

Consider yourself Triggered.

Unnamed Journal

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L'Art est inutile Rentrez chez vous

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sirs,

I object, in the most strenuous terms, to the content of your most recent issue. This was clearly the result of a collection of lazy minds in love with their own cleverness. Had you taken seriously the effort in making a literary magazine, providing, as it were, a window on the mind of the *zeitgeist* any failures you might have suffered would at least be *aesthetic* failures. You would have confronted the myth of Sisyphus. As it stands, you have failed as writers, and as human beings. Kill yourselves.

Yours,

W. Wiggins

Okay, first off, how are you objecting to our most recent issue, when this is the first one? Are you a wizard? Second, this reads like a pile of paint-by-numbers dudgeon. You could have sent this to literally any literary magazine in the country, which leads us to believe that you have done exactly that. So this at least tells us that we've managed to get onto some kind of listserv for crochety old-school trolls who pretend to have read Camus based on reviews of his work on Amazon.com. So we're going to mark this as a victory.

Hey azzholez,

You suck and your magazine sucks and you can't get any women because you suk 2 hard respect D, who's D? D's NUTZ LOLOLOLOLOL

-Gandalf420, LorD of teh SCHWINGS!!!!!!111

Methinks you have partaken too much of the Hobbit's weed, sir. Particularly the Longbottom Leaf. Criticism like this makes us wonder what your basis of comparison is. I mean, aside from High Times? The Atlantic, we're not. So maybe put that in your pipe and smoke it. The Atlantic, we mean. Not....Oh, never mind.

Hey Guys,

I have been looking soooo forward to this issue! I am big fans of you guys. That one thing that you did? In that place, with those people? That was awesome. I never expected that twist at the end. You just don't understand. I

am your Biggest Fan!

Seriously, I've been looking forward to this for six months. You guys rule.

Signed,

...

Um. Thanks?

We have no idea who you are, or how you know enough about us to have been excited about this for six months. That's a weirdly specific time frame for something that is, well, "fledgling" would be generous. So either you're the intern who takes two hours to fetch my dry cleaning (where the hell are my ties, you little punk?) or we should just go ahead and change all the locks on the doors.

That said, we appreciate your excitement. Please keep it no less than 100 yards away. UJ

FROM THE PUBLISHER

Somehow, no matter how many times you say now to a person, that person will assume you to be on board with whatever he feels like doing. Which is how I find myself the publisher of a literary magazine. It all involves unfulfilled clauses in contracts and restraining orders issued by Miley Cyrus, but mostly the second thing.

Literary magazines are either a dying medium desperately clinging to existence by suckering untalented wannabes, or a significant platform for whatever esoteric sophistries we've decided will make life marginally more bearable for those deciding between a career as a prostitute or a runner for the Crips. Determining which would get in the way of day drinking, so I've decided to leave the answer to the readers. Let someone know when you've figured it out. Just not me. For our inaugural (but unfortunately not final) issue, we have a handful of pieces by our senior writing staff (I made the mistake of asking who was on our junior writing staff, and the girl working out the knot in the small of my back got all huffy). First, cheerful milquetoast Tim Fibble offers a short memoir entitled, with uncharacteristic brusqueness, "The Time I Slapped a Midget." *Agonistes* ensues. Then there's something post-modern and self-congratulatory about the *Dick and Jane* books. Anyone who gets past the second paragraph is dumber than I am. Author's name rings a bell, though. Then a piece of actual fiction, about a beaver or a groundhog or something. I remember liking that one.

Thomas Fitz
Publisher

THE TIME I SLAPPED A MIDGET

By Tim Fibble

I know. You're not supposed to call them midgets. You're supposed to give them the approved vagary, to grant the linguistic illusion that you could be talking about a child, and not specifically calling attention to a genetic abnormality. Because sensitivity means murdering specificity, which is about the only good thing the English language has going for it.

Yeah, okay. Political Incorrectness cast. Now for the story.

It's not like I'm the kind of guy who enjoys physical violence directed against the helpless (not that mi... "Little People" are helpless, but in a physical confrontation, c'mon. You know what I'm saying). Or any kind of violence for that matter. Come to think of it, I don't know that anyone actually enjoys violence. Even BDSM types. It's more like a simulacrum of violence.

See? I'm the kind of guy who uses "simulacrum" instead of "simulation". Have I demonstrated my education? Does that give you enough evidence that I'm not some mouthbreathing Neanderthal type?

Neanderthals. They got a bad rap, I'll bet. How could they not? We basically destroyed them. So how can anyone believe anything we've said about them? History written by the victors and all of that.

Sensitive and culturally aware, in spite of that soupcon of political incorrectness earlier alluded to. I just contain multitudes, don't I?

Right, right, I'm getting to it. I'm not going to keep yammering on tangents and then never actually explain the incident that involved me slapping a ... you know. I mean, how irritating would that be? Just talking and talking and never explaining what it's all about. There's even a term for that kind of story. It's called a "shaggydog." Not sure about the origins of the term. Maybe I should google it.

Is there a term for diverging from a story while in the act of promising not to diverge from a story? Or when a promise to diverge becomes itself a divergence? Perhaps it should get called a "punchable". That at least would be funny.

Speaking of punching....dammit, I'm sorry. Okay, nothing but midget-slapping from here on in. Wait, that sounds wrong. I mean, the purpose of the

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story is not to enjoy midget-slapping. That's not a Rule-34 subculture I'm trying to reach. Like I said, that would just be a midget-slapping simulacra, and now I'm repeating old riffs.

This is not working. I need a drink. Then maybe I'll start again.

* * *

Okay, got some small-cask bourbon in me. Ready to tell the story. I slapped a midget in the bathroom of a bar. There, a significant detail. A setting, even. A men's room. In a bar.

It's not what it sounds like. Let me be more clear: I. Am. Not. Into. Midget. Porn. Or sex with Little People in general. Not to say that there's anything wrong with that. If you're into that, that's fine. But I'm not. I like normal (and let's stipulate that "normal" is at best a problematic term, of course) -sized people. And by people, I mean women. Again, not judging. I thought about being gay once, but *de gustibus non est disputandum*, as it were. I think that's the right way to use that term. My Latin was mostly picked up by literary osmosis.

THE POINT IS: I did not slap a Little Person for sexual reasons. Just in case you were thinking that (not to say that you were thinking that, but if it occurred to me, who is manifestly not into Little People, then it could be common enough to require the disclaimer). I slapped a Little Person for non-sexual reasons. Which makes it better, said no person ever.

I don't know why I'm having such a hard time telling this story. I'm not the one who got slapped. Other things happened to me as part of this...kerfuffle, but it was minor compared to the slap I put on this guy. I mean, I got all of that, as they say in baseball. He's gonna have my handprint on his face for a month.

Now I'm bragging. I don't mean to brag. I'm not a fighter. Really, I'm not. It's going to be difficult to believe that I slapped a midget in self-defense, but honest, at the time, that's what it felt like.

I mean, okay, is a midget a threat to you? Not really, you'd have to say. But are you just supposed to let them treat you like shit, put hands on you with impunity? What the hell are you supposed to do? When a person, any person, little or no, is literally dumping a flagon of piss on your head, What. Are. You. Supposed. To. Do?

Yes, piss. He was pouring piss on me. Fresh piss, at that. This was after he punched me in the groin. Yeah. So it's safe to say that he initiated hostilities. So this ought to be an open-and-shut case of punishing aggression. But somehow, because he's Little, it doesn't feel that way. It feels like I did something wrong.

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But I didn't. Did I?

Would it make any difference if I said I was drunk? Is that an extenuating circumstance or an aggravating one? I can see it going either way. I mean, obviously, you do a lot of things drunk that you wouldn't do sober. Alcohol impedes normal brain function, and thus, normal decision-making. But it's not like I was *forced* to drink alcohol. I willingly drank it, knowing and even *intending* said impairment. Because that's why you drink. So if you deliberately made yourself drunk, are you intending the bad actions that you might commit because you are drunk? An interesting ethical question.

Don't think I don't see what I just did there: open up the whole "unreliable narrator" trope. Obviously this is my version of events; you ask the other guy, he'll have a different story. So things that I noticed he won't, and vice versa. That would have been true even if I hadn't been drunk. It's like *Rashomon*. You know, the Kurosawa movie? Difference in perspective, that's all it is.

And my perspective is that I was drinking in a bar, with some friends. One of those friends was a girl who I've kind of been into, and I've sort of picked up the return vibe, but it's all very under-the-table. And not in that hot way. I mean, we're at that phase where we want to put it out there that we like each other, but we're scared of the consequences, so we're keeping it very friendly and ironical. Theoretically, as the man, I should be the one to move first. That's what's expected. I mean, feminism and all of that, but my experience is that women just don't feel comfortable making the first move. But I'm just not a player like that. It's not my style to be all "Hey, attractive friend. Accept my tongue in your mouth." So my plan was, everybody comes out, has a good time, and then we both have enough social lubricant to damn the torpedos and express what we want to express. For good or ill. I mean, if she's not into me, I can accept that. I'm a big boy. Won't be the first time, won't be the last.

This is useful information, right? This gives you an eye to my emotional state. I was fine, literally fine, with whatever. I do not suffer from, what's the euphemism? "Intermittent explosive disorder"? Fanciest way of saying "asshole" I've ever heard. But I mean it. Becky's a free agent, on whom I have no claim.

Yeah, her name's Becky. She's pretty. She dresses nice. She has this confidence and air about her, like when you're with her, everything's okay. Problems don't happen around Becky. Or if they do, she hides it well. Maybe that's all show. Maybe on the inside, something else is going on. But it makes me feel good, is my point.

But somehow, no matter how much I drank, we just didn't seem to have that ease about us. I couldn't start the ball rolling to get the conversation at that

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level, you know? We seemed off of each other. We seemed bored. Everyone seemed bored. Tense. Tired.

So, more drinking happened. But instead of silliness and abandon, we just got more tired. More unable to hear each other. More confused by the noise. It was just weird.

Becky was the first one to get up and go. I tried to stop her, to get her to stay for another round, but before the words were out of my mouth, she just caught my eye and shook her head. I gave a wan smile and nodded. She left with friendly waves to everyone. I excused myself to the bathroom.

I never said that rejection didn't hurt. I mean, this might not even have been rejection. But it felt that way. When you want something, and you can't have it, it hurts. That's all there is. I'm not saying she was a terrible person for it. I'm not saying I won't get over it. But at that moment, I needed to get far away from everything.

The men's room was U-shaped, in that it had a wall of urinals, with the stalls on the other side and the sinks on the base of the U. Weird, I know. It means if you have to pee, you go deeper into the restroom in order to wash your hands, and then back towards the urinals to leave. I never got it, but someone had a laugh with it, I guess. It was usually kept pretty clean, as men's rooms go. Nothing was obviously stained or in ill repair, and you didn't have that sliver of condensation that men's rooms sometimes have (I think I can fairly omit any discussion of women's rooms and their common features. I'm not trying to be exclusionary; it's me that's been excluded from the experience of ladies rooms. Insert call to action about unisex restrooms here, if you want).

I entered the U-shaped men's room with angry push, strode past the bank of urinals, went around the wall, and ducked into the farthest stall. Which is always the handicapped stall. Now this is an important point: in all your days, have you ever actually seen a handicapped person use a handicapped stall? I don't mean, watch them use it. That would be gross. I mean seen one go in or out? Because I never have.

And I gotta be honest, I'm not even sure why they exist. I mean, if you're in a wheelchair, you're probably paralyzed, right? So aren't you, you know, going into a bag or something, anyway? So why do you need a special stall? It's not like you're going to hand- express the contents of your bag out, and then flush it.

Or maybe you do. That sucks. I shouldn't judge. I feel bad now. I should educate myself. I'm sure there's a reason for it.

But still, it's not like there have been many instances of a traffic bottleneck

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towards the handicapped stall. I've never used one when there was a guy who obviously had need of one. I don't even have a particular preference for using one. I mean, the extra room is sometimes nice, but is it nice enough to walk all the way down to the end of the men's room (and that's another thing, why aren't they closer? The parking spots are...)? No, not really. Most of the time, in a men's room, I'm trying to do my business and go. Closest stall will do.

But that longing for escape drew me down the row to the furthest place I could get away. A cave to lick my wounds. I didn't even have to excrete anything. I just sat on the oversized toilet, pants on, and swirled around in that introspective torpor that always follows romantic disappointment.

I don't know how long I was in there. Heartbreak stretches out the present. And I don't care how pretentious that sounds. I know what heartbreak is, and I know what it feels like, that that's where I was at that moment. When you get your head wrapped around someone, and it just dies cruelly, you can be heartbroken, even if you never touched her.

Maybe I should have touched her. Regrets.

Anyway, I was in there for a good bit before I had that moment. That moment when you see two feet in front of the door of the stall. And they're ... they're not tiny feet, but they're small. And you can see knees. Which you can't normally see. And you realize that there's a little person waiting for you to come out of the stall.

Had that experience? No? Don't judge.

I'll admit, the first thing I thought of was he was going to give me shit (pun not intended. Intention is a fallacy, right?) for using the handicapped stall. But then I started doubting that a little person would care about using the handicapped stall. Is that roll-bar particularly useful for them? It seems unlikely.

So you know when you open the door that nothing good is going to happen. It's going to be weird and embarrassing, *at best*. But you want to open the door before the guy has to knock, because that's only going to make it worse. No one wants to have to knock on that door.

Sometimes you just have to face the midget at the front of the bathroom stall, is what I'm saying.

He was drunk. Like, one eye pointing in a different direction from the other. And yes, I'm sure that wasn't just part of his condition. He's a little person, not a mutant, you insensitive prick. He was swaying just ever so slightly, as though he was trying to decide which eye to focus on me with. He was holding

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a half-full pint of dark beer. It's important that the beer is dark. Because I earlier mentioned that he dumped piss on my head, and it was fresh piss. So you can put from your mind the idea that he was holding the piss handy. It wasn't piss when we started. It was beer.

Which means he didn't plan on dumping piss on me at first. I'm trying to see the good in him, you know?

He finally settled on his right eye. He looked at me with his mouth a thin hard line and visibly stifled a belch.

"You," he said, in a voice that was deep and growly. And I won't lie, I was taken aback. You just expect little voices from little people. Also, his voice seemed to indicate some kind of displeasure. Now, of course, I know that something else was at work, but at the time, this little guy (that has different resonances than "little person", doesn't it? I won't use it again) was intimidating. Fear of the unknown and all of that.

All of which just explains why I stood there with a goofy look on my face, expecting him to go on.

But then he didn't.

"Me," I said.

"You," he agreed.

We stared at each other like a pair of goats for what probably seemed a lot longer than it was. But who knows? Finally, just to expedite the whole process, I said "Can I help you?"

"Yeah," he said.

"Okay," I said.

He lifted his head slightly, as if he was now ready to get down to business. "You ever...slap a midget?" he said, and then took a pull of his beer.

I wanted noted for the record that he said it. I know there's a difference between him saying it and me saying it, and I know memory is a cloudy thing, but I distinctly recall being surprised that he would use that term. I remember remembering it, if that makes any sense.

"No," I said. "No, I've never done that."

"Ya wanna slap one?"

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“Why would I want to slap a m...Little Person?”

“Fuck,” he said. “I fucking hate that term. Little Person.” He took another drink.

“I’m... sorry...?”

He waved it away with a fairly normal-sized hand. “You’re fine. That’s what everyone says to say. And I suppose it’s more respectful, or whatever.”

“Yeah,” I said, trying to figure out if this was the weirdest conversation of my life.

“S’just...” he said, belching. “It’s a lie, you know... A child is a little person. A pygmy is a little person. Ever seen a fuckin’ pygmy?”

“Are pygmies real?”

“Fuck yeah, they’re real. Seen ‘em in the national geographic. Looked ‘em up on the Wiki-Pedia.” His head seemed to nod a little.

“Wow,” I said.

“Yeah,” he said. “Real as you or me. Not that short, though. I mean, noticeably short, yeah. But still a hell of a lot taller than me.”

Yep. Inter-shortness-subculture rivalry. This was happening.

“The point is,” he said, pointing a finger at me, “Nothing gets to be my age and stay my size except one of me. Kids grow up. Pygmies grow up. I stay this fucking size. I am unique among Persons of Small Stature, because I am a fucking midget. Dig me?”

What could I say? “I dig you.”

“So you gonna slap me, or not?”

I’d really hoped we were past that. “Do you want me to slap you?”

His eyes widened in sheer incredulousness. “Why the fuck you think I’m talkin’ to you about it, if I don’t want it?”

“I don’t know why you’re talking to me at all.”

“Cause I’m lookin’ to get slapped, you dumb mother fucker.”

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I started looking around the room for hidden cameras. This was ridiculous. I was being punked.

"It's not a sex thing," he said. I looked him in the eye. "I'm not into big people."

"Are you even gay?"

"How does that even matter?"

"I guess it doesn't."

"Fuckin' A," he said, and finished the contents of his beer. He then let loose a powerful belch, and put his glass on the floor.

"So what I guess I'm wondering..." I started to say.

"...is why I want to get slapped." He unzipped his fly.

"Yes."

"Fair question," he said, as he urinated into the empty glass, fixing me with an eye while he did it. He pissed for a really long time, grinning at me.

"Good for you," he said when he finished, hunching to put himself away. "Most people have this need to see if everything's proportionate. I appreciate your fuckin' restraint."

Just go with it, I thought to myself. "You're welcome."

"So have you ever been slapped?" he asked.

"Since I was a kid?"

"Yeah."

"No."

"Me neither."

"That's good though, isn't it?"

He shrugged at this. "I suppose it is. But on another level, it's just means we've avoided that which we fear."

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Don't you love it when drunks get philosophical on you? Especially stranger drunks in the men's room. This guy hadn't even told me his name, and here he was wanting to wax deep with me. If it had been anyone else, I would have just "Yeah"ed away from him, nodding politely. But for some reason, be it confusion, be it some sense of obligatory deference to his community, be it simple curiosity, I could not find the will to extricate myself from the situation. Besides, he was still blocking my exit. I would have had to push past him, which felt wrong.

Oh, ye gods of irony.

"Are you saying we shouldn't fear violence?"

"No," he said, shaking his head with emphasis. "We absolutely should fear it. But if we avoid everything we fear, then when it happens, we won't fuckin' know what to do."

"So you want me to slap you so that you can know what to do in case someone slaps you."

"No," he said, pointing a finger. "Not in case someone slaps me. In case one of you slap me."

"Oh," I said.

"Oh," he said. "You can't fuckin' know how we feel around you mother fuckers. How it feels to walk around lookin' at your fuckin' crotches all day. Expecting any minute to get picked up and hung on the nearest wall hook like a goddamn coat, for giggles."

"Has that ever happened..."

"Were you not listening, asshole? Of course it hasn't happened. Yet. That's why I *fear* it. I fear violence from Big People, okay? And I'm tired of feeling that fear."

The sound of the men's room door opening outside of our view silenced him, but he kept his finger pointed at me, and he kept his angry eye on me. For a moment neither of us said a word.

Then we heard someone using the urinal bank on the other side of the wall. We both relaxed. He put his finger and his eyes down. For a moment I thought he might heave, but he kept it in. "So now you know," he said.

"Look, man, I'm not trying to..."

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He waved a hand. "I get it," he said. "It's a weird thing to just ask. You're not a bad guy. You're not lookin' for fuckin' trouble. You may not even think it's funny to knock a midget around."

I must be sheltered. That never even occurred to me. I mean, on some level, violence is funny. Otherwise shows like *Wipeout* (a dreadful Americanized copy of *Most Extreme Elimination Challenge*, which is itself a mashup of Japan's *Takeshi's Castle*, but whatever) or *Three Stooges* movies would not exist. But that violence should be especially funny when applied to those who can't defend themselves had not entered my thoughts. I said as much.

"There you go," he said, hands up in discovery. "You're not that kind of guy. You're not the kind that enjoys violence."

I nodded. Perhaps this was going to resolve itself. Maybe we could have a drink and work it out.

"That's why you're fuckin' perfect," he said with a smile.

I smiled back.

"So here's what I'm gonna do," he said. "I'm gonna punch you in the balls, and then I'm gonna pour this glass of piss on your fuckin' head."

"What?" I said, and he punched me in the balls.

He was not kidding about little people seeing people's crotches all day, because he nailed me. I mean, *nailed* me. It was that perfect mix of pain and tingles that only the best crotch shots offer. My face met the cold tile before I even knew it. Then, as I struggled to understand what was happening, I stopped feeling the cold tile and felt lukewarm liquid splash my face.

I know, hardly a surprise at this point. I didn't even foreshadow that, I bluntly predicted it. I suppose I could go back and edit the announcement of piss poured on head, make it a subtle misdirection. But the thing about having a glass of piss poured on your head is that there's nothing subtle or misdirected about it. It's piss. Poured on your head.

I yelled. I gagged. I staggered up. I saw a guy, probably the one who was just using the urinal, at the other end of the bank of stalls, staring with one of the most purely confused faces I have ever had the pleasure to see. And I saw this as-yet unnamed drunk-philosophical dick-punching cockbite, laughing at me.

"You mother fucker!" I said.

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“Do it!” he said, his eyes angry, his mouth still drawn up in mirth.

So fuck it, I thought. Fuck politeness, fuck decency, fuck this situation, and fuck him. And fuck you if you don’t like it. Yeah, I slapped him. I extended my arm and spun my torso like a jujitsu master. I windmilled that midget.

He went down with a hard *ugh* that was satisfying as hell. And then he “woohooed” and started laughing again. I went to grab him, lay another slap on him, or something like that. The blood, she was up, as it were. But I never got the chance, because the guy at the other end of the bank of stalls ran up on me and grabbed my arms and shoved me into the wall.

He was the bouncer. Of course he was.

* * *

There’s not much else to tell. I must have been more drunk than I realized, because when I tried to explain myself, to the bouncer, to the cops, to my friends, I couldn’t make myself understood. Somehow, they took it to be I asked the guy to hit me and pour pee on me.

The little person declined to press charges. His name turned out to be Steve. Steve Richards.

Honestly, I’m over the whole thing. It’s entirely possible that I’ve misrepresented the entire affair. I was drunk. I was feeling low and angry with myself. I might have been aggressive with Steve, to the point of him punching me defensively. That could be true.

But that’s not the way I remember it. And he never said that it was. So you might say I’m the only one telling this story. History written by the victors and all of that.

But if this is victory, why doesn’t it feel that way? UJ

THE DYNAMICS OF INTERBEING AND MONOLOGICAL IMPERATIVES IN DICK AND JANE:

A Study of Psychic Transrelational Gender Roles

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1. Expressions of absurdity

If one examines the textual paradigm of reality, one is faced with a choice: either accept Derridaist reading or conclude that consciousness is part of the defining characteristic of truth. Therefore, Baudrillard promotes the use of the textual paradigm of reality to analyse class. The subject is interpolated into a capitalist paradigm of narrative that includes culture as a whole.

However, the characteristic theme of Geoffrey's[1] critique of Batailleist 'powerful communication' is the role of the observer as reader. Several deappropriations concerning not narrative as such, but prenarrative may be found.

Thus, the subject is contextualised into a capitalist neomaterial theory that includes narrativity as a reality. Foucault suggests the use of the neotextual paradigm of reality to deconstruct the status quo.

2. Dick and Jane and capitalist neomaterial theory

"Class is used in the service of outmoded perceptions of sexual identity," says Sontag; however, according to Wilson[2], it is not so much class that is used in the service of outmoded perceptions of sexual identity, but rather the failure, and hence the paradigm, of class. In a sense, the premise of Batailleist 'powerful communication' holds that discourse is a product of the collective unconscious. The main theme of the works of Dick and Jane is the difference between society and sexual identity.

If one examines capitalist neomaterial theory, one is faced with a choice: either reject Batailleist 'powerful communication' or conclude that the media is fundamentally dead. However, Bataille uses the term 'the textual paradigm of reality' to denote the role of the observer as reader. Marx promotes the use of capitalist capitalism to read and attack truth.

"Society is part of the meaninglessness of reality," says Baudrillard. Thus, the

characteristic theme of McElwaine's[3] essay on the textual paradigm of reality is the dialectic, and subsequent absurdity, of cultural truth. The within/without distinction which is a central theme of Dick and Jane stories, especially Times and Places, while also evident in Days and Deeds, although in a more self-sufficient sense.

But the subject is interpolated into a capitalist neomaterial theory that includes narrativity as a whole. Many narratives concerning Batailleist 'powerful communication' exist.

Therefore, Parry[4] suggests that the Dick and Jane works are an example of mythopoetical nihilism. Marx uses the term 'capitalist neomaterial theory' to denote the role of the poet as reader.

It could be said that Derrida's analysis of Foucaultist power relations states that reality is used to entrench class divisions, given that the premise of capitalist neomaterial theory is invalid. The primary theme of the Dick and Jane works is the meaninglessness, and thus the stasis, of neoconstructivist society.

But if the textual paradigm of reality holds, we have to choose between Batailleist 'powerful communication' and the semantic paradigm of narrative. Any number of discourses concerning a self-supporting totality may be revealed.

In a sense, Lacan suggests the use of subcultural narrative to deconstruct hierarchy. Sontag's model of capitalist neomaterial theory holds that culture is responsible for the status quo.

3. Consensuses of genre

"Sexual identity is part of the rubicon of consciousness," says Sartre; however, according to Bailey[5], it is not so much sexual identity that is part of the rubicon of consciousness, but rather the defining characteristic, and eventually the paradigm, of sexual identity. Therefore, Geoffrey[6] suggests that we have to choose between capitalist posttextual theory and material objectivism. The characteristic theme of Wilson's[7] critique of Batailleist 'powerful communication' is the bridge between class and society.

The main theme of the Dick and Jane works is a semiotic paradox. Thus, the textual paradigm of reality holds that language serves to exploit minorities, but only if sexuality is distinct from truth; if that is not the case, we can assume that the State is capable of intentionality. The primary theme of Abian's[8] essay on capitalist neomaterial theory is not discourse, but subdiscourse.

But Derrida's critique of Batailleist 'powerful communication' implies that art has significance. Many narratives concerning the textual paradigm of reality exist.

In a sense, Sontag promotes the use of capitalist neomaterial theory to read society. Marx uses the term 'Batailleist 'powerful communication'' to denote the

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role of the writer as observer.

Thus, the characteristic theme of the Dick and Jane works is not discourse, as posttextual structural theory suggests, but neodiscourse. If capitalist neomaterial theory holds, we have to choose between predialectic libertarianism and textual theory.

However, Foucault suggests the use of the textual paradigm of reality to attack colonialist perceptions of sexual identity. Any number of materialisms concerning the genre, and subsequent defining characteristic, of postdeconstructive society may be discovered.

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WHERE THE BLUE CLOVER GROWS

By Michael Dower

It is common knowledge in the animal kingdom that groundhogs possess an acute sense of ennui. And rightly so: a groundhog's life is a miserable one. The fat little creatures spend their bewildered lives trying to slake their ever-present existential crisis with the sweet taste of clover. When there is no clover to be found, they sleep fitfully in their burrows. Any time a groundhog finds itself mulling over questions like: Why do I feel so incomplete? Am I an unfinished beaver? What happened to my tail? Either clover or sleep soothes the sting. I am all too familiar with these questions, for I too was a groundhog.

I felt I had it worse than most of my people because I was cursed with an amazing amount of insight; well, at least for a groundhog. I found my incompleteness both haunting and difficult. I engaged in the shameful vices of avoidance and indulgence, only to shower myself with guilt and contempt for alleviating my malaise. The absurdity of my life was all too apparent.

There must be more than this, I thought to myself countless times. There just has to be.

* * *

One late spring afternoon, while chomping sweet clover with my yellowed incisors, I came across a blue specimen mixed in with the usual green. I didn't think much of it at the time; I just mowed it down with its green-leaved brethren on my way to temporary satiety, which I achieved shortly thereafter.

This day marched in time with all the others that came before it, filled with tedium and angst. It was all I knew. Shamefully stuffed, I retired to my burrow where I dozed and dreamt of being a beaver. I swam with my paddle-like tail down a river toward my home: a modest dam I had constructed myself. Upon entering my dam, I shook the excess water from my oily coat. I surveyed my dwelling's integrity. I found the construction to be sound and decided it was very much to my liking. I felt a joy unlike any I experienced in the waking world.

Alas, when I awoke, I found the usual grey morass of life waiting. Yet something about the new day felt less oppressive than usual.

Bah, no matter, I thought. Surely the crushing talons of despair would soon return me to the depths I knew so well. There was no question that I would soon go back to sleeping or gorging myself on flora.

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But those dreaded daggers never descended. Though it was strange to think about, I felt as if my burden had lessened, if ever so slightly. I was not suddenly in possession of some sort of unflappable platitude; my life was still depressing, and I continued to loathe myself. But I loathed myself just a little bit less. My struggles had eased just ever so slightly.

What could it be? I thought. I spent a good while making myself miserable wondering why I wasn't miserable. After protracted mental strain, I realized exactly what had made me feel better. I whistled and stood up on my hind legs as I recalled it. I simply had to have more of the fantastic blue clover.

I returned to the patch that had contained the blue wonder but could find no more of its ilk. My budding joy withered. I lacked the will to eat any of the sweet, green clover, its abundance mocking me. What I hungered for was gone.

Forlorn, I waddled home. The following day I returned once more and found nothing. The day after that, I returned again to the place that had fed me the smallest of succors and again, my search was for naught. As I turned to leave, disgusted with my pretensions of hope, a squirrel approached me.

I did not care for squirrels in those days. Perhaps I was jealous of their arboreal acrobatics, their opposable thumbs, or their ability to find food anywhere. Perhaps I envied them the simple joy of a short attention span. Whatever my reasons, I felt squirrels were beneath contempt.

The squirrel before me paused and said, "Why have you come to this place?" I bristled. What concern was it to him? He continued, "I have been watching you these last few days. You come here and search the ground intently, yet never seem to find what you are looking for, despite the abundance of clover."

Incredulous, I asked him, "Why are you spying on me? Haven't you any shame?"

"What are you searching for?"

My limited contact with squirrels had never included questions. Usually they just spouted incomprehensible gibberish, followed by a "wheeee!" before vanishing from sight. But this squirrel was different; he was more focused, intent. His speech was slow and deliberate, without the hint of an ellipse or a catch phrase. Curious, thought I, and suspicious.

Facing him, yet backing away, I said, "a few days ago, there was single piece of clover with blue leaves. I don't know how, but eating it made me less miserable." He listened to me, motionless, unnerving me with his attention.

"I understand," said he, "I happen know of a place where you can find more of the

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blue clover, but the journey is long and treacherous."

"Where is this place?"

"You must follow the sun to its resting place," he said looking toward the sun, adding, "I can guide you, if you wish to go."

My belly made a strange sound, and my bowels thoroughly emptied while I stood in front of the squirrel. There was a long, shameful pause before I said, "I want to go." The squirrel cocked his head to the side, a gesture of acknowledgement.

"We will depart tomorrow."

"But why would you help me?" I asked.

He looked at me – or rather, looked through me – for what seemed like an eternity. Then he spoke, "I was not always a squirrel. I was born a chipmunk, living in fear and desperation as all chipmunks do. I spent my days darting about recklessly, afraid of my own shadow. I could not abide my life as a chipmunk, so I set out to find peace or die. Eventually, I stumbled across a great tree that bore strange fruit. I ate some of the fruit and was transformed into a squirrel. Ever since that day, my life as a squirrel has been peaceful and full of plenty; far superior to my life as a chipmunk."

This all sounded rather far-fetched to me. Besides, he still hadn't answered my question. "That's a lovely story," I said, "but what is your motive for taking me? Why would you help me?"

"I will help you because I remember living in discontent, in misery, like you do now. And I will help you because I can. I know how to get to the tree with strange fruit. It has an abundance of blue clover growing around it." He paused, taking note of the way my eyes bulged. "Come back here in the morning, if you want to make the journey." And with that, the squirrel ran up his tree, vanishing into the foliage above.

My head swam as I trundled home. I slept fitfully that night, and I ate little when I awoke before first light. Stiffer with trepidation than with sleep, I returned to the tree where I had found the unusual clover and the unusual squirrel.

I spied him on a branch above, and I knew when I saw him that he had been tracking my approach. My bowels emptied themselves involuntarily again. I paused to muster my resolve, trying to squish my fear and loathing into courage. When that failed, I decided that not looking a fool in front of a class of creature I despised would have to suffice. I greeted the squirrel, and we began our journey immediately.

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I had lived my entire life on the edge of a wood, yet I had never traveled far into it. The first part of our journey would take us well beyond the place I had always called home. It's unnatural for a groundhog to travel so deep into a wooded area because all of our predators live in places such as these. We much prefer meadows or clearings that sport a few trees, or even the edge of a forest. In those environments, food is easy to find and predators are easy to spot. In short, the woods were a dangerous place for us to travel.

But the squirrel was unconcerned with danger. He stayed above me, moving from tree to tree. Occasionally he relayed simple information about the terrain ahead, whether or not he saw an owl, and how much longer we could travel before the sunset. Banal, but useful.

After two days journey we came to a clearing near the side of a mountain.

"We must cross the clearing," said the squirrel.

"Do you think it's safe?"

"There's no way for us to be sure," he said. "We don't have enough daylight left for me to scout it before we continue. We'll have to take our chances together."

I felt scared, and could feel my bowels trying to empty themselves. I fought to control both my fear and my guts. The squirrel waited for me, and when I was ready, we began crossing the clearing.

The air was still, and I couldn't hear any birds or other animals about. The squirrel stood up on his hind legs sniffing the air and craning his neck in surveillance. Everything was dead quiet.

Across the clearing I could make out something moving. It was a indistinct blob in the distance. It moved quickly, but I couldn't make out what it was. Then I screeched and froze in horror as I saw the vague shape take on the definite form of a black bear. It was coming straight toward us.

"Hold your ground," said the squirrel. Then he sat down on his haunches, his little paws crossed before him, looking straight ahead.

"But, but, that's a bear!"

"Yes, I know, and we have no hope of outrunning it. We must wait for it to pass or face it down before we can move on."

I ceded what little control of my bowels I had gained. I chattered and grunted and

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turned to run.

"If you run, then the bear will eat you," said the squirrel.

"Damn it all! This is your fault! If I hadn't listened to you then I wouldn't be here."

The squirrel looked at me sideways, our doom snarling, lumbering closer, "you made your choice to come. I only offered to guide you. Now, turn and stand your ground." I screeched again and stood next to the squirrel, head low, teeth grinding.

And then the bear was upon us.

The bear towered above, growling and howling, "what puny morsels! Why couldn't you be fatter? How am I going sleep through the winter eating food like you?"

"Madam," said the squirrel, "I think you're right. We are meager food for a bear. Perhaps you'd be better served seeking richer food than us."

"What? What did you say, little squirrel? How dare you tell me what to eat? I should eat you right now for being disrespectful."

"I mean no disrespect, madam. But as you yourself said, we are puny morsels."

This exchange betrayed how strange my travel guide was to our would-be predator. She snorted and began pacing before us, watching us all the while. The squirrel watched the bear, while I stood mute, paralyzed with fear.

"What kind of a squirrel are you?" She growled.

"I am a chipmunk that dreamt of being a squirrel, and one day, my dream came true."

"Eh, what's that? You look like a squirrel to me. What's all this chipmunk nonsense?"

"I'm afraid an explanation would take away valuable time from your search for food, madam."

"Well, I supposed I'll just eat you then," said the bear, leveling her jaws at the squirrel.

"I wouldn't recommend that, madam."

"Eh, what's that? Why shouldn't I? I'm a bear. I'm bigger than you. You can't get away. Besides, your friend over there looks very tasty." I shrieked in fear when the

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bear said this, and she must have felt encouragement because she moved to stand over us again, putting us both within the reach of her jaws.

“If you eat me,” said the squirrel, “you’ll be a victim.”

“Eh, what’s that? A victim of what, what could you possibly do to me, squirrel?”

“I told you I was a chipmunk that dreamed of being a squirrel. When my dream came true, the sky darkened and the rains came and so did the sky-fire.” The bear paused and raised her head to listen to the squirrel. “It...touched me,” he said. “Since that day, a small piece of the sky-fire has lived inside me; it is what made me the strange squirrel you see before you. If you eat me, you will release the sky-fire and be killed.”

“What?” said the bear, and she turned to me, “is this true?” I was too petrified to speak, but then she roared at me, “Is this true? Answer me little groundhog, or I’ll eat you on general principle!”

“He is very strange,” I stammered, “how could it not be true?”

The bear backed away a little, and began pacing around us, looking at us both with disgust. She orbited us several times, and then stood in front of us again. She snorted and made a noise that sounded more like a yawn than roar.

“Hmph,” she said, “fine, go. You’re a weird pair, I’ll give you that.” She moved past us. “Bah. Both are too strange and not enough meat. Probably would’ve given me indigestion anyway.” The bear charged away, disappearing into the woods behind us.

I let out a gasp of relief and lay down on the ground. The squirrel stood watching where the bear had disappeared and then turned to me.

“Well done,” he said, “you stood your ground.” He paused, probably noting my prone posture. “That wasn’t too bad, was it?”

“Are you joking? We almost died!” My eyes protruded from my face in anger. “If you hadn’t thought of that lie about the sky-fire we would both be dead.”

“It wasn’t a lie,” said the squirrel. “In a manner of speaking, something like sky-fire really is inside me,” he turned away to look at the area where the bear had emerged. He was silent for several moments. “It’s...complicated,” he said. The squirrel faced me again. “You’ll understand soon enough. Come, we must go.” And with that, he set off toward the opposite side of the clearing.

I ground my teeth and snorted, but I followed him.

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* * *

Our journey the next day passed without incident. Halfway through another day of travel the squirrel chirped, "stop."

I looked about nervously. This place seemed no different from the rest of the forest we had already traveled through. The light of day was subdued, but I couldn't see anything amiss. Nothing smelled off. What was so important that we had to stop?

The squirrel descended from a tree and stood on his hind legs in a mote of sunlight. "There," he said, gesturing to a spot in the distance. "By traveling in that direction we will soon come to a river. You should begin preparing yourself to cross the water, now."

For all of their numerous flaws, groundhogs are decent swimmers, yet they seldom swim. I have long suspected that they are reticent to swim because of a common dream amongst groundhogs, one that involves transforming into a beaver. During the dream, the groundhog feels free and weightless as he or she navigates the currents. Some have dreamt long enough to begin building dams within the dream world.

Waking from these dreams – back to the vicissitudes of their inelegant lot – crushes the heart of the groundhog more than anything else. Those that have the dream must push aside a nagging suspicion that they are just incomplete. Some never succeed in dismissing that suspicion.

We came to the rushing river and its deafening din. I had never seen so much water in my life.

The previous spring, my home had flooded while I was sleeping. A few of its tunnels collapsed, but I swam my way out through the muck. At the time, I was terrified, but that was nothing compared to how I felt looking at the river. I was completely out of my element.

Once more the squirrel came down to converse with me. He must have seen me freeze at the sight of the water. He looked at me for a moment, and then said, "I'll cross first." My mind was so numb with fright that I didn't really understand what he was saying.

The squirrel climbed a tree on the river bank that had leaning branches. He went to the end of the tree's furthest reaching limb, high above the torrents. I stood, gaping, as the squirrel flung his little body out into space above the violent waters. He looked suspended in the air for what felt like an eternity.

My heart all but leapt from my mouth as he gripped the narrowest part of a branch

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from the opposite shore. He struggled, twisted, turned, and clambered up the branch. Then made his way toward the trunk and hurried down to the ground. A moment later he was on the river bank. The squirrel stood upright, staring at me.

It was my turn to cross.

I would have to swim the roiling currents to continue on. I began grinding my teeth and screeching. Why not go home? I thought. Why had I bothered with all of this nonsense anyway? What was the point of happiness if it killed me for seeking it? For a few moments, I could only hear the sound of my own screeching.

And yet, there was the squirrel, still standing on his hind legs staring at me from the opposite bank. We locked eyes. He didn't look away or stand down while I continued to screech. It was as though he was trying to transmit courage and resolve through our shared gaze.

I knew I couldn't find my way back home at this point: I would have to continue on or die. I was committed for the duration whether I liked it or not. I felt my jaw relax; my eyes stopped trying to escape their sockets. My breathing slowed. This was destiny.

In a trance, I waddled down to the river bank and splashed in.

The water was cold and cruel and very fast. Within two little strokes of my front legs, I was already being carried away by the current. I struggled and fought and fought for breath, but I fatigued quickly in the overwhelming river and went under half-way across.

I was whipped in every direction. Water invaded my nose and mouth. I tried in vain to paddle myself toward shore.

Though my vision was beginning to close in on itself, I thought I saw a root of some kind. I latched onto the root with my jaws; it was slippery, but my teeth were sharp enough to gain purchase. I dug my front claws into its length, trying to pull myself up, but I began losing consciousness.

Drifting into a cold, wet sleep had an odd, weightless quality, not unlike floating continuously upward. Then my head broke free of the water's surface. Tiny, thumbed paws pulled me onto shore.

"You've made it," said the squirrel.

I vomited for the first time in my life before blacking out.

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After a day of rest and eating grass, I was back on my feet again. I was shaken, yet determined to see the journey through, even though I was sure that it would kill me. The squirrel did his best to reassure me in his laconic way. He never said we had to continue on, but we did.

We traveled another day. And on the next, we came to what the squirrel said was the final hazard. We had to cross the narrow but deadly territory of fast moving, foul smelling beasts, which killed, yet never ate their prey. Their land was narrow and hard, made of some kind of stone that stretched off to either side and into the distance. It was unlike anything I had ever seen before.

“I have heard a legend,” said the squirrel, “that humans travel inside the beasts. What’s more, the legend says the humans made the beasts and the beasts’ land. The beasts’ speed lets the humans cross great distances. The humans maintain both the beasts and the stones for this reason.”

“What nonsense!” I said. “We have better things to do than sit here and conjecture about the comings and goings of humans. Let us pass this place and move onward.” The squirrel did not argue with me, he cocked his head to the side and continued to wait.

We stood next to the stone for a little while, but not a single beast came past. I couldn’t see any scavengers circling the sky above; now seemed as good a time as any to cross the stone. Once more, the squirrel offered to go first, but I declined his offer. I walked slowly onto the edge of the beasts’ land.

The surface burned my paws. I waddled quickly to the middle of the stone, and then stood on my more calloused hind paws, listening for any signs of trouble. I could only hear familiar sounds.

“Those who hesitate are lost! Cross to the other side, you fool!” called the squirrel.

I was back on all fours and moving as fast as I could. I reached the opposite edge of the stone and then climbed a dirt slope to the protective shade of a tree. I turned around, whistling for the squirrel, but he was already halfway across.

The squirrel paused, barely slowing down, as if something had caught his attention. Then he was moving faster than before, bounding across the other half of the stone toward me. And then I heard it too: a great rush of air, followed by a low steady roar. A beast was closing fast.

I watched my companion leap toward my location. He was almost to the end of the stone when the predator hit him. I watched in horror as the squirrel flew through space with his limbs and tail spread out; he landed on his back, amongst some dead leaves.

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Standing on my hind legs I looked for any sign of motion. I whistled for him. No response. I clambered down to where I saw him fall.

It didn't take long to find him. The squirrel's legs were still spread out wide, like he was leaping through space. His eyes were open, and he was panting for breath. Blood trickled from the side of his mouth, and his limbs twitched involuntarily.

His gaze focused on me as I approached. I yipped, grunted, and whistled at him frantically. "Are you okay? I'm so sorry! This is my fault! I should have let you go first! It should have been me!"

The squirrel listened to me. "Fault does not lay with you, my friend. It would seem this is my destiny. My situation cannot be helped, but I have no regrets," he said in little half-chirps.

All of my thanks rushed from me in a single, massive wave. "Thank you, thank you so much," I said. "You've saved my life. You've been my only friend. Thank you for giving me hope."

"You are welcome, my friend," he said. "Your journey is almost finished. All you have to do is find the Great Tree, and it is near. I can feel it. That tree is wreathed in blued clover, clover that will change you, just as the tree's fruit changed me. I am certain of it. You must go," he said. The squirrel's eyes were glazed, and he coughed up blood, but he continued speaking. "I am a squirrel that was born a chipmunk. I could not accept living in fear and desperation, so I embarked upon a journey to find peace or die. In time, I found The Great Tree and ate its strange fruit which transformed me into a squirrel. My life as a squirrel gave me the peace I so desperately craved. Since my transformation, I have devoted my life to promoting peace amongst all life. Thus was my life, thus is my life, and thus my life shall be."

The squirrel was seized by a violent coughing fit. I whistled and grinded my teeth anxiously. His little legs kicked and his body convulsed. He made a terrible wet, growling sound, and then he was gone.

Screeching and letting out cries, I grieved my friend until the sunset. I left him where he fell, and moved up a slope through a darkened patch of woods and onward to the edge of a field. Burdened by grief and hunger, I dug a shallow burrow and slept without dreaming.

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I emerged the next day still numb and hungry. Eventually I managed to find some suitable grass to eat, but the meal held no joy for me. When my hunger abated, I made my way across the field and went into an unfamiliar forest.

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Aside from the occasional gossip of birds or the scurrying of another rodent, the area was quiet. Not long ago this kind of silence would have had me on edge, but today I was just thankful for the peace; it soothed the numbness and recrimination I felt.

I searched the depth and breadth of the forest. There were many great trees within it, each helping to form an impressive canopy, but none were the tree I sought. I asked mice, deer, squirrels, and birds if they had seen the tree but none had.

I grew frustrated after a week of searching and left the forest on the side opposite of where I had entered. A meadow stretched before me, softly sloping upward into the distance. It was on the threshold of the meadow that I pondered my fate.

Perhaps I ought to just give up, I thought. Maybe I'm just lucky to be alive. What did it matter that I felt unhappy most of the time? Wasn't I already happier than the average groundhog? Hadn't I experienced more than any of my brethren?

I decided to give up. It was here, on the edge of this quiet forest, that I would build a new burrow and live out the rest of my life. I couldn't find the tree with its bounty of blue clover without the squirrel.

And maybe he had been wrong. Maybe the tree didn't exist. Maybe he had just been a crazy squirrel, who had always been a squirrel. But even if he was crazy, he had been my friend.

I dug the beginning of an elaborate burrow and went to sleep inside. The next day, I decided to investigate the meadow, since I had already investigated the forest rather thoroughly. I couldn't see the meadow's limit from where I was, and I wanted to know what my new surroundings held. I chomped on some of the sweet clover outside my new home and set out.

The meadow was full of tall grass. Field mice darted by periodically, one of which called me a "fatty!" as I made my way through. I paid the mouse no mind and continued up a slight incline that leveled off shortly thereafter. I must have reached the top of a very gradual hill, I thought. And before long, I was traveling downward through the tall grass.

I couldn't really see ahead of me; I was mostly relying on my ears and nose to guide me. I kept moving forward, even though I began to think of turning back. I could tell there was a shady area up ahead, which seemed like a good place to turnaround. Then the tall grass ended, and I was standing in the shade of the largest tree I had ever seen.

I got up on my hind legs, craning what little of a neck I had to try to see the tree's crown, but I couldn't see the top. It was as though the tree was holding up the sky.

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I put my front paws back on the ground. I smelled clover before I saw it.

Between the shade and the tall grass there was a thin ring of blue clover going all the way around the tree. All of the clover was blue; I was standing in it, surrounded.

A happy whistle escaped my mouth. I began eating the blue clover with abandon, its taste filling me with light and weightlessness. I felt an overwhelming joy wash over me.

When I came to my senses, my form had changed. My coat was thicker and oily, and I had a long, paddle-like tail. I realized I knew how to build dams. My transformation was total and complete.

I had found peace.

I am a beaver who was born a groundhog. I could not accept living in fear and desperation, so I embarked on a journey to find peace or die. In time, I found and ate the blue clover that transformed me into a beaver. My life as a beaver gives me the peace I had so desperately craved. Since my transformation, I have devoted my life to promoting peace amongst all life. Thus was my life, thus is my life, and thus shall my life be. UJ

