

UNIFIED FIELD QUEST :: INITIATORY JOURNEYS, LUMINOUS ABYSSES

In prior episodes of this Smallish Art Town's Newsletter I've remarked more than once what a remarkable year 1922 was (e.g. JJoyce's "Ulysses," RMRilke's "Duino Elegies" and "Sonnets to Orpheus," TSEliot's "The Waste Land," etc.), so I feel compelled to remind you this time 'round that in early November of that same Annus Mirabilis, Howard cARTer discovered the tomb of a certain Tutankhamun in Egypt's Valley of the Kings, to which me Inner Apprentice Mage made a memorable PilgrimMage ca. one-half century later. To hark back to the Enigma that was Tutankhamun, in the innermost chamber of his tomb, we find inscribed 'Spell 17' from "The Egyptian Book of the Dead" :: "Who then is this?" A possible further clue from this first section of T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land," aptly named 'The Burial of the Dead' :: "I will show you fear in a handful of dust . . . / I was neither Living nor Dead, / & I knew Nothing. / Looking into the HeArt of Light, the Silence."

And then, by way of providing you with yet another clue as to the timeline in 'quest'ion, slightly over 1,000 years closer to the eternal present, the great Mouseion, dedicated to the Nine Daughters of Mnemosyne, was founded in the wonderfully cosmopolitan city of AleXandria. Should you be inclined to inquire further, you could certainly do worse than give Irene Vallejo's "Papyrus: The Invention of Books in the Ancient World" (A. A. Knopf, NYC, 2022) a close peruse. Ms. Vallejo is thoroughly versed, & she makes her vast learning readily accessible.

As for what this may or may not have to do with the current Queen City Arts Scene, according to the Jungian archetypal psychologist James Hillman & art critic Suzi Gablik, "It's the Anima Mundi/World Soul that is in need of healing." In other words, it's high time to thInk beyond the SphinX in Schrodinger's BoX. For the Platonists, contemplation of Beauty (aka 'the Eternal') is central. As the {metaphorical} ship is going down, do you concern yourself with the plumbing or something else: the lifeboats, the apocalyptic transformations, etc.? In such critical circumstances, one's priorities could well be subject to a 'sea-change' -- think, for stARTers, W. B. Yeats's emphasis on "that dolphin-torn, gong-tormented sea" in his 'Sailing to Byzantium." (Keeping in HeArt & Mind that in this pARTicular conTeXt, for Yeats the dolphin denoted death, which is of course core-curricular to what the Initiatory Mysteries were about, since time immemorial). In other words, "You must die before you die."

For Hillman, Psychotherapy's interiorizing of one's dysfunctional emotions more often than not keeps one from doing anything in the so-called 'real world' . . . Hillman makes a persuasive case for the need to refocus our attention away from ourselves & onto the larger Picture/World/MultiVerse. By way of a reminder, 'Aesthesis' (which is more than casually cognate with 'aesthetics') means noticing the world/paying attention. Hillman's thesis is that Art is centrally concerned with the alchemical transformation of the literal into the metaphorical & mythical. Hillman also emphasizes that the ideas of Beauty & Metaphor are integral to what he deems Art. In Hillman's opinion, Art needs to connect with life for it to become meaningful in more than a 'gallerycentric' sense. There is of course the danger that working at just healing yourself &/or hermetically sealing yourself away in your artist's studio from the chaos in the outer world becomes yet another form of middle-class indulgence. Awareness of this Higher, & well-nigh All-Encompassing, Interconnectivity would appear to be the key to the human{e} condition. There could well be something to be said for applying the uppercased Alchemy of da Vinci's Light/Dark Sfumato technique, especially when attempting to lift the Veil on what Hathor sees with her Horus eYe.