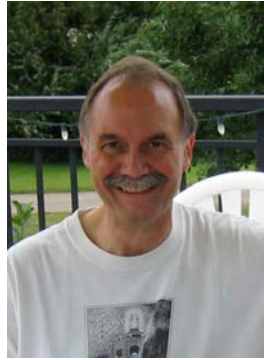


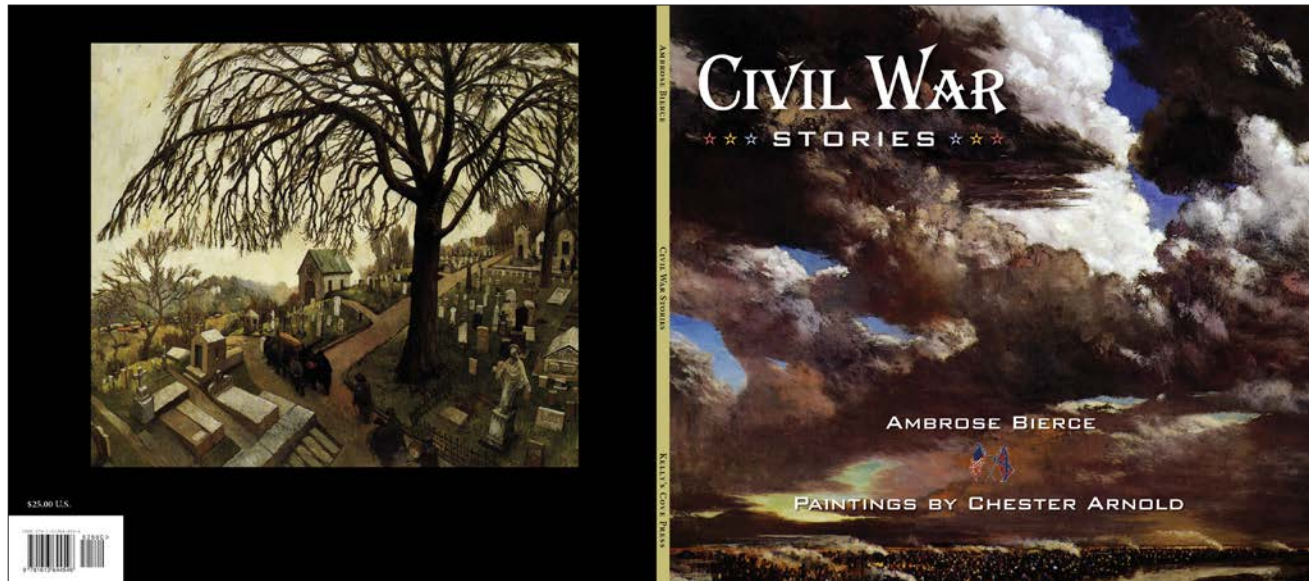
LYNN PHELPS BOOK PORTFOLIO



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UNDERSTATED HORROR

This treasury of Civil War stories by Ambrose Bierce is among the richest representations of America's bloodiest that we have. These stories were written from the inside by a man who fought across the South, including battles at Corinth, Stones River, Kennesaw Mountain, Chattanooga, Chickamauga, Resaca, and Shiloh. These stories focus on victims rather than heroes, folly rather than heroics.

Noted Bierce scholar Ernest James Hopkins referred to Bierce's Civil War fiction as anti-war stories. Whether or not Bierce intended to create a powerful body of antiwar literature, the effect was achieved. These brief, realistic tales, unsparing in their depiction of human suffering, are not tempered by sentiment or reflection. Their power derives, in part, from their understated narration, which stands in contrast to the graphic scenes depicted a technique that anticipated Hemingway by more than a generation.

Readers behold a searing landscape of horror. The child in "Chickamauga" observes a trail of hopelessly wounded men creeping through the mud "upon their hands and knees. They used their hands only, dragging their legs. They used their knees only, their arms hanging idle at their sides. They strove to rise to their feet, but fell prone to the attempt."

In "The Affair at Coker's Notch," Bierce more than suggests Dietrich's Inferno, as poor Captain Coker appears beside the blackened corpses of his wife and child. "A ferocious demon darted spring out of the smoke to take his place, but passed and gazed up at the mounted officer with an unearthly regard, his teeth flashing between his black lips, his eyes, fierce and expanded, burning like coals beneath his bloody brows."

The ten stories presented here were initially published, one by one, in the *San Francisco Examiner* between 1867 and 1893, and later included in Bierce's collection *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians*. In addition, Bierce's autobiographical essay, "What I Saw at Shiloh," is included. Originally published in *The Volga*, a San Francisco weekly, in 1881, "What I Saw at Shiloh" is considered by some to be the author's most important single contribution. The elegiac tone of the essay stands in profound contrast to the stark voice of the tales, and seems the work of a writer much older than thirty-nine.

Ambrose Bierce enlisted at eighteen, just days after President Lincoln called for volunteers. He joined in the

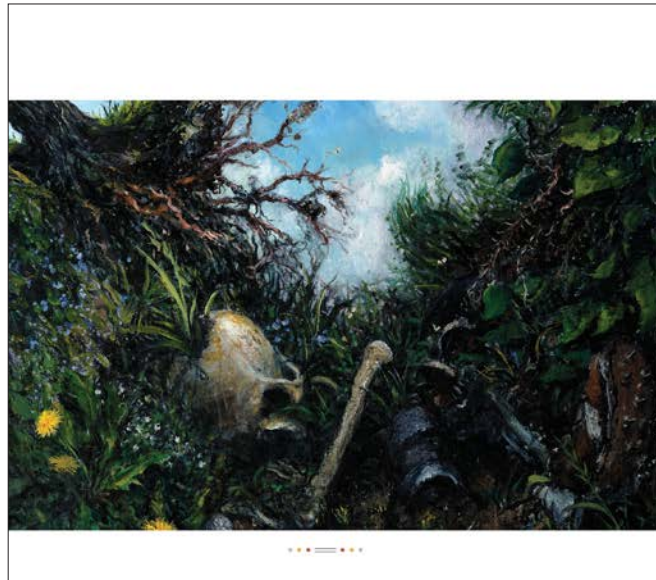
Ninth Indiana Infantry and served nearly to the end of the war, when he was forced to resign due to the recurring effects of a head wound suffered during the battle at Kennesaw Mountain.

After the fighting at Stones River in 1862, Bierce was promoted to first lieutenant. Later he would serve as a topographical engineer for General Hubert Hartzon. Bierce's specialized knowledge of topography gives the landscape its centrality in these stories. It is a landscape as devastated as the man whose blood it wears, and whose bones it swallows.

Bierce creates a physical world of enormous range. He breaks the landscape into distinct planes, and the field of vision is always relevant to the character that beholds it. We see the sky through the eyes of a bound man on the scaffold, and the earth from the vantage of gravely wounded soldiers falling through the mud. In *The Devil's Dictionary*, Bierce defines realism as "the art of depicting nature as it is seen by fools," seeming to malign his own method.

The inclusion of twenty-one color plates from paintings by the widely admired Northern California realist Chester Arnold adds immeasurably to the timeless quality of this edition. Although Arnold's paintings bear no direct reference to the Civil War and were painted nearly a century and a half after its last battle, they share with Bierce a profound sense of the hollow devastation that human violence and destruction have bequeathed. Arnold, an American, grew up in post-World War I Germany. His recent painting of the bombing of Dresden, *A Natural History of Disaster*, stands in well for the destruction of Fredericksburg, Virginia, just as Ambrose Bierce's Civil War tales apply to all wars.

Burt Schrieber, August, 2011

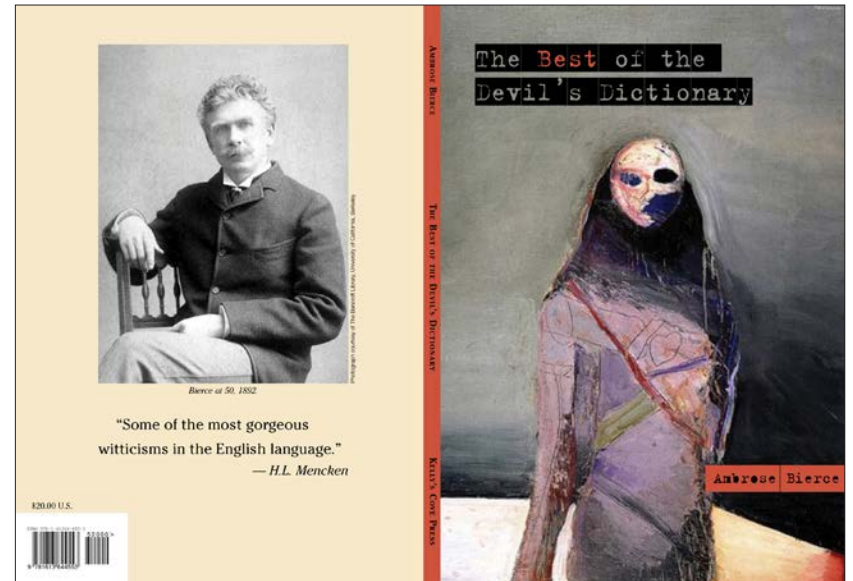


CHICKAMAUGA

One sunny autumn afternoon a child strayed away from its rude home to a small field and entered a forest unobserved. It was happy in a new sense of freedom from control, happy in the opportunity of exploration and adventure for this child's spirit, in bodies of its ancestors, had for thousands of years been trained to memorable feats of discovery and conquest—victories in battles whose critical moments were centuries, whose "victors' camps were cities of hewn stone. From the cradle of its race it had conquered its way through iron continents and passing a great sea had penetrated a third, there to be born to war and dominion as a heritage.

The child was a boy aged about six years, the son of a poor planter. In his younger manhood the father had been a soldier, had fought against naked savages and followed the flag of his country into the capital of a civilized race to the far South. In the peaceful life of a planter the warrior fire survived, once kindled, it is never extinguished. The man loved military books and pictures and the boy had understood enough to make himself a wooden sword, though even the eye of his father would hardly have known it for what it was. This weapon he now bore bravely, as became the son of an heroic race, and passing now and again in the sunny space of the forest assumed, with some exaggeration, the postures of aggression and defense that he had been taught by the engraver's art. Made reckless by the ease with which he overcame invisible foes attempting to stay his advance, he committed the common enough military error of pushing the pursuit to a dangerous extreme, until he found himself upon the margin of a wide but shallow brook, whose rapid waters barred his direct advance against the flying foe that had crossed with illogical ease. But the intrepid victor was not to be baffled; the spirit of the race which had passed the great sea burned unquenchable in that small breast and would not be denied. Finding a place where some boulders in the bed of the stream lay but a step or a leap apart, he made his way across and fell again upon the rear-guard of his imaginary foe, putting all to the sword.

Now that the battle had been won, prudence required that he withdraw to his base of operations.



Bierce's Contemporary Shadow

ALTHOUGH HIS PRESUMED DEATH OCCURRED nearly a century ago, Ambrose Bierce casts a contemporary shadow. Literary critics have long compared the author of *The Devil's Dictionary* to classic satirists like Jonathan Swift. But in our time, Bierce, as a provocateur beholden to no one, bears a more striking resemblance to the revolutionary comic of the 1950s and '60s, Lenny Bruce.

More than a century ago, Bierce said that in this country satire "never had more than a siddy and uncertain existence, for the soul of it is wit, wherein we are delightfully deficient."

"Satire," said Lenny Bruce in the 1950s, "is tragedy plus time. You give it enough time, the public, the reviewers will allow you to satirize it." It is still too soon for Americans to absorb the battle of Bierce and Bruce without denouncing them as misanthropic or drug-addled?

Ambrose Bierce began knocking out satirical definitions for his San Francisco newspaper column nearly a hundred years before Lenny Bruce was arrested in a North Beach nightclub for using honest Anglo-Saxon words like cocksnaker and motherfucker, words that cry out for proper Biercean definitions.

While Bierce's losses, including William Randolph Hearst, met his demand that not a single word that he wrote be altered, Bruce went to jail, demanding his right to use unensored speech.

Although Bierce may not have admitted it, he would have enjoyed Bruce's stand-up bit, "Religion, Inc." Bierce defined religion as "a daughter of hope and fear, explaining to ignorance the nature of the Unknowable." He can hear him chuckling out loud at Bruce's line: "If Jesus were killed twenty years ago, Catholic school children would wear little electric chairs around their necks, instead of crosses."

For both Bierce and Bruce, language became the prime tool with which to hammer away at the hypocrisy of humankind. Although they were each accused of being bitter, both men, in the guise of humor, engaged in serious work.

"All my humor," said Lenny Bruce, "is based upon destruction and despair. If the whole world were tranquil, without disease and violence, I'd be standing on the headline right in back of J. Edgar Hoover."

Ambrose Bierce's world, like ours, is filled with treachery and despair, but his analysis of it, through elegant and brilliantly efficient definitions shrouded in language that is at once lucid and beguiling, remains a marvel. Bierce defined cooperation as "an ingenious device for obtaining individual profit without individual responsibility," a definition which has seasoned with time, not aged.

What may be most surprising about reading Bierce's dictionary now is how endlessly funny it is. Those capable of honesty will recognize themselves, just as Bierce saw himself in these definitions. He defined egotist, which he was often accused of being, as "a person of low taste, more interested in himself than in me." The readers who will most enjoy Bierce's dictionary are those capable of recognizing that there is nobody funnier than the character in the mirror.

Compiling *The Best of the Devil's Dictionary* was a wholly pleasurable exercise in cherry-picking. I admit to looking over my shoulder occasionally for the ghost of old Bierce, with Civil War revolver, as I took a knife to much of the dog-eared and extended commentary contributed by his invited poets and scholars, and pruned some of the lexicographer's more ponderous definitions. My crime is tempered by the fact that the full, unedited edition of *The Devil's Dictionary* is available at no cost online and through the usual ebook purveyors.

This streamlined edition includes extended definitions of such essential Bierce vocabulary as idiot, infidel, and regalia, definitions that deserve to be read out loud to fully appreciate their wisdom and irony, as well as the glory of their language. This volume offers readers a surprisingly contemporary hit parade of Bierce, suitable for easy reference and quotability.

To extend the spirit of Ambrose Bierce's lexicography as a living dictionary, we have compiled and included a list of 300+ words that we wish Bierce had defined. Some of these words did not exist in Bierce's time, others have taken on fresh meanings. Imagining Bierce's definitions in an amusing exercise and underscores how the essence of a culture resides in its language.

For a *Twenty-First Century Devil's Dictionary* that we hope to publish in 2012, we invite readers to contribute vital words and Biercean definitions at our website, www.kellyscopress.com.

Burt Schrieber
August, 2011

Ambition. *n.* An overmastering desire to be vilified by enemies while living and made ridiculous by friends when dead.

Amnesty. *n.* The state's magnanimity to those offenders whom it would be too expensive to punish.

Aphorism. *n.* Predigested wisdom.

Apologize. *v.* To lay the foundation for a future offense.

Apoptate. *n.* A leech who, having penetrated the shell of a turtle only to find that the creature has long been dead, deems it expedient to form a new attachment to a fresh turtle.

Appeal. *v.* In law, to put the dice into the box for another throw.

Appetite. *n.* An instinct thoughtfully implanted by Providence as a solution to the labor question.

Applause. *n.* The echo of a platitude.

April Fool. *n.* The March fool with another month added to his folly.

Armor. *n.* The quality that distinguishes love without knowledge.

Armor. *n.* The kind of clothing worn by a man whose tailor is a blacksmith.

Ass. *n.* A public singer with a good voice but no ear. In Virginia City, Nevada, he is called the Washoe Canary; in Dakota, the Senator; and everywhere the Donskey. The animal is widely and variously celebrated in the literature, art and religion of every age and country; no other so engages and fires the human imagination as this noble vertebrate.

Auctioneer. *n.* The man who proclaims with a hammer that he has picked a pocket with his tongue.

B

Babe or Baby. *n.* A misshapen creature of no particular age, sex, or condition, chiefly remarkable for the violence of the sympathies and antipathies it excites in others, itself without sentiment or emotion. There have been famous babes; for example, little Moses, from whose adventure in the bulrushes the Egyptian hieroglyphs of seven centuries before doubtless derived their life tale of the child Otafis being preserved on a floating lotus leaf.

Bait. *n.* A preparation that renders the hook more palatable. The best kind is beauty.

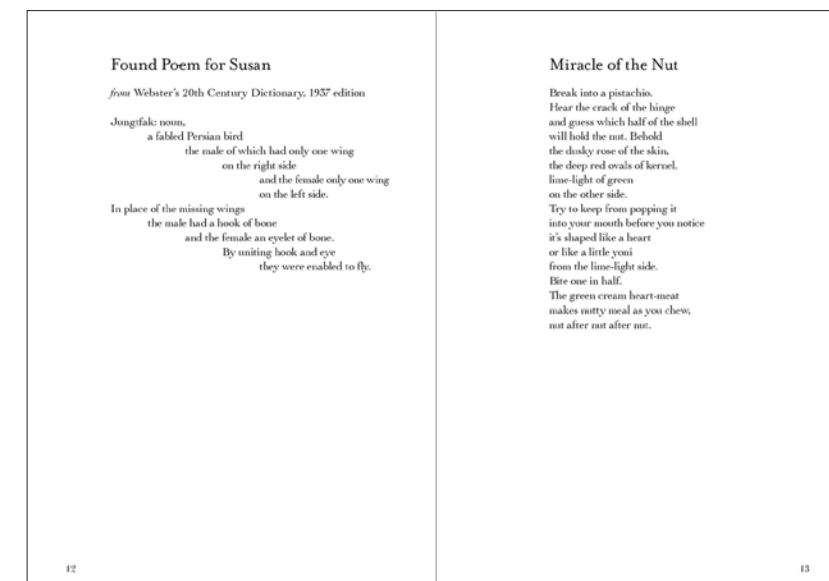
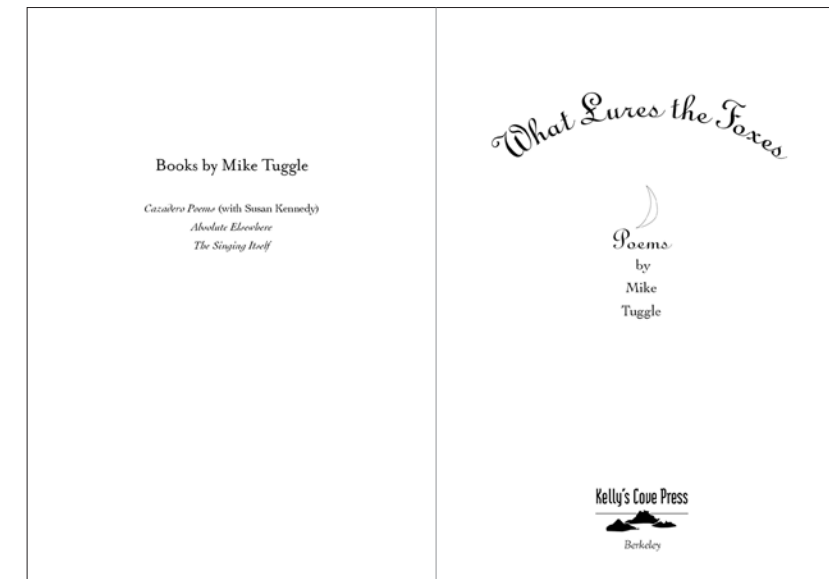
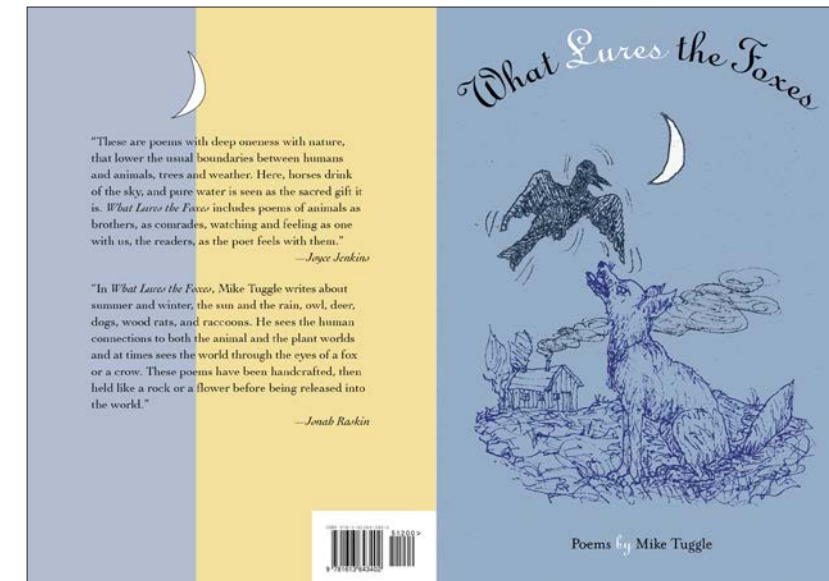
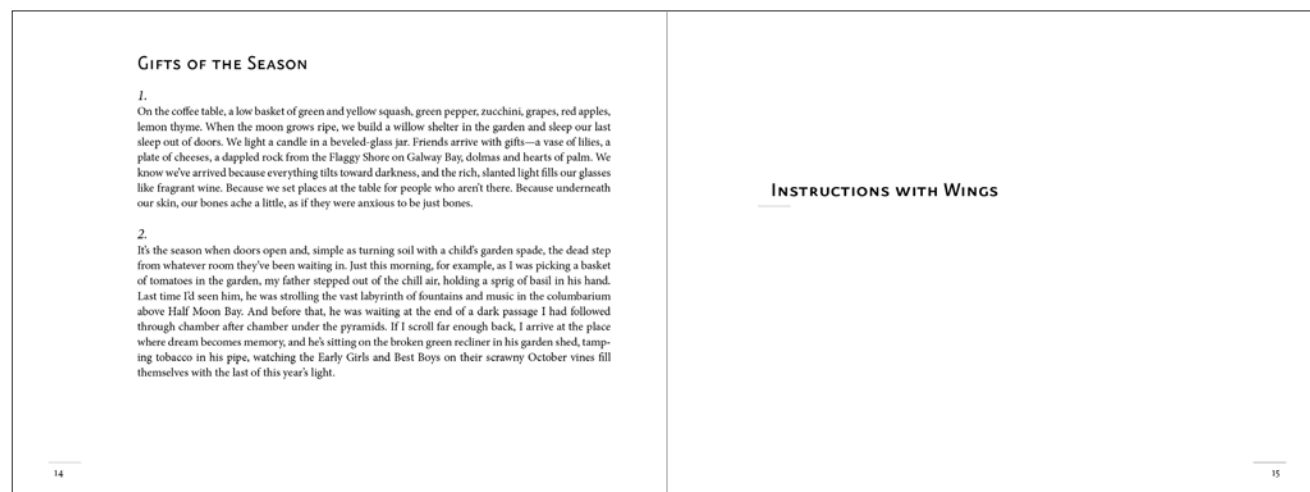
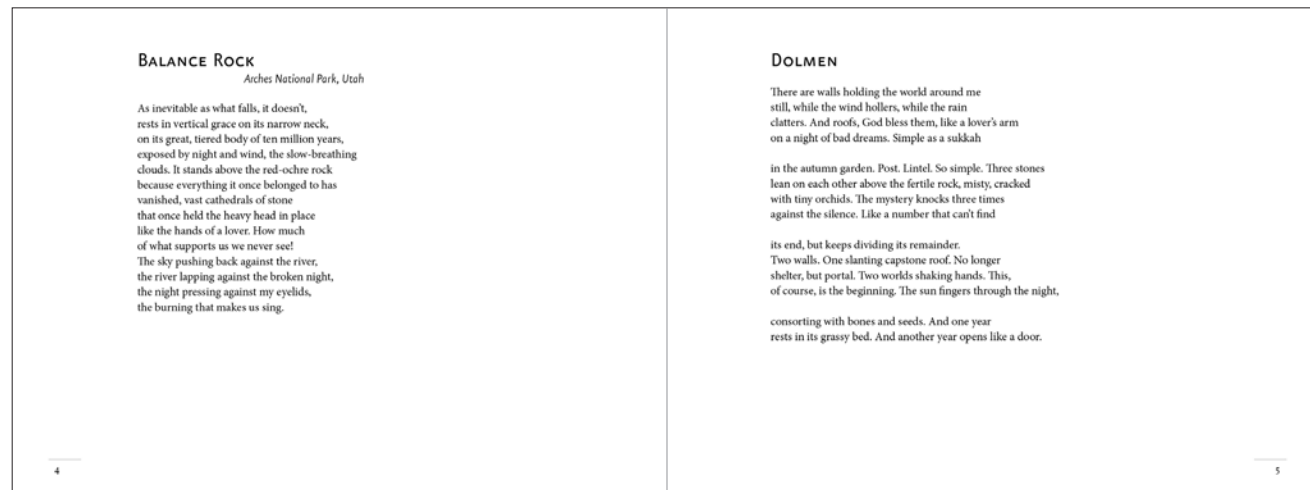
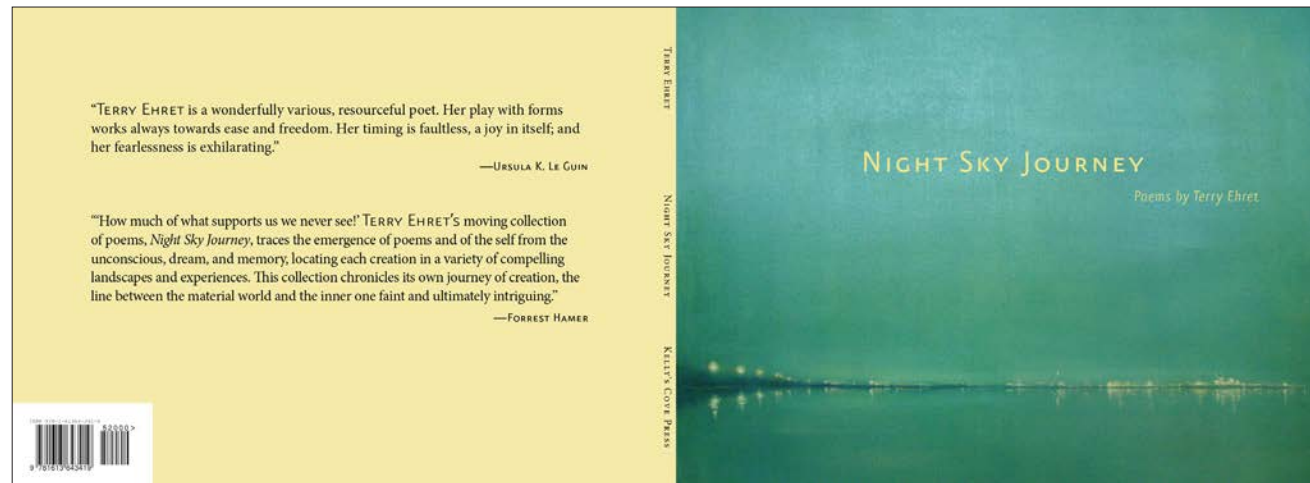
Bath. *n.* A kind of mystic ceremony substituted for religion worship, with what spiritual efficacy has not been determined.

Battle. *n.* A method of untying with the teeth of a political knot that would not yield to the tongue.

Befriend. *v.* To make an ingrate.

Beg. *v.* To ask for something with an earnestness proportioned to the belief that it will not be given.


Beggar. *n.* One who has relied on the assistance of his friends.



Ken LaZebnik

Hollywood DIGS

An Archaeology of Shadows



Ken LaZebnik

These essays are wonderful untold histories behind the people, places, and movies of Hollywood. Ken LaZebnik is a gentle soul with an eye for story and a gift for words, which makes it amazing that he's ever had a day of work in this town.


— Brian Rooney, journalist and editor, TheRooneyReport.com

In *Hollywood Digs*, veteran film and television writer Ken LaZebnik unearths shards of film history that have rarely seen the light of day. Here is the romantic and tragic saga of Jack Mahoney, legendary stuntman and Hollywood's thirteenth Tarzan; F. Scott Fitzgerald, toward the end of his life, living in a cottage on the Encino estate of film baron Edward Everett Horton; Micky Moore, who spent eighty-four years in the industry, first as a child actor with Mary Pickford and later as the fabbed second-unit director of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

More than sixty dozens photographs include two large galleries by Hollywood master Leigh Wiener. They accompany the author's deft and idiosyncratic portraits of Hollywood luminaries including Paul Newman, Frank Sinatra, Jimmy Stewart, Judy Garland, Al Jolson, Milton Berle, George Burns, and Harpo Marx.

Ken LaZebnik gives readers an insider's look at how Hollywood works, sharing his own experience of success and failure. He excavates hidden histories of the famous and near famous. Told with wit and compassion, *Hollywood Digs* finds treasures amid the dust.

\$29.00 U.S.



Gregory Peck & Judy Garland, 1955



Gregory Peck with Judy Garland at the Hollywood Foreign Press Awards, February 1955.

LEIGH WIENER GALLERY

I HAD A PERSONAL BRUSH with the eccentric world of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association when I worked for Sundance. The HFPA supported Sundance Institute with a generous grant each year, and for many years they made a plea for Sundance founder Robert Redford to make an appearance on their broadcast. The President of the HFPA would call me up, ask whether I had heard from Redford—I had not—and then urge me to ask him again. To be clear, I wasn't the one making the ask; I would forward the request up the chain, and Redford would regularly decline, and the HFPA would search elsewhere for the stars that made their annual awards show, the Golden Globes, the money-maker that helped bankroll their existence.

Within Hollywood, the HFPA show was for many years regarded as an amiable white-trash cousin of the Oscars; the awards were, after all, the decision of a few dozen newspaper correspondents representing places like Uruguay. The criteria for membership in that one-publix-four-artists-a-year-in-a-foreign-publication, so the members are not so much the internationally respected European film critics as they are the entrepreneurial stringers who come to Hollywood and cobble together a career. Early on, they realized that by scheduling their awards ceremony before the Oscars, they could catch the rising wind of publicity and free studio junkies. One key to giving their ceremony a strong profile was getting celebrities to appear, so they served great food and lots of booze. The films nominated for HFPA Best Picture were often on the list only because their stars were considered most likely to show up at the Golden Globes.

The Leigh Wiener portrait of Gregory Peck and Judy Garland at the 1955 Golden Globes captures the dichotomy of the HFPA. From the waist up, here is Gregory Peck, elegant leading man, revered for his integrity even before it was stamped in the public consciousness as *African Fiend*. Peck made his mark as the star of *Gentleman's Agreement*, in the role of a newspaperman who goes undercover as a Jew to uncover anti-Semitism in postwar New York City. His agent urged him to turn down the part, feeling it would endanger his career. Instead, it earned him an Oscar nomination as Best Actor.

Just behind Judy Garland, we catch the outlines of Humphrey Bogart's face. He was a supporter of Garland and hated her husband at the time, Sid Luft, whom he accused of living off of Judy's talent. Garland and Luft lived at 144 South Maple Drive in Holmby Hills, in a home built by producer Hunt Stromberg. (It was Stromberg's son, Hunt Jr., who was moonstruckly cruel to Judy at the cancellation

HOLLYWOOD DIGS

lamed the American mind and retarded Americans from becoming a cultured people." This is a bit of the *de rigueur* position on film that most American intellectuals took mid-twentieth-century, critics of the studio film as a society of commentary and administration were another twenty years in the future. Now, with the dust of the studio peeps blowing somewhere over Africa by this time, we can consider the writer in Hollywood as more than the peripheral figure Hecht dismissed. He wrote of his books:

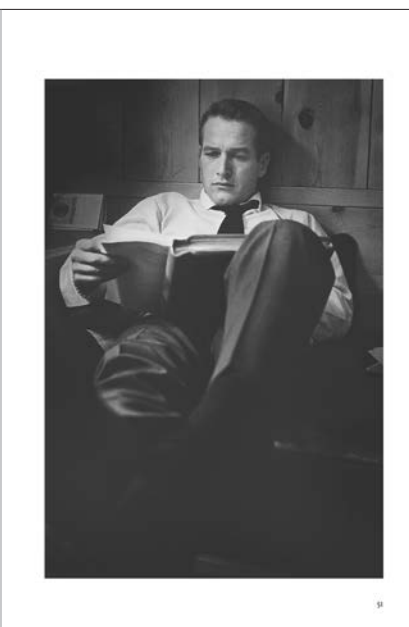
The sad thing about writing fiction is that unless one writes classics one writes in a closet. Nothing can disappear like a book. The characters I made up are still alive... but in the closet always.

The characters of his novels are all shut away and forgotten. But the characters in his films get seen every day all over the world. It is the writer's plight to be remembered as the public wishes, not as the writer desired. All thirty-five of Hecht's novels are out of print; his films will never be.

Paul Newman, 1961

BORN IN OHIO, the son of a Jewish father and mother who practiced Christian Science, Paul Newman described himself as a Jew, saying, "It's more of a challenge." He was a leading man for decades. Film has a strange way of unearthing an actor's essence, and Newman was that of a discreet and generous man who was amazingly handsome but really would have preferred being known as a great actor rather than a movie star. Also for him, he was a true movie star. He was both blond and cursed with baby-blue eyes. He once joked, "I picture my offspring. There's Paul Newman, who died a failure because his eyes turned brown."

After World War II, in which Newman served as an aircraft radio operator, he attended Kenyon College in Ohio, playing football and acting in plays. His father died in 1950, and Newman took over the family sporting goods store in Cleveland, only to leave after a year and a half and head east. He ended up with a role in *Panic on Broadway*, where he first met Joanne Woodward. He was married at the time, and while the sparks may have been lit, nothing happened for several years. When they finally got together, their marriage lasted for more than fifty years, until Newman's death in 2008.



SAMUEL GOLDWYN'S BIRTHDAY

George Jessel



ACTOR, SONGWRITER, SINGER, AND COMEDIAN George Jessel earned his nickname, "Bantamstar General of the United States," by frequently serving as emcee at political and entertainment gatherings. He was especially famous for his eulogies, which ring with nineteenth-century diction. His eulogy for Al Jolson, delivered at Temple Grand on Hollywood Boulevard on October 26, 1950, begins this way:

A breeze from San Francisco Bay and the life of the greatest minstrel America has ever known is in the balance. A hint of a card—a rilling of a gag—and within a few moments, a wife, a legion of admirers, and a nation are broken-hearted. So it was—and so, alas, it is—the passing from this earthly scene of Al Jolson. And the voice that put majesty into the American popular song most from now on come from a disc instead of a heart, from whence it came.

And on it goes, a stern winder that no longer appeals through its florid prose. It was probably in Louisville, the stage for the dramatic, his mother was a ticket seller at the Imperial Theater in New York, and he was a child actor. She formed a singing group of child actors that included him and Walter Winchell. Later, George partnered with a young Eddie Cantor as child comedians until George outgrew the role at sixteen. He appeared in vaudeville doing a famous routine in which the audience sees only his side of a phone conversation with his mother. He co-wrote lyrics for a hit song, "Oh How I Laugh When I Think How I Cried About You." Then he was cast on Broadway in the starring role of *The Jazz Singer*. When Warner Brothers got ready to make the movie, he asked for too much money and they turned to Al Jolson. The movie catapulted Jolson to new heights of fame, and Jessel went on to play smaller roles.

HOLLYWOOD DIGS

Milton Berle was an over-achiever and an under-achiever; he was the greatest in the world at some things and the worst at others. What too few people understand is that like other historical figures, he got up almost everything else in life to be the greatest at one thing. His death is both an inspirational tale and a cautionary tale, a great tragedy as much as a success story. By all rights you should love him and hate him, as I did.

Shirley Jones

SHIRLEY JONES CEMENTED HER RELATIONSHIP with the American public as the girl/Mom next door with her starring role in *The Partridge Family*. Was that a step-down from starring in the film versions of *Old Maid*, *Carousel*, and *The Music Man*? Without a doubt. She realized the dangerous career detour she was taking.

The problem with *Partridge*—though it was great for me and gave me an opportunity to stay home and raise my kids—when my agents came to me and presented it to me, they said if you do a series and it becomes a hit show, you will be that character for the rest of your life and your movie career will go into the toilet, which is what happened. But I have no regrets.

One accidental piece of casting for the show helped convince the world that this was a fourth decision her stepson, David Cassidy, played the role of Keith Partridge. Amazingly, the casting director and network had no idea they were related. David has told the story.

At the auditions, they introduced me to the lead actress (Shirley Jones) cause they had no idea, they had no idea. So I said, "What are you doing here?" She looked at me and said, "What are you doing here?" And I said, "Well, I'm reading for the lead guy." I said, "What are you doing here?" She said, "I'm the mother!"



HOLLYWOOD DIGS

Shirley Jones had arrived in New York as a young singer from Pennsylvania. She auditioned for Richard Rodgers, who was so impressed that he rushed Oscar Hammerstein over to see her audition, but she ended up being the only actress over under personal contract to that great team. She played minor roles in *South Pacific* and *My Darling Clementine*, and then Rodgers and Hammerstein lobbied for her to take the lead in the film version of *Carousel*. Frank Sinatra was going to be her leading man, but he dropped out when he learned that each scene would be shot twice to accommodate Cinemascope technology. His theory was that he should be paid twice because he was shooting one film in 35 mm and another in 55 mm. Somehow the studio didn't see it that way and replaced him with Gordon MacRae.

Jones projected All-American sweetness and blindness, and then, in 1958, she was cast against type in *Elmer Gantry*. Hollywood loves playing against type. In this Richard Brooks film, Jones was a hooker who had been involved with Burt Lancaster's Gentry years earlier—and won an Oscar for her performance.

She had a somewhat tumultuous marriage to actor Jack Cassidy, whom she started seeing when she was twenty. Cassidy, for instance, had a premarital sexual encounter with Cole Porter) to Burbank television studios. Ingle's once appeared for an interview wearing a purple bubble and an oversized hat labeled "HUSHHANG!" ending jokes about being kept in the attic.

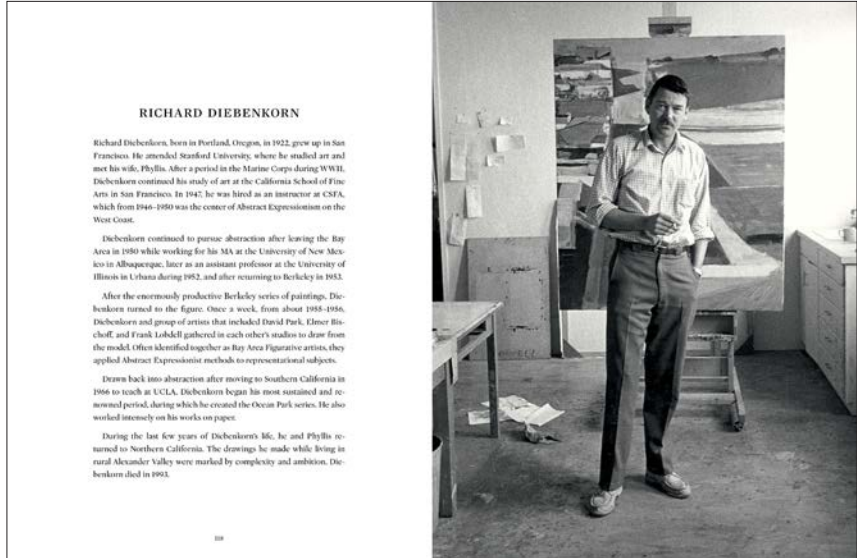
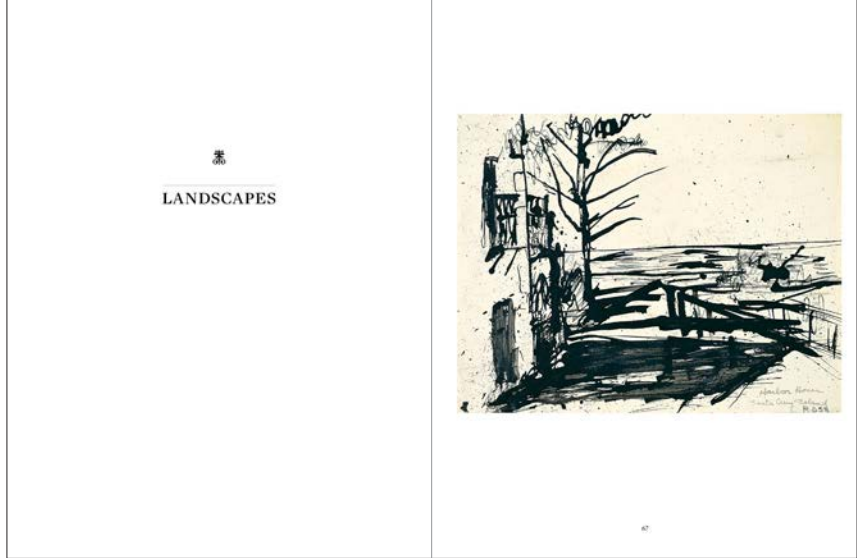
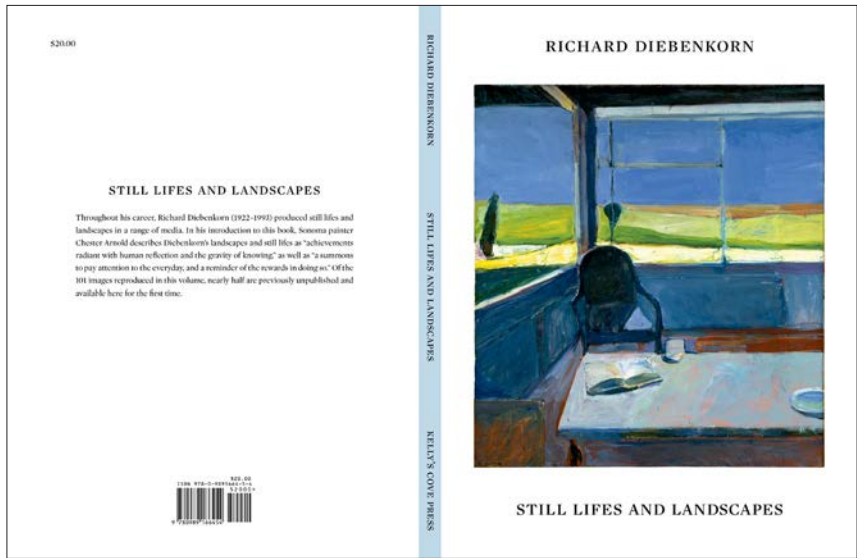
There is a death grip about television, especially successful television. The American public forces you in a moment and a role and there you are, a sort of media staccato, hanging from the darkened cave of the television set, beautiful to view but unchanging to the human eye. Shirley Jones knew this going into the little box that lives in American homes; she knew she was giving up forever whatever dark career allowed her to play a troubled hooker. We may appreciate her work in *Elmer Gantry*, but that will stand only as counter-programming to the Shirley Partridge in our minds.



Frank Sinatra

ONE OF MY EARLY AND STARTLING ENCOUNTERS about Los Angeles culture is that the gossip columns here are embedded in the real estate news. Coming from New York and Page Six of the *Post*, I was initially confused when I landed through the *Los Angeles Times*. Where was the gossip column? Maybe, I thought, this paper was more devoted than the New York tabloids; it seemed to have more in common with the *Times* than the *Daily News*.

Then one Sunday I came across the "Hot Property" real estate column. It listed homes for sale, but much more Madonna was selling her Malibu beach house because of her marriage was on the fire. Jennifer Aniston was purchasing a Pacific Palisades charmer to accommodate the new love interest in her life. Bruce Springsteen's extended tour meant his Beverly Hills Tudor would be on the market.



Letters to Isabella presents 77 egg tempera paintings by Marley Kaul. A letter to his granddaughter accompanies each painting, offering an intimate look at the artist, process and the personal and professional influences reflected in his work.



"Marley Kaul is a contemporary egg tempera master. ... His work in both content and energy emphasizes his connection with natural forms and poetic metaphor."

—Lauri Reuter, director, North Dakota Museum of Art



LETTERS TO ISABELLA

MARLEY KAUL

SHIL STUDIO PRESS

Letters TO ISABELLA



PAINTINGS BY MARLEY KAUL



Detail: *Dancers*
egg tempera, 1989

Dancers

Beila,

Time seems to be a constant factor in my life—the time it takes to make a work, the time to prepare materials, knowledge and time spent to become proficient in the process, and the time to reflect on the ideas flowing in my head. As a youngster, I was privileged to listen to my parents and grandparents talk about the "good times" in their lives. Visiting friends, barn dances, and festivals all rose high on their list. Many artists, when searching for appropriate ideas, tend to dwell or draw to make these ideas visible—sometimes in quick, gestural ways. In the late 1980s, I was doing my drawings with brush and black ink. They were bold, full of minute detail, and always filled with rhythm.

For this painting, I drew directly on the painted (beila) surface. I then applied a wash, sometimes called an "imprimatura," over the entire work. The wash sets a mood and is usually a mid-tone between light and dark. I try to balance the light and dark and then add color. The painting shows a house and a couple dancing. If you look closely, you

might notice some pink near to the door on the house. The way you indicate that it's a woman's space. It looks like a couple. I built several female figures and searched male writings to help discover who I was. A dance is about movement, timing, and social grace. I don't know what your generation thinks about dancing, but I attended local dances when I was younger. Many dances were celebrating a wedding or harvest festival and were ethnic-driven, playing and celebrating family origins. We called the music for polka and waltz "old-time music."

Your grandmother and I went to many dances when we moved to northern Minnesota, and we especially remember "new forms" of music and meeting many new (and historic) friends.

I like this painting because it calls back these memories and the joy I remember. Sometimes I think my hand and brush dance on the surface, leaving marks and brushstrokes that may my day's dance. I usually feel more relaxed than exhausted when finished.

Love, Papa



Dancers
12 by 10 inches, egg tempera, 1989



Detail: *Listening to Dylan Late at Night*
egg tempera, 1989

Listening to Dylan Late at Night

When I was a young man, before I was married or even a serious artist, I would listen to the radio late into the night. Sometimes it was beautiful, but many times it was music. I grew up with polka and other Bohemian old-time music, but all my friends were into rock and roll.

When record players with hi-fi and stereo sound systems arrived, your grandmother and I bought records to listen to. Many folk songs and then antiwar protest music filled our ears. This was the 1960s, and our country was divided over the Vietnam War. Many young people found ways to express their feelings. I remember early Bob Dylan, a young Minnesota folk singer and songwriter, and many other great musicians. Listening to them, my thoughts became more politically informed, and then I imagined myself painting more meaningful and carefully selected images too.

Your grandmother and I bought our first stereo in 1962. It was really fun to just listen and become absorbed in the rhythms and poetry of the lyrics.

Listening to Dylan Late at Night has a relative, another painting done in acrylic, which came later and is also called *Listening to Dylan Late at Night*. For these paintings, I adapted expression and narrative through color and brushwork. I very much wanted to tell a story. My images began to move, sway, and grow in relation to all the music I was listening to. The brushstrokes and color began to sing back to me. I love the process of making paintings. Dylan is my age—my generation—and he influenced many other artists with his songwriting. His words "times they are a changing" were appropriate to the '60s era. His work and words are still as valid today as they were then. Times are always changing for someone. Make your work sing!



Listening to Dylan Late at Night
12 by 10 inches, egg tempera, 1989



Detail: *Anticipating the Return*
egg tempera, 2003

Anticipating the Return

Your mother, Allison, called me one day saying she was going to have my first grandchild. We were all overjoyed. Nancy and I were flowers in celebration. A few weeks later, Allison lost that first grandchild. We all were sad and mourned the loss. It was like a knife cutting through what was once a good day.

Now, in the painting, the flowers droop and the apples try to gather some sun. It is really cold and quite dark outside on this Minnesota winter day. A small piece of the apple is missing, and the bird goes about gathering seeds to eat. Life goes on. ... I tried to balance the cold and the warm colors.

One day a woman came to buy paintings to hang in her home, and this was one of them. I told her the story of the painting. She's a mom too, and she said she loved the painting and the story. She wanted to include it with the others in her collection.

Your mom didn't know this story until I wrote about it for you.

Everything I do is about my everyday life and those events that seem to stand out.



Anticipating the Return
22 by 18 inches
egg tempera, 2003



Detail: *Drawing the Curtain*
egg tempera, 2012

Drawing the Curtain

Isabella,

When I was a little boy, my mom and dad took me to church and then to Sunday school. I remember the issue of paper, but I could never really visualize to whom I was praying. As I became more educated, I realized that maybe prayer is an energy that manifests through the ether somehow. (This was before computers and the Internet.) When I studied Zen Buddhism, I discovered meditation. Could this be a parallel to prayer?

When I work in my studio, I'm conscious of what the work might mean, and I make choices to direct it this way. Each brushstroke is a deliberate action, carefully laid on with directions that follow the contours of the shape. This also allows me to represent a sense of three dimensions to enhance the form. I did a painting I called *Only a Dreamer*. *Care Change a Dreamer* when a close friend had radical surgery. She was in my mind when I put the work together. I worked, she recovered, and I

felt maybe this prayer or painting process had an effect. When I discovered that my good friend Jane had breast cancer, I began another painting, hoping I had some kind of magic or power to help her recover. I remember the day I gave it to her. I said, "Jane, I'm not good at using words for prayer, but I did this work to honor your struggle. ... I want it to help."

Jane struggled for months and passed away a few days before Christmas. I was unsuccessful with my hope, but the intent was there. I designed the work to show talpa half in darkness and half in light. The curtain is sliding across the background to expose a healing arc and a sky with stars. The sunset and stars show that there are at least two people involved. Her partner suffered during this ordeal and tended to her needs each day. The lemon is really a symbol for cleansing, but it is good with tea as well. I've been asked why I put the pill containers in the composition. The pills are real, sometimes kibble, attempt to make the pain go away. They show that one must trust in a larger scheme of things.

Some of my paintings are prompted by sad or unusual circumstances. That's what pushes me on—looking for answers.

L. Papa



Drawing the Curtain
16 by 20 inches, egg tempera, 2012

About the artist

Born and raised on a farm in Good Thunder, Minnesota, Marley Kaul earned a Master of Fine Arts at the University of Oregon. He taught painting and drawing at Bemidji State University. He paints daily in his studio near Lake Bemidji and exhibits throughout the northern region. His paintings, acrylic and egg tempera, reside in private and public collections, including North Dakota Museum of Art, Plains Art Museum, Minnesota Historical Society, SM Collections, Minnesota Manual Life, Tweed Museum of Art, and Wisconsin Art Museum.



Marley Kaul in his studio.