

Home, Sweet Home: Dispatches from the Manchurian Candidate Factory #18

Κύριε, ἐλέησον. (Lord, have mercy.)

My own opinion (borrowing from Richard Wolin) regarding the stuff I write: "Anecdotally rich but analytically impoverished."

Date: 04/10/23

Distribution: Book group, Adams Blvd./Cochran Ave. and Environs, *Selected* (wouldn't want to get me face bashed in) Tenants of my Apartment Complex, Others. Search for: *Schizophrenia Weaponized*, my book on eBay

Purpose: To Ridicule Few. To Amuse Many. To Inform All.

A reminder: because of frequent computer malfunctions, when I notice an egregious "printer's devil," I'll **bold** it and add (sic). That'll bitch it.

Copyleft notice: You're free to redistribute so long as all contents, including my name, remain intact. This is in the public domain. Bergendahl/Berg (as in Nuremberg)/Bergie Hawkins, Los Angeles, 2023

"... Tu te demande comment il se fait qu'un peuple d'une telle dimension soit gouverné par un régime aussi grotesque et c'est peu dire... En fait, tu as raison. On trouve sans doute plus de sagesse dans une famille de montagnards albanais qu'au sein de l'assemblée de prétendus représentants de la nation." ("... You ask yourself how it is that a people of such abilities could be governed by such a grotesque regime and that's saying the least... In fact, you're right. Without a doubt one finds more wisdom in a family of Albanian mountain people than within the assembly which supposedly represents the nation.") My (somewhat unsatisfactory) translation. — *Le Dossier H*, Ismail Kadare

One can't well argue the honor and beauty of an act by referring to its usefulness.

— Montaigne

"History: A conspiracy, not always among gentlemen, to defraud." (I can now freely attest to that.)

— Ambrose Bierce (possibly paraphrased)

"She also told me, in great detail – and I could see this childhood memory meant a lot to her – ... It was very unpleasant, Judit recalled, in a faraway voice but without complaint... But Judit continued talking, as matter-of-fact as ever... She never blamed anything or anyone; she simply remembered and observed."

— *Portraits of a Marriage*, Sándor Márai

"Seul dans une société détraquée." (Alone in a malfunctioning society)

— *57 boulevard Staline*, p. 118, E. et J-P. Champseix (adapted from)

The Cat Walks (Backward, Natch!):

In the 80s, when I lived in Glendale, after my 4 years in the trailer in Echo Park, at the Bautistas, renting a 2br from a Filipino owner, a woman, a pin was broken off in my door lock, forcing me to enter through a back window. Soon after, another renter, a man whom I seldom spoke to attacked me, pretending I had caused him to spill books as he walked by me. Hearing I was leaving, the owner offered me an apartment in another building, which offer I refused. After which I moved back in with Colette in Santa Monica. Until I moved back with her, we seldom saw each other.

As I've said, we were an information-poor family in an information-poor society. You might say we lived in 60s France and all I got was a copy of Mao's *Little Red Book* (since stolen from my bungalow). I have a suspect in mind too, a certain Maoist friend of the Chinese persuasion. Honest and decent man that I know him to be, I wouldn't put it past him as I once had to make diplomatic excuses to leave his house and escape an ongoing midnight harangue.

La Rubrique des Gueules Cassées (A Section on War-wounded):

On the experiment I've been carrying out on myself triggered by a peculiar conversation, years ago, with a customer by the name of Fern. I can report that I'm 80% satisfied with the results. These are, in order of increasing importance:

1. Substantial long term weight loss (between 40 and 60lb, depending on how far back one goes)
2. Type 2 diabetes "fixed;" that is, while I do obsess about my numbers, keeping a spreadsheet, I no longer worry about long term consequences.
3. High level of confidence in the sixty or so people listed in a spreadsheet I call the *Nifty Fifty*. All but one MDs or PhDs. A confidence derived in part from my body's surprising reaction to the fasts I occasionally do; fasts in which, after as many as eight days, I feel no hunger whatever.
4. The great improvement, otherwise unexplainable, in my mental health. I'm diagnosed as schizo-affective or paranoid schizophrenic, depending on who you talk to, a condition for which, after twenty years, I now take no medication. Yet, for the last several years, I've felt better than since I was a kid.

Over a decade ago, I took the high road to diabetes, landing in the hospital with a blood sugar level of 976. Considering my A1C has since ranged from 5.5 (where it stands now), down to 4.8, this improvement, accomplished without medication, is striking. (Update: 4-10-23) My latest A1C came in this evening at 5.7, not bad but a bit disappointing.

A possible dynamic involving my mental illness. Fraught as my life is with stress, my hoarding behavior is likely intensified by it, as I think was the case with Colette Walczak. As the tension takes its toll, could my hoarding be worsening? => Leading to more stuff in bungalow thus an increase in potential code violations eventually noted by City inspectors as I complain about landlord inaction on requested repairs. => Which then leads to notification by City and landlord forcing me to exert myself physically to cure the code violations by (re)moving stuff (difficult, as my shoulders are bad), exertion compounded by landlord's requests delivered at the last minute i.e., given two days to empty and move stuff out of pantry. => Which then further increases my stress level. => Leading to further hoarding on my part, etc., etc., etc. *Da capo, sine fine*.

The Quotable Other, i.e., *L'Enfer, c'est les Autres* — Sartre (Hell is Other People):

Weeks ago, during a voice or Skype call, Irene advised me to not build my sauna. No reason given. Sometime around then, she also suggested I not place my solar panels outside on City property during the day, something I've been told is within my right, so long as it is not a permanent installation. Stated reason: "it could change the character of the neighborhood." (Update: 3-22-23 Yesterday, during another Skype call, Irene, when told my blood sugar meter had been giving wrong results, said instantly: "Oh, bad calibration!") *N'importe quoi!*

I've said Irene, whenever I visited Florence, would never walk next to me when we were outside. An exception: one night walking by an empty deli, she threatened me. Using the word *amoché* (beaten up) in a sentence, ostensibly a remark about the former owner of the shuttered store who had, apparently, borrowed money from the wrong people and, unable to repay, skipped town one night. She was, I surmise, hinting at what would happen to me if I did not come to my senses and keep my trap shut.

It was in 1995; again, in the apartment my long-suffering sister shared with her then-husband that I happened across a small book: *The Great Emperor and his Automaton* by Jean Lévi. *Kommentar Überflüssig*.

(3-23-23) Over maybe fifteen minutes, a curious scene unfolded at the #33 bus stop on Venice and Motor when I returned from mailing a package in the late afternoon. As I stood behind a partition, shielding myself from the wind, sitting inside the bus shelter, a man began a loud conversation with a woman next to him. A conversation which soon degenerated into hectoring in an enraged voice. At times bellowing, he accused her of making fun of him, of not listening to him, etc. During the impromptu(?) show, if I may make light of this strange scene, he used the word bitch. Whatever he was selling with this commercial, judging from her silence, I don't think the "bitch" was buying. Thinking again about this episode, I find it strange that anyone, let alone the *Herrrenklub*-types I mostly address these notes to, would care one whit about the ridicule I occasionally scatter in their direction. Offended by a nobody like me, are they? Curious.

Sassenach™ and His Yankee Damyankee Tricks:

In the days of Queen Elizabeth, Walsingham had his bag of "cloak and dagger" or perhaps even "croak and stagger" (credit to Pynchon) tricks. Nowadays, "We, The Peasants" can in no way consider ourselves even somewhat exempt from the attention of our Walsinghams. Nowadays "there's an app for that," i.e., the available tools, evermore powerful and cheap, lend themselves to a "shotgun approach" to the ubiquitous (according to *Cioran*) police state. Now, I don't have anything against such means if they protect the Queen's subjects from the Spanish Armada. When used as a last resort though, *not* as the default stance to be taken regarding every Tom, Dick and Harry who happens to be thought clever and Black (or Jewish, Mexican, White, French, Italian or Asian). OK?

(2-27-23) Well, the long-awaited City inspection took place this morning, catching me by surprise as the written notice had said Friday, 2-24-23, with the additional warning on an attached yellow sticker: "It has to be today." Yet no one attempted a visit; neither would it have been allowed. So today, as soon as I caught sight of the two gentlemen, José Nava and the City Inspector, I carried out an impromptu *Apartheid Aktion* by immediately leaving. Though not before, in a reprise of the Spectrum Cable technician's act of a couple of weeks ago, both (are they *all* blind?), made inquiries as to where the light was. Each of them. In turn. In my rush, I neglected to answer and, giving them the freedom of the bungalow and bidding them lock both doors when done, left. Rain or shine, such is my habit.

Later that day I spoke with a young man from City Vector Control about my ~~rodent~~ rat infestation. At one point, he seemed confused about the meaning of the word "bungalow." I tried to be helpful.

(3-4-23) I think there's big game to be had in my attic and living area, judging from the level of the nightly noise. We've got company, it seems.

Irene reports her TV spontaneously turns on in the middle of the night. Another *unanswerable* objection to the use of the darn things, in my opinion.

(3-11-23) Lady Lurk's alleged dawg has been unusually quiet of late. And, as I write these lines, she opens her door briefly and softly says (moans?) "Go." I also no longer run into the Tyson family dog being taken for a walk by one of the daughters, formerly a twice or more daily occurrence.

(3-24-23) From Spectrum Communication, my internet and phone provider, an email: "*We found an issue affecting your services while performing routine network maintenance. Schedule an appointment to have a Spectrum technician correct this issue.*" Third time in about as many months and, when the tech shows up, he invariably fumbles, asking repeatedly "Where is the light?" before dissolving into a puddle of mumbles as I delicately inquire as to what exactly is the problem. I've decided to schedule another visit just for the chance to take notes as the poor fellow goes through his moves, with my notepad in hand, Natch! (Update: 3-28-23. He came, he fixed(?), he went. Problem: a defective cable modem injecting (if I understood) noise into Spectrum's network, impacting their bandwidth(?). Second replacement.

Juegos de Manos, Juegos de Villanos:

Irene tells me she may go to Turkey. She doesn't have to, does she?

(3-12-23) Text of an email I sent March 10:

Subject: I believe congratulations are in order here!

Hi Dear, [Redacted]

Reason is, it's 2AM a-and I just bagged my first rodent (the loathsome creature). Mwahahahahaha!

Hence the deeply felt sense of satisfaction just now as I had an, shall we say, interesting night last night (the night of March 8 to 9, I'm writing this March 10). In fact, I'd go so far as to say it was an interesting night...

Well, I'm off. To celebrate wiv' another cup of coffee. A-and perhaps bag a few more rodent scalps. Rattus longa, vita brevis.

You know, once one gets over one's almost palpable sense of disgust, it's actually not a bad experience.

Irene, I rather recommend it.

*(signed)
Bergendahl/Berg (as in Nuremberg)/Bergie aka der Rattenfänger*

P.S. Irene: Photos a l'appui! (what a disgusting toad I am a-and quite the stickler for detail, no?) Re-Mwahahahahaha!

P.P.S. For additional details on the last 2 nights and days, you'll have to wait for HSH #18.

*P.P.P.S. I simply must get one of them so-called ratcatcher's coats (as seen in *Brideshead Revisited*). Or am I just confused about the terminology?*

(3-16-23) A cup left near the open kitchen door has a tiny hole outside and a larger one inside. Pics available. I pity anyone in this here Republic who's not me.

Speed Bumps on the Road to Ragnarök:

Have not heard back from Apricot Lane Farms about my email inquiries, I'm looking to buy what I call "Happy" eggs, beef and pork.

(3-6-23) Got 3 day notice to pay rent and an email from Tiffany Anderson telling me my account was "fixed." (Update: 3-9-23) Got a second 3-day notice, this time in the mail, amount considerably reduced but, according to my calculations, I am paid up. I looked back 4 months and have dates, amounts and confirmation numbers. This is confusing and stressful. It seem the right hand does not know what the right hand is doing. *Oder?*

Here's the text of an email to my landlord in response to two 3-day notices to pay rent or quit:

Distribution: Tiffany Anderson, manager, AFJ Investment, Irene Hawkins, LAHD (Complaint Department), [Redacted]

Subject: Your latest Three day Notice To Pay Rent Or Vacate Premises

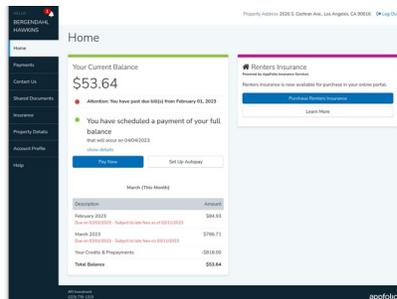
Hi,

The current discrepancy between your calculations and my figures is \$53.64 (dunning letter dated 3/6/23, received by me on 3/9/23), the previous amount (dunning note dated 3/6/23, left in my mailbox on 3/6/23) came in at \$871.64. They differ greatly. What's the reason? More serious is the fact that I do not see any errors in my rent payments and calculations since my rent was lowered in December. These notices have been a source of some stress. Still more serious is your feeling that I, who have been your tenant for over twelve years, should be served 3-day notices over an amount as small as \$50, with said amount owed for about a month.

The following is my understanding of the last four months' rent situation:

Date of Payment	Confirmation #	Paid	Credit	Owed	LAHD Decision	
12/04/22	7AD4-1A00	\$818.00	-\$22.35	\$795.65	Partial refund Dec rent	\$22.35 Prorated credit
01/04/23	8536-1EA0	\$818.00	-\$31.29	\$786.71	Refund Jan rent	\$31.29 Full credit
02/04/23	A953-BBF0	\$818.00	-\$31.29	\$786.71	Refund Feb rent	\$31.29 Full credit
03/04/23	1D3B-5BF0	\$701.78	-\$84.93	\$786.71		
					Credit	\$84.93
4 months totals =====>		\$3,155.78		\$3,155.78		\$0.00 <= Balance outstanding
1-time March rent	\$701.78					
New rent	\$786.71					

While your payment portal shows:



Should this be resolved in my favor, I ask that, in future, you exercise more care when sending me these upsetting 3-day notices; notices of which there have recently been many.

Thanks,

Bergendahl/Berg (as in Nuremberg)/Bergie Hawkins, tenant at 2626 S. Cochran Ave., LA 90016

P.S. Tiffany Anderson: As I've said before, while we may not be on the same team, we're on the same side.

This note is placed in the Public Domain. So long as my name and contents are unchanged, you may reproduce it at will.

(3-15-23) Not having received a reply from Tiffany Anderson and on the advice of LAHD, yesterday I paid the disputed amount, hoping to forestall any, shall we say, awkward interruptions in the presence and continuity of a roof over my head... (Update: 4-10-23) Got a third 3-day notice from AFJ Investment a few days ago, this one claiming a past due amount of \$0.00.

(4-3-23) This AM, left message with LAHD seeking to file a complaint about an illegal rent increase on the basis of the above, unjustified, claim and two 3-day notices. None of my emails on this to Tiffany Anderson have, so far, been addressed or even acknowledged.

(3-9-23) The day began inauspiciously. One or more rodents/Rodan(?) (those of you of the Japanese Persuasion will get the simply coruscating attempt at humor)... The joint was jumpin', I tell you. (Update: 4-10-23) This section removed for rework as I do not have the time to properly present the succession of lurid scenes involved.

This episode leaves me pondering the very real question: Which was worse, the four bouts of bedbugs infestations, the head lice or the rats? I declare.

With the whole business a close-run thing Gentle Reader™, I, at one point, even considered the following question: “Hotel? Motel? Holiday Inn?” But the next day, just as the UPS guy delivered my humane rodent traps (since returned, unopened), the exterminator sent by AFJ Investment showed up at my doorstep. The day was saved! (Update: 3-11-23) Since last night, an eerie silence fills the apartment, could it be the rats, for rats they were, according to the exterminator, took fright at his menacing appearance? I grudgingly admit that with this *Ratten Aktion*, these Gentlemen of the Organs of State Security™ may finally be on to something. *Rattus pugnator*, anyone? Though I probably shouldn't give these jokers any new(?) ideas.

I myself trapped one rat, the exterminator's traps caught two then there was a small one and the largest outstanding, both still on the loose; for a definite total of at least five. (Update: 4-10-23) Caught another in the kitchen two days ago.

(3-11-23) Got my kitchen faucet fixed, two days ago. We've got flow! As they say (though admittedly in an entirely unrelated business). (Update 4-8-23) The new faucet vibrates so, it shakes the kitchen sink, making a racket fit to wake the dead and threatening the very foundations of this ramshackle edifice (by which I mean, of course, me bungalow).

(3-21-23) Visit by City inspector Thomas Reichmann. (Update: 4-10-23) This section removed for rework as I do not have the time to properly present the succession of lurid scenes involved.

If, as I've said before, I'm willing to camp out in the ashes of my bungalow, you can safely assume that, should I be requested to remove every stick of furniture, every bit of the impedimenta of the hoarder that I am from this ever-shrinking bungalow (*my peau de chagrin*); when requested to do so as a result of findings of this or the next Reichmann, I. Will. Comply. For I know which side of the Atlantic my butter is on.

Benelux: A Kushi, it's True, but a Nice One:

(4-6-23) After a confusing and unpleasant day dealing with my code violations, I've decided to, again, practice a “scorched earth” policy, as I previously did both in the book and with my car. Meaning I'll again deny *anyone* the use of my vulnerabilities. Starting this morning, I'm moving almost all my things into a nearby U-Haul storage. Q: What do I *really* need? A: Not my stuff, not really, what I most need is to maintain a certain idea of myself. And so when, later in the afternoon, I head downtown to the LAHD office for a list of my code violations outstanding (I was unable to get my hands on them otherwise), I will not overly trouble (with) whatever participants of this circus I find there.

Wink-wink, Nudge-nudge:

How many of Irene's scripts are provided in realtime? Which then leads to the question: What's the available bandwidth?

The folks at FlokiNET, my Icelandic hosting service for the blog I have reserved space for, lately seem to be having problems of an unspecified nature, judging from the recent confusion regarding my account. And, anyway, my eBay listing for the book has toted up 15,000+ views in a few years. Though it's true I've had and continue to have mishaps, thankfully mostly with support people and some customers (see below) rather than any strictly (show-stopper) technical issues. Irene, whatever happened to that “*C'est là qu'il faut appuyer*,” when I got my marching orders? Something's not adding up, Dear.

A recurring theme of writer Octavia Butler: a creature, once human, has the ability to leap from one person to another, wholly taking over the target individual's mind with the previous host dying in the process. This creature, unfathomably old, prefers the mentally ill. Perhaps appreciating the savor of a schizophrenic mind.

(3-24-23) Having set my mind on contacting media outlets and journalists with an eye to generating some buzz about the state of this here Republic, you might, Gentle Reader™, be inclined at this point to think I've finally got me head on straight. Nothing of the sort! I'm merely following in the footsteps of that Stalin who (or of whom it has been) said: “Flush them out, unmask them, liquidate them and, in due course, adopt their program.” You see, flogging my wares is a secondary concern as I often lose something on every sale (credit my considerable business acumen). No, this is not in the expectation of actually generating interest as the contents are what I consider to be “burn before reading” material; no, my aim is *strictly* to generate traffic (a somewhat technical term, I believe). And so, in the interest of what Anna Lembke calls “radical honesty,” I have here laid my cards on the table. <FIX>

The Provocation Will Not Be Televised or *Mine de rien* (While Pretending Nothing is Going on):

(3-4-23) At Home Depot today for more sauna material, I can report multiple importunate and persistent offers of help. I finally hit on the expedient of simply turning my back and remaining mute. They can't arrest me for this, surely.

Have settled on a plan to provide my bungalow's electricity and do demonstrations with two solar panel setups. The first, with one or two panels charging battery packs, will be installed every morning *on City property*, between the sidewalk and the curb (see pic below). It will be self-contained with no connection to my bungalow a few yards away and I'll remove it every evening. The second, with one panel, *just inside the bungalow*, slightly recessed, with the door opened every morning, will allow sunlight to charge my main battery pack while powering my house. With the latter there is also the possibility of a greatly increased power output if heliostats reflect additional sunlight onto the panel. For this, I may use a number of lightweight reflectors made of kitchen aluminum foil mounted on loops of heavy gauge wire, 2'x2' each, mounted outside the bungalow (Hey, nobody said nuffink about mirrors not being allowed), with the number limited to what the traffic public opinion in me neighborhood will bear. In this case, water cooling of the panel would be required, providing a convenient supply of hot water in the bargain. Panels will not be placed on landlord's property as *the City forbids it...* A caveat: this whole effort subject to City and landlord disapproval. Mostly unaware of applicable regulations, at times even finding it difficult if not impossible to find out *what* the relevant rules are, I merely comply.

(3-26-23) Technical problems of an unknown nature prevented test of part of the above system this AM.



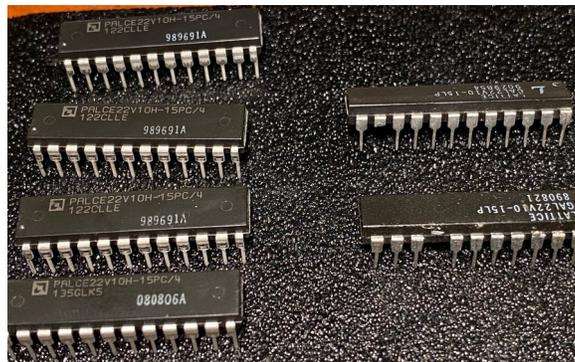
Figure 1: The location and actual stand of the outside setup (only 1 of 2 panels mounted). The battery packs go under and behind the panels in a locked box fastened to the stand.

(3-27-23) Considering the “skits” Our August Person™ was subjected to to-day, both at Home Depot and later, trudging home with my purchases, it might save a certain party some energy if I restated my position:

1. All efforts to the contrary, I firmly believe I have considerable help and that while truth may never be the preponderant factor here or anywhere, neither is it a negligible one. With nobody running a charity, I don't think I'd have attracted the support I imagine I have, were it not felt that I stand on solid ground.
2. Do you think my conduct would differ if I did not feel I have backing? After what I've learned of my life and the lives of mine? Really?
3. And last, does anyone think I give a Flying F**k at a Rolling Doughnut™ (expression of unknown origin) what my chances of success are? Hint: I've read Berman.

O Sassenach™, my Sassenach™ won't you, at long last, come to your senses?

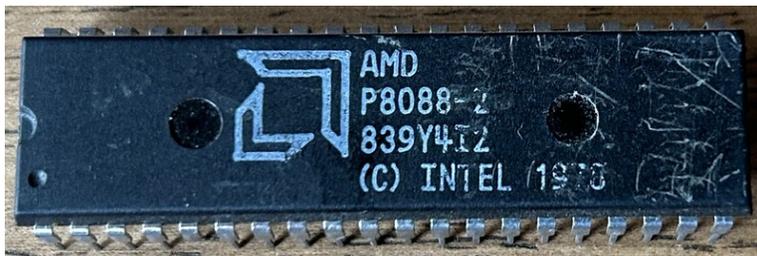
(2-27-23) An eBay customer complains that two of the chips I sold him are damaged while the others are not as advertised. I gave a full refund without asking for return of the parts. While part of his complaint was in error, have a look at one of the pictures he sent me. I am sometimes sloppy or distracted, but *this!*



Note the damage to the plastic on one chip.

(3-24-23) Another eBay customer complains of two of three parts he ordered arriving damaged. After I offer to replace them at no charge, he asks: “What of the two bad ones?” Later, in reply to another email, he adds: “I'll trash them.” Nothing if not punctilious, this one.

(3-31-23) Today, another complaint by a customer. Quote: “I ordered this item for a collection and the top and text is all scratched. This is not the quality depicted in the listing.” Emphatically not what I sent him! See pics below. In reply, I asked him to file a complaint with eBay before refunding in full.



Picture I received with customer's complaint.



eBay listing showing a representative sample of what I sent.

★★★★★ Be the first to [write a review](#)

Condition: Seller refurbished
 “PARTS WERE PULLED
 CLEANED WITH LE...”

Bulk savings: Buy 1 \$5.43/ea

4 or more for \$4.62

Quantity: 1 7 available

Folks, a pop quiz here: What is the meaning of the German word *Naseschleimentladung* (Whew! A mouthful): Snot.

Regarding the above three items of business, are not crimes being committed somewhere along the line?

Shooting Fish in a Barrel a-and Getting Pretty Good at it, Too:

Because I neither have the courage nor the dignity to face this reality head-on and without my trademark jackass laugh, I'm inaugurating a new section. By shooting fish in a barrel, I mean assembling my woolgathering and the notes I take throughout the day and distilling the stuff into a bit of ridicule (see comment at end of this section). Ridicule: another solvent, one of the more humane ones, I hope. As you look these emails over, remember that I neither

expect an answer (let alone a coherent, useful one) nor will I reply; any responses going, unread, into my "NOOP" folder. The exercise merely a way for me to while away the hours (literally, in the case of Home Depot) while having some laffs.

The following is a note I've sent to *Mitsuwa*, a Japanese market where I sometimes shop:

Date: 3/15/23

Distribution: Irene Hawkins, Beth Wolfson, Matt Horns, Susanna Reza, Others: this message being in the public domain, Mitsuwa Market management

Subject: Request for a recommendation

Hi,

After I declined the purchase of a bag for my groceries the checkout clerk, perhaps not having heard me, began repeating "Do you need a bag?", pausing only to catch his breath.

I, my attention maybe directed elsewhere, did not reply. Neither to the second, nor the third entreaty on the young man's part. To his puzzlement, for he continued in this vein for quite some time.

Luckily a young woman, a security guard, eventually came over, looking to remove a stray shopping basket before helpfully asking me something. In Spanish.

Momentarily taken aback but not to be outdone I replied in my kitchen Russian: "I don't know from nothing," adding a typical Russia term of endearment "*Matyushenka*," before making good my credit card purchase (Mitsuwa Marketplace, Mitsuwa Santa Monica, 3760 S. Centinela Ave., Los Angeles, CA #005-002 3/15/2023 10:38:31 Alex Inv#:00299252 Trs#:299803, Item Count : 7, Total \$17.84) and departure.

To forestall further misunderstandings, maybe I'll bring a flash card with the words "No thank you, I don't need a bag." on my next visit.

This note is in no way to be taken as a complaint. On the contrary; for it typifies a certain atmosphere in this, our polyglot metropolis. I visit your store from time to time and have seen this young man before, he seems like a nice guy.

Same with the woman who smiled at me as she approached. It's just that, taken unawares, I regret not having replied in her language. You can be sure I'll brush up on my conversational Spanish for next time. Is there perhaps a phrasebook the (upper) management could recommend?

Thanks,

(signed)
Bergendahl/Berg (as in Nuremberg)/Bergie Hawkins

P.S. The contents of this message are in the public domain and may be reproduced at will. All I ask is that my name and all contents be left intact.

Another to our postal service on the four day anniversary of outgoing mail not picked up:

Date: 3-16-23

Distribution: Irene Hawkins (of Florence, Italy), Beth Wolfson, Others: this message being in the public domain, USPS (Complaint Center)

Subject: A (com)plaint along with a modest proposal

Having been unsuccessful in having two (now three) packages picked up since Monday, today being Thursday evening, with one mailman even dropping by to apparently(?) verify my address (cheeky! Nevertheless, I thanked him), I'm puzzled. My packages are on the mailbox at my porch, visible (pics, taken today, available) from the walkway in my small (4 bungalows and 4 apartments) complex. And, before you suggests I schedule a pickup online, this option not having been terribly, terribly effective in the past, may I offer a suggestion, if I may make so bold?

Perhaps the USPS should (re)instate the mandatory vision test for prospective employees.

Thanks,

(signed)
Bergendahl/Berg (as in Nuremberg)/Bergie Hawkins, 2626 S. Cochran Ave., LA CA 90016

Another to Home Depot, this note partly assembled as I waited, on hold:

Date: 3-17-23

Distribution: Irene Hawkins, Beth Wolfson, Matt Horns, Susanna Reza, Others: this message being in the public domain, Home Depot management

Subject: A thank you note and a modest suggestion

Hi,

Today, I managed to make quite a dent in *The Despotate of Epiros* by Nicol (not exactly a page turner), while on hold for the wood department as they checked some prices. A welcome opportunity to catch up on some neglected reading, I confess.

I note that two hours and twenty two minutes elapsed. Perhaps the management would care to recommend another book of the appropriate length for my next call to your Hyde Park store? I'm about done with this one.

Lastly, be sure and let your (upper) management know that, as a long-time customer, I find them to be surprisingly competitive and, above all, *cheap*.

Thanks,

(signed)
Bergendahl/Berg (as in Nuremberg)/*Bergie* Hawkins, in Los Angeles

P.S. This note is placed in the Public Domain. So long as my name and contents are unchanged, anyone may reproduce it at will.

The second to the USPS in a week:

Date: 3/22/2023

Distribution: Irene Hawkins, Others, USPS

Subject: A compliment

Hi,

Yesterday, in a daring move, my mailman actually dropped off some letters. An act which required him to move the outgoing package I had placed on top of my mailbox without taking the item with him; in my opinion, an even more daring move. These bold acts were carried out in full view of (possible) passersby and in the teeth of the (possible) disapproval of any nosy neighbors who might have been watching.

Today, in a repeat performance, though without the added fillip of dropping off any mail, he again failed to pickup the same outgoing (small) package.

Outstanding!™

My compliments to the (upper) Management on the effectiveness of their employee training. Truly, these are lions led by lions. Well done!

By the way, I'm the same customer who, last week, complained of three packages not being picked up for almost the whole week. At that time, I suggested you institute a mandatory, across the board, vision test for all mail carriers. One of the eBay customers concerned has since corrected me, suggesting the reason for the mailman's inaction might have been that the packages were too big, something I was inclined to believe. At the time.

(signed)
Bergendahl/Berg (as in Nuremberg)/*Bergie* Hawkins, 2626 S. Cochran Ave., Los Angeles, 90016

P.S. Tracking numbers available on request.

And another to my landlord after a not unexpected period of silence from both her and a City Inspector.

Date: 4/3/2023

Distribution: Irene Hawkins, Beth Wolfson, Roberta Edgar, Others, LAHD Complaint Dept., AFJ Investment

Subject: Following President Lincoln in a letter to General McClellan, a suggestion

Hi Tiffany Anderson,

I've not yet received my copy of the list of code violations found by City Inspector Thomas Reichmann on his visit of March 21, two weeks ago, (case# 850338). These are violations due both to my complaints and other problems noticed by him.

Would you mind if I borrowed your list as you don't seem to be doing much with it.

Thanks,

(signed)
Bergendahl/Berg (as in Nuremberg)/*Bergie* Hawkins, your tenant at 2626 S Cochran Ave, Los Angeles 90016

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P.S. The quote from Lincoln: "My dear McClellan: If you don't want to use the Army I should like to borrow it for a while"

Folks, these things practically write themselves.

(Update: 3-18-23) Sound advice from an eBay customer (perhaps making the first note to the USPS unnecessary) led me to hand-carry the three packages languishing all week to my local post office today as they might have been too big for the mailman to carry. It proving to have closed early today (1PM scrawled on a note at the entrance instead of the usual 3PM posted on their site), I was forced to go to another post office. From there, went to the Robertson library branch to return two books as my local branch has closed for renovations. This leg of the trip went smoothly enough with only one scheduling conflict with bus #617, ID 5647, northbound on Robertson at 2:05PM, to report. She wouldn't effin' stop. Though I quickly add she did return my wave as she drove by. What kind of a place is this, anyhow? (Update: 3-23-23) Went back to my local post office to mail an eBay item I'm returning only to find the branch unable to take debit cards, the system being down. Again, had to make my way to the more reliable(?) branch on Motor Avenue to finally mail the package.

Conclusions:

Astonishing that I resort to an Albanian writer, her greatest living, commenting on his country, a nearly-failed state, in an attempt at grasping the situation in this place.

It would be a serious mistake for me to not take this circus seriously; it would be an equally serious mistake to take it at face value.

A tentative, incomplete take on where I stand relative to my side on the spectrum of commensalism/*clientelismo*/master-slave type of relations. My side, unlike me, has in the past, probably proven perfectly willing, when it comes to it, to make deals. They, while not necessarily having the upper hand in all things, at least had enough power to bargain with. I, not so much. How else to explain this place's political/civic/moral trajectory over the last decades? Not

merely a question of interested parties repeatedly turning a blind eye but actually establishing a (dynamic, ever-shifting) *modus vivendi* with these Gentlemen of the Organs of State Security™. A balance which, over the decades, has (I imagine) proven repeatedly unstable as occult forces show themselves to be increasingly power-hungry (the appetite being known to grow with the feeding); thus the current turmoil, with the *palpable* circus I'm at the center of being but the tip of the iceberg. Speculation.

Consider the very idea of the punishment cells of *Vorkuta*. What. A. Piece. Of. Work. Is. Man.

Even under the most absurd circumstances, I must remain civil; will I, though? Why do I have the, now frequently recurring, thought that I may be the most reliable cog in this mechanism? How long will this all take? The rest of my life and then some, I imagine.

(signed)

"Varmints" Hawkins, Appalachian(?) dialect implying I'm afflicted with: a) Bats in the belfry b) Rats in the attic (I'm not sure which is worse). Sigh.

P.S. To my beloved sisters, Irene and Colette (the latter dead of breast cancer in 2018): May our wordless tears, yours and mine, eventually prove invincible.

P.P.S. Bleak Lives Matter™

P.P.P.S. To Irene: Regards to *le-Matin* The Syndicate (local branch)