

In many ways *The Cure of Folly* is autobiographical, at once the story of a loss of faith and the development of, or growing into, an arguably deeper faith informed by great literature and myth in ways that, at least in Warne's account, contemporary psychiatry generally is not. Thus the cleverness of the title: the book both traces the cure of Warne's own folly and describes his understanding of the predicament of modern psychiatry, which he feels has forgotten that "madness is just a variant on the weird behaviour of the rest of us." The "fraudulence of the psychiatric enterprise" as Warne would have us understand it, is

its insistence on curing folly. "I won't pathologize my patients," he notes, "a boon when trying to understand another person's world, but awkward when the world of psychiatry asks me for diagnoses, wants me to 'normalize' patients, or eagerly try to change people."

Hubris, of course, lurks shallowly below the surface in all of us who presume to put our ideas in print, and I think Warne's editors might have been a trifle more strict with him in this regard. That said, this is a wonderful read. The literary references and epigraphs alone are worth the price of the book. A favourite, attributed to

Montaigne, opens the first chapter: "Man is quite insane. He wouldn't know how to create a maggot, and he creates gods by the dozen." But here is Warne, near the end of the book: "As far as I can see, any god worth his [*sic*] salt has a repertoire of weirdness at his disposal, as does every literary and mythological figure. It's what makes human conduct riveting."

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## Room for a view

# Solitude

In April, Lenny Moscow paced at night reciting arteries, nerves, and the Krebs cycle. He locked himself into his dorm room. He drank coffee and played jazz — Coltrane, Davis, Parker. "Lenny!" I whacked the wall. "Lenny, shut up! It's three a.m. I need sleep."

"Rubens?" He yelled into the wall. "Is that you?"

"I am sleeping, Lenny. Lower the volume."

"Rubens, I am cramming. Do you understand?"

For ten days in April, Moscow took cafeteria meals to his room. He studied morning to evening, slept three hours after supper, and stayed awake all night. His only intermezzo was a trip to the bathroom. His grey eyes, dark stubble and gaunt body gave him an anarchist look. "I have to study all first-year medicine. It's life and death, Rubens."

"Lenny," I asked, "why did you leave it so long?"

"I have a death wish."

A month earlier, Moscow had been living at his girlfriend Tanya's flat, writing poetry and spending the evenings at a pub debating Life, Art and Marx. Whenever I had a beer with him, he was witty and anxiety-free. No one realized he was a medical

student. Lenny had disappeared from classes. He was against formal instruction. In February I had warned him. "Lenny, be careful. The profs know you skip class."

"So what? Is it a crime to discuss great ideas?"

"They will make an example of you."

"I will make an example of *them*," he said, jabbing me with his finger. "This is a free world."

I had the room next to Moscow in our dorm; we were good friends, but I rarely saw him. During second semester he sneaked into Tanya's Ibsen class and read Sartre in a café. He wrote for the university journal. He published poetry. "People say I don't belong," he told me. "It's untrue. I want to be a doctor as much as you — my problem is there's too much to know. There is little time. Death stops us."

"It would help if you attended class. People think you don't care."

"I don't *care*?" Moscow stormed. "Forgive my passion. My teachers are dull, the courses uninspiring. How can we be illiterate doctors? Why is there no Art in medicine?"

You either loved Lenny or you hated him. He argued that teachers were prigs, that the university was a

bastion of conservatism. He ridiculed medicine, had long hair, agitated against Vietnam and drove draft-dodgers to Canada. He was a fire-brand. Classmates mocked him because he questioned everything. It didn't help that his girlfriend Tanya, an exchange student, was drop-dead gorgeous.

Lenny caressed her in public whenever possible.

I had a crush on Tanya. I hated Lenny. I loved Lenny. I wanted to be Lenny.

But he lived life too fast. I feared he would burn up, like a shooting star.

Friday we met draft-dodgers at the Watertown border and drove them to Kingston. They stayed in our dorm. Lenny had the contact; I was sworn to secrecy. One week before final exams, during a spring snowstorm, I picked up a Louisiana draft-dodger with his banjo, Fadeus Jacques. He slept in my room on a cot.

By this time Lenny was popping wake-ups around the clock and cramming nonstop.

"Heck," Fadeus said, "that Lenny-boy does talk mighty fast."

We lay in the dark. Lenny recited cra-

nial nerves and played Charlie Parker.

"I miss folks down South," Fadeus hummed. "Canada is fine but for snow."

I closed my eyes. "Let's go to sleep, Fadeus."

"Vietnam's a painful war," Fadeus said.

"I know."

"Do you now? You're lucky to be studying here." Fadeus spoke of his dad, who had fought in World War II. I talked about my uncle, an army doc. After half an hour of listening to Fadeus Jacques, Charlie Parker and cranial nerves, I turned on my light and opened Grant's *Atlas*. "I can't sleep," I said.

"Me neither," said Fadeus.

"I better study. Do you mind?"

"Can I play banjo?"

Fadeus stared into space, strumming. "Your president, the cool French dude — ?"

"Trudeau? He's prime minister."

"Heck. Nixon worries me," Fadeus strummed. "I can't go South anymore."

It was the price of freedom. In Canada we had no draft, no war; but there was winter most of the year. In medical school we studied from September to May. Sometimes, feeling sad, I wondered what I was sacrificing to be a doctor.

Fadeus had given up everything. All he had was his banjo.

Each night he played soft, slow. The music soothed me.

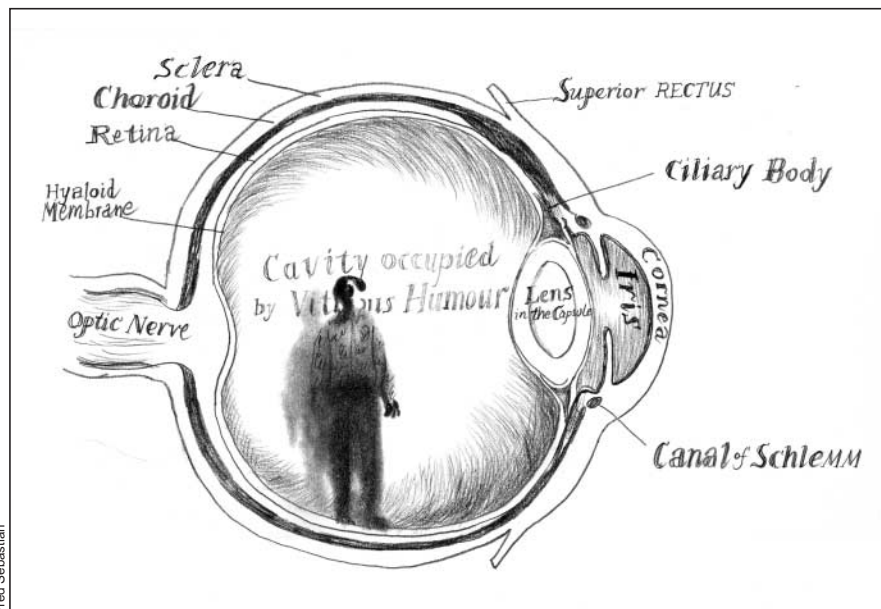
Three days before the finals, Lenny staggered to the bathroom.

"What's the matter?"

"Chills." He shut himself into a cubicle and vomited into the toilet. Then I heard the ominous explosions of diarrhea.

When he came out I took his temperature.

"Thirty-eight point five Celsius. Not good." Lenny shivered in his bed. I had not seen his room for ages. Stacks of soup cans, rotting fruit, beer and a mouldy meal lay inside his dorm window. Medical books were piled on his bed — Ham's histology, Grant's



Fred Sebastian

anatomy, Smith's neuroanatomy. Beside Lenny's desk was *Being and Nothingness* and a fetching photo of Tanya. A hot plate on his dresser boiled water. The room was dim, fetid, unclean.

"Make me tea, Rubens. I need tea."

"No. Call a doctor," Fadeus entered. "I've seen dead people look better."

Lenny struggled from bed. He sipped Coke. He popped pills.

"What's that?" I asked.

"Wake-ups."

Lenny choked on the pills. He had a coughing fit. His bulging eyes were ringed and bloodshot. He trembled, turned white and raced to the toilet. More diarrhea.

"You are dying," I said. "We are going to emergency."

"Over my dead body," croaked Lenny.

"Fine," Fadeus said. "Dead or alive."

After we brought Lenny back from emergency, Fadeus and I removed the rotting food and swept up. Fadeus washed the floor. I opened the window, letting cool air ventilate the room.

"Five hours of study-time shot," Lenny hissed. "You're making me flunk!"

I stared at Tanya's photo on his

desk. How could she love him? I phoned Tanya to ask her to take Lenny to her place.

"No," he coughed, "I need solitude."

Lenny stayed in his room, studying. That Saturday another American arrived in Watertown. The finals started in two days. Sunday morning Fadeus left for Toronto. He strummed the blues and bid farewell. "Keep studying," Fadeus waved. "I'm moving on."

Sunday night I reviewed anatomy. I checked to see if Lenny was alive. He lay in bed in pajamas, fully recovered, reading Grant's *Atlas*.

"Get some sleep," Lenny said. "Imagine if we end up doctors?"

That night it was hard to imagine anything because Lenny snored. He rarely slept, but when he did he sounded like a chainsaw. I recited cranial nerves and the circle of Willis. I wondered what would happen if we failed our exams. I thought of Fadeus. I loved Tanya but said nothing.

Life filled me with sadness.

We were all of us so far away from where we were going.

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