

Now offering gravy on the side.

Pie From the Sky -

Sweet Words of Pie and Gravy From Your Admins

Issue 3
May 2007



Hey everybody. It's not the standard fare for me to write this introduction, so a) you should feel incredibly honoured, and b) shut up and listen, gosh!

Okay so let me officially offer congratulations to miss silver on her impending doom – I mean marriage – to her hunk of man, Mark. They are getting married on the fifth of May, also known as Cinco de Mayo.

I'm supposed to be joining a potluck that day, and due to the fact that all our white asses are cooking faux Mexican food, we're calling it "Gringo de Mayo".

So yeah, the wedding... All of you should check out silver's cool signature and buy her presents. She's far from home, and won't be having any family

at the wedding. SPOIL HER!!! God knows she spoils us rotten.

In other news, you may be disappointed to find out that the porn-spam-botopolis that once was our member list has slimmed back down to a more reasonable weight. The Rubenator and mme. vodka have found a way to outwit those nitwits. New members may not – I repeat 'not' – post a link in their first post. New members also have to jump through hoops of fire to register, too. Not literally, but who are we – Literally Mary dot com? What kind of site would that be?! Lighten up Francis!

Word on the streets is that we're going to witness our very own first annual wheelchair drag. The incredibly dashing and handsome Mr. Pinchus and our resident schizo, Esther-HoffmanHoward (FAYE), are toeing the line and eager to burn rubber. Pinchus, I think the odds are in your favour...

Here in Oregon, we have spiders, and they get pretty goddamned big. I just had to kill one in the bathroom with a fly swatter. I'm about ready to freak out about that. Just thought I'd share.

Have you noticed our new members? Have you said hello, or are you being standoffish and rude because you don't like change? Well get over yourselves and make nice! As a matter of fact, be so nice that you go out and get some new members we can alienate, apologize to, and then learn to love. M'okay?

In closing I'd like to thank each and every one of you for the contributions you have all made (even Hodge), and for making LM a fucking cool place to hang out.

Peath out.

LANS

Special points of interest:

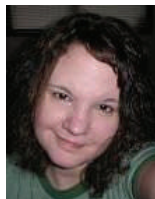
- *What stood out to staff members in Site Pie—Featured Slices around the forum.*
- *Hawke is at it again with another sweet slice of wisdom for the forum.*
- *Is strangedaze really talking about American Idol? Find out inside.*

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Site Pie

Featured Slices from around the Forums



Silver's Pick

Something to Lose

Vodka

there comes a time
when you cannot tell someone
you love them
anymore
because you've
realized
you actually mean it.

Ilan's Pick

Nineteen
By JT

Donny taught me religion with Russian roulette and blind man's chicken. I remember today, another anniversary of his passing. They ruled it suicide. I know they were wrong—one bullet to the head and none in the gun.

I promise you, dearly departed, I'll never forget the Torchlight's last call and the Berlin Pike. Barely drunk, our cash gone to strippers, just another Sunday morning coming down. It seemed no different at first, then on the way home I got religion.

Donny spun out, gravel to street. He ran the first red light at 65 miles an hour. Running the second he hooted and hollered. I yelled, "Pull over! What the fuck you doing!" He locked it up and skidded to a stop.

"Johnny, how old are you?"

I said, "We're both nineteen. What's that got to do with it?"

He asked, "Johnny, do you believe in God?"

"Donny, you know I do. We go to Mass every other Sunday."

"Johnny, do you believe God loves

you?"

"I'm not sure."

He grinned. "You want to find out?"

"How?"

"Johnny, you know when we play Russian roulette with my Dad's 38, we don't play slap shot like in the war movie. It's always free throw. If you slap, it's one in six. If you let it free spin, it's one in fifty at best. Gravity keeps the bullet from the top. So we're gonna play slap shot with my Dodge Dart."

He laughed. "I'll give you one minute. Then you'll find out or walk on home. At 65 down the long 40 hour zone we'll hit every red light. It's all timed out for God and you."

He gave me my minute, an eternity it seemed. I thought long and hard and clenched my teeth, but something kept me from getting out. "Okay, Johnny," he said, "unbuckle your belt. And you better worship like them black people do—there'll be no Catholic Mass." He burned rubber, and at 65 we hit every red light.

Donny yelled bloody murder, laughing and shouting his praises. Then the spirit entered me. I clapped, hollered, laughed, and sang—"Hallelujah!

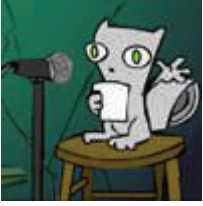
Mother Mary, Son of God! I Love Mom! I Love Dad! I Love The Holy Spirit! I Love God, Sweet Jesus Christ!"

I heard horns blaring and tires screeching, but there were no sirens or lights spinning. And Donny was steady through the commotion—65 miles an hour—no faster, no slower. After each light, he looked over with his crazy grin.

I was laughing and crying turning into the drive. Donny said, "Johnny, now you see. God loves you and he loves all the others who could've died. Now we're gonna climb on the roof and drink whiskey. Then we'll howl at the moon."

We drank hard and fast. A while later Donny asked again for my age. I yelled, "Nineteen Lights, Nineteen Lives!" He screamed, "Damn Straight Brother! Look, Full Moon!" Our howls pierced the sky.

*This is flash fiction meant for a comic book. This is one in a series of about fifty about these kids. If you know of anyone that can do cartoons here for future ones, JT would like to know.



Hot Cakes

Virginity Lost and Found

By Silver

I know it's not just me because I've talked to a friend on the subject and she agrees. So I've decided to write up a little something about it.

When you lose your virginity...

Hm.

"Lose" your virginity.

You know what? Before I get into the topic I want to write about, I'd like to say just how much I hate the phrase, "I lost my virginity." Oh, really? Shall I help you find it? Did you leave it in the sock drawer? I hope you didn't leave it in the car because I left the doors unlocked.

Where is the alternative phrase? "I became a non-virgin three years ago." Yeah. Right. Like "non-virgin" is really going to catch on. So, instead, we're stuck with losing virginity like you lost that pair of earrings last week you were dying to wear to the party tonight.

Yes, you could say, "I had sex for the first time when I was..." but define sex these days. Is sex penetration? Is anal sex really sex? How about oral sex? Or is all oral

sex is (for women) testing to see if your gag reflex is still working?

"Oh, yes. I've been giving head for years, but as long as I have a hymen, I'm a virgin." Don't pop the cherry and you get to keep that shiny medal of virginity.

So there's the physical virginity which, for women, involved the state of the hymen. Okay. But first, you still don't lose it; you break it. You break your hymen (hopefully with some considerate stretching from your partner, your tampons, or your rechargeable friend in the dresser next to the bed). Yet, how absurd is, "I broke my virginity"?

You did? How? Faulty nuts and bolts? Forgot to check the oil? I'm sure we could get it taken to the shop and fixed right up.

It's nearly right up there with "I lost my virginity." The closest you can get to a non-ridiculous statement that isn't tossed up for speculation as to *exactly* what you mean is "I broke my hymen when I was..."

Even then, you're likely to get lewd comments from guys and sympathetic ones from women who think you accidentally did it with a tampon. Despite the dark humor of being able to say you lost your virginity to yourself, you're still stuck as to be absolutely clear.

Silver Talks About...Anything She Can Think Of

Sure, you can say your husband broke your hymen, but what if the man who "did the deed" was a man you can't remember the name of because it happened in the closet that one crazy office Christmas party?

Second, if there's a "physical virginity" being referred to, that implies another type of virginity out there. How many percentage points do I lose for giving a blowjob? Is a handjob less? Add up the calculations and I'm whatever% virgin still.

Oh joy.

And what about lesbians? They can all kinds of sex play without ever having penetration (unless they like toys), thus, technically remaining virgins according to some definitions. If they do introduce a toy into their relationship, strap on or hold a penis substitute, only one loses virginity by penetration only definitions.

Just think, I haven't even touched on the part of men in all this. I could write another article on how they get to take while women get to lose.

In the end, yes, it's all semantics, but that doesn't mean it doesn't piss me off.

Ping Pong!

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TOM - Well Dick it's that time of the month again.

DICK - What you not getting it in-doors?

TOM - No Dick, not that. It's Literary Mary's Ping Pong.

DICK - Oh that. I thought for a minute there you was talking about mad cows' disease.

TOM - Ping Pong. And this month it's between an established Canadian big hitter and a Brit pretender. Should be a good one Dick.

DICK - Should be but ...

TOM - Well it's about to start and it's the Canadian to serve first.

DICK - Is he the waiter Tom 'cos I need a top up?

TOM - Let's just get to the action.

JR

First lets fawn over and stroke gigi, vodka and the staff for introducing this cool feature that allows strangenesses such as ourselves to have this conversation!

So p., tell us a bit about yourself, how you came to be a writer, and to be posting at LM?

P

Ahh! stroking staff, me thinks the pussy

cats are for me which leaves you with Ruben. I have it on good authority that you will need a good supply of tissues as apparently he dribbles a lot when purring. Bless.

So JR, I see you want to get straight down to it, none of this teasing about, no desire to know what colour panties I'm wearing or how long I've been wearing them? as the Cramps might say. Actually, for the record, I'm wearing my lucky extra large Y-fronts which

“(Sitting in large leather chair stroking staff and pretending to be a James Bond villain) Well, my fine friend, so you wish to claim to be a John Robert. Ha! you can not fool me, I know you are really Jaunty Rhododendron, licensed to carry a quill.” - Pinchus

after two weeks are yellowing nicely although I think there's a good three or four more weeks to go before they mature into their full crusty Rik Mayall potential.

I'm going to start with names 'cos after all this time I don't even know your name. Now Pinchus, in a kind of way, is actually my real name. Being born Jewish I have a generous name supply in that I have two; a Hebrew name, Pinchus Elia, and laughably a Christian name, Paul which sounds very ordinary and boring. Just the start of what is the paradox that is me! Pronounced Pinkus although the 'ch' is more of a harsh back of the throat Germanic sound that

comes complete with projectile spittle, I was named after a relative who was murdered in Auschwitz, so there's a kind of defiance in at least keeping a name alive.

Now, JR. You know I'm kinda of hoping that the 'R' is something really really embarrassing like Rhododendron or Roddenberry or Rictus, so come on, spill the beans.

JR

Pinchus, my friend, I'm afraid my terminal dullness may be the albatross around the neck of these proceedings. Most people do call me JR, short for John Robert (sigh-hopefully that sexes up Paul for you in comparison). I'm Scottish descent on my Dad's side and Macedonian on my mother's. Third generation Canadian on both. I began requesting people call me JR a few years ago so I'd be reminded of my 'writing name'.

Did your parents flee from Germany in the 40's? When did you arrive on the scene?

P

(Sitting in large leather chair stroking staff and pretending to be a James Bond villain) Well, my fine friend, so you wish to claim to be a John Robert. Ha! you can not fool me, I know you are really Jaunty Rhododendron, licensed to carry a quill.

My parents, like me, were common or garden Cockney sparrows, but my grandparents were refugees of Cossack persecution before the revolution. I was cobbled together from fluff, pearly buttons, jellied eel bones and a lot of cor blimey huff and puff in the mid fifties.

J.R. Mac vs Pinchus

Brains and good looks were still rationed and I think my parents traded their coupons for some tea and roast chestnuts. I've since heard a rumour that I was assembled after they had been snorting lines of tea at a Doris Day gig from her 'Polka Dot - Micro Dot' world tour and subsequently put me puff and me huff together the wrong way round.

Now I know we should be starting to get down and dirty into the writing stuff, but to my shame I know so little about Canada, and home - what and or where is home? I know you put down Peterborough so I looked it up and I think there's a bit too much of a French mentality to confuse here 'cos there's two. Is one le Peterborough? There's a Peterborough not too far from me, but that's a bit of a dump.

JR

(sitting on jute bottomed chair, stroking quill) My Peterborough is about 100k from Toronto, in the Kawartha Lakes region. Likely we're named after your Peterborough. Canada is a 'cultural mosaic' which is another way of saying the French and English were damned if they would even think of melting together. Now you can throw everybody in: Chinese, Italian, Dutch, Indian--- everybody-which is a good thing. I think Canadians, as Canadians, tend to identify with our geography, the land itself, rather than a particular race or ethnicity.

Speaking of which, you said you were born a Jew. Do you still see yourself as such? It wouldn't be a stretch to see a little Phillip Roth in your latest Poetry

posting... As we are close in age, perhaps you also stroked your staff while reading Portnoy's Complaint?

P

Ha! You don't expect the French and English to get on do you? Come to that the English and the Scots, Welsh, Irish, German etc. etc. etc., do we actually get on with anyone? I agree with you about everything being chucked into one big pot and all fused together like some kind of cabbage and chocolate and squid muffin, well ok perhaps fusion cooking shouldn't be a career choice for me, but I really love the wonderful diversity of multicultural societies. You only have to look at the English language to see how well different elements and influences can combine and work.

I've not read any of Roth's work so had to look up a synopsis of 'Portnoy's Complaint' and just from that could really understand what you meant, although I think we should leave that little discussion for the poetry thread. But yes I am a Jew . but no I'm not Jewish, you see, the paradox of me coming out again. I wouldn't mind getting a job as an Antichrist when I grow up, or should that be the Anti-rabbi. I'm very tribal. Being a Jew, when I was hippyish and then a punk, the colours of the football team I've always supported, being a Cockney, on a global scale being a Brit, it's all tribal to me. Shit, even the field at the bottom of my garden is a designated site of scientific interest because of six thousand year old tribal settlements.

Now patience my children we are get-

ting there, we're just enjoying a little flirty lose the skirty striptease but all the nuts and bolts and nipples of writing will be revealed just like . well, if you lot think your getting off lightly by just reading you've got another think coming 'cos you can insert yer own simile there and not be so lazy. Do you think we should go into families and stuff? I don't think these good readers, (is there really anybody out there?) want to know about me Auntie Ethel's carbuncles or how me Uncle Bert got his genital warts do you? I still think your being a little secret squirrel but I'm certain more will come to light when writing influences and such like are revealed. Shall we slip out of our knickers and bra now or is there something you wish to insert?

JR

Well, yes p., there is something I'd like to insert that I haven't been inserting nearly often enough lately but uh, let's move right along. Writing influences? Hemingway. English Romantic Poets. Ursula K. LeGuin. Walt Whitman. Edgar Rice Burroughs. Shakespeare- more deity than influence-nyah, there are more. I love Hemingway because of his ability to put one into the moment to make one live the story, to (in short) cast a spell that puts us in the realm of the timeless- which is where we should all be living anyway. It's just been the last couple of years I've set my cap to fulfill my potentials as a writer. Before that I knew I weren't ready, plus there were kids to feed etc etc.

What about you? Influences? Writing history? Tribal war scars?

P

How easily we surrender ourselves into

Ping Pong!

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becoming society's gimp! Bill slaves and payroll whores and you look at life from a distance and she looks a stunning seductress in skin tight leather and high heels only to find up close that she's an ugly dominatrix called Doris, an ex-school dinner lady and part time traffic warden with a birch cane hired by the local council with the sole purpose of extracting taxes. And kids! I tried to sell mine, put an add in the local shop window (cost me fifty pence) but apparently, so I was told, it's not the done thing. I even took her on day trips to the lost property office leaving her on a shelf and telling her it was the queue for ice cream, but, according to some tosser in a uniform, you can't do that either - story of my life in a nutshell.

I have to say there are two names on your list I find a little intriguing in that I wouldn't have expected to see them given such importance; Edgar Rice Burroughs and Ursula LeGuin. Are these childhood influences or am I missing something here? Also noticeable by her absence is Margaret Atwood who must surely be the greatest Canadian writer and for me one of the most important living writers. I think you need to explain yourself young man or I'm sending Doris over.

JR

Burroughs was a childhood preoccupation. The adventures of Tarzan, the ape man, and John Carter of Mars. The man had a wonderful imagination, some spectacular ideas, and knew how to tell a story. LeGuin was a little later. She's actually out of Oregon, if I'm not mistaken. Highly intelligent and a Taoist, I

think she has written some of the most thoughtful, yet down to earth science fiction and fantasy out there. I gotta throw in Ray Bradbury here. His story collections, R is for Rocket, S is for Space blew me away at age 14. Really changed the way a I looked at the world.

I can just see Marg blushing at what you said. She's unquestionably a terrific writer, as are fellow Canucks Alice Munro and Leonard Cohen.

Now come on, p. Wild tangents aside, previous questions still stand and let's add this one; Why do you write?

TOM - So what's your summary so far Dick.

DICK - You know Tom, I think the little Brit has had go but I can't help thinking he's punching above his weight and from now on in he's gonna suffer.

TOM - I make you right there Dick, I think the Canadian is going to storm him. He's looking strong and purposeful and full of vim.

DICK - Is that a banned drug Tom?

TOM - No Dick. But the Brit has to keep his eyes open, he's about to lose his G-string and then anything can happen. It ain't gonna be pretty.

DICK - Both eyes Tom. You know in Thailand I once paid twenty five bucks for a girl with two vaginas so I know the value of keeping both eyes open.

TOM - I don't think we need to know this.

DICK - when she opened her legs.

TOM - No Dick, don't go there.

DICK - But I did I did.

TOM - Let's just get back to the action.

P

You know JR you've asked a lot questions and I'm not giving answers, so... let's start with my writing history 'cos to be honest both my writing and reading history only really starts about ten years ago. At that time my life went through a monster major change. I'm sure some of you know from posts and comments I've made both on LM and WF that I'm disabled, which stems from when I was a teeny tiny baby and I caught polio - but recovered, went about the business of life, everything fine, then pretty much out of the blue I'm getting weaker and in constant pain, and well, to cut a long and rather boring story short I discover I have what is known as Post Polio Syndrome. Quickest and easiest, although not entirely medically accurate way to describe this is a deterioration back into a paralysed state - I am assured it won't get that far but it's kinda what is happening to my body. But I had to give up work (veneer preparer). It was Lady P who encouraged me to pick up the pen, so to speak, on the back of all the notes I would leave her, or shopping lists, or if I wrote birthday cards for anyone, they ended up as little stories. She had the faith. I had no qualifications, a patchy education at best, so had to start from scratch,

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went to evening classes to sit A level English Lit and the rest is self taught or just fly-boy winging it. So before we go any further you haven't actually said if you have any qualifications, and work, does that involve or hinder your writing in anyway?

JR

Lady P's instincts were correct. I doubt any regulars here would disagree with my saying that you have shown yourself to be one of our most talented writers. Sort of a cross between Keats, Monty Python and (what the hell) Phillip Roth. An original voice well worth developing to the full.

Qualifications? Ha! I was an English Literature and Drama major before I dropped out of university. Unhappy fool that I was, I had no idea how good I had it there. I also studied acting and directing at Ryerson in Toronto, before I dropped out of that to launch out on a Spiritual Quest (no idea again what I was doing). I became the follower of a notorious guru for six years and spent 19 months residing at his commune in Oregon. This was early to mid eighties. There I met the love of my life, a Dutch goddess who was foolish enough to settle with me in Canada. I struggled mightily with the growing up thing for decades, receiving well deserved kicks in the butt from Lady M (nice touch that, don't mind stealing it from you), financial hardship, and our beautiful children.

For over 12 years I've been a one man home improvement company, doing renovations and remodeling here in Peterborough. I've known that writing is part of my destiny/fate all along but

realized about 20 years ago that the person I was then A: had nothing to say and B: would never be able to feed his family with writing. Though brought up to be intellectual, working with my hands seemed to be good for me, so that

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was the direction I decided to go. I promised myself that when I was older, the kids grown, the writing thing would have my fullest possible attention. So here we are. My work helps the writing in that I'm constantly faced with new challenges, new people (clients), and new locales to work in.

Veneer preparer? I'm picturing a furniture shop, a small room in the back, a tousled, half mad, cockney figure moving between steaming pots of glue and test tubes filled with various stain concoctions..?

What about money? Have you, or do you hope to make \$\$\$ from your writing?

P

A cross between Keats/Monty P/Roth, I like that, and when we come to my influences I'll think you'll see why, and such a big compliment too from someone I've always regarded in the light of a mentor, a very high standard of thoughtful work with a precise use of language who is always willing to help others; 'ark at us, we'll be going on a date next, well your the one with the actor's bent so you can don Lady M's clobber and I'll meet you under the clock at six.

The veneer side was a father to son handed down trade, mostly mass production runs but also room settings and marquetry, but you can teach that, it's having an eye for the grain patterns and the knowledge of the wood that is the real skill, as I'm sure you will know. I've also been yer East End market trader, and a slightly wide-boy (not fat boy) portrait photographer. Yer regular irregular bread and butter nutter.

There's a bit of a hippy backdrop to your life I can really relate to. Do I hope to make dosh? I would be lying if I said no, but one step at a time as I would love to be published, would really feel like a writer then, and besides money has never been my god; never had any, true, but money isn't the motivator where as, without wanting to sound poncy, the desire to produce art has (too late poncy alarm has sounded), as for the actual qualifications, the bits of paper to wave about in the air; it's the knowledge that is really important and that will always be ongoing. But there is something else that has played a major part in my development as a writer, and that I need to expose (!) I think, readers, well come on I know yer expecting some smut here but you can do it yerself - I'm far too busy right now.

Ping Pong!

April 2007

Another reason my reading and writing history is so recent, and not a lot of people know this (oh I've gone all sort of Michael Caine now, be saying things like "you were only supposed to blow the bloody doors off, " and "Zulus! Thousands of 'em" next), but seriously, one thing I don't talk about much is that

"I have lived my life as a non-slave to the almighty dollar, likely starting with the moment I was accepted into law school and promptly turned the other way and ran.

But now, as the leaves of the tree of turn from succulent green to brittle gold, I am ready to cash in. (twirls moustache) Nyah ha ha! My intention is to write a breakout novel that people, hopefully many people, will enjoy reading." - JR

I'm a bit on the old dyslexic side. In terms of reading, for something that was said to be a rewarding and pleasurable pastime, it was in fact a torturous ordeal, and as for writing, well, many a time I was actually discouraged. When I gave up work I also bought my first computer, a second hand Mac. The significance of this still is immense, because with a spell checker, for the most part, I am able to get the words into a recognisable spelling to then allow me to use a dictionary and thesaurus. A systematic plod sure, but this intense and methodical procedure also helped with my reading because it taught me to slow everything down and

read it over and over.

Life is about what you can do and not what you can't do. There is no rule book, so there is no rule that says you have to clamber over obstacles, you just need determination and discipline to work out a way around them. You know, strange as this may seem, I seriously believe that my dyslexia has really made me a better writer by forcing me to take my time and use all the resources open to me. Similarly I look upon my disability, not with any kind of bitterness or anger, but as an odd gift that now provides me with the opportunity to write.

Now before we do get to influences, and we touched on yours earlier but I'm going to demand more because it's not just writers who influence our writing, we also touched upon publication, so I think you know the next question. Also I'm reluctant to let the guru slip though on the sly as that intrigues me.

JR

I've written for a local paper and had some opinion pieces published, occasionally for decent remuneration. Like yourself, I have lived my life as a non-slave to the almighty dollar, likely starting with the moment I was accepted into law school and promptly turned the other way and ran.

But now, as the leaves of the tree of turn from succulent green to brittle gold, I am ready to cash in. (twirls moustache) Nyah ha ha! My intention is to write a breakout novel that people,

hopefully many people, will enjoy reading. I have to say your citing of discipline and determination resonates, as I have surprised myself (ex go-with-the-flow 'hippie' that I am) with my behaviour in that regard. Writing poetry, the haiku a day project, have been efforts to re-connect with my imaginative inner self, as well as to develop whatever writing talent I have. Lately I've been branching out more into prose- short stories, debate, etc. to sharpen my thinking and nurture a voice capable of eloquence. So the novel, begun long ago, gathers steam- choo choo-ing up the first gentle slope of what is a mighty mountain.

I'm even studying (studying!) a book on writing the breakout novel! An activity that years ago I would have sneered at as palpably and damnably UNARTISTIC. But of what use is art that is not read, or read only by the 'initiated' few? I'm damn sure I'm not a Van Gogh, whose masterworks will be appreciated by future generations once I've finished dying in poverty.

You have a magnificent attitude towards your disability, p. I wonder if, along with the other unanswered, you could reply to this. How did you come across (develop?) said attitude?

P

No, I don't regard it as such in any way, just a consequence of the single most basic human instinct; survival. By some strange logic I consider myself lucky having caught it that young so I've always lived with it and never known any different. I've always thought that having to make a dramatic adjustment and face what you might have lost later in life becomes that bit harder to accept, but attitudes are

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taught.

The expression; no pain no gain, originated from the harsh early polio rehabilitation regimes and if I came home from school whinging that some kid hit me and called me a spastic or something I was told to hit 'em back harder and tell them that they're pig ugly. This isn't just about my attitude so much as the people around me. Another important weapon of survival is my inherited sense of humour, and laughter has such powerful qualities. Cockney humour will take the piss out of everything and very much part of that ethos is taking the piss out of yourself. In a similar way the butt of Jewish humour is often the Jew. I laugh at myself a lot, yet I also tend to think I've plenty to be happy and feel fortunate about and that you have to put everything into perspective. If I had been born a couple of thousand miles in a different direction I would be begging on the street desperate as to where my next meal was coming from. As it is I have Lady P and a loving family, I have a cottage in a rural location in the heart of one of the most beautiful counties in England, and materialistically I have more than everything I need. You know, you can't have everything but you can make the best of what you've got and you able bodied bastards might be able to run and jump about but I get the best parking spaces in town and get in places for nothing. And geezers, I'll tell yer what, calipers are a real babe magnet!

Hats off to you JR, you have an impressive CV of almost education, but is there any more you can tell us about your book. Are you prepared to divulge any plot lines or themes or characters at

this point, or should I bore readers to the point of suicide with my influences? Actually that's quite a cunning plan 'cos once they've all keeled over we can sneak off down the boozier for few bevies. We can slip out the back way and be back before the ambulance crews have resuscitated 'em. No one will know.

JR

Firstly, my dear P, I likely would enjoy nothing more than heading down to the boozier with you and downing a beer or three. Shit would be deeply disturbed, songs sung, garments rended, and virtues seriously compromised. The better part of our readership would likely be there with us, inextricably bound up in the sad, soggy mess that is our literary lives.

WAKING UP PINK subtitled 'one Canadian's adventures with a sex cult' is about a repressed Canadian who joins a notorious cult looking for enlightenment, but finds (gasp) love instead.

I fully intend to put you on my 'please please buy my book' list when it is (self) published, so start squirelling away a few quid!

There, now please carry on regardless with boring us with your influences. (btw, anyone perverse enough to stay with us this long is likely amused by anything, so just let 'er rip, mate)

P

Now that guru who is trying to slip by on the sly, or 'ad you thought I'd forgotten, well now he definitely has to be

exposed!

My first exposé, that I can remember, to poetry would probably have been through Spike Milligan, but as I've said, I had no real affinity with anything literate through my childhood. (See the way it linked together there. This ain't rubbish you know, well alright, but it's well linked rubbish. Back to it, in the style of a Rear Admiral's memoirs.)

A few years later my admiration for, no, worship of, Blake begun, but at this time it was in reverence of his art. Not till many many years later did I discover my first literary hero, well heroine actually. Life is full of ups and downs and I was at the point of my most wretched down, with friends dying from OD's and a couple of suicides,

“Another important weapon of survival is my inherited sense of humour, and laughter has such powerful qualities. Cockney humour will take the piss out of everything and very much part of that ethos is taking the piss out of yourself. In a similar way the butt of Jewish humour is often the Jew. I laugh at myself a lot, yet I also tend to think I've plenty to be happy and feel fortunate about and that you have to put everything into perspective.” - Pinchus

a couple of other deaths too and my divorce, and I bought a paper one day, something I never did, and there was a 'poem for the day'; 'Remember' by Christina Rossetti.

Ping Pong!

It was the first time I felt the written word.

After sitting my A Level, I wrote a couple of piss poor short stories, but me being me I decided it was a sink or swim moment and that I should write a novel. I had no idea how to draw a character, how to build a plot, anything really, so decided to read and read (after all I had some catching up to do) going back to the birth of the English novel and moving forward. From gothic novels I came to understand the basics of plot and suspense. From Dickens; characters, weaving different plot lines together and using comedy as a device for dramatic effect. Symbolism from E M Forster, and so on, but even though I had absolutely no desire to write poetry I found it was the poets I was really falling for and who were really igniting my imagination. Of course Shakespeare, Blake and the usual suspects Byron, Shelley, Keats and Coleridge. By now I'm probably besotted with Christina and she can do no wrong, and through her I discover her brother's poetry, from him I discover Swinburne, it's all of these that I think of as my real inspiration. In terms of prose Virginia Woolf, Angela Carter and Margaret Atwood are the giants for me and who I feebly aspire to, or to whom I feebly aspire, or to them that I feebly aspire ...

But this is all bollocks now 'cos the only thing going through their minds is did the guru have a big dick?

JR

Ah Blake! Was and continues to be a

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huge inspiration for myself, as well. I had big prints of his drawings on the wall when I was just out of college. He lived in London, did he not? Were his haunts far from where you live? His American counterpart (in spirit anyway) is Whitman.

Am I to understand that you too have started, (or even finished) a novel? Do tell, in 2500 words or less, what it's all about?

My guru's name was Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, later know as Osho. He passed away many years ago. For those interested www.oshoworld.com or just google OSHO. He was a little Indian guy who somehow managed to attract beautiful people (especially women, which wasn't the least of the attractions for myself at the time) from all over the world. He was almost certainly an enlightened being, though his followers were a mixed bag, to say the least.

P

2500 words; that's longer than the novel! Well for seven years I was shut away by Lady P, fed only on mouse droppings and condensation until I finally emerged with a completed manuscript entitled; 'Sampled!' I'm trying to forget it for a year or so because it still needs yet another rewrite and I want to approach it with a new and fresh outlook when I finally come to do it. Very basically it has an absolutely beautiful slut, a psychotic delusional tramp, a cast of thousands and a punk soundtrack. As you can no doubt tell from that it's about guilt, but I think it has too many themes and too much going on in the background so would benefit a

little simplification.

Like Shakespeare I regard Blake as a genius. He was a Londoner from the Tottenham Court Road area. Finances later dictated he emigrate South of the river to Lambeth and Southwark which

“Not only that, but being interactive, it allows for heart connections between people thousands of miles displaced. People who may never meet, but get to know each other in ways previously impossible in human history. And, relatively speaking, it doesn't cost anything! Damn near miraculous, isn't it?” - JR

were notorious for brothels and general seediness although I doubt this conflicted with his Swedenborgian following and pursuit of free love. An engraver by trade, he self taught to read and write through a volume of Milton, accepted into the Royal Academy of Art only to fall out with Sir Joshua Reynolds over style, put on his own exhibitions, and when no one would publish him he printed, published and sold himself. For me, true punk spirit.

Are there any other people, places things and stuff that also influence your work? In spite of the fact I don't even attempt to write comedy, somehow it comes through as an influence in some way or another. You mentioned Monty P. and I brought in dear old Spike and I suppose hand in hand with Spike would come Peter Sellers, and then there's the slightly anarchic Comic Strip era. I found when writing the novel that com-

J.R. Mac vs Pinchus

edy was creeping in - so I promptly cut it out, only to find that it worked better with the odd flashes of comedy there. Also music, of course there are beats and rhythms but also the atmosphere of music and the challenge of creating a sound scape on the page. I can't think of anyone in particular and it would also depend on moods both of me and the piece but it does play its part.

JR

I didn't mention John Updike, whom I've read quite a bit of. At his best he's stylish and exuberant, a very classy combination. Musically, my likes reflect my age, I reckon. Dylan, L. Cohen, Bob Marley, Van Morrison, Joni Mitchell, Bruce Cockburn. Lately, as I head into my dotage, I can't get enough of great singers like Sinatra, Bennett, Ella Fitzgerald, K.D. Lang, Diana Krall, singing great songs- the classics by Gershwin, Berlin, etc.

I find a lot of my writing, especially poetry, in subconscious material: dreams, images, visions, or in superconscious material- moments that seem to display themselves as poetry. If I can open myself to those experiences and let them happen without interfering or manipulating, then the writing is a matter of just telling what happened.

P

I don't think it's age, more taste and maybe background as we are of a similar age and yet - nah! not for me. Growing up in London when I started going to clubs, say from about '68 I would frequent the blues clubs as that was also where the psychedelic and

underground stuff came out of. Then punk, and now I'm kinda getting into lots of stuff like Unkle and DJ Shadow, but, and I think surroundings play their part here, as this country living is very laid back mellow I'm also getting into singer/songwriters.

Which brings me nicely into environments. I was going to embrace environment when talking about influences, yet I'm not sure if it classes as an influence or a recurring theme. We have a saying; 'you touch that again and I'll chop yer fucking hands off', although we also have a more relevant saying; 'you can take the boy out of the East End but you can't take the East End out of the boy'. I'm sure there's probably someone in Alice Springs right this moment in time saying; 'you know what, you can take Bruce out of the Outback but you can't take the Outback out of Bruce', but still, I find it frequently comes into my work as well as the countryside where I live now, and a closeness with nature that I didn't have before.

And now a crunch question. Poetry or prose? And do you approach them in the same way? I've only been into writing poetry since last summer but I love it. I find it relaxing, fun, and armed with me lappy I can do it anywhere, whereas for prose I have to lock myself away and avoid distractions. I have to sit at the desktop and be disciplined and although it carries a greater sense of achievement - well it's a slog. How are you approaching your novel? I had a beginning and an end, maybe one or two stop off points in-between, but basically the rest was organic. I found that if I tried to plan it out I soon be-

came bored writing it and if I was bored writing it that would make it boring to read. So what's your path?

JR

Well, you write what you know, or as Blake put it 'you become what you behold'. Pretty tough to write outside the settings we've experienced first hand. I do get a strong sense of place from much of your writing. The East End is it? One day I'll get to London and check it out. And those areas where Blake and Dickens hung out.

When I returned to writing, I gravitated to poetry right away. Odd, in that my ostensible purpose is to finish the novel. Poetry juices the imagination and fits the modern lifestyle- you can sit down for an hour or two and emerge with something that feels complete. And it's delightful to have room for spontaneity. The novel's a bit like a wrestling match. I have to circle the thing, feint back and forth, make a few lunges that are fended off, and then finally come to grips with it. Once I do, and the writing comes, time can disappear and off we go. I'm working on developing the discipline to come to grips with it more quickly and get on with it.

Poetry or prose? To be honest, I'm still so early in the game, I don't know. Maybe the answer'll be whatever I'm working on at the time.

How about wrapping things up with this question: What do you think of Literary Mary and forums like this in general? Not the sites themselves, but their potential? Benefits? Drawbacks?

P

I surprised to read that; 'I'm still so early in the game' as your work always

Ping Pong!

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seems to carry so much confidence, but then there will never be a point when we can turn around and say; that's it, I've learnt all of that. Eternal students.

As for forums in general, well I think they work extremely well for poetry, in fact I believe that they have become a driving force behind a resurgence in poetry, but I'm not too convinced about their benefit for prose. The media itself demands instant gratification with minimum effort and to that aim poetry fits the bill admirably, however, for the same reasons I think the art of prose suffers. Work that is deliberately slow paced to carefully reveal an intricate plot, or complex characters or just setting a scene becomes a victim to the requirements of impatient button clickers. Even in short stories the demands of 'now' are in the first sentence. All of this is not helped by the physical strain of reading on-line. Another side of forums that have certainly helped me has been interacting with other writers. Writing, by its very nature, is insular and you need an outside view to really find out where your going, and this is an overriding strength of forums to explore ideas and workshop pieces.

Which brings me nicely to Literary Mary. More than any other site I've been on this has a relaxed laid back vibe where everyone seems genuinely enthusiastic to help each other with honest and thoughtful critiques. Because of stuff that I've talked about, you know, those two 'd' words, my self confidence had taken a massive kicking, yet through LM and the relationships that I hope I'm building this is coming back. - Now can I have lots of dosh and untold amounts of pie please

Jen.

Is it in the can?

I must say, Jaunty Rhododendron old chap, in the nicest possible way, you've been a real sweetie but I'm spitting fevvers 'ere and I need a bleedin' cup of tea so I'm gonna leg it out of 'ere (ok wheel it if you want to be pedantic) and 'ave it on me toes lively.

JR

Lady M says I'm the type of person who likes to have the last word. Utter nonsense of course.

But I'll just add this. What we are doing now is just the beginning. Soon we'll exchange audio and video files as easily as written ones. Computers will have universal translators so people will have the ability to understand and be understood from anywhere in the world. This internet thing is the beginning of a world mind, one that will shrink the world a million times more than the jet airplane did. Just imagine a van Gogh today can post his stuff on loads of art sites and have it eyeballed by thousands who might be ready to appreciate his genius. Bloody amazing, Paul.

Not only that, but being interactive, it allows for heart connections between people thousands of miles displaced. People who may never meet, but get to know each other in ways previously impossible in human history. And, relatively speaking, it doesn't cost anything! Damn near miraculous, isn't it?

It's been a total pleasure Pinchus, truly. Though we may never hit the boozier

together and share laughs and honest talk, it doesn't matter. I feel like we already have!

cheers

J.R.

DICK - Where they gone?

TOM - It's all over.

DICK - Phew! What a relief. I had to go and wash my socks I was so bored. Who won?

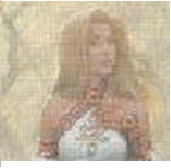
TOM - Couldn't say Dick, I was doing the crossword. There will be another bout next month, that should be good.

DICK - Not these two again? They ponged!

TOM - No, don't worry Dick. It'll be someone interesting next time.

So Ping Pong fans, back next month. Say goodnight Dick.

DICK - Goodnight Dick.



Hawke's Sweet Slice One Cup of Inspiration, Please



Ah, if it were only that simple. But really, it is.

"Inspiration is born of the need for self understanding and acceptance. We write to discover and accept who we are." In other words, observation and experience are the tools of inspiration, but the need for self-love is its impetus.

I don't write every day. In fact, having to write (or rather, *the pressure to write*) is the quickest way to do me in—I'm lousy under pressure but can write like a demon when the muse strikes me. And maybe that's the thing. Writing just to write doesn't necessarily make one a better writer, any more than is writing just to write better than nothing. Sometimes the ideas just aren't there, and if you push it—if you *make* yourself write—often the best ideas don't have the opportunity to form, in effect sandbagging those times when you could have walked away, relaxed, and perhaps had that brilliant "ah-ha" moment.

A dear friend pointed out that I'm "going to pop the bubble of all those 'Write every day' people" to which I conceded that a lot do indeed write every day, and more power to them. At the same time, how often have you heard writers say they have to think about a story? That they have to let it form and stew and come together in their mind? Tons. And I'm one of them. If I wrote the first thing that came to mind, odds are I'd go so far off track that when something really good twiggled that I'd either have to discard the idea entirely, or back so far up in the story that I may as well start over. So yes, sure writing every day works for some. But it doesn't work for everyone. Whatever works for the individual, that's what I think; just write in the way that works best for you and to heck with what anyone else thinks.

Did you know there are a number of writers out there whose work has influenced a nation, a world, but have themselves only written one or two books? Never mind that though. Writing has to be in you, but more importantly, it as to be fun. You have to want to do it and be a happy camper while you are. If you aren't happy, if it's not coming to you, then why bash your head against the wall until you loath it? And yes, you can loath anything, even if you *want* to like it.

Think of a little kid (let's call him Tommy) whose parents force him to practice the piano. So there little Tommy is, twenty-minutes a day, right after supper, parked in front of the piano and pounding out tunes that make the neighbors cringe. At the end of that time, he shuts the piano and walks away until tomorrow's practice when he'll pound it out again. Sure he might get better. Sure he'll learn the basics. But he'll never love it, and I guarantee you, the first chance he gets he'll stop playing the piano and take up something else... like decorating the cat. In other words, it's not fun, and because of that, about the only thing he'll learn is to hate the piano with a blinding passion. Forcing yourself to write when it's not fun and not coming to you is kind of like that—Tommy torture. At least, it is for me.

A writer never really stops writing; it just doesn't always involve the use of a pen, pencil, or computer. Experiencing things and observation are forms of writing. Take, for instance, my mother's day surgery, and the lady in the bed across the way who'd waited so long she fell asleep. Or the quiet man on one side of the curtain and the "talker" on the other—the one with tan shoes and matching corduroy pants... which were about all I could see of him under the curtain. Or my mother, who was so

wired for sound that she turned speed talking into an art form (of course, bells suddenly going off followed a few minutes later by the announcement "Code Red, all clear! Code Red, all clear!" should get at least some of the credit.) All of them will come back to you when you need them as characters or stories that seemingly write themselves. In other words, inspiration can come from anywhere. The trick is to recognize it.

Speaking of recognizing it, do you know your own past can be a wealth of inspiration, one where "honest writing"—*the best kind of writing*—will come from? For example, some authors have to travel to where they are writing about. They need to smell that air, touch that earth, see that hillsides. They need to feel the moment and put themselves there—right in the character's shoes—and walk the walk. Why? Because nothing beats honest writing, and nothing is more honest than one's own perceptions and observations. To commit sights, smells, scenery, customs and even dialect to memory so that they can write not just from research, but from *personal experience*. From honesty. In other words, much of their work is real, if known only to them. But not everyone can afford to jet off to who-knows-where, and it's to those (myself included) I say you don't need to book a plane ticket, because you have your past. Better?—it's unique because it's all your own. And even better still?—it comes complete with dialogue, scenery, emotion, characters and even an outcome. Voila! Instant inspiration and instant honest writing, and you didn't have to leave home to find it.

So one cup of inspiration, please. And fill it to the brim with your own unique observations and experiences. In yourself, you will find all the inspiration you need.



Drewcicle Pie

American Idol

American Idol
by Strangedaze

Some foreshadowing: I fooled you. This isn't about American Idol, that delightfully scathing romp through the miserable 'careers' of would-be pop-stars. Expect little to no references to that smarmy Brit's snide commentary or van full of girlfriends. His cohost's substance abuse issues, though they sometimes brighten my day, will also be off the table. No, this puppy's about a conversation I had with a young(er-than-me) writer the other day.

Some context. The university I attend has one creative writing class, run by a novelist whose career peaked in the 70s. Mordecai Richler, whose generally curmudgeonliness could be said to rival Simon Cowell's, wrote oodles of praise for him, but the Can Lit community, rife with puritans, announced his first novel to be immoral. Which, nowadays, would have ensured best-sellerdom, à la Chuck Palahniuk and Bret Easton Ellis. Anyway, because there's limited space in this class, you have to apply to get in. On average, 100+ people apply, submitting poetry, prose, screenplays, things in between, and 24 get in, split into two sections.

This class is legendary for a couple reasons. One, everyone gets an A. If you're good enough to get in, you're good enough to get a high mark. Unless you don't come to class. Ever. But everyone goes to class. Always.

'Class' is kind of misleading, because it's more like a coterie, or a salon. After countless workshops of bearing your soul and laying

Should ambition be added to the list of traits that make a writer successful, along with discipline, dedication to one's craft, and aesthetically pleasing genitals? Or does ambition merely put you on even keel with the next American Idol hopeful, who takes the stage only to be embarrassed when they piss themselves on television?

your cards on the table, you become close knit, a family. Parties are encouraged. Classmates usually end up sleeping with one another (whoops), lasting friendships are made, requisite drama is enacted. And so on.

If you think it's pretty competitive to get in, once you're there, you fantasize about being one of four

or five selected to an undergrad thesis in creative writing. Things can get ugly. Anyway, I was in the class last year and this year I finished a thesis, a collection of interconnected stories. Two days ago, I presented my thesis at the thesis-presentation-day-thingy. Someone I recently met, someone from this year's creative writing class who desperately wants to do the thesis next year, was there. After I read a piece we all shuffled outside for a break. She approached me and we chatted.

'I took my name out of the running for the thesis group,' she said.

'Buh?'

'Yeah, I don't think I'm ready.'

'Buh.'

Later she professed to idolizing the people who were selected for the thesis, and sighed, noting that she needs more worldly experience to be a successful writer.

I repeat:

Buh?

You know, I always thought that writers were SUPPOSED to be ambitious. Fuck knows I am. Over the last few years, I've met lots of

American Idol (cont.)

writers, both students and the kind who've been published and make a living doing it. I've been a part of a growing campus community of writers, all vying for the scant few creative writing prizes our school offers - bragging rights to be held over all others. Writers similarly scratch and claw for spots in the two campus literary publication.

And, even more paramount, a spot in the creative writing class. I know - I went through it all, checking every week to see if the list of accepted writers had been posted yet. Clicking 'refresh' twice a day on the Arts website to see if contest results were online. Inquiring through the grapevine, asking if the creative writing professor has decided who he's taking for the thesis.

Thus I was baffled by her admission that she doesn't feel ready.

'I'm not on the level you guys are on yet,' she clarified. 'I'll try again next year.'

Next year? Lady, by that time a whole new crop of bright-eyed pen-wielding keeners will add to the list of people who didn't get it this year who are going to give it a second go in a few months.

Is she ready? Probably not. But then, I didn't think I was ready

when I did the shit, but I sure as hell wasn't going to admit it to anyone. I remember going to hear some thesis writers when I was in first year and being dumbfounded by their talent.

'Fucking shit,' I told the wife. 'They're good.'

The wife smiled, knowing that I was already fantasizing about pissed on each of them. Again, maybe that's just me. I don't have idols that are within striking distance. Published novelists - maybe, but only if they're over thirty.

Other students? No thanks. It's not that I hate them as people, but I use them as motivation. Maybe it's the residual jockhood in me.

Maybe playing sports growing up has conditioned me to see everything as a challenge, a way to improve. Boys don't cry, but they also don't admit to being over-matched. And by boys I don't mean 'boys,' as signified by two balls and a wang. Here I'm talking about anyone itching to succeed, whatever gender. Publishing is a harsh mistress (not that I've banged her, but I know people who have).

This girl's response made me wonder about writing in general. Is it like athletics, or business, or all the other uber competitive endeavours

that train you to be ruthless? Our writing professor believes it to be such. Sure, the act itself is simple, the stringing together of words, grammar, syntax, building stories, other worlds, characters. That's something anyone can do. But if publishing were easy, anyone could do it. What separates a published novelist from the weekend warrior?

I guess what I'm really asking is: was she right to withdraw from the class because she didn't feel she was ready? Or should she have jumped headfirst into the flames, preparedness be damned and gutted it out?

Should ambition be added to the list of traits that make a writer successful, along with discipline, dedication to one's craft, and aesthetically pleasing genitals? Or does ambition merely put you on even keel with the next American Idol hopeful, who takes the stage only to be embarrassed when they piss themselves on television?

Send us your thoughts. If they're as juicy as Simon's ass, we might run it in next month's newsletter.



Party Pie and Other Time-Wasting Goodness

Silent

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Not Silent

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[Mysterious Places](#)
[Paxcon](#)
[The Exorcist \(In 30 seconds. With Bunnies.\)](#)
[The Shining \(In 30 seconds. With bunnies.\)](#)

Member Websites and Blogs

*listed alphabetically

[Blogs from the War Room](#)—ckm's blog commenting on everything from movies, people, and literature, to what should be the next line of Hallmark cards.

[Dog-eared Notebook](#)—Cearo's blog filled with poems, thoughts on life, television, controversial issues, and more.

[Gasbagging](#)—Silver's group blog for women.

[Hawke's View](#)—Hawke's personal blog. A blog about this, that, and the other thing. Oh, and writing too.

[I've laid my dreams...](#)—Kagechaos' blog documenting the day-to-day of life and the evil of Wal-Mart and working there.

[I've laid my dreams...](#)(site)—Kagechaos' website with links to all his spaces around the web as well as his comic Black vs. Pencil.

[Fiction Scribe](#)—Silver's site with the 451press network all about anything and everything to do with writing.

[Murderous Musings](#)—Murdershewrote's blogs filled with her ever amusing ponderings about life.

[Mythica](#)—Cearo's second blog all about myths, urban legends, ghost stories, and folklore.

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