



*Divers to Dive:  
A Pandemic  
Dream  
Journal*

**#8**

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## **Sunday 17/5/20**

Charles Olson's definition of "cockhog" from the time he went fishing for swordfish on the schooner Doris M. Hawes in July of 1936: "Harry Fletcher told the story of the man who [said] 'my first wife was an angel & she went to heaven, my second was a cockhog.' When asked what he meant: 'We weren't married long when she reached her little hands down and caught ahold of my nuts. 'What are these?' 'My nuts' 'Well, can't you put those in, too?' That's what I call a cockhog."

In 1940 the Doris M. Hawes went down and was lost at sea in the same St. Valentine Day's storm that Olson mentions in "Letter #41 [broken off]" in *Maximus*, where he performs a leap off his porch into the more than 17 inches of snow that had fallen, the same snowstorm that, unknown to him, had already claimed his old schooner. "With a leap (she said it was an arabesque/I made, off the porch, the night of the/St Valentine Day's storm, into the snow."

I was blown away to hear that when at Black Mountain, Olson would participate in Merce Cunningham's dance workshops. But this beautiful arabesque, on a night of fate, diving, simultaneous to his old crew, best displays this huge man's spontaneous grace. When asked how Olson was as a dancer, a classmate replied, "he was a very large dancer".

## **Monday 18/5/20**

John Nathan-Turner, the late producer of classic-era *Doctor Who*, once tried to chat me up at a *Doctor Who* convention, in Paisley. It is one of my great regrets that I just didn't fucking go ahead and do it, because I would rather be writing the story of how John Nathan-Turner fucked me in a hotel in Paisley than bemoaning how come we didn't. Not that

he was attractive in the slightest, no thank you, but what's that saying about regret? That, precisely.

## Tuesday 19/5/20

One of my best buds, Hal Dean, writes from the States on news of the death of the great Phil May, Pretty Things frontman, true believer, and visionary motherfucker:

“In December 2015 I went to the UK largely to see Stackridge's last gig, in Bristol (I actually saw the last 2... a magical time), AND I had a ticket to see the Pretty Things in Leicester. That was the night before a flight home from Heathrow, which meant I had to catch the 1st train south out of Leicester at some ungodly time the next morning. Getting up there was no easy matter either, but so much for transit tales... the main thing is, I FINALLY FUCKING SAW THEM in a sweaty bar with a crowd of fellow acolytes. It was kind of a Christmas party (I think it was Dec. 23). FUCKING DICK TAYLOR AND PHIL MAY.

Jesus blood be sucked, they were tremendous, did the good songs from that last album, quite a few from the psych peak, and a slew of the RnB tunes that were their early lifeblood, which I heard on Radio London in '66-'68.

OK, it wasn't the band that made *Parachute*. (Well, the XPTs album kinda slaked that thirst a bit, eh?) I love reading about their time on Westbourne Terrace, being the coolest acid-droppers that ever walked. Wally has been posting wonderful home-recording versions of PT classics on F'book. I wonder what he'll do now that his friend since the age of 4 is gone/

The PTs made one of THE great comeback albums when they came out of nowhere with *Crosstalk*, wherein they took the likes of Johnny Rotten and mopped the floor with 'em (not that I have much against John). Phil makes tunes like 'Office Love' sound like the last night on Earth. Even the *Swan Song*-era albums have gems – 'Belfast Cowboys/ Bruise In the Sky' is incredibly moving, to cite one example.

They were such great champions for misfits and downtrodden, the real deal. I talked to both Dick and Phil at the merch table in Leicester - they were the nicest, most down-to-earth people in the place! So much for the glower of Baron Samedi. The only song I've ever sung live – 'Cries From the Midnight Circus'. They are all around this house right now.

All the best, dear friends. Miss you much!"

### **Wednesday 20/5/20**

Heraclitus writes: "Man is estranged from that with which he is most familiar."

"And that ignorance is from the simplest of causes," writes Olson, "that it is our selves that is under investigation by our selves."

This is where I think science comes in. Richard Dawkins' scientific rationalism does nothing to encroach on the domain of God, which is consciousness. But no need for that name, even. The domain of man, is consciousness. And science, really, is no closer to understanding what consciousness actually *is*. I would go so far as to say that science has yet to prove even the existence of the material world, outside of consciousness. All scientific experiments take place inside

consciousness, and are expressions of it, are its contents. We can get down how things act, how their constituent parts interact, we can name process, but we cannot say, precisely, what *\*is\**. Precisely because, it is we, who are is-ing.

Yet there is a feeling, back of everyone, that God is dead and all wonder has been removed from the experience of being this living thing, this is-ing, by science, which, we believe, falsely, has proven that all of our spiritual ideas about it are nonsense, that our experience in itself is hopelessly unscientific and invalid. And so we no longer wonder, as in experience wonder, the wonder of existing at all, the absolute miracle of all of the impossible detail - even as science itself reveals it - we no longer sit back and watch things arise and disappear and ask ourselves, what is this?

Man is estranged from that with which he is most familiar, *because he believes it has been explained already*, and so he doesn't even notice it anymore, he stops looking, like they've figured it all out, so what the fuck else is the point.

But seriously, frivolously, even; look, listen, feel. Where are you? What is this? Ask naïve questions. What the myths do. What stories do. What paleolithic man did, in the caves. What Freud did. What poetry is. Poetry is to see what is happening for yourself, outside of category. And to wonder. But above all, it is to Is. Douglas Harding calls it the rediscovery of the obvious.

It is us, Is, all of our friends and loved ones, is in on the miracle. Which is energy, at all. And as writers we take that energy and we translate it across and we say, here, this rose up in words to tell us how things are, more, to be how things are, to replace symbol, with is-ing, is the thing in itself; poetry, image, myth, story, is our solid ground.

## Thursday 21/5/20

Olson, on Cro-Magnon cup-markings in stone: “That when he used his cutting power to speak for generation as it lay behind women’s bodies he did such a thing as his first thing, the cup, or perfect circle, and beside it such signs of the movement of life greater than the imagination as the spirals, mazes and labyrinths.” Why do I find that so beautiful?

Again, Olson: “...it will come at us new if we don’t put it off by letting the name of it make us familiar with it when we aren’t familiar with it at all (the sun, e.g., which, tomorrow, is a distinctly different sun than that one, today, provably different, just, that we, the air, and the clouds, plus conceivably its own furnaces, shall have varied just enough to make that majority it is which makes it common uncommon, so that tomorrow one can call it by a new proper name to indicate that difference, that, tomorrow, it is changed – it is not the sun, it is a Necco wafer, or it is the mouth of an animal, or it is red man.”

## Friday 22/5/20

The late Douglas Adams was one of the great heroes of my youth; the original *Hitchhiker’s Guide To The Galaxy* radio series, the TV show, too, novels like *So Long*, *And Thanks For All The Fish* and *Mostly Harmless*, his legendary stint on *Doctor Who*.

There’s an amazing scene in *Hitchhiker’s* where they come to some kind of galactic super-computer named Deep Thought and they get to ask it what the answer is to the ultimate question of life, the universe, and everything, and it answers: 42.

It’s a brilliant undermining of the idea that there is an answer, or really anything to be solved or explained, and that even if there were an

‘answer’, what would we do with it anyway? What is the meaning of meaning?

Still I forgive Richard Dawkins all his hoo-ha because he was once married to one of the major crushes of my childhood (alongside Lynda Carter and Charlie’s Angels (except Kate Jackson) and Catherine Schell and Hot Gossip and Diana Rigg and Jenny Agutter and Joanna Lumley and Diana Dors and oh my god Daisy Duke and vampires from Hammer Horror movies too), i.e. Lalla Ward, who starred alongside her then partner, Tom Baker, in two of the best Doctor Who adventures of the Douglas Adams-era, “Shada” and “City of Death”, the latter of which pits Lalla and Schell, together. I only need to hear the words “Bye, bye Duggan!” to either wanna pop one off, or cry.

### **Saturday 23/5/20**

Can’t sleep. I’m reading Edna O’Brien’s 1972 novel, *Night*, on the recommendation of my editor (and Edna’s) Lee Brackstone. “Afternoons merging into evenings, and such a momentum of tears and for what, and for whom? Evening light, sometimes phosphorescent, in threads, finely spun, melting, molten, like oil, like honey, ladles of light, linking the two worlds, the one where we carry cudgels, the other to which we aspire to go and for which the whole of our living life was a frigging pilgrimage.” Night x







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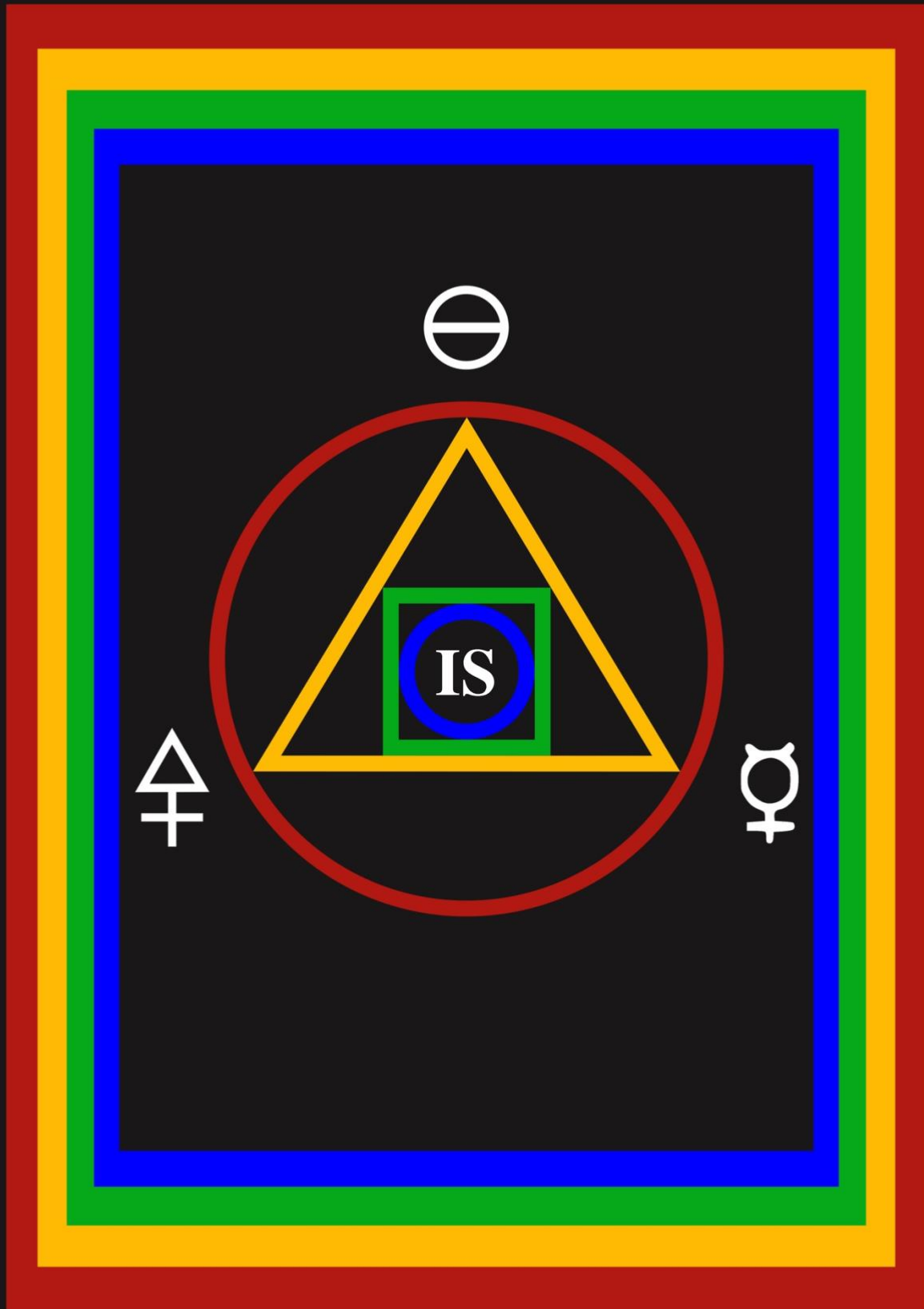
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*WHERE*



*ARE YOU?*