

ON DIVESTING

“ . . . a granulation in the fabric of reality. . . ”

There are many instances where fabric, is seen not only as cloth, but as the fabric of being itself . . . we have, for example, Joseph's Many Coloured Robe; in Gnostic mysticism, the body as a garment that is cast aside in death; in Mesopotamian Mythology, Ishtar removes her garments and jewels as she descends to the Underworld, and then of course, the finest symbolic form of fabric - the veil. Veiling and Unveiling, re-veiling . . . and so on . . .

The *material* [note italics] in the sense that a woman may buy some material for a new dress. Then, we also call *material* by another name: *fabric*. But fabric has other associations, e.g. pre-fabricated. Or we might say, 'he fabricated the evidence'.

Fabric: noun. **1-** material produced by weaving or knitting textile fibres; cloth. **2** a structure or framework, especially the walls, floor, and roof of a building. - the essential structure of something abstract: the fabric of society. ORIGIN: C15 (originally denoting a building or machine, i.e. 'something made'): from French *fabrique*, from Latin *fabrica* 'something skilfully produced'.

DIVESTING, is a wonderful word, because it means - in essence, to remove the clothes, related to the Italian/Latin I suppose, *vestire* - vestments, clothes, hence trans-*vestite*. To *divest*, to strip off the outer garments, to abandon, rid oneself of something &c. In the symbolic sense, I feel it is rather like a ship going into dry dock for a barnacle scrape. The encrustation's are, or have to be removed, stripped away. To continue: this act in itself is of the nature of cleansing, a purification, a removal of unwanted dross, or dishonest outer layers, in order to let the Truth, the naked body - crude and nude, shine through.

Thus, I think we have to, if we wish to grow - divest ourselves when and where necessary. That is if we are even conscious of the need to divest in the first place. Most of humanity is hidden between so many layers of egocentric barnacle encrustation - that little of the Inner Light is to be seen.

On a personal level, my acts of divestation, are concerned with assumptions about myself, or what I deem to be myself, and assumptions that I have about the Outer World in general, and certain people in particular, and then beyond that, of the basic patterns of social behavior that we accept as real, but which, are in severe need of the dry dock treatment.

Then, naturally, the scrapping off of the layers and layers of barnacles leaves very raw and bleeding flesh, exposed to the gaze of all and sundry. A state of vulnerability that we all want to avoid at all cost.

This act is also like a ritual unveiling. It needs a secure space, an embryonic matrix into which the shorn off flakes of skin can be cast, as if into a collective healing cauldron. Such spaces, of course, in the 'Me First' Age - do not exist, and certainly cannot be created in front of the television sets where we spend most of our social interactions. And for reasons of health and sanity, I have had to divest myself from smoke-filled Bars and other social spaces, with their lethal ultra-violet lights, noise hazards and doped and drunken hordes. These vortices of mass social addiction are difficult spaces, fraught with the dangers of regression, for any individual divesting themselves from addiction.

The same applies to social gatherings in domestic spaces - where the other five guests are chain-smoking through the evening. One returns home, to days of secondary air poisoning. One has to divest themselves of those occasions as well.

Then, without a car, in a civil or uncivil society where in Cape Town, public transport does not exist after 9 p.m. in the evening, and in any event, it is not safe to wander abroad after dark, means that one has to divest oneself of any legitimate nocturnal pleasures, such as theatre, dance, the cinema - unless invited to do so by friends. This never happens in Cape Town - so I attend the matinees, alone - and also because it is cheaper during the day.

So mainly, I have to divest other people from this idea that they all have, that Samten has a busy social whirl. Exactly the opposite, I live in a solitude that I enjoy, as they say: "Disgust with the World is the Legs of Meditation." Except I rarely meditate, but prefer, instead to dissolve my "self" in my arcane laboratory of symbols - and work, work, work, until I collapse and fall asleep.

I have reached a point when I make no promises, take no appointments for anything beyond the immediate necessities. I have started destroying some paintings and documents I think have no value and can bring no benefit to sentient beings. I have also parted with all my books, except three, which I keep as close friends. This is my divesting.

I have also divested myself of most of my so-called friends, or they have divested themselves of me - also for reasons that are obviously outside my control, e.g. they are in a state of poverty, they are on medication (many varieties) they are having mid-life crisis, and also, they have become successful, and as Robert Bly says, have pulled the ladder up.

None of the above fits the vision I had of collective Working together on Projects for the Benefit of All That Lives, so I have had to divest myself of that one as well. Without selling out to "Me First"ism - but returning instead, to the Old Buddhist preoccupation of No-Me-ism. I do not wish to be part of the Food Chain. I have no strategies to suck arse to have my paintings exhibited or my writings published - and besides, South African Culture is very based on a historicity, endless European Film Companies doing mileage on District Six refugees - or ex-political prisoners, or exiles, with Struggle Credentials, or Nadine Gordimers, or Athol Fugards, or Dollar Brands, or Hugh Masekela, and all the other cultural industries that breakfast at the Hyatt International Hotel, and then the Sell, Sell, Selling of South Africa to the Tourist Hordes!

Any hope that a Samten, or the vision that I stand for can find the smallest space in this self-congratulating Food Chain and cacophony of snapping ladders, as the successful close the doors on their friends below - is something that I have long divested myself of.

And this is not to say, that I in any way subscribe to a state of hopelessness. I am always, deeply grateful and profoundly overjoyed at the richness and wonder of what has happened in my life, the friends and special human beings it has been a great honour to share time and space with. The Few, instead of The Many. This is a sort of micro- versus the macro approach. Joy in the little. Like the tiny white feather versus the black block of bad karma on the Scales in the Judgment Scene of the Egyptian Book of the Dead.

The small things matter, the small things are closer to God, as James Hillman and Schumacher have informed us, than the titanic propensities of fame and fortune.

I have always, she said, always, rather wanted to be a nail than a hammer!



I have recently started to realize, after approaching the seventh decade of my life that to date, I have been weighed down by great deceptions and a rank and fulsome stupidity. I have had to divest myself of these deceptions.

For example, I have taken it for granted, that the reason we have some bond of affection, friendship, acquaintanceship, or commonality, is that we are here to help each other in the Work of Living our lives. The one motto that has always flown above my work has manifested in two forms, one so-called Eastern, the other Western. The Western version says:

"Contribute Thy Utmost to Universal Welfare."

The Buddhist version is imbedded in the Buddhist Refuge where it says:

"May I gain Enlightenment for the Sake of All That Lives."

Not for me. For ALL THAT LIVES. For UNIVERSAL WELFARE.

Now only the most unconscious of entities, [and that includes the great mass of humanity at present suffering under the delusion of the Self] -

Yes, as we say, I can wipe your bum. But I cannot shit or piss for you. I cannot cry for you, and I cannot die for you. My water, my tears, my come and my blood, and my death are my own affair. But together we stimulate these flows of liquid - and lacerate the dry surfaces of the mundane.

There will be no end to crime or violence in society until we realize that a society based on GREED AND SELFISHNESS is a society that has ceased to exist as a civilization but begins to move into the Dog Eats Dog apocalyptic scenario so beloved of Hollywood, *Judge Dread*, *Bladerunner*, *Robocop* and its various spin-offs, *Terminator*, *Highlander*, *Escape from New York* and so on. One would have to do a deep analysis of the embedded cynicism and nihilism in these productions - and why they should be industrially packaged and exported in such global quantities. And wherever these industrial products have been distributed, social violence and imbalances have grown in exact proportion. The paid apologists of the media, who say there is no correlation between media violence and real violence, are the same salesmen who have marketed a deadly addictive substance such as nicotine to a mass market, in the disguise of fun and sophistication. The Peter Stuyvesant advertisements, which are built into *Ster Kinector* - are dreaded in glamour. They are shown, even during films marketed for children. And not a word of criticism.

In fact the silence is deafening.

The glorification of violence, and mass addiction. The Gun Lobby. The Military Industrial Complex. The Patriarchal Testosterone Power Base.

Also, recently, as part of the Great War of the Polarities, I have been thinking of divesting myself totally from the Urban environment. In fact there is very little to keep me attached to the city. If I was offered, by some miracle, the possibility of retreating to a Rural setting, I would be tempted. But, with Computer and Internet facilities of course.

The Disgusting Legs, again. Or, a Monastic setting - created by intelligent and delicate people. A waste Ground for senile visionaries, a dump for old age altruists... some of them turned out to be real shits, hollow vessels, empty carnal people who are only interested in tramping on other human beings to rise a centimeter or two above the rabble of their peers.

I was, and still are shocked.

Let Sleeping Dogs Lie.

The Crisis of Knowledge and Ignorance.

As part of the Divesting series.

I have to admit that I am a closet evangelist.

Etymological roots of Evangelicalism...

Everyone is fodder for conversion...

Cast the Net...

“Nevertheless, if a person is skilled enough - not necessarily intelligent -but skilled enough and patient enough to sift through his rubbish and study it thoroughly, then he will be able to use it. So, coming back to the subject of concepts, which is a very important example, the idea behind this is to develop a positive outlook and to recognise your great wealth. And having recognised one's concepts and ideas, one must also, in a sense, cultivate them. One has a tendency to try and abandon them or throw them away. But one should cultivate them, not in the sense of reading more books and having more discussions and philosophical disputes - that would be the other way, the way of the friend who ran the businesses - but simply, since you already have enough wealth, just go through it. Just as a person who wants to buy something has to first check through and see how much money he has. Or else it is like going back to your old diaries and studying them, and seeing your different stages of development; or going up to the attic and opening up all the old boxes to find the old dolls and toys that were given to you when you were three years old, and looking at them and examining them together with their associations. In this way you gain a complete understanding of what you are, - and that is more important than continuously creating.”

Trungpa Rinpoche, *Meditation in Action*, pp.25 -26
