

Some Preliminaries

I

SOME PRELIMINARIES.



Towards A Pleasanter Inducement.

Forbear!; and, to you, I shall raise a toast!

You had strolled, and then paced, the docksides, the quays, the marinas, amidst the cradled, secure, rocking wombs of little ships whose tales you had only imagined. I've watched you, as, at one point, you had watched me; I still gambol the oceans from the dockside.

Farther out, an untouchable one, an indiscernible one, rides at anchor, with a dim lantern glowing within, and what is that place scrolled upon the transom: HONOLULU ? What bearded, be-tuqued Captain writes or reads, puffs or sips away, swinging a-tethered to some braided, stranded rode secured to what lie hidden below: Chain; Plow, Bruce, Northill, Kedge, Stockless, Danforth?

You had hoped for some elevated discourse concerning the wonders of the sea. You had wished to be invited to 'come aboard', to be asked to enter the inner sanctum, to the holy, wooden, sea-aromaed interior wherein the secrets of adventure and intrepidity lie. You had hoped to be served up the horrors and the glories of the nautical lion's den, 'bibing alongside some other heady stuffs and garnishings to warm the cockles of an o'erladen heart.

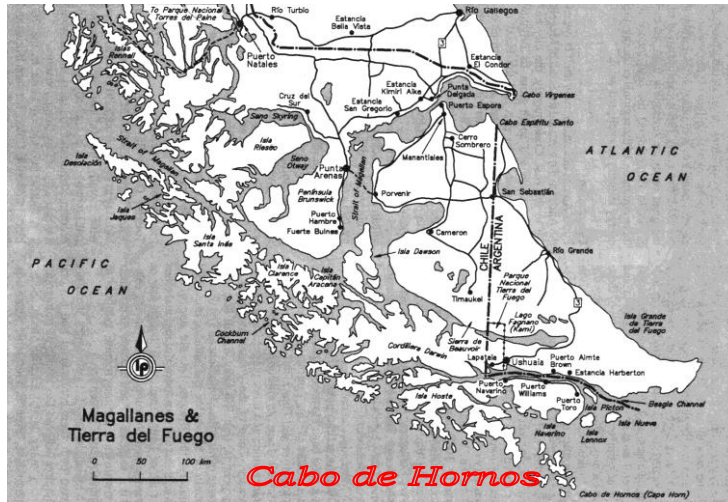
How then, to fill up your great emptiness; how then, apply the poultice to the wounded palpitation?

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One day, you stepped from the extension of terra firma, to this buoyant presence; it responded to your mass and gravity; 'Hang On!, lest you stagger back, out-of-kilter with the main force'.

Now, let it be said you have abandoned the shore; you have entered the inviolable element of Neptune; you have forsaken the clamoring and the ticking.

We glide away from the edge; we leave it stranded behind. Already there are fathoms of this fluidity that surrounds, now beneath us. We are contiguous with Tahiti, the Orkneys, Odessa, Melbourne, Balboa and, the one and only, o'erfabled *Cabo de Hornos*.



But first, let us clear this headland; let us feel the rhythm of the great pulse, that perpetual throb. Ah!, today she lies supine, sunning herself; but observe, she breathes, heaving her breast ever so slightly; later in the day a breeze will rouse her listlessness.

Now we have cleared the headland; we gaze at an infinity; before us we notice the dominant horizontal severance, below which is the darker substance, the endlessly rocking realm of Neptune, above which is the lighter transparency from which we draw our breath - these two married, yet separate, affecting one another deeply, and for eons. The sun glistens upon the watery womb. The shearwaters and murlettes tender their endless oblations. For many miles we observe nary a craft, Then Lo!, the lonely fisherman, or some freighter tracking some distant meridian.

Still later, a white-capping breeze materializes from out the ether plying steadily and sternly behind, upon our heels, driving our little ship in a rush as the main and poled-out genny gather the force unto themselves; 'See there!, the quarter-wave', as she furrows the blue-green...and 'Listen!, Listen!'.

What is the reality of the Zephyr which rushes about eschewing this lighter transparent world above to the greater disturbance of the darker below? Is he berating her for some indiscretion or does he just wildly and wantonly assault her?

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How do we qualify to merge into this great meeting, this eternal marriage?

One Man's Meat, Another Man's Poison.

Since abandoning the world of collective man, plying a more solitary course, some of you, wondering how I utilize my time, for good or ill, and having learned I was possessed by certain literary aspirations, have indulgently inquired if I had written of my 'adventures' upon the water; others simply have assumed the 'adventures' in themselves served as sufficient inspiration, and reason to so inscribe the Word. These writings ensue in part as response to both the muse and the inquirer after adventure.

I make so bold to offer as encouragement to those of you who only dream of faraway places, which, in the last analysis, may be considered to be close at hand, by saying, "what I now take 'for granted' once passed as dreams".

'Adventure' is perhaps the apt embracement of a certain category of happenings that ensue, inadvertently, when pursuing and enacting a fantasy derived from the long Quixotic hours steeped in the writings and tales of 'others'. However inadvertent, I have merely sampled the great element to which I have referred.

To fill out this opus, then, I shall speak of our particular sojourn to Southeast Alaska and enter into discourses concerning derivative and other loosely related matters; and perhaps offer some quotations from these 'others', permitting you access to their own words, such as will suffice to augment this endeavor.

Who have these 'others' been, in whom I have 'steeped myself'?

Sailors, in the main. They comprise a recent phenomenon encompassing the last one hundred years, aided by the expansion of the publishing industry, and the possibility of, and fascination with, adventurous travel. They have been survivors of long journeys over the face of our circumscribed globe, carried out in small vessels whose length is sometimes eclipsed by the height of an ocean wave. One might conjecture that choosing danger and death as one's close companions qualifies as excessive behavior. Surely I am one who is cautionary, while simultaneously, feeling deep inside, a sense of not having responded fully to the inspiration or challenge.

If I had been weaned on boats and the sea, somehow becoming accustomed, comfortable, and inured early on, as, perhaps, I should have been, given my propensities, I might be less wary.

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Yet, by way of further rationalization and procrastination, I argue there are those who have been more exposed in the most mundane way as fishermen, or hands aboard some freighter, salvage tug, or Coast Guard Cutter, who might reveal they have had quite enough of the elements, considering it their better fortune to be snugly ashore when the tempest abounds. They may not find great challenge in tussling with an apparent unremitting violence, if surviving a 'storm-tossed sea' be the measure of such challenge. So, 'tis not before cabin-fever that one cowers, nor the intrigue of the foreign shore, nor the monotony of halcyon days.

Glamourously We Intrude Upon A Province.

Aye!, what safe shelter exists a hundred miles off some rocky shore as a great tumult agitates the liquid immensity all about one? Who would flauntingly engage a mere craft and a merer self in some unknown continuum? None, one supposes.

Are there, indeed, safer havens; are these too, only imaginary? Has not man affixed some possessory stamp upon every hospitable shore. Even the ocean, far out to sea, 'belongs' to some puny little hominid presence. Truly one is apt to be alienated and estranged, both as mariner, harried by the elements, and as prospective citizen of the world, by port officials.

When all accounts are in, it is the breeze one seeks, that best fills one's sails and drives one's sleek hydrodynamic ship effortlessly o'er the kindly sea day and night, all in one grand dream. Danger lives in every roll of the dice, yet the averages expand the odds; when the dice lie favorably, the well-prepared will not flaunt the averages, lest one venture where a different kind of gamble would overwhelm him.

We tend not to write or read of those endlessly effortless days gliding beneath the sun, moon and starlit heavens. Instead, in our living rooms, our parlors, our garrets, our dens, our lairs, even in the womb of our dock-bound ship, we enliven our stillness, our emptiness, pursuing the animations provided by those self-conscious ones amongst us, who will narrate, at times, embellishing their drab sea life, at other times revealing their speechlessness when confronted with the immensity of their own fear as their lives trembled in the face of a reality far greater than their imaginings.

Yes!, and what of those who, for centuries, of need, relentlessly staked their issuance each day, in small open dories, as they floated sea-ward into fog and cold inauspicious air ignoring

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the premonitions and signs, to 'wrest from the seas' theirs and their loved one's sustenance? How many of those disappeared? Who amongst them does not measure up to these whom we have enshrined, now reposing upon on our bookshelves?

Nay, none are diminished in their aspect, when confronting the inevitable, as we, each of us, sail that same symbolic sea. We surely may come off less glamorous, but he that has become inured to the oceans and their moods may still approach the inevitable with caution.

Then, perhaps as part of a Symbolic Gesture, one seeks to be initiated into the 'Rites of Passage' as a test of his 'Manhood', as a demonstration of his courage, fortitude and endurance, in some unknown theatre, acting out a symbolic drama. This grandiose gesture seems to appeal to what is beyond the judicious, suggesting life could not be effaced without exposing it to the ultimate peril. One holds the knife's edge to the quick in order to flush the animate from the perception of a stone, only to deluge the palpitation with fear and trembling: a test; a Rite; the intoxication of fright; or the price one pays for leaving the security of the womb?

To conjecture further, apart from any need for validation, one may be obliged to maintain certain latencies in the event of the return of the Ice Age, the Deluge, the Dinosaur. Before the Darkness issues forth to engulf us, Man, without assistance, hovers close enough to the edge in his overweening presumptuousness to quite diminish the whole realm of Specters the Terrible Mother might conjure. Perhaps a pervading consciousness of Death will become the ultimate obstacle to presumption.

Some Disturbing Reflections. A Life Apart.

Perchance it is a surfeit of time that allows the unbridled imagination to abscond with the day.

While I have been inspired in this undertaking by other's grander exploits, it has also been the need that impels me, to discover an accommodation on an other plain or in another sphere; one that might transcend, or avoid, or preclude the effect, the prevalence, the influence of one's look-a-likes, however solitary that may seem. Who is not solitary that dare step beyond the confines of the daily routine mired in the swelter of humanity?

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And what of those for whom such a choice or enactment of free will does not exist?

You have sought in me the mirror, as you seek, in each other, the mirror. I do not know why difficulty has surrounded me in ultimately reflecting you; I have turned aside to gaze in other directions. It has not been intended, in permanence at least, that I should seek my reflection in you or seek approval or recognition; there is still some question remaining whether I would ever have succeeded in establishing myself in the human milieu, regardless of my ability to impersonate you.

In as much as reason does not dissuade you from those perilous paths that would experiment with self-destruction, as well as other forms of self-pollution and self-immolation, I tend to believe that some obtuse current is at work driving us all in some forbidden direction, which some other sense in me has cautioned against. Although I cannot identify any part of its purpose, I sense I cannot yield my being any longer to its meandering, changeable, ill-defined course.

Surely, I judge too readily, harshly and grandiosely; perchance I am mistaken; and most likely this preoccupation of mine will pass. Perhaps you will cease to be important. Still, it is your world; only a thimble-full be mine. It is hoped those years yet remaining to me will unfold in contact with the elemental, in a way that feels intrinsically familiar and comfortable, in a manner that exposes me periodically, in a controlled and measured way, to the larger overwhelming aspect, the hidden aspect; while no more reasonable or comprehensible than you, it might be claimed, 'tis more predictable.

'Tis not that I hold any special reverence for the cataclysmic power invested in the forces that I detect, but that I ponder the inborn restraint of the Universe as some imaginary harmony teeters in a precarious balance. It is you, Man, who threaten to upset the balance as you brazen your way along, arrogating the world. As if your manners were not enough to discourage me, you have welcomed us with your baronial placard 'NO TRESPASSING' wherever we go. So it is we have been served with these utterly bland inducements.

Is it possible for one to live a life apart? Do we all desire some semblance of this experience, to find a place in our surroundings, untroubled by the awful failings of our institutions and our traditions; I maintain if they do not yield repose, they have failed us, (perhaps this last is too complicated a quandary or too

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outlandish an opinion; I cannot abide the rhetoric that appeases, that claims 'this is the best of all possible worlds').

Is it not wise for one to live a life apart? You have invested your labors, your good will, even your spirit and your love, as we are wont to do, gesturing towards some 'imaginary' goal, in this great human undertaking, in the construction and repair of this great edifice, this continuum that is erected upon an uncertain foundation, requiring the perpetual acts of salvaging, shoring up, of renewal of faith, when it might be advisable to raze the whole edifice, which some have likened to the Tower of Babel, to begin again or leave well enough alone, each to go his own way.

What ought one man or woman do, or each individual, if that states it better? Is there an edifice that ought be constructed? Does our interaction require this uncontrollable, yet controlling immensity, we call civilization? If we are to serve something that, in turn, serves us mechanically, unfeelingly, can it be said we have found the mean; can we not reassess the criteria, or abandon the bargain? Is your life so long-lasting that you are prepared to wait; are your energies so infinite you will endure your fate, from 'without', to its ultimate end?

What Restrictions To The ERSATZ?

I stray far afield in conjecturing upon my adventures; scant they must be to have recourse to such lengthy circumlocutions. A consensus might reveal: ALL of life is an adventure. It is not just the corporeal locomotion probing for satisfaction; it is not just the transcendental feeling that emerges from this tangible satisfaction; it is not just the transformation of the corporeal into a wondrous and desirable, however non-touchable, self; there are also other sproutings, quandaries, delvings, other-thannesses, steppings outside of oneself, as though one was part of a Universal presence that could peer blankly and inquisitively at the passing scene. Such is the realm of the conscious; how should one express the totality; what sounds, what syllables, or gyrations, in order to re-enliven, to add substance, to suffuse our reposeful finite living corpse?

These aforementioned ponderings and interspersings accompany me in all my adventures. They quite often leap to life as I stir at daylight; they follow me about as I brew the coffee, walk the dogs, approach the vestibule, sigh in her arms, issue instructions to the helm, ride at anchor, staring at a distant

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shimmering horizon as the darkness triumphs over the resplendently disappearing solar illumination. I feel empty and lusterless without the company of these musings - necessarily then, also construed as adventures.

What adventures then, if I have not defied the elements, if we have played it safe, hugging the shore, not chancing the odds?

Is it not enough that one should depart the mainstream?

Why this departure and not some other? Why a seeming spiritual quest and not one of the flesh? It is spiritual, is it not? Could we not have booked passage to the erogenous zones, to the heightened states emblazoned with elixirs and mind-altering substances? Were we once again playing-it-safe? Did we not desire the touch of flesh upon flesh? Did not imbibing and ingesting release the power of the grip of some great restraining force that held one down; were not all the invitations and seductions there, as common as dandelions?

It is yours to speculate upon the whys and wherefores. Surely we seek the entire experience and wonder at our moderation, or caution, self doubt, or fear, which ever it is.

Prudent Men

At the risk of reiterating the self-evident, forthwith I propound, without demeaning as much as a name, but impugn us all.

You have become enchanted. In 'Toward A Pleasanter Inducement' I have led you down to the sea. Lest you sprout gills, fins, scales and tails, I had best retreat to plainer wordings to round out these beginnings. Now, if I was one inclined to offer my opinion without full knowledge, I might advise you out of my depth, and yours as well. There are those amongst us who have assigned themselves the task of evaluating the seaworthiness of small craft; of a conventional kind that anyone of us might casually consider, once having seen them arrayed in the showrooms and marinas; as well, those one-of-a-kinds built in boatyards or backyards. Fully realizing, in the wake of assorted upheavals, much larger vessels have not withstood the immensity of the global perturbations, regardless of their size or method of construction. While those whose task it has been to argue for designs which account for the ultimate conditions (which our fantasies might lead us into), being prudent men, whose firsthand experience would not permit a casual reference to what their conscience might dictate, spelling out in detail, their best judgment, it has been the second-guessers, the penny-wise

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and pound foolish, the foolhardy and arrogant, who have ignored them, as the prudent are ignored in everyday life; to the extent that lives have been consigned to the deep unnecessarily (a cynical view would interject that 'Life is Cheap'). Some would malign the prudent with the imputation of cowardice or overcautiousness, as being doublesafe, as not venturesome, as prejudiced, even; thus it is the conscionable temperament is judged and avoided by those who would press on in the service of their inflated egos, attempting to eclipse some chimerical record. Death too, appears as an accommodating chimera, suddenly hovering into sight. However we will not tolerate any flaunting wild-siders amongst our contingent.

Will one encounter ultimate conditions hovering about in nominally protected waters? Perhaps not, yet lives do expire, as well as the craft housing their precious cargoes. There are times when the meteorologists conservative estimation of an onsetting weather pattern proves incorrect, when we might have exposed ourselves given his predictions. While it may only be a schedule we attempt to honor, it would be 'tempting fate' to sail away in a toy.

If our choice was so simple as to invest all our wealth, plus some promise or mortgage against our future, we might obtain a craft that would survive all but the ultimate. But so simple a thing as driving a craft at hull speed upon the rocks will soon reveal how difficult and absurd it is to prepare for the ultimate, since even the most well-found, built to Lloyd's, vessel is indifferently rent asunder. Thus it may evolve, the Prudent will so easily be flaunted and brushed aside. If one would discount warships and rocks, planning for the friendlier encounters with Neptune, we would still be ill-advised to take to the deep with some broadbeamed ultralight displacement racing machine, lest it is his will to further flaunt something of which he knows little; such being the case he would do us all a service if he was to confine his racing propensities to radio-controlled models in a mill pond.

Our aspiring aquanaut may elect to follow tradition with Colin Archer, or Atkins, or wisely yield to the likes of Joshua, complete with water-tight compartments and turrets, forsaking the aesthetics of the Morning Clouds, or the Pachenas, for the more enduring 'qualities'. In lieu of such considerations one might construct himself a suit of armor that will assuredly float, come what may, and protect his frail presence against violent collisions, should survival be his aim, even in the worst, though hopelessly ill with ***mal de mer***.

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If one should seek to survive, at least until he had attained the ultimate ecstatic demise, he would still require a fairly substantial craft to reach that dangerous quadrant of a full blown hurricane; a lesser craft would succumb early on, thus cheating him of the ultimate ecstasy which was intended to witness the transference of his will and the transfiguration of his soul.

Alternatively one might transport his worthiest ship to the edge of a convenient cliff above the sea, placing himself within her very bowel, pretending he had encountered the supreme watery perturbation whereupon his vessel would have mounted the highest breaking 'rogue', which would inevitably cast him down upon his beams end into the trough one hundred feet below; at that very moment an army of acquaintances would launch him from the cliff to those very depths below.

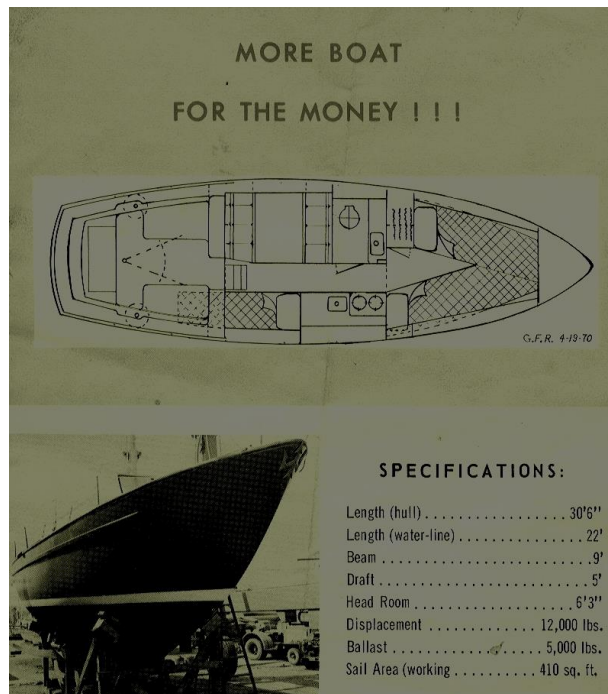
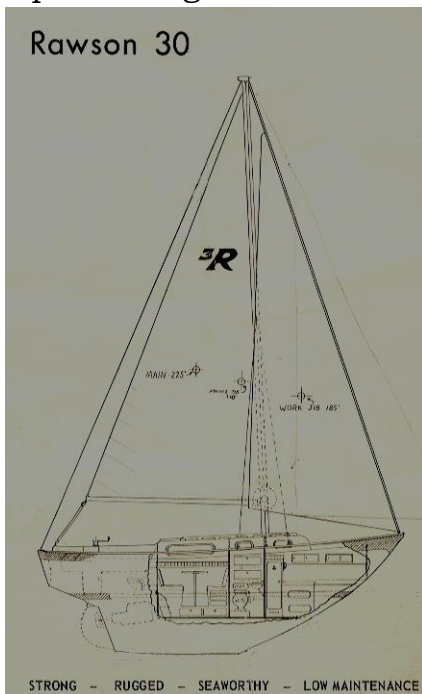
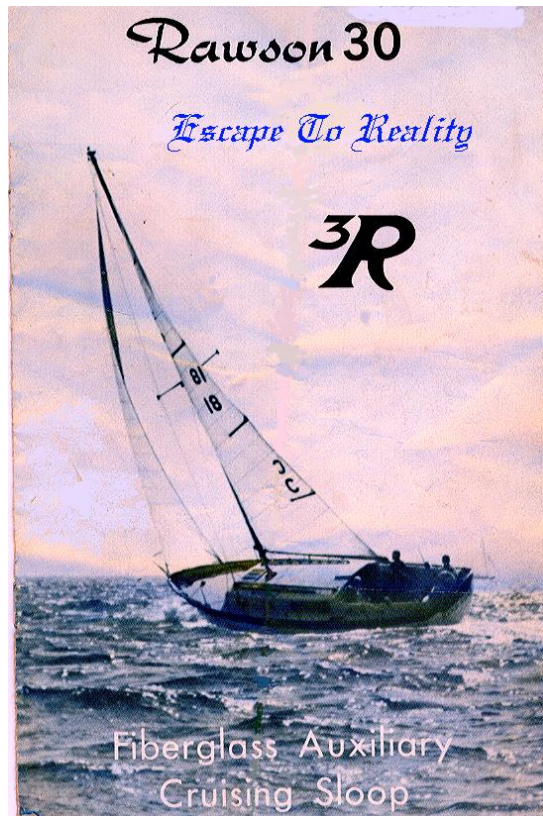
Now that I have parodied the imprudent, and the prudent as well, let it be said the seas are truly the Master, and we are the ones obliged to their bidding. Perhaps most of the time we are permitted our leisure; eventually we will be called to account.

"Escape To Reality"

To further the last; beyond the fantasy, one needs be precise in his real choices. When he encounters the elements, one cannot choose the frills, however enchanting, however womb-like, The landlubbers, like us, who would spend occasional weekends and vacations cruising about, even in protected waters, would be ill-advised to chance a wooden craft, lest it rot, none too subtly, from the lack of ventilation, and sundry other inattentions suffered in the damp marine environment, not to mention other salt-water difficulties associated with worms, electrolysis and galvanic action, not diminished in wooden boats. We, too, are aestheticians, and would relate to the warm tactile environment of living wood, and the creaking and groaning, as wood works upon wood, but we would be the ones to creak and groan as the elements made off with fair vessel in our absence. Being landlubbers, our choice was clear in terms of the aforementioned considerations. While their precision may be questioned, our choices were also dictated by our means, which limited the dimension of our "Escape to Reality". This latter ploy was the considered marketing device bandied about by the manufacturer to promote the fiberglass yawl we eventually captained o'er the distant horizon.

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Our "Escape to Reality" was a gradual process. Initially we had converted a 'half-baked' notion into a well defined substantiality. When the fullness of its reality confronted us, the drain upon our resources began the onset of the phenomenon which others have characterized as 'sink-holing'; and to some degree, forever after, we have paid homage to these floating contraptions made of plastic, wood, steel, aluminum, cement or gold, through a steady state of offertories and oblations. I suppose it could be said, in affirmation, that we expended our resources 'wisely' instead of squandering them on the



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standard fare of a shoddy obsolescing materiality to be found in furniture, color T.V.-V.C.R., or a new automobile every few years; a rather all-consuming slavishness towards this religion of materialism which serves little purpose beyond making 'us' leaner and 'them' fatter. Aye!, our willingness to expend ours does not justify the avarice of the chandleries, the marinas or insurance companies that parasitically wallow in arrogating wealth perpetuated through this symbiosis with their fantasy-ridden captives. Truly, our imaginary need for a tacky preparedness and a material security leads us this way - perhaps unduly astray. Indeed a new reality did emerge; one very different than we had imagined. There were times when the physical realities dominated the expected fulfillment of the fantasy. "How did we get into this?" as we became grounded, as a halyard carried away, as the mainsail battens caught in the shrouds, as the engine failed; as we were obliged to share cruising anchorages with some of those very same creatures whose habits and basic inconsiderateness we sought to avoid; and sometimes, still more frustratingly, the elements (the weather), as they interfered with our schedule.

Surely we drove a hard bargain, and we chafed upon each other in our frustrations with reality. Eventually we learned to cope, to adjust, to compensate for the lack of congruency between the realities and our expectations. We overcame many of our early apprehensions, increased the fiber of our nerves, extended the range of possibilities, and finally ventured away from the multitude, therein reaping the largest of our personal rewards. By nature, we were more of a temperament that elected the seclusion of the solitary cove; it is still our predisposition to seek out our look-a-likes reservedly, and many times, reluctantly. Standoffish? What may appear as a disjunction may be only a search for a harmonious constancy of purpose; or an abstract metaphysical unity not to be found within our fraternizings.

In this questing of ours, there has existed the choosing to do; perhaps to 'sail around the world'. Surely, who has not so fantasized? Is not the spirit a free-ranging entity? Perhaps we would undertake such a journey entrusting our frail presence to some other Captain, of yet another sounder vessel than our own, who might possess a bolder and wiser spirit. Ah!, could there be such a Captain, and such a vessel? One wonders upon the construction of men and vessels in their myriad configurations, as they set out in all manner of adventures and necessities from the multitude of shores each and every day.

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Perhaps it has been a luxury for us to suffer no impediments to our dreaming, eventually advancing these few steps beyond fantasy. Perhaps! And because we have tested the waters, learning that reality is wet and sometimes cold, in a startling way, has not completely inhibited our tendency to dream.

An Additional Chapter

I have asked myself, what further need is there for an additional chapter which may not augment or embellish what has already been achieved in our collective history; and why forego silence, in any case?

Is it the echo of those voices who have inquired after these imaginary adventures, perceiving them as some intrepid undertaking, that prompts this outpouring?

I have suggested what I might do, or we have done, comprises only a small part of what is ordinary fare for the fisherman or seaman, and I would not wish to project fantasies upon elemental happenings, or in any way distort these realities that might be more properly assessed and defined by those whose exposure earns them the special prerogative to delineate them. Contingent upon this last there exists yet another breed of yachtsman, unlike myself, whom I have encountered, also wedded to the sea, not foolishly, who could and ought reveal more of themselves and their adventures, in order to inspire and sustain us in their wisdom, but, who respond succinctly to the suggestion, "ours serves yet another purpose".

More still, there exist those others who yak without restraint, or adequate measure, strutting about, making capital of themselves, goaded, to be sure, by both their flatulent egos and their unseemly avarice, dispensing their opinions as some marketable gospel. Even some of the more conservative lose compunction, repeating themselves over and over, respinning old yarns. Personal Integrity can be measured in redundant Royalties. 'Some live to eat, others eat to live'; now there's an old yarn.

Indeed, what further need for an additional chapter?

Tabula Rasa. That these pages will not go blank?

***Vox Audita Perit
Litera scripta manet.***

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We are hewed of some stuff that has prompted us beyond the everyday and the circumscribed. It has been our fortune, at this time, in the vast expanse of the Universe, in the materializations of our planet, in the inadvertencies of the hominid event and his 'civilization', to have been privileged to embark upon a journey to a place that has left us with many memories, and always the urgency to return.

While these preliminaries intone both consonance and dissonance, I say, 'hearken to the sound of whole melody, which is intended but to while away, while away'. For true it is, forbear these refrains, and we shall abate and avert the tedium.

