

*Divers to Dive:  
A Pandemic  
Dream  
Journal #5*

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## Sunday 26/4/20

Thinking of intimations of fate, of seasons, of Jack Kerouac, glimpsing Thomas Wolfe, as a child, crossing Brooklyn Bridge, in the snow, of a 10 year old Boris Pasternak glimpsing Rainer Maria Rilke, once, for the only time in his life, at a train station, Rilke was a friend of his father's, and years later, now a poet, all of Boris's incessant plotting to try to see him again, preferably in the company of his other obsession, the great Russian poet Marina Tsvetayeva, and the letters those three traded, the purest poetry of love, published as *Letters: Summer 1926*, which Susan Sontag described as "a portrait of the sacred delirium of art". Yet neither of them would ever see Rilke again, and Pasternak and Tsvetayeva would meet only twice more. When Pasternak died, in 1960, an envelope was found in his wallet with a single word on it. 'Precious'. Inside was his first letter from Rilke, and Tsvetayeva's reply.

I am cursed by the Scottish poet Liz Lochhead. Every time I am in the same room as her there is some awful interaction. This has been going on since I was 11 years old, when she came to talk at my primary school, and because I was interested in poetry and literature, the headmaster, the legendary Mr Brown, this was Clarkston Primary, long since demolished by a council intent on bulldozing Airdrie out of history altogether, suggested that I might like to stay behind afterwards to ask Liz about how to be a poet, and I was so excited, and I had a list of questions, but as I read them out Lochhead openly yawned and rolled her eyes and made it clear she could not in any way be arsed. The last time was at some book event at the Mitchell Library in Glasgow a year or two ago, Lochhead was on what looked like a pretty interesting panel, so I decided to brave it, but as soon as I sat down, Lochhead, from the stage, announced that she didn't like where I was sitting and said I needed to move somewhere else. I think what she actually said was

“no, that’s not acceptable”. I will update you if I see her in the street and she straight up tells me to fuck off.

### **Monday 27/4/20**

Re-reading one of my all-time favourite books, *The Dream Of The Poem: Hebrew Poetry From Muslim And Christian Spain 950-1492*, translated, edited and introduced by Peter Cole. What an absolute labour of love this book is, the poems are luminous. “Run where you will/Heaven surrounds you/Get out if you can.” I feel you, my brother.

### **Tuesday 28/4/20**

I am planting seeds in my greenhouse, chillies I brought back from my last trip to Mexico, and cucumbers. When I was last in Mexico City someone tried to sell me a hardboiled egg, outside its shell, on the street. I got drunk in Queretaro, at the book fair, on mezcal, and flooded this mad boutique hotel, completely destroying the room below. Luckily, my Mexican editor had thought to sign me in under a fake name. I got my beard trimmed in a Portaloo on the street that had been re-tooled as a one-man barber shop. I was obsessed with waterways, rivers, lakes, pools, stagnant buckets, sewage, cause I was researching a book set there, a book to do with my father, and so I took many boats, visited many lakes, hung out eating tacos next to sewage outlets, some of the best food stalls are right next to stinking rivers, the smells are mad, I love eating there, people just stand around in this fug of awfulness and pollution and amazing spices and corn tortillas, everyone is eating always in Mexico and if there is a space even in a doorway going free, you can bet your ass that someone will set up a hotplate and start flipping tacos. It is my second favourite country on earth.

### **Wednesday 29/4/20**

It's Bill Drummond's birthday. I drop him a line, hoping he hasn't gone completely mental by now. His response:

Thanks.

I actually went mental just before lockdown.

Thus using the lockdown to shield me from the reality of having to deal with the world.

Great strategy Bill x

### **Thursday 30/4/20**

The songs that Bob Dylan wrote in Woodstock circa *The Basement Tapes* are some of the most gnomic, unfathomable works of art in the rock canon. Tracks like "Goin' To Acapulco" (Greil Marcus says Dylan delivers the line "gonna have some fun" like what he is actually going to do is crawl under a rock and die), "I'm Not There", "Sign On The Cross", "Lo And Behold", "Odds and Ends" ("lost time is not found again"), "Million Dollar Bash", "I Shall Be Released".

"They say every distance is not near" is such an enigmatic line. I've been thinking about distance a lot this week, and its reality, or otherwise. So far as everything that takes place takes place in consciousness, then nothing is further away, or closer to, anything else. The horizon is as close, or as far away, as the end of your nose.

It's all very well to say this kind of stuff and understand it in a conceptual way. But I have been having experiences with meditation that *are* the experience of every distance being not real, which is how I always mis-hear Dylan. Ideas, like words, can point to the thing, the very damn thing that perhaps we haven't even noticed yet. Douglas

Harding, in his 1960s spiritual classic, *On Having No Head: Zen and the Rediscovery of the Obvious*, makes much the same point. Harding talks about spiritual ideas as if they were available right now without any sense of having to earn them or study them or otherwise qualify for them. His practice is to come to see that you literally have no head, and no two eyes, neither, and that there is no observer, that all the time we are living conceptually, and not experientially. And that everything comes out of, and back into, the Void; every thought, feeling, love, doubt, came from nothing, and went straight back there. Just for the hell of it. And that you are not contained. Rather, the Greek sea and the Euphrates, the Bosphorus, and the mermaids and angels that swim in them, the very planets themselves, and further out, quasar, star, are the very blood and corpuscles of the mind: image.

Hippolytus, in *Refutation Of All Heresies*, writes, “For already have I become a boy and a girl and a bush and a bird and a silent fish in the sea.”

### **Friday 1/5/20**

Thinking of the time my father was walking down the street in Belfast and some bad bastards started hassling him from across the street. He was carrying a huge bag and they kept asking him what was in it and taking the piss. It’s a bag of whores, he shouted at them, come over here and pick out your ma. I often think of that line and marvel.

I found an old birthday card from my father today, when I was cleaning out a drawer of my desk. It has a picture of a teddy bear climbing through a wooden fence in order to deliver a note on the front. The border is a sweet baby blue. My father has written (*REMEMBER STAY SPECIAL*) inside, all, remarkably, spelled correctly.

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When my father died, I had a series of terrifying dreams where he came back to me as a zombie, where he returned and his flesh was rotting, his beautiful suit all stained and torn, his handsome face half eaten away. I began to realise it was force of love that was making him come back, even though he was one of the dead now, in answer to my longing. And that I had to let him go. He's with his people now, that great historic horde of the dead. I wonder if that's where the universal idea of the zombie comes from, the living dead, the love that we cannot relinquish, coming back, and all of the regrets and broken promises too, and that the duty of love, of true love, conquers death, even as it is terrible, and unnatural, and wrong. I think of my father, coming back, in pieces, all over again, and I marvel.

### **Saturday 2/5/20**

Boris Pasternak, talking about Marina Tsvetayeva's physics of poetry:

“...at the point where motion is accelerated to such a degree that it begins to think, to throw out definitions, formulas, Pythian mantissas, bits of well-formulated thought. In just the same way, excursions into the blind alleys of palpable words, i.e., into lip, throat, and neck-muscle sources of excitement or embellishment, result in the turning and twisting of the rhythm.”

Write with the body. Energy births form.

Tsvetayeva:

“After Carrara marble,/how is your life with the dust of/plaster now? (God was hewn from/stone, but he is smashed to

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bits.)/How do you live with one of a/thousand women after  
Lilith?/Sated with newness, are you?/Now you are grown cold  
to magic,/ how is your life with an/earthly woman, without a  
sixth/sense? Tell me: are you happy?/Not? In a shallow pit  
how is/your life, my love? Is it as/hard as mine with another  
man?"

Fate, and seasons.







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*Caught by the River*

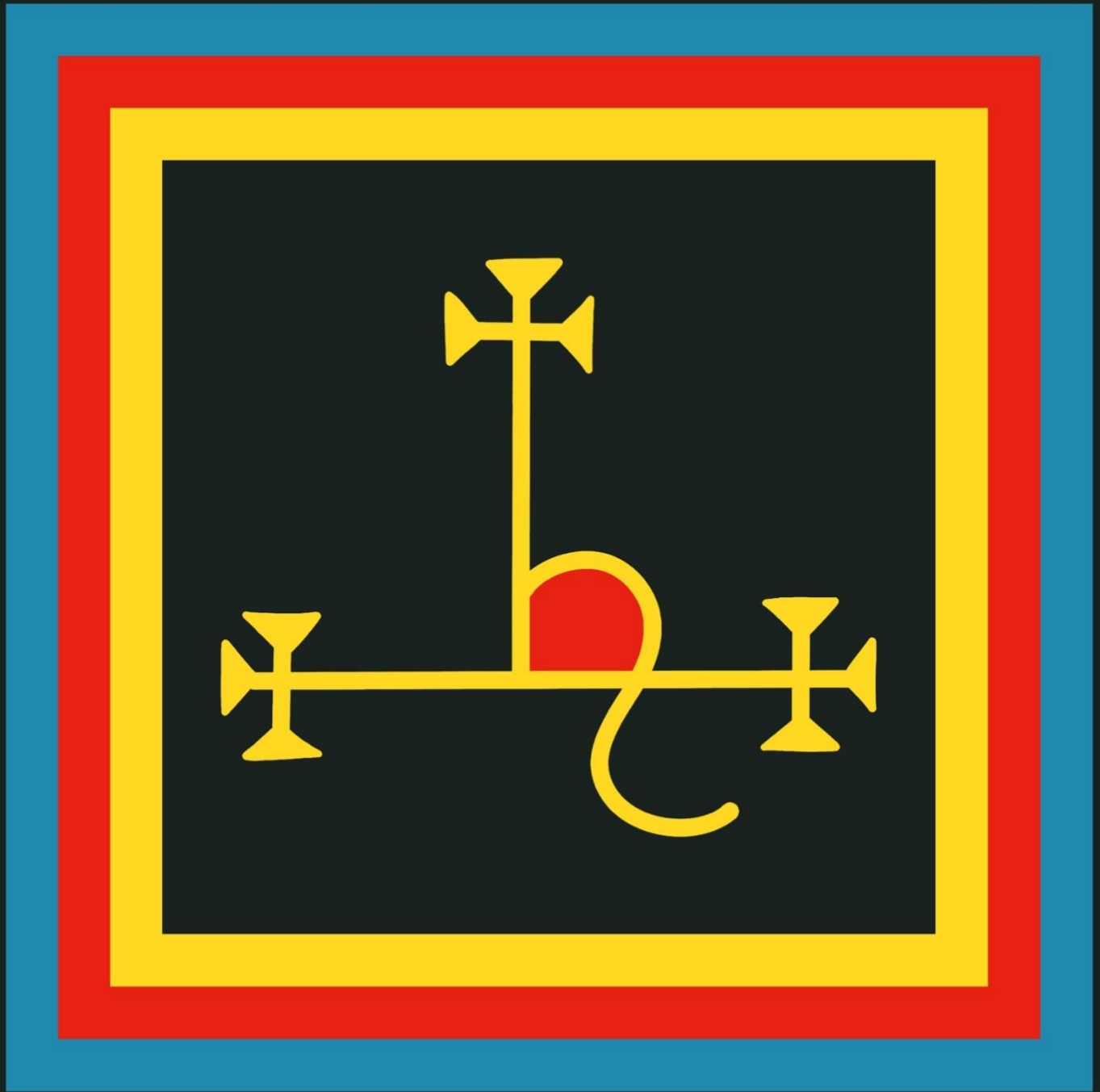


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***RUN WHERE***



***YOU WILL***