



*Divers to Dive:
A Pandemic
Dream
Journal #6*

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Sunday 3/5/20

I love Paul Williams, the late rock critic, *Crawdaddy!* editor, science fiction nut, and all-round good guy evangelist; smoking pot with Brian Wilson, talking divine invasion with Philip K. Dick. His books on Dylan, Neil Young and The Beach Boys are joyous, life-affirming reads. I like the term rock critic, I like how it is cut and how it feels, but even though I wrote about music for twenty-five years myself, I never considered myself a critic. Rather, I thought of myself as an evangelist. I wanted to turn people on to the possibility of the same artistic epiphanies I had experienced myself. Plus I simply can't stand music writing that is not about music, and that does not convey the feel, the elation, the holy moment of release through sound, I abhor record reviews as cultural critique. It's so easy, mis-directing music writing into a place where it's easier to write about it by not actually writing about it at all. Music is nebulous, and demands new metaphors, new words, new rhythms, new sounds, too. But most of all I respond to enthusiasm.

I'm re-listening to the *Thirty Years Of The Beach Boys* 4xCD box set that came out in 1993, while re-reading Williams' essay on it, "I Believe You Anyway", which opens with the lines "Life is imperfect. And so endlessly filled with blessings!" In 1995 Williams suffered head injuries in a bicycle accident that resulted in early onset dementia, having to be cared for 24/7 by his partner, the musician Cindy Lee Berryhill, until his death in 2013, at the age of 64. "The moral is," he writes, in *How Deep Is The Ocean?*, the book in which the essay appears, "life is imperfect, but an American kid with a CD player and a roof over his or her head doesn't have a hell of a lot to complain about." Amen, my brother.

At one point Williams recalls a road trip he took, where he dubbed the entire Beach Boys box set, all six hours and twenty minutes of it, onto cassettes, and listened to it in its entirety in one unforgettable session while driving from San Francisco to San Diego. “Wow,” he writes. “A hundred or so years from now, when there are no cars or freeways anymore, people will be spending their life savings for the opportunity to have such an experience.”

You were so alive, Paul. I miss you more than ever. I’m going to spend the night listening to the same box set and I’m going to try to hear those same things you heard in it.

Monday 4/5/20

I may be cursed by Liz Lohead but I am better haunted by Borges’ last bird. I first read Borges’ poetry in the early 1990s, I think, in an issue of *Chemical Imbalance*, a brilliant underground fanzine edited by Mike McGonigal, who went on to edit *Yeti*. I think it’s the same place I first read about Blaise Cendrars, too, it was a great mix of poetry and art and literature and avant garde and rock n roll. But they published a poem by Borges in there that has haunted me since, I’m not going to look it up, I don’t know what it is called, or what the particular translation is, but I am going to write it from how it is in my memory:

“I will bring history to dust/and the dust itself to/I am watching
the last sunset/I can hear the last bird/I leave nothing to no one”

The last bird is the dying light of consciousness and what I believe the final moment to contain, distant birdcall.

Tuesday 5/5/20

Planting asparagus crowns beneath the quince tree in the early evening is the name of this day. The site of abundance, the place of all fruitfulness, is nothing, and nowhere.

Wednesday 6/5/20

Comes the news that the great poet, ecologist, essayist and suave motherfucker Michael McClure has died. McClure wrote one book that is completely central to me, *Scratching The Beat Surface: Essays On New Vision From Blake To Kerouac*. I recommend it to anyone who loves poetry, and magick, and ecology, and science. His analysis of Shelley's "Mont Blanc" is one of the most psychedelic dissertations on poetry ever, as McClure leads from the formation of the universe itself, and its ever-increasing complexity, to the moment of Shelley's poem, which finds the universe speaking to itself through it, and marvelling: "The material of Shelley was in the original primeval explosion and went through all the densifications and expansions and complications. Then, in 1816, the material of the universe in a point of novel self-comprehension (as all points are novel) stood in the stance of poetry admiring itself from the primeval past to most modern retreating glacier and roaring river – and naturally played upon itself and sang."

See Appendix for Shelley's "Mont Blanc".

Thursday 7/5/20

My favourite line in all of William Burroughs is in *Cities of the Red Night*: "Far away his father points to Betelgeuse in the night sky." My favourite line in all of Bob Dylan is in "Farewell Angelina": "What

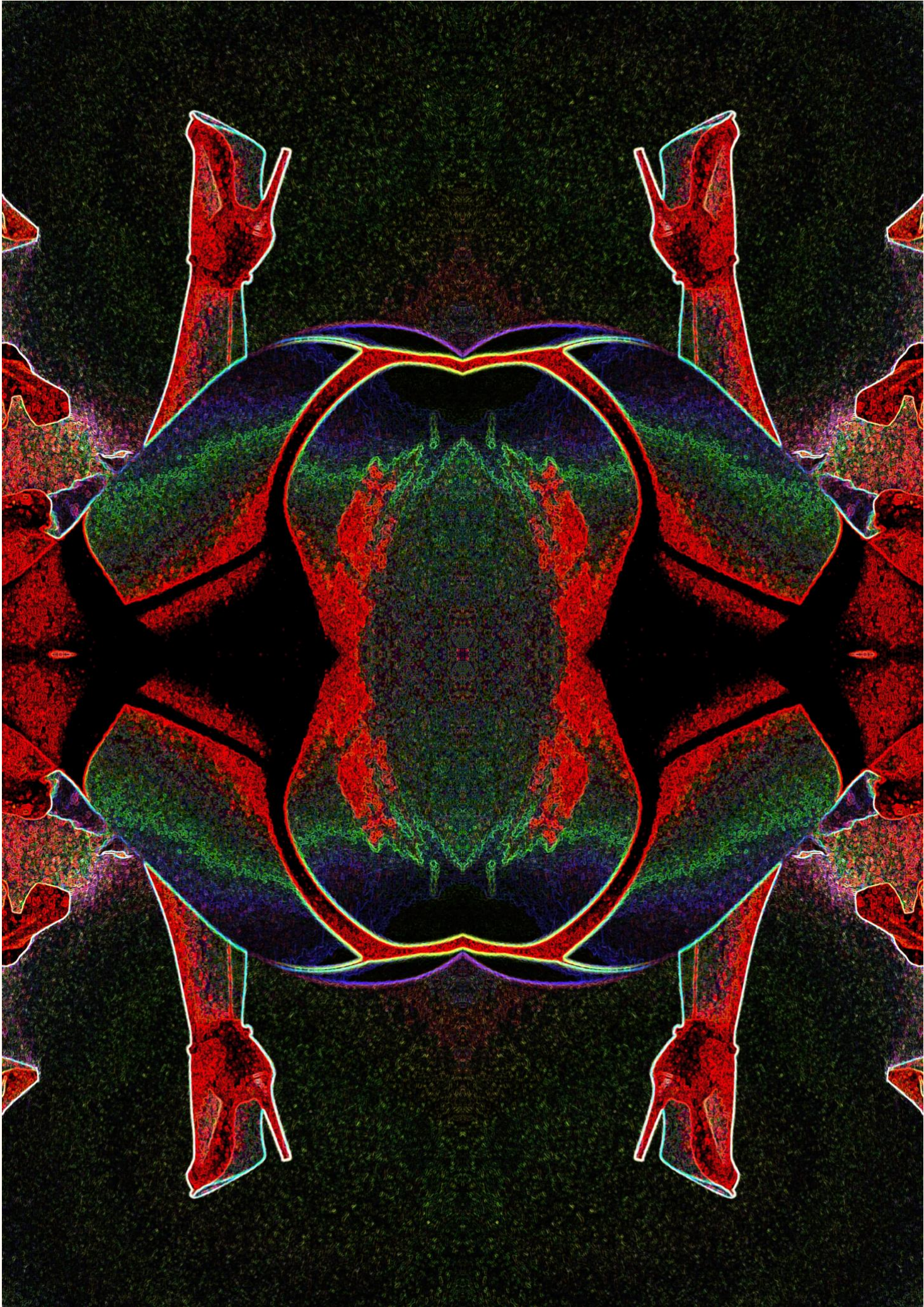
cannot be imitated/perfect/must die.” Taken together, it is my favourite song.

Friday 8/5/20

When Nirvana’s *Nevermind* came out in 1991 a whole bunch of us got together at this rundown flat off Woodlands Road above a mosque in the west end of Glasgow to take LSD and listen to it all the way through. I’m not much of a Nirvana fan, but that album sounded good on LSD, even if you wouldn’t expect it to. There is a drum break on there with weird noises, what is it on, “Come As You Are”, “In Bloom”? I can’t bear to listen to it to check, but anyway, the point is, this drum break seemed to last forever and we all looked around at each other like, is this really happening, and some guy said, fuck me, Kurt coded this for LSD completely, and then this other guy burst in, this guy that I could not stand, he had a bunch of nicknames, The Boy David (after that poor sod from the Amazon who had his face eaten and had to have it rebuilt), John Merrick (after the Elephant Man) and Wee Karoli (after the guitarist from Can), he had been tripping in some other room the whole time, I think he had been in a cupboard, just lying inside a cardboard box, out of his mind, but just as this mad drum break started going on forever, Wee Karoli bursts into the room, topless, with just a tiny leather jacket at least four sizes too small for him, how did he get into that thing, and he pulls the jacket apart to reveal that he has written the words ‘One Way’ on his chest, in lipstick, and then he punches out both his fists to reveal the words ‘My Way’ smeared across his knuckles, and the endless drum break comes to an end, and The Boy David turns, and exits the room, and permanently now, in a place in my brain, in the holy of holies, there is that wee ugliest fucker, the most genius thing I ever saw on LSD.

Saturday 9/5/20

When Lou Reed sings the words “and your best friend Frankie” at 1:07 on “I Wanna Boogie With You”, on 1979’s *The Bells*, it is the single most Lou Reed moment ever. Life is imperfect. And so endlessly filled with blessings!



Appendix

Mont Blanc: Lines Written in the Vale of Chamouni by Percy Bysshe Shelley

I

The everlasting universe of things
Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves,
Now dark—now glittering—now reflecting gloom—
Now lending splendour, where from secret springs
The source of human thought its tribute brings
Of waters—with a sound but half its own,
Such as a feeble brook will oft assume,
In the wild woods, among the mountains lone,
Where waterfalls around it leap for ever,
Where woods and winds contend, and a vast river
Over its rocks ceaselessly bursts and raves.

II

Thus thou, Ravine of Arve—dark, deep Ravine—
Thou many-colour'd, many-voiced vale,
Over whose pines, and crags, and caverns sail
Fast cloud-shadows and sunbeams: awful scene,
Where Power in likeness of the Arve comes down
From the ice-gulfs that gird his secret throne,
Bursting through these dark mountains like the flame
Of lightning through the tempest;—thou dost lie,
Thy giant brood of pines around thee clinging,
Children of elder time, in whose devotion
The chainless winds still come and ever came
To drink their odours, and their mighty swinging
To hear—an old and solemn harmony;

Thine earthly rainbows stretch'd across the sweep
Of the aethereal waterfall, whose veil
Robes some unsculptur'd image; the strange sleep
Which when the voices of the desert fail
Wraps all in its own deep eternity;
Thy caverns echoing to the Arve's commotion,
A loud, lone sound no other sound can tame;
Thou art pervaded with that ceaseless motion,
Thou art the path of that unresting sound—
Dizzy Ravine! and when I gaze on thee
I seem as in a trance sublime and strange
To muse on my own separate fantasy,
My own, my human mind, which passively
Now renders and receives fast influencings,
Holding an unremitting interchange
With the clear universe of things around;
One legion of wild thoughts, whose wandering wings
Now float above thy darkness, and now rest
Where that or thou art no unbidden guest,
In the still cave of the witch Poesy,
Seeking among the shadows that pass by
Ghosts of all things that are, some shade of thee,
Some phantom, some faint image; till the breast
From which they fled recalls them, thou art there!

III

Some say that gleams of a remoter world
Visit the soul in sleep, that death is slumber,
And that its shapes the busy thoughts outnumber
Of those who wake and live.—I look on high;
Has some unknown omnipotence unfurl'd
The veil of life and death? or do I lie
In dream, and does the mightier world of sleep

Spread far around and inaccessibly
Its circles? For the very spirit fails,
Driven like a homeless cloud from steep to steep
That vanishes among the viewless gales!
Far, far above, piercing the infinite sky,
Mont Blanc appears—still, snowy, and serene;
Its subject mountains their unearthly forms
Pile around it, ice and rock; broad vales between
Of frozen floods, unfathomable deeps,
Blue as the overhanging heaven, that spread
And wind among the accumulated steeps;
A desert peopled by the storms alone,
Save when the eagle brings some hunter's bone,
And the wolf tracks her there—how hideously
Its shapes are heap'd around! rude, bare, and high,
Ghastly, and scarr'd, and riven.—Is this the scene
Where the old Earthquake-daemon taught her young
Ruin? Were these their toys? or did a sea
Of fire envelop once this silent snow?
None can reply—all seems eternal now.
The wilderness has a mysterious tongue
Which teaches awful doubt, or faith so mild,
So solemn, so serene, that man may be,
But for such faith, with Nature reconcil'd;
Thou hast a voice, great Mountain, to repeal
Large codes of fraud and woe; not understood
By all, but which the wise, and great, and good
Interpret, or make felt, or deeply feel.

IV

The fields, the lakes, the forests, and the streams,
Ocean, and all the living things that dwell
Within the daedal earth; lightning, and rain,

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Earthquake, and fiery flood, and hurricane,
The torpor of the year when feeble dreams
Visit the hidden buds, or dreamless sleep
Holds every future leaf and flower; the bound
With which from that detested trance they leap;
The works and ways of man, their death and birth,
And that of him and all that his may be;
All things that move and breathe with toil and sound
Are born and die; revolve, subside, and swell.
Power dwells apart in its tranquillity,
Remote, serene, and inaccessible:
And *this*, the naked countenance of earth,
On which I gaze, even these primeval mountains
Teach the adverting mind. The glaciers creep
Like snakes that watch their prey, from their far fountains,
Slow rolling on; there, many a precipice
Frost and the Sun in scorn of mortal power
Have pil'd: dome, pyramid, and pinnacle,
A city of death, distinct with many a tower
And wall impregnable of beaming ice.
Yet not a city, but a flood of ruin
Is there, that from the boundaries of the sky
Rolls its perpetual stream; vast pines are strewing
Its destin'd path, or in the mangled soil
Branchless and shatter'd stand; the rocks, drawn down
From yon remotest waste, have overthrown
The limits of the dead and living world,
Never to be reclaim'd. The dwelling-place
Of insects, beasts, and birds, becomes its spoil;
Their food and their retreat for ever gone,
So much of life and joy is lost. The race
Of man flies far in dread; his work and dwelling
Vanish, like smoke before the tempest's stream,

And their place is not known. Below, vast caves
Shine in the rushing torrents' restless gleam,
Which from those secret chasms in tumult welling
Meet in the vale, and one majestic River,
The breath and blood of distant lands, for ever
Rolls its loud waters to the ocean-waves,
Breathes its swift vapours to the circling air.

V

Mont Blanc yet gleams on high:—the power is there,
The still and solemn power of many sights,
And many sounds, and much of life and death.
In the calm darkness of the moonless nights,
In the lone glare of day, the snows descend
Upon that Mountain; none beholds them there,
Nor when the flakes burn in the sinking sun,
Or the star-beams dart through them. Winds contend
Silently there, and heap the snow with breath
Rapid and strong, but silently! Its home
The voiceless lightning in these solitudes
Keeps innocently, and like vapour broods
Over the snow. The secret Strength of things
Which governs thought, and to the infinite dome
Of Heaven is as a law, inhabits thee!
And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,
If to the human mind's imaginings
Silence and solitude were vacancy?

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Caught by the River

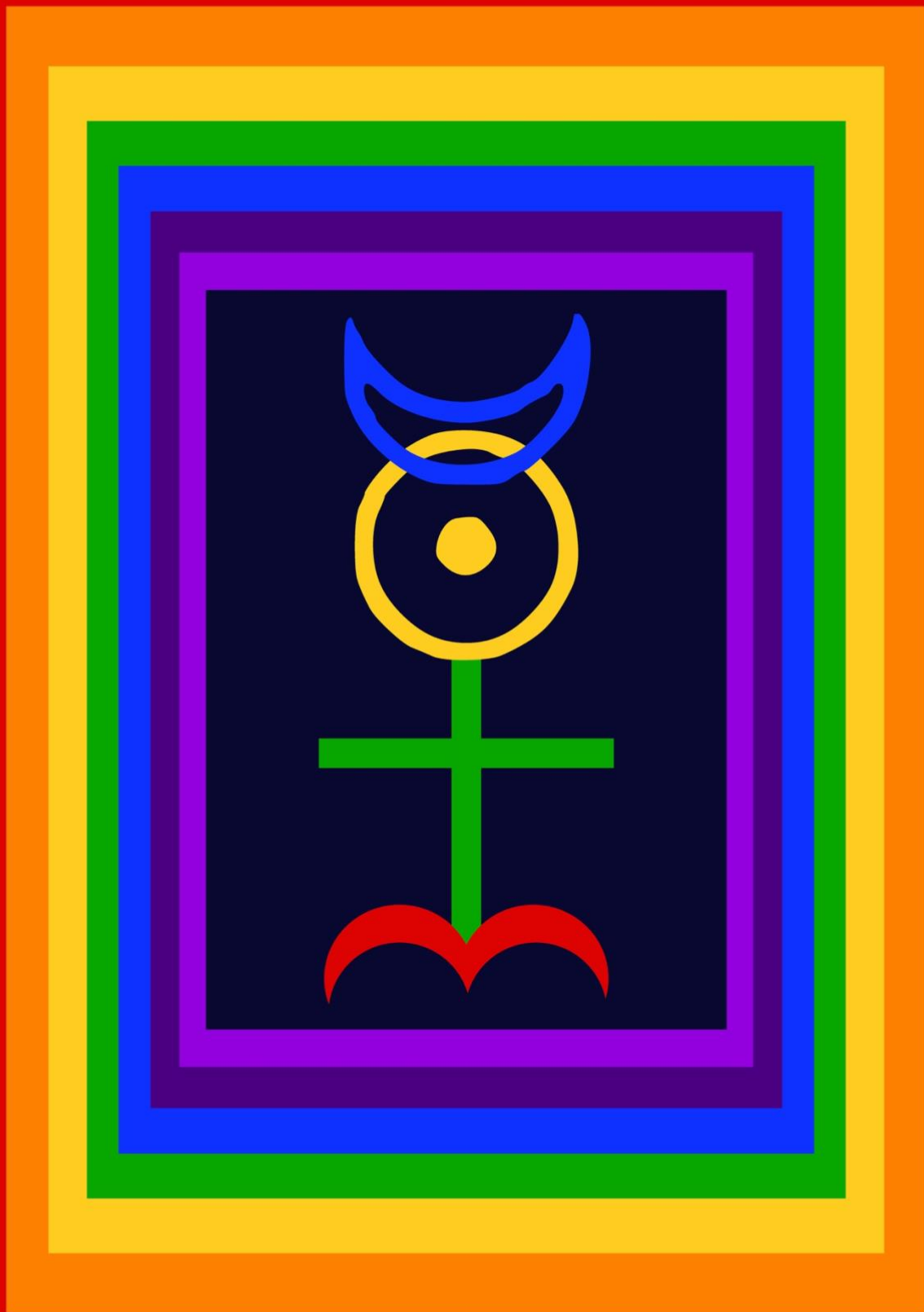


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I WANNA BOOGIE



WITH YOU