

IDLE DOODLINGS: ON DRUGS... Mathew Klickstein



Rite Aid, 1841 N. Western Avenue
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Fart. Vagina. The two words suddenly pop to mind.

The palimpsest list of things to get (one) Deodorant (two) Chocolate bar (three) Bag of chips (the latter two for J, who requested Some chocolate and something 'Potatoey').

We leave the house, and now go into the Mouth of the Beast. On this crisp, halcyon day. The End of Winter, best time of the year, and some whistling, followed by unintelligible Spanish. To the left of us, the rhythmic, steady flow of cars flitting past. The shade of a continuous string of low-awning storefronts to our right.

The sound of plastic being crunched behind us; perhaps a tire ran over a plastic bottle. The whooshing wind of the constant cars. Young, old, woman, male, white, Mexican: the people of LA appear glum today. Except for this one smiley bastard in aviator glasses and Spielberg hat and beard. And beneath his hip, professorial jacket, he dons a blue shirt with yellow Helvetica spelling out New York City anyway.

The moist, verdant grass; the awed hush of sudden silence. Is it suddenly four pm? But, no, and then the impending build of the whooshing cars, and they're upon us, to our left and glazed in a lemony sunburst cloaking; the whole world, in fact, lathed in a fine golden dust.

Well, we have to cross *some* time, so we might as well now -*Christ*, it's taking forever. Even the little electric ghost avatar on the other side is still. Then amnesty from the other side of the street, and we're off... to finish the quest to the long-awaited Rite Aid.

Pitch In! the filthy blue trash receptacles outside tell us in the shade and under the strange structure of a hospital entrance.

Inside.

And just as Gladys Cooper at last discovered the truth when she took the hand of Robert Redford as Death, we too find that the entrance to the Other World comes in not a bang but a whisper. Serenity, peace, and equanimity. Soundtrack by U2, who still haven't found what they're looking for, off of the unseen, crackly, and faint speakers in the heaven of that low, sooty tiled ceiling lined by exposed double-tube fluorescents above us (stark white light, not sickly green).

Now, it's later-day Sarah McLachlan and suntan lotion stacked next to fire logs, which in turn are under the religious candles bearing the portrait of Jesus or Saint Antonio on the face of their towering cylindrical glass. Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe.

A diminutive elf -old redheaded Lucille Ball Junioresque woman flitting by with dour expression on wizened, freaky, pale face splattered with red freckles; dressed in festive red and green- strains at the boxes and plastic bags in both hands at her sides as she trundles down the way past us, dropping them with a loud clatter and a huff, both noises breaking the otherwise hypnotic tranquility.

The 'Book Section': Carly Phillips. CL Wilson. Heather Graham (not the lovely actress). *Charlotte's Web/La telaraña de Carlota*. Cold Play on the juke now. Magazines, the lifeless yet humming photo developer machine, photo albums wrapped in tight plastic with black and white photos of smiling people from the 1950's on the covers as samples.

Clocks. Lots of clocks and watches. Hannah Montana DVD. *The Simpsons Movie*. Vests.

A long, whimsical aisle of bright but solidly colored detergent bottles and the like. A wondrous, surrealistic rainbow. Orange Tide, blue Purex, green/purple/lime/yellow Xtra, white Clorox, fuchsia/powder-blue/seagreen Downy/Purex/Nice N Fluffy, and an equally titillating, resplendently colorful array of dish soap bottles, glistening in their diaphanous glory, showered upon by the light of those severe whites from the low-ceilinged heaven above us.

A model on one of the boxes of makeup reminds one of Scarlett Johansson, and this gets one to thinking: She's really only truly 'Sexy' in Woody Allen's *Match Point*. In all else, she's merely 'Cute' or 'Freakishly Adorable.' So how much of her being sexy in *Match Point* was due to Scarlett herself, and how much of it was due to Mr. Allen? Although... she *was* also in *Scoop*, a film in which she did not look her best at all... How can someone make being chubby such an endearing quality? Scrap it.

Clamor returns at the front register, as though it had been waiting all along, bottling itself and storing its energy for our predestined arrival. Babies gurgling, at least three different languages fending for superiority, people coming, people going, whole families who never made it all the way into the store where we had been investigating. Everyone in a harried rush, and their loudness attests to that.

While we wait in line, the crowd dissipates -less for the Mexican transsexual to our left, and an old Asian couple in sweats in front of us. The rustling of the lithe, white plastic bags and the Beatles' Love Me Do is all we can hear now.

'Five oh eight,' the tiny Filipino behind the counter tells us, and we're given our sundry wares, ushered out of the store by cacophonous Spanish and the harmonicas of Love Me Do.

Outside, under the shade of that hospital-entrance-esque entrance/exit, a baleful dog awaits, gazing at us as Cerberus. And why not? For this exit from the Rite Aid is really only an entrance back, back into the mean streets of LA.

Time slows down when you're on drugs. Life can become suddenly something to study at hyper-close range. As with a base-jumper, the closer to the target, the better. Go.

Drugs allow us to better break down certain common impositions set upon us by what's known as Society. Already, since we're forever being inculcated with the mendacious information that drugs are bad, once you take them and find that they're *not* bad (as is generally the case) there is a massive break-down already: Society was *wrong*! Once we do this, we break through and find that 'Society' is in fact fallible, that it is merely one level of what we call 'Reality,' and then the true existential exploration can begin.

Of course, there are those who are a little off, anyway. For these people, the incessant drive of searching and playing with all the rules that comes with the correct usage of drugs only enhances what is already off about them. The good judgment they already lack anyway allows them nowhere to go when they're forced to make a difficult decision. Of course, they may have made their mistake anyway, as it is very simple for a psychopath to become psychotic, with or without stimulants.

And this is the worst part of all these drug-related celebrity deaths and scandals of late: such news only further taints the already tenebrous reputation of the Drug Culture. Which is a shame, truly, if you think about it. Drugs aren't just for bored sybarites and Mid-West wastrels.

We can go as prosaic as the late Bill Hicks (who, of course, was far from prosaic himself) and say 'Well, if you don't like drugs, then take all your records and burn them, because most of them were probably made by people who were taking a lot of drugs.' There's much more to it than that.

No, the real problem here is that the Drug Culture and drugs in general aren't given the opportunity to show what we can achieve as a people, let alone the opportunity to defend themselves. Being stamped as 'Someone Who Takes Drugs' automatically means that person is a danger, rather than an explorer.

Dr. Carl Sagan was also a great explorer of different worlds. He may have been a huge pothead, but perhaps that only augmented his curiosity and allowed him to pursue multiple possibilities in multiple worlds. Dr. Sagan forever implored the world to throw down its weapons and work together to search out the unfathomable sky. So too do we now need to cast aside our ignorant dispersions of the Drug Culture and realize that in so doing, we will be in fact opening up whole new worlds.

For, when one is on drugs, he is indeed in touch with a whole new mysterious purview of possible worlds and realities. Each new reality should be explored and mined for information, for answers and solutions.

In the beginning, this was par for the course. The intellectuals were the ones experimenting with these new vegetables: Sigmund Freud, Aldus Huxley (whose family is clocked at having the highest IQ in the History of Themerica), Carlos Castaneda, Robert Anton Wilson, Walter Benjamin, and, later, such cultural influences as Harry Smith, Hunter S. Thompson, Ken Kesey, and William Burroughs, Philip K. Dick, and Brian Wilson, just to name a few.

Heck, the ethnobotanist Terence McKenna maintained that humans arose from apes that began eating psilocybin mushrooms. And who knows? Perhaps it's all bunk. But, perhaps not. How will we ever find out until we realize that there is indeed a huge difference between *abusing* drugs and *using* them, between those who can handle a wild trip, and those who -because we're all biochemically unique- simply can't? To use that great Burroughs truism: 'A very negative experience for someone could be a very positive experience for a writer.'

Maybe if they *hadn't* taken drugs, some of our greatest artists and thinkers would have approached a greater deal of their potential. Perhaps Hendrix would have been even *better* if he had stopped with all that LSD nonsense. Possible. But, again, how will, how can we find out the answers to such questions while we destroy and castigate the Drug Culture?

As much as we need to explore the outer regions, so too do we now more than ever need to explore the realms of the inner worlds, the worlds of the mind. We live in a very orderly universe where even Chaos can be measured, defined, and monitored. Would drugs be here were they not of some kind of tool to be utilized?

Unfortunately, those who might want to break through the yoke of society as young hotheads tend to give up on the dreams of their nonage when they reach a certain age or when they start a family. As the great American authoress Flannery Carver Billings once admonished 'It is far more likely that a rebel will become a conformist than it is that a conformist will become a rebel.'