

A DREAM DIALECTIC:
THE NEW AESTHETIC

Willow Zef
and
Marshall James Kavanaugh



spread it

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Off in the distance a city on a hill behind an expanse of trees slowly comes into view. We shuttle into the bubble of New Paltz. Right away we come across a memorial to a child who seems magical in his ways.

'Give me another slug of that jug. How! Ho! Hoo!' Japhy leaping up: 'I've been reading Whitman, know what he says, Cheer up slaves, and horrify foreign despots, he means that's the attitude for the Bard, the Zen Lunacy bard of old desert paths, see the whole thing is a world full of rucksack wanderers, Dharma Bums refusing to subscribe to the general demand that they consume production and therefore have to work for the privilege of consuming, all that crap they didn't really want anyway such as refrigerators, TV sets, cars, at least new fancy cars, certain hair oils and deodorants and general junk you finally always see a week later in the garbage anyway, all of them imprisoned in a system of work, produce, consume, work, produce, consume, I see a vision of a great rucksack revolution thousands or even millions of young Americans wandering around with rucksacks, going up to mountains to pray, making children laugh and old men glad, making young girls happy and old girls happier, all of 'em Zen Lunatics who go about writing poems that happen to appear in their heads for no reason and also by being kind and also by strange unexpected acts keep giving visions of eternal freedom to everybody and to all living creatures...'

from *The Dharma Bums* by Jack Kerouac

Zen Lunacy

*Sell your soul for less than it's worth,
The Man says. Stay off the roads and be afraid
of strangers. There is nothing good for you out
there in the world of creativity. You must work,
work, work or else this whole thing you've grown
to understand will come crashing down with no
hope in surrender.*

These are the delusions of reality that you will begin to dismiss as the car kicks into a higher gear and *Zen Lunacy* takes hold of the drive giving truth to the road. Your outward appearance appears well-composed as the language rattles beatenly and erratically around wind turbines in your mind. The inner words set off soft chords of alarm for rationale down the line only to open up new neuro spaces and passageways spewing enlightened dialectics out into the light.

The practice of *Zen Lunacy* is simple to subsidize. Consume 1-2 mushrooms a day, practice yoga in a wide open field, cough abruptly and breath deeply, carry on with strange new

acquaintances as if you've known them your whole lifetime, and make sure not to overstay your welcome but instead when the moment is right hit the road at a goddened speed.

The pursuits of the *Zen Maniac* are language and the clarity of expression. No *Hum-drummer* can talk *them* out of this ecstatic peace. Though some may try, *their* existence cannot be categorized out of the real. *Their* imaginary predilections swoon and sway even the strongest minds into a dreamlike ecstasy marveling over the glow as *they* plummet through inspired and exaggerated flow.

The teacher-student union is soon formed, transcending any normal platitudes for hierarchy. Pick *their* brain and find the source to all this knowledge: *they* learn just as *they* teach. Don't you see? YOU are the story the *Zen Lunatic* will tell the next troupe of students. YOUR presence is magical and YOUR existence is meaningful. YOU are the Dharma Bums the *Zen Lunatic* has come to listen to and learn from.

The world for the *Zen Loon* consists of

plenty of young wandering souls waiting to impart knowledge on a whole cast of other creatures. *They* are there like a monk, *their* shaved crown perspiring as it fills to the brim with words. Time lies flat as *their* reach expands outwards. Highways and dirt roads are but short subdued meditations bound for conversation following the curvature of the landscape. *Their* spaceship hurtles at full speed down the alleyways of American wastelands and sublime rivers. Cigarette smoke expels from its windows. The paisley daze and tie dyed haze emits at high frequencies enraging otherwise tunnel-visioned middle roaders.

This traffic shouts at top volume, shaking middle fingers rapidly out rolled down windows exchanging road violence for cooler breezes.

The *Zen Lunatic* is unaffected by these breaches with reality. *Their* flying saucer is equipped with the congo lines of Nigerian mambattiyana. Nodding *their* head and shaking to the rhythms of nature. *They* wave back at these passer-bys with mirth-filled inflection glowing inwardly and outwardly a

stupefied rapture.

At the colleges *they* are welcomed as a traveling writer. *Their* colleagues back home believe *they* are on a far out bender that no one has time for. *Their* detractors ask, *Who pays for this? Who pays your rent?* The Zen Lunatic responds calmly, *I pay for this. I pay my rent. I make things work and I create my reality.*

Contrasting the 9 to 5 *they* sleep four hours a night and extend the days from 24 to 36 and sometimes as far as 48 or 96. Wide awake but always sleeping. Conscious but always dreaming. The land *they* walk in is lucid. *They* dominate the atmosphere with jumps that turn into an interstellar breeze. Growing an aura that mixes with the fermentations of all wanderers across the globe. *They* are a tree and at the same time a person and at the same time nothing but always everything undaunting. *They* speak in proverbs of the vernacular. Life is sweet for *them* and *they* forecast that it is sweet to us all, as soon as we open our eyes and look inward.

I whisper in her ear a Spanish verse from Pablo Neruda. She smiles in silence. Earlier she read an erotic poem of mine and asked, “What did you do to me with your words?”

We stand out front of a house commenting on the stickers on the car in the driveway. Bumper stickers referencing Bukowski, Hunter S, New Orleans.

“Hey!” comes from a window.

We look up smiling and laughing, before we know it she is at the door welcoming us inside.

On a subway car in Brooklyn a young man with long blond hair steps onto the train. He sees a young lady stretching her legs from railing to railing in a gallant split. Pointing to an object the gentleman is carrying I inquire, “What is that?” “A melodica,” he says. “Play it man!” He plays a circus-y Parisian snake charming riff and the lady contortionist bends into herself over herself and all around in tune with the cabaret melody.

We hike a path seeking waterfalls. We're a group of dogs, babies, moms, and men. "Yeah we're going to have a goodbye party. I want to have it in the woods."

"A good vibes party?"

"A good vibes party! Yes! That's what we need to have!"

"Good vibes parties!"

She leads us through the house, introducing us to her roommates and takes us into the attic. It's enormous, slanted roofs reminiscent of a cathedral, pillows laid on the floor for seating, and a rickety wooden ladder to the roof. "No one's allowed up there," she states. We sit and talk. She's spunky, pretty, a tiny femme activist. "I'm going to get a 30 rack of PBR and charge people a dollar so you have money for the road."

We wander around Bard College looking for the campus farm. We see it in the distance and walk towards it. But first a giant sculpture apprehends our vision.

"What is that?"

"It must be a cloud generator of alien technology... Look! It sways in the wind! It must be a giant weather vane dream fore-caster!"

"Hey!" a voice yells from afar. I wave hello and we walk towards one another.

"I'm Willow," she says.

"Hah! That's my name too."

"How lovely," she responds. We converse and she invites us to a vegan dinner at her house. "Great," we say and part ways until the evening.

The Traveling Poet

Traveling like a gypsy *they* move from woods to city feeding ravenously on the spoken word. As each syllable rolls off the tip of *their* tongue renewed energy seeps into *their* being. *Their* body sways to each beat a dance made by each footfall and pivotal exasperation. *They* feel the attentive gaze of *their* audience, looking into eyes for brief moments *they* see minds transported to the dreamscapes *they* orate in masterful dream labored eloquence. The energy shared by the audience rekindles the *Traveling Poet's* inner fire and *they* breathe musical transcendence.

Their travel takes *them* far out in *their* mental rhythms and so *they* appear at each new homestead with the glow of a humble giant. Kerouac lights the back of *their* tail blowing wind to *their* sails and when *they* read *they* sound like Ginsberg playing a saxophone.

Each community welcomes *them* with open arms, potlucks of carnivále, and warm hospitality. *They* are an energy force that inspires those weighed

down by the everyday to rise up and join the circus as it moves fluidly on down the road. For days the *Hum-Drummers'* routine is disrupted giving health to imaginations. *They* raise smiles out of the otherwise boring every day.

There is an exchange that happens that is fruitful. A part of this is the *Traveling Poet's* ability to shapeshift between various subconstructs of *the Wanderer*. For the farmer *they* become the *Migrant Worker* tilling the land and feeding off the previous year's bounties. For the show promoter *they* become a *Dream Organizer* speaking punk dissonance and moving the crowd in large sweeping gestures beckoning them forward through the night's performances. To the student *they* become the *Impassioned Yogi* a construct most students have not seen before. *They* take in as much as *they* expel and adapt *their* own language and experience to better meet the brilliance in *their* students.

The *Traveling Spirit* attracts others with travel in their hearts. Everywhere the *poet* goes

they meet others either between travels or planning ahead for the next big adventure. Sometimes *their* path even crosses those who are also on the road working a different circuit and sharing other sorts of road knowledge. *Their* attraction grows stronger the further out *they* go and because of this *they* will always have a roof over *their* head.

Those that share this spirit invite the *Traveling Poet* into their homes in order to otherwise vanquish their own dissatisfaction for their anchored state. They ask the *Traveler* to share *their* experiences and thus imaginations fill in the blanks creating a grand marvel all around. The *Guest's* energy fuses with the host's and both life forces upend with new freshness. In one final quest for the perfect moment the *Poet* embraces *their* new followers and tells them to visit *them* at *their* own home, eat *their* own food, and expand the dreamspace with future travels.

Whether in the forest or the city the *Traveling Poet* comes to the same conclusions about life: *The spoken word is one of the last vestiges of humankind. Words are like oxygen and one must speak them out loud to live and to survive. Everywhere one goes there are beautiful people working on incredible projects against insane odds. And finally, it is better to live out one's dreams than to have never tried.*

The reading took place in an enormous attic with a ceiling so high at its peak reaching twenty maybe twenty five feet appearing like a sanctuary with piles of cushions for seating lit by candles and incense dancing through the air smokily relaxing the gathering bodies with its aroma. The mood was set and the night was ready and people chatted about the state of dilapidation and depression in their city maintaining a spirit of hope and revitalization as they commented on the dead space and abandoned buildings their imaginations filling the apocalyptic post-industrial town with visions of community and urban farms. A quiet excitement filled the room hopeful and idyllic yet firmly grounded in the reality of their harsh environment the people began to settle down with beers in hand taking seats on pillows awaiting the readings and performances ahead. As the poetry started to occupy minds and hearts feelings and thoughts the people entered a trance a collective sway laughing and listening attentive engaged and very alive. Poetry from teachers and philosophers, caretakers, college kids, and activists all sharing their alchemy of words communicating sadness and confusion, wants and desires revealing both our higher humanity and our more base animal natures. After the readings we took a break to converse and chat and continue our conversations about what's happening in the town on the edge of rebirth nearing the tipping point of a critical mass unhappy with the way things are run ready to take over humbly with good intentions of change and progression renewal in all scopes of life from the economically downtrodden to

the disabled, elderly, and the mentally ill. The night continued on with music acoustics and sing-a-longs of folk rise-up tunes ballads and songs and a mystical absurdism expressed through a unicorn blaring a trumpet speaking trying to convey his innermost soul like a jester a clown providing a glimpse of grotesque beautiful whimsical charm upsetting unsettling any trace of status quo normal everyday humdrum slumbering entertainment not seen on tv or in bars but only in the imaginative kingdom of a particular people coming together creating a unique experience non-reproduceable charged by subconscious archetypes embodying bubbling up from the underground found throughout the country in pockets. These people are ready for real change for deeper connections and interactions exchanges of knowledge and memories stories yearning for rebirth new life transformative living like everyday matters because our children deserve better always the generations to come deserve enlightenment and paradise a return to the earth under the stars. We are the prophets, we are the change, we are peace speeding love being sung.

After our reading in the attic cathedral we climb onto the roof and stick our heads into the sky shouting poetry over the dim darkness of night. We climb back down and drink beers and talk sex and rose rituals. We are being housed by college students and femme activists. We read tarot by candle light and burn sage and incense. We discuss the implications of a passing age.

The Mystic

The Mystic observes quietly and conducts *themselves* smoothly going with the flow as the others lead the way. It is interesting because with subtle motions of *their* aura *they* are able to affect the conversation that surrounds *them* into more mythical planes of thought.

A girl comes up to *them* out of the crowd and asks *them*, "Have you heard of mystics? I have a lot of friends who are into mystics."

The Mystic smiles at her and asks,
"What is a mystic?"

She starts to describe all these strange incomplete ideas and unoverturned stones about what she believes a mystic to be and what their role in the urban dichotomy could be. Meanwhile *The Mystic* continues to smile producing a staff with a series of bones tied to the end of it. There are fox skulls and deer vertebrae and raccoon teeth and other small pieces dangling from the end of the staff.

They gesture her forward and say for her to

look closely.

"See this one is a spaceship. You see? And this one looks like a small boat. Choo choo."

The girl moves closer and examines each artifact with extreme intent not noticing the spell slowly being cast upon her.

Then with a sudden intensity, *The Mystic* slams the staff onto the sidewalk and shouts,

"BOOGA! BOOGA! BOOGA!"

But the girl remains unaffected not noticing the strangeness of this scene. She looks into *The Mystic's* eyes and smiles and agrees with *them* saying that she sees what *they* see.

Her anxiety and her angst passes from her. For unknown reasons she feels a weight lifted from her heart. Her mind opens to places it has never traveled before. She is gay and merry and at the same time intuitive and strong.

Eventually *The Mystic* moves on. *Their* spell has satisfied its audience and the world continues to turn.

We stand on stage and speak our poetry for an audience of drinkers who fade in and out uncaring about the performance at hand. On occasion our words enrapt them but we are still in practice at the beginning of our trip in Ithaca.

“Hey,” I say to a pretty locks lady sitting across from me. She is slow to respond at first so involved in her own situation. I ask, “Do you know where the community garden is?” She rips from her reality and accelerates with speed, “Yeah, actually I’m going there soon.” We communicate rapidly telepathically soaking in the other’s vibes, “Hey so do you want to like jump on our magic school bus and journey together?” We look at one another nodding in agreement.

The melodica plays as I nudge my neighbor. “Hey. There’s going to be a unicorn soon.” He looks at me over his glasses and inches closer to hear. I say again, “There is going to be a unicorn.” He looks at me chewing on a toothpick as if to say, “Yeah I’ve heard that one before,” and slides a spacious 5 inches away from me. No sooner does he look up than a masked unicorn with a trumpet confronts his reality. I smile as the rest of the car reacts in laughter and disbelief.

The Jester

Standing in the center of a large attic with multi-colored lights shining down from the roof beams *The Masked One* plays the trumpet and tames the court. *Their* role is that of comic or jester playing out thick narratives of unusual turbulent rapture. The court stands back and laughs with fresh energy igniting inner fires and finding solace in the short but timid breath of relaxation.

Found on a subway traversing the underwater border between Brooklyn and Manhattan, *The Jester* is playful in *their* manipulations of reality. Dressed as a unicorn *their* band of merrymakers warp the otherwise dull day's reality into that of carnivale full of contortionists, fire breathers, and other odd forms of humanity.

Subtle in *their* spell *The Jester* brings the reveling court into subconscious trumpeting emotions down dark plated hallways until the space opens up to a room with a Madonna naked in all their glory peeing directly and with accuracy on a stone-casted bust of Julius Caesar.

The response to this divine beauty is awe and mixed laughter until the whole room swells with joyous son ambulance. Catching them futher off guard *The Jester* directs the captive audience's attention to the patchwork curtain hung along the inner wall.

From behind this curtain comes a pony-sized dog who walks on his hind legs as his long felt tongue laps at the air in round ramparts teasing the midnight frolic his bald nubile body stretching against incredible odds until it expands outwards across the room blanketing the court in diffused light. The expression on the dog's face is that of wonder and juvenile delinquency.

A cat walks out from underneath it but the dog is too ballooned out to do anything more than drip huge puddles of warm saliva flooding it with hail. The cat meows. The balloon pops. In a simple gesture the court erupts in laughter.

Back at the courtroom the level of gaiety has reached a noble high. Gender roles are abstracted. Closeness of the heart is ever prevalent.

Sorrow is an emotive response far from collective reality.

The Jester is a traveler that scores a ride with the poet. *They* value narrative and perfect *their* skillset of storytelling through each venture and each interval practicing out loud *their* magical tide. *They* show up at punk rock show and open mic, café or living room, metro stop and street corner. Everywhere *they* go *they* break the spectator's normal confines of reality in surrealist spasms of laughter.

A performance artist in basic form, a shaman or mystic in more far out episodes. Through the practice of transformation *they* guide an audience through the discordance of inner dream worlds. Carefully *they* construct and perform a joke that appears weird and methodical but not so easily contrived. It involves *their* own death. *They* take a rickety, old ladder and balance it so that it stands straight upright 15-feet into the air. *They* place a small glass of water on a table next to the bottom rung. It is the setup for a parlor

trick you have seen many places before. Then *they* begin to climb singing all the time about the magic of sunsets. At the top *they* hold one leg in front of *them* and the audience begins to chant for *The Fool*.

"Jump! Jump! Jump!" the crowd shouts.

And so *The Jester* hops forward off the top of the ladder, free falling for only a few milliseconds before pulling an umbrella from out of *their* sleeve and spreading it open to slow *their* air time to a safer speed.

They float downward slowly, drifting closer and closer to the crowd and eventually landing in front of the king's throne. The king applauds and then leans forward and asks for *The Jester's* advice on his kingdom's affairs, and like magic the whole world is at peace: all war at an end, humans of every background stand hand in hand and there are smiles on each and everyone's faces. Time is no longer perceived as alien. *Infinity in being is quickly becoming real*.

In the morning we awake and travel to a farm. We chop wood and weed in preparation for sewing seeds. As night approaches we grill a hen raised at our farm stay the year before along with root vegetables, beans, and beers. We elongate the night with weed smoke and a bonfire stoking with light until the rain. We revert inside and enter teacher/student dialogues feeling like dharma bum philosophers at which point the zen lunacy really starts taking a hold. We fall asleep to candles and awake in the morning to hit the road and say so long.

spontaneously combusting off the beaten path
acting as shaman and jester, wise fools
teaching and learning
each city, each town offering a different vibration, a different
communication
we fill our onlookers with a dreamscape of stories and poems
invading mind space with zen antics and schizopoesis

thump-a-kunking goes our hearts
throbbing and infecting listeners with a primal tribal death rattle
call to life

“listen up!” we cry

we are the rucksack revolution traveling through your stories
spreading our love enrapturing your minds

we are here for but a moment
so listen carefully