



New Yorker, 22 July 2019

1. Roach Motel Under The Banyon* Tree?

“A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.”
-- William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* (II, ii, 1-2)

For a strong stretch, Sarnat has belonged to two men’s groups. Gerry is youngest member of one where he learns tons from their life experiences

although eldest in the other whereby default I teach. Former winkingly calls itself “Dharma Punks,” latter wincingly “Sangha’s Sour Old-Timers.”

But while first prefers check-in schmoozing, second can’t get enough off our chests mumbling about walk-the-talk convincingly before you check out.

*Gautama Buddha attained enlightenment (bodhi) while meditating underneath a *Ficus religiosa*.

2. Chinese Proverb haiku

The best time to plant
a tree's twenty years ago
--- second best time's NOW."

3. Paintsville's up the hill about a Moonday above Deadwood City.

Sunday after a painful meditation I loved being wheel-chaired around narcotized,
our eldest texted, *Dad, it sounds like your hippy rose-colored glasses
seem to work really pretty great still!*

Monday began getting lifted first into the Subaru's passenger seat
then Sunnyvale's spine MRI station wherein for twenty-eight ear-plug
clang-clang poly-pharmacy crazed minutes

I hallucinated Redwood City, the place another daughter lives, anew:
everyone joined in to transform their town into Xmas Tree Lanes
whose baubles taste juicy like Santa's just-picked oranges.

Avoiding freeways or boulevards, cruising leisure back streets
which recapitulate a family's shared memories, while I hangdog
my head out the window as a Golden Retriever puppy might

my half-century partner, perhaps tuned into her own downbeat
contact high, breaks that slow-motion sick silence as we pass
four parked blue and red SamTrans pufferbillies all in a row,

Ghost ship wind's in those black sails but no homebodies're aboard.



4. Throes Of Proper Lynching

Our trees bleed blood.
Their gaudy birds go crazy.
Bare bodies are cut with thuds.

5. No Petrarchian, I've Always Been A Homer

Simpson back home, after spending hours vacuuming, washing plus waxing the 1942 Woody, Ulysses' on the floor trying to see if yoga helps various shoulder spine hernia miseries.

bag of broken bones odious septuagenarian cul-de-sac, an APB's out for memories of Daddy who played the radio loud while Mama sang around the house in her nightgown.

having circled the earth at least a dozen times exercycling or before that hill jogging, today will be the last breaking a sweat for the six weeks while my new left hip's glue sets.

the backbone of this fool's odyssey remains a search for love. reclining with therapeutic purpose in a pool of warmth, we return waves to kind neighbors & nosy in-laws exploring our epic forest.



6. End As Beginning As...?

99.9999% lifeforms
died today.
75% known species
went extinct.

an asteroid plunged
Earth from
Cretaceous Period
into dark

consumed 70%
of forests,
set subcontinent
India ablaze.

which make it
promising
2 Jupiter moons
contain life.

If you looked up
a “star”’s
luminosity grew
very large.

deep freeze Palogene.
It was as if
we took a billion
Hiroshima

Oceans emptied.
Ash covered
all – only ferns
thrived.

And 66 million
years pass
bark beetle bits,
paddlefish

The previous lush
warm planet
just teeming with
organisms --

bombs’ lone bullet:
peaks rose
much higher than
Mt. Everest.

But vagabond
debris sown
into space had
microbes

conifers blossom
as dinosaurs
give way to
previously trivial

Temperatures
higher
than our sun’s.
Wildfires

mammals which’s
what allowed
us a short time to
thrive ‘til now?

7. Blighted Parched Dreamscape On Saint Anthony of Padua Feast Day



Momentous mourning one morning post sawing down 4 more Sequoias the family planted from seedlings when we moved into an oak grove cabin 35 years ago but which

beloved trees fire marshals plus our naturalist son sadly agreed needed to be removed: that same evening 103 year-old Mom's finally felled, my wife said, *You snored/ whimpered all night.*

There is every good reason to lose sleep over destroying those redwoods. Parched forest is alive in so many ways we really just do not consider enough, and killing it ends up killing ourselves.





8. Deeper In Doc Sarnat's Backyard

Looking like a mango when sated
plus an overripe banana
if it develops melanomatous spots,
the slug's slime numbs
the tongue of predators that nibble
-- as well as attracts mates.
During famine, Northern California
Yuroks who lived here resorted
to foraging bountiful critters as food.
These gastropod members
in good standing of our majestic
redwood community on
occasion leave the adjoining forest
floor's detritus to meander
onto our cabin's many screen doors
where they deposit patterns
resembling mysterious sine waves
perhaps reproducible by
giraffe saliva or maybe Martian snot.



But what muse moi to write
today are my son and his Benjie Blaze
who together roam the land
we are graced to occupy for a while
where Eli spent a childhood
figuring every spring how many frogs

lived in our creek, then later
on the number of males and females,
differentiating subtle sounds.
Now he teaches my grandson to ID
owls by their eerie hoots
from high in Japanese maples nights
before hawks the next day.
I am proud on the trail as the toddler,
picking up a big black feather,
simply says to me, *It's crow, Coachie*
-- though I'm the one who learns.
Mostly silent, this two year-old boy
earns points avoiding poison oak.
Benjamin bends down to gather wild
mint which he offers, *For your tea.*



9. The late Indian summer twilight,
still basically hundred degrees out

9

as rhythm moves toward night,
few frogs/ owl hoots, some crickets

make many musics which waft into
both French doors and open

windows while we begin
to celebrate in confines

of master bedroom
our holy wedding

anniversary
marking 50

years -- with
old golden

retriever
all call

Chico at
wife's side.

I do realize
fully for very

1st time ever
how living in

rustic cabin
within forest

raising fam here
who experience

4 real seasons
(now just a bit

off with global
warming), offers

sanctuary including
quiet plus cleaner air

to grand/kids: it is clear
during earlier r/ toasts

honoring us; not enough
credit went to this beatific home.

10. Operative question's not If but When Windy Hill burns.”

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Per Don the Woodside Fire Marshal's several inspections walking our property with me starting with house perimeter & on new synthetic roof down easement to barn then Shady Trail into 1st growth forest,

“Now through October'll be peak Red Flag days' high temperatures/ gusts plus low humidity when everyone's risk is as strong as weakest-link neighbor, so you all better co-operate

doing these most basic things:
although water goes downhill, conflagrations flow up thus clear brush, cut dead trees, trim branches below my height well as ten feet from cabin

swap out ground vents more than ¼ inch holes for 1/8 to catch sparks, broaden defensible space in meadow below from 100 to 400', keep gutters clean of leaves in order to minimize ladder fuel...”

Living here for more than 36 years, back in those good old days we only had to make preparations for how to survive on your exact epicenter of the San Andreas Fault after that Big One finally hit.



Poetry Editor Hezekiah writes: *Sarnat is very cerebral and at times, for me, arcane. Might I even say surreal? It is heady candy. Theatre of the mind on printed pages—idea art: ‘the backbone of this fool’s odyssey remains a search for love.’ ‘the slug’s slime numbs... giraffe saliva or maybe Martian snot.’ “‘although water goes downhill, conflagrations flow up...keep gutters clean of leaves / in order to minimize ladder fuel...”’ I would describe his writings as colloquial esotericism with a Buddhist-Homeric twist.(Spacing of text and images is poet’s own)
HS*

THE POET SPEAKS: *Like a meditation practice, poetry is personally important because its dis/quiet beauty elevates life both through reading others' work and creating sometimes universal gyrations which express my voice, make me happy, perhaps keep me young(er).*

BIO: : *Gerard Sarnat is a physician who’s built and staffed current homeless and ex-prisoner clinics as well as a Stanford professor and healthcare CEO. Currently Gerry is devoting energy/resources to deal with global warming. Sarnat won the Poetry in the Arts First Place Award plus the Dorfman Prize, and has been nominated for a handful of recent Pushcarts plus Best of the Net Awards. Gerry is widely published in academic-related journals (University Chicago, Stanford, Oberlin, Brown, Columbia, Harvard, Pomona, Johns Hopkins, Wesleyan, University of San Francisco) plus national (Gargoyle, Main Street Rag, New Delta Review, MiPOesias, American Journal Of Poetry, Poetry Quarterly, Free State Review, Poetry Circle, Poets And War, Cliterature, Qommunicate, Texas Review, Brooklyn Review, San Francisco Magazine, The Los Angeles Review and The New York Times) and international publications including Review Berlin. He’s authored the collections Homeless Chronicles (2010), Disputes (2012), 17s (2014), Melting the Ice King (2016). Gerry’s been married since 1969 with three kids, five grandsons with a sixth incubating.*