation—letting it come through me.

Lera: Everything you have said about live music makes me think that you might get a little bored in recording sessions?

Mark: I don't get bored; it's just a very different place. I love recording. I'm a sound freak almost more than I'm a notes freak. The actual sound of the instrument really grabs me more than what notes I'm playing. If I can play one note that has a great tone, that makes me really happy. Recording is very much about sound. There is also a real beauty and an intricacy to the parts

working together. That is a very different thing than the kind of improvisation we do on stage.

Lera: Can we learn to improvise like that in normal life?

Mark: If I'm honest and I look at myself, outside of music, I could improvise more. I just turned 50 this year and I've been thinking, "Wow, I really want to make a concerted effort not to calcify." I get really attached to the stuff that has worked, and attached to avoiding the stuff that didn't work. That's kind of not what life is about and not what improvisation is about. Because what didn't work last time might work incredibly well the next time, and visa versa.

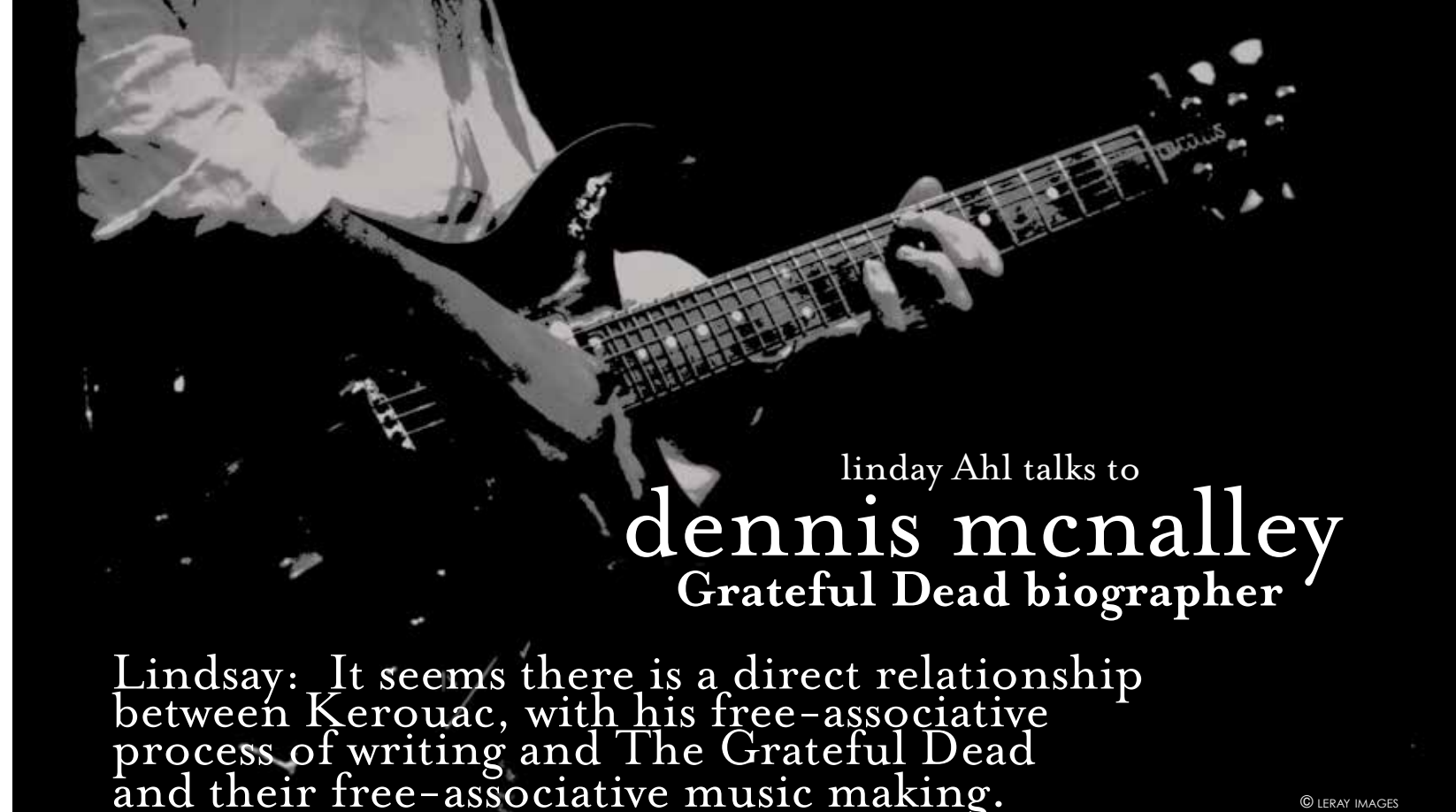
Kristin: Is there an effort to keep the spirit of the Dead alive in Ratdog or do you guys try to get away from that?

Mark: I used to deal with that and it wasn't working for me. I was judging everything I was playing - "Is this Jerry enough? Is it too Jerry? Should we be doing this song because it's a favorite of the Deadheads?" It was horrible. So now I think, "Let's do what we want to do. Let's play what we want." I mean, from the time I was twelve or so, I've been listening to this music and have been blessed enough to be seeing the Grateful Dead - '67, '68, '69 - so when I hear this music with a guitar in my hands, I can't not invoke some Jerry Garcia. It's in my DNA. It's part of how I learned to play music so it's going to come out when I play. I mean, you hear bands that are very definitely the offspring of the Beatles too. You can hear it in their music—a stylistic approach. They aren't copying the Beatles but they speak the language of the Beatles. And that is sort of what is going on here. We are speaking the language that the Dead developed and furthering the conversation. We are adding some conversational elements that weren't there in the Dead, or were infrequently there in the Dead.

RATDOG PRESENTED BY

FOREVER FAMILY PRESENTS

FOREVER FAMILY PRESENTS (FFP) is the production company that recently hosted Bob Weir and Ratdog at The Lensic Theatre in Santa Fe. FFP Founder, Brad Taishoff, describes the company as an organization founded on the core ideals of allowing for a deeper meaning of community through music. FFP hopes to accomplish this by producing events that bridge gaps between genres, artists, and audiences. Regarding the principle ideals of the Company, Taishoff believes that "...for thousands of years, music has proved to be a means of consciously gathering people together through common bond. And with the power to transcend space and time, musical gatherings will always hold the potential to accomplish great feats for humanity." Santa Fe Artisan-Jeweler Randy Taishoff is the co-founder of FFP with his brother Brad. Randy makes custom guitar slides for Bob Weir. FOREVER FAMILY PRESENTS hopes to expose Santa Fe to a variety of musical events and artists that they feel would enrich the music scene here.



lindsay Ahl talks to dennis mcnalley Grateful Dead biographer

Lindsay: It seems there is a direct relationship between Kerouac, with his free-associative process of writing and The Grateful Dead and their free-associative music making.

Dennis McNalley: Yes, you are absolutely right. That's what I thought, and that's what Jerry thought, originally, which is how I got to meet him. My calling card was *Desolate Angel*, and he was very enthusiastic about it. And not to put down my book, because I think it was a decent book, but he was enthusiastic about in exact scale to his genuine enthusiasm for Kerouac. He ran into Jack Kerouac's books as a very impressionable 15, 16-year-old kid and they opened up a world for him and changed his life. Those books were his role model for the rest of his life. Jerry was a beatnik, he was not a hippie. Okay? There were trappings, but the fact is he saw himself as basically a young beat. As he was, he was a 16-year-old kid going up and down Grand Avenue in San Francisco, listening to poetry readings and jazz, going over to City Lights, and that was the progression. I wrote *Desolate Angel*, and then oddly enough, the same guy who said, "You know you should write about Kerouac," was the same guy who took me to my first Grateful Dead concert. And I immediately went, Halleluiah. And about a year later, after it all had percolated for a while, I thought, I'd really like to write a book about this underground, bohemian thing that ... well it started in the 1840's as a reaction to industrialization, but in America, you could tell that story from 1940 to 1970 by looking at Kerouac in the 40's and 50's and The Grateful Dead in the 60's and 70's. You

get the 80's and 90's as a bonus because they took so long. And they are linked, (you know the standard archetype of romantic versus classical - classicists like form and romantics like inspiration, and within that, improvisation, among other things). Kerouac did something very interesting, which was he tried, and to some extent very largely succeeded, in creating what Ginsberg called "spontaneous bop prosody" to write. He wrote spontaneously and he did not go back and rewrite. It helps that he had written a million words before ... and his facility with language was such that he could get away with that. The Grateful Dead, in 1965, when they were a little funky garage band, like every other garage band, doing covers, semi-consciously and semi-not-consciously decided that they were not going to just play the songs. Bob Weir said, "We found out that the song was over but we weren't finished yet." And they started improvising, basically on the model of John Coltrane, who Phil had seen and who Jerry worshipped.

Lindsay: Talk about the relationship of Be-Bop in jazz and Bop in Kerouac. Did they get that term from jazz?

Dennis: Oh yeah. Absolutely. Kerouac loved Parker and Gillespie who were the original boppers. But really Jack's model was before that, Lester Young, Kerouac wrote *Mexico City Blues*, which is a wonderful book of poetry, and he said, "I'd like to be thought of as a Lester Young on a Sunday afternoon."

DENNIS MCNALLEY IS THE AUTHOR OF: DESOLATE ANGEL, A BIOGRAPHY OF JACK KEROUAC, AND THE GRATEFUL DEAD, A 30 YEAR CHRONICLE OF THE BAND

CURT DOWDY, FILMMAKER, AND ARON RALSTON, AUTHOR AND INSPIRATIONAL SPEAKER, PREPARE TO CLIMB K2
INTERVIEW BY KRISTIN KUHLMAN

Kristin: Have your perceptions of the universe changed throughout your recent transitions?

Curt: Yes, they have—especially my way of looking at life. Before, everything needed to be figured out, analyzed. It was a numbers game and it was very cerebral and very mental. At the same time I felt a stirring that was inside my body—in my chest—my heart. I called the combination of these voices in my head and in my body “the committee.” The “heartfelt desire” or “calling”—whatever you want to call it—led me down the path of filmmaking.

Which part of the committee was it that gave permission to the compassionate committee member to speak up?

Curt: I don’t know. I guess I got lucky. If you believe in Karma, you would say that our purpose in being here is to experience and learn and grow to the next level. Fortunately, there was a voice inside of me that was able to say, “Go do this. Don’t worry about what other people think.”

Can you talk about your goals for the K2 project?

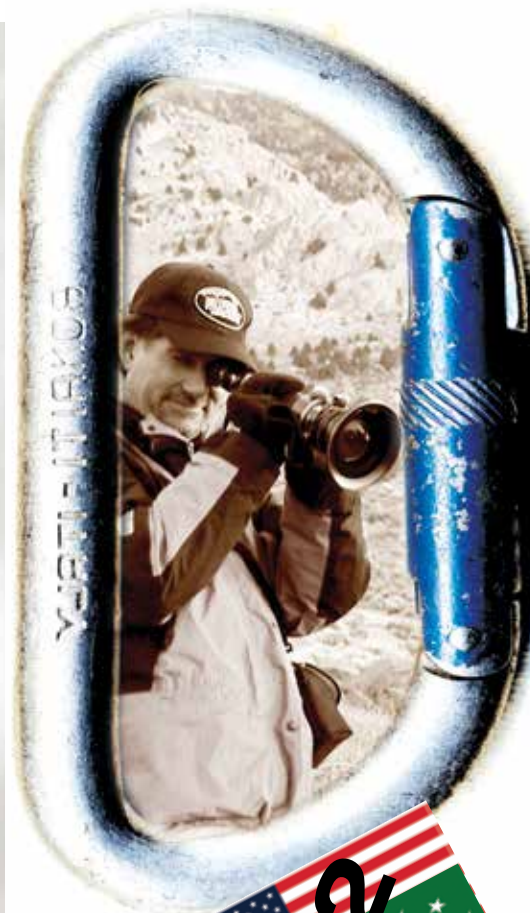
Curt: Our first goal is to go have the experience of attempting to climb what is known as the world’s most deadly and difficult mountain. So, for a mountaineer, this is a journey of desire and of realizing the impossible. But, there is more than just the mountaineering desire of this project. If we gain any enlightenment at all, we want bring that home to share with the world. We will be approaching K2 from Pakistan and recruiting Pakistani climbers to our team. There is a friction in the world. I would argue that the friction in our cultures has to do with fear - the fear of losing what we value in our culture. I can assure you that Islamic people are fearing Americans. But, ultimately, the path for all of us is to grow and learn. And so, here is where the possibility comes in. I do think it is possible for our cultures to see the best in each other. One way we are going to get there is that we are going to have to get past our fear. We are hoping that by having a joint American/Pakistani team working together and getting to know one another—and facing our fears together—that our stories will contribute to our home cultures understanding each other better. The story of climbers overcoming their fears on an impossible and deadly mountain then just becomes a metaphor for overcoming any other kind of fear, including fear of another culture.

Do you feel that the fear may be more fundamental than losing cultural values—that it comes from the fact that there are limited resources and that they are going to run out—whatever those resources may be.

Aron: The thing that scares me about American culture is the American mindset of the ever-increasing appetite and our consumption of those resources. If we can’t find contentment in what we have and in the ways that we live, there will never be enough to sustain a more outward focus of relations with other people. There will always be that competitiveness. What is creating this situation where “safety” becomes so far removed from our basic needs? What’s keeping us from looking inside?

Curt: There is certainly a whole delegate that has lost connection with what is inside—where contentment comes from. There are cultures that live much more primitively than we do. Cultures that certainly “do without.” And guess what? They find happiness. If I can do anything as a filmmaker—and sharing Aron’s journey—its to show the similarities across cultures and to move others towards finding their contentment within.

We are hoping that by having a joint American/Pakistani team working together and getting to know one another—and facing our fears together—that our stories will contribute to our home cultures understanding each other better.
—Curt Dowdy



“We will be approaching K2 from Pakistan and recruiting Pakistani climbers to our team.” —CURT DOWDY

Curt Dowdy resigned from a corporate management position in 2001 to pursue his passions for filmmaking, high adventure and living through inspiration. His most recent film, *HIGH AMBITIONS IN THE HIMALAYA*, was shown at the Santa Fe Film Festival and will soon appear on DVD.

THE WEBSITE FOR *HIGH AMBITIONS IN THE HIMALAYA* IS WWW.HIGHAMBITIONS.NET. THE *K2* PROJECT CONTACT IS CURT DOWDY, BELEGATO@BELEGATO.COM, WWW.BELEGATO.COM. ARON’S BOOK IS *BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE*, PUBLISHED BY ATRIA (SEPTEMBER 2004), ISBN: 0743492811

Aron: My life was changed dramatically after September 11th where I felt such anger and desire for retribution and a lot of the things I think a lot of Americans felt towards the world of Islam. I realized that this was absolutely the wrong reaction because that is the reaction of fear. And that is really the greatest lesson we have to realize as a country—in our political directions—to react with tolerance, not fear. I really feel compelled with this project; being able to use the notoriety that I’ve received from one incident in my life and direct it towards something that can really be important. The more that I can work on getting that out—its part of honoring my spirituality and my relationship with God—that’s my motivation behind all of this.

Do you feel that it takes personal tragedy to recognize that you can be content with less?

Curt: I don’t know that we necessarily have to face tragedy in order to come to a new awakening or awareness in our lives. I think tragedy is an extreme form of a contrast between what we want and what we don’t want. The process that I’m trained in now is to think about what I do want. If there is a message in this film project and going to Pakistan and going to K2—it’s to envision the possibility and embrace the journey. If we can convey that, if we can live by example, we will have accomplished our mission

Aron: I don’t think that you have to quit your job to understand the benefits of simplicity or be trapped by a boulder to understand the benefits of freedom but I do think that to go through adversarial circumstances is a great opportunity to reflect and be introspective. I do think that in some cases, you can get so set in your ways and your mindset and those layers of protection that until it gets stripped away and makes you exposed and naked and raw to your own mortality its hard to understand that there are things that are a lot bigger going on.

Did you change the way you lived your life after “the boulder?”

Aron: (laughter) There hasn’t been an aspect of my life that hasn’t been changed since that experience. But I think every momentary experience in our life has the same potential to do that kind of work—to help us be more appreciative.

“...that is really the greatest lesson we have to realize as a country—in our political directions—to react with tolerance, not fear.” —Aron Ralston

Aron Ralston escaped death On May 1, 2003, by amputating his own right arm with a dull knife after his hand had been pinned under a boulder for six days in a remote Utah canyon. His story of taking risks and facing the deepest of fears became an international best seller in his book *BETWEEN A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE*.

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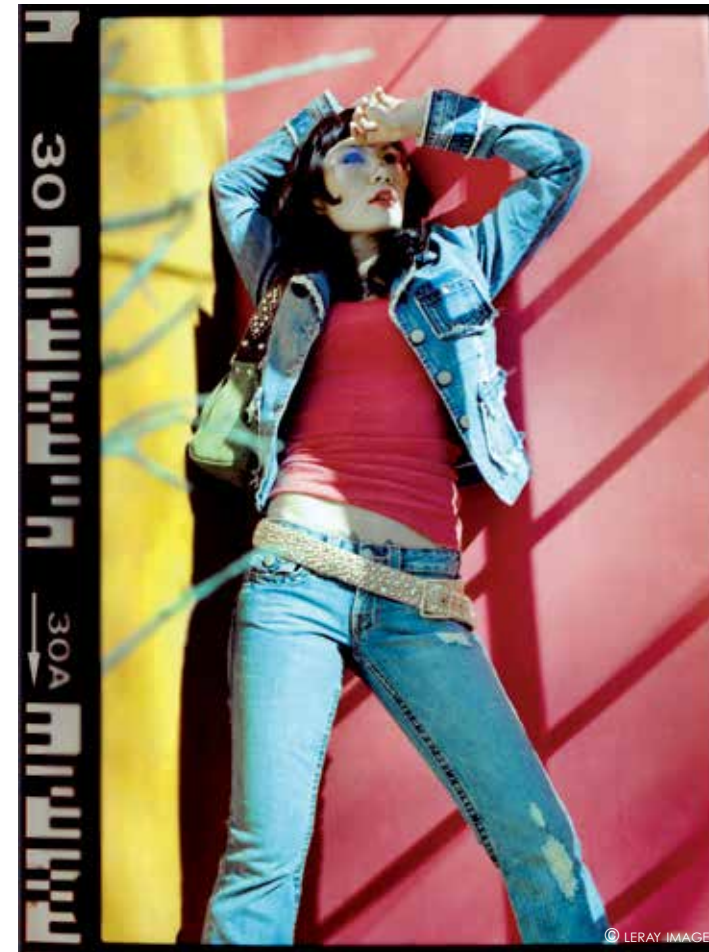
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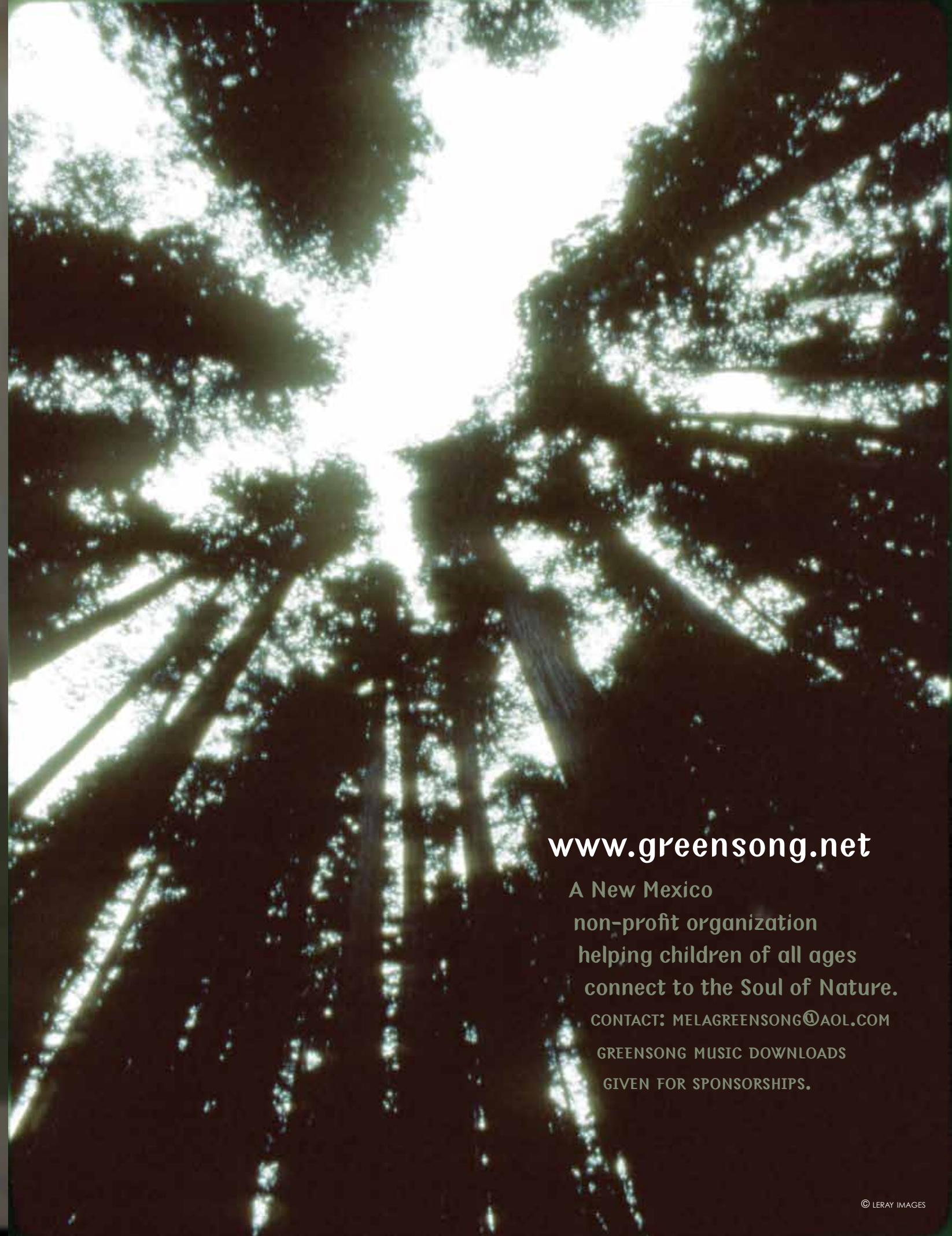
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Yoga Myths

Kate Daily of BODY
talks to Yoga teacher Jennifer Morrison

For many non-yogis the idea of taking up yoga is daunting. We conjure images of perfect-bodied men and women smiling as they twist into a pretzel, breezing through a two-hour class with nary a drop of sweat. For those of us who can barely tie our shoes, much less put our foot behind our head, the benefits of yoga don't quite outweigh the impending embarrassment of attending our first class. And for those of us who've heard about Ashtanga, an intensely rigorous form of this ancient exercise, we are even more intimidated.

Jennifer Morrison frequently hears such concerns. She's been teaching Ashtanga yoga for six years, practicing for ten. She currently instructs classes six days a week at BODY in Santa Fe. And she agrees, watching from the outside, it can seem intimidating. Upon speaking with Jennifer, however, any worries a yoga novice may have about starting a practice are dissolved by her patience and presence. She humored me and answered a few questions about Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga.



advanced practitioners. So, don't worry or get overwhelmed, the teacher will guide you through the details of the practice. Simply concentrate on breathing and moving – doing something good for yourself!

Kate: I'm out of shape. I'm not very flexible. Can I practice Ashtanga Yoga?
Jennifer: Yes, everyone can. Although Ashtanga is a challenging, physical practice, it really is for all levels, ages, and abilities. People do need to practice intelligently, and listen to their bodies. After all, that's one of the aspects we're attempting to cultivate in our practice, awareness and a deeper listening, right? If needed, poses can be modified to accommodate an injury or limitation. It is important to learn slowly, cumulatively, developing a good foundation and understanding of the Sun Salutations before progressing. So, as long as one is willing to approach the practice as a learning process, to establish a balance between effort and patience, there is the possibility for both subtle and profound transformation.

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Kate: First things first: What is Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga?

Jennifer: For me, it's a meditative dance, a chance to follow my breath while moving through various positions. But most literally "Ashtanga" means "eight-limbed," and "Vinyasa" is the connection of movement with breath. That might sound technical, but the ultimate goal is realization of one's true Self. Each practice begins with Sun Salutations and is followed by a specific series of standing and seated postures, before finishing with backbends and restorative poses.

Kate: That sounds like a lot. What does it take to practice Ashtanga?

Jennifer: First of all, a general state of wellness is recommended, but also some curiosity and a little commitment, too. The practice is done on a yoga mat, usually without additional props, unless a something is needed to facilitate an individual's pose. Everyone is encouraged to work at their own pace, which may vary day to day, even for

“Over time I've strengthened and become more flexible in ways I would have never imagined.”

—Jennifer Morrison

Kate: What attracted you to Ashtanga, versus other types of yoga?

Jennifer: I enjoyed the sense of fluidity, deep breath, and movement from the beginning. However, it was also quite an eye opener to my own lack of strength and flexibility. Still, I was curious – and inspired by teachers and practitioners around me. Over the years I have peeked into other practices and value what I have learned, but I continue to be drawn to Ashtanga. I think what's truly unique about it is the fact that the sequence of postures remains the same. Every visit we make to the mat, we breathe, follow the progression of our practice, and slowly something happens. Over time I've strengthened and become more flexible in ways I would have never imagined. So, it's the person that changes or evolves, and that's pretty amazing to me.

BODY

BLISS talks to yoga teacher Sean Tebor

Leray: So you did Tae Kwon Do for 17 years, which is a very demanding sport, and then you started doing yoga, what did yoga begin to contribute to your overall physical fitness?

Sean: The repetition of all the dynamic kicking in Tae Kwon Do created patterns of imbalance in my body I was unaware of until I began practicing yoga. Yoga has, and continues to deeply unravel the energetic and physical knots created by the fast, ballistic actions of a "striking" martial arts style. Immediately I began to realize that overlapping the two practices was counter productive, and I gave up the kicking soon after that first magical yoga practice. Most "sports" make us strong on the outside, but can actually weaken the core. Yoga does the opposite, which is of course what the body yearns for. My martial arts practice left me with some gifts. I walked away with a strong sense of core strength, and an elevated capacity for balance that have carried over into my yoga practice and teaching.

Leray: In general, how does yoga benefit the male students in your classes, like Type-A business guys who need to get centered, or hardbody athletes who need to become more supple?

Sean: Wow, this is really huge. It has to be one of the most satisfying aspects of teaching, seeing men come in for the first time to sit down on a yoga mat. That seemingly simple step is no small thing, and many men I think are

intimidated by the notion of joining a yoga class comprised of mostly women, all of whom will appear to be (and probably are) infinitely more flexible. Yoga brings about balance between many pairs of opposites, and masculine/feminine balance is perhaps one of the most important examples of this. It seems there is a tendency in this country for both men and women to slip onto the masculine side of the fence, and regardless of gender, a proper yoga practice brings balance—so that no longer are there two sides. There is only simple truth.

Leray: In this issue of BLISS we have been exploring *spirit*, which is related to the word *breath*. What is the experience of breath and breathing in yoga that has been good for you?

Sean: Breath for me is everything. Breath is in many ways our most tangible connection with Spirit. We (obviously) don't breathe for ourselves. Every inhale is a gift of animating life force, and every exhale is an opportunity to give it back. The inhale is truly inspiration and the exhale is gratitude. Yoga without breath awareness is just another workout. Yoga and meditation practices move forward by allowing the breath to unite mind and body, and the meeting place is the heart. In this way the breath becomes our teacher. This simple truth permeates all of my personal practice and teaching.



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Sean teaches special event classes and workshops monthly at BODY, and is a guest instructor in the yoga program.

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—John Berger, *WAYS OF SEEING*



Glenna Hill, Santa Fe actress.
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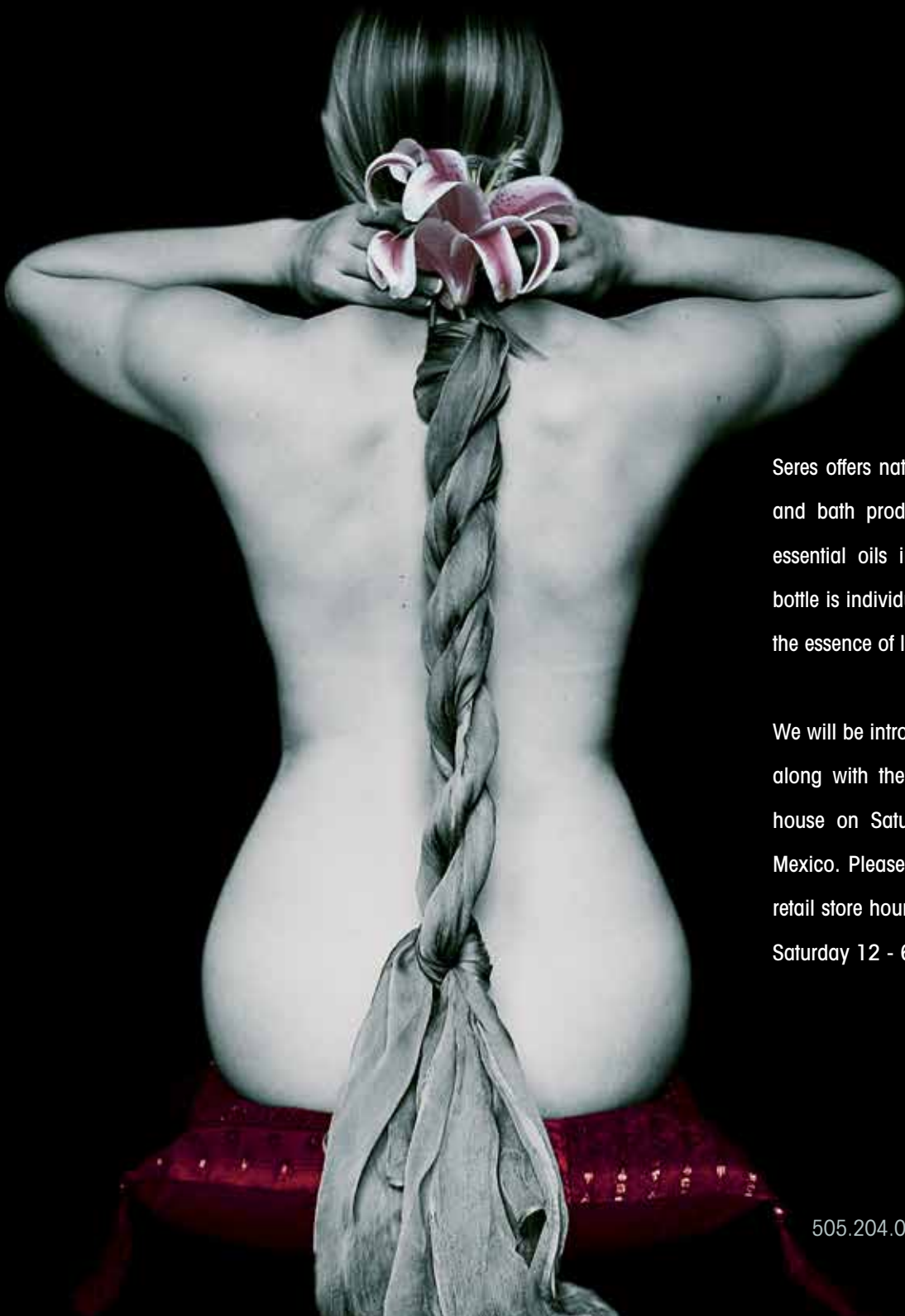


Carole Kozak, BLISS model, is a professional pastry chef about to open a new pastry shoppe at PLANTS OF THE SOUTHWEST on Agua Fria, just south of Siler Road. Her business partner, Maria Bernal, owner/chef and creator of the new **Treehouse Bakery & Cafe**, wanted to open a pastry shoppe with 100% organic cooking and all local produce with really high-end, delicious food. The cafe is set to open in June and will feature Carole's yummy Tripple-chocolate Cake, Vegetarian Soups and Dinosaur Pancakes for Kids. The Treehouse Bakery will also provide community oriented, very affordable, cooking classes for kids. With hand-hewn vigas and lots of natural light, the Treehouse pastry shoppe will be a great place to spend the afternoon enjoying Santa Fe's yummiest deserts. Last but not least, Carole and Maria specialize in beautifully decorated, organic Wedding Cakes, which can be custom-ordered for your special day.

Maria Bernal on left and Carole Kozak, plan to open the new **Treehouse Bakery & Cafe** in June

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Come see where your eyes cannot see.*
- *Richie Havens*



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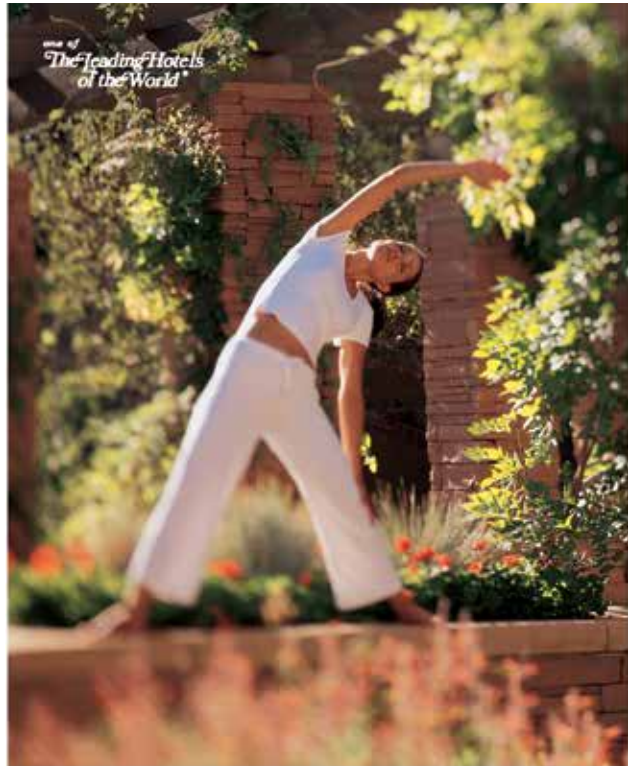
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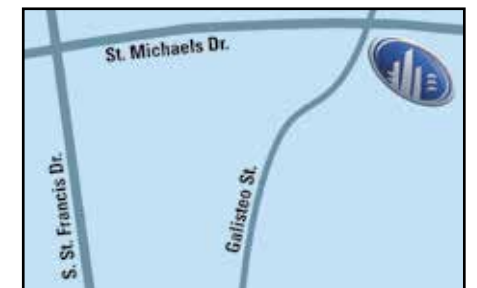
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Bliss visits with Anna Marie Houser

Bliss: I'm looking around at all of Allan's pieces. Do you ever feel like he is speaking to you through them?

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What is your idea of God?

Well I was brought up in the Catholic Church, but as I've gotten older, I've come to believe in a universal spirit, in intelligent design. To me, religion has a feeling of caring, that there is something to depend on. Science is so cold. It may be true, but I tend to want to believe in God, and I think Allan believed too because his parents and his people believed, in nature mostly, in its spirit. There is so much in nature.



Anna Marie Houser at Allan's studio circa 1985

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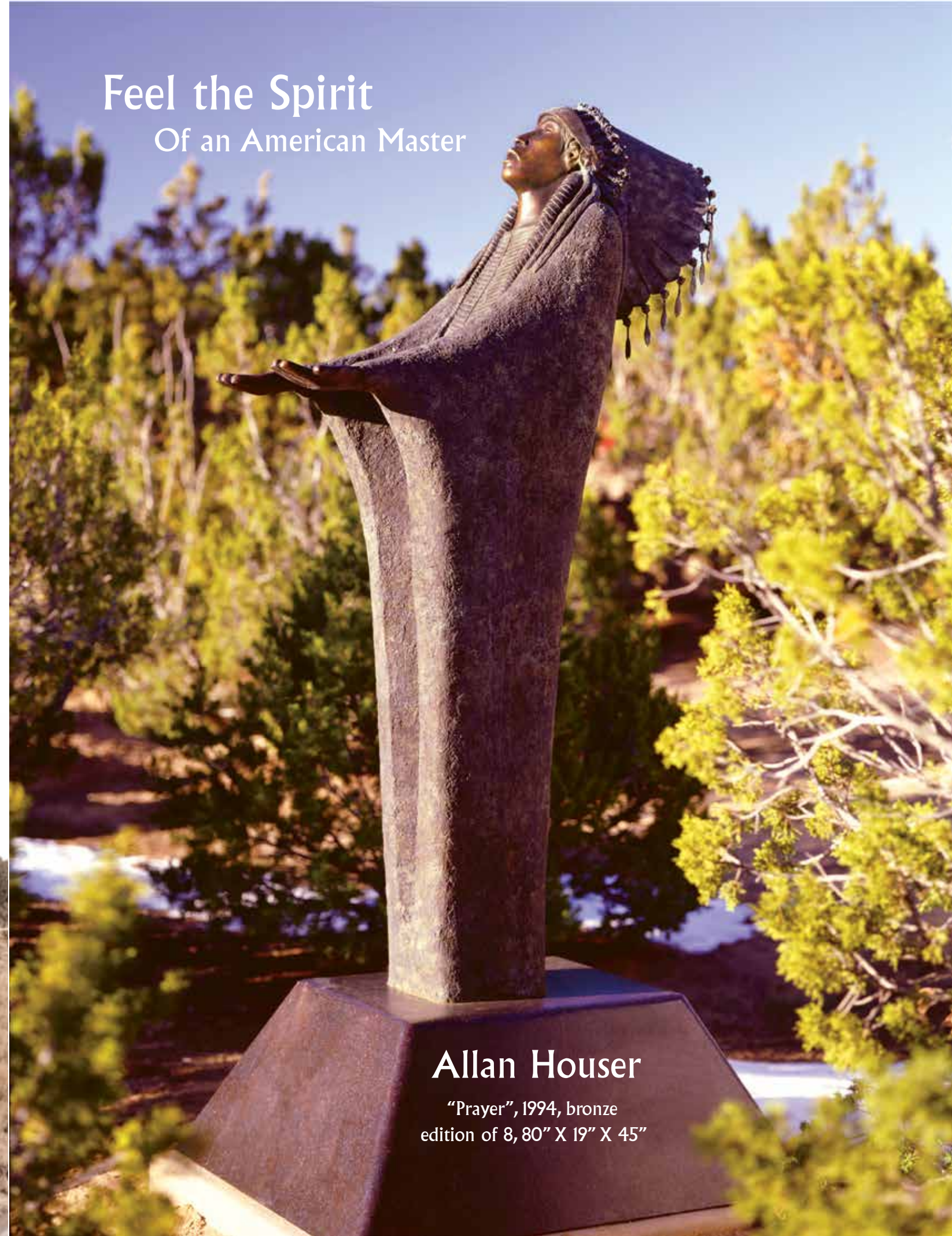
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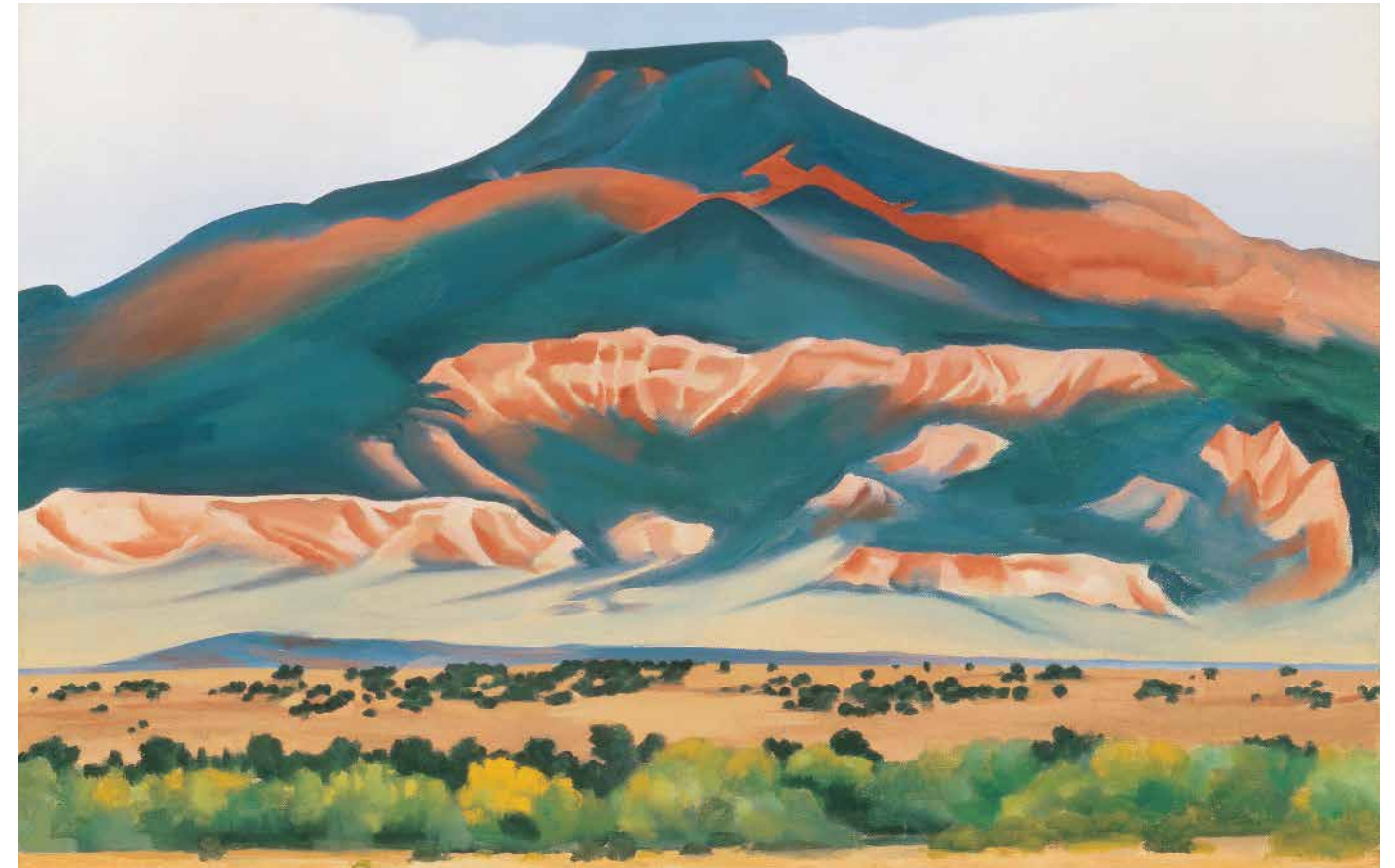
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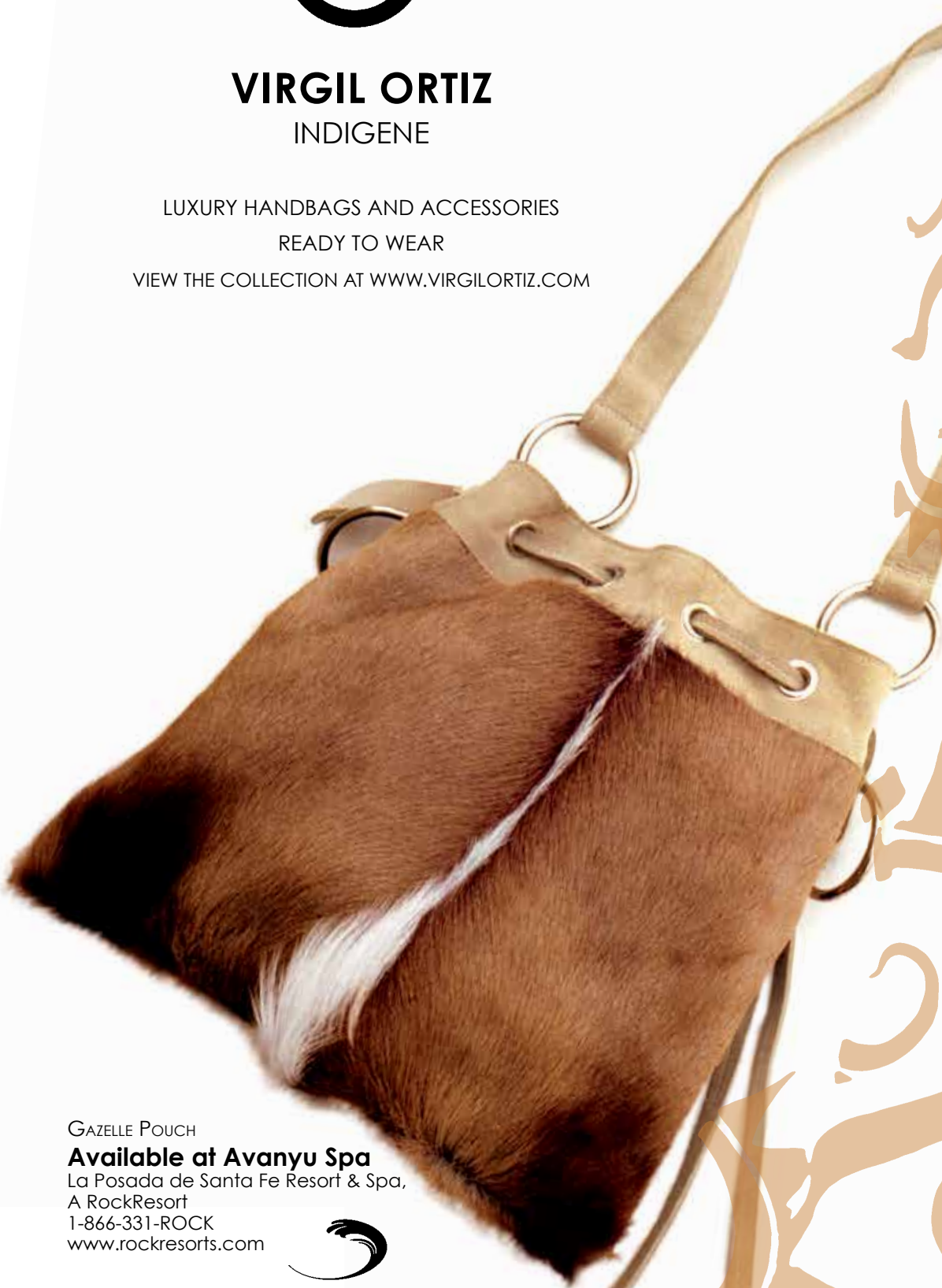
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