

MUSINGS

Middle way somewhere



This pirate's throne is in the middle. There is a mirror in front and a mirror behind. So the vision is infinite. I find myself going and coming in this middle way. There is plenty of room even in my little ordinary body life events. And even though there is little rest in this room I find it vastly superior to my friend Plato's cave. In there it feels very limited to be shackled to the one vision of only the shadows on the wall in front. There even the light behind is too bright, too insistent to be of any help in seeing.

It is clear that being in the middle has its benefits. But it is definitely not an upwardly mobile location. That doesn't bother me at all. I like the half way up and half way down.

Just as in A.A. Milne's childish poem, I am simply in the place where I sit, no other place quite like it, not at the bottom, not at the top. And like in the Milne poem I have all sorts of funny thoughts run round my head.

I think about things like tattoos and sand paintings.

Can you be a pirate without a tattoo? That seems highly unlikely. Tats bring stability to the pirate life style. When

faced with an ever-changing surround of light and dark, sea and sky, and the internal shifting of funny thoughts, pirates need stability written into the flesh.

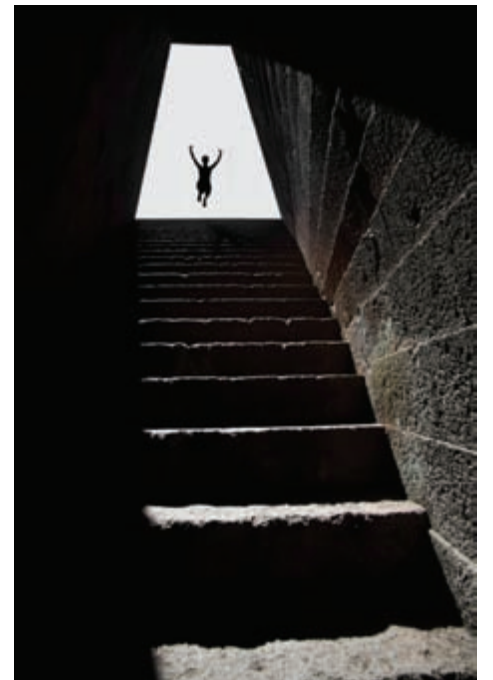
In the mid 18th century Captain James Cook brought the tattoo experience from Polynesia to Europe. Since then the wonder of inserting ink under the skin has been with us. Our chosen image becomes part of our body self, stable and embracing. It is like the comfort of a child's favorite toy, but better. It is inseparable, and cannot be lost or stolen. The word "tattoo" itself is a calming onomatopoeic lullaby. Our word comes from the Polynesian "ta ta u," which literally means "hand, hand, color." The word mirrors the repeated insertion of color by hand beneath skin.

I can hear the gleeful affirmation of the ancient Greek philosopher Parmenides. For him, being is timeless, unchanging, motionless, uniform. For him, being itself is of the nature of tattoo. In the space of the tat, becoming is being and death is stamped out, pacified through the repeated application and subsequent appreciation of color.

Tats are the bottom line art of choice of the Parmenides position, the mirror behind in my rest room. Sitting as I am on the middle stair, I must also find the perfect representational form of the mirror in front. And I would say that the form of the mirror in front is the sand painting.

"...Halfway up the stairs isn't up
And it isn't down....
And all sorts of funny thoughts
Run round my head.
It isn't really
Anywhere!
It's somewhere else
Instead!"

— A.A. Milne



Sand painting is found in many places in the world: in the southwest Native American tribes, in Tibetan monasteries, among Australian aborigines, in Christian Latin America, in India. These paintings can be healing tools or portals into worlds. They are of many different designs. But the bottom line is their quality of impermanence. After long painstaking execution, the paintings are simply blown away, like soap bubbles on the wind. There is a joy in the dissipation.

Sandpaintings are the bottom line of the Heraclitus position. Heraclitus is the ancient Greek philosophic foil to Parmenides. He is the mirror in front position to Parmenides claim to the mirror behind. Parmenides is permanence. And Heraclitus, like sand paintings, tells us that we cannot step into the same river twice. In fact later continental philosophers took it a fashionable step further:

You cannot step into the same river once.

So on my pirate throne, I am. In body and mind I am still and moving endlessly. In the middle between mirrors I have it all, instantly and simultaneously. And I throw my head back, laughing on the middle stair, not really anywhere, just somewhere else instead.

Yo ho! ■

— Rx is the FloridaWeekly muse who hopes to inspire profound mutiny in all those who care to read. Our Rx may be wearing a pirate cloak of invisibility, but emanating from within this shadow is hope that readers will feel free to respond. Who knows: You may even inspire the muse. Make contact if you dare.

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Pete D'Alessandro, vice president and market manager, devotes his efforts to LARC Inc. and other area organizations, balancing his time between serving his clients and serving his community.

(Pete is pictured with members of LARC Inc., serving people with developmental disabilities)

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