

STIR IN MY HEART, YOU ANCIENT RHYTHMS--- *A PHILOSOPHICAL FANTASY in the now, beyond space and time, and with a classical twist*

Introduction to THE ORACLE PROJECT.

There were many Oracles at Delphi in Greece over the centuries.

As there had been many Pythian priestesses before them.

Should you visit Delphi today, you can stand on the ground where ancient seeresses dispensed prophetic counsel to crafty kings and seekers of wisdom. It is the same ground where young women once served Pythias, the Python goddess, who was later supplanted by Apollo when the Olympian gods eclipsed Greece's earlier, largely female deities.

The Delphica of this project worked about 500 B.C. A Pythian priestess, as the Oracles were called, she served as "mouthpiece of the god Apollo." At least she was so advertised. Our Oracle laughs at this description, but she does not dispute that rich and poor journeyed to consult her. Nor that the grand, pretentious folk emerged, bewildered, with a self-confounding Delphic riddle. It is she to whom Socrates refers in THE APOLOGY penned by Plato.

How Felicity, an excruciatingly shy and earnest postgraduate philosophy student, came to consult the long-retired Oracle of Delphi is quite a tale. Stir

In My Heart, You Ancient Rhythms recounts that epic journey in journal form.

The book envisioned will look like a journal...

The initial pages will be written in a neat hand with much hesitation, letters carefully formed and laden with self-doubt. As the Seeker's "journey" unfolds, so does the book, literally, with cut-outs, fold-outs, ribbons of prose, cauldrons of treasure. As Felicity becomes ever more expressive, sweeter, fuller, and, occasionally, flamboyant, so does the text. The reader stumbles across splotches of paint and plaster, fabric swatches, drafts of coursework, memos to self, poetry and occasional blank stretches: invitations to contemplate.

Felicity's journal---which becomes the book Stir...---was not intended for public perusal. Her conversations with Delphica [the retired Oracle] are recorded faithfully, as are the contributions of the Nine Muses, the oh-so-fashionable and wise Margarita the Bat, and other humans, deities, and semi-divines.

Not surprisingly, the work resembles a classical epic. It begins with an invocation to the Muse; launches *in media res* [in the middle of things]; and makes the outer journey self-transformative. Like THE ODYSSEY, THE

AENEID, THE DIVINE COMEDY, PARADISE LOST, AND ULYSSES, Stir
In My Heart, You Ancient Rhythms is poetic. Rooted in its time, it seeks ancient wisdom within, jolted by improbable benefactors, harrowing circumstances, and detours from career path of one's youth. This is the epic way.

Where are we in THE ORACLE PROJECT?

- Many of the poems and entries have been written.
- The journal has yet to be designed and mocked up.
- A few parts of the journey remain in draft or in outline.

We're moving!

Epics are oral tales. With the aim of speaking her work and enticing an agent or publisher to notice Stir..., the author has recorded an audio CD. It jumps around the anticipated text, showcasing elements of the journal-to-be as well as poetry which remains freestanding until Stir... births.

The CD is narrated by a fictitious rather prickly editor, a highly acclaimed author and acerbic academic, who resentfully prepares this unknown girl's untidy notebook for mass consumption. The "editor" is not a character in the manuscript. She came to life in the week prior to recording to provide "glue" and "grist" for the audio narrative. What a task that formidable figure undertook and how well she did it! That our crusty classics scholar will figure in Stir... is highly uncertain. But do enjoy her in these audio snippets!

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Stir in My Heart, You Ancient Rhythms...

Track 1: Introduction to the CD: Fictitious Editor's Foreword

The editor speaks...

If this were a novel, the skeleton I am about to relate would be a plot. But this is not a novel. It is an odyssey, recorded by a wanderer for herself, while I, a reluctant midwife at best, struggle to introduce another's tale to you, unseen auditors.

I'll begin with what I know: I am a brilliant writer. I have a reputation I have crafted and a name upon which I bank. For several months I have had before me an untidy, uncanny volume, in parts disciplined, in parts unkempt, seeming fiction, or schizophrenia, teeming with artless sketches, diaristic trivia and inspired discourse. It is the product of a young woman whom the publisher calls Felicity; she exists; I have met her.

A graduate student in Philosophy in the U.S., of all places, Felicity (or the seeker, as I call her) one summer's day decided that she would interrupt a boring life with a journey. Having selected Greece as her destination, and having squandered her fortnight in solitary pilgrimage to philosophic ruins, the boring girl spends the evening before her departure in a taverna in a small town. As she notes in a neat hand in the journal's opening pages, Felicity found herself in the middle of a lively crowd of intimates, very alone; as always: a solitary observer, reverential but insular. A glass of wine appears at her elbow, compliments, according to the waiter's pantomime, of a gleaming, rather glamorous woman, at whom Felicity had silently stared earlier and who is now surrounded by well wishers, several tables over. Urged and clearly expected to take wine in hand and join her benefactress, the painfully shy child, very timidly, and out of sheer politeness, complies. Felicity stammers out a greeting. They converse. Felicity is charmed. The well wishers reappear, wine is

consumed, children are dandled on the American knee, food oohs and ahs its way toward fueling dance, and the Greek sojourn is suddenly peopled. The laughing woman expresses delight at meeting a philosopher; it's been a while, she observes; she hands Felicity a card; contact me if you need me she says; the pleasures of meeting and kisses are exchanged with a copious crowd. And the next morning, an attentive bevy of Spiroes whisks her luggage into a gleaming cab while a riot of grandmothers force upon Felicity fragrant food sufficient for the Battle of Salamis, and villagers present her with miniAcropoli and handwrought doilies, all to share with her family whom her new friends regret not to be gifting in person.

Returning to her native soil and arid tillage thereof, Felicity remains boring. And lonely. On a winter's night in early Autumn, she rustles through her pack of Greek mementoes, and out falls the card of the fascinating woman. No name is inscribed, no contact information emblazons the fine bond...just a large question mark greets the puzzled girl. Felicity props the card beside her bed, starts a journal by recounting the companionable evening, and reflects upon the life she hasn't. Dispirited, the girl grabs the card, as if to inhale the good cheer of those bright moments; her thumb presses on the dot below the crook of the interrogatory; and the seeker finds herself in a cave marvelous to describe before the gleaming woman who introduces herself as the retired Oracle of Delphi who declares herself anxious to converse with a philosopher. They do. It is marvelous. And Felicity awakens in postgraduate dullsville the morning after.

Their encounters continue, by the same protocol, although some times they meet in a different era or in a different culture. Felicity does her best to record the outings and begins to live her life differently. She and the Oracle become friends and such fascinating characters as Margarita the Bat and Apollo the Messenger/publisher enrich the astonished seeker.

As I warned you at the outset, dear auditor, if this were a novel, I would have given you the plot. But it isn't a novel.

It's an epic buffo, a fool's journey. And it begins in media res: in the middle of things. It ends at home, all transfigured. The muses

are invoked. In blessed openness, the reader is plunged into the midst, into a complex tale well and obliquely underway.

Do you remember The Odyssey? Do you recall its first golden words? One arrives in the middle of an Olympian debate where flawed and fractious deities broker human lives. As The Odyssey commences, the past hangs heavy, mysterious. The present is obscure; the future implicate. The reader reels. There are no pristine beginnings here. The hearer must give way to the tale: to its shape and let the journey unfold as it will, from the middle, in the midst.

I am in the midst of editing Felicity's document, for want of a better word, and those who dare to join us had best prepare to walk an epic way, humbly, with humor, in media res.

We begin not on Olympus but with a dance troupe. The invocation to the Muse, well it takes a while for Felicity to get there...after all, she's learning...

VOLUMINOUS DANCERS

The editor introduces an excerpt from the journal of a young American postgraduate student by the name of Felicity. The child, as the Oracle calls Felicity, has been thinking about packages...the packages people come in. She reads about a Cuban dance troupe. All of the dancers are very large, fat by the traditions of contemporary dance. They call themselves Voluminous Dancers, and critics say that their performances, which do not feature leaps and twirls on point, recall the dignified dance of ancient Greece. In her diary, Felicity pens a tribute to the...

**Voluminous dancers,
moving a new way.**

A big presence on stage.

Slithering elegance,

pinpoint precision,
a tableau of sculptural mass
moving lightly with a grace
leaping can't encompass.

Fat
we are,
they say.

Obese.

Obese dancers.
People start by laughing, they ridicule.
Fat we are
they say
Obese
they shout with derisive stares, revolted nudges
and hacksaw
titters.

Undeterred,
we embody beauty as best we know,
monumental teachers to those who fear bulk,
generous sensuality, and space amply
grounded by being.

As we persist,
our mockers pause
in time and
grudgingly, concede an appraising glance,
then release a startled glimmer:
enchantment's seed. We see it drop and slowly blossom
as another mass of would-be foes
breathes in
our unexpected artistry,

our lithe interpretation
of the dance of being human
unabashed and far-reaching.

Critics say---
*(and who is not a critic
who will not move through space and time
with all the mass that grace can muster?)*

critics say we have rebirthed dance,
re-sourced ancient art by the miracle
of being who we are
in love
with movement.

Viewers warm.

Reviewers marvel
as on we spin,
each a center of gravity
solid
synchronized
splendid.

Birthed from the very desire

to be
beauty,
the voluminous re-invent archaic movement
so impelled are they
by their outsized need
to be
themselves;

to be

the outrageous bulky beauty,
behemoth style, grace and point of splendor

they know full well

they have the right
to be.

Bless

you,

elephantine elegance, how great
is your courage
to display your all,

scorn will spill
knowing full well
upon your earnest,
knowing
beauty.

Bless you,

**courage makers
who dare to show us
how very small
how very dwarfed
and stunted
are the dances
we dare to conceive.**

**Slithering along,
faintly alive,
we thinly**

sneer

**at the large doers
we could be**

**were not our brains callipered to inches,
our hearts pinched to the strained capillaries
of those afraid
to be**

outsized

who smugly call small the norm and damn

the generous

gesture,

**the full tilt,
the mammoth beauty**

of life,

sweat-stained and heaving

in all its glory.

From the editor... *These words the Oracle speaks to Felicity early in their relationship. As she moves through her own, gradually expanding world, Felicity finds the words cropping up in odd places at odd times. They illumine her path as the fearful seeker strives courageously to be. Joyfully.*

BE LARGE OF HEART

Be.

Be large.

Be large of heart.

**Be large of heart
and life opens for you.**

**Be a gypsy of deep goodness
and flowers open on your path**

**and generous benefactors
take you in**

Be.
Be large.
Be large of heart.

**Be large of heart and life opens
for you**

The editor plucks another excerpt from a different part of the journal and introduces it thusly... *Felicity would tell you, as she has told others and herself for years, that she is not creative. She would have you understand that she gladly leaves to others the expression of noble ideas and stirring heart songs. Imagine her surprise, her keen discomfort, and tentative release when her former staid diary issues forth new life, such as...*

I WRITE

I write.

**I write
because
I need
the inspiration.**

**I write
because**

I need
the inspiration,
you understand...

the rhythm
the reason

to listen,

to make sense
of my breathing

because
it fosters
touch unknown
and
drips
rasping beauty
across a page
that might have been
an enemy

had I not known
it would create me

at peace

**just
for now.**

The editor is summarising for us a great deal of what she has learned about Felicity by working through the girl's very long and rather tattered journal. We don't yet know why she has selected certain sections for the audio CD, nor do we know what shape the final document will take. *Felicity is a good girl, a thoroughly nice lady. Her penmanship has always been exemplary. Her manners are impeccable, although rarely glimpsed. For only rarely can Felicity summon the courage to express herself in public. The young seeker feels obligations keenly. She feels obliged to the Oracle to live the sage's lessons fully...a fool's burden, given the liberating intent of her luminous benefactor. But a self-burdened fool carries a double pack, and the seeker does not yet know how to walk lightly. She feels obligated to her professors to become the kind of academic they admire, when that life clearly ill suits her, and when so very few jobs await any of the eager thinkers who flutter from the postgraduate nest. Imagine her surprise when, cross for once, Felicity scrawls across several pages, lines going every which way, this manifesto...*

I'VE STOPPED

I've stopped.

I've stopped

asking people what they do.

Let them be,
I say.

Let them be.

I've stopped asking what people do.

Let them be, I say.
Let them
be.

I've stopped
responding
when people say:

What does he do? What does she do?

Let them be,
I say.

Let them be.

I am
what I do,
of course...

but all the time.
Twenty-four hours.
Around the clock.
Breathing
makes me
who I am

just now

every just now

fading
and pulsing

into the next me

I wear
with such self-regard,

I've stopped

being
someone you'd notice.

From the editor... And here, dear listener, if you could but glimpse into the life this young woman is writing, you would stop in the middle of a very scrawly-page for there is a large stop sign, hand drawn and colored in no neat hand with a scarlet crayon---bold strokes flailing across the page. One wonders where such a serious scholar found to hand a red crayon, for lo and behold, the last two lines of her disquisition are scribbled---no other word for it, ladies and gentlemen---scribbled. Crawling like giant red lobsters over two open pages are the words...

It's beauty that
fills
the deep
sad
sweet source
of flow
with more,
more of itself,
with flow
well
and truly
spoken for.

It's beauty,

I believe.

It's beauty that prompt us;
beauty that clues us in.
"Not a second to waste,"
Beauty whispers.

"This is the dance of life.

Fill

your card, not a second to waste.

Boogie,
lambada or
twirl on point.

**It's time; it's beauty
here
now."**

**Time
to
close that magazine,
turn down the volume
on alluring shadows and pre-packaged dreams.
"I love you,"
Beauty whispers.**

**It's beauty.
It's beauty,
I believe.
It's beauty before us all the time.**

The editor explains that Felicity's conversations with the Oracle and her friends "catalyze" the young woman's thought world, as evidenced in her journal. They soon seep into the confines of academe and erupt in the most likely places... *Imagine her surprise when Felicity, seated in a postgraduate seminar, cannot focus her attention on her revered professor nor on Immanuel Kant and that most elusive empire---apodictic certainty. Why even the much-disputed twelve categories of judgment scatter as her synapses dart to recapture them. Breath racing, the little seeker sees the walls of her drab flat and yearns to paint them, now at this moment, in bright primary colors. Right in the middle of a graduate seminar...what is happening to her? Quickly she jots this note into her unblemished copy of Kant's PROLEGOMENA TO ANY FUTURE METAPHYSIC. What IS happening to her?*

COLOR

I've been waiting.

I've been waiting
for some color
to put my words on;

to hang a life
charged with hue of indescribable
dignity

and
savor.

"Take my life,
oh blue," I say.

"Take my depth, oh green and aubergine..."

and red, you hotcha gotcha crimson ditty:

sing me

clear

through;

rock my soul,

you virgin page

and spill me full of life.

THE FATES' LOVE SONG

The editor finds another selection of the journal, about one-third of the way through, to discuss. Once again Felicity the faithful is preparing a paper for her Philosophy of Biology seminar on the assigned topic of DNA, Causation, and Scientific Explanation. She is, again, off task. And, again, nearly desperate with lack of proper concentration. After all, DNA is fascinating. Some of the authors she had plucked from the vast storehouse of molecular conjecture assert that all our traits, defects, promise, even life span are encoded in little threads, acids strings, within our every cell. Some surmise that these coiled cords spin us unique and determined. Just the previous evening Felicity had been riveted by debates on gene expression: it was both affirmed and denied that our emotions, desires, and imagination signal self-chemistry which turns on genes and turns them off. Self-causation,

she wondered? Post-partum creation? Internal alchemy? But now, on a bright morning, with a deadline demanding its due, the little seeker turned off her duty genes and contemplated the Three Fates of ancient Greek mythology. Daughters of Zeus and Themis, ("order," or "law"), the sisters formed the cord of each soul about to be born (or, as Plato would have it, reborn) on earth. Clotho, the spinner, wove the thread of life; then Lachesis, time dispenser, measured it, allotting life span. Atropos, the inexorable, cut the cord at the moment of death. What did the Ancients know, she wondered, that we "moderns" have barely begun to explore, and does our self-adulation impede us? Oh my, that thought could never find a home in a seminar paper, and that my dear, she cautioned herself, is reality: due almost now. Felicity heard it again. Again and again: a strange, sweet singing in her mind. Heard it again and again, until journals falling to the paint-stained floor, she recorded this, the Fates' Love Song...

**Oh
do we
envy
you
your
human life.**

**And
oh
do we
send you off
with searing love
and
protean benediction.**

Let us bless you,
human child.

As
we plant
within your
core
mystery of sweet innocence,
your best being
ever
self-revealing,
a seed
uncoiling.

A
thread,
spiraling
you
into
being.

So that
wherever you go,
whenever you pause,
the voice of your genius,
the touch of your passion,
the breath of your kindness
intones

deep
deep
memory

the shade
of your you-ness,
the pith
of your potency,
the spark
of your making

which
through and through
is

you

being.

Is
you
becoming.

The being
you are choosing.

Is
you
becoming
the
you
you are choosing.

The

who you
are being
as you choose
the being
you become,

as you
dare
to be
human.

Oh,
child,
dare
to be
human.

Curse not
fate.
Nor laud it.
Implore no Agent of Fortune
nor
wither
your vibrant cells
with fears
of flaws
your forebears
have
(you fear) bequeathed
you.

You.
You make
the you
you
are.

The only one
worth
knowing.

Bond
with joy
and
goodness.
So
they
become you.

And
thus
you manufacture
more truthful
beauty
than any code
can conjure,
any fate

constrain.

**You,
you
are the creative core
within which breathes
Memory,**

**the mother
of all muses.**

**Yes,
Mnemosyne,
who births
inspired
being,
hums within you.**

**So
kith and kin,
we
salute
you.**

**We
intone
you.**

We
intune you.

From fate's
brief blessing,
we release you.

With love
we
croon:
at every swerve
of destiny's dream,
invoke
your spiral dancer,
you who weave potency,
sweet source
of being,
enrich us.

You have been spun
and seeded.
And soon you will leave
your watery cradle.

**Then
oh human child,
take a deep breath,
sing out your beauty,**

and

**be
it.**

The editor tells us a little about what she is doing and why.

As anyone who knows my name knows, I do not edit works for publication. I write. This assignment, foisted upon me by a very charming, very persuasive man, as obdurate as he is powerful, is one I resisted. Now, dug in, I will not release the finished text until it is

that: done by my standards. The original journal, which I have in my possession, is the private document of a girl created with no intent and no desire to share. It is, thus, not orderly by narrative standards. But, as a few poems are being released here and there, doubtless by the ingenious publicist of the press for which I labor, curiosity fomented about the history of this young woman and the contents of her putative encounters with the retired Oracle of Delphi. Quite naturally, the publisher wishes both to pique and assuage the curiosity of an expected large readership. Accordingly, but not in the best of cheer, I interrupt manuscript preparation to prepare for audio recording some morsels from the Delphic symposium. On the larger task I will not be hurried...so I cast before you...the opening words of the journal and the closing. A few dialogues with the Oracle. Smatterings of Delphic utterance. Observations by Felicity. All are plucked from various parts of the journal and pretend to no sequence. You'll have to wait for the rest, I am in the midst...and I won't be interrupted again...

MUSINGS

It was Margarita the Bat who encouraged Felicity to contact the Muses.

At that point, the little seeker was so intimidated by the beautiful being that she truly feared Margarita was subtly mocking her when MB assured Felicity that the Muses were but waiting for a respectful

invocation. "It's tradition..." the Bat had murmured. "Good old ways." The aspiring philosopher had no doubt that Margarita was precisely as she had said: couturier to the Muses and subconscious adviser to upstart designers pangalactically. But how would David Hume respond---he who would consign to flames all abstruse speculation and disembodied metaphysic---were Felicity to tell him that "Oh yes, she believed all that about Margarita the Bat...but that she, well she dared not believe that a muse would give this plain child even a scrap of recycled inspiration?" It was a very cold day. Just cold everywhere...even in the spirited, elegant prose of Hume's Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding. No jewels, no luster in Felicity's life, and even a fear, so real to her that she dare not hug it, that she quailed to approach the Oracle again, so drab was Felicity in her daily living, despite the infusions of Oracular enthusiasm; so persistently unconnected to beauty and joy despite the cherished Delphic uplifts. "Unworthy, unworthy, she muttered. "Don't they know it?" And then with a truly uncharacteristic jerk and an ejaculation that would have astonished even Hume the skeptic, Felicity did just as Margarita had counseled: she grabbed a mauve magic marker (heretofore consecrated solely to devoted worship: underlining the great words and peerless thoughts of others) and on her dining room wall, Felicity did it...she invoked a muse.

i.

how to begin?

ii.

How to begin?

The fool's journey

Recounting it

with home uncertain
still
and self
to be made
still
a character worth
recounting?

Able to endure
some stillness
now.

But
how to begin
to relay
the greater deeds of wanderers
bespattered
fallen
weathered beyond pretense
in
media
res?

How to begin?

I seize the old formula.

I turn to the muse, mendicant.

**Oh muse,
I say,**

Do your stuff.

It will not surprise you, dear listener, that Felicity could journey no farther into the land of worth and inspiration. It was, I'm sure you will agree, a bold beginning for a browbeaten child, and the Muses were oh so glad that Felicity had dared to open a pathway to their ready love and chatter. Nor will it surprise you, dear listener, that the seeker had spent her scant stores of faith and self-expression in this, indeed inspired beginning...which the young woman left on the dining room wall, and which glowed for her through many a cold day as violet testament to that which might be: goodness here now.

iii.

Begin, again

Felicity tapped into her laptop...she had painted a few gold stars on its serene gray face and hot glued lace in citrus hues around its middle, rather hoping to alert the Muses to her affiliation with Margarita whose attention no light being would refuse. Still, it was a disheartened Felicity who began again...and in truth, she felt badly for the little laptop which now, for the first time in its life of service, was distinguishable--- and thus, open to mockery.

I begin again.

Beginning....

How to invoke a muse?

Are they around any more?

Muses?

Can we moderns log on?

And oh yes,

not incidentally,

will they sing
for me?

Will they unleash
through me
a song for the people?

Will they croon
to me

that tale of failure and deliverance,
of nobility, depravity,
of inner eye
and healing love
which we
so
deeply
crave?

Where to begin?

iv.

Where to begin?

In self-doubt.

v.

Where to begin?

In self-doubt,
where I am.

This is no epic age,
I fear.

We are not grand enough
for epics.

Nor foolish enough,
I fear.

I fear
we fear

the stir and sweep of epic tales
as they rise from the inner self
and spill onto page,
into life
in uncontrolled fervor

and pitch.

I fear we fear
and decline
the epic lure to hardship,
greatness
and self-knowledge...
A failure of will?
Or faith?
Or hope?
A surfeit of comfort?
Veneer of competence?
Portable, packaged bread and circus
available on line, on credit,
at the flick of a whim?

An
arduous journey?
A perilous, marvelous
three volume tale?
How to begin?

We have begun...
We are born,
We are here
in the midst

And I

right now
feel
very lost.
A pilgrim to be sure
seeking
Something
deep in my cells
which I cannot yet affirm
so
home does it feel
and so
lost.

vi.

It is clear.

I am no epic poet.

No seer.
Shaper.
Sage.

Why do I fear

Epic
Exploits?

Exodus,
Odyssey,
Return,
Living.
The journey.

Burnished insights.
Revels,
Revelations,
Lost,
Lost on the way,
Living?

Why do I flee
decision, betrayal, conflict, tears, love...
the stuff of greatness,
the fools' noble way?
I cannot say.

And more,
I cannot say that
the muses
are larger
than life.

For where
I am
now,
in the midst,

I see nothing
larger than
life,
nothing greater than,
deeper
more exacting,
grandiose,
turgid, or divine
than that?

Nothing more worthy of breath.

Oh, you Muses,
dancing in the grove,
gossamer-scented,
enrobed with
rapturous delight,
each twist,
each twirl of you
tweaks a cell
within me,
a mother memory,
Mnemosyne,
she loves us deeply,
and twist, turn, snip and sparkle,
I birth the new
I need
just around the corner...

Oh muses,
you....

you know me: I do not aspire to epic grandeur.

So
why
invoke
a muse
or two?

Why disturb
you spirits of the
pathways?

For old times' sake?

To amuse
you sonorous souls?

Oh
this
I
know
from the depths,
from my depth:

I need you.

This I know: we need you.

vii.

**We need
your songs.**

viii.

**We need
your songs
to flow though us:
the inspiration
which directs.**

**Which weaves
a truly human
tale
from within.**

**We need
the inspiration.**

**Frankly that.
Exactly that.**

I'll speak for myself.

I need
the inspiration.

I am in the midst.
And I need
a song for myself.

And I need a larger one,
one to pass on.

I beg
some healing verse
to ease,
direct,
and mark
our common passage.

viii.

to begin...
to be touched...

yes, that's it...

I wish
to be
touched
lovingly
with wisdom.

Touched by
“the better angels of our nature,”
by the needs of others,
by that which lives beneath the surface
in all of us
and moves
us
on.

And
although
weak,
flawed and foolish,
although no hero,
bard,
or pundit,
I beg
the voices from beyond
so deep within
to caress us
once again
to pour upon us
that balm
which lightens
heals
and graces
our way.

I am not
proud.
I have no cause to be.

So I can plead
the grander cause...

I beg.

I beg the Muses...

Oh Muses,
I have not the wits
to shape
these shards
of love and desperation
into a public tale
myself.

I implore you.

I invoke you
oh most humbly
oh most lofty
Muses,

for I am
in the midst

where epics begin.
And fool that I am,
I want
a song
better
than I could myself
devise...

that song
built
for noble ends,

for inspiration
for counsel
humor and insight...

hum it for us,
Muses.

Send us a tuneful start.

Then weave in

those strains
of grandeur
and compassion
that draw us in,
that draw us out,
that draw us together...

We're waiting...

and while we do,
we'd best

begin...

CELLULAR OPULENCE

The editor here refers to a central character in *Stis...*, Margarita the Bat, about whom we have heard very little in the material thus far selected. An amazing creature, and very influential on the Seeker, Margarita has been the Oracle's best friend since 500 B.C. or so---but after all, **who's counting?** If you were to interview Margarita the Bat, which I assure you will never, never happen (she was badly disappointed by a journalist in 432 B.C. and the scribe tribe has yet to redeem itself in her eyes); if you were to interview Margarita, she would tell you that she is no philosopher; no poet. But if you were to inquire of the Muses who inspires them to swirl in color, overflowing creation, they would chime as one: "Margarita!" And if you were to ask the odd philosopher who had persuaded him or her out of the stacks and into life, the truthful trolls would blush and stammer: "Margarita!"

Still, even ever-regenerative bats expand their horizons. So moved was Margarita by the little seeker's heart cry to the muses, that she sent this reply. ("Suspiciously poetic," murmured Delphica, with a lightning wink and grin) CELLULAR OPULENCE, a crystal cylinder, wrapped in wine velvet, which sings when it feels like it, appeared on Felicity's door step one crusty day borne by a handsome youth in a toga with laurel in his hair. "College kids..." the neighbors muttered. Felicity transcribed the golden flow into her book as follows:

We move.

We always move.

**Underneath it all,
we are
what we are not
and not
what we think
we are
so continuously
it is best
after all
to be.**

To be grateful

for life
in and around
our inseparable spirits
dancing
joining spirit hands
jumping into unknowing mischief,
inevitable sorrow
and soul-piercing delight.

Move on!
Make yourself anew.
Regeneration...
The way of all flesh.

Stretch!
Surge!
Sing!
Grow!
Young person.

You are the muse
for whom
I wait.

You bear the songs,
the script,
the seeds,
we need.

You.

You and I
as well.

We are the muses.
Wait for no one else.
No sad and silent chorister
will leave the gifts
you bear,
the sweet and mournful,
silly and profound songs
of deepest love
and life,
living beauty
for whose birth
the very silence
in due reverence
genuflects
and nudges...

Sing,
young person.
Weave your loving song
in the flawed and desperate
grand and flairful way
that you
only you
can.

Let life be
as full
and rich
as grand design
intended:

Open your heart.
Take a deep breath.
And sing.

Track 9: IN MEDIA RES...in the voice of Felicity

The following excerpts are from Felicity's journal about herself...a subject she has long shunned.

I begin,
as I have always done,
in the middle of things.

It's the epic way.

I was, when I first met the
Oracle,

Pong

“Her face is rather fine.” Ping

“If only she didn’t pinch her face.”

Pong “Perhaps she needs glasses.”

Ping

She was I.

Thus the women of my family
dissected my appearance. As if I were
not there. As if I could not hear.

There was much fault to find as they
prospected, with caustic precision, for
potential.

Empresses manqueé, they pronounced.

Unsuitable.

So much was Unsuitable.

Sigh.

Unsuitable sigh.

Disappointing. Held for five counts.

Ping.

Pong.

Ping

Like a Tsarevitch dumped
unceremoniously in Davenport, my
mother presided. She spoke with
clarity. She surveyed. Assessed.
Pronounced.

I read.

My mother lied. Regally. She
announced. She declaimed. She
detracted. Royally. Her sisters
visited. They all pronounced. Ping.

Pong.

I read.

Ping.

Pong.

Does that child have a mouth? Can she not learn how to participate in civil discourse?

Ping.

Pong.

What is she thinking? You can never tell.

They all lied. Regally.

I hid. I read.

I became a philosopher addicted to simple truth. Quietly addicted. Quietly everything.

I chose not to embroil myself in my mother's creative fiction...her account of life as it might have been, should have been, would have been, had not... My father featured prominently in had not. He had a starring role in the screenplay "Unsuitable," a work-in-progress by the dowager Duchesses of Downey, honed, one would think, to perfection, but rehearsed relentlessly in the theatre that passed for life. He came with a bit of money. That was the best that could be said of my father.

I surmise it was a good thing. For when death freed him, the bit of money proved helpful. So they said. Helpful. A very good thing. I loved my father. He was not, to me, unsuitable.

I stole away. Quietly. To a boarding school in Southern California. We read a lot. Quietly. It suited me.

Track 11 : EDITORIAL ASIDE, in the voice of the fictitious editor

The editor tells us why the publisher has decided to release some excerpts from Felicity's journal in Audio CD form before the editor has finished her task of transforming a disorderly, private notebook into a "blockbuster" publication. Again she summarizes much of what we have not yet been privileged to read.

Some conjecture that this Felicity is actually the creation of a Southern California publicist; that she is a poetic harridan whose lackluster exterior and alleged devotion to philosophy are crass commercial fictions. I have met the girl myself and I assure you, she remains on the exterior, as earnest, bland and unassuming as the journal portrays her. This little seeker is, in some ways, remarkable...but I digress. People wonder what any Oracle could have said to have catalyzed the creative patter of the volume I edit. As far as I can tell, Delphica is a woman I should like to meet. As far as I can tell, she spoke of things un-Oracular...no dark mutterings...no smudges of laurel; she talked of wandering, of not knowing, of learning in the midst, of being ignorant, of simple goodness, cosmic swerves and ripe peaches. Of her life, friends, the pleasures of retirement, love, passion, expression. According to the seeker, a dancer and a dance upon whose sole account we must rely, or do without, Delphica was not pedantic. She was kindness concentrated; Felicity recalls, very quick and very gentle. As a rule, upon waking after an encounter with the Oracular troupe, Felicity would commit to her journal all she remembered, later preserving these relicts for future sustenance on her word processor. The meetings themselves and their slow digestion, absorption, and self-expression were joyful, cherished, slow burning embers of warmth and inspiration for the lonely philosopher. Early on, Felicity feared that the next time she pressed the world beneath the curve, the Oracle would not be there. She dreaded to disturb the Pythian priestess...a sentiment Margarita soundly drubbed. It was a source of dissatisfaction to the aspiring scholar that the precise words Delphica had used eluded her. As did the chronology. "Good," said the Oracle. "Know thyself, not the prattle of

another, however loved and loving." Still, off and on, Felicity would flow with a surge of golden words and jot them down instantly, verbatim; the seeker believes that the words she recorded were the exactly what the Oracle had said in a previous meeting, memory's treasure delivered in a cosmic swerve of inspiration. What follows, out of sequence, is a journey with no footnotes.

Track 12: ALL THE CASE, in the voices of Felicity and Delphica (the Oracle)
--

Felicity recalls a conversation with the Oracle, recording her reactions.

The universe is friendly, child.

She said.

It was a whisper, I think. A sigh.

I felt in me a sigh.

I don't believe it I replied.

The world....the world is just the big out there. All that is the case, wrote Wittgenstein. "The world is all that is the case." Out there. "There is nothing that is not the case." Maybe...

The world is all that is the case, she affirmed. And it glows with love for you. Pulses with it. The world knows you. Intimately. Be at home there. Where you are. In your skin. Under stars...

They write in books: a sigh escaped her. One did.

The world is a friendly place, Delphica challenged. Be it.

I arrested the next sigh. Firmly.

Friendly.

Loving.

Pulsing Warm.

Where had that world hidden?

Hers was, of course. The case. That I believed. Marvel that she was. Anywhere she went became her. She fit in. She glowed. That I believed.

But I?

Of lesser stuff, I wanted to say to her. Look at you. Look at me. I see what is the case. I am of lesser stuff.

You are? Are you? The Oracle rejoined to what I did not say. Lesser stuff? You and I are the same stuff, child. Be it. Beauty. Be it. Friendly. Be it.

Delphic riddles. Kindly meant. I could feel her truthfulness. She could see within me. I didn't mind. The parts she read were bathed in kindness; I felt smoothed, not violated. But some things were clear: *I* was not hobnobbing with the muses, schmoozing with the lesser deities.

How little do you know yourself, child. I think she might have sighed.

Be the self you want to be.

Be the self worth knowing.

The one who does not have to change to be loved, admired, cuddled. Liked. The you you are now. Only a little sweeter. Only just a little sweeter, warmed by the scent of your own true self. Sweet being.

* * *

Early on, Felicity is very curious about Delphica's own life; about her past as the Pythian Priestess and her prophetic gifts...As the journal proceeds, Felicity's

meditations themselves become more exuberant as she finds herself leaping poetically...and feels as well that searing unworthy she has so long embodied...The first line is one Delphica has used to describe herself and Felicity is shocked when the phrase leaps out of her onto the page of her journal...

Rivers of gold run through me...

Stir in me, you ancient rhythms.
Let me sigh with the bliss of the reborn
while stuff of innocence leaks
from tender cracks
I reopen
with love of breathing.

Sweet. True. Being.

Oh the sadness of the not at home,
I am that sadness
I wanted to say.
Such melancholy! I smiled within. Why, I did have unexpected shallowness to reveal!
Headline: "Drab, disgruntled child surprises world with unexpected spurt of melodrama." Thus I thought into the book of life... "To all that is the case, Felicity adds her trite mite."
But I have never.
Been at home.
Except with books with papers. With flowers in pure air.
You see I'm not you.
Books and papers, flowers air.
With people,
I'm odd;
at odds.
I didn't say it.

Nonsense she countered: you are love you are warm you are all be it.

Put some color in your life,

the oracle advised.

And so I did.

Track 13: CHILD, in the voices of Felicity and Delphica

In the journal Felicity reflects on her transformation after many visits with the Oracle and her menagerie. She also “pieces” together some shards of the Oracle’s life as a young seeress and “cultural institution.”

I didn’t mind it when she called me child.

I felt...

not patronized...

warm.

I felt cared for.

I felt

I had time.

I could be a bit.

I felt

I had help.

I felt

Warm.

Pulsing.

Cared for.

Who calls you child, I once said.

Everyone and everything she answered. They can if they want. I prefer it.

Who *does* call you child? I persisted.

The Sibyl. The muses. Diotima, of course; Gems and Aphrodite.

You don't think that I was young once?

I was different, you see.

I saw.

I was different.

I was so seen.

I didn't want to be different.

I wasn't.

I'm not.

But I saw.

And what I saw made some uncomfortable.

What they saw was not comfortable. The they they saw was not comfortable.

So I became the outcast.

I am

myself

now.

I am.

I am, thus, loved.

I love your truthful heart, child.

I love the who who questions.

The words I say
are not to taunt you.

If they cannot live within you,
they do not serve you.

I know that, child.

I love your truthful soul.

And then, as if were an afterthought,
the Oracle placed a large pearl in my hand.

Put some warmth in your life.

Child... she whispered.

And so I did.

* * *

The Oracle

Is human.

She is, just,

human.

* * *

Finally, in this series, we hear from the Oracle.

Caldrons
Caverns
Caves of pleasure.
Arches of triumph
Archipelagoes of bliss
Memory
Memory
I've done it all before
I've been there
I've had it
I was it
I am it
Every blessed thing
Bless the beautiful
Beatify the banal
I am
What I was
Who I am
In the midst
No higher
No better
No Persona.
I am the Oracle.

Rivers of gold run through me

And tunes of splendor,
crescent moons of godhead and
hues of earnest beauty
tumble from my heart.
In a land without miracles
hope
is rare courage.

Oh be that land.

In that other,
don't go.

Modest mentor,
loving friend,
grab your hope
by the vitals
blushing
(if you must)
with that self-regard
you know
core deep
you
are
and bring

hope

deep

home.

In which case,
reality

becomes

you.

They say
Don't dream.

They say
don't dream
lest you lose
that hard, slimy grip
on reality
so reputed

to give you
ulcers.

Au contraire,
I retort:

Dream

Dream
and reality
births
courageous
beauty.

But you must
Be your dreams,
dear one.

For undreamed dreams
nurture not
and
dreams designed
to flee you
cannot
rainbow into heart
bursting forth
seed
into promise
as yet
undreamed.

As yet undreamed....

The really real
twenty-four hour
miracle
you.

Hope.

Give me hope.

I would love to.

But, dearest,

you must grab it,
claim it,

name, demand that it call you by

adopt you,

take you home,

feed and clothe you in gold and chocolate.

The world does us no injustice
being

as it is.

The magic carpet seats twelve
crystal decanters in the bar
free fall zones

chutes of pleasure
innocent delights on tap.

If we make inners
big enough,
we will find
lofts
to soar in
and
windows teeming
with gardens
of delight
and enchanted bats
and golden doors
to ecstasy.

Track 15: RIVERS OF GOLD, voice of the Oracle

Rivers of gold run through me.

I am the oracle.
The mouthpiece of the Divine.
Just like you.
Breath to breath.
Touch to touch.
Hymn to hum
In every pore
dignity and splendor
pour in.
And out.
Released
to know itself

life wanders
blessing
all its own
becoming
bare beauty
unbeknownst
the very breath
before.

Rivers of gold pour through you.

Be
your better
self
and
all you want
becomes you.
Thus life feasts
simple
goodness.

I learned child,
I found it hard.
Then.
I learned.

People would say
You are the Oracle.
You have these powers.
You owe me.

Give me.

Give me riches.
Give me grace.
Give me everything
You have.
Give me a hint.
Give me a direction.
You owe me.
Child.

And I was
a child
then.
A good child.
A gifted child.

And so they said
you do not deserve to have
for you
anything good
sweet
rich
kind
warm,
for you
the gods favor

while we,

lesser relatives
of immortal goodness,
need oh so much more

from you.

Oracle.

You are the

Rivers of gold run through you.

Thus
we demand
that you never have
a good day
a sweet thing
a love to cheer you
a child
whose heart
beats with yours.

I learned, child.
I learned hard.

I learned to look.
Not just to see.
I learned to look.
Within.

I saw how innocence
is violated,
turned against itself;
I observed those games of spite
envy-driven
which trade on
uses
of the good.

But what can an Oracle do?

She can give away her secrets.

And when she does?
Many find the simple truth to be
too good to be true,
too free to be valuable,
too arduous to be
the way.

Know thyself.

I posted it.

above my gatepost.

Freely given:
every trick of the Oracle trade
to any wanderer
who cares to seize it
and make it
home.

Know Thyself.

No mystery, child.
It's posted
in your cells.
Remember...

Mnemosyne,
the mother of all muses,
thrives within you,
spiral splendor
bursting forth
in every unfettered
moment.

baring
promise
of the empty set.

Track 17: NO ONE SPECIAL, the job description of an Oracle, as Delphica sees it

Rivers of gold run through me

I am
no one
special.

Special Delivery
I am the connector.
The Oracle.

I am.

Boulders of gold surge through me.

I am no one
special.

I am.

Pebbles of gold make through me.

I am no one

special.
I am called the oracle:

She who sees
She who says
She who surges with prophecy.
Pythian Priestess.

I tell you:
I know this.
I am no one
Special.

It is your heart
I see.
It is your own pregnant beauty
I note,
your own doom
rising to reveal itself,
pining to repent
should you but recall it.
It is your chill
I feel,
fractured heart
no pillow for beauty's assurance
just now.

Rivers of truth run through me,
streaming strands of clean and bright
should you decide to bathe
and heal.

Diamonds of love run through me

so that you,
torrent of gold in life's dream,
so that you
may reweave your blessings
so as to birth
the blessed being
the being
blessed
by fateful goodness
who breeds a self
a world of good
infinitely
worth
knowing.

You cannot see

a seer

when she is being

true,

just a pipe for your own best being
to trickle through,
dropping on the silly seer
all the power
and splendor
you just might create
connecting to all goodness

and breathing
your best beauty
moment
by
moment.

*Look not at the seer,
my darling,*

I am
I assure you
no one
special.
The Oracle,
remember?
At your service,
should you be looking
for
yourself.
No spectacle,
no performer,
I am untouched by your regard.
Regard
yourself
as I do...
Respect that being
with power
of such magnitude
it flares
with goodness unimagined
and from that golden orb

whirls
a being
infinitely worth
comprehending.

So be gone from me
who is no one
special...

On your way,
fragrant pilgrim,
bursting with all
that we need
and yearn to be
just
now.

Rivers of gold run through me.

The conduit.
The connector.
At your service,
splendid child.

Rivers of gold run through you,

Child.

Your breath is like Olympus,
nectar-feast birthing
all the case becoming
as you dream.

I, too, am a wanderer.
Never to leave you.

The editor is hard at work on her task. In the notebook one finds several color Xerox copies of a painting of the nine muses dancing with Phoebus Apollo. I gather from the inspirers' voluptuous thighs that the original work dates from Baroque times. (???) I am having the devil of a time identifying the work which I must do *magna cum celeritate*---where is the number of that woman from the Hermitage? The scene is pastoral, the dance stately, and the garments unworthy of Margarita. I surmise that the seeker at this point in her sojourn was seeking solace in cappuccino for the relevant pages attest to an upset of a domestic nature, and the following plea may be discerned beneath a thin mocha veil...

THUS WRITTEN

How
to befriend
the blankness

the lack

of plan

that is

all progress.

You Muses,

you dance

together

while I,

alone,

at least for now,

draw

on love's clean face,

this page,

today's sustenance,

the blank slate of my dreams.

Here the editor gives us a “glimpse” of how the journal seems to flow... *One infers that the caffeine, the mess, the invocation or some combination thereof proved salutary, as the next entries unfurl what the Americans dub “attitude.”*

SELF-RECURRING ODYSSEY

**So
Be.**

**Be
Simple.**

**Be simple,
however unfashionable,
and let**

beauty

steel you

from the fading fear:

fleet fancy.

Oh
people say
it's a fleeting fancy.

But
what you want
tends
to overtake
you,
pushing aside what settled
good
you might have taken
for
god
in a duller moment.

Deep.
Deep,
dark
desires,
they say.

But
it's the hot
ones
tend
to do you in,

all unspoken,
then
rob the day
of its
thereness

all unspoken.
More's the pity.

Flights of fancy.
They say
don't give in
to imagination's
sweet caress,
fallen hopes
righting
themselves
on dismal
prospects.

I say
what
brings joy
brings true
and joy
is
sunny
sweet
very deep

goodness
lighting in
singing out.

Sullenness repels
the simple pleasures
of the best
goodness
planetary bliss
bestows.

Oh
I say
be yourself,
yet
unimagined
beauty
warmed by
fading beauty
for that sustains us:
the self
that will not
be stilled
by dull
because we see
bright
where we are
and being brilliant
so absorbs us
light

wouldn't think
of dwelling elsewhere.

Colors
paint us
noble,
every beauteous note
of deep dignity
unmasked as giddy
freely flowing tone of soul
bursting with
you
too pregnant
to retreat
from the moment's
sparkling embrace.

SELF-RECURSIVE ODYSSEY

It's not
a
road show,
this life.

It's a deeply meaningful
procession.

Solemn ritual:
breath in,
breath out.

We are God's breath

wisps of air
on life's canvas.

Soul notes
of deep
goodness.

Fret not
the fall

of night.

In sweet
solemn stillness
you are goodness,
and life
caresses you
with pleasure.

Be
that good thing
you treasure
and all magic
becomes
you.

Free and easy,
lightly breezy,
leave a space
for knowingness
to visit.

All unencumbered,
it lights
in that open soul and
hush!

leaves a gift:
the way forward,
new delights to birth.

Time to wander...
to recreate days of wonder
and miracle nights
by the very act
of breathing,
savoring
every unbound
molecule.

Time to return
to the compass point:
sweet space
of love
with no
holding back.

That's where
God
dwells.
All good from there
proceeds.

You are

**the best,
I assure you,
the best
that breathes its beauty**

just now.

Grace looms.

Grace.

Grace surprises,

rushes in.

All abandon.

We're getting a sense from the editor what this journal looks like physically and how it has evolved, but we have no clue how the editor plans to make it into a published work...does she?

Felicity's book becomes more populous as her journey takes her--- if the photos scattered at random may be taken as evidence of her attendance--- to parties, street fairs, open air markets, parks, preschools, sporting events, clown fests...One finds swatches of fabric in thickets throughout, gobs of what I take to be tinted plaster, sketches of improbably elaborate desserts and recipes for

alcoholic beverages serving forty. There is still philosophy to be
sure and qualms aplenty...but also...

DO

**Do
the world
a
kindness**

**and
?**

?

**It's the question
that frees**

the inner
to respond
to
itself;

to leap beyond
the known, the now

even when the now
is
under construction.

I'm

I'm a wanderer,
soul's code
spinning out
daily itinerary,
losing track
of my energy source
at times,
wrongly attributing to

myself,
the glory,
the star-trekking savvy
which fuels
my progress
on this

open

eager

planet.

Blessed
on every fork of the road,
every
snaky passage,
what is apparent
to the transparent
is

But I miss
the benediction
often
muddling on
muddied
by sordid inner
squabbles.

I'm
a wanderer.
Hold me
to
no perfect
standard.

Don't mire me in solicitude,
nor delay me with questions
which demand
tragic answers.

Don't pout for contact information,
as if I were not
here
now,
as if

then
gone
I am less
myself than ever
and more to you
than we have ever
been.

Spare me the grappling hook interrogation,
muddy footprints in
my book
of fate.

I'm a wanderer.
I love you,
fellow travelers.

I leave you
to your selves.

So
Be
It.

DIVAGATION

I'm a wanderer.
Don't
expect me
to stick to the point,
stand on tradition
or trudge
your career path.

I'm a wanderer,

and I want

to wander

off the point,
over and over off the point, and behind schedule,
in the midst.
And I want
my cells
to know:

I support you.
I support you in your breathing.
I support you in your growing.

I
more than
marvel
at your very
splendor.

I'm
a wanderer.
And I want
to stumble
over revelation
and find a limber beauty
in my own clumsy gait.

I'm a gift giver.
Even beggars choose
and even widows
when they're flush
have a mite or two
to
arc
in serendipity,
rainbowing wonder
on a dreary day.

Here.

If you like it,

take it in.

No obligation.

Your cells:
have you wandered there
lately?

And have you told them:
“How truly
good
you are
you never seem
to
fathom;
will
you
but take it in,
my dears,
please?”

And then
I ask your cells
to uncoil
nightly

your best
beauty,
smiling as you sleep,
they murmur:

“Oh
how
good you are,
wholesome and ineffable,
simple
goodness
well worth
searching for,
truth’s beauty
being
all
revealing.”

And I?
The wanderer?
I’ve straggled on.
Off the point.
Out of fashion.
Mired in tangents.
In some midst
of my own making,
Baffled,
like

not.

as

But this I know,
sweet fellow traveler:
the godlike beauty
of simple goodness.

I pray
you
take it in
and let
it breathe you
wherever
you
may
wander.

'T WAS

I am

I said.

I love it.

Ah,

**that was
a good day.**

From the outset, the editor relates that Felicity begins her odyssey as a very lonely girl and that, as the volume proceeds, the young Seeker has filled her life with poetry, color, and friends---and rather fabulous and amazing friends....but HOW has this happened? Is the editor trying to stir up an audience for the book-to-be or is she, as she claims, a Classical Scholar and intellectual essayist conscripted to task she initially despised? There are (surprise) a few notes and post cards taped in the tattered volume. One recognizes the villagers from the taverna at weddings, baptisms, parties, and seasonal intervals. Various vacation spots in Europe, the Orient, and North America vie for space with a torrent of mail from New Zealand and Australia. Discretion has prevailed thus far, and I have not perused Felicity's personal correspondence. I am, as a rule, far from discreet; I cannot say how long my newly found ethics will thus bind me. What follows is the seeker's recall of a snippet of dialogue...

Who are you?

A graduate student.

That's not a who.

It's a what.

Who are you?

A professor in the making.

That is not a who, not even a what. That's a what you aren't.

And the you you are creating?

A philosopher.

A philosopher? That's got who potential. Could be a who. Could be a what. A lover of wisdom? Yes, that is someone to be. You are a who who loves wisdom.

Through and through a lover of wisdom.

Delphica...does it matter whether I am a who or a what?

Decidedly.

Well, I clearly haven't given the distinction much thought. You're suggesting I have to decide?

Decidedly.

Hmmmmmmmm.....Well, when is a philosopher a who and when is one a what?

It's not the degree that makes you a philosophical who. The degree: that's a what. The degreed entity: also a what. The established chair: an elevated what. Those who study and seek I so admire but as Diotima oft' noted, the groves of academe seem to multiply whats. Bless the whos who prosper there.

When am I a what and when a who?

When it's a what, it isn't itself.

You, my child, are a who except when you try to be someone else's idea of who you should be.

Delphica...

Yes?

What should I answer when people ask who I am?

Don't answer.

Felicity...

Yes, Delphica

I love that sweet who. Be it.

* * *

One finds in the journal a long handwritten document, with much crossings out and asterisks, circles, underlining and revision. JUSTICE AS FAIRNESS VERSUS JUSTICE AS ENTITLEMENT: IS THERE A MIDDLE WAY? appears to be working title. Sections of a word processed document have been cut and taped by hand and much is written, in various shades of ink, all around. Just past this grove of philosophic reflection and apparent academic angst, we see a sheet from a memo pad stapled on a page...and here Felicity has written...

RE:

About that life of yours?

The one clearly worth having?

Get on to it!
Now

Before it's too late or do without

That vital thing:

be it.
* * *

This prose is clearly from the Oracle:

Stir in my heart, you ancient puzzles.

Blood of my blood.

Bone of my bone.

So old we are and where is our wisdom?

Give it up, I say.

The it: give it up.

The disconnected say
I have no heart
such truth I share.

They say
you cannot know me.

They say
I need work
like a vase half wrought
or a bronze poorly burnished,
a dish under seasoned;
they say I speak untruth.

I agree.

Readily.

Why waste words on those who want from

Pythias

a pauper's feast:

flattery

cajolery

mockery of goodness' great cradle---

my heart?

My heart is indeed a large part of it

I grieve for those who desecrate me
for they
are not the they
they might have been
had we connected
deeply.

I am the Oracle.

You are the seeker.
I make connection visible.
I embody the link to all
within
all.
Within each.

Unsought,
the Oracle is no connector.
Unconnected, the seeker
is not herself:
the who who makes herself
daily
questioning
savoring
discovering
the dance.

What is the Oracle?

Not a what.

The who in you.

It is not my job
to preach.

It is not my task
to berate.

It is not my space
to beseech.

It is not my calling
to placate.

I am love's extravagant creature

and a humble servant
of truth

as it rasps through me

God's gift and your inspiration

*Stir in my heart, you ancient
puzzles.*

Blood of my blood.

Bone of my bone.

So old we are and where is our wisdom?

Give it up, I say.

The it: give it up.

*Rivers of gold stream through me
and rivers of tears*

crystalline

push aside boulders
with the ease of water

running

grace streaming

light saving
love pouring
rivers of gold
torrents of tears
free me
from the bounds
of who I was
what I feared
who I would not let
break through
the bracken shell
of dread.

Rivers of gold run through me

And joy.
Joy from sorrow
well spent,
sacred transmutation
of the stony
to the supple
stream.

That life you love
my child...

So
be it.

*The Oracle is
only human
after all.*

*She must resist
the push and pull*

*of others to see her
as more than that.*

*She must
Know
Herself.*

“Put some color in
it” the oracle said. So I did.

Track 25: SHARE, in the voices of Felicity and Delphica

So this is how the book came to be!!!???? The Seeker resists the Oracle...

*Where is your appetite for life,
child?*

Delphica queried.

I don't know, I said. Is this another task you would assign me? Locate appetite for life?

It takes some cultivation, child.

Felicity?

Yes, Delphica.

*How are you finding your sweet
self?*

I like her. She's good company. Getting more forgiving all the time.

*You must protect that sweet child,
Felicity. I love her.*

Will do, Delphica, I love her, too.

The editor relates the conversation that led to the publication of *Stir*... The retired Oracle of Delphi had a surprise for the seeker, a challenge. One Felicity would (as was the case with an obstinate author of mutual acquaintance) resist.

You are a philosopher, the Oracle remarked.

Yes, ma'am, I replied.

You need to share, said Delphica as Margarita rumbled around the chocolate drawer.

Share what? I wondered.

Philosophy, she countered.

Philosophy? What about philosophy

That book you keep.

That book? She couldn't know about that. Well...of course, she could. She did. My life, I said.

That book, she replied.

No.

That book, she repeated.

No.

It's your philosophy. Delphica's eyes were determined to soften me. I resisted, while Margarita dove for Belgian chocolate in a very distant cavern.

Share.

I can't I said.

Fool that I was. Never "can't" an Oracle. They know choose from can't.

Won't, I thrust in firmly.

It's just a journal.

Just a journal?

Okay, I said. I see what you mean. Our conversations are important. It would be my pleasure to share you

with the world. I can do that. I would enjoy that immensely

The whole book. Just as it is. I

presumed Margarita had flown to Switzerland for emergency rations; there was no hint of sound from the far quadrants...just our breathing.

I want to share you, I insisted. I'll leave everything about me out.

Impossible, she declared.

Untruth.

Unacceptable purgation.

Unacceptable to you, I countered. I'm quite fine with it.

Untrue to life, Felicity. Untrue to what is the case.

How so, Delphica? I am obstinate; I see this. But I advocate no lies.

You are the seeker, child. And without the seeker, there is no Oracle. A connection does not exist unless a questing, questioning being plugs in and uses the connector to fashion a better self. Moment by moment. In truth Felicity, we are both seekers and both oracles. All humans are both seeker and oracle, questioner and pipeline to the great All. That is what it means to be human. That's the beauty of who-ness. You're always a point of interrogation wired for guidance...and delight.

I'll think about it, Delphica. You know I will.

Thank you, child.

Where's Margarita?

Gone to fetch Phoebus Apollo. You know how he adores her. Margarita has a publisher in mind for our little project. Apollo can talk anyone into anything. Ah yes...! think he has your book in hand now.

Without my permission?

Of course not.

I don't want my name on it.

Fine.

I don't want to look at it. I'm embarrassed.
Embarrassed about the me parts. I want it to be about
you.

*It is as you have lived, my dear. It
is brave and beautiful and
frightened, gauche and noble, tender
and tentative...just as the self you
have made. You will look.*

*Examine: it's part of knowing
yourself. Give up that fear of being
you.*

This will take some getting used to, beloved Oracle.

*You are the who who seeks, sweet
teacher. No shame in that. Let it
be.*

Track 26: KNOW THYSELF, in the voice of the editor

This is our last excerpt in the audio CD. The editor reflects on her odyssey thus far.

Thus came to be the so-called Oracle project. A philosopher, I guess, is a peddler of used ideas. And Felicity, when she met the Oracle, had to try some on existentially. Her curious volume charts the odyssey of one seeker slowly connecting to possibility and learning how it feels to live a self-fulfilling quest. She is not done. She is not set. But she is no longer alone. And just as Odysseus is not Everyman, Felicity is not every discoverer. What she has chosen may not suit anyone else, nor please her in a year or two. Her Oracle is not everyone's model mentor. Still, neither proffer this, her messy passage as a universal model for the attainment of happiness or self-expression. And while the Pythian priestess is not everyone's idea of a vital connection, a liberating teacher, there is much good in this volume, as there much good in the seeker and much kindness and wisdom in the Oracle, however such connections are felt or embodied.

I am quite sure that Delphica would advise us not to dwell on their conjecture or conclusions, nor to revere these, their leavings, relics of time well spent...I think she would have us examine the meaning, the living of our lives...for quite truly...our days are numbered and plenipotent

...and however foolish or splendid one finds Felicity's Oracle, she brings every discussion back to ontology. Being. Personal ontology. Being: what it feels like to be. And how to know ourselves well enough to make ourselves humans worth knowing, from the inside out.

Yes, even when the now is under construction. As it is. Always.

Build selves we must. Let us do so wisely.

Even I, who have brought this amateurish text to the point of publication, even I have changed. For I am no longer embarrassed, as I once was, by this young person's earnest passage, recorded in the best truth she could muster, and with more courage than she knew she could be. I am no longer put off by the triteness of the language, the

tedium of conceptual repetition, the spineless heroine worship of an unformed woman, by the unseemly opulence of her mentors.

I have examined myself over the course of these months and I find therein a sneering, snobbish, lush yet desiccated woman who wants, suddenly, to live. Just now I want to be less chic, less arch, more kind: I want to be a self large enough to be embarrassed, to be embarrassing by the etiolated standards I am just now learning to dissect and discard. I am writing this afterward and affixing my name to passages I would have derided, with devastating charm, not six months ago. I have a name. It has been important to me. People know it. It is largely who and what I am. Until recently, I never looked at what a small who remains from the what I have so diligently constructed. I have a name. I have style. I have a style. I have a lifestyle. I look good for my age. I am in demand. I am paid to demolish beliefs, to puncture air. I have believed in things, foremost: not believing in things. I am what I have crafted: My snide and witty condescension, honed in the halls of academe and peddled smartly in glossy circles, is a shield for a rather nice self I might care to know. I have been a brittle who, a bitter what.

So what I have learned? Recently?

That I can learn.

That what I choose, how I live, all that courses through me: that is my being. Moment by moment. Over time. So I need to think about that "self" I make. Take time with it; examine it. Quite simply, I cannot help but be. And I cannot help but be the being I have chosen. The who I embody. Moment by moment. Over time.

The ancients were correct, if cumbersome in translation:

One cannot not be...

And one's being is of one's choosing.

We might like it otherwise...

But whatever we breathe in and breathe out;
whatever we give, take, recycle, and manufacture: that we are. Now.

After all that choosing, we somehow, often, find ourselves surprised
that we have no choice but to be.

At least I find myself surprised.

I am just now surprising myself; just now enjoying a capacity for
learning from which I have artfully shielded myself. Until recently.

So I sign off with the most simple, startling, obvious and nearly
undoable advice I have taken in for many a decade...

Be

wisely.