

Clearing the Life/Rene J. Navarro

December 3, 1993, 5 am:  
at the end  
of the year  
I try to get  
my bedroom  
in order. With each  
day, it seems to get  
smaller. It's too  
crowded now, there  
is too little space  
to move, I have  
to tiptoe around  
odds  
and ends stacked  
randomly everywhere. I am  
clearing  
junk mail, scraps,  
old newspaper  
clippings, notes and  
reminders posted  
on a styrofoam board. On my desk  
are all  
sorts of things: along  
with my dragon chop from  
Sichuan,  
a Glue Stic,  
slide viewer, cups, pens  
that have dried,  
vitamins I don't  
even take.  
What is  
junk, what is not?  
Why do we keep some  
things at all?

I've been looking  
at each item piled  
inside boxes and stuff  
comes out  
and feels  
heavy  
on my back as I  
swim through  
the day. Here are notes

from a previous  
life. There is  
a journal  
from 1970 with  
aphorisms,  
quotes from books  
I read, thoughts  
on exile and my first  
autumn in the US.  
I know I don't need  
them, but I couldn't  
let them go  
like the first  
draft  
of letters  
on my computer.

I can't  
even remember why  
they are here  
buried under  
other things in no  
particular  
sequence, each  
like a claim  
on my time.  
I hold  
this rock with veins  
of crystal  
and I can't remember when  
I picked it up from  
what beach: it must  
have been beautiful  
on the surf shiny and wet;  
now, it feels  
warm in my hands  
but yields  
no more memories than  
much of what gathers  
dust on the  
windowsill. I know  
as I get older  
I need these things even  
less. Many that I enjoyed  
before

are now dead  
weights. These things  
have piled  
up in baskets  
and drawers  
and chairs  
like the petty  
worries  
that distracted me  
as I walked  
in the meadow  
for fresh air.

How much  
do I really need  
to bring with me when  
my lease is up  
and I move away  
from here?

I wonder what  
Sakyamuni Buddha  
thinks  
from his perch  
atop my corner  
bureau where  
he quietly observes  
my comings and goings  
in this piece  
of crowded  
earth.

Quite  
a few of these  
have given me  
pleasure, times  
when I seemed  
to descend  
through  
the dark and  
found a  
place to rest instead. A few  
tell  
of times  
with friends who made

the journey easier, some  
are maps of places  
I have been to and  
places I like to be. But  
what do I keep a map  
of Paris for  
or Brooklyn,  
places  
I may not see  
again. Some  
of these things  
I will give  
away to people  
who I hope will  
embrace them as  
I have like  
Ursa Major and Ursa Minor,  
teddy bears above  
my bed. Many  
of them

I will have to throw  
away: rough  
copies of  
printouts,  
those old Times  
on the rack...

Make space  
for my life.

12/7/93, Weston, MA, 4:45 AM

## DRAGON (Winter 1994)

Snow is falling in transparent  
sheets across the garden  
of lilacs into the woods  
beyond. The dragon is out  
there, his tail whipping  
the wind in gusts  
along the rhododendron path.  
He has been out since  
dawn, tasting the melting  
snow on his tongue. He hears  
the elegant explosion  
of a flake vaporising  
in an instant: it recalls  
other quiet  
revelations  
of the quotidian.

### Flute

music rising with the mist above  
the darkening canopy  
of trees in a deep  
valley somewhere in  
the Catskills where Rip  
Van Winkle slept  
for maybe 20 years.

### The morning

sun in haze as the rays hit the air  
descending on Chengdu from the foothills  
of the Himalayas.

### The taste of cold

ripe cherimoya: sweet,  
sour, bitter  
at once, flavors  
of a childhood  
in a tropical  
town north  
of Manila.

The moaning  
echoes of a frozen Waban  
Lake as ice pushed  
against ice.

All of his lifetimes  
he has heard  
this earthsong as  
white cranes take him  
to the farthest  
star, his senses  
waking him  
to God's presence  
on earth.

by Rene J. Navarro 1/11/94

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