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Confessions of an American Ginseng Addict

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CONFESSIONS OF AN AMERICAN GINSENG ADDICT

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the English Master's Program
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

By
Addison Davis James

August 2015

CONFESSIONS OF AN AMERICAN GINSENG ADDICT

Date Recommended 6/25/15


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CONFESSIONS OF AN AMERICAN GINSENG ADDICT

Addison James

August 2015

95 Pages

Directed by: Dale Rigby, David LeNoir, and Tom Hunley

Department of English

Western Kentucky University

Confessions of an American Ginseng Addict uses the Lazy Branch Holler in Muhlenberg County, Kentucky as a setting for a creative nonfiction work, which uses history, confession, remembrances, and digressions to tell the story of a man dealing with loss, mental health issues, environmental sustainability, and the power of ginseng. In the style of *Desert Solitaire* and *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, the narrative is a discursive work of raw unadulterated gonzo writing.

The blood of my motherland waters a magic plant that cures all ills. That plant is art, and sometimes art needs corruption as a kind of fertilizer.

Alfred de Musset, *Lorenzaccio*

I here present you, courteous reader, with the record of a remarkable period in my life: according to my application of it, I trust that it will prove, not merely an interesting record, but in a considerable degree, useful and instructive. In that hope it is, that I have drawn it up: and that must be my apology for breaking through that delicate and honourable reserve, which for the most part, restrains us from the public exposure of our own errors and infirmities.

Thomas DeQuincey *Confessions of an English Opium-eater*

Part 1

To The Reader

August 24, 2014 – Penrod, Kentucky

Sunday-dark, the storm blew wind and rain on the grove just beyond the barn. Mighty lightning cleaved a walnut tree. The giant peeled like a banana; it struck and stuck in the tight grove on the hill. Heaped-up-green-walnut-ground was overspread with broken branches, signs of shifting ecosystems. I hadn't seen these signs when Grandma Jo called though.

Uncle Allen and Aunt Patty stayed with Granddaddy Alfred and Grandma last night. Wife Sarah and I hadn't gone to morning church. I was scrying¹ for God's will² on

¹ Scrying – Verb. Meaning to use some talisman to divine the future. “Some talisman” can be classified as an actual object, like a crystal, stone, piece of glass, mirror (*Snow White*), or crystal ball (John Dee, a powerful mage, scrying the future for Queen Elizabeth I). “Some talisman” can also be defined as something more elemental, like water, fire, or smoke. Gods, devils, spirits, and psyche combine to foretell the future by engaging the subconscious and imagination in the perceived power of “some talismans.”

² Genesis 1:14 “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for *signs*, and for seasons, and for days, and years.”

the circle and heeding medical whispers, so I knew death was coming. I had gotten Deacon McPhearson to teach my Sunday night discipleship training class, so all we had to do was ready for death watch. Around 1:30PM, Grandma Jo called.

“You better come.”

I knew what that meant. I ran through Granddaddy’s hayfield that separated my house from theirs. I looked up on the hill and saw the downed giant, but it barely registered.

Out of breath and in, Brother Eck Mayes was sitting hospital bed-side in the living room. Granddaddy looked like a withered, paper-thin daffodil, enough life left to shine translucent yellow. His mouth was agape.

Brother Eck’s Daughter had been talking to Grandma Jo when they saw me come in the back door.

“He went well.” Grandma said.

Tears and Kleenexes gnashed and moaned the moment for me. Hugged-up, arm-wrapped solace #safe**vulnerable**.

“I’m a retired nurse.” Brother Eck’s Daughter said walking up behind. “We walked in, and I could tell he was reaching the end. He had the death gurgle. When we finished praying with Mr. Davis; he passed.” Her verbatim recitation of the events had a dutiful tenor.

I was Haitian zombie-like³.

³ In the Haitian Voodoo religion, powerful spell-casters use the neuro-toxin of the pufferfish to create a poisoned potion. This poison is then administered in a ruffiesque fashion to an unknowing target. The neuro-toxin slows the heart rate making the person appear dead. The power of this potion lasts for days. The spell-casting Zombie Overlord waits for the person to be pronounced dead. For fear of this, people leave a body out to make sure the person is dead. The people of Haiti also tie a string to the fingers of dead-n-buried folks. In the event they have been zombified, when they awake they pull the string, which is attached to a bell, to attract attention to their predicament. Assuming the body is buried, the Zombie

Brother Eck went on, “I had known Brother Alfred ever since ’31 when I first moved to Beech Creek. We were childhood friends. I become a preacher, moved here-n- there, but we remained good friends.”

Grandma was crying at the table. Brother Eck’s Daughter went to comfort her.

Brother Eck leaned and in Missionary Baptist⁴ minister voice said, “When I approached the hospital bed and began to take Brother Alfred’s hand to pray, he opened his eyes. He recognized me; he knew me. A tear fell from his eye.” Closing his eyes and searching memory, he softly sang

*Because He lives, I can face tomorrow,
Because He lives, all fear is gone;
Because I know He holds the future,
And life is worth the living,
Just because He lives!*

Brother Eck’s Daughter softly harmonized from the kitchen. Grandma, Home Instead Haleigh, and I all cried.

*And then one day, I’ll cross the river,
I’ll fight life’s final war with pain;
And then, as death gives way to vict’ry,
I’ll see the lights of glory and I’ll know He lives! ⁵*

“This is a vict’ry. Brother Alfred will be in Gloryland today.” Brother Eck opened joyful eyes. He knew what the lyrics meant. He was in the midst of his own war with pain.

Overlord will dig up the newly acquired slave. The “zombie” is then indoctrinated as a servant and trained to follow the command words of their master. This is quite lucrative, as the zombies are then sold into the black market slave trade, sex trade for females. I know a zombie up in Covington, Ky, he said he’s fine unless the Overlord that turned him comes up to the states. He said that one word from the Zombie Overlord’s lips, and he would be under zombification again. For a more in depth and #literary**scientific** look on this topic, see ethnobotanist Wade Davis’ nonfiction book *The Serpent and the Rainbow*. Wes Craven made the book into a movie with the same name starring Bill Pullman.

⁴ Bible Belt Baptists have a passel of denominations; there’s Southern, Independent, Missionary, Regular, Separate, and Two-Seed-in-the-spirit-Predestinarian Baptists, to name a few. Missionary Baptists was big round Muhlenberg County, where Penrod is located.

⁵ Songs always appear in italics & tabbed twice in this text. Mostly, quotes appear in italics, as well. I like the aesthetic, so I damn & dismiss convention for conventions end.

Grandma dotted her eyes and said, “Rufus,” my bloodhound who had been staying there the past month, “has been acting strange all morning.”

She said, “He’s been scratchin’ on the front-n-back doors, whinin’ to get in.” He was a hundred pounds of outside animal.

I said, “He can read the signs of the circle⁶, dogsense is diff’rnt’n peoplesense.”

Brother Eck’s Daughter agreed, “Dogs can sense when things like this are happening, you know? Last month’s *Guidepost* told all about a cat that stopped a woman from going inside her house because it was being robbed. The Lord worked through that cat; I know it⁷.”

Granddaddy wanted his body left out at the house, the ole tymey impetus tied up in the folklore of sitting up with a body.⁸ So Grandma said, “We’ll keep Alfred awhile, way all the children-n-family can come and see him here at the farm.”

And they did, for the most part, too hard for some; and others would make the funeral. The neighbors up and down HWY 431 and out HWY 949 came bearing potato salad, tuna casserole, pecan pie, Kroger fruit trays, and on and on topped off with a picnic basket full of paper products. All the Davis relatives from the area came, dish-covered or saran-wrapped-platter laden.

⁶ The idea of seeing the earth as a circle is an extension of Nietzsche’s “eternal recurrence.” The exact quote from Nietzsche is “...all truth is crooked, time itself is a circle.” Without delving into quantum mechanics, I will just say that the circle is synonymous with time & earth in this text.

⁷ Choose to believe what you will, but *The New England Journal of Medicine* published “A Day in the Life of Oscar the Cat,” in 2007, which lends credence to animalsense when it comes to death. Oscar, an adopted cat at the Steere House Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Providence, R.I., successfully predicted the deaths of twenty-five patients. He would go into a room and sit by a patient’s bed. After several hours of standing sentinel, the patient would pass, and Oscar would preside over the death. Who knows if he was sensing death, smelling something, or responding to nurse/family behavior? Regardless, Oscar became a harbinger of demise.

⁸ Back before highways and businesses sprawled through the Southern hillcountry of West Ky, village communities, like Penrod, use’ta all pitch in when someone passed. After the death, folks would sit up to keep the critters away while waiting for the neighbor who had the embalming fluid. Some folks say that’s hullybilleu though; they say the vigil was kept to keep demons away from the soul, waiting for the safety of a box and dirt and the rapture.

& & &

After I walked back home and took a beat, my zombification ended. I came back a few hours later. Walking through the hayfield, I could see several cars parked at the Davis'. I saw Cousin Reid's rat rod⁹ sitting in the drive; he'd probably be the only cousin come around today.

When I walked in, Reid was unwrapping a peppermint disc at the kitchen table. The house was an arc'd light popping with wild electric laughter and tears.

Reid just finished eating, but he directed me to the spread. "Go get ya a mouthful to eat."

I told Reid over a plate of deviled eggs and ham. "If I'da seen the tree earlier, I could've read the sign¹⁰, seen him out."

"Why?" Reid asked

I said, "It's like after all us cousins had been here vistin'. Remember how we'd get picked up at different times after morning church?"

"Yep."

"As the house died down, I would watch to see who got picked up next. When it wasn't me, I would watch all ya'll leave. I would watch the cars roll down the drive onto

⁹ A rat rod is a uniquely American mashup of car culture and usable art. Generally, a rat rod is a cobbled together Frankenstein of a vehicle that has a functional component, like racing or off-roading, or just looking badass and nostalgic. Car shows are a cool spot to spend a Saturday checking out this drivable art that is muscle, steel, chrome, and imagination. Reid's rat rod is a 50s truck cab slapped onto a diesel dually pickup frame, with a flatbed stuck on the back; it's a statement to be seen in this truck, especially in rural West Ky.

¹⁰ Although a totally unfounded theory, I believe in the interconnectedness of all living things. If I am in tune with my surroundings, I can read signs. The storm was a foreboding sign. The ecology of Penrod was changing. Nature is some talisman that I use to divine God's will, other times I scry the actions and words of people, and they become my talismans.

431, go over that rise, and disappear. Sometimes when Momma picked me-n-Andy up first, I'd stare back at the house watchin' the weekend fade from that angle."

Reid shook his head, "Let's get outside, too crowded in here."

I suspect having eaten in an adjoining room to a dead body had unnerved him¹¹.

We walked outside and saw a couple of cars pulling in. Rufus was bawling.

"What I was sayin' was, I did't want to move. I wanted to remember what that moment felt like. He got picked up by some primal force, and it musta been scary. Bein' in the room to support that scary pick up felt necessary, make him not so lonesome."

Reid was a bit older and a lot less prone to reflection. He was practical, reasonable, and reliable. He was also my supervisor at the community college where he was the welding instructor, and I was the class tutor/assistant. "Well, you're here now. I'm here now too. Where's Kyle? Andy? Steven? Jeanette, Valerie, Patrick? They all live sa'far away they were out of the loop."

"I talked to Andy earlier; he ain't even sure if they can make the funeral."

"When I talked to Kyle after Dad told me, he said, 'I didn't realize Granddad was that bad.' Well, come in mor'und twice a year. I didn't tell him that, but you know what I mean."

Rufus was done bawlin' at the cars; he was whining to get in the house now. "I better take him in to see Granddaddy."

¹¹ Levinas' "first philosophy" says that life centers around the rise & repetition of face-to-face encounters. So cognition of persons and things exist from self to other. This isn't new; it harkens back to Plato's cave, but Levinas' first philosophy addresses the nothingness of death. My entire cognition of Granddaddy Alfred had changed because his form changed. He would soon transition from sentient person, to dead body, to memory, and since dead body is the category that occupies the least amount of that continuum, being around a dead body becomes unnerving, horrific, tragic, or debilitating.

“Yep.” Reid’s booted foot jammed a divot in the earth. “I’m gonna go see Grandmom.”

I brought Rufus in the house, in the living room. He paid his respects to Grandma; she petted him. He smelled Granddaddy’s body, and then I took him out. I cried as we walked up towards the splintered giant. Rufus was as sullen as me. I sang “Gloria Patri” loudly.

*Glory be to the Father,
And to the Son, And to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, World with-out end.
Amen.*

Part 1

Preliminary Confessions¹²

But my way of writing is rather to think aloud, and follow my own humours, than much to consider who is listening to me; and, if I stop to consider what is proper to be said to this or that person, I shall soon come to doubt whether any part at all is proper.

Thomas DeQuincey *Confessions of an English Opium-eater*

Confession 1

This text is a remediation, adaptation, appropriation of DeQ's *Confessions of an English Opium-eater*. As a writer, I am foremost two things: thief and egotist. I can only speak for myself, but freely apply these definitions to all writers. A thief because, I steal narrative from my world and my mind and transmute new forms of narrative. An egotist because my arrogance dictates my transmogrification of narrative is something worth reading.

I have never tried opium, but I can see the appeal – euphoria, relaxation, floating outside one's self, sweating, coma, death. I could see myself going down to the dens with DeQ, but I didn't, wrong lifetime. My pleasure with opium came in the form of researching it, stealing and smelting information.

On artistic theft Jim Jarmush, the white coifed wizard of indie films like *Coffee and Cigarettes* and *Deadman* says,

¹² In *Confessions of an English Opium-eater*, Thomas DeQuincey uses the format – two sections, Part 1: To the Reader and Preliminary Confessions. Part 2: Introduction, The Pleasures of Opium, Introduction to the Pains of Opium, The Pains of Opium, and Notice to the Reader. I have stolen his format for this narrative. This structural appropriation does not necessarily extend to similar content between my confessions and the content in the corresponding sections of DeQ's text. Each of my sections contain a blend of narrative, history, confession, and digression.

Nothing is original. Steal from anywhere that resonates with inspiration or fuels your imagination. Devour old films, new films, music, books, paintings, photographs, poems, dreams, random conversations, architecture, bridges, street signs, trees, clouds, bodies of water, light and shadows. Select only things to steal from that speak directly to your soul. If you do this, your work (and theft) will be authentic. Authenticity is invaluable; originality is non-existent. And don't bother concealing your thievery – celebrate it if you feel like it. In any case, always remember what Jean-Luc Godard said: 'It's not where you take things from – it's where you take them to.'

So I have stolen from DeQ. Jarmush would ask, “Why did you steal this? Is it an authentic theft?”

In response, I say the word opium first drew me. I have an affinity for words and plants, so I dug into this one.

Words - I am a logophile¹³, but I prefer the term wordist¹⁴. As a wordist, I am fascinated by etymology. I am also infatuated with linguistic analysis. I definitely knew what the word opium meant, but all of the associated images, history, and culture conjured a mystique that was alluring. Opium is Shiva & Vishnu¹⁵, creator & destroyer; used as medicine & abused as drug, or so they say¹⁶.

Plants - I like growing a garden. I love to overturn earth, slip in seed and make fruit and veggies grow. I sing this song all Kentucky spring and summer long. I traipse around huntin' good field-edge honeysuckle patches. I'm keen on a few blackberry patches, cleaned the thorns from 'em at least. They growin' in a quasi-domesti-wild situation. Opium, the word, opium the plant, opium some talisman?

¹³ Logophile – Noun from Greek. I translate it lover of speech, but some would say friend of words. Neither translations define my relationship with words. I have a wellspring of destruction & creation in store for words, so I am more than a lover of words #loveHATE. There are words I loathe, so I am not always a friend of words either.

¹⁴ Contrary to urbandictionary.com, a wordist is not always a word fundamentalist. I do not care to debate absolute meaning, or whatever bullshit. To me, a wordist is a devourer of planet sized tomes, a digester of language, and a constant tinkerer with roots and morphemes, dispassionately utilitarian, yet supremely creative.

¹⁵ In the Hindu trinity Brahma is the creator of the world. Brahma grew in the navel of Vishnu hidden in a lotus flower. To maintain the trinity, Vishnu became the preserver & Shiva the destroyer. Hinduism associates beauty, fertility, prosperity, spirituality, and eternity with the lotus. A pure lotus heavenward from muddy waters represents a wise and spiritual person. An unfolded lotus flower is connected to a folded soul, just the opposite with the open flower.

¹⁶ Opium – *Papaver somniferum* is used to make opioid analgesic alkaloids, the shit in **opiates**. *Opioids* is a broad term that encompasses **opiates** (direct opium forms like morphine) & semi-synthetic *opioids* (hydrocodone, oxycodone, heroin, etc.).

Mr. Jarmush, to get back to your question about the authenticity of my theft. One of the thumbnails that popped was the image of John Jacob Astor. He was involved in the US/Asian and Euro/Asian ginseng and opium trades. The roots of globalization and empire run back to the exchange of goods, humans trading nature like they have control. For all I gathered, DeQ could've been puffing Mr. Astor's brand. My brain spoke green poppy language. I could see global commerce, agribusiness, the rise of the pharmaceutical pill-pushers, and the destruction of green spaces all coalescing.

For the English literati of his day, DeQ brought recreational drug use en vogue. He surely wasn't the first, but he brought narrative to page engagingly figuring him and opium into the public sphere. With the success of the narrative, DeQ quickly put on the papal tiara¹⁷ proclaiming himself the Pope of the church of opium.

Finally, I saw that I didn't want to rip off DeQs style or his content per se. I really wanted to steal parts from DeQs life, the historical time period, the structure and form of *Confessions of an English Opium-eater*. During the work of hunting ginseng (I'll get to that soon), I had not thought about the form of narrative or of stealing from DeQ. It wasn't until later the idea of appropriating the title came about. Once I had the title in mind, I began to see all of the connections. This was a very non-linear process, but I knew form would follow event. I first had to experience the event.

To speak to what this confession is not, I would like to say this is no "Adrien Brody.¹⁸" Although, I did have a planned-life event, it was less contrived than stalking and being a #famewhore. I also use visual images to accompany narrative, but no cum-

¹⁷ The crown worn by popes from the 700s – 1963. Pope Paul VI laid down the tiara & donated its monetary value to the poor.

¹⁸ Title of Marie Calloway's controversial confessional-type creative nonfiction piece about 21 yr old Marie Calloway (not her real name) who sexed up a minor literary type and wrote about it.

splattered nubile 21 yr-old face here. If you want Alt-Lit go someplace else, these confessions are mired in the larger forces of life.

To build on my DeQ theft convo with Jarmush, the word opium drew me because it was cousin to another word that I was deeply interested in, marijuana. For at least a few months before Granddaddy Alfred's death, I had been self-diagnosed as feeling like shit¹⁹. I felt like I had been Gilbert Graped, first year of marriage and 4 hours a day between both sets of grandparents.

My paternal grandparents, the James', lived on the other side of my house. In fact, the Davis and James farms connected behind my property. My mom and dad were neighbors and high school sweethearts, married late 70s and divorce bandwagon by the late 80s. Currently, I was the only relative of the Davis' or the James' that still stayed in Penrod²⁰. Sporadic help and deaf ears were all I had for support at the James'. The Davis' had more money since Granddaddy Alfred made a bunch when he had the store, so they hired additional help, no questions.

¹⁹ Over a decade ago, I was prescribed an SSRI (Selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitor or serotonin-specific reuptake inhibitor). I took the antidepressant for about a month, then ditched 'em and told that doc to fuck right off. Those drugs, those little pills had robbed me of my creativity; I couldn't write; I couldn't emote; I couldn't express myself in any artistic manner; I felt the numbness of normality. SSRIs impede the reuptake of serotonin. This means that SSRIs force serotonin to linger in the synaptic gap between two nerve cells in the brain. Biology has yet to come up with a comprehensive explanation of mood disorders, so there is no commonly accepted theory as to how the lingering of serotonin in the synaptic gap actually leads to mood-elevation or anti-anxiety. So the proverbial "we" knows what occurs, but "we" cannot explain why the SSRIs function the way they do in the brain. David Healy advocated for the inclusion of warning labels on SSRIs that indicate suicidal thoughts are a side effect, WTF! So for me, I figured that SSRIs were not the way to go.

²⁰ Penrod has a church and a pizza place, Stix, no other establishments. It is a 100% white community, living & dead. There is a black guy buried in the James' family cemetery on Graveyard Hill. It came down that he died on the L&N train during the 1880s. My forebearer, Dr. A.D. James, Lincoln Republican, also on the train, said, "Put 'em off in Penrod. I'll bury my constituent by Daddy." Based on records of the dead, this is the only black person ever buried in Penrod. Basically, whitebread as whitebread as whitebred, as can be; that's Penrod.

The James kids, my dad and his siblings, were too far-flung and disorganized to mount a campaign to pay for the proper care Granddaddy Harry needed. They were planning for a long slow death, so they had plans to parcel out and sell portions of the farm. I kept asking for help, whispering, “Death is close; the signs say so.” Everyone wanted to listen, but none wanted to hear, so I shut up and started self-medicating with my old friend - weed. It had been sporadic and secretive, only at night before bed when the chances of being called to help were small. With a one-hitter of some solid smoke, I was able to calm my worried mind.

On the day Granddaddy Alfred died and after my zombification ended, I walked home, twisted up a hog-leg²¹ and got ripped that Sunday afternoon. It was all I could do. Afterwards at the Davis’ with bloodshot eyes, everyone assumed I had been crying, or maybe they knew. Everyone had heard the rumors surrounding my paraphernalia arrest from a few years earlier. I was teaching English at Muhlenberg County High School, and the drug dog hit on my truck. I had an old one hitter behind the seat that I was unaware of #stonerproblems. That was a bad day. I didn’t lose my job because I immediately pissed in a cup to prove the pipe was old; Superintendent Todd level-eyed told me, “That’s strike 1²².” Regardless who thought or knew at the Davis’, I was high, and I had been crying. The weed helped. I had smoked the joint, killed two hours roaming the woods and then gone back, so I wasn’t terribly blitzed.

²¹ A hog-leg is a particularly large marijuana joint. No one says marijuana joint, btw. Other synonyms are doobie, roach, pinner, blunt, spliff, J, Jay, joint, etc. Weed can be smoked out of bowls, pipes, one-hitters, water pipes, bong, vaporizers, etc. Stoner/smoker culture has come up with some great terms for the verb smoking and the nouns weed, pipe, paper, joint, etc. This is really a cultural thing that is influenced by pop culture and by region, but all groups of smokers code switch within certain groups to describe the act of getting high and the tools used to obtain that high.

²² I didn’t even realize I was playing baseball; I thought I was teaching high school English.

After that day, I started smoking a daily dose of anti-depressant, sometimes 2xs. I was working with Cousin Reid in the welding shop of a mornings, so of an afternoon, I was of a certain nature to get high, hunt ginseng, research ginseng, and write. Getting high and browsing the images, videos, and texts about ginseng online was fun. Ginseng, like opium and weed, has a fascinating historical and cultural impact. Opium and weed are destructive masks when used irresponsibly. Ginseng, on the other hand, is a powerful healer. I was stavin' off the blues with the weed, but I still hadn't found my song, so to speak. Fall was approaching and I knew that SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder) had been a problem for me, so it seemed a dark winter was ahead. I really didn't want chemicals; I wanted nature to heal me, but I knew I was playing a dangerous game with weed. I also knew that I needed to embrace my sadness and fully experience it, to facilitate healing. Crushing sadness is healthy, but prolonged crushing sadness can lead to suicide or the complete disregard for one's life.

...of opium much has been written. The ecstasies and horrors of DeQuincey are preserved and interpreted with an art which makes them immortal, and the world knows well the beauty, the terror, and the mystery of those obscure realms into which the inspired dreamer is transported.

H.P. Lovecraft *The Crawling Chaos*

...here was the secret of happiness, about which philosophers had disputed for so many ages, at once discovered; happiness might now be bought for a penny, and carried in the waistcoat-pocket; portable ecstasies might be had corked up in a pint-bottle; and peace of mind could be sent down by the mail ²³.

²³ To circumvent having to interact with drug dealers, I was coincidentally getting my weed mailed to me via California (FYI – UPS, FedEx, & the USPS are the largest drug distributors in the U.S.).

Part 2

Introduction

*Panax Quinquefolium*²⁴ (Panax = panakos in Greek. Panakos = panacea or cure-all. There are eleven plants that belong to the genus Panax. Quinquefolium or quinquefolius is the specific species in the Panax genus). Commonly called - ginseng²⁵, 'seng, 'sang, red-berry, five-fingers, ginsang, etc. This text will mostly stick to using ginseng, 'sang, and 'seng interchangeably.

Where D'ya²⁶ Find It? American ginseng is native to North America. It loves to grow in hollers and hideaways, tucked away in creek bottoms. It also loves a slope; give ginseng a sloping hillside and its generations will crawl down towards the drainage. It needs moist, well-drained soil and mixed hardwood leaf litter. American ginseng grows from down south in the Ozarks clear up to the Catskills. I first found ginseng round West Ky in a deep holler called the Lazy Branch Holler. The plant was nestled amongst the undergrowth waiting to seduce me.

What Does 'Sang Look Like? The plant is arrow straight and sits about 8-15 inches off the ground. A root will sprout a stem in the spring. The plant will grow throughout the summer. As August wans, the plants become sexually mature, berries begin to ripen. By fall, the plants drop berries and begin to wither. The root, which resembles the human form, overwinters in a cocoon of rich loamy soil, and is covered by a leaf litter comforter. Come spring, the root awakens and from its neck sprouts a new stem. Roots can live to be in their 80s or 90s, legends tell of 100+ year old roots found in our grandfather's grandfather's days, but those days withered long ago.

²⁴ I loathe using Latin like this, but I love using proper nouns and the proper names for things. My loathing = antiquated usage of words that have been termed "scientific names." The use of these words can be traced back to an Aristotelian need to categorize and name every blessed thing. I hate that science uses Latin names; it's a Euro-centric form of naming, owning, and controlling things. It is also a form of academic code switching that sounds so pretensions. So in the spirit of white assholes that think that they are the namers of things, I am telling you this is the "proper" name of the plant. Now please forget that name. Damn the Hellenists, damn the world-traipsing white Europeans that ever used this word to assert a fraudulent form of knowledge. Why include that racist, outmoded term? I bring that word to this space, so I can destroy it in this footnote, like it fucking deserves. No one says that word.

²⁵ "Ginseng" is an English word that hails from China. In China, "renshen" means "person root" with "ren" meaning person and "shen" meaning root. The English word came out of a mistranslation of the Cantonese "yun sum" and the Hokkien dialect's word "jin-sim." Ginseng refers to both Asian and American ginseng. Both plants have similar chemical structures and belong to the same genus, but the properties of the two plants are slightly different. Ginsenosides, a class of steroid glycosides, and triterpene saponins are found exclusively in the plant genus Panax (ginseng), which many attribute to the medicinal properties of the plant. I reckon if the Chinese are still chewing the stuff down after 5000 years, there ought to be something to it.

²⁶ Any vernacular that doesn't appear in quotes is intentional. Just pretend that I'm making a narrative choice, commenting on southern colloquial writing patterns, morphology of words, etc. etc. Peter Cetera, etc. etc. things that Noam Chomsky would say.

Native Americans²⁷ used the plant as a stimulant and a treatment for headaches, fever, indigestion, and infertility. Interestingly enough, the Native American tribes in North America and the Chinese in Asia used the root for similar purposes. Makes me wonder if the ethnic groups traveling across the land bridge into Alaska brought the use of the root with them, or did both people groups hit upon similar uses for the same root independent of one another? Coulda been signs on the circle that drew humans to the root²⁸, magical properties willing unearthing hands to dig them.

The Viagric²⁹ benefits of the plant are only one property of its power. Ginseng is often called an adaptogen, a plant that helps the human body deal with stresses. There is

²⁷ I want to take this space to again damn the naming of things by Western Culture & Europeanized people ever since the Age of Exploration. A Blackfeet Medicine Man named Tom Crawford of Heart Butte, Montana told me that it doesn't matter what people call him, it's all wrong. In their language, they are called something that is a deviation of the Algonquian language group, but that word was imposed upon them after being conquered. Tom felt like the original name of his people was gone. Whatever it was, it was certainly not Native American or Indian (America being a derivation of Amerigo Vespucci, and Indian being an ethnic group in Asia). Tom felt like it didn't matter which he was called; he was being lumped into a categorization of individual ethnic groups as one whole. Tom told me that I didn't have the words to properly identify who he was or who his people were, so what did it matter if I said Redman, Chief, Nigger, Spick, American Indian, Native American, and on-n-on, they all tasted bitter to him. I cannot give voice to a lost language and hit upon that forgotten name, so I will just use Native Americans instead. I damn this word-term, but since Tom bore me no ill-will, and said, "Call me whatever you want, just don't call me late for dinner," I'll use it here. Sorry I had shitty ancestors, Tom.

²⁸ Signs are tied to the Zodiac. Roots are associated with the 4th and 8th signs of the Zodiac, Cancer and Scorpio. The 4th sign, Cancer, is the primary sign of roots. It's symbol is the crab. Cancer's associated body parts are the breast and stomach. The moon is the heavenly body tied to Cancer, and water is the elemental association with the sign. The 8th sign of the Zodiac, Scorpio, is the second sign for roots. The symbol is the scorpion, body part = loins, heavenly body is Mars; and the elemental association is tied to water. Interesting connections exist between the Zodiac and ginseng lore. Gathering roots is most harmonious when done during the last quarter of the moon when the signs point to the knees and feet. Coincidentally, this is also the best time to slaughter. Conducting oneself in harmony with the signs means being aware of which of the 12 Zodiac signs reigns over that particular day, each of the 12 appear at least once a month, max of 3Xs. It is also important to be conscious of the phase of the moon. The Blackfeet believe the moon gives women certain powers. It is unsafe for men to worship the Creator in a sweat ceremony when a woman is menstruating; her life-giving power is too great. Before a menstruating woman can enter the sweat lodge, she must have ashes spread over her to protect others from her power. This body-moon-cycle is representative of the alignment that exists between our bodies and our environments, as outlined in the Zodiac.

²⁹ Called "herbal Viagra" ginseng has been used in clinical studies to treat impotence. Dosages of ginseng ranged from 600-1,000 mg of extract three times daily. A German research outfit used 1-2 g of dried root once daily for 3 months. Ginseng and Rhodiola Rosea, golden root, are the number 1 & 2 natural cures for impotence. These trials were conducted using Korean red ginseng, not American ginseng.

no scientific evidence to prove ginseng functions in this capacity, because surprisingly little scientific research has been conducted on ginseng. The adaptogenic draw was like the gravitational pull of dark matter on me. I wanted to find the root, eat it, find more, sell it, repeat. I wanted potency and power.

My story with ginseng began back in the winter of '12/'13. I watched the History Channel's show, *Appalachian Outlaws*. The show initiated a connective spark to a remembrance. I focused, concentrated, and remembered back about twenty years ago when I was ten or so.

&&&

A memoir is an invitation into another person's privacy.

Isabel Allende

It was the weekend, and all us cousins were at Grandma Jo & Granddaddy Alfred's. Grandma had packed up some sandwiches and drinks. Granddaddy was readying the pistols. All us cousins were a bustle of bodies puttin' on mud clothes. I searched the house for my shoes. I was upstairs when I heard a succession of happy-slammed doors. They had left me. Frantic shoe-panic hustled up. Found 'em, bounded downstairs.

“Addison, you be careful shooting those guns.” Grandma said.

“Have they left already?”

“I think they are about to go.” A 4-wheeler engine whistled into 1st gear. “Hurry up, and be careful.”

“I will be.” I was ready to take a bouncy metal ride in the wagon behind Granddaddy’s 4-wheeler. I rushed out the door. Half the cousins piled high on one 4-wheeler and wagon were already up the hill. Granddaddy was getting a shovel and a bucket from the barn; blonde-headed, bespeckled Cousin Kyle sat in the wagon. Confident Reid, Kyle’s big brother, sat casual-like, hand on throttle.

“Take this Add.” Granddaddy said, handing me the shovel. “Kyle you take this,” he said, handing Kyle the bucket. “We are huntin’ up some Christmas Tree Ferns to take to the funeral home.”

Who died I wondered? I didn’t ask, too much metal bouncing excitement on the horizon to talk grownup talk. We bounded and bounced out to the field where we shot pistols at pop cans. I shot the ivory handled six-shooter and channeled John Wayne. Cousin Steven was a bad shot, the controlled explosion was vastly different from Duck Hunt. Reid was the best shot. The other cousins and I were middling marksmen (and two middling markswomen).

After the blasting and evisceration of a 24 pk, we took an even more rollercoasteresque ride down into the Lazy Branch Holler. All cousins were good grapevine swingers. We breached the branch and diffused into the holler, some swang, some swum. I remember Granddaddy telling me about the ginseng that grew in the Lazy Branch Holler while we dug ferns. He didn’t find any ‘sang that day, berries hadn’t come out yet. I didn’t hear any of his wise words that day. All I wanted was to swing on a grapevine across the branch. Just like I didn’t see the purpose of the ferns being dug, I didn’t pay attention to where he pointed in the holler where the ‘sang should be. I didn’t love plants in those days.

Granddaddy knew boys needed more than ole green plants to be interested, so he shared a story with me and Kyle. He had recollected ginseng hunting in Graveltown, over in Butler County when he was a boy. His father, Herschel, had a coon hound named Prometheus,³⁰ could sniff out ‘seng, or so people believed.

He said, “During one fall in the ‘30s several men went huntin’ ‘sang. There was no work during the Depression, me-n-my brothers, with Daddy, joined the group.”

As they hunted, Prometheus darted to the base of a hickory tree and began to bawl. When Herschel ran over to investigate, he discovered the biggest double decker ginseng plant that he’d seen. He also discovered Prometheus had found a mouse living by the plant. The lil’ mouse was squirreling away hickory nuts, but Herschel didn’t share that when he sang the ‘sangers yelp.

“Word quickly spread the hound could sniff ‘sang. Daddy claimed, ‘It was right nice having a famous dog,’” or so my Granddaddy recollected, cheeks full of whimsy.

I pressed the issue. I said “Granddaddy that dog couldn’t sniff no ‘sang. It was just the hound goin’ for the mouse, ‘cause that’s what hounds do.”

He was quick to point out, “That was the same mentality some of the people around Graveltown had back then.”

I said, “It couldn’t be true.”

³⁰ Prometheus means ‘forethought’ in Greek. As a character of myth, he was a Titan. All knowledge of Prometheus stems from the Titanomachy (ancient images of the struggle between the Titan parents and their Olympian children). When Zeus and his pack challenged the hegemony of Cronus and the Titans, war fell onto the cosmos. Prometheus abandoned Cronus, and he sided with Zeus and the Olympian gods. After the fall of the Titans, Prometheus betrayed Zeus, stealing fire and giving it to humans. He was punished by being chained for eternity while his liver is eaten by birds. This story is emblematic of the family struggle for who controls the “world” as parents age and children come-of-age.

He said so, “People decided that mischievousness was afoot. A few pushed the matter. Daddy, unbending, met the challenge by taking Prometheus out into Pea Gravel Holler one day to hunt ‘sang.’”

“What’d those men want?”

“They were tryin’ to call Daddy out, make him admit that Prometheus’s just a dog.”

“Well I’ll be, dogged.” Kyle said, mimicking Andy Griffith³¹.

Granddaddy went on, “This day was quieter than the day that Prometheus found the double decker four prong. Only a few men, ones that spoke the language of the forest, went with Daddy that day.”

The way it came down was like this, “Daddy set Prometheus loose around noon in Pea Gravel Holler. By nightfall, the troupe was camped-up two counties away with a year’s worth of wages in ‘seng between the five of ‘em. When they returned the next day, Prometheus was the talk of ten counties and those men made big bank rolls, which made their ways into a bank for Elmo Odell, sock-drawers and an attic crawlspace for Eddie Grace, a new Ursus tractor for Mr. Minton , and a new ’34 Ford truck for Mendrel Cottongim, or so they said.”

Granddaddy looked down at his boots and said that Herschel had to shoot Prometheus shortly after that ginseng hunt. “During a coon hunt, Prometheus was chasin’ a mated pair of coons through the forest. When those coons hit a sudden stream, the both

³¹ Griffith’s first film role was in Elia Kazan’s adaptation of Budd Schulberg’s short story, *A Face in the Crowd*, good film and a stellar dramatic performances. I think this is awesome, because I didn’t see the film until after having Andy Taylor of Mayberry type casted on Griffith. It made me reconsider him.

of ‘em bowed up on the hound and took to his haunches and face.” Kyle and I looked down at our shoes.

After the fatal fray, the male coon and Prometheus lay gasping for breath in the primordial soup of the stream.

“Daddy shot Prometheus in the left eye with his pistol; he popped Ricky the Raccoon with the scatter of his ten gauge. Rather than see them suffer, he shot ‘em both, or so he said.” We all stared at our shoes for the briefest of conjoined seconds. “ ‘Nuff of that, go on-n-play, boys.”

That was one of the last stories I ever heard Granddaddy Alfred tell. Running a General Store meant he was a constant talker. People were always coming in to sit around and talk local gossip, swap tales, jokes, and information. After he closed the store, after that day at the creek, Granddaddy Alfred went to Bowling Green to get his carotid arteries cleaned. The surgeon nicked his vocal chords.

He didn’t talk right after; he tried, but it got so hard for people to understand him. He spent 25 yrs cursed with the quiet voice of a mouse saying the words of a lion. People round Penrod told him to sue that doctor, but he didn’t pursue it, money wouldn’t repair the damage done.

At the end, the lion and the mouse gave way to two sounds – a howl of pain or a yip of pleasure. Most everything was howl; yips were mostly for when he heard the voices of family. His desire to tell stories never faded, but he suppressed it after too many glazed eyes and nodded accents signifying misunderstanding. When I moved to Penrod³²

³² In 1860 Muhlenberg County registered having one of its ten post offices in Laurel Bluff. Between 1860 and 1884, Laurel Bluff gave way to the name Home Valley. By 1884 Home Valley had been renamed Albrittain, after its 100% white population. Come 1912, Muhlenberg had a slew of post offices, and

in 2009, he began to tell me stories again. To be able to understand him, I had to learn his garbly'd language. Grandma would help translate. The stories, their stories, were all ones she knew too, so she would sometimes tag in and finish the tale, or supplement with a tale of her own. Towards the end of the stories, I could see the whimsy in his cheeks; it was the same as before.

Granddaddy Alfred was in poor health in the winter of '13, so I didn't ask him about the ginseng in the Lazy Branch. I couldn't remember where it was; all I remembered was Prometheus. The holler was a big place to search, so I abandoned the idea back then.

The winter of '13 faded with love and marriage; and then spring came. Summer, Granddaddy was real bad. He was 90, body giving out. I never brought up the 'sang.

Late summer of '14, Granddaddy had already spent a week and a half in hospital. Upon being released, he was brought home to Penrod.

Over the next month, relatives pitched in to help and say goodbye. The Davis', against Granddaddy's initial resistance, hired help from Home Instead to supplement the Homehealth people from the insurance. While there was a strong network to help ease Granddaddy into death, I was supervising the day-to-day of what was the "family" spending hundreds of dollars every day for care. About a month after his homecoming, Granddaddy passed away on that Sunday after the storm.

Albrittain had been renamed for the Penrod family. Dr. A.D. James married into the Penrod family in 1870, starting the James line in Penrod.

During the passing, I heard all kind of stories. Lots of relatives recounted how Granddaddy would bring in things like ‘sang, pawpaws, snakeroot, acorns, buckeyes, pine cones, and so forth. They told me he would dry the ‘sang on the counter at home to either sell or trade at Davis Super Saver. One story not associated with ‘sang, but speaking about how Granddaddy viewed my chosen profession resonated with me; he loathed teachers. He came by his loathing honestly; they owed him money.

A fella named Richard approached me one day while I was at Stix Pizza place in Penrod, our only restaurant. Richard said, “You one of Alfred’s grandkids aren’t ya?”

I didn’t know the fella, but I knew the woman he was with, Dot, she worked at the community college. “Yep,” I said.

“I use’ta hang out at the store. I lived there in Beech Creek, and I’d do odd jobs for Mr. Alfred. One night, he asked me, ‘Do you wanted to see \$100,000?’ I fumbled over me-self and said, ‘Yeah.’” Richard released a torrent of dipspit into a 20oz Mt. Dew bottle. “Well, Mr. Alfred showed me a metal box that looked like an ice chest. He said ‘it was everyone around the communities tabs.’ Said he ‘hated the teachers the most, cause they would build up a tab all summer long, en move off or never pay once they was drawin’ again from the school board³³.”

Momma remembered how before I was born, when she was in high school, she would close up the store by herself some nights. She always packed an apple box full of receipts and cash ready to drop if she needed to get Granddaddy’s ivory handled pistol.

³³ When Granddaddy retired in 1995, he wrote all that bad debt off. The big metal box full of tabs is now buried beneath all the merchandise he transferred to the garage. Now Muhlenberg County pays its teachers year round.

Beechcreek was a coal mining town, rough-n-tumble at times and big-belly-Baptist at others, so she had to be ready for either. By that time though, the 70s, everybody done gone off, Detroit to build cars or Chicago to slaughter steers.

Momma stopped talking about the ivory handled pistol, Cousin Patrick had stolen it back when he was cookin' meth down around the Logan/Muhlenberg line. I didn't fault him; it was a real fuckin' nice gun. I figured he needed to stay alive; I hope he traded it to save his life, not used it to take one. Either way, those were his choices. At that moment, I was thinking about 'sang while Momma trailed off, not wanting to further embarrass Aunt Becky about the missing piece, or force Patrick's memory back to those days before he got on at the mines.

The puzzle pieces began to form; I began to think there was probably some ginseng still in the holler, back of the farm. After the family had gathered and Granddaddy was buried next to his daddy and momma, I decided to hunt the ginseng in the Lazy Branch Holler. He had been the steward of that forest ecosystem, and now I would learn its ways and steward its growth.

The Lazy Branch was a tributary of the Mud River, now pretty much dried up. Towards the end is a fine, mile long holler. This is the Lazy Branch Holler situated at the back edge of Granddaddy Alfred's farm.

Granddaddy had his portion of the holler cut in the early 90s, along with several other area land owners. Granddaddy owned two tracts of land in the holler. One he had cut, and the other he let stand. Later in life, he regretted even having timber cut on the one. He said, "The land around what's left of the Lazy Branch is good rich ground.

Fertile, well-drained soil like that'll grow mammoth trees. But these monsters are a lot of money standin' here just bein' big."

Although this grew to be a regretted choice, I believe the removal of the timber did allow a new forest to spring up along the old tributary³⁴. Granddaddy Alfred had the loggers to preserve a handful of pawpaw trees. Following the timber harvest, the secret stand of pawpaws³⁵ began to spread like the expanding universe.

By 2014, the Lazy Branch Holler had changed. Granddaddy had been vigorous when it came to making sure that the loggers cut nothing smaller than 10" in diameter³⁶. He would say, "Leave those black walnuts, that cherry, and those beeches."

In the past 25 years, these trees had developed into their own new-type holler/forest ecosystem. There were also plenty of maples, sycamores, and ashes left as well. These 10"-unders provided the forest canopy, while the pawpaw and some saplings provided the forest understory. Now, beautifully thick grapevines wind from the forest floor up to the highest boughs of the hardwoods. The low-growing plants of the forest are Virginia creeper, snake root, yellow root, Christmas fern, Mayapple, wild ginger, ginseng, maidenhair, Jack-in-the-pulpit, trillium, various mushrooms, and other wild roots and plants. Like Granddaddy Alfred before me and Boone before him.

³⁴ Destruction by fire has been a long used method of Native Americans to force new growth; destruction by chainsaw & log truck is a newer advent by some "stupid fucking white man" (Jarmush uses this phrase in both *Deadman & Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai*).

³⁵ Paw Paw or pawpaw or Paw paw = *Asimina triloba*. Sometimes called custard apple. This is a temperate fruit tree that is cousin to the papaya. This fruit, like the pomegranate, acai berry, goji berry, cranberry, etc., is considered a superfruit because of its antioxidants. Superfruit is marketing term used by product manufacturers wanting to press their product.

³⁶ The fella cutting the timber, Mr. Pendley, was known for his less than wholesome business practices, so Granddaddy had to be vigilant. Mr. Pendley was reputed to have trolled the obits for freshly minted farmer's widows. He would go around, make an offer to the widow for the farm. The widow would get to keep the home and some acreage. Following the sale, Pendley would take all the timber (generally making back all he paid for the property). Then he would sell the farm or lease it out (most times doubling or tripling his investment, while the poor widow retreated into a quiet house, watching other men work her man's land.).

Boone deliberately chose the peace of solitude, rather than mingle in the wild wranglings and disputings of the society around him – from whom it was ever his first thought to be escaping – or he would never have penetrated to those secret places where his name became talisman.

William Carlos Williams

...Historical Aposiopesis ...

13,000 – 11,000 B.C. – Mesolithic period. Archaeological evidence from the Epipaleolithic Natufian culture living in the Levant shows domestication of dog. The site at Ain Mallaha, Israel revealed an elderly woman buried with a four month old puppy, a nearby cave revealed similar burials of people and canids (wolf, jackal, fox, coyote, and domestic dog).

9000 B.C. – Mesolithic period. Domestic dogs are in the Jaguar Cave site in Idaho. The Star Carr and Seamer Carr sites in Yorkshire, England reveal two domestic dogs and a domesticated wolf. Domestic dog also on the Iberian peninsula at the Muge site.

3400 B.C. – Opium is cultivated in Mesopotamia by Sumerians. The plant was called Hul Gil, “joy plant.”

3000 B.C. - Ginseng was found in the Manchurian Mountains, China. It was said to have curative properties and give strength. Asian ginseng was lauded as a cure for listless penis (Mother Nature’s very own Viagra), stomach problems, fatigue, stress, depression, anxiety, and the all-overs³⁷.

2737 B.C. – Emperor Shen Neng of China is the first to record the use of cannabis for medicinal means.

³⁷ Unease or full body nervousness.

1300 B.C. – Sumerians to Assyrians, then to Babylonian and on to Egyptian hands opium cultivation went. The Egyptian pharaohs, Thutmose IV, Akhenaton, and King Tutankhamen saw the opium trade spread across the Mediterranean and fill coffers at home.

1000 B.C. – The Hindu *Atharvaveda* (4th veda) lists cannabis among the five sacred plants of India. Bhang was also prescribed medicinally, bang on.

1100 B.C. – Islanders at Cyprus developed specialized knives to surgically harvest opium. They smoked and sold the stuff before the fall of Troy I'm told.

460 B.C. – Hippocrates declares the magical qualities opium hogwash, but says the stuff'll be a damn fine narcotic and styptic.

430 B.C. – Herodotus reports on the ritual and recreational uses of cannabis by the Scythian culture in *The Histories*.

330 B.C. – Alexander the Great gives opium to Persia and India.

300 B.C. - Chinese demand for the root sparked international trade with Korea. Imagine that, erectile dysfunction helped spark international trade in Asia, the limp-dicked disorder that launched a thousand ships; take that Helen of Troy. Joking aside, mostly, the penis power of the plant is only an element of its magi-mythical attributes. The plant is strength, vitality, wellness, and longevity; its human-like shape is a powerful sign of divine harmony on the earth. Great and ancient forces lay buried in the hills, like some spell-trapped doll slumbering. The Old World knew ginseng as powerful medicine. The New World knew ginseng too, but when Europeans found it, a truly global market sprang up.

100 B.C. – The herbal collection Pen Ts'ao Ching lists the psychotropic of cannabis.

79 A.D. – Pliny the Elder discusses cannabis as rope and analgesic in *The Natural History*.

200 A. D. – Galen the Greek doctor doles out scrips for cannabis.

400 A.D. – Arab traders carry Egyptian opium into China.

1000 A.D. – Arabian scholars debate the pros and cons of eating hash, and use proliferates in the area. *On Poisons* by doctor Ibn Wahshiyah warns against its use.

1200 A.D. – *1001 Arabian Nights* describes hashish as an intoxicant and aphrodisiac.

1300 A.D. – Opium acquires a stigma in Christianized, European West because the poppy grows in the East.

1532 A.D. – Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel* brings up medical marijuana.

1550 A.D. – Mohammed Ebn Soleiman Foruli writes the allegorical epic poem *Benk u Bode*, which deals with an imagined battle between wine and hash.

1621 A.D. – Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* conveys the notion of using cannabis to treat depression.

1650 A.D. – Hash becomes a major commodity traded between South and Central Asia.

1702 A.D.. – Father Jartoux, a French Jesuit missionary, saw the Chinese using ginseng. In his writings from Manchuria, he described the wonderful plant in such detail as to fascinate another Jesuit priest, Father Lafitau in Canada.

1716 A.D. - Some say Lafitau, working among the Mohawks, deduced the climate was similar to Manchuria, so he might find the same plant growing in North America. After months of being guided through virgin forests, Lafitau was rewarded by making the European discovery of American ginseng. The smoke from their fires meandered through the wilderness around the Great Lakes as they piled up the root and engaged with semiconductor speed the global marketplace.

1716 A.D. – The “forbidden text” *Hagakure*³⁸ began to circulate in what is now the Saga prefecture on the south island of Kyushu, Japan. This treatise on bushi³⁹ is a collection of 1300 vignettes by two authors. In book two vignette 26, Yamamoto Jocho describes the #retainerproblems incumbent with serving Lord Nabeshima Mitsushige. Yamamoto was a middling samurai official who swaggered back and forth between Kyoto and the Nabeshima clan. He glowingly described how the elders paid for a doctor prescribed ginseng treatment he was unable to afford. Samurai health care was top-notch.

1717 A.D. - The Fox Indians were bringing the root from Green Bay, intercontinental commerce. The Mohawks, under Lafitau's supervision, were shipping boat loads of ginseng to Hong Kong via France, global commerce. The world shrinks-n-such things. French fur traders quickly realized there were enormous profits to be made selling ginseng to the Chinese. They reportedly paid 25 cents per pound to the diggers and then sold the ginseng for \$5 per pound in China, but they did assume the risk of crossing the globe with the ‘sang.

1752 A.D. - French fur traders were selling \$100,000 worth of ginseng annually. Unfortunately in haste to profit, they gathered poorer and poorer roots and dried them in ovens, ruining the value. Greed and poor stewardship led to market collapse and ecological destruction. From Virgil to *Middlemarch* to today, I have read, “Varium et mutabile semper femina,” which means, “Woman is ever a fickle and changeable thing.” Good for them. At least they are dynamic characters; the male characters that appear time and time again on the circle are static characters,

³⁸ As a book collector, I must stop to tell you about this book. Originals are one of the rarest texts on the planet. It was circulated in secret in parts of Japan for over 200 yrs. before coming out of hiding to be the warrior’s handbook for a modernizing and militarizing 1930s & 40s Japan. Originals of this text are more difficult to locate than uncials (specific type of original manuscripts) from the Old Testament. If someone says they have read the *Hagakure*, they lie. Most people only read parts, just like most only read the natural selection chapter of *Origin of the Species*. In the case of the *Hagakure* though, it is because publishers only publish 5 or 6 of the 11 books. You cannot get the text in its entirety in English. The secret text was subversive in its portrayal of samurai as pawns of the feudal state in Edo. The text is abstract, vague, insightful, esoteric, wise, humorous, and profound, but most importantly it imparts the tenets of the Way of the warrior, or bushido. The parts I’ve read, read like Che Guevara’s *Guerrilla Warfare*.

³⁹ Bushi = Samurai. Urban Dictionary describes this word as, “Someone you don’t want to fuck with.”

driven by greed. Men in pursuit of mammon melt economies. All recessions and depressions result from an amalgamation of greed and ignor-arog-ance.

1784 A.D. – George Washington wrote about the developing trade. He said, “In passing through the mountains, I met a number of persons and pack horses going over the mountain with ginseng.”

1793 A.D. – Andre Michaux estimates that ginseng is the only viable product that can be shipped overland from Kentucky to Philadelphia.

1816 A.D. - J.J. Astor, self-made-fella out of NYC starts smuggling opium. Under the auspices of his American Fur Company, he buys 10 tons of Turkish opium. The ships and his secret cargo are bound for Guangzhou, also known as Canton, China. Ole’ J.J. would later abandon the opium trade in China and sell solely to England.

1817 A.D. - Thomas DeQ married his baby-momma, Margaret Simpson. The marriage led to a falling out with his demi-god, Wordsworth. DeQ was experiencing financial want; and he was bondservant to seductive opium.

1819 A.D. - John Keats and other English literary-types start experimenting with opium strictly to get fucked up. Recreational use to get high, but taken at spaced-out, non-addictive periods, social opium addicts.

1821 A.D. - DeQ publishes his story of opium addiction, *Confessions of an English Opium-eater*. He gains overnight status as the go-to-guy on the study and use of narcotics.

1827 A.D. - E. Merck & Company of Darmstadt, Germany commercially begin manufacturing morphine (made from, you guessed it, opium). This is one of the crucial moments in the historical development of pharmaceutical companies in modern times.

1906 A.D. – The Pure Food and Drug Act requires over-the-counter cannabis to be labeled.

1914 A.D. – The US gov’ment passes the Harrison Narcotics Act in an attempt to limit cocaine and heroin use. Regardless, this act defined the use of marijuana illegal.

1925 A.D. – Federal bans on opium and derivatives like heroin open the way for a boom of black market business in Manhattan’s Chinatown.

1930 A.D. – Fear of cannabis spreads, and the US gov’ment created the FBN (Federal Bureau of Narcotics)

1932 A.D. – US gov’ment encourages states to conform to the Uniform State Narcotic Act.

1936 A.D. – *Reefer Madness* propaganda film was released.

1937 A.D. – Marijuana Tax Act

1948 A.D. – The mafia begins its control of the US heroin market by setting up opium refineries in Marseille.

1950 A.D. – Cold War alliances against communist China puts the US in league with Golden Triangle (Laos, Thailand, and Burma) warlords and opium kings.

1973 A.D. – Nixon creates the DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency).

1995 A.D. – The Golden Triangle region is the world leader in opium production, 2,500 tons of the stuff each year.

2015 A.D. – 23 US states have legalized marijuana in some form. Alaska, Oregon, Colorado, and Washington have all gone as far as legalizing recreational marijuana use.

May the love I feel at this moment for columbine, girl, tree, symbol, grass, mountain, sky, and sun also stay, also grow, never die.

Turn that motor off. Get outta that piece of iron and stretch your varicose veins, take off your brassiere and get some sun on your old wrinkled dugs!

You sir squinting at the map with your radiator boiling over and your fuel pump vapor locked, crawl outta that shiny hunk of GM junk and take a walk.

Ed Abbey *Desert Solitaire*

Part 2

The Pleasures of Opium

The Native Americans that hunted in Kentucky immemorially dug the root before the Long Hunters⁴⁰ came to the dark & bloody ground⁴¹. In 1761, Daniel Boone was the most notable of the Long Hunters delving deep into southwestern Virginia's hinterland.

I love the mythic American character Daniel Boone. He was living irony and contradiction incarnate, like me. He was paid to open up and destroy the wilderness he loved #lovehate #conservationvsgottaeat⁴². In Robert Morgan's bio of Boone, he establishes Boone's life between 1770-1782 as the bedrock for his fame. This is consistent with a theory Morgan posits where most geniuses do the brunt of their work during one productive decade, Boone being a genius of the wilderness, or wildergenius. For mathematicians and physicists their 20s are most productive. Poets and composers are creating the majority of their catalog during their 30s. This is not a hard-n-fast rule, but Morgan cites Wordsworth, Coleridge, Whitman, and Emerson as being examples of artists that adhered to the theory, coincidentally these artists were enamored with the Romantic artistry of the wilder-genius Boone.

⁴⁰ Called such because of their months-long hunts into Kentucky.

⁴¹ Dark & bloody ground is a mythic-mistranslation or misunderstanding of the word Kentucky. No one knows where the rumor originated this was what the word Kentucky meant. Some say it was a mistranslation of remarks made by either Dragging Canoe or Oconostota, two Cherokee chiefs that sold a large part of Kentucky to Richard Henderson (Incidentally, Boone was at this transaction). In any event, the actual meaning of the word Kentucky has been lost. Kentucky could mean "land of tomorrow," in the Wyandot language, or from the Iroquoian language group, "place of meadows."

⁴² Ed Abbey is another naturalist who was conflicted about how he earned his bread. Despite being a back country ranger at Arches & holding various other National Park posts, he railed against "industrial tourism" & other prostitutions of nature. Luckily, Abbey was able to give up seasonal park employment & earn his bread by his Royal.

Boone lived to enjoy ecstasy through his single devotion to the wilderness with which he was surrounded.

William Carlos Williams

The impulse to explore, chart, and claim led to the settlement and development of the wilds of North America, which signaled an end of an epoch, beginning the slow sprawl West. Iconoclast Boone helped initiate this strange and horrible sprawl; he was Oscar the cat, harbinger of demise. The forest primeval was full of ginseng when Boone was wildering⁴³. With the burgeoning international trade in the root looking like an attractive payday, Boone began to dig. He would find patches of ginseng, dig it, and leave it in hiding places to dry. He would secret away his ginseng throughout the mountains and hollers, so that he could pick it up when he came that way again.

He sought only with primal lust to grow close to the earth, to understand it and to be part of its mysterious movements – like an Indian.

William Carlos Williams

Confession 2

Sarah and I were married in December of 2013 when I was 33 years old and she was 18. Based on 2013 data, Sarah and I are among 1.6% of the married population with

⁴³ Wildering - Verb. To cause to lose one's way. The root word is *wilder*, which means to cause to lose one's way. Bewilder is derived from *wilder* as well. Wildering came into English during 1605ish, from, possibly wilderness. The word is also connected to wander. Boone was both a wanderer and wilder. No one uses this word anymore, while bewilder has had a pretty kick-A run as a word. Sadly, I think bewilder is slowly fading from usage. Wilderbeest is Dutch for wild beast. This is a word form that still holds, maybe because it's a noun. It's strange that this animal, only found in southern Africa, is still known commonly by its Dutch colonizer name and not the native African.

a dynamic of husband 15-19 years older than wife. I could technically be classified as having ephebophilia⁴⁴. I do not know if I have ephebophilia or not⁴⁵. Sarah is 20 now, and I am still sexually attracted to her⁴⁶. This is a real grey area for me because I think that God made the male and female bodies sexually mature at a certain age for sex. Isn't sexual attraction to sexually mature people acceptable? Clearly gender and age are both variables that create social anxiety for other people. Also, since various states in the US have differing laws establishing the age of consent, as do other countries, it seems age of consent is a subjective social convention. I do not know what I am, nor to what degree my deviance from the "norm" is, but I do know I love Sarah. I am definitely attracted to sexually mature girls, women, grannies, and even some trannies, none of which I can control. Penises are unruly things that swell based on societal inputs of attraction.

Before Sarah and I got together, this attraction, or ephebophilia, bred trouble. There was a girl I started seeing the summer after she graduated from Muhlenberg County High School where I was teaching. Following a confused and distorted evening where she spent the night at my house, I discovered she reported to my bosses I made, "Unwanted sexual advances⁴⁷." She said that while we were in my bed that I put my hands up her shirt and down her panties. Guess what, I did those things. We were half-

⁴⁴ Here's the breakdown for what is broadly called chronophilia. Pedophilia – attraction to prepubescent children. Hebephilia – attraction to 11 – 14 year olds. Ephebophilia – attraction to 15 – 19 year olds.

⁴⁵ There is a mad-crazy way to test for this; it's called a penile plethysmograph, basically a polygraph for a cock (Interestingly, there is no test used for women, as if they cannot have these desires). This test measures bloodflow to the penis while the subject is exposed to sexually suggestive images, videos, and audio. I can't help but picture Malcom McDowell strapped down being forced to view horrific images while Ludwig Van blares in *A Clockwork Orange*.

⁴⁶ I am also sexually attracted to Sarah's mother and her grandmother, so WTF. Aren't I just a horny fucking man? These are biological impulses that I am not going to act on, but my point is I like ass-n-titties. I may be guilty of having a penis, but to define and classify what biologically is inherent (a man's impulse to copulate, thus ensuring the continuation of the species) seems strange to me. If I deviate from the "norm" so what, so do homosexuals. There is no "normal" when it comes to gettin' your rocks off. This isn't fetish; I love my wife for who she is, not her age.

⁴⁷ One of my exs alerted me, so I called Principal Perky Perkins; he used this phrase.

naked in my bed kissing, and all hands were simultaneously exploring. By the time she said she didn't want to go any further, she had already played with my penis, blurred lines and mixed sexual signals abounded. We ended up falling asleep talking.

By the time the school board's investigation into every girl I had ever dated or flirted with over the past two years was under way, the official explanation for the investigation was I was being looked at for, "Conduct unbecoming a teacher⁴⁸." I later found out she shared what happened with a school employee she went to church with. The unnamed school employee then felt obligated to report me for "Conduct unbecoming of a teacher," because the girl had graduated in the spring. That was why she talked to the school board instead of the police, although Rent-a-cop Drake was part police officer, part aging whip hand, and he was present. That incident was, according to Superintendent Todd⁴⁹, my 3rd strike. I was told to resign, or he would encourage the girl to file charges against me⁵⁰.

I was intimidated enough and fed-up enough with the good ole' boy system to even fight for my job; I quit⁵¹. Following my resignation, the rumors online and in line at Wal-Mart proliferated. I looked a creepy Nabakov character⁵², so it was understandable that Mother-in-Law Angie and Father-in-law 2, Mark, weren't keen on Sarah's summer-

⁴⁸ This nimbus term is often used as a catch-all to categorize any number of actions.

⁴⁹ The whole county later found out that Superintendent Todd was fucking a 19 yr-old Pentecostal girl. She was a student worker at the Board office during her senior year. After she graduated, her and the Superintendent began openly dating. I wonder if he saw me as a threat to his hegemony as the fucker of recently graduated 19 yr olds? I never figured how it was conduct unbecoming in me, but in the 54 yr old head of the Muhlenberg County School System, it was perfectly fine.

⁵⁰ I should have told 'em to go ahead and follow the law. In the moment though, I was beyond caring.

⁵¹ Some satisfaction – Superintendent Todd was later ousted, & his rep was destroyed when it became clear he & his Finance Officer had bankrupted the Muhlenberg County School System. The pair claimed no maleficence took place, which would indicate pure idiocy, but online & in line at Wal-Mart, I heard it was a true combine of both.

⁵² Obvious reference to *Lolita*, but this is also a reference to the Police song, "Don't Stand So Close To Me." The Police song is about the mixed feelings of lust, fear, and guilt as experienced by a female student and male teacher. The specific line I am referring to is, "Just like the old man in that book by Nabokov."

fall romance with me; so much so that a large portion of Sarah's mom's side didn't attend our Penrod church wedding. Father-in-law 1, Bill, gave her away, and his people came, but Sarah's mom couldn't get over the fact that I was closer to her age than to Sarah's. Angie never saw the irony that Bill was 12 years older than she was, and Mark was 10 years older than her. Maybe Angie did see it⁵³. Maybe that's why she didn't like it. Now Angie has moved beyond all that, and we are good. When Sarah and I were visiting preachers to decide on a minister for the ceremony, Brother Jerry Eades told us, "The way to show her family that ya'll are right for each other is to have a good marriage." We followed the advice, and Angie and Mark came around.

I have been upfront with Sarah about my weed use, for the most part. She knows I smoke. She knows I use it of an evening and at other times. She didn't know I had been smoking more-n secret ever since the ending of the summer. Secrets and lies aren't aspects of a good marriage, Brother Eades' words became a cancer in my mind. If I dwelt on my increasing lies and deceptions growing out of unspoken pain, I would be compelled to confess and quit self-medicating. Maybe Sarah knew all of this. Maybe she knew that I was spending too much time smokin' trees in the trees. Maybe she could see me yearning for a wilder-genius moment where nature sustained my emotional and mental states via weed.

⁵³ Assuming Angie classified my attraction as deviant, Margaret Mead would illuminate with, "Those whose temperaments are indubitably aberrant fail to adjust to the accepted standards, and by their very presence, by the anomalousness of their responses, confuse those whose temperaments are the expected ones for their sex."

Everyone knows that a lot of memoirs have made-up scenes; it's obvious. And everyone knows that half the time at least fictions contain literal autobiographical truths. So how do we decide what's what, and does it even matter?

Lauren Slater *Lying: A Metaphorical*

Memoir

Desire for the possession of encyclopedic knowledge of nature made me wonder if this was how it began for Dr. Faustus or Dr. Heidegger⁵⁴. Literary allusions aside, let me tell ya, the thirst for the knowledge of nature is a primal desire. Patience tempered my desire against the slow spinning wheel of process, but passion for instant answers propelled me to drink in whatever I could cup in my hands. I was Ed Abbey in Moab; I was Boone in a nameless Indian land.

After Granddaddy's funeral⁵⁵, I went out into the Lazy Branch Holler to hunt ginseng. The season starts September 1st in Kentucky, what amounted to a few days following the burial. I went for solace from the glare of loss and to unearth secrets. Activity can stave off depression, so laced up boots = workout gear, Rufus = workout buddy, nature = gym. We entered an elemental arena to play a very old game.

I had done my due diligence, felt confident and told people, "I'm smart enough to identify a wide variety of plants. I've researched it up right."

⁵⁴ *Faust* was Goethe's play adaptation/appropriation of Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*. Marlowe stole the character from old, old German legend. To steal from Goethe, I say, "I yearned for more than earthly meat and drink." Dr. Heidegger is a Hawthorne character who experimented on human subjects using an elixir obtained from the fountain of youth. Hawthorne's story has been adapted into a radio episode in the 40s, a 60s movie with Vincent Price, and a 70s chamber opera.

⁵⁵ Brother Eck preached Granddaddy Alfred's funeral.

Rufus⁵⁶ and I roamed over the holler's rocky north slope. I said, "Rufus, I see why they say 'seng is hard to find - looks like everything else.'" I was going very slow through the holler. Virginia creeper, poison ivy, yellow root, saplings, poison ivy, poison ivy, Virginia creeper, and back again. Scattered searching hours slipped into a serendipitous moment in a pawpaw patch. Hanging against the creek bank, I spotted a small three prong plant nestled near to a pawpaw sapling.

Finding that first plant was like digging up a secret. It felt like the little human-like root had been sleeping, waiting there for me. Kneeling in the earth digging up that first root changed me. I stood up a digger of 'seng. I felt more in tune with the signs of the circle. I was free associating Boone, Abbey, and Tom. I danced⁵⁷, and gave thanks to God, the Creator. I felt powerful.

That first day, I dug a handful of plants in about three or four hours. It was taking me a long time to identify the plants because they did not have the bright red berries on them. Identifying by the leaves is the best way to identify the plant because you become more accustomed to looking for the specific shape, whereas looking for the red color of the berries means you can only ID plants for the month or so when they are in bloom. I assumed deer and turkey gobbled up all the red berries. Searching for 'seng was very difficult, but I continued on deer and turkey trails for a week, finding smidges here handfuls there.

⁵⁶ Bloodhounds & other hunting/tracking/working hounds love being amongst the wild smells of the woods. It's a shame so many hounds are used as hunting dogs instead of companions; men should learn to track and hunt on their damn own.

⁵⁷ During my time with the Blackfeet, I learned powerful medicine. I was taught the song of the white buffalo and the buffalo skull Sundance (This is powerful medicine that requires a flesh offering). I have made 9 different flesh offerings at three different times. Few tribes still practice self-mutilation. Although flesh offerings are seen as primitive, they signify a very serious contract with the Creator. Asking for the power of God to manifest on earth sometimes requires giving much more than prayers and tears, sometimes it requires blood & flesh. This wasn't one of those times.

Hunting ‘seng daily, I had totaled up about twenty roots or so. I traversed the entire universe and the whole of history within that holler. I was semi-satiated with my haul. I felt I had all the ‘seng to be had, since the confounded red berries were gone. I began drying the ‘seng and thought that was that. It had been a weeklong treasure hunt, engaging my Ky flora and terrain skills and powers. It was soul-satisfying.

While researching how to dry the root, I discovered devastating info. I was harvesting ginseng without red berries because they hadn’t matured yet. It wasn’t the deer, not the turkeys; it was me. This was bad because I was snuffing out those lines, plucked before they reproduced. Although Sarah and I had been married for only a matter of months, we both wanted kids soon. I wondered on random events that led me to the destruction of something so beautiful as potential birth and growth. I wondered if I had damaged my sperm from prolonged weed usage. I wondered if some random series of events would lead to my destruction before I could reproduce. Cousin Steven was born after his father, Roger, had been killed in a truck-drivin’ accident. Steven wouldn’t have been here had Roger been plucked up a few months before. Roger’s line lived, but Steven never met his daddy. If a series of events doesn’t prevent me from being plucked up, Sarah and I will have children one day. I animadverted how my kids would never meet my Granddaddy Alfred; he will only live for them in memories and versions people tell, maybe in what they can imagine from pictures too. These thoughts on life, death, children, offspring, and plants made my stomach churn.

I was just another redneck servant of Mammon⁵⁸. “I thought the deer had already consumed the berries, and they would spread ‘em.” I told Grandma.

⁵⁸ The etymology of this word is disputed. When I used it earlier, I was referring to lowercase mammon. Lowercase mammon means about the same in Greek, Syriac, Aramaic, and Hebrew, roughly “riches,”

She looked at me with bewilderment and said, “So it goes on the circle.”

Grandma knew I knew the circle always spins, but she scowled like it was unseemly to remind me the past was full of missteps and defeats, which the circle will always revisit. The physical space of earth and the abstract of time are a wheel, so regret and sorrow about woulda, coulda, shoulda won’t help to right the missteps and make the defeated the conqueror. The only way to be is moving forward, informed by your past, but not bound by it, good or bad.

“Simple truths and hard-learned lessons.” I said.

She smiled, “You’re good at learning the hard way, but so it goes.”

When I realized I had unconsciously harvested these plants, I was befuddled. This was inexcusable negligence. My insatiable thirst to be in the moment and drink down the elixir of knowledge had caused me, like Boone before me, to destroy what I loved. I wish this negligence could have been attributed to being high, but THC had nothing to do with this destruction. My plan of attack was flawed from the get-go, smoke or no smoke.

After that first weekend in September, I was miserable. I spent five days hunting ‘seng and probably wiped out the entire line in the Lazy Branch. This seemed like affirmation I was a cancer. I was caught somewhere between death and life, and what I was coming into contact with, both human and plant, was dying. I knew I wasn’t responsible for Granddaddy’s death, but I had wanted him to die. I wanted him to be free from this world. He was in so much pain. His mind was mush. His body was hollow. Not

“money,” or “possessions.” Jesus used the word in the Sermon on the Mount. In this instance, I am referring to uppercase Mammon, which is the Middle Ages personification of the devil. Specifically, Milton uses Mammon as the name of a fallen angel in *Paradise Lost*. Also, Spenser stations Mammon as the sentinel guarding a valuable cave in *The Faerie Queene*.

only for his sake, but for me, for Grandma Jo. Being so close to someone as they are walking their way out of this world is a debilitating cocktail. I was in the darkness, and I could not see my way through to the light.

Towards the conclusion of that week before my devastating discovery, my body had been attacked by chiggers and turkey mites. I felt like one big itchy sore. My soul felt itchy as well; I had set out to honor Granddaddy through my respectful practices, but I had failed. I had done the exact opposite of what he would have done. He was a good businessman and investor; he had foresight. His foresight saw to the creation of a successful mercantile and grocery business, a large family, and to the propagation of hundreds of various trees, plants, and wildlife in the forest. My impetuosity was destruction. The insect bites seemed like a punishment for my sins against nature.

Sarah, pointed this out, “Uh-huh, that’s what you get for runnin’ round in them woods all day instead of writing or cleaning or doin’ yard work, or applying to PhD program.”

Her words cut quick and gently, like briars. I really felt like I should stop, but hunting ginseng was a perfect excuse to wander the woods in a stoned primeval fantasyland instead of making adult decisions about my career as an educator.

Sarah might have said, “Being a barely employed 34 year old child does not look good on you.”

After a Sunday evening of introspection, I had a plan for moving forward. I was going to order some stratified⁵⁹ ginseng seeds online to make up for the red berry mishap. Secondly, I was going back into the holler to see if I could find more ginseng now that I

⁵⁹ Ginseng seeds need 18 months to incubate before they will grow. Stratified seeds have been buried in sand for 12 months, so they can be planted in the fall and over-winter the remaining 6 months in earth.

knew the plants should be sprouting the red berries. The plan felt like a good one, redemption lay down that path. I would identify the plants, so later I could come back when the berries filled out. Next, I would harvest the ginseng root and replant the berry seeds. Finally, I would plant the stratified seeds once they arrived. I could still be an ecological steward.

The second week in September, I set back out into the holler. Armed with the ability to identify the plant based on its leaf pattern, height, and color, I felt the earth speaking to me, Boy-the-Earth-Talks-To⁶⁰. The bright red berries were bursting forth and calling to me.

“Here I am,” their clarion call chimed.

The Native Americans say that the plant chooses to whom it will reveal itself. I prayed that the plant kept choosing me. That second week of ginseng season, I was finding a few plants each day with some berries. I observed and waited. I started to feel somewhat redeemed. Old gods of heathen times watched over my forest movements. Deer paths were airport escalators to departing flights in the space time continuum. I was high and lifted up; nature was doing a great work in my soul, and I could not come down⁶¹. My life was becoming a free association poem.

After a few days, some plants were ready. Before digging the root, I removed the berry stem and placed it out of the digging area. After digging the root, I replanted the

⁶⁰ This is a reference to the title of David Milch’s *Deadwood* Season 2 Ep. 12 season-fucking-finale, cocksuckers. Milch’s title refers to George Hearst’s ability to find the earth’s precious metals.

⁶¹ This is a denigration of Nehemiah 6:3. Following the scattering of the 10 northern tribes, all that remained of the Jews were the tribes of Judah & Israel. Because of Judah’s broken covenant with God, Jerusalem was razed to the ground, and His people were held slaves for 70 years by the Babylonians. When the Babylonians fell to the Persians, King Cyrus of Persia declared Zion to be rebuilt and His people restored. When Nehemiah, cupbearer to the Persian king Artaxerxes, was rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem & his enemies were trying to lure him to be killed, he said, “I am doing a great work and I cannot come down.”

fresh red berries in the same hole where I dug the root. The seeds were covered with about 1/4" - 1/2" of dirt. Next, I covered the seed with leaf litter. Those little seeds were an 18 month deposit that would yield a profit in 7-8 years. I was becoming business minded. I was investing. I was showing foresight, not impatience.

If this were *Robinson Crusoe*⁶², I would have remembered the words of Daniel the prophet. "He changes times and seasons; he disposes kings and raises up others. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning." But this is just a narrative about a man trying to tune his harmony to the song that nature swings to, so I didn't have one thought of Daniel the prophet, Robinson the character, Daniel the author, or Robinson the narrator⁶³.

I felt much better about planting all those pretty red berries in the earth. I began to feel like a steward of the land. I knew there would be loss to rodents and other circumstances, but the promise of life was there. Sowing seeds in fall-earth was like putting the dead to sleep. The spring-earth would transmute these brittle containers of genetic code into a resurrected human form bearing seeds and green life.

During that second week, I realized cutting my teeth hunting ginseng by the leaf pattern made me a better hunter. Rufus still hadn't sniffed any 'seng, but he was enjoying the time in the holler too.

⁶² The actual title of this work is *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, Mariner: Who lived Eight and Twenty Years, all alone in an uninhabited Island on the Coast of America, near the Mouth of the Great River of Oroonoque; Having been cast on Shore by Shipwreck, wherein all the Men perished but himself. With An Account how he was at last as strangely deliver'd by Pyrates*. This is a crazy-long title, which I think is to the point of hilarity. I bring Defoe and Crusoe into this space because Defoe totally appropriated/stole the story of Alexander Selkirk and pawned it off in novel fashion under the guise of a true memoir from the pen of Robinson Crusoe. Tangentially, *Crusoe* is one of the most published books in the history of literature; some even claim this to be the start of realistic fiction.

⁶³ Robinson is both the narrator and main character. He narrates from 1st and 3rd person using shades of epistolary style, confessional, & memoir.

I began seeing each day as more than ginseng hunting. For a couple of hours each day, I was learning about the forest, exercising, and spending quality time with my hound dog. I would live in my mind during the work day – running along the deer paths, crawling up steep slopes, hollering for Rufus, consuming the freedom and self-reliance that only raw nature can offer. The tedium of the community college couldn't end quick enough. The forest drew me like a divining rod⁶⁴. I would try to work ginseng into the conversations around the welding shop. Pursuit of the root washed my thoughts like a pyroclastic flow⁶⁵. I was Kurtz obsessed with all that white ivory.

Pleased to be finding ginseng, I was only pulling up good sized roots. All plants I was finding were under 15 years old⁶⁶ for the most part. I did find one four prong that had the root scars to indicate that the plant was almost 20 years old⁶⁷.

Lots of ginseng hunters will replant the stem after digging the root. This is another way to propagate the plant. I intentionally chose to not replant the stems, because I planned on planting enough seeds to make up for the stems and leaves. The stems and leaves would be fertile territory for experimentation.

⁶⁴ A divining rod is an A, Y, or L shaped twig or stick used to divine, witch, or dowse for water. This method of finding water became popular during the Renaissance. The explanation for how the divining rod will point to underground water is often attributed to the ideomotor phenomenon. This is the same psychological phenomenon undergirding the use of a oujee board where someone unconsciously makes moves to cause an object to move. All that being said, people round Penrod have witched for wells and water lines for years, still do.

⁶⁵ A pyroclastic flow is a steaming hot current of gas & rock which result from a volcanic explosion. The average temp. of the flow is 1,830 degrees F and moves at about 450 mph.

⁶⁶ Each season a root develops a root scar where the plant withers. Based on counting all of the root scars, one can exactly determine the age of the root. Aging things like roots is interesting because the root scars only indicate the years the root sprouted. What about the 18 months of gestation? So aren't the 'sang plants 18 months older than the root scars indicate? There is an interesting parallel that exists in Vietnam. The Vietnamese assign age beginning at the date of conception; thus to convert Vietnamese age, you must subtract about 9 months. So who is right? What age is correct? Should pro-lifers add 9 months to everyone's age? Are all Vietnamese pro-lifers because they acknowledge life starts at conception?

⁶⁷ Coincidentally, these ages mirror the rough approximation of ephebophilia.

After the second week of ginseng hunting, I had about 40 or 50 roots. During this time, I researched consumption of the leaves, stems, and roots. I learned little research had been done on consuming the root. Surprisingly, even less research had been done on consuming the leaves and stems. Regardless, I started consuming the fresh leaves in a ginseng leave tea I was brewing. I became a consumer of ginseng.

Ginseng tea made from leaves and stems has a pungent odor and tasted like licorice. The tea is not particularly good, but it is palatable with some cream and sugar. The ginsenosides and saponins⁶⁸ supposedly make it a healthy tonic, but it tastes like Satan's taint.

I began to dry the leaves and stems after the second week of hunting. About this time, I also ordered 50 reusable teabags from Amazon. My plan was to continue drinking fresh ginseng tea, which I had branded Satan's Taint, until the end of September when I could try the dry.

Muhlenberg County⁶⁹ is full of small hollers with similar conditions to counties in the Eastern Kentucky region of the Appalachian Mountains where the root abounds.

Muhlenberg, also like Eastern Kentucky counties, produces coal and is populated by numerous streams and rivers. Ginseng loves these environments. Muhlenberg is more

⁶⁸ Some researchers claim ginseng leaves and stems are a more potent source of ginsenosides and saponins than the root.

⁶⁹ Muhlenberg County was formed in 1798. The county is named after General John Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg (many of Muhlenberg's soldiers were given land grants in Kentucky following the Revolutionary War). There is a wonderful statue of the patriotic Muhlenberg in Philadelphia. The statue and its pedestal relief depict a pivotal point in Muhlenberg's life. In 1776, Muhlenberg was appointed colonel of the 8th Virginia Regiment. Before taking up the saber of war, Muhlenberg had to resign his post as pastor of the Woodstock, Va. congregation. Muhlenberg mounted the rostrum for his final sermon in his ministers robes. Towards the conclusion of the sermon, Muhlenberg is rumored to have said, "that, in the language of Holy Writ, there was a time for all things, a time to preach and a time to pray, but these times had passed away." At this climatic point, he cast off his ministers robes revealing that he was dressed in full military regalia. He unsheathed his saber and boomed, ".that there was a time to fight, and that time had now come!" The legend of the fighting parson began that day, and it remains from that day to this in the name of the ruff-n-religious county bearing it.

densely populated with pastures, row crops, and stands of timber than Eastern Kentucky, less good rocky/hilly ground for ginseng. I began to study relief maps of my region. I started looking at the surrounding counties of Logan, Todd, and Butler for similar drainages to the Lazy Branch off the Green River or Mud River. I needed to expand my search area.

Part 2

Introduction to the Pains of Opium

On my way to work Wednesday morning, September 17th, I got a call from Dad. He told me that his father, Granddaddy Harry, had just passed away. I had been steeling myself for this, but it crumbled me. This second death cut through me, fatherland and motherland in upheaval. I continued to work in the welding course till noon. On my way back to Penrod, I stopped at the Sorrels farm, one of the Davis' properties. I searched the woods for hours, finding no 'seng. I finally sat down by a stream and twisted up a J and listened to "No Depression" by the Carter Family on my iPhone.

*For fear the hearts of men are failing,
For these are latter days we know.
The Great Depression now is spreading,
God's word declared it would be so.*

*I'm going where there's no depression,
To the lovely land that's free from care.
I'll leave this world of toil and trouble
My home's in Heaven, I'm going there.*

*In that bright land, there'll be no hunger
No orphan children crying for bread.
No weeping widows, toil or struggle,
No shrouds, no coffins, and no death.*

*The dark hour of midnight nearing
And tribulation time will come.
The storms will hurl the midnight fears
And sweep lost millions to their doom.*

I had been helping out my grandparents as much as possible, but the past few months had taken their toll. I smoked and remembered a night with Granddaddy Harry

more'n a month ago, before the diseases made him disappear into a backroom hospital bed. He was still getting around okay then.

In a memoir, I think, the contract implies a certain degree of truth. I think you have to be as true to your memory and your experience as you possibly can.

David Leavitt

I told Granddaddy Harry I was ready.

He stood up slow and straight, Korean War military precision. He was wearing white cotton boxers with a clean white t-shirt tucked tight.

“Take off your glasses.” I reminded.

He mutedly nodded his entire Beetle Bailey body in assent.

I slid the pocket door to the right. The heat of the waiting bathroom sucked sweat from my skin. It had to be very hot in here, so when he stood in front of me naked, he wouldn't catch cold.

He came in and closed the pocket door behind him.

I had everything lined up on the sink: a new colostomy bag, a reusable clip, a white stretchy belt to hold everything in place, and two wads of toilet paper to wipe any feces from the stoma⁷⁰ or the barrier. I sat on the toilet and waited for him to pull down his boxers.

He stood at attention in front of me. He stared straight ahead, deeply focused on the woodgrain swirls of the medicine cabinet. I imagined that either his dementia,

⁷⁰ The stoma is a little red node that protrudes from the belly of the person. It is connected to the intestine and functions as the anus for expelling waste.

Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, or maybe just the embarrassment of having his bag changed by his grandson caused his mind to drift far away from the hot shit smell.

After his memory got so clouded he could not recall the steps in the procedure, Grandma Rhoda dutifully changed his bag morning and night. Then she fell off the back step and fractured some vertebrae. Now I was the 3rd string bag changer.

When Uncle Steve hired me to do this job Grandma Rhoda said, "Now don't end up hating any of us."

I thought it so ill placed then, but writing this now, I know those words were prescient. I didn't see it, but Uncle Steve was sitting across the kitchen table entering into a FedEx business deal, like he wasn't retired anymore. Weeks later when I quit, Uncle Steve would text me from some Louisville golf course and demand I return anything I had been given by the James'. In his mind, he wasn't retired from FedEx, and I was just some employee who had made his life more difficult⁷¹.

But, all of that was future. Now I was trying to stand up to the job I felt obligated to take-on because my far-flung and successful uncles and aunt couldn't be bothered to smell hot shit.

Granddady Harry looked down at me. Standing at attention shaking, he stuck out a hand to steady himself on my shoulder. Wherever his mind had taken him, he was back now.

"What are ya thinkin' about, Granddad?"

⁷¹ He went as far as changing the locks & threatening legal action if I didn't return all tools & books I'd been given. I cannot say this any better than Ed Abbey said, so I appropriate *Desert Solitaire* for what I wish I texted Uncle Steve, "... 'stop that' I wanted to tell him. 'Stop that thinking.' I wanted to put my arms around his old shoulders & stroke his thin gray hair & tell him the truth about everything, the wild beautiful utterly useless truth, but I didn't." Thank you Ed for giving voice to what I could not.

“Aww, not much. Can you believe that though?”

“Believe what?”

“That I got a standing ovation last time I was at Penrod church⁷².”

I didn't look up. “I was there, Granddad.” I couldn't look him in the eyes just then, or I would've lost it. Normally, when I reminded him of things, I could see a glimmer and a lightning strike of memory. He would say “that's right.” More and more, the glimmer and lightening gave way to darkness and confusion.

“That's right.”

He didn't know it was right. I could hear it in the timber of his voice. I kept working while tears grew large.

“Well, can you believe that Penrod church did that? And I was one'a the worst ones.”

I laughed. He was G.I. Joe⁷³. He had stood on the line in Berlin⁷⁴, raised a family in European Army bases, and stared down the Red Threat. He was the head deacon at church. I had hardly ever heard him raise his voice. He was a giant god, a solid mold of morals, American pride, and family values. He now stared at me.

⁷² The standing-O was a powerful moment. No one in my family was there to see how proud Granddad & Grandma looked in that moment but me. When I first moved to Penrod, I initially did not start going to church at Penrod, so I missed the one time Granddad sang a song (he never even joined in for congregational singing). During one Sunday morning, Granddaddy Harry sang a special before service. He practiced “Amazing Grace” for weeks before the performance. I wish I'd'a been there that day.

⁷³ As squad leader, Granddad was leading his men in the taking of a position in the Chorwon Valley, the Korean Whitehorse mountain provided the backdrop (some of the Korean ginseng lands that were destroyed during the war). Rounding a corner to take the Chinese position, Granddad was face-to-face with his enemy. The enemy pulled the trigger first, but the weapon misfired, amazing grace saved Granddad that day.

⁷⁴ The Potsdam Agreement divided the Germany into occupied zones following WWII. The Allied forces divided up the country. Berlin, the capitol, was 100 miles inside the Soviet controlled portion of the country. The US, UK, & French had sectors of the western portion of the city while the USSR had east Berlin. Granddaddy Harry & Grandma Rhoda, plus the kids, were stationed in Berlin after Granddad came back from Korea.

“I was. I was one of the worst ones. People used to say, ‘here comes that ole Harry James.’”

“Step in,” I said as I cupped his hairless calf.

We were almost done. The stoma hadn’t become active; he hadn’t shit on me.

“Well, anybody thought you was a bad fella’s gone now.” I said this half trying to joke, half trying to make him feel better.

“I’m still around.”

Tears been rousing drip-dropped, and I laughed. “Let’s keep it that way.”

He stared at the swirls in the woodgrain. He didn’t smile. He didn’t laugh. He didn’t cry. He knew I was lying.

“Take me to Momma⁷⁵.”

“To Grandma?”

“Yeah, to Rhoda.”

“Okay. We’ve gotta get your pjs on first.”

He looked down at his half clothed body and around at the bright bathroom. He was a perplexed Adam.

The smell of the shitty colostomy bag and other waste mingled with the hot sweat in my nose. “Open the door,” I demanded like a put upon asshole. It felt and smelt like the Devil’s asshole. I wanted to leave. I wanted to go smoke the joint waiting in my car. I was ready to listen to a podcast, smoke that joint, and kill time till I went home to Sarah.

He grasped the brass recessed pull for the pocket door, pushed instead of pulled.

“Pull it, Granddad.” I said steady with frustration.

⁷⁵ Carl Jung lists mother as one of the main archetypal forms. Jung would say Granddaddy Harry was longing for the nurturing and comforting of the mother figure.

“I am Add.”

“The other way.”

He repositioned his body so that he was now crouched looking at the brass pull from the other direction. He pulled now when he should've pushed.

“Let me get it,” I blurted. I was sweat soaked anger at my gods crumbling in front of me.

He shuffled awkwardly to the side, intently watching how I was going to solve the riddle of opening the door with no handle, the door that slid and hid with the faded brass pull that faded into wood grain that swirled back in time, a portal to the other side, a portal out of the hell we stood in.

I pulled, and a flood of AC suddenly collided with sauna force heat. We stepped into the cool carpeted bedroom.

“I still don't see how you opened that door. I'm gonna have to ask Momma about that. She knows about those doors. She was living here when they built this addition onto the old house.”

“Who's they? Didn't you and Grandma build this part after you retired and came back?”

“Well, yeah we did Add.” He laughed softly at my not knowing him and Grandma built this when he retired from the Army.

“Oh, okay,” anger mitigated by the AC. “I'm gonna help you put these pjs on, and then I'm gonna take you to Grandma Rhoda.”

He searched for Rhoda in his head. He didn't know if I meant his Grandma, or if she was my Grandma. He found it quicker than I could speak. “That's right, Rhoda.”

He didn't want to go back out though. He wanted to get in bed, too many people in the house tonight. I helped him

"I'm gonna take this out," I held up the bagged up diaper and waste material, "and then I'll come back with Rhoda." I thought if I dropped the Grandma it would help.

"Alright, Add," he said soft headed, barely indenting the pillow.

I put the waste in the biohazard bin out back of the well house. I stood in the cool blue Kentucky evening. I was standing above the deep water well that my ancestors had dug. I could smell the green grapevines and tomato vines. Standing in the moonlight with my feet in bright green fescue, grown by ancestral waters, I became aware of the differences between me-n-my kin. The crickets cricked, and I stood on a vanishing homeplace, an endnote for a fading family tales and ties.

Granddaddy Harry's generation left to fight in WWII or the Korean War. 'Steard of coming back, most of them went off elsewhere round the South to watch *Gunsmoke*, buy Chevrolets, make pot roasts, work and die. Dad's generation went into the whole of America to grow up with the country⁷⁶. Here I was, knew every stream and stone of the ole homeplace, but I didn't have the money to buy it or maintain it. None of the James' wanted to move back, only keep the farm in the family because of Graveyard Hill.

I walked back cherishing each swipe of my feet through the grass. Kitchen was empty, Uncle Mike, Aunt Connie, and Cousin Jessica all sat with Grandma Rhoda in the tv room watching a European soccer match; that branch of the family was big into soccer.

⁷⁶ "Cause I headed West to grow up with the country," was the inspiration for this phrase. Thank you, thank you Gram Parsons for writing *Return of the Grievous Angel*. An interesting aside, Gram Parson's Nudie suit (a rhinestoned, sequined country-type suit made by the famous Nudie Cohn) now resides in the Country Music Hall of Fame. I've seen it, the embroidered naked woman, the green weed leaves, the red poppy flowers, and emblazoned with the cross on the back. This suit is iconoclastic and poignantly defiant, tragic that Parsons OD'd on morphine.

Grandma sat glassy-eyed. I walked in. No one looked towards me, critical moment in the game. Well, Grandma was staring through the television, so she wouldn't have looked up had I been a whirling dervish plopped out of an *Arabian Nights* sandstorm set in her living room.

Manchester United⁷⁷ scored, and the trio was pleased. Grandma Rhoda broke free from her starin' spell because of a man kicking a ball passed another man over in Jolly-Ole.

“Grandma, he doesn't want to come out. Do you want to go back.”

The room grew quiet.

“Yeah,” she said. The motorized recliner electric-hummed as she lowered herself walker-side. Not till she got stood up and adjusted, did she speak again. “Ready,” she smiled. She was her 18 yr old self, waiting tables at Mabel's. She was about to go meet Harry P, and she was happy.

My tv-glued relatives should've been fucking clapping for her, but they didn't see the smile on her face and the spark in her eye. They didn't know she was now her 20 yr old self, saying goodbye to her husband before he left to go fight in Korea. Grandma Rhoda, Rhoda, Momma, Wife, Mother-in-law, her collection of selves rolled the walker down the hall to see Harry, her man, her only lover, her best friend, the living person she's known the longest. I followed behind, now wanting to go smoke that joint and cry love and sadness. She stopped at the closed bedroom door.

I opened the door, stepping back to let Grandma roll in.

⁷⁷ On the 15th of August 1785, Thomas DeQuincey was born in Manchester, England. The young lad grew up nearby the city on a spread called “The Farm.”

“There you are, Doll,” Granddaddy said. “I’ve been looking for you. David (he meant me, but said my dad’s name) said I had to ask Momma about that door.”

Their faces glowed like a candle-lit sanctuary. They were teenagers.

“Harry Penrod James, you know your momma’s dead. She died after we came back here from Fort Bliss when you retired. She died a month after Addison was born.”

“That’s right.” The white sheet pulled tight made his face seem disembodied. He stared off into the painting of a Swiss mountain village on the bedroom wall, reliving Momma’s death.

“Goodnight, Granddad.” I said to break his concentration.

“Night, Add.”

Grandma sat down on the side of the bed. “Tell me what you want to know about that door.”

I left, closing the door behind me. I had witnessed another secret moment. My grandmother was just a girl in love with a boy. My grandfather was just a boy that wanted his momma. There were no gods; I had built them all from a wishing well of fancy; they were just people. As I walked back towards the tv room, I smiled down the dark hallway. I’m glad I was not a couch-bound sports-centric person. I’d spent the past 5 years living by or with the James’. I’d seen them daily. They were my friends. I talked to them without barriers, and they let me see behind their closed doors. What I saw, and what I was currently walking down the hallway away from, was true love. Put aside any grand allusions or comparisons; I can only say in their eyes when that door opened there was love, love, love.

Confession 3

I haven't just stolen from my boy DeQ; there were others. The marble pages you've been seeing interspersed throughout, do you know what that homage is to? Alas, poor Yorick 'tis a nod to pg 169 of *Tristram Shandy*.

I learned to steal from Sterne. *Tristram* is a grand work of "biography" and digression (I love digressions), also lauded for its "originality." The ironic thing is Sterne totally ripped off Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* and Bacon's *Of Death* (in many instances complete word for word plagiarism). Sterne likewise stole from Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, plus many other works from varied authors. Point is, this goes back to Jarmush; originality simply does not exist, authenticity breathes life. Opposed to celebrating his theft and the magnificent heights he took his thievery to, Sterne concealed larceny (big-fuckin'-deal). It wasn't till after Sterne was done dead that John Ferriar deduced the artistic appropriation, brought to light in Ferriar's 1798 *Illustrations of Sterne*. Thanks for showing me the way, L-dog.

Informed by Sterne and Jarmush, I will share one more secret – Wikipedia. I read a lot, but I also rely on open source knowledge. I haven't read everything I cite or quote from. I know the *Reader's Digest* of a great deal of literature, so I leap from there to my bookshelf to Wikipedia to the etexts (mostly free versions on Google Books), and then I translate onto my page.

Since things had been going so well hunting 'sang at the Lazy Branch, I decided to set out to the other place where Granddaddy Alfred had said there was 'sang -

Graveltown. Part of the reason for going to Graveltown was to increase my total haul. After the second week when I realized I had amassed almost 50 roots, I decided to try to harvest enough to make a dry pound, about 300. Granddaddy Alfred's people still had an old homestead over in Graveltown. A reunion coming up that would be held Saturday, so I talked to some relatives about hunting on some of their property. They seemed apprehensive about there being any 'sang. Grandma Jo said, "If they were any 'sang out there it'd be as hard to find as frog hair."

With the lofty goal of a dry pound, which could bring about \$700-\$1,000, I needed to take on the risk. To do this, I needed a second digger. After hunting for about two weeks, word had gotten around Penrod I was hunting ginseng. I am known for being interested in old time ways, mean living, self-sufficiency, folklore, local traditions, local words, local histories, stories, and rumors. I had talked to several old timers around my end of the county, so I was not surprised when Jarett Francis asked me if I could teach him to hunt 'sang. We struck up a deal, and I took him to Graveltown Saturday.

He chain smoked hand rolled cigarettes and waxed poetic about the various sexual advantages of thick women. "Boy, they'll keep you warm on a cold night and fix you a feast next morning." He grabbed his dick and then rubbed his belly. "Happy all around," he laughed.

I had to pry him away from the buffet and fiddle music to head into Pea Gravel Holler. He walked slower than me. He stopped to smoke. He wasn't living in the moment like I was; he was observing, slowing me. I hadn't taken any weed; I didn't want Jarrett to know, even though I knew he smoked (he was Deacon McPhearson's cousin, being

also my second cousin. Although no direction relation between us, it'da been like world's colliding.).

With Jarrett's help, I added about 25 more roots to my haul, no Ursus tractor. On a very steep bank, I found a patch of about 7 plants. Among those plants was an awe-inspiring four prong with a bevy of berries as big as a golf ball. Although seeing that plant was a good moment, nothing equaled hearing Jarrett yip and yell when he found his first plant. He had a perma-grin wrapped across his face while he recounted the whole story of how he saw the plant, studied it, and assayed it to be true.

As my relations were cleaning up after the festivities, Jarrett and I strode up the pea-gravel path to the Davis/Goodman homestead. We were haggard from three hours of searching up and down the holler. I laid that ginseng on the picnic table. Several ate their words covered in silence; few spoke. The few that did commented on the size of the four prong. Everyone agreed, after the silence, "I knowed what I was doing."

I told Grandma Jo, "I didn't know nothing about no frog hair, but I could dang sure attest to that being ginseng, 'bout 25 examples of the species." She laughed. Everyone laughed.

Jarrett rolled smokes, and we all drank coffee as the reunion day faded into the silent Saturday sands of time.

Pea Gravel Holler in Graveltown had been hunted out⁷⁸. Contrary to my frog hair retort, we were lucky to find the ones we did. Both patches we found were deep down the

⁷⁸ Going into the hunt, I knew that poachers had hunted 'sang around Pea Gravel Holler within the past seven years. In 2007, Uncle Allen & Granddaddy Alfred had gone to examine some property lines in Graveltown. When they pulled up some land owned by Uncle Allen, they saw two rough characters approaching their car. Allen got out, & one of the men said, "Go on, this is our spot." Allen told the men he was the property owner and they had better go on theirselves or he was gonna call the law. The men quickly lit out. After Allen and Granddaddy checked out the property lines, they stopped to see Pistol Pete who told 'em those fellas had been huntin' 'sang all over everyone's property.

holler. I enjoyed teaching someone the things I had learned. Despite only hunting for a few weeks, I had acquired some knowledge. It was rewarding to impart knowledge. For Jarrett's part, he gained a little ginseng knowledge, which can help a fella like Jarrett what runs in certain circles dealing in roots, metals, and stolen goods. The real fortuitous find for Jarrett was a new phone number he greased from one of my distant cousins over the casserole section of the buffet table.

Part 2

The Pains of Opium

After Graveltown, I was ready to get back to the Lazy Branch. I was ready to hunt ginseng with Rufus. On Monday, I was back in the forest. I looked high and low on the fertile slopes of the Lazy Branch, but I couldn't locate any more ginseng. I was very focused on the forest floor, but I wasn't having any luck. I kept troding ground I had trod before. I investigated crannies and crevices I had peered into before. I hit a wall.

After a wasted afternoon of hunting ginseng, I began to think I had hunted the holler out. As I was walking from the far end of the holler back to where I had left the four-wheeler, I heard a loud thump on the forest floor. I investigated. It was a pawpaw, secret fruit Granddaddy told about. I looked up the spindly patch of trees and saw lots of the dangling "custard apple" fruits of the forest.

The Native Americans from the Archaic⁷⁹ culture that lived many years ago all around the Green, Red, and Mud Rivers, lived on these. I consumed the fruit and channeled the dead. Dejected over no 'sang, I got blunted and surreal. Transcending time with my mind, I imagined what this place would've felt like thousands of years ago.

I began to free associate my personality out loud, "I am Hawk. I am part of the Lazy Branch Tribe of the Green River people. I do not hunt with the other men; killing makes me ill. I gather the fruits of the forest and dig the roots of the earth. The hunters trade me the skin and the brains of their kills for roots. I tan the hide with the brains and then use smoke to finish the process. My wife uses sinew to sew beautiful blankets and

⁷⁹ Human activity in Kentucky is divided into five broad period: The Paleo-Indian (10,500 B.C. – 8000 B.C.), Archaic (8000 B.C. – 1000 B.C.), Woodland (1000 B.C. – 1000 A.D.), Late Prehistoric (1000 A.D. – 1750 A.D.), & Modern.

clothes to keep our tribe warm. Like the hawk, I live and work alone. My wife and I live in another part of the forest, removed from the tribe. We trade our blankets, clothes, roots, and fruit for meat, pottery, tools, stones, wood, and entertainment. We teach our children to do as we have done.”

Stoned immaculate⁸⁰, I began to walk and study the forest understory where the pawpaws grow. The leaves were dancing in the breeze. There were hundreds of trees, filled with fruit⁸¹. This wilderness fruit had a forgotten past only sung in the songs of pawpaw leaves swaying in the wind.

I was enchanted by this new mystery. I had never tasted a pawpaw before, but the creamy sweetness was like heaven. I began to think about this secret fruit that Granddaddy would bring into the house, heaven.

And then it all went to hell. Later that night after going to Russellville with Sarah on some errand, I went back into the woods shortly before dark. I lied to Sarah, “I am going to look for the ginseng like the Chinese did long time ago. They purified themselves, and then went headlong into the night when the moon was full.”

“Sounds plain silly to me,” Sarah said.

“They said the ginseng would glow, revealing its soft green light to a hunter in tune with the rhythm of the woods.” That much was true, but my intentions were much

⁸⁰ “Stoned Immaculate” is a Doors song/spoken word poem on the *An American Prayer* album.

⁸¹ Archeological evidence from William S. Webb's excavations into the Green River sites show that the Lost River site and the Indian Knoll site were two thriving Archaic Indian communities within a ten mile radius of the Lazy Branch. I have visited both sites; at each location, I found massive patches of pawpaw trees.

darker. I had amalgamated myth, psychosis, depression, angst⁸², ennui⁸³, weltenschmerz⁸⁴, a full moon, and immutable deification of process into an excuse to lurk about at night, a primal urge. I was slipping from depression towards manic depression⁸⁵.

If you find yourself lurking about in the woods, not scared a smidge, then it is because you are the one to be feared. This is a scary revelation to have about oneself, when one is trolling the darkened forest pathways.

I had been studying relief maps of the area around Penrod. Based on those maps, there were some hollers close by I could hike to. I hadn't purified myself, and I was going to trespass. I was being devious and mischievous, and I could blame it all on the effects of the full and glowing moon. I walked into the Lazy Branch Holler with my headlamp and compass. The root was drawing me.

I crossed a few drainages that led up to Meyer's Chapel and crossed some soybean fields. I met a handful of deer at a field edge. I kneeled and watched them feast. They munched the green soybeans and eyeballed me. I slipped into some woods. Google maps and my compass weren't helping much at this point. I knew where I was, but the topographical map couldn't show me that these watersheds and holler type environments had been cut for timber and were now corn fields, tobacco patches, or soybean fields. The deer knew.

⁸² Angst – Noun. Hails from the Germanic. Means inner conflict, mostly undirected. Soren Kierkegaard used the term in his work, *The Concept of Anxiety*, to mean an unfocused fear.

⁸³ Ennui – Noun. Coming down from the French. This idea encompasses the preoccupation with the fundamental emptiness of existence.

⁸⁴ Weltschmerz – Noun. Obviously, very German. World weariness from the mismatch between the ideal & actual world.

⁸⁵ Now called bipolar disorder. My mania was manifesting in grandiose delusions, mild hallucinations. I was beginning to believe that the Lazy Branch Holler was my ley line. Ley lines are ancient alignments of various geographical and historical sites. These sites of power are imbued with spiritual and mystical properties; in *The View Over Atlantis*, John Michell connects ley lines with the Chinese notion of feng shui.

I ran with the deer. My heart was thumpin' like I'd had two bumps of pure powder. I felt alive. My senses were alive, visceral, and powerful. After I had gone as far as I felt like going, I decided to head home. I had an electric buzz from the moonlight and the thrill of trespassing. I turned my headlamp off and ran the deer paths home. I was not stoned, only high on the mystical power my mania manifested.

Along the way, I found "some talisman," a beautiful left 4 point antler shed⁸⁶ from a mighty 8 point buck. I didn't know why I was gifted the talisman, but I liked how it felt in my hand. Was the antler other worldly aid? Had the universe rewarded me for exploring my darkness? Was this a sign on the circle from God?

I cannot put this moment into words, but I was slipping deeper towards mania. The next day, I went hunting ginseng in the Lazy Branch. At one manic point, I grabbed an orb of light with the antler I was now calling Gift of Darkness⁸⁷. After catching the orb, I found a patch of ginseng and dug it with Gift of Darkness instead of my mattock. Like a cursed set of gauntlets⁸⁸ or a demonic pair of cestus⁸⁹, Gift of Darkness needed a hand, so by its nature it instantly made me feel like it had never existed anywhere else, other than in my hand. After catching the orb of light, I held Gift of Darkness and pretended to fight invisible attackers while I smoked a pinner. The weed zeroed me in on a memory.

⁸⁶ Jung identified the shadow archetype. This form can appear in dreams or visions. The shadow often appears as a snake, monster, demon, dragon, or a wild/exotic manifestation. These are elementary structures, which rise up from the unconscious and are impossible to apprehend. In my case, the shadow was this antler.

⁸⁷ Back to Jung, I'll elaborate more on archetypal imagery. These images are culled from the dynamic substratum common to all. "We" build experiences colored by culture, personality, and life events. Innate nebulous forms arise as images, symbols, and patterns of behavior. Finding my shadow, my talisman, in nature and naming it was concrete formation of my manic episode.

⁸⁸ The metal gloves that accompany a suit of armor.

⁸⁹ Early form of leather boxing gloves used by the ancient Greeks. Sometimes the leather straps had bits of metal or spikes interwoven to cause more damage.

Despite living next door, the last time I had seen Granddaddy Harry was three weeks before his death, sitting in the James' living room. Last time I saw him, despite the ravaging effects of Alzheimer's, dementia, and Parkinson's, he knew he was approaching death. I too knew these were last days. Hospice had only given him a few weeks to live. Grandma Rhoda had refused to listen to any projections or prognostications about the length of time the love her of life would remain with her, so she sat in anguished oblivion⁹⁰.

In that living room, I forced her to confront the demon of time. I roared, "He only has two weeks left to live. Stop making plans for next year. Focus on today."

Granddaddy Harry stared out the window into the gray September day; he was the only one not in tears. That moment was the culmination of years of love colliding with the utter helplessness humanity faces when grappling with time and death. I quit "working" for the James' that day because Uncle Steve refused to get his ass off Valhalla⁹¹ to come to Penrod and hire some professional help.

The following quote from DeQ has been altered so that all instances of the word opium have been swapped for the word ginseng.

⁹⁰ Have you ever heard of those war-time Western Union telegrams? Back in the day when a fella got hurt or killed, government would send round a telegram to relay the unfortunate news. When Granddaddy Harry was in Korea, Grandma Rhoda stayed in Penrod with Harry's parents. One day, a cab pulled up. The cabbie stuck that dark urine yellow telegram in Grandma's hand. She stood crying; she quivered, unmoving. It wasn't until Mrs. James came & took the telegram from her hand that the message was read. Great Grandma Winnie told Rhoda Harry had been wounded in action. Now, Grandma Rhoda was still standing, shaking holding the message. Winnie wasn't here to force the matter, so I became Winnie.

⁹¹ Fancy-ass golf course in Louisville where rich-fucks make a big deal about hitting a ball into a cup. I hope a game never becomes some talisman to me.

Oh! Just, subtle, and mighty ginseng! That to the hearts of poor and rich alike, for the wounds that will never heal, and for the 'the pangs that tempt the spirit to rebel,' bringest an assuaging balm; eloquent ginseng! That with thy potent rhetoric stealest away the purposes of wrath; and to the guilty man, for one night givest back the hopes of his youth, and hands washed pure of blood...

Why DeQ? Old Dead White Man, eh? Bear with me; he's a strange and terrible type that inspires serial killers⁹², the modern Rambo writer⁹³, and Romantics, as well as addled addicts and pimped-up profiteers. So let's explore DeQ, in my strangely terrifying interpretation.

The Norton Anthology of English Literature 7th ed. Vol. 2 (2000) defines the Romantic Period as 1785 (DeQ's birth year) to 1830. Looking at DeQ in 1830, we see *Confessions* being adapted by Hector Berlioz in his 90 instrument symphony *Symphonie Fantastique: Episode de la Vie d'un Artiste en Cinq Parties*⁹⁴. The strain of drug-art spreads with this leap from DeQ's text and the instrumental formation of liquid sound that takes 90 practiced people, a conductor, a composer, and an audience to experience; hot damn that's art. Like DeQ, like Berlioz, I was composing solid stoned on earth. The

⁹² DeQ's essay "On Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts" has become talisman for serial killers both fictional and flesh.

⁹³ David Morrell, author of *First Blood* about John Rambo, has a 2013 crime thriller linking DeQ with the Ratcliffe Highway murders of 1811 in London. Couple DeQ's *On Murder* with fact he was opium-addled during this period and you have speculative fiction. The most interesting connection for me is how the Ratcliffe Highway murders connect to DeQ and to the rise of modern media machine that perpetuates stardom and mental whoredom. DeQ contributed to the sensationalism of the main suspect John Williams. Morrell tells a tale with the literary sprawl of DeQ's multiple writings about Williams and the murders and the facts of the case, as gathered, recorded and prosecuted in a pre-policed London.

⁹⁴ Translated – *Fantastical Symphony: An Episode in the Life of an Artist, in Five Parts*. Leonard Bernstein described the symphony as the first musical foray in psychedelia. Bernstein is citing the dreamesque soundscapes and the fact Berlioz is puffed out on opium while composing portions of the piece.

drugs seemed like a connection to the lurid and strange underworld between what Hunter⁹⁵ wrote about and what Stanley⁹⁶ photographed. *Confessions* was mired in revolution, cultural fuck'da'tude, and madness. The confessions then, were strikingly revealing in a closed and secreted society; today is anything less than secretive with Facebook, Instagram, and instant access to ad infinitum information. What are my confessions in light of *Kendra On Top*⁹⁷?

Revealings are no longer revealings of worth, yet I reveal. To circumvent this modus, I go back to Coleridge in 1801 with the words, mind is “not passive..made in God’s Image, and too is the sublimest sense – the Image of the Creator.” I am established by this, but this is grounded in Kant’s “Subject” the “Ego,” “we” and “I” are fuckin’ it, and we’ve been it since way back then. The mind was in the hands of the prior peasant and gentry classes and their realities became subjects of interest (this explains why we watch the inner workings of pawn shops, crab boats, and duck call warehouses, in addition to our obsession with watching the inner workings of the bowels and integumentary systems of lay-around rich folk. We have been Kardashianized my friends, and the self-as-star factory (social media sites) has proliferated the platform from the select to the peasant masses of users and followers – we are all a part of it, less we

⁹⁵ I’ve always compared my path with fellow Kentuckian Hunter S. Thompson. I first found Hunter in 1998 when another fellow of the Commonwealth, Johnny Depp, played Hunter in *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. After that movie, I devoured every book I could find by Hunter. *Fear and Loathing*, *Fear and Loathing: On the Campaign Trail '72*, *Hell’s Angels*, *The Great Shark Hunt*, *The Proud Highway*, and on and on as I aged with his catalog.

⁹⁶ Hunter became my literary foundation, but Stanley Kubrick became my Wordsworth of storytelling. Ever since *Full Metal Jacket*, I was hooked. Stanley was an auteur, photographer, story thief (he adapted just about every film from literature), and my Rock of Ages. When I was pledging a social club at David Lipscomb University, I was given the day off on the day Kubrick died in '99.

⁹⁷ *Kendra on Top* is about a former Playmate and former NFL player living their semi-famous-kinda-lives. In the most current season, most of the episodes feature Kendra watching and commenting on old episodes of...*Kendra on Top*. This cyclical viewing of inane moments has reached terrifying critical mass.

Abbey-out or Boone-out if you prefer. So where did it leave me? I would have to look back to what caused DeQ down the dark end of the street⁹⁸.

List of DeQ's Medical Ailments Leading to Prolonged Opium Addiction

- Grief stemming from the death of Wordsworth's daughter, Margaret.
- Intestinal problems.
- Vision problems, possibly a myopic astigmatism.
- Trigeminal neuralgia.
- Self-medication for any of the aforelisted real issues.
- Psychological issues, unresolved issues about his sister Dorothy's death when he was seven.
- Self-medication for psychological issues instead of seeking treatment.

I cannot pretend to perceive why DeQ was an opium user from 19 yrs old to his late 50s, probably still used till he passed at 74. I suspect some, all of, and none of the above attributed to the fact DeQ probably enjoyed being fucked-up. Couple the love of buzz with shitty medi-pharma-care and legit medical problems, I can definitely see why DeQ ab-used his way to Holyrood Park⁹⁹.

#backtome #imastar I had been feeling depression inching its way into my life. Now it had transitioned into mania and was bounding by feet and yards into the center of my life. My words had been a punch in the face to my Grandma Rhoda. Her statement, "We never asked you to move next door and help us," was a kick in the nuts.

Despite that, I knew we could repair the damage done.

⁹⁸ Reference to the James Carr song "Dark End of the Street." Percy Sledge and Gram Parsons cover this song, plus everyone from Porter Wagoner to Cat Power. The song's writers, Dan Penn and Chips Moman, wrote the song when cheatin' at cards inspired them to write the best cheatin' song ever.

⁹⁹ Holyrood Park was a debtors haven DeQ fled to in time of financial strife. I can definitely sympathize with DeQ. I have acquired \$60,000 worth of student loan debt. I owe various members of my family in the cul-de-sac of \$20,000. Seeking shelter at Holyrood sounds nice, but I'm sure it was shit, hiding out round the edges of Edinburgh.

In reality, there were no beautiful death bed apologies or good byes. Granddaddy Harry had died and the last memory he had of me was making Grandma cry. Death was a crushing hand.

Two halves of me were battling, more illegal drugs or try some legal routes. I had been down the roads of medication and self-medication before. Thank you no, I would say to Astor the opium peddler and DeQ the opium eater, nothing that hard for me. Bygone days of rifling through other people's medicine cabinets begin to batter away at my unmollified mind.

The warm-head hum only snorted Ambien can give called to me. It told me, "I can make everything better. Go see Dr. Singh and say your insomnia is back." While that was feasible, I would have to pass a drug test to get Ambien again. I could get off the weed for monthlies of little sleepy-highs, but why trade one poison for another?"

The "clink" of ice in a whiskey drink sang that same chorus, but with less fervor.

Pills, joints, bowls, one-hitters, bottles, and chemicals all wailed that same refrain. "Take me, smoke me, drink me, ingest me, consume my essence and let me make you feel..."

I knew I was in bad shape. I needed something to help me in this difficult time, not a high or a low, but a sea-level buzz, so I started consuming ginseng root. I wanted to consume the promise of harmony and see how it made my world look.

Ginseng is believed to have antidepressant qualities. It moderates the levels of serotonin and dopamine in the brain, regulating ones mood, so I decided to see. It seemed a more viable recourse than gobbling down doctor prescribed pills. It definitely beat asking my street pharmacist what he would suggest I imbibe, smoke, or shoot for easing

my depression/manic depression. My plan was to eat a few thousand dollars (retail) of ginseng and keep buying bags of weed by the oz¹⁰⁰. I wasn't going to degenerate into a gritty Denis Johnson¹⁰¹ character, ginseng would save me.

I didn't hunt anymore ginseng that third week, nor did I gather anymore pawpaws. The rest of that week I mourned, ate ginseng, and got blazed up. I was morphing. Each day, I would sort through the roots and identify the most human-like. I examined them upside down, sideways, right side up, and so on, until I hit upon a root looked how I wanted to feel. Thus, I consumed several little legs jumping and outstretched arms reaching.

The loss of two revered men in my life had quieted my soul. I was full of regret for how things concluded with Grandma Rhoda and Granddaddy Harry. I grew introspective. Hunting ginseng had started as a way to fight the depression I was feeling after Granddaddy Alfred's passing. I thought keeping my mind and body active would be a positive experience. The time in the holler had been good quality time with Rufus. I had a quiet nature filled space from which to contemplate and reflect on life, death, family, love, and loss. Now, my pensive and curious mind was quieted. I waited.

¹⁰⁰ This is a big fucking bag of weed. Smoking 3Xs daily, I can burn down an oz. in about a month, six weeks if I smoke slow. An oz. costs about \$300, but if you divide that by the 30 days in a month, I can rationalize \$10 a day. People burn that on a pack-a-day habit, or sip that on a Starbucks addiction, so why not this?

¹⁰¹ I am specifically thinking of psychic narrator in "Car Crash While Hitchhiking," the hallucinating narrator of "Emergency," and the heroin addicts that narrate "Work," & "Out on Bail." All of these stories appear in Johnson's collection *Jesus' Son*, which is a line lifted from the Velvet Underground's song "Heroin."

I could feel ginseng changing into something else for me. It became a drug. Wild American ginseng is rare. It is dug a world away from where it is sold. It only grows in a vanishing ecosystem. I had about one-hundred mysterious, rare, and valuable roots. I began to think of my root store as a dragon thinks of its' gold - often and longingly¹⁰². I began to foresee a future where I could cultivate and consume ginseng in the Lazy Branch. It all seemed beautiful in my baked mind.

Sunday September 21st, the day after Granddaddy Harry's funeral and burial on Graveyard Hill, I went to the woods after church. Grandma Rhoda and the rest of the James family pleasantly looked away from me at the funeral. Only the Penrod Baptist choir and the preacher saw the tears soaking my beard from my pew in back of the church-house. Graveyard Hill was just down the holler from the Lazy Branch, so I walked up there to see him tomb-rock.

I initially went into the woods that day to walk up Graveyard Hill and visit Granddaddy Harry's grave. I hadn't attended the burial. I needed to apologize to him. I needed to hear if the earth above his grave beat with the tell-tale rhythm of phonics forming the phrase, "The horror, the horror"¹⁰³. I needed to sit at his feet one more time and search for a story, some story, some narrative to hold onto, some truth, some lie. I wanted the heavens to speak and the dead to rise. Then I could look into his deathless eyes and cry my apology into rivers of life.

After a silent Graveyard Hill, I went walking along the trail that separates the James' farm from the Davis' farm. I was walking south towards the Lazy Branch Holler.

¹⁰² Being a creative person, I am prone to obsessive behavior. Being the son of an alcoholic, I am genetically predisposed to addiction.

¹⁰³ Kurtz's final words in *Heart of Darkness*. I am also making an allusion to *The Tell-Tale Heart* by Edgar Allen Poe.

I crossed the property line and decided to follow the deer trails that wind around the top ridge of the holler.

I went down a gully. The gully was all dry now, but when heavy rains came, I'd seen this gully fill up and divert a lot of water into the Lazy Branch bottom. I surveyed the east and west slope of the terrain while standing on the loose loam of the gully. I used the compass on my iPhone to orient myself. I headed towards the northeast upward slope of the hill.

After only a few steps, I was looking down on a healthy patch of ginseng, over 50 three prong plants. The patch was bright with berries. Was this a sign of forgiveness for my actions? Was this the heavens speaking? Had Granddaddy Harry heard my apologies? Had he tasted my salty tears on his fresh grave? Was this kismet, fate, happenstance, coincidence, divine peace? I did not know how this sign fit into the narrative of my life, but I began to ignore my thoughts and focus on my actions. I used Gift of Darkness to dig the roots. I left a few mature plants and all of the small plants. Then I replanted the berries, walked away satiated.

That day, I reflected on what I had learned. I never would have suspected ginseng to be on that wooded hillside; I had been looking within the holler, not along its edges. I seemed very ignorant of the ways of ginseng. I thought about both sides of my family moving forward in the wake of the loss of both of their patriarchs. I never would have thought when I moved to Penrod six years ago that I would no longer be welcomed at the James'. I seemed very ignorant of the ways of death and family.

The sadness of death and loss propelled me to a new way of thinking about ginseng. I wanted to fill this hillside and the whole holler with ginseng. I wanted to raise

it, eat it, and learn its ways. Taking roots from this ground and selling them seemed seedy, like selling my own roots. After that introspective fall day, I had acquired about 150 roots total. My plan was to conclude hunting ginseng for the season and save my roots for personal consumption.

And the dreaming organ, in connexion with the heart, the eye, and the ear, compose the magnificent apparatus which forces the infinite into the chambers of a human brain, and throws dark reflections from eternities below all life upon the mirrors of the sleeping mind.

DeQ Suspiria De Profundis

Part 2

To the Reader

It was Spring '15, and I was helping Momma, Aunt Becky, and Grandma Jo clean out the attic, twenty yrs of memories brought over from the Beech Creek house plus the forty plus yrs of accumulated memories at the Penrod house. Over Christmas, Grandma Jo has divvied out all the guns, knives, belt buckles, tie pins, tie clips, and other metal memories to kids and cousins. The big things like farm equipment and the Penrod Farm, the Dunmor Farm, the Old Sorrel's Place, and the Beech Creek house were drawing income, so the status quo remained. As for house stuff, the family (my Momma, Aunt Becky, and Grandma Jo) wanted to have a yard sale.

Lifetimes in closets and frozen moments in time confronted us. There was Aunt Kathy and Roger's wedding photo, along with boxes of former selves that Aunt Kathy had shed there. We found parts of ourselves we had forgotten in old dolls, coloring books, records, and books, and all the things that grandmoms acquire.

Lots of shelves from The Store made their way home to the attic, so the built out portion of the space was lined with nice metal and wood displays. Aunt Becky was taking a set of twelve fountain glasses emblazoned with the brands of all the major soft drinks – Coke, 7Up, Pepsi, RC, Sunkist, etc. I saw some Pepsis glasses I thought would be cool to use at home. I asked Momma why they looked like a gasoline rainbow.

“From copper water,” she said.

“What's that?”

“Oh, yes,” Aunt Becky said. “That dishwasher was hooked up to the welllllllll.”

The last of her sentence turned into an actual squeal-smile.

“My toenails turned orange for two years, Momma.” Momma said to Grandma Jo.

Grandma Jo smiled. She knew then and she knew now the copper water couldn't be too bad. “A body needs a bit of copper.”

“Can I clean it off?”

“Use some bleach. That's how I took it off the dishes Momma gave me when David and I got married.” Momma said.

“Sharon let me see that.” Grandma Jo was pointing to an apple box with puzzles.

“I want to get some of those out for the little ones.”

“I'm going to go make some coffee, Addison. Would you like any?” Aunt Becky asked.

“Sure.”

I took the copper water Pepsi glasses with me, five of them. I tried to bleach them, but it didn't take. I decided to adapt to the copper organish scintillating tint of the retro glasses. I like their color now. It reminds me of that day, image of Momma's orange toenails. I hear the sound of me saying “Momma,” to my mother and her saying “Momma,” to her mother and Aunt Becky saying “Momma.” We all said “Momma” the same. We were all calling for our mothers from different rooms in the five room attic, looking at different epochs of the Davis existence. We were all one.

The gasoline rainbow bouncing off the organish Pepsi glasses is a token I carry with me of those memories and those realizations.

Confession 4

One night so much blood went to my penis, taint, and anus I felt like I was being pulled by an invisible thread heavenward. I had the hardest of hard-ons.

Sarah asked, “How many roots did you eat, Baby?”

My body was simultaneously saying ‘pee, fuck, and shit.’ Disconcertedly, I said, “Two big fuckers’.” I awkwardly peed poised to aim my erection tolietwards. This would be the point, if American Ginseng had a drug company sponsored ad, where the pharmaceutical company says, “If erection lasts longer than four hours seek medical attention.”

“Are you okay?” She yelled from the bed.

“No, but I’ll be fine.”

After that night, I decided to go get a check-up from Dr. Singh, not necessarily ‘cause of the hard-on. I felt the crushing culmination of my depression, mania, and inability to self-medicate all of this away.

I confided in Dr. Singh I was depressed. I didn’t share my ginseng habit (Kamal Singh is too married to pharma-culture to see the value of ginseng as mythic medicine or talisman). I was prescribed Bupropion SR 150MG, an SSRI. To become wholeheartedly dedicated to beating the depression, I decided to commit to the pills.

Easter Sunday 2015

No matter the leanings towards predestination, once saved always saved doctrine, or the definition of “man of one wife,” prerequisite for deacon, all good Baptist churches have a sunrise service/breakfast **#Baptistfull #deathburialnallthefixins**. Sarah and I went to ours at Penrod.

Service was sedentary. The burly build and baldy dome of the visiting pastor was the focal point of the bleary 6AM talk for me. I'd heard him several times, so this time I was ready. Last time, he told how his father wrestled back in the day. He was in the tag team "The Kentucky Hillbillies." I pictured the bulky bruiser's father bouncing round the ring battling the Demolition Men, Axe-n-Smash, or The Hart Foundation, Anvil-n-Hitman, as his progeny bounded about the pulpit. All his lauding and loud calling, "Can I get an Amen," couldn't break me from the match in my mind. This was pay-per-view Christianity, but the breakfast was gonna be my main event. I bypassed the boisterous visiting pastor. Sarah and I weren't gonna bogart the buffet, we needed coffee.

Sitting around waiting for guests to go through the line, I was engaging in a redux of some childhood VHS of a Wrestlemania when a stranger came up to the table.

"Mind if I sit down?"

"Yeah, come on." I said.

Sarah smiled, "I'm gonna go get a plate. Want anything?"

I sensed a long sit-here with this fella since I had seen him at service last week, but hadn't had the chance to speak yet. "Sure, sausage biscuit, please." I wanted a heaping plate of ham, bacon, breakfast casseroles, and scratch-doughnuts, but Sarah hadn't perfected multiple Dixie plate balancing yet, so I demurred.

By the time Sarah returned, Ron had shared his prior penchant for pussy-n-painkillers. He was now telling about his seven years riding with the Hell's Angels in

California. I wanted to ask if he had read Hunter S¹⁰⁴., but I was edgewised out by verbose candor.

We learned how gospel music saved Ron from a dark path. In the late 80s, he left the Angels and started writing songs for Waylon Jennings and Billy Joe Shaver. By that time, I had to get more coffee and a homemade doughnut. Walking back, I was 99% sure that Billy Joe Shaver, toughest son-of-a-B songwriter, singer, outlaw poet around¹⁰⁵, never recorded other people's songs (other people recorded Shaver's songs). Table-side, I heard Ron "...after all that cocaine, waking up like that? Man, I checked into rehab that day!"

Ron seemed as theatrical as the visiting pastor, more fascinating though. After rehab, he got back to his West Ky roots of gospel music. The truest thing he told us was eight years ago he moved back to the area to see his parents out. They had grown old, and they needed their son home. He was playing Southern Gospel with a roving prison ministry, working their way through Southern Cali when his momma called him home. He said, "Daddy passed first; me-n-Momma just started waiting then, like playing chess with Death in the *Seventh Seal*¹⁰⁶."

¹⁰⁴ Hunter S. Thompson, fellow Kentuckian, wrote *Hell's Angels: The Strange and Terrible Saga of the Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs*. This unflinching account of creative nonfiction helped shape my early views on writing. I loved Hunter's gonzo style; I snorted his drug addled writings like cocaine.

¹⁰⁵ Shaver joined the Navy at 17. Worked rodeos and lumber mills, lost two fingers on his guitar hand. He bounced back and relearned how to play guitar minus the digits. Shaver notoriously broke his back when he fell off a roof, going for a few days before the pain sent him to the hospital. Around 2000, Shaver's son/guitarist Eddy died of a heroin overdose. Less than a year later, Shaver was performing a 4th of July show in Texas when he collapsed on stage from a heart attack. None of this stopped Shaver. He continued to write and sing, making more albums, and even serving as spiritual advisor to Texas gubernatorial candidate Kinky Friedman. Not to be bound by the Country music machine, Shaver has acquired a new audience from his theme music for the Adult Swim tv show *Squidbillies*.

¹⁰⁶ I love it that Ron made this allusion, but I didn't want to break the flow of our talk. I wanted to tell him how I was a Bergmanite, and I admired any director that was also a writer (Michel Gondry, P.T. Anderson, the Cohen Brothers, Charlie Kauffman, et. al.).

“Losing someone is hard.” I didn’t share the deaths of my life, felt wrong. Ron was working through something.

He stared into his plate, plastic white fork poised over a final bite of biscuit-n-gravy. “Yeah, yeah, it sure is, but livin’ for the Lord ain’t easy neither.” He gobbled down the last of his chow, pushed back, and said, “I got an old, old song, perfect for now. D’ya mind?”

“Go ahead,” I said.

He softly began to sing while the fellowship hall echoed with the din of talk and the laughter of children.

*Trav- 'ling thro' this world of sorrow,
Long-ing for a heav'n ly rest,
Look-ing for a bright to-mor-row,
In the man-sions of the blest;
Thus I jour-ney on tow'rd heav-en,
To the man-sions of the blest,
When the crown to me is giv-en,
And I shall for-ev-er rest.*

*Yon-der rolls a tur-bid riv-er,
Just be-tween the shore and me,
Where the pil-grim rests for ev-er,
And from toil and pain I'm free.
Yon-der stands a beau-teous man-sion,
Shad-ed by life's fair-er tree,
And I hear my Sav-ior say-ing,
'Pil-grim, this was built for thee.'*

*Now I en-ter in-to heav-en,
En-ter thro' the pear-ly gates,
And my crown to me is giv-en,
And e-ter-nal bliss a-wakes;
Now I en-ter in that man-sion,
Shad-ed by life's fair-er tree,
And I join the an-gels,
Sing-ing 'Praise to him that died for me.*

Before heading out, Ron promised to see us later at Sunday school in a few hours; he didn't show. I thought about Ron through the Easter cantata and most of our pastor's sermon. I couldn't escape his #~~li~~estruths. His path with death had materialized him breakfast-plate bedecked at that precise fellowship hall table. My path with death was physically pulling me from that body of believers. I sat in the pew blankly looking at the dais where Sarah and I were married. Momma and Dad got married there too. Granddaddy Harry's body been laid out there as well. I looked around at where he used to sit. Grandma Jo had been coming back after Granddaddy Alfred passed. Her-n-Grandma Rhoda now joined the widowed.

After the service, Deacon McPhearson passed by, holding his 1-yr-old, Chessie. "How are the James' this lovely Easter morning?"

I hesitated as that new label fell upon me. "We are doin' fine, sir."

Confession 5

Concluding remarks. I stopped smoking weed, so I could honor the chemical attempt at healing I was undertaking with Dr. Singh. The Bupropion caused me to have two suicidal thoughts and one aggressive outburst. These incidents were very uncharacteristic, so I set up another appointment with Dr. Singh. During this 10 minute appointment, I did share that I had been experiencing manic episodes. I also shared I thought I was bipolar. He put me on Fetzima (the newest and most expensive non-SSRI antidepressant¹⁰⁷). I left with 8 weeks-worth of samples and an appointment with a psychiatrist. Based on my research, I felt like I needed a combination of lithium to control the manic episodes and an anti-depressant. Regardless, I would have to wait a few months to get in to see the shrink.

To honor the thoughts of lithium, I listened to the Nirvana song on my ride back to Penrod.

"Lithium"

I'm so happy because today

¹⁰⁷ Fetzima is an SNRI, which is in the same class as SSRIs. Fetzima is also prescribed for major depressive disorders, so I felt like the same side-effects may rear themselves.

*I've found my friends
They're in my head
I'm so ugly, but that's okay, cause so are you
We've broken our mirrors
Sunday morning is everyday for all I care
And I'm not scared
Light my candles in a daze
Cause I've found god
Hey, hey, hey*

*I like it, I'm not gonna crack
I miss you, I'm not gonna crack
I love you, I'm not gonna crack
I killed you, I'm not gonna crack*

I took the Fetzima for 3 days before I ditched it; fuck chemicals. The mere 10 minutes that Dr. Singh spent with me coupled with the indefinite waiting to see a goddamn shrink was more than I could bear, plus I like the manic fits. In the end, all there was for me was ginseng. My root store was still healthy, and around the last of May, I began to see hundreds of little yearling plants and 3 and 4 prongs crawling forth from the forest floor. My way was with the 'sang.

I didn't get into any of the PhD Creative Writing programs I applied to. I was able to score some adjunct work in Bowling Green at WKU, so Sarah and I ended up having to move away from Penrod. The farm, the Lazy Branch, Graveyard Hill, Widow Jo, and Widow Rhoda all became rearview. Rufus ended up staying with Widow Jo. When we left, Sarah and I listened to John Prine wail and whine about what we were leaving. "Paradise"

*When I was a child my family would travel
Down to Western Kentucky where my parents were born
And there's a backwards old town that's often remembered
So many times that my memories are worn*

*And daddy won't you take me back to Muhlenberg County
Down by the green river where paradise lay?"
Well, I'm sorry my son, but you're too late in asking
Mister Peabody's coal train has hauled it away*

*Well, sometimes we'd travel right down the Green River
To the abandoned old prison down by Adrie Hill
Where the air smelled like snakes and we'd shoot with our pistols
But empty pop bottles was all we would kill*

*Then the coal company came with the world's largest shovel
And they tortured the timber and stripped all the land
Well, they dug for their coal till the land was forsaken
Then they wrote it all down as the progress of man*

*When I die let my ashes float down the Green River
Let my soul roll on up to the Rochester dam
I'll be halfway to Heaven with paradise waitin'
Just five miles away from wherever I am*

*And daddy won't you take me back to Muhlenberg County
Down by the green river where paradise lay?"
Well, I'm sorry my son, but you're too late in asking
Mister Peabody's coal train has hauled it away*

Post Script

Down deer paths, I found the yearling plants brought forth by the circle. I found a four prong; I hadn't hunted the holler out. The Lazy Branch was still full of old 'sang I'd missed. Seeing the new and old 'sang was a balm.

I bought some weed after a series of job rejections, wrong writing directions, and harsh reflections. I really didn't want it. I just wanted to own it, control it. I ended up going into the woods with it, down the path where I had dug up the secret.

I took the rest of the weed and buried it beneath the folds of the beech roots, like a secret. New life and ten thousand year old impulses led me-n-Rufus back into the woods. Jungian impulses towards a Penrod that only existed in books and memories fades from what I knew for the past five years, last rattle of the Greatest Generation buried under technology and transportation.

This secret would stay buried in the Lazy Branch, hidden with the 'sang, and all the secret stories of the past, buried with the passing of the forests and all their damn beauty. Maybe I'll leave the secrets buried till the weed has molded and the

ginseng has sprawled itself and its generations towards the bounds of all that's left of what passes for forests these days.

Like the gods I had built from my family, I had built gods of others too. DeQ was a god, our affinity for books and drugs. Boone was a statue of individualism in my life. There was Hunter, Abbey, and Stanley, all of these that went before. To honor my fallen gods, I have a fun Bibliography I hope you delve into as you conclude this text. Before going all alphabetical, I leave you with a quote about becoming more elemental and connecting with your inner wilder.

One final paragraph of advice: ...It is not enough to fight for the land; it is even more important to enjoy it. While you can. While it's still here.

So get out there and hunt and fish and mess around with your friends, ramble out yonder and explore the forests, climb the mountains, bag the peaks, run the rivers, breathe deep of that yet sweet and lucid air, sit quietly for a while and contemplate the precious stillness, the lovely, mysterious, and awesome space.

Enjoy yourselves, keep your brain in your head and your head firmly attached to the body, the body active and alive, and I promise you this much; I promise you this one sweet victory over our enemies, over those desk-bound men and women with their hearts in a safe deposit box, and their eyes hypnotized by desk calculators. I promise you this; You will outlive the bastards.

~ Edward Abbey

Like DeQ, I'm a rabid book collector. Some of the books listed I own, others I've read snippets or sections online. The following bibliography will be top-soil for my voice. For some entries on the bib., I'm going to expound and extrapolate (if you've digressively survived my ramblings so far, what's to stop you now, eh?).

Bibliography¹⁰⁸

Books, Periodicals, Online Articles & Folk/Fairy Tales

“Adrien Brody” 2011 - Marie Calloway

A Face in the Crowd 1957 – Budd Schulberg

Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious 1913-1935 – Carl Jung

Boone 2007 – Robert Morgan

This was my first Boone biography. I had read a lot about Boone in Kentucky history books, so this was an exciting book to really immerse myself in the cult of Boone. One particular section I didn't get to use is powerful, and will here include. *Many believe that Boone in his final years saw clearly the contradictions of his life, how his “love of Nature” had led not to a future of peaceful hunting with Indians but to the destruction of the hunting grounds the Indians had preserved so long. Boone blamed the lawyers and speculators and politicians, calling them “Yankees,” meaning Americans;...*

Confessions of an English Opium-eater 1822 – Thomas DeQuincey

Thomas DeQuincey. So much of what I like in creative nonfiction seeps back to DeQ. My problem with DeQ is that *Confessions* is not as reactionary today, rather a boring read. How to punch it up? I had seen David Morrell's historical nonfiction book *Murder as a Fine Art*, but hadn't read it. I pontificated, to what degree if any Morrell wrote about the real DeQ? The idea of drawing parallels twixt me and DeQ was there, book collection, drug addiction, stable marriage, literary aspirations, self-medication, coming from a well-off family, but being constantly living next to earth. Appropriating the structure and just offering up my experiences with grief and addiction, the two main themes of *Confessions of an English Opium-eater*.

¹⁰⁸ I realize this is not in any proper “format” (i.e. MLA, AP, APA). I also realize I have used articles “A” & “The” as first words in the alphabetical listing. If listing the title of the work and the author or director is not good enough, oh well. This is a list of works that I have consulted in the creation of this text. Feel free to follow up & read/watch/listen to any/all/none.

Daniel 536-530 B.C. – Aramaic Folktales collected with the writings of Daniel the Seer
(Maybe)

For me the interesting part of using *Daniel* is that it came from the pages of my *MacArthur Study Bible*. This bible was given to me on my birthday January 18, 2010 by my grandparents, Harry and Rhoda James. I had been going to Penrod church with them for over a year at that point. This has been an excellent bible in terms of durability and research, MacArthur did a helluva job commenting. Family bibles are important tokens, written history and well-worn world culture. Sometimes they contain records of the family born'd and died eating that "Baptist Pie." Maybe one day this bible will come out of some apple box to surprise some progeny.

Desert Solitaire 1968– Edward Abbey

I did not come to Abbey till as of late, despite my friend Garrett's recommendations. Regardless Garrett, I found him. And what a wonderful punch in the face this book is. I would like to include the following excerpt I didn't include in my narrative.

Look here I wanna say. For godsake folks, get outta them-there machines. Take off those fucking sunglasses and unpeel both eyeballs. Look around. Throw away those goddamned idiotic camera. For Christ's sake folks, what is this life if full of care we have no time to stand and stare, uh? Take off your shoes for a while. Unzip your fly. Piss hearty. Dig your toes in the hot sand. Feel that raw and rugged earth. Split a couple of big toenails. Draw blood. Why not?

"Dr. Heidegger's Experiment" 1837 – Nathaniel Hawthorne

Elizabeth I and Her Age 2009 - ed. Donald Stump & Susan M. Felch

Faust 1806/08– Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

I have never seen this play. I have read the play, but this is like masturbation. Plays are meant to be performed and seen. Books are meant to be read; so reading *Faust* is definitely not like seeing the play, or even sleeping through the play. Some quotes from the play I wanted to include.

A man sees in the world what he carries in his heart.

All theory is gray, my friend. But forever green is the tree of life.

Whatever is the lot of humankind I want to taste within my deepest self. I want to seize the highest and the lowest, to load its woe and bliss upon my breast, and thus expand my single self titanically and in the end go down with all the rest.

Foxfire 3 1975 – ed. Eliot Wigginton

Foxfire books are fun. I've always known about these books. At a young age, some nice family member passed along a set of the entire Foxfire books. The books are collections of new material and previously published articles in Foxfire magazine. For the most part, these works document and celebrate Appalachia. They are a wonderful wealth of vernacular, folklore, and practical knowledge.

Foxfire 7 1982 – ed. Paul F. Gillespie

Gargantua and Pantagruel – Francois Rabelais

I merely want to comment on Rabelais, LEGENDARY and historically hazy. He was a monk, doctor, and writer, contemporary of John Calvin, Martin Luther, and Ignatius Loyola. Rabelais was a mysterious satirist and humanist that vacillated between Roman Catholicism and Genevan Protestantism; he was walking contradiction, like Boone and me.

Genesis - Moses (Maybe)

The structure of *Genesis* is ten sections. Each of the ten sections begins with the word “account” (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 37:2). The first five sections are often labeled “primeval history.” *Genesis* lays the foundation between God and his creations.

Guerilla Warfare – Ernesto “Che” Guevara

I went through an intense Che phase, wearing a Che shirt with the sleeves cut off. I initially read Jon Lee Anderson's book *Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life*. By the time I got to *Guerilla Warfare*, I was expert in Ernesto. In the text, I compared parts of the *Hagakure* with *Guerilla Warfare*, accurate statement, but differing styles. Che has the fire of suns.

The guerilla fighter is above all an agrarian revolutionary.

The guerilla fighter is the Jesuit of warfare.

The guerilla fighter should be an aesthetic.

Sabotage is one of the invaluable arms of a people that fights in guerilla form.

Sabotage has nothing to do with terrorism, terrorism and personal assaults are entirely different tactics.

Guidepost

I did not read the article about the animal that alerted the owner about the bugler. I know the Brother Eck's Daughter cited this, so I went with it. I have not checked her sources. As a DIY publisher, I cannot pursue the ramblings of just any ole character in my narrative. I can barely keep up with my own citations, allusions, and references. I assume there is some story somewhere that corroborates this *Guidepost* story.

Hagakure Kikigaki – Yamamoto Tsunetomo

This is one of the most interesting text because of its secret status. I could go on for several wasted sentences, but I will let the text speak for itself about the storied history of the samurai and the word bushi.

Men from powerful local families in the eastern frontier lands entrusted with governmental titles formed bands and took up arms to defend their own estates, and helped quell other local disputes with the impending threat of violence. Provincial bands of samurai eventually formed feudal ties bound by a strong sense of identity as warriors. They maintained intense bonds of loyalty born of their shared experience in combat, as well as the promise of financial reward for services rendered. By the time Minamoto-no-Yoritomo set up the first bakufu, or warrior government, in Kamakura in 1192, warriors had already developed their own unique culture based on a ferocious appetite for fame, glory, and honor. Although it was not codified at this early stage, warrior culture was referred to by an array of terms, such as bando musha no narai (customs of the Eastern warriors), yumiya no michi (the way of the bow and arrow), kyuba no michi (the way of the bow and horse), and so on. The term bushido was not coined until much later, in the 1600s.

Heart of Darkness – Joseph Conrad

I would fucking puke if I had to talk about this book by itself, I only will talk about this text as it relates to *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe. Conrad may be a fucking racist, but he was definitely a regionalist. I admire all regionalist writers. Achebe addresses the greatness and asshole-ness of Conrad and *Heart of Darkness* in his essays and novel, so please read Achebe for any additional commentary.

Heavenly Tiding - C.E. Leslie

I later talked to Ron about the song he sang at Easter Breakfast. After learning the title, I was able to locate the song in this old hymn book that my Grandma Jo had.

Hell's Angels: The Strange and Terrible Saga of the Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs – Hunter

S. Thompson

From the text

All my life, my heart has sought a thing I cannot name. Remembered line from a long-forgotten poem. Life is not a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in one pretty and well preserved piece, but to slide across the finish line broadside, thoroughly used up, worn out, leaking oil, and shouting GERONIMO!!!

Illustrations of Sterne - John Ferriar

From the text

Readers are often inclined to regard with veneration, what they do not understand. They suppose a work to be deep, in proportion to its darkness, and give the author credit for recondite learning, in many passages, where his incapacity, or his carelessness, have prevented him from explaining himself with clearness. It was not the business of Sterne to un-deceive those, who considered his 'Tristram' as a work of unfathomable knowledge.

Indian Knoll 1974 – William S. Webb

I own this book, but I didn't buy it until after visiting the Lost City site. After hearing about this site less than 15 miles down the road in Lewisburg, I struck out for the remnants of the excavation. I travelled down the road that Lost City was located, nothing. Finally, I saw a fella out tilling his garden. I approached in the truck. Turned out, I knew the fella, had fucked his sister several times. He was more-n happy to let me kick around in the soybean field edges and woodland sites. He said the University of Kentucky pay him to preserve the dig sites in the woodland; said I was welcome to look around. Gigantic mounds stand feet and yards from the Green River. Fruit trees, like pawpaw and persimmon, stand among oaks, maples, beech, pine. It was a surreal site because of the ancient culture that lived there and the 1940s white archaeological academic culture that uncovered the site.

Jesus' Son 1992 – Denis Johnson

I cannot be enticed to comment on the work of Johnson passed what I have said.

Lolita 1955 – Vladimir Nabokov

Reading this was like white-paged porn, sexy black words & shapely phrases. I had already seen the movie, so Stanley had greatly influenced my interaction with this text; I'm sure his version of the narrative painted my sexual canvas trichromatic, white, black, & red (because *Lolita* is not a very sexy book. Only a few chapters are sexualized, with not many erotic scenes). Opponent process took over, rods and cones transposed Stanley's-visual-sexy onto the white of page and black of word of Nabokov. In any case, I'm sure educated-ole-you can draw numerous parallels between your writer and Nabo's text. So I want to address an interesting time period in the reading-history of this book. Written in English and published in Paris in 1955, NYC '58, & London '59, this book frames a lot of student(female)-teacher(male) archetypal form. Stanley reimagined Nabokov's narrative to film in '62. Culture appropriated *Lolita* as synonymous with a young sexualized girl, which Dolores wasn't so much; sadly, this cannot be undone. Happily for me, *Lolita* exists as a cautionary tale against sexual fetishism and extreme ephebophilia. Maybe I am Humbert fetishizing over my nymphet

students? I doubt I share his vision for such a twisted and strange search for love. He and Clare Quilty can go to hell; I hope me-n-Nabokov are in heaven though, 'cause I like to ask him an thing or thirty.

Lorenzaccio 1834 - Alfred de Musset

Again, we are discussing a play I have not seen. I believe I have never experienced this narrative in its intended form, but I will comment on it. This French play is about the Italian Lorenzino de' Medici killing his cousin Alessandro de' Medici. I would love to see this play because the Medicis are a bloody fucking lot.

Luke 60/61 A.D. – Luke the Evangelist

Luke and Acts were both composed by the same author, some dispute Luke's authorship. Holy ghost living come up from Luke, or whoever it is that put these preachins together.

Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life 1874 – George Eliot

In my opinion, boring Victorian reading, similar to Dickens and Thackeray (not bad, but the realism gets too real; it crosses thresholds of minutia, but overall the plots of most Victorian novels are appropriately geared towards shut in Victorian lay-about.

MovieMaker Magazine #53 2004

This is where a lot of my text grew from. Jarmush. He was on an episode of *Bored to Death*, sucks that show got cancelled. Ever since 18 yrs old, I've known Jarmush's work. He's my guy.

Nehemiah 400 B.C.?– Nehemiah

“Of Death” 1612 – Francis Bacon

Bacon's essay is comprised of two parts – a brief and telling philosophy of death and a catalog of historical ways to die. This is a very morbid essay, and a fun look-through.

One Thousand and One Nights Date Unknown – West and South Asian Folktales

(Commonly called *Arabian Nights* in English)

Many editions and versions of this collection exist, but all begin with the frame story. The initial frame is the tale of Shahryar and his wife Scheherazade. This motif remains with the form that a story is told each night for 1,001 nights. Complete, or mostly complete editions will have somewhere near the 1,001 tales.

Paradise Lost 1667 – John Milton

John Dryden said *Paradise Lost* is *one of the greatest, most notable and sublime poems which either this age or nation has produced*. Great poem, but it's a helluva hard read, even a Norton edition.

Physiology Primer 1902 – Cornman & Gerson

This is an old school book I found at the Davis'. I think it had belonged to my Great Aunt Abbey, Grandma Jo's aunt.

Robinson Crusoe 1719 – Daniel Defoe

#boringASfuck

Sex and Temperament 1935 – Margaret Mead

Snow White Date Unknown - German Fairy Tale

The Aarne-Thompson folklore classification assigns the Snow White tale type as 709. Other tales in this classification are *Bella Venezia*, *Myrsina*, *Nourie Hadig*, *Gold-Tree and Silver-Tree*.

The Aeneid 19 B.C. – Virgil

*The circling year
Completes its months since we entombed in earth
The bones and remnants of my godlike father.
Unless I err, that anniversary
Is here, the day that I shall always keep
In grief and honor...*

The Anatomy of Melancholy 1621 – Robert Burton

The beginning of the text, following the frontpiece. gutenberg.org

THE
ANATOMY OF MELANCHOLY,
WHAT IT IS,
WITH
ALL THE KINDS, CAUSES, SYMPTOMS, PROGNOSTICS, AND SEVERAL
CURES OF IT.
IN THREE PARTITIONS.
WITH THEIR SEVERAL
SECTIONS, MEMBERS, AND SUBSECTIONS, PHILOSOPHICALLY,
MEDICALLY,
HISTORICALLY OPENED AND CUT UP.

BY DEMOCRITUS JUNIOR.
WITH
A SATIRICAL PREFACE, CONDUCTING TO THE FOLLOWING DISCOURSE.
A NEW EDITION,
CORRECTED, AND ENRICHED BY TRANSLATIONS OF THE NUMEROUS
CLASSICAL EXTRACTS.
BY DEMOCRITUS MINOR.
TO WHICH IS PREFIXED AN ACCOUNT OF THE AUTHOR.
Etc. Etc. Etc. You get the idea, Latin-n-such.

The Complete Idiot's Guide to World History 2008 – Timothy C. Hall

Wonderful resource #not**ASHAMED**to**USE**a**Book**

The Concept of Anxiety 1844 – Soren Kierkegaard

The Faerie Queene 1590 – Edmund Spenser

I like it that Spenser became synonymous with form through this work, Spenserian stanza. Spenser was also a gifted allegorist sponsored by Queen Elizabeth I, which is kinda cool. Similar to other epic poems, I enjoy the story of the story more than the actual story, dense epic poetry doesn't kickstart my heart.

The Gay Science 1882 – Friedrich Nietzsche

Holybooks.com. The first section of the text is called 'Joke, Cunning, and Revenge' Prelude in German Rhymes. It is comprised of 63, you guessed it, German rhymes. I have culled a few from the batch to share with you here.

4. *Dialogue*

- A. *Was I ill? Have I recovered?
Has my doctor been discovered?
How have I forgotten all?*
- B. *Now I know you have recovered:
Healthy is who can't recall.*

6. *Worldly Wisdom*

*Stay not where the lowlands are!
Climb not into the sky!
The world looks best by far
when viewed from halfway high.*

7. *Vademecum – Vadetecum*

My way and language speak to you,

*you follow me, pursue me too?
To thine own self and way be true:
Thus follow me, but gently do!*

27. The Wanderer

*'The path ends! Abyss and deathly silence loom!
You wanted this! Your will strayed to its doom!
Now wanderer, stand! Be keen and cool as frost!
Believe in danger now and you – are lost.*

33. The Solitary One

*Despised by me are following and leading.
Commanding? Even worse to me than heeding!
Who does not scare himself can frighten no one:
The one who causes fear can lead another.
But just to lead myself is too much bother!
I love, as do the sea and forest creatures,
to lose myself a while in nature's features,
to hide away and brood in secret places
until, lured home at last from distant traces,
my self-seduction lets me see – my features.*

52. Writing With One's Foot

*I do not write with hand alone:
My foot does writing of its own.
Firm, free, and bold my feet engage
in running over field and page.*

54. To My Reader

*Strong teeth and good digestion too –
this I wish thee!
And once my book's agreed with you,
then surely you'll agree with me!*

59. The Pen Scribbles

*My pen, it scribbles: this is hell!
Have I been damned to have to scribble? –
I dip it boldly in the well
and write broad streams of inky drivel.
See how it flows, so full, so pure!
See how each thing I try succeeds!*

62. Ecce Homo

*Yes! I know now whence I came!
Unsatiated like a flame
my glowing ember squanders me.*

*Light to all on which I seize,
ashen everything I leave:
Flame am I most certainly!*

The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman 1761/67– Laurence Sterne

Alas, dear Laurence. If ever I write a love letter to a book, this be it. Playing with form is fun. You would have loved Blurb, but also so the world turns.

The New England Journal of Medicine 2007

The Republic 380 B.C. – Plato

Book 8

When discord arose, then the two races were drawn different ways: the iron and brass fell to acquiring money and land and houses and gold and silver; but the gold and silver races, not wanting money but having the true riches in their own nature, inclined towards virtue and the ancient order of things. There was a battle between them, and at last they agreed to distribute their land and houses among individual owners; and they enslaved their friends and maintainers, whom they formerly protected in the condition of freemen, and made of them subjects and servants; and they themselves were engaged in war and in keeping a watch against them.

Although mired in myth and muse, Plato is discussing the four types of government (timocracy, oligarchy, democracy, and tyranny) in the section I ripped this excerpt from. He argues all cities will traverse these gulches.

The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche 1913-1935 – Carl Jung

Volume 8 of Jung massive decade spanning work.

The connection between spirit and life is one of those problems involving factors of such complexity that we have to be on our guard lest we ourselves get caught in the net of words in which we seek to ensnare these great enigmas. For how can we bring within the orbit of our thought those limitless complexes of facts which we call “spirit” or “life” unless we clothe them in verbal concepts, themselves mere counters of the intellect? The mistrust of verbal concepts, inconvenient as it is, nevertheless seems to me to be very much in place in speaking of fundamentals. “Spirit” and “life” are familiar enough words to us, very old acquaintances in face, pawns that for thousands of years have been pushed back and forth on the thinker’s chessboard. The problem must have begun in the grey dawn of time, when Someone made the bewildering discovery that the living breath which left the body of the dying man in the last death-rattle meant more than just air in motion. It can scarcely be an accident that onomatopoeic words like ruach, ruch, roho (Hebrew, Arabic, Swahili) mean “spirit” no less clearly than the Greek and the Latin.

Do we know then, for all our familiarity with the verbal concept, what spirit really is? Are we sure that when we use this word we all mean the same thing? Is not the word "spirit" a most perplexingly ambiguous term? The same verbal sign, spirit, is used for an inexpressible, transcendental idea of allembicing significance; in a more commonplace sense it is synonymous with "mind"; it may connote courage, liveliness, or wit, or it may mean a ghost; it can also represent an unconscious complex that causes spiritualistic phenomena like tableturning, automatic writing, rappings, etc. In a metaphorical sense it may refer to the dominant attitude in a particular social group-the "spirit" that prevails there. Finally, it is used in a material sense, as spirits of wine, spirits of ammonia, and spirituous liquors in general. This is not just a bad joke-it is a part of the venerable heritage of our language, while on the other hand it is a paralyzing encumbrance to thought, a tragic obstacle to all who hope to scale the ethereal heights of pure ideas on the ladders of words'. When I utter the word "spirit," no matter how accurately I may define the meanings cannot be wholly excluded. We must therefore ask ourselves the fundamental question:

What is really meant by the word "spirit" when it is used in connection with the concept "life?" Under no circumstance should it be tacitly assumed that, at bottom, everybody knows just what is meant by "spirit" or "life."

The Serpent and the Rainbow 1985 - Wade Davis

Semi-demi god author and main character, Wade Davis writes a good story, but the legitimacy has been doubted. Zombies, ethnobotanist, and poison - what a wonderfully strange and terrifying account.

The Timechart History of the World 2004 – Metro Books

The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus 1592 – Christopher Marlowe

The View Over Atlantis 1983 – John Michell

Thus Spoke Zarathustra 1883 – Friedrich Nietzsche

Totality and Infinity 1961- Emmanuel Levinas

Films, Songs, & TV Series

A Clockwork Orange – Stanley Kubrick

Stanley based this film on the Anthony Burgess book of the same name. I won't tread well-worn ground, so let's delve into sound. Andy Warhol produced and

directed a movie called *Vinyl* in 1965 based on Burgess's book (before Stanley's 1971 film). The following is a list of songs from the film:

"Nowhere to Run" by Martha and the Vandellas

"Tired of Waiting" for You by the Kinks

"The Last Time" by the Rolling Stones

"Shout" by the Isley Brothers

A Face in the Crowd – Elia Kazan

Andy-Fuck-N-Griffith!

Appalachian Outlaws

This was the show that got me going on the ginseng idea. I would not have ever remembered Granddaddy Alfred talking about ginseng had it not been for this show. The show is good "reality" tv, as far as that goes. It is in an interesting category of reality tv based on nature, but it is still a pale ale compared to the stout of visceral heart-pumpin nature. I digress, and I thank this show for being beamed via Direct TV satellites to my location.

Coffee and Cigarettes – Jim Jarmush

Deadman – Jim Jarmusch

Love, love, and black-n-white cinematography. Johnny Depp, Gabriel Byrne, Crispian Glover, Robert Mitchum, Iggy Pop, Billy Bob Thornton, When I saw how Jarmush just appropriated William Blake as a fish-out-of-water Depp rube and Nobody's knowledge of William Blake the writer and painter, I was smitten to smithereens.

Deadwood

I believe this to be one of the most well done television shows ever. From acting to directing, and over the moon with writing, this show killed it.

"Don't Stand So Close To Me" – The Police

New wave rock ridden till '86 when the band couldn't keep together. The band reunited in 2007. What a gas this world is and how it spins.

"Heroin" – The Velvet Underground

Andy Warhol originally managed the band, and they served as the house band at the Factory (where Warhol recorded *Vinyl*). "Heroin" appeared on *The Velvet Underground & Nico*. The majority of the songs on this album were mainstays on the set lists during Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable events in '66.

"Lithium" – Nirvana

This song predates the group's *Nevermind* work, but Kurt Cobain chose to re-record the track and include it on the monumental album. Cobain says the song portrays a man dealing with the death of his girlfriend. Following the death, the man turns to religion to keep the mad-dogs of suicide at bay. Some have connected the song to Karl Marx's statement about religion being the "opiate of the masses."

"No Depression" – The Carter Family

The Carter Family first recorded this song in 1936 during the Great Depression. Some say Tennessee music teacher and composer James David Vaughan is the songs writer, but A.P. Carter is generally given the credit. After the 90s, the song title became appropriated as the name of the movement inspired by alternative country artists like Uncle Tupelo, who covered the song (Uncle Tupelo split into Son Volt, headed by Jay Farrar, and Wilco, headed by Jeff Tweedy).

"Paradise" – John Prine

Quintessential Muhlenberg music. Muhlenberg County is home to the Everly Brothers, as well as being the home of the original thumb-picker, Merle Travis. This song is pure sound memory from Rochester Dam down to Adrie Hill.

"Return of the Grievous Angel" – Gram Parsons

This is the second solo album from Parsons after leaving the Byrds and The Flying Burrito Brothers. The album was released four months after Parsons heroin/alcohol death. Parson's widow, Gretchen, changed the album cover posthumously. The original featured Gram with Emmylou Harris (whose relationship with Gram Gretchen didn't care for) and was replaced by Gram against a sea of blue. Gretchen also removed the song *Sleepless Nights*.

"Stoned Immaculate" – The Doors

Squidbillies

The Andy Griffith Show

The Serpent and the Rainbow – Wes Craven

The Seventh Seal – Ingmar Bergman