

## LETTER TO THE WORLD 3: BLOAT &amp; FLOAT by Mark Sargent

Contributed by Mark Sargent

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What if you didn't understand anything you said? Okay, plenty of these folks wandering around already, either god-drunk or scrambled and fried. All of the above? What I mean is, you've got the same consciousness, thoughts, emotions, but when you open your mouth what comes out is utterly incomprehensible. And I don't mean some Papua New Guinea sub-tribal tongue or Basque backwards, but more akin to the lingo of another planet, maybe an entirely different set of phonics, but anyway, completely beyond understanding. You just wake up one morning and this is the case. Same fucking world and everyone around you is also rocking this impenetrable noise, only they can dig it. But not you, although you seem to be functioning. Maybe I'm just describing a type of schizophrenia? Oliver Sacks probably has too many of these patients all jabbering at each other, debating current events, sorting out the world, hell, the universe. But take another example, Angela Merkel, for instance. We understand what she's saying, the implications of it and why, but she acts like she doesn't. Or rather, she seems convinced that we can't penetrate below the bullshit level, can't see that she's a shill for financial interests that do not take ours into consideration. She has a lot of company in this affliction, most anyone standing before a microphone and a video camera has contracted this condition. When confronted by a sudden advantage by your opponent you may declare without previous mention that this and this and these are lasers, thereby reordering the balance of power. This is known as the laser alternative and may be employed at any moment in the action. This brings up an endgame tactic that is often banned, but is still encountered. Known either as the laser saturation or the infinitude resolution, it occurs when one player proposes overwhelming force, as in, all the hairs on this bear are lasers. But then it is over and must begin again. The game is in the questions, balls in the air, the power of curiosity. Answers, the insistence upon, truncate possibility. "Such a superiority of firepower discourages intelligent strategy; to think strategically one has to be able to imagine oneself in one's opponent's place, and an habitual sense of superiority precludes this." John Berger on the IDF in Palestine I was driving Sparti today when I recognized a guy on a tractor. Twenty-two years ago we were new in the village, the bohemians in the concrete hut, when a bolt of pain tore the village apart. His brother's motor bike lights weren't working so he drove into town at night behind his brother in the family truck, lighting the way with the headlights. Typically, his brother decided to speed ahead in the darkness. Round a corner he ran into a car, was hurled to the street and his brother, speeding around the corner to catch up, ran over him. You could hear his mother keening everyday and everyday she threw herself on his grave and cursed the fates for taking him. She went from a fit woman in her forties to a ravaged crone of misery within weeks. And the brother, the man on the tractor, he sank into a profound silence, the long distance stare that can't see far enough. A farmer in his forties now, maybe kids, I forget, it was a long time ago. I wanted to shout out a question, solicit his take on the oligarchy that is the European Union, but the roar of the tractor was greater. "Everybody says I'm talking out of my head, But nobody bad mouths the man with the bread." I have few arguments with Dave Van Ronk, but I believe that line above is utter codswallop, as my father-in-law used to say. Nearly everyone bad mouths the man with the bread, that goes with the territory. You got the scratch, you get the diss. It wasn't so long ago that many commentators, critics, theorists and the like, felt that capitalism, the market system, and democracy, were essential to each other, mutually supportive, one necessarily led to the other. Who talks that shit anymore? Okay, probably plenty of morons, but who is listening? It's not the crap they're talking that needs attention, but their motivations for pitching this shit. Early evening, the bay of Kamares below, Mavrovouni beyond, the Parnona mountain range in the crepuscular distance, blues, dusky lavender. Cows are lowing on a nearby hill beneath a two-days-shy-of-full moon. Jim is telling us about burying the dead, and digging them up again. Green burial, it's all the rage in Wales. Keep the dead near at hand, plant grandpa in the garden. From the kitchen Penny says, "There's no water." The phone rings. Jim picks up. It's Amos saying, "Bobbie's here. We need the boat for a burial at sea." "What?" "Yeah, we're going to give the dog a sea burial." "Why don't you just bury it? Dig a hole and bung him in." "No, no, she wants it at sea." "Well, I've got the oars for the boat and I'll give ya hand, but think about digging a hole. It's gonna be dark soon, man." He hangs up and we trudge up the hill to the cistern, clamber up the piece of shit ladder, haul up the pump and give it a look. Penny calls from the house, "It's Amos on the line." "Tell him to bury Bobbie and call us back!" We fiddle with the pump and it hums back to life. Back at the house Jim says, "Ya know, I think Bobbie's a Dutch lesbian." "She's not the dog?" "She's alive?" "I met her once at the music workshop. Sings. Short spiky hair. Pretty good looking too. She must be the dog's owner." "That's Bobbie." "Dog's body?" "Who's the dog?" "Amos didn't tell me that." The phone rings. "Tell him to dig a hole." "And throw Bobbie in it." Jim comes back. "Looks like it's all hands on deck." "At least there's lots of moonlight." "How are they going to sink this beast? It's going bloat and float." "I don't know. He's talking about tying rocks to it." "Tying rocks to it? How is that going to work?" "I told him to build a box." "He's not going to do that." "Doesn't sound like it. Let's go get the oars and oar locks." "And have a beer." "Yeah, that too." It's dark when Amos drives up. He's wearing a sheepish what can you do? look. We give him grief. He uses a lot of line and knots to lash the oars to the roof and down the hill to the beach we go, ready to send a canine comrade to a watery grave. We'll be working by moonlight. Bobbie's there and a dog still on his feet, Alfred, or, I'm making that up, I didn't catch the name. Bobbie, tall, thin, blonde, glasses. The song says, moonlight becomes you. I think that's true of most everyone. And, wrapped in a blanket with his head sticking out, the recently deceased, Pavlov. We get the short version of his history. A true blue soul companion of the highest order Pavlov was. A prince of dogs, the equivalent of Argos on his hill of dung. Except Pavlov was put down earlier in the day. Borne on clouds of mercy, it was the big sleep for Mister P. We turn over the boat and push it down to the water all the while discussing how to sink the beast. Bags and sacks that we don't have are suggested. We're crouched around the corpse and Bobbie's talking about tying rocks to the dog. Huh? I ask, "You have some experience in this?" She replies, "Only with humans." Aha, touch. Any floaters? We

settle on a plastic orange crate, place several very heavy stones in it and then lash Pavlov, still in his blanket, head sticking out like a dog out a car window, on top of the crate. All the while Ms B is cooing to the Pav. We hoist it into the bow of the boat. Heavy, it'll sink like a muthafucka. I sit astern, Jim mans the oars. In the bow Amos keeps the crate from sliding and Bobbie reads him his last rights, along with a song. The retired terrorist strokes us out into the thick lunar waters. The moon is huge, a rippled mirror shakes across the sea. This is the Mani peninsula, home to blood feuds and honor killings. Others perhaps have been sunk in this bay, throats cut, heads stove in. From the beach a narrow valley runs south toward the mountains. At the end, painted by the moon, a castle on a hilltop glows where but two years ago a mutual friend, a Mani man, finished himself with a big bang. An internal feud, an honor killing. If there are ghosts in the world then surely this is a place they linger. Bobbie asks, "Why are you the one rowing?" "Because Israelis can't and Americans won't, so it's up to the Irishman." "What about Dutch women?" Jim grunts. But where to drop the bugger? Far out is best, of course, but what about the fishermen and their nets? We can see the lights of two small boats further out. They don't want to be hauling up ole Pavlov. We're being respectfully solemn. Jim's facing me trying not to laugh. Amos says over near these rocks it's deep but they don't fish there. I argue that if it's deep then the fishermen probably do drop nets there and then stop myself and swiftly agree. We could be out here all night. We drift into the selected area. B murmurs to Pavlov, Jim lays down the oars. Amos surreptitiously checks the depth with an oar, relieved to find that it's deeper than that. Jim grabs the crate; Bobbie urges slow and easy and gets Amos to take the other end to ensure a graceful sendoff. They stagger, it's heavy, and drop him in. Gulp, he's gone. We all stare after, hoping he stays down. I break out a couple of cans of beer and we toast Pavlov's departed spirit. Libations are poured into the sea. It's a beautiful balmy evening, the most delicate of waves whisper up the beach, we drift with Bobbie's loss. There's only one story for the situation, so I tell it. "A young monk goes to the great Chinese Zen Buddhist master Joshu and in all seriousness asks, 'Does a dog have Buddha nature?' I roar out a mmmmmmmmmuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuhh! And Joshu said, mmmmmmmmmmmuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuhhhh! Meaning, no thing. mmmmmmmmmuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuhhhh!" The world is an interdependent Whole and each separate one of us is that Whole. Once you begin to think 'has' or 'has not' you are as good as dead. The night swallows Joshu whole, the moon moves a tick across the sky. I grab the oars and begin to row. Jim nudges up and goes over the rail. We talk and bask in the rare privilege of being here. 5 June 2012 The Mani