

Home, Sweet Home: Dispatches from the Manchurian Candidate Factory, #16

Κύριε, ἐλέησον. (Lord, have mercy.)

My own opinion (borrowing from Richard Wolin) regarding the stuff I write: “Anecdotaly rich but analytically impoverished.”

Distribution: Book group, Adams Blvd./Cochran Ave. and Environs, Selected (wouldn't want to get me face bashed in) Tenants of my Apartment Complex, Relevant Organizations, Others.

Purpose: To Ridicule Few. To Amuse Many. To Inform All.

A reminder: because of frequent computer malfunctions, when I notice an egregious “printer's devil,” I'll **bold** it and add (sic). That'll bitch it.

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“Having gotten mixed-up in writing, I have been punished for my impudence;
Refractory, I have offended my era's mentality.
The accumulated calumnies could very well get the better of my carcass;
As useless as it may be, my voice will nevertheless survive in these pages.

— *Lu Xun's* autograph/poem (1933). My translation from the French

The others, at least, were ashamed of their depredations; but what's to be done with this one who's proud of them!

— Julien Benda, quoting from a story by Tolstoy. My translation

One can't well argue the honor and beauty of an act by referring to its usefulness.

— Montaigne

“History: A conspiracy, not always among gentlemen, to defraud.” (I can now freely attest to that.)

— Ambrose Bierce (possibly paraphrased)

“What for?” Akhmatova would cry indignantly whenever, infected by the prevailing climate, anyone of our circle asked this question. “What do you mean what for? It's time you understood that people are arrested for nothing!”
— Nadezhda Mandelstam, *Hope against Hope*

The Cat Walks (Backward, Natch!):

Standing outside my high school in 1972, in Bremerhaven, West Germany, during my senior year, I run into my friend in the US Navy, Robert Seidenstein; we talk. Then a girl, in a lower grade, one I knew mostly by sight, walks up to us, stopping briefly to chat, something she had never done before. After she leaves, Robert: “Why don't you f*ck(?) her?” Seidenstein, a witting or unwitting participant? Witting, I now think.

At Caltech in 1972, for the affirmative action admits: an English class... Which is where I first met Robert “Taj” Tajima who stuck out like a sore thumb.

At JPL in 1978-9(?), where, in a deserted lab, *Stephan Suszko*, for no reason I can discern, attacked me, leaving a temporary scar around my neck after pulling on a gold chain I was wearing. A slight injury I pointed out to the policeman who came to the lab at my request. An injury also noticed, though I never mentioned it, by my landlady, Lorraine Griffith. He and I briefly fought when a fellow technician by the name of Miles/Niles(?), walked in on us. Finding me straddling my assailant, he interrupted the proceedings. Immediately calling the police who met me at the entrance to JPL, I vainly tried to have Suszko arrested. Soon, someone from the personnel department came out and had a lengthy aside with the officer. Eventually, the officer declined to arrest Suszko, telling me I had called the wrong station (something I was to hear again, decades later when I attempted to file a complaint of a break in to my car). Afterwards, the JPL personnel office employee told me nothing would go into either of our files, assuring me it was the best for everyone concerned. Stephan Suszko, an electron microscope technician originally from Poland, soon left. Though much later, no longer at JPL but still living in East Pasadena, I was to get a call from someone who asked detailed questions of the incident, telling me that Suszko was back at his old job and that the section secretary, a woman named Marilyn who, I recall, flew sailplanes as a hobby, had told him he should beware of Suszko. Decades later, Colette Walczak was to bring up the location of this incident, mentioning Oak Grove Drive, the address of the Jet Propulsion Lab, in another context. So much for the JPL employee's assurance about: “nothing going into our files.”

(1-1-23) Colette, I've told this before, years ago had been trying, successfully as it turned out, to get me to kill myself among other manipulations. During that Christmas, in my kitchen, she said: “It would not be good for you.” Her eyes brimmed with tears as we held each other for a moment. Years later, I came to see that with those words, gestures and tears, this occasionally terrified little girl (among other characteristics, some less pleasant) redeemed not only herself but, because she was not much different from most of us, including me, most of humanity. I'd like to see those who howl with the wolves top that.

Somebody is apparently desperate enough to have been persuaded to break into my bungalow and, obligingly, leave a DNA sample on one of my shirts. I've already reported this burglary, both to police and in these pages. What I'm now realizing is that this may be an attempt to force the poor devil to burn his/her bridges by leaving damning evidence behind.

Looking back, it's clear they got me fired from Rigel Instrumentation. So why not other from jobs? And, if so, just how many times did this happen?

Looking back even further, I sense a concerted effort at intoxication, e.g., the Brown Derby Hotel and Encore Video incidents, to name only the obvious, verbal attempts; incidents I can still scrape together from my imperfect memory of times long past.

La Rubrique des Gueules Cassées (A Section on War-wounded):

I often find myself humming a tune when I wake up. I've *never* been like this. Won't some kind soul (with the appropriate medical credentials, Natch!) please explain this to me?

OK, OK, I get it. I've got a space problem. Not what you might think though; no, this is not about my exiguous living space, *nenni*. The problem is really with the space between my ears. I'm a pack rat, OK?

The Quotable Other, i.e., *L'Enfer, c'est les Autres* — Sartre (Hell is Other People):

What's this refrain from my long-suffering, one remaining sister: “We're not getting any younger”? Heard three times within a couple of weeks during our Skype conversations.

Coming home from my maiden talk at the Robertson branch of LAPL on February 14, 2016 (I've already told this), going into my bungalow with my video equipment; Tyson, my long-suffering neighbor, happening to walk by, delivers himself of this payload: “anything for a buck,” he says acidly.

(1-20-23) In another of her non sequiturs: “Wagner,” Irene said toward the end of a Skype conversation. No plaster fell, unlike after her previous, celebrated (by me, at least) non sequitur: “CIA.” One in which, I imagine, considerably more than plaster may have fallen... Again I ask: why is it that, so often, I'm left feeling

uncomfortable after talking to her. While I may occasionally wax churchillian (see a previous email); why would she ever wax Wagnerian? Is it that dread Wagnerian drift?

(1-31-23) Met with E.D. for coffee yesterday. Conversation pleasant enough (he's a nice guy) but when, in rapid succession, he brought up a concatenation of COVID-19 and concentration camps along with something about the impact of events in the Ukraine on natural gas prices here in the US; I with my, by now renowned, lightning-quick presence of mind, *immediately* changed the subject(s). "What's this I hear about Mr. Trump no longer being president?" I said, unhesitatingly. Another version of the PBO (polite brush-off). To which I now hasten to add: "Слава Украине! Слава Украине!" (Sorry, no translation 'ere) Covering me bases wiv' alacrity, I am (*faut bien, par les temps qui courent*). Damn clever bugger, aren't I? Tantalizingly, he and I met at Vees Cafe, down the street from where I live. A place Colette Walczak, years ago, seemed to insistently suggest I patronize. And, on a not completely unrelated note, I'm told the dosage determines the poison.

Sassenach™ and His Yankee Damyankee Tricks:

The technical phrase, "ground truth," from the field of remote sensing (satellite reconnaissance), refers to knowledge of an area obtained by visiting a spot in question which, until then, had only been photographed. Thus verifying conclusions inferred from images taken at distance of perhaps hundreds of miles. Amid the ~~miasma~~ web of *Maya* which surrounds me, the following events stand out like landmarks in an unfamiliar landscape, giving me *some* confidence in my model of the world and interpretation of my peculiar life:

1. The "Meet Cute" at Santa Monica Beach, where, sometime in the late 70s. Invited by Guy Pritchard, head of engineering at Teledyne Controls where I worked, and another manager, I joined them for a jog at the beach. Oddly, after our jog, I happened on Richard Evans, son-in-law of Lorraine Griffith, my former landlady in Pasadena, riding a bike. Neither of us said anything, though our eyes met. I was not invited by Pritchard to repeat the exercise.
2. The two physical attacks in 2022, one by pepper spray, the other by a family man named Tyson. Both attacks carried out by neighbors in my complex.
3. The terrified look on Tyson's daughter's face as her father kicked a box near where I was working outside my bungalow, as he walked by recently.
4. Tyson still on the loose, months after an LAPD detective spoke of issuing a warrant for his arrest.
5. The vandalism in which someone entered my bungalow and left a stain on a shirt. A stain certainly containing DNA material. I took pictures and sealed the shirt in a Ziploc bag before calling police. They issued a report number but, inexplicably, were not interested in further investigation.
6. The puzzling theatrical email sent by Tiffany Anderson, my landlord, in which she wrote: "... the police are on there (sic) way." after I had refused her worker entry when he showed up at 5PM.
7. The 15+ car accidents I've had this century, accidents of which I can probably document at least half.
8. The occasional refusals of buses to stop to pick me up, up to seven in a row. Should I think of the drivers as *refuseniks*? (Update: 2-1-23) Why, today, I believe one may have, If I'm not entirely delusional by now, flipped me off as he drove by. *Sagt bloß!* (This takes the cake!)
9. The unusual, recent anomalies noticed in the functioning of some of my test equipment.
10. The parlous (and, to me at least, mysterious) state of my spine as revealed by MRIs and nerve activity tests; Bergman used the word stenosis. With attendant striking and unprecedented (for me) neurological symptoms.
11. What I sometimes call "Grand Central Station." An enchanted place where items mysteriously come and go without obvious rhyme or reason; whether I'm home or not... I present: my bungalow. Incidents I began noting in my diaries and publicly commenting on over a decade ago, starting with the policeman who investigated my first complaint. In which incident an *empty* disposable coffee cup, *stolen* from a car I had borrowed, was placed in a trash container *in* my bungalow the next day...
12. The strange, coordinated series of incidents in which several labeled and dated USB sticks I used for backups of a manuscript were removed from one or more of my safe deposit boxes at Broadway Federal, before finding their way to my kitchen. I have yet to get a police report or be successful in having the bank file a complaint.
13. The suicide attempt, my last one. The one in which I turned on the gas but, before the place could turn into a brief fireball, gas flow was interrupted and an inert substance used to flush the line. Both in my bungalow and probably throughout the whole block as well.
14. This last item, though it does not directly concern me, is equally concrete and so serves my purpose here. My friend, Jon Howard, once paid me to accompany him to inspect a multi-kilowatt solar electric array he had installed for the Upland, California school system. It was this visit which ultimately inspired and galvanized me to take an interest in solar and begin selling systems for RVs. I'm told Colette Walczak, by then his girlfriend, made a short loan to his company, CP Solar, in order that the project could be completed. She also was hired by Jon as a temporary contractor on the project which, I believe, was his last ever. In fact, Jon Howard has complained to me that credit for this substantial installation was stolen from him and wrongly assigned to another developer. Sometime after this, Jon moved in with Colette Walczak under conditions which are unclear to me; this arrangement continued until Jon, by then broke and seriously mentally ill, became permanently homeless. A slide which took place over a period of a decade. In addition to serving as another instance of the "ground truth" I mentioned above, perhaps this murky situation warrants a further look by the relevant authorities.

Something's up, surely.

Someday, we must attempt a thorough inventory of the means available to these Gentlemen of the Organs of State Security™. Just to have some idea of what we're up against. Reason is: I've heard it said that intentions can change rapidly; capabilities, not so much. Who authorized disbursement of the funds necessary to develop these fiendish technologies? Who then allowed these techniques/technologies to be unleashed on the general public?

Juegos de Manos, Juegos de Villanos:

(1-18-23) Today, I reported the following event to Detective Hargrove of the LAPD, the person assigned to the battery case against my neighbor. And, as I did so, Tyson with his, by now, trademark expressionless mien, walked slowly by my window.

Hi Detective Hargrove,

Last night (1-18-23), a man came to my door showing me a picture on his cell phone of the suspect in this case, a neighbor in my complex I only know as Tyson.

What followed was nearly incomprehensible, a conversation in which this man, old, Korean-American, speaking little English, pointed to a picture of Tyson on his cell phone, a picture which looked like it had been taken by Tyson himself, judging from the angle.

This man then repeatedly said: "Brake sensor - brake sensor ..." showing me a pic of some device before pulling up Tyson's pic again.

I replied that I did not know what he was talking about, asking who he was and what he wanted. He could or would not answer intelligibly.

After a couple of minutes the man left.

This is odd.

I thought I'd bring this up in light of the fact that Tyson is still on the loose.

I'd like to add that in December, Tyson, walking by, kicked a cardboard box I was unpacking a cart from, a box partly obstructing the way. As he did so, he said nothing, neither did I. I did notice, as I turned toward the sound, his daughter, following him, looking frightened.

Thanks,

Berg (as in Nuremberg) Hawkins

I once read that, in Tsarist times, if a person had to be made to disappear, leaving no trace of ever having lived, i.e., “Who?”; the secret police could not only do away with that individual but with anyone who had ever known him, as well. The feat apparently achieved with a database consisting of index cards only, mind.

Speed Bumps on the Road to Ragnarök:

(1-15-23) Called a J.C. in Wilmington, someone I found on OfferUp, looking for a router for my sauna build. Well, this man I'd previously spoken to replied when asked “is this Jason?” with what sounded like “*lo*.” Confused, I repeated my question a couple of times, each time getting the same “*lo*.” Finally concluding I had misdialed, I hung up before calling again, this time getting an answering machine. By the way, I believe the word “*lo*” in Hebrew, means “no.” Now, I'm as anti-Israeli as the next man but that tears it! I'm taking my marbles (what's left of them), packing up and going home, wherever that is (a typical wandering Jew predicament, Eh?). Then, just after this “skit,” outside hanging some clothes to dry, I chanced to cross paths with Lady Lurk, with the lady looking a bit more apprehensive than usual.

Benelux: A Kushi, it's True, but a Nice One:

(2-1-23) Driver of a #37, eastbound on Adams failed to comply after I rang for a stop. Standing near him, I quietly said: “Are we stopping, then?” Two blocks after Dunsmuir, my usual stop, he finally slowed, saying something. I replied: “I'll take what I can get, sir” before getting off once the bus had come to a halt.

Wink-wink, Nudge-nudge:

“... I want a *real* date,” she said ambiguously, some years ago.

— M.B.

Coño!

Several years ago, at her townhouse to work on computers, I hear Dee Forrest, a friend of Dennis Allard who worked as a therapist on contract to the military, stand near me, and say: “Work, sucker!” To no one in particular, apparently...

Is *Sassenach*™ in the business of “harvesting” soldiers suffering from mental illness? He seemed not to have been deterred by my own illness, quite the contrary... If true, not only is this an abomination, it is also terminally stupid. To my mind, it also smacks of sedition.

The Provocation Will Not Be Televised:

Inaugurating a new section, so florid and egregious have the “skits” become.

(1-18-23) Years ago, I made an incautious remark (“not without provocation and much prior conditioning” – credit to Pynchon for the phrase) about former President Obama; a remark in which, may I remind you, I called him a Regular House Nigger. This *incartade*, regrettable really, occasioned a veritable charm offensive in which concerted attempts were made; how successfully only you, Gentle Reader™, can judge, to paint me as a regular feller (of the Negro Persuasion, I presume). Call it a “Black *Aktion*” of the positive kind, suggesting Berg==Doubleplusgood (in spite of it all). I'm afraid signs now point to an extended “Mexican *Aktion*” (though of the opposite polarity) under way, an *Aktion* suggesting Berg==Doubleplusungood. Consider:

1. As workers started the demolition of my pantry, weeks ago, I offered them coffee only to be met with a blanket refusal. Only tea would do, it seems. This was the opening gambit in what turned into a week's ordeal of peculiar behavior, both verbal and sonic in nature. Along with a liberal sprinkling of mild Spanish insults.
2. Some time later, several workers engaged in another multi-day demolition in the house just to the south of my bungalow. Same behavior as above only without an offer of coffee on my part, Natch.
3. Peculiar behavior by the owner of the above-mentioned house, someone I've known for years.
4. Weeks ago, as I walked home, past the Rockenwagner bakery on Adams Blvd, was met with some provocative behavior by one or more Mexican/Hispanic employees milling around outside.
5. More peculiar Mexican/Hispanic worker behavior nearby, earlier this month.
6. (1-25-23) On leaving Home Depot yesterday, I (diplomatically) fended off an importunate, repeated (over)eager verbal offer of help. As I struggled to load my cart with a considerable amount of wood for the trek home. I begin hearing the word “*Chocolate*” repeatedly from a Hispanic man nearby. This went on for the next few minutes, accompanied by peals of laughter from other parties nearby until I was able to make good my escape.
7. (1-26-23) Almost as I write this, some poor unfortunate of the Mexican(?) Persuasion injects the word “*Cabrón*” repeatedly in an interminable conversation carried out in a low voice outside my bungalow. I swear there are moments when I, Intemperate Negro That I Am™, feel like leaning out the window and shouting “Up youse guys!” Before taking on all comers, not that I have the backbone spine for it. In addition, I believe I'm in a position to say it in *Afrikaans*: “... *julle naiers!*”, though I dare not quote the whole phrase as we are in polite company and “people will talk” (credit to the late Filipino Archbishop *Sin* for the phrase. No, really, there once was such a person).

8. (1-20-23) At my bank, the ATM outside being out of order. My transaction done, I head for the exit and almost run into a Hispanic security guard who, seeming to rush at me from nowhere, stops feet away before graciously waiving in the direction of the door as though to say “you can go.”

The reason for these skits which hint at divide and conquer? I note that the root of the word “Hispanic” is “panic.” Unless, of course, I’ve been misinformed.

Disturbing as these continuing, transparent, almost monotonous, provocations are, the obvious implication is far worse. Namely, the assumption underpinning this often-repeated exercise. That there are people in responsible positions willing to take this *circus* (should a provocation eventually “bear fruit” and something untoward happen) at face value, either formally or informally, (more ammo for a whispering campaign?). A comment on the tense atmosphere in these unsettled times.

Additionally, in my opinion, should what I’ve described in detail over the last several years come to public attention yet result in no formal, judicial sanctions, then what we will be dealing with here would be hardly more than gangsterism under another guise.

Conclusions:

(2-6-23) Was thinking, how Americanized I’ve become. In the seventies, I heard a comment which scandalized me. A man, waiting at a stop with me for the JPL bus, staring at a group of ants says: “Ants are funny machines.” I’ll focus on the philosophical aspect of these words. In those days, to me, even ants possessed something, what, I didn’t know, something which set them apart from mere robots. By contrast, today I find myself about to settle on a strongly mechanistic possible answer to the question: why am I doing so well mentally and emotionally? My current answer, until something better comes along: the effects of ketosis and my “happy” gut bacteria. How much more mechanistic-minded can you get?

Akhmatova/Mandelstam/Ginzburg, one of the these three anyway, standing in line, waiting for entry to a jail in Moscow is approached by a woman she’s never seen before. The woman quietly asks, “Can you describe this life faithfully?” The writer replies: “Yes” before the woman disappears. Unfortunately, I cannot give the same answer. Firstly, I just don’t have the talent. Secondly, though it might conceivably turn out to be as monstrous a horror here, it’s just not as stark as it was in the thirties over there. I do ridicule and slapstick, not literature. A pity.

In a ground-breaking effort for his culture, *Lu Xun* deliberately crippled his powers of expression by writing in the vernacular instead of the customary high-flown literary Chinese, though he was a scholar of this rarefied dialect(?). This in order to make his work more readily available. Contrast his attitude with mine. I do the opposite, couching what little I have to say in frequently obscure foolishness. Partly to show off, partly to have fun. A bit of auto-critique is in order here.

In the hands of these Gentlemen of the Organs of State Security™, “We, The People,” should instead think of ourselves as “We, The Mark.” Funnily enough, I well remember my boss at Sound Solutions, that poor fellow, Michael Dubrow, once taunting me with the words: “Berg; con man.” How droll. Not only is the victim often blamed, a common enough occurrence in this world; but in this particular business it would seem that the mark should be made to feel it’s his fault.

According to Stalin, a million deaths are but a statistic. To this I add: one life, a mere single life, can by itself be a thoroughgoing indictment. Of an *entire* country. You know whose life I mean. And you know which country I’m referring to. “May you know it! May you know it!”— words from the Bronze age

(signed)

Soldier of (**Gay** (sic)-Glo) Orange (I thought I had written my customary “Day-Glo”)

P.S. To my beloved sisters, Irene and Colette (the latter dead of breast cancer in 2018): May our wordless tears, both yours and mine, eventually prove invincible.

P.P.S. By way of a birthday(?) card from Irene, I once got the following bit of sound advice: “Be yourself, everybody else is taken.” I’ll try to remember that, Dear. Thanks. (2-26-23) It just occurred to me that, if one inserts the word “by” between the “Be” and the “yourself,” her counsel can be taken as a plea for *apartheid*. Sensible, when one considers the prevalent atmosphere around these parts a-and the fact I’m a *verkramp*te by calling if not nature, i.e. another Dr. No.



Before.



After.

I had some difficulty taking this pic as AFJ’s handyman, José Nava, chose that very moment to park right where I stood on the street, feet from the curb; forcing me to nimbly move out of the way. I had to wait until he had gone to take the picture.