

Norberto Gomez, Jr.
09.30.08

about

In Grandma's house Jesus Christ and la Virgen de Guadalupe stare down, vibrantly, printed on some large fabric, and framed. There are the bright halos, the powerful green gown, the stars, and the luscious red blood runs everywhere. They are there everyday, icons of the perfect human, and as such, the viewer's imperfection.

A curandero with his shamanistic, folk healing walks through the house with some sort of incense as his daughter follows behind. This is to help force out the Evil spirits who are creating economic instability (bad luck) in the family. The small, wrinkled man slowly paces throughout the house, muttering quietly in Spanish. There is an unquestioned relationship between the shaman and Jesus Christ. Once, at his home, he broke a couple of eggs. The yoke dropped into a glass of water. The shape of the yoke as it contorted in the water, and the line of bright red blood said everything. He did it twice.

The idea of Evil spirits possessing a body, or poltergeists watching as one is home alone or naked in the shower, is frightening. Waking up with mysterious scratches means he or she hasn't been a good boy/ girl, so the Devil visits during sleep. But by repeating Satan over and over under one's breath or dialing 666, the number of the beast, on the family telephone is a direct connection made to the other side?

What's lost with the digital translation of literature is the enjoyment of the tactility a book offers. The feel of one hand holding Dr. Seuss, while fingers struggle to turn the page is underrated. There's the excitement of the colors, the creatures, the strange worlds, Beatrix Potter, through Peter the Rabbit, Aesop's Fables and Greco-Roman Mythology. These are tips, morals, and lessons on life powerfully told through illustration and drawing. Marcel Dzama's recent watercolor works evoke a child's book gone awry, or that the mature is suddenly a horror story with no perfect ending. Nancy Spero reinterprets the images of the Greco-Roman ancients. By reengaging with our Western past, she comments on our present.

Jack Kerouac writes:

"If possible write 'without consciousness' in semi-trance (as Yeats' later 'trance writing') allowing subconscious to admit in own uninhibited interesting necessary and so 'modern' language what conscious art would censor, and write excitedly, swiftly, with writing-or-typing-cramps, in accordance (as from center to periphery) with laws of orgasm, Reich's 'beclouding of consciousness.' Come from within, out-to relaxed and said."

William Blake had visions and, inspired, Allen Ginsberg tried to force his. But Kerouac and Burroughs' attempt to spontaneously tap into the unconscious, through cut-and-paste or stream of consciousness was extreme.

The focus on emotion, an ultra fauvism in terms of color, or application filled with the energy, spontaneity, and rebelliousness of the abstract expressionists (De Kooning, Pollock) is only one side of the coin. A focus on the human predicament leads naturally to the human form. The illusion of the Masters, with their delicate attention to the figure and representation, offers a much more profound visual and conceptual experience, than the generalizations of the unconscious could ever do alone. Together they are in harmony.

Alexander the Great, Caesar, Napoleon, and George Washington are men of ambition. They are world-historical individuals, conquerors, liberators, agitators. They are not just a part of history, they wrote it, and they shaped it.

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all the kids swung
with red stained palms
tightly held chains
all the boys flirted
with future ambition
the most daring of games
two broken wrists
on the playground
that day

Peter Parker (Spider Man) and Steve Rogers (Captain America) are men who understand they have a responsibility and duty to uphold the Good. It's not as though they aren't intelligent to grasp the nuances of good and bad, they simply understand that a leader is the one who is burdened with objective decision making. There is a fine line between being nuanced, and being afraid to act. If Parker had been a better person, he would have stopped the thief who ran by him after a wrestling match. Instead, he looked away, saying it was none of his business. Afterwards, that same man killed his Uncle. Certainly a grim way to realize one's responsibility, but such a moment is sometimes the only way to wake up the living dead.

The poet was a fool
who wanted no conflict
among us, gods
or people.
Harmony needs
low and high,
as progeny needs
man and woman.
-Heraclitus

There was a time when déjà vu, between five and ten years old, was a regular occurrence. That feeling, that dreamy, dizziness overtaking all senses, suddenly, one day felt like too much, too often. It was so often in fact that at that point the horrific possibility of foresight became all too real. The hopeless, paranoid feeling of such a burden was frightening. What a responsibility. I decided to wait it out, as usual, and tell no one. Hopefully, it would lessen or go away entirely. Years and years later, I long for it. Instead, now it's a weak, simple acknowledgement of being. I deeply miss the possession. Now, there's jamais vu.

Norrin Radd of the planet Zenn-La sacrificed himself in order to save his world from being devoured by Galactus. Ironically, now stripped of his memory, he is turned into the Silver Surfer, herald to Galactus, whose only job is to find a new planet to be consumed. Later his memory is restored in time to save Earth from such a fate. He has surfed the galaxy ever since as a pure, noble being, but what of the countless species and life forms murdered with his help? Imagine the guilt, the attempt to save more lives than the ones you killed. How does one live with this history, or fight the past?

I watched as Grandma would shoo away the stray cats with a broom. There were always cats, but this time there were kittens as well, old enough to walk and run, but still always near their mother. One day I noticed them outside, picked up a small stick, and chased the mother and her litter. They ran left but one ran right and up an old mesquite tree that nearly lay on its side as it came out of the ground and then curved up higher and higher. I used to climb this tree often with my cousins and other kids. The black kitten was up on the tree, scared, separated from its mother, brothers and sisters. I swiped my small stick in the air, back and forth in front of it. It fell, either from fright or a slight hit. That is hazy, possibly consciously so. There it lay in the grass

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crying, too scared to move. I stared at the kitten and this sense of remorse, dread, guilt, and fear rose up in my soul. I dropped the stick, utterly sad and walked away, hoping the mother would comfort her child. I wanted to forget it all: my small hands, that small stick, that small black cat.

i remember praying every night
i'd think of my parents
how one day they would die
i'd beg God to never take them
while i cried
i tuck it away now
i had a favorite grandpa
he called me his shadow
he would say "ain't he a dude"
one morning my mom told me
he died and i couldn't really cry
i think i kissed him on the cheek
my mom says i used to hug alot
until grandpa was gone
i don't ask anything from
a god anymore
but i can't remember
when that stopped
probably punk rock

Walking through the house Dad grew up in, now unlivable and decrepit, there is wet moldy wood, and floorless rooms. It causes a sense of dizziness and faintness, as the aroma of history passes through my nostrils, like inhaling the ghost of my Dad's dead mother. The souls pass through mine. It's scary but I take deep breathes. Now there is only dirt and grass.

This was also a time when dusk engulfed me. Playing outside, the sky, space around me, filled with a deep, dark blue. It filled my eyes, ears, and nose, drowning me with its softness, which I eagerly accepted. As blue deepened, the roar of chicharras grew. Where has that gone?

Wordsworth writes:

What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now for ever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.