

George Djuric

Skeptiko

Dear Sonny,

I am writing to you so to clarify a 53-foot truckload of misinformation you were bombarded with as of recent. The evil that men do lives long after them, the gossip that women spread perpetuates into infinity. The good, on the other hand, is often misspelled, regardless of natural simplicity of the word. So let it be with gossip. On the bright side, I am in good afterlife health and even firmer spirit. We had a brawl here, I don't deny. It was forcefully resolved into the best of outcomes where, as you would say, I raised the bar.

Now, please, listen carefully. Clairvoyance and exaggeration go together. You personally may not be interested in clairvoyance, but clairvoyance is interested in you. A clairvoyant must not fear ridicule if she is to push all the way to the limits of humility or the limits of delight.

When I entered here, it was like my first visit to the country fair in Petrich, except the locals were 'talking' about the holographic universe applied to quantum physics instead of tasty hearts made of leceder dough. Nobody ever comes back from Beyond to tell you how hard was the afterlife transition of the woman, and how sudden and overwhelming her last anguish was. Nobody can say with what thoughts, with what regrets, with what words on her lips she joined the dead. But there is something refined in the sudden passing away of her heart, from the vast,

unrestful rage of the surface of physical life into the profound peace of the depths beyond, smoothly operating there since the beginning of ages.

As for us, Slavs, we carried our peculiarity like a worn out, right–arm–fallen–off wooden saint from the forgotten homeland, a talisman bargained for at some East Trzcinec flea market back in the 6th century, invariably refusing to let it go. By modern standards, the idea of an ‘original home’ is absurd. Even early narratives always speak of origins and beginnings in a manner which presupposes earlier origins and beginnings. But the single point of departure lives on. The widely circulated Times Concise Atlas of World History perpetuates a map showing the Pripet Marshes as the Urheimat of the Slavs; that vast swampy home is ringed with outward-pointing arrows marking Slavic emigration. The silliness of this image does not keep it from being unforgettable.

On sober reflection, I find few reasons for sending you my updated version of an obscure, neo-Gothic French version of a seventeenth-century Latin edition of a work written in Latin by a Dutch monk toward the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century. But I am sending it to you in a desperate attempt to illustrate the live force not just empty words behind me. This is an alchemist formula how to make gold out of non-precious metals. You try it, it works. Here it is: ‘I, Nicholas Flamel, a scrivener of Paris in the year 1414, entrust you with this pinnacle of my life, so you should pass it on with care. Take thou ten ounces of the red Sun, that is to so say, very fine, clean and purified nine or ten times by means of the voracious wolf alone: two ounces of the royal Saturnia; melt this in a crucible, and when it is melted, cast into it the ten ounces of fine gold; melt these two together, and stir them with a lighted charcoal. Then will thy gold be a little opened. Pour it on a marble slab or into an iron mortar, reduce it to a powder, and grind it well with three pounds of quicksilver. Make them to curd like cheese, in the grinding and working them to and fro: wash this amalgama with pure common water until it comes out clear,

and that the whole mass appears clear and white like fine Luna. The conjunction of the gold with the royal golden Saturnia is effected when the mass is soft to the touch like butter.’

This woman is a sorceress! Forget clairvoyance, this is a witchcraft at its finest. Or alchemy, which is all but the same. The old school. Can she read my thoughts? – most definitely. Do I care – most definitely not. She has her powers, I have mine. The true alchemists do not change Saturnia into gold anymore – they change the world into words. After endless days of scratching around in flea-infested car dealerships, I’m finally going back to where I belong: to my script. The script’s formal qualities are the only measure of the writer’s obsession with his subject; the form is always in proportion to this obsession.

There are some enterprises, like your beloved writing, in which a careful disorder is the true method. I am only trying to lay in front of you my personal experience in this matter, more cosmopolitan than you might imagine. The moment of truth, the sudden emergence of a new insight, is an act of intuition. Such intuitions give the appearance of miraculous flushes, or short-circuits of reasoning. In fact, they may be likened to an immersed chain, of which only the beginning and the end are visible above the surface of consciousness. The writer vanishes at one end of the chain and comes up at the other end, guided by invisible links. You have to dig out that chain from your viscera, dive without a thought after it, and hold your breath for a long time. If your lungs explode in the process – so be it. Become an obscure and patient pearl-fisherman who dives into the deepest waters and comes up with empty hands and a blue face. The fatal attraction will invariably draw you down into the abysses of sentience, down into those innermost recesses which never cease to fascinate the strong.

Go for broke. Always try and do too much. Dispense with safety nets. Aim for the throat. Keep grinding. Be bloody-minded. Argue with the world. And never forget that writing is as close as you will ever get to keeping a grip of yourself.

How do I know all of this? Well, when I was ten years old, a rainstorm fell on Rupite. At the time it did not occur to me that rain forms puddles on a flat roof when the drainpipes are clogged, and I would have continued to feel falsely secure if I had not suddenly discovered a crack in the wall. The funny part is that our roof, typical for the Balkans, wasn't flat but well angled. Cheer up, Vanga, I kept saying to myself to keep up my courage up while being chucked out of safety net, you are sure to find out whatever it is that scares those village people. It must be in the essence of the rainstorm, and that's why they're so dead set against going into it.

Beware: those bastard existences where you sell cars all day and write short stories at night are made for mediocre minds – like those horses that are equally good for saddle and carriage, the worst kind, that can neither jump a ditch nor pull a plow. Our culture has engaged in a Faustian bargain, in which we trade our genius and mastery for krugerrands and exaltation.

Keep in mind, sonny, that everything is theoretically impossible until it is done. One could write a history of science in reverse by assembling the solemn pronouncements of highest authority about what could not be done and could never happen. People will gladly share with you their five cents: agents provocateurs disguised as friendly neighbors, editors-in-chief, blind readers, voluptuous librarians, Gypsies, ghost writers, gangsters as well as odalisques – obliterate them all! Anybody can look at a pretty girl and see a pretty girl. An artist can look at a pretty girl and see the old woman she will become. A better artist can look at an old woman and see the pretty girl that she used to be. But a great artist – a master – can look at an old woman, portray her exactly as she is, and force the viewer to see the graceful girl she used to be. And more than that, he can make anyone with the sensitivity of an armadillo see that this lovely young girl is still alive, not old and ugly at all, but simply imprisoned inside her ruined body. He can make you feel the quiet, endless tragedy that there was never a girl born who ever grew older than eighteen in her heart, no matter what the merciless hours have done to her. Look at her, Georgi. Growing old doesn't matter to you

and me, we were never meant to be admired – but it does matter to her. I am leading to a personal story here, don't you see? It was 1926, I took a field trip with my school for blind to the outskirts of your beloved native Zemun – where the pen of Ovid was said to be found, if you could trust our Slavic gift for falsifying artifacts and other facts. Prvomajska Ulica, so dear to your young heart, was a dirt road then. While strolling casually behind the rest of the group, I passed a tiny road on my left, well covered in shrub and barely visible to a blind girl, when a strong force almost swept me aside. You guessed it right – it was Ulica Sime Šolaje. The first step was to recognize with how much force and of what kind I was dealing with, and the second, when I suspected it happening, to maximize it to my advantage. That really was about giving my full attention to whatever presence I was experiencing. It could've been a mental intrusion or a song going on in my head that had something to do with a person I've never met. The lyrics could be telling me something, or the song was strongly associated with a certain future event. I paused. Those distant Gypsy shacks emitted a solid signal – obviously a crafty pythoness had lived on the premises. Yet, something way more potent took place, and her being there simply amplified the occurrence. Then and there – and please don't laugh at an old, dead woman, ugly as hell at her finest – I fell in love with you! God help me and Mother Teresa, my darling peer. I saw you the way you were in 1968, back to Belgrade from the European tour where your parents took your sister and you, fresh from Paris, talking to your cronies about the aftermath of the student demonstrations there. Your vigor blew me away, your passion, eloquence. Years later, in 1961– please don't blame me, I couldn't resist, it was one of the rarest pleasures of my physical lifetime – I ordered your mother to take you to Rupite. Well, if I may state so, you weren't a beauty contestant then: cross eyed, large head over an overweight body – nothing to write home about or take a picture with, ha, ha! Now you know. What you don't know is that I still love you. As my godson, of course.

Now back to business. The question is not who is going to let you in, to welcome you as their scribbling peer, because they wouldn't if it were up to them – it is who is going to stop you. Nobody. That is where my confidence in you peacefully rests. You are brilliant whenever you choose to be. I will always remember your '74 YU Rally performance: the audience was stunned, your own crew was watching in disbelief. They later said each guy thought he was hallucinating from sleep deprivation. And the Yu Rally was an international clearing house for rising talent; they came from all parts of Europe. Let me tell you this: once a master, always the master. Don't ever listen to a word more about it, either an outside or from within – the subject is closed for good. Remember: perhaps Manolete was a hoof fetishist, or suffered from terrible hemorrhoids as a result of long nights in Spanish horn parlors... but he is a great matador, and it is hard to see how any amount of Freudian bullshit can have the slightest effect on the reality of the thing he did best.

Continually work on the conscious need of the strong writer to come to terms with the blind impress which chance has given him, to make a self for himself by redescribing that impress in terms which are, if only marginally, his own. A perceptive French critic has once argued that in an age of deepening illiteracy, when even the educated have only a smattering of classical or belletristic knowledge, erudition is in itself a kind of fantasy, a surrealistic construct. Thus, writing is a perpetual bullfight with the reader. Silambam is a bamboo-based Dravidian martial art from Tamil Nadu in south India, but also practiced by the Tamil community of Sri Lanka and Malaysia. In one-on-one combat a master would just slide his stick to opponents wrist many times during combat. The opponent may not notice this in the heat of battle, until he feels a sudden pain in the wrist and throws the stick by reflex, without knowing what hit him. This is exactly how you win the reader for life – your book simply drops out of her hands the moment it is finished, and she walks out to collect her thoughts; her mind agape.

As for the critics, you plainly quote from Shakespeare: I would challenge you to a battle of wits, but I see you came unarmed! Literary prejudices are so to speak the mechanical instincts of the critics: through their prejudice they do without any effort many things they would find too difficult to think through to the point of resolving them. As you well know, it is all but impossible to carry the torch of mastery through a crowd without singeing somebody's beard – there are countless people who read simply to prevent themselves from thinking. Please let me reiterate what you wrote yourself: the highest level than can be reached by a mediocre but experienced mind is a talent for uncovering the weaknesses of those greater than itself. Cicero once said, I would rather be wrong with Plato than be correct with those men.

A sick thought can devour the body's flesh more than fever or consumption. What a kiss-ass this woman is! At her age – no shame there. What is the world turning into! These writing skills are all telepathic. You can't have that more clinically proven than it is. It's just been proved over and over again in literary trials with non-readers. Every day, average guy off the street is having telepathic abilities. We couldn't even have a culture without telepathy. Understand that all these skills you need are inborn. Proceed from your strongest emotion and make contact. There are things you can do that can enhance the experience, like creating sacred space. I give all those things in detail in my book. It's quite easy. That's the crazy part. Also to recognize how often you're already doing it. It's available on Amazon.

Now I need your unswerving attention, Georgi. I need your forceful focus and luminous head. Once you cognize this technique, it will elevate your writing skills to Zen clarity. You will realize what to do, when to do it, and how to execute. Your thoughts, especially writing related ones, don't necessarily dissipate after you have them. If you continually produce thoughts, consciously or unconsciously, that are alike in nature and clustered around the one topic, these theme thoughts will coalesce into thought-forms, which can sometimes be so strong they can be perceived. Thought-forms create electromagnetic imprints. When psychic energy is high, it thickens the

electromagnetic field to a point where it becomes a little like a screen on which the typically invisible stream, such as thought-forms, becomes visible. Certain people can deliberately impress thoughts and images on tapes, unprocessed film and the like. The imprints are impressed by strong bursts of concentrated energy. You are not capable of performing an impress, at least not yet, and I don't think you need this technique to begin with. What you do need is to transfer these outburst of energy into this interactive spot that we are communicating through right now, and store it here. Given time, similar to process of aging wine, they will reorganize themselves into a pure masterpiece. You just feed the 'raw material' and wait. It never fails.

These thought-forms are also carried in your energy field, or aura, recognizable to others usually just below the surface of conscious awareness. It is also the source where professional psychics mine information on their clients. Thoughts of any nature live and grow. They resonate with other thoughts in the ether-spheres of mental activity, often amassing into thought-forms. They not only continue to survive and grow after we think them, they go on to develop a kind of consciousness of their own – in your case, a literary mind. Mass consciousness is the result of alike thoughts and beliefs aggregating with other alike thoughts and beliefs on a global or national scale. What is in it for you? Once you form and cultivate your literary mind, you will open a path to minds of alike peers, editors, readers, critics, which will in return boost your recognition as a writer and shortcut the publisher hunt. In a nutshell, what I am explaining here is about speeding up your writing communication with yourself, as well as your intercourse with the writing community.

Every medicine you buy in your local drugstore comes along with two instructs. The first one I already described to you – how to use it. The second one is highly important because of its fatal consequences if ignored – how to avoid side effects. You have to browse through your thought-forms routinely and discard the malignant ones, especially those that are potentially damaging to your core persona. The more powerful a thought is, the more repetitive and

the more emotional, the more it will develop independently of the thinker and the stronger it will be. Obsessive-compulsive thoughts which are always powered by strong emotion create dense thought-forms. This type of thought-form could be regarded as a live entity. They are consciously alive composites of obsessive-compulsive thought and concentrated emotional energy. Thought-forms created by obsessiveness are energy draining and destructive to the core personality. They are often so entrenched that it takes a great deal of energy to discard them. The core personality usually sloughs off these stubborn thought-forms at a critical turning point in a person's life, when a high do-or-die kind of energy is available. Quite frequently people with deregulated consciousness, such as Alzheimer's also discard them. The core personality splits from the live entity in an attempt to heal itself, to redirect itself onto a more constructive life path.

As I said, scroll through your thought-forms and themes routinely, make a habit out of it, and you will do fine. I cannot describe them in more detail, it's intuitive: you will recognize them once you spot them. Now, to eliminate the vermin, you need to re-live them through a positive force. If it fails to work the first time, repeat the procedure – you cannot afford to leave them unattended.

Stay lucid, my godson, and best of luck in your endeavor. I kept my end of the bargain: the black scrying mirror is clearly inside you court now.

Those who have laid claim to their postmodern writing in the past have done so with toll tickets, punched time clocks, gas receipts, and logbooks. I took a far more precise approach to verification. It's in the form of a document, prepared by the GPS tracking firm I hired, that lists my address, latitude, longitude, and speed every minute or so throughout the entire writing trip. It's 369 pages long. I looked over the document from start to finish, and the evidence is, at the very least, comprehensive.

But it's so much more than fuel tanks of inspiration. There's a self-censoring scanner. There are two different Garmin GPS units monitoring self-focused, rambling hodgepodge of preaching interspersed with bragging capabilities. There are two iPhone chargers and

cradles to run apps like Anti-Block Liquid Plumber and Skeptiko; an iPad charger and cradle for overseeing the restless, whacked-out territory of my mind and prevent losing the plot completely; and three radar detectors for different writing speeds. And that's just the easy stuff. There's a switch to kill the rear lights when annoyed critics are after you waving their prophecies, a switch to activate the spare fuel tanks unknown to you until then, and a professionally installed switch panel mounted in the center stack that controls all of these goodies. There's a CB radio, complete with a giant desk-mounted antenna and tweeting capabilities. There are also two laser jammers, to confuse the sharp readers.

You might think the hardest part of setting the cross-mind writing trip is driving across the mind. You might think the hardest part is staying awake for more than 24 hours, or constantly keeping your foot on the keypad, your lips on the coffee mug. You might think the hardest part is around-the-clock search for publishing opportunity. You'd be wrong. The most difficult thing about writing is the decades-long preparation.