

I instantly visualize the John Huston character in Chinatown.

"Do you live in P.A.?" I ask.

Accelerated laughter and dramatic head tossing.

As we are walking from the plane to the terminal, she presses a piece of folded paper into my hand and walks ahead of me.

She walks up to a tall, impressive looking guy with a beard who is no older than she or I and puts her arms around him. Looking at me, he kisses the top of her head, takes her travel bag and escorts her from the terminal.

I unfold the paper she has given me.

Written in large graceful script, is what appears to be a local phone number. Except that there are 8 digits. Beneath the number she has written, "Don't be afraid." And a little Happy Face.

ON HERITAGE AND HERESY

i recently submitted some of my writing to
a professional poet/publisher
he returned it with a letter telling me
the verse exhibited a "delightful imagination"
but the prose was "too concerned with self"

I stayed up all night drinking
and as the sun rose from behind the mountains
I hauled out the typewriter
and tapped out a response to this professional

it was a rather nasty and defensive piece and
after i read it a few times
i discarded it and
wrote another
less angry
more patronizing in tone
i went to bed in the sunlight

when i awoke some hours later
i read what i had written to the pro
it was still too defensive
not really what i wanted to say
so i pitched it
and wrote a third reply

i thanked him for reading my work
and told him i was sorry he didn't "get it"
i disputed some of what he had said
about "tradition" and "heritage"
(didn't tradition begin somewhere?)
and the place of "self" in my work

but i was still on the defensive
so the third attempt went in the shit can
with the rest

i still don't know quite what i want to say
to the professional poet
so i am writing this now
hoping something will emerge
that's how i write

but i guess i don't really have much to say
to this guy
that wasn't in the writing i sent him
except maybe
"delightful" has nothing to do with it
"self" quite a bit to do with it
and running your own press
everything to do with it

PROBABLY THE BEST FRIEND I EVER HAD

the trusty little cat
swipes at you
with a fish
in his mouth
he knows you're
routine
a master
in name only

he likes to eat
almost as much
as you do
that's why
you think
he loves you

— Scott Schafer

Port Angeles WA/ Portland OR