

The Silver Pipe Cafe & Other Texts

by Hakim

1. The Silver Pipe Cafe

Orphaned at nine he left his village alone & came down on the coast below the Southern Hills – once an independent Sultanate where the men made their living as pirates – some grandfathers now still remember – in their lateen rigs with red sails or black, lying a quarter of a mile out in the shallow bay – longboats fetch & carry from ships to the beach, whitely curved and palm-lined – The town: tin-roofed houses, shops tilting over the garbage in the canals, a cracked stucco cathedral in the style of Goa or Macao. At the far end of town, facing the sand, a long shed, thatched-roofed & decayed, the Silver Pipe Cafe – stained walls, tea-pot spumes caught in the slanting sun, low platforms around the room where habitués recline, a yellow cat, flyspecked calendars with colored prints of gods, radio crackling with gamelan & Chinese pop tunes – and darkly shadowed as the stage between waking and sleep – a hypnogogic cafe. At ten he first learned how to serve the customers: the older boys told him how to heat the hashish over the brazier till it could be crumbled into little pastilles – then fill the blackstone bowl of the longstemmed silver pipe, choose hot coals & arrange them with tongs over the drug, tamp them down, take a few puffs to start the smoke flowing, hand it over to the patron, one rupiyah per pipe, fetch tea & cigarettes for the old brown men in their flower-patterned lunghees, dark sailors with earrings, a Chinese or Moslem merchant, dissolute European adventurer or failed priest. With the tips he earned he could buy rice & fish, & slept at night in the cafe or on the beach. At first he felt no interest in the drug – but the older boys saved unburnt remnants & crumbs & smoked them, huddled together outside the back of the cafe next to the latrine, & when they lit pipes for customers they inhaled as much as they could. In the evenings one or two of them would dress like girls in a sacred drama & perform the traditional dances, their long curls braided and crowned with heavy white flowers, lips rouged, arms & legs braceleted with tinsel, silk cloths bound around their childish waists – golden moths, moving slow as if narcotized, shifting slender hips to the candlelight of drum, flute & gongs. The dancers were well tipped, disappeared with their admirers & came back with toys or jewels, & he determined to master their skills. By eleven he discovered the pleasure of the pipe, & he too began to steal green flakes from his customers. He saved coins & bought a new sarong

from a thief, of black watered Chinese silk – with his white blood he was the palest boy in the cafe, & the inky cloth set off his pallor & the hint of gold in his brown bangs & coffee tinted eyes – an older boy taught him a trick: if you want a bigger tip, let your sarong fall open, as if by accident, while you serve them their pipes, then pretend not to notice but stay naked for a few minutes till you tie it again. Every day he swam in the sea. A man gave him a gold chain for his neck in exchange for a kiss. By the time he was twelve his eyes were always lazy, melting with intoxication – late at night, the last few customers slumbering deeply, he & his friends would huddle together on one of the platforms, away from the patron's eye & ear as he nodded over his tea-pots – ceiling fans stirred the air, a warm sluggish rain spattered the dry roof – the boys smoked, curled up together against the dirty bolsters to whisper & sleep, limbs tangled together, like young pye-dogs in the shade – nightbirds moaned outside the cafe. At thirteen he dances in a costume of his own invention: a long loincloth of lilac-colored shantung, a belt of chased silver, necklaces of seed pearls & jasmine, bells on his bare ankles & wrists. Still another year or two before he must begin to depilate his body & use powder like the older boys – but the hashish now keeps him awake some nights, too insane to move, staring at the crescent moon under the roof, a green parrot perched on its cusp, & the silver hands dripping from the stars – now he is a devotee himself: in this religion I have invented, of hashish & little boys, he is both worshiper & object of worship. The sky opens & between his legs the black silk chafes him till he throws it off – the silk, & the tropical limbs of sleeping boys, more electric than silk & darker, brighter than amber. The moon, a hundred & six moons invade his veins with their pulsing light, spermy & opalesque. He lights the pipe again, balancing the cool stem on his knee, watching it glitter in the match-light, & smoke englobes his space, owl's wings brush his shoulders & thighs, he alone awake in this androgynous cafe, the moonlight kissing his feet, running its glowworm tongue over his thin legs. The night strokes his innocence, fingers it till it wakens, a pirate of self-abuse, & the hashish mirrors his pigeon's moans, fearful the others might be feigning sleep. Mirrors, the Silver Pipe Cafe is made of mirrors – take this night for an Emblem, the half-breed acolyte for your dervish boy, your double-sexed shaman child, & the lilacs of his hands open for you a crack between earth & sky, & fill all time with the pubescent lightning of a single pipe.

2. Fat Chance

a short infatuation with *Tropicalismo*. The rooms should be kept as empty as possible: mats on the floor, a water jug: not so much a question of the tyranny of objects as a clearing of space to make room for the few images of real importance now coming into focus: palm trees in the window, square of sunlight on the floor, a boy who undoes the patterned cloth around his waist to

display his sudden sculpture to himself, prepuce stroked by shadows of fronds & by sugary fingers till his invisibility surges against the empty air.

chance is pregnant with all this, dancing slow & tropical against a backdrop of cardboard palms, surprisingly graceful, calling attention to the precarious heart jolting immediacy of objects & the rhythms which connect them

Tropicalism: in the Maravilla Restaurant on 85th Street a composer talks of a night in the Park, walking the dog with his beloved who is fourteen – of the lamplight in the Park, neon, azure, *encantada* – water from the fountain arching like wasted pearls – the child dancing for him, leaping to the spontaneous music under his breath: if this is no Rio, no Manila, still the future rushes toward the present – sun, water, flesh – compressing longitudes & latitudes like the clocks of chaos

the thinner the body the fatter the chance: a Persian poet, dieted to a hairsbreadth, slips though Fortune's lock like a burglar's skeleton.

3. To P. V.

The 8th A venue train makes the whole building shake as it goes under. No blame for you in these betrayals – yet in your innocence the sacrifice is made in your honor, in memory of your September flesh. The room is like a time capsule droning with electricity; the city, which is not dreamed, will stand for interplanetary void. It is for you, this solitaire which drains the room of color: outside your presence, the air is full of incubi & anesthetic puzzles; within sight of you they begin to fade, replaced by the gravity of desire; touching you, they are forgotten: a finer trick than any learned through prayer & fasting. A spy will come to your town to see if you shed any tears: the information would be precious, a sample of the liquid itself beyond price. Or perhaps kidnappers: a car pulls up beside you on your way home from school, you smile in recognition....

4. The Same Word Means Marriage and Funeral

Every night all night he stood up to his waist in the river reciting the Koran & weeping – till one morning he laughed instead & lobbed the book into he water, maybe skipping it like a stone, & drowned it – climbed out, shaved his beard, threw away his turban & dressed in scarlet, color of prostitutes and assassins – so they called him Lal Husayn – the color of Gabriel's wing. Meandering the streets of Lahore drunk on wine & hashish – as soon as he perfected his apostasy Madho came into his life, a little Brahmin he followed in

the lanes reciting his poems till the boy fell in love with him. The parents were shocked, but relieved at least that Lal Husayn made no attempt to convert the child from Hinduism to Islam; what would be the point of such a farce? Madho transmuted to a saddhu: thirteen or fourteen years old, his hair in disheveled locks twined with jasmine & roses, his bare breast rattling with magic medals & necklaces of seeds, a trident painted on his tea-colored forehead, his eyes bright with ganja, naked except for a crimson loincloth, his girl's legs smooth with oil, bells on his ankles: the source of Lal Husayn's unending intoxication, so much loftier than the Law, or even saltless metaphysics; impossible to express except with beggar's songs. Meditation on their grave: buried under one stone behind Shalimar Gardens, where the masterless dervishes & rogue qalandars of Lahore met to drink their bhang – in death become one person, Madho Lal Husayn, one saint, one poet. In your opinion did they kiss, did they hide behind scarlet bushes in the park & masturbate each other? “And what if they did?”, as one sufi said once to an accusing Doctor of the Faith. What would be the point of heresy, if he could not sodomize the child he loved?

5. House of the Witness

If you're looking for a town to hide out in, G....., imaginal site for a Moorish Orthodox Retreat: treelined streets of decaying victorian sea-side houses. Picture of the place, the Shahed Ashram: no sign on the lawn, just a square clapboard two-story building, peeling green paint with patches of salt-gray pine exposed, a sagging front porch, its roof held up by broken gingerbread; to one side, the lawn overgrown with sawgrass, snapdragons gone to seed, sunflowers, tangled brown vines; on the veranda several bicycles, a sagging couch, a porch swing. The screen opens on a shadowed hall, coolish & musty, with doors leading off it & a staircase at the end; the room on the left, the Reading Room: bookcases with sufi texts, science fiction novels & comic books, more comics littered on the worn persian carpet; in one corner a pin-ball machine (called “Arabian Nights”) – it lures the neighborhood children in, they lounge around in bathing suits helping themselves to free soda from the ice box. Hanging on the wall, a huge old tintype of a black man in a fez with a feather in it, the inscription reads Love Truth Peace Freedom & Justice; Every man must have his own vine & fig tree. One of the children offers to show you around: let's say twelve years old, long curly black hair tinged red as if with henna, brown eyes flecked with green, a July tan, thin gold chain round his neck, wearing a white teeshirt bearing the emblem of a red heart with two gold-glitter wings, crimson bathing trunks & high-laced black sneakers without socks. On the neckchain hang several old-fashioned keys; with one of them he opens the door of the parlor on the right of the hall, which is furnished sparsely with

caucasian rugs, turkoman gelims & saddlebags; in a corner, a sort of altar with framed lithographs of tantrik deities & gypsy saints – the boy does not offer to identify them – & incense & candles guttering before a 19th century French bronze, about two feet high, showing Cupid as a naked prepubescent bending his bow. The kitchen: gloomy, appliances vintage 1955, dishes unwashed, half-eaten chocolate cake & milk glasses on the counter; the guide, who says his name is Nathaniel, offers you lemonade & watches you gravely while you drink it; you notice what look like several ounces of marijuana in a half-closed drawer of the kitchen table. I came to see the people who run the Ashram, you say, & he answers, They'll be back soon. The stairs at the end of the hall creak. On the walls of the stairwell: a reproduction of Odilon Redon's egyptian god of silence, all brown & green, two fingers to his lips, a print of Chinnamasta, the goddess who spurts blood into the mouths of her worshipers & dances on a copulating couple; an 18th century etching of the Procession of Bacchus & Silenus; a portrait of Alice Liddell; and so on. Upstairs, a bathroom with victorian porcelain toilet and tub, messy, smelling of coal-tar soap, a view of the garden, & a pair of boy's jeans on the floor next to a pair of roller skates. Then, this is the master bedroom, says Nathaniel: hung with embroideries & carpeted with bukkharas, containing a small writing desk with a vase of faded roses, an armchair upholstered with worn red velvet, an unmade double brass bed, a bedside table littered with detective novels, more comic books, a silver pipe & box of turkish cigarettes, an ashtray, china cups... on the wall, a gilt frame holding a snapshot of the bronze Cupid. Nathaniel jumps on the bed & climbs into a precarious balanced position straddling the brass end-rail. This is where he sleeps, the boy says, & laughs suddenly. The best way to approach the Ashram is by water, he goes on. Did you come by water? I came over on the ferry, you say. Outside the window, the mid-summer afternoon is fading; beyond the skin-pink flowers of a mimosa tree you can still make out the old wharf & the estuary at the end of the dead-end street, beyond the fish-processing plant (1923); and beyond that, the moon rising yellowish-red & precisely rounded over the flat landscape. Good, says Nathaniel.

6. Not Only is the Alchemist Anonymous, So Also is the Stone.

– *Spagyria Puerorum* by Hakim Bey (Leiden, 1883)

The child who is most completely in his flesh, the seam so tight between numen & sinew that light radiates from beneath the skin, who is most precisely of this beach, this instant, whose hairless armpits smell suddenly sweet as a faun's immature rut – that child revalidates the supernatural. But how could I

disguise him, how could I claim that one times one is one, & then offer him up as some courtly abstraction? True idol worship includes the mucous membranes, blood, saliva, piss – or it cannot be worth the price of renouncing all faith, the gibbet in Baghdad. There exists a point on this island where the void, the angel & the realm of matter coincide – and if I do not give out the address, so that anyone who wished could visit such a metaphysical scandal, it is not from the lack of pride a worshiper should possess, but from the cunning he must also use, the craft of slipping through keyholes like smoke. Even angels sleep, & beneath the sheets, with the ocean sounding nearby, with curtains open to nothing but meteor showers, one might caress the sleeping child to a summery stiffness, “till the morning bells of the Christians”. This rite I reserve for myself, or rather its promise; & even if I never see him again, I would not tell his name & town to anyone else, lest they succeed where I failed.

7. Night Letter Tease

Does the night of July 31st have any shame? Somewhere in it the person whose name I will not mention is sleeping on a bunk bed in a summer camp, & the night by definition conceals our simultaneity. By occult telegram I ask not Will you undress for me? – since the world itself is continually created through your nakedness – but rather Will I undress for you, accepting myself as a mode of that borderless harmonia. Rhetoric! Rhetoric! There is no question at all, no prudery – nor have I cooked you up to answer some pseudo-Petrarchan grilling. Even shame can act a fortune role in our special game: imagine your tantrik blush, in the distant shadow of the confessional, when you show me whether you are cut or un-cut: such modesty is made only that it might be raped – just as the purpose of this night is not to conceal – like some mullah beneath his black robe – but rather to reveal what day hides by its very brightness – this golden chord which stretches from my wake to your dream – “so be sure to leave your door unlocked”. Shame breeds amnesia, like a horse that is too much tamed, & must be broken back to wildness. The museum of Emblems we serve will instruct us: they are always naked – and frequently uncircumsized; they may wear clothes, even of nocturnal embroidery – but they are still undressed. I’ll light the lamp, then, & spy on your sleeping – for if the night stands between us, it does so not to enforce a Law but to tease us the more; “the sash that binds the waist of the Christian child” might now take the form of the drawstring of your pajamas or the elastic of your drawers, & a hand might slip past as if solving a riddle by the glare of prophetic rockets – your own hand, tomorrow morning, finding yourself hard with piss – or my hand, how in your dream, peeling back your foreskin (forcing the petals of an unopened rosebud) – the esoteric hand,

mano nero, color of your pupils, color of my midnight window; and as for tomorrow, let it put on red, like an altar boy; then let it strip, as if for a soaping bath; & let the shower of gnosis rain on its divested thighs & groin.

8. Charlatan's Idyll

arcadian. Green white blue

clear pond fed by small waterfall – biologically secluded – jasper emerald jade held suspended in the day's solution – water, sun, flesh

libations, invocations, smoke, wine, butter. A raven sings in the charlatan's ear. Pine needles burning invisibly in direct sun. summer camp for the children of neo-pagans

pagan revival, maybe good on the West Coast – regain contact with classical gods & goddesses through neo-vedanine meditation – quaint services in victorian house, white robes, nudity on palm-lined beaches – the best religious scams are the ones you believe in – boys grow long blond hair in hyacinthine ringlets, wear white tunics & high-laced sandals

remote, back up in the hills, the camp looks like a run-down motel, tiny pre-fab log cabins, ground littered with cones & needles, the aryan-blue sky

the blue-gray dwarf woman with necklace of skulls, the cremation ground, the ash-smeared lord of hemp, the arrogant boy on panther, the fat man with an erection, the wall-eyed goats, cocks sprouting like mushrooms from the shrouded forest

rituals that are dreamed, that cause burning erotic pain when imagined

they put on dreams like costumes & the ribbons & rags seem like meat sliced from the air, molecule-thin capes of opal fungus, the wettest & most delicious of membranes

the dream takes in the whole camp – certain objects, flowers, childrens' skin glow as if immortal – the air smells of bhang, indian-grass, pond weed, woodsmoke, semen & honey

their games, their movements in transparent water mark out the borders of the temple, the gestures of rite, always shifting, dragonflies, fireflies, the chaotic

dirty cult of naked children, pure acadian caresses, panpipes, masturbating in the sleeping bag, pissing by moonlight

fauns with pointed ears & yellow eyes. Watching owls by galactic light. Passing a bottle & a pipe back & forth on the porch. The pickup truck returns from the village with supplies, its headlights shine on the pond like temporary moons. Dark & silent; the crickets & frogs start up again. Boys with luminous skin gasp & spend their fragrance on rough plank floors. Lanterns turned down to pricks of clandestine blue

with the children asleep & the stars more foolish overhead, a patterned emblem is complete & burns a cool brand on the charlatan's milky forehead, buzzing with satchitananda. Still painfully erect Silenus grasps the pretty foot of a sleeping faun & splays the soft toes against his slippery yard

dawn mist over the pond like a slow heart not yet bursting with blue light, hugging to itself the conspiracy, the scandal, the sapphire of day's foetus, its all-seeing azure-veined eyes, in no hurry to be born, its eyes never close, it breathes like sweet water

9. Anniversary Poem for the Festival Of the Great Resurrection Of Hassan the Second *

A hieratic raven in a black top hat
forbidding melancholia steals the scene
dances in & closes down
the sideshows of the split back brain
with routines almost mystically banal
(soundtrack: Saturday afternoon matinee
children screaming with laughter
like gods of chaos at X-rated koans).
Tappity-tap, Raven himself
always prances his melisma to a
cantus firmus of intergalactic void:
there is no inflexible authority
in the way a set of leaves jigs
with its unseen partner the western wind.
One of Raven's avatars is an Indio boy
with lank black hair & eyes that stole the moon
& bluejeans worn out at the knees
a compulsive masturbator & thief
who wins all the prizes in the junior division
for dancing at inter-tribal jamborees.
In other dreams he appears as a giant salmon. Wherever you are it
solicits you
& offers itself up for sacrifice
planked and broiled – and afterwards
all the elders vanish like cat's cradles
slipped off the fin feather fingers
of the fancy dancer thirteen summers old –
& the soul, like water, effortlessly agrees.

*Grand Master of the Assassins, “Old Man of the Mountain” of Alamut.
Abolished the religious law on August 8, 1164.

10. Chinese Hotel a Text for Music

1. Chinese Hotel

Money can buy you love – don't ask how, it works, just pay – waiting alone in the hotel room for him to return – tropical rot and Taoist incense, soap, Mme de Rochas perfume – watching the lizards hunting under the neon – outside the window a painted flat: palm trees, illusions of order, the moon, cupped genitalia of the sea. In the long hallway centered under a black ceiling fan that hardly stirs the shadows the proprietor nods half-melted into the colonial furniture, his yellow moth skin slightly luminous, Peking Opera on the radio. Sailing away like a gangster, masturbating through black silk trousers, the hotel half-stiff & damp with absence.

2. Cross Dress Shaman

On the wild rides at the amusement park he squeals like a little girl – powdery queens call out from the gambling booths – fourteen years old, Malay skin, Chinese eyes, Spanish hair – when he was twelve his stepfather beat him & threw him out for being like a girl – back in jungle times the heretic Sultans would have had him dress in the costume of a woman dancer – sky is masculine, earth feminine, between them mediates the cross dress shaman, the androgyne child with eyes of ganja & black perfume – I ride with his sweating trance – he combs his hair with scent & drops fall on my skin, burning cool as drops of mercury burn hot.

3. Assassinism

Anything may be used to build this garden – Chinese hotel room with its aquarium light – before they entered they drank wine drugged with hashish – bamboo screens, old rattan chairs, green shutters – dancing in front of the mirror dressed only in white briefs – he shotguns the smoke directly into my mouth – longing evokes the witness, the saki, the naked catamite who provokes the absolute – who clothes the pattern of desire with arabesques of distillation & pours the pleasures of unveiling from the glass of his nakedness & his whispered orders. On the esplanade beneath the palms he sits on the grass & falls into a trance, evading definition, he doesn't know where his soul has gone.

4. Boy Whore

We're off the map, the city's on the edge of danger, borders of chaos – armed guards in front of every shop, fragmentation grenades thrown into nightclubs – the room darkens with his scents, pomades & lotions, the moon comes up over the palm trees like pens flowering with greensperm calligraphy, lit by the phosphorous of a half erection – a boy's name tattooed with flowers beneath his hip – like gorging on mango or trying to swallow a snake, its loose hood of flesh, the satin-snout glittering with spit – he masturbates while I suck his ballsac – flavor of the semen, a few liminal drops, syrup of crushed fireflies on his fingers & stomach – afterwards he's overcome by dizziness in the toilet, I hold him up one hand over his heart the other his stiff cock while he pisses – he tastes himself when he kisses me.

5. Sleepless Night

On the white sheets he sleeps brown with skin ointment softening the light, on the other bed I watch till dawn, the subtlest form of domination – between the beds in the middle of the air hangs suspended a rose – incubus with a pen, stretched out to the molecules by smoke, I monitor his dreams by his hardening & softening – but with no need to dream all need for sleep vanishes. Night bricks up the hotel like a forty day retreat – the skull empty, permeated by night light, the glowworm in the spine, scraped red by drugs & lack of sleep – the fan whirrs, shrouding each hour in a tent of weeping air, soft corals beneath the corners of the room, fresh amber stains the wallpaper, hermaphrodite secretions, tendrils of smoke like algae – he turns in his sleep, his genitals like marzipan, his face childish, expressionless, expensive.