

OCEANIC DIALOGUES

"The sea accepts no bad art."

Verses from the Voyage of the RV Heraclitus

Bali to Palawan, January 2000 - February 2001

Michel Lippitsch

Expedition Leader and, at times, Captain

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First edition.

A NOTE ON THESE POEMS

These poems were not written as poems. They surfaced inside the working ship's log of the RV *Heraclitus*, an eighty-five-foot, three-masted junk in ferrocement — launched from Oakland, California, in 1975 by volunteers of the Institute of Ecotechnics, working eighteen-hour days for eight months to get her into the water. Over the following decades she sailed more than 270,000 nautical miles across every ocean but the Arctic, worked two years up the Amazon, carried researchers into the Antarctic, and, through the coral she collected along the Yucatan coast, helped seed the reef eventually built inside Biosphere 2, the sealed ecological experiment many of her own builders went on to create.

It was in service of that same coral reef work, chartered by the Planetary Coral Reef Foundation, that these poems were written — in the middle of navigation notes, dive reports, and the ordinary business of running a research vessel through the Coral Triangle. Between January 2000 and February 2001, on a voyage documented at length in the author's companion volume, *Expeditions Inner and Outer*, the prose would occasionally give way, mid-entry, to something else — lines that broke differently, that reached for rhythm instead of record.

This is a collection of those moments: thirty-four poems, gathered from six stops along the voyage, presented here largely as they were first set down. They were not composed for a reader. They are offered now for the same reason the journal itself was: because the record, once made, seemed worth keeping.

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OCEANIC DIALOGUES

Bali to Manus

January - February 2000

The Dream of Sea People

*The dream of sea people,
Living with the elements,
Caress of the wind,
And all sails up,
Singing the song of the rigging.
The smell of fresh bread in the oven,
And Orion high in the sky,
Telling us where we are.*

Nature's Way to Teach

*Nature's way to teach,
Observations of the patterns,
Strategy to program the visions,
Tuning to the beat of the earth,
Fine energy and vibration grid,
Creating moods and secret rituals,
On old tested ground,
On old tested methods,
Create the new mythologies,
Carrying out the evolutionary game,
The play of gods and deities,
The miracle of life.*

The Expedition

*Witness in a whirlpool of change, searching for
the vanishing sea cultures, and the creation of a
sea people's dream.*

*Create the dance that will follow the beat of the
oceans.*

Recondition,

Restructure the path,

Abandon to the elements,

Become the wind,

The warmth of the sun,

The clouds, the scent of freedom,

Become the plants,

Become the snake,

Become the shark,

Become the dolphin,

And finally,

Learn to be human.

The Birth of a New Man

*From the foam of the sea,
Rose a child from our dreams,
He gave the ocean his soul,
To watch over the minds of lost seamen,
Reborn, they incarnated the spirit of the
dolphins,
And the spirit of the dolphins dreamt the birth
of a new man,
What is man dreaming of?*

Rouse My Senses

*Like lost lovers reunited
I kiss the ocean with my body.
Caresses
The eyes are the gates to the beauty of creation
Rouse my senses,
Shake my soul,
Freedom,
I scream freedom with all I have,
My heart, my feet, my hands, my hair, my nose,
my mind
Rouse my senses,
Explosion of colors, shapes, sounds.
Dance, dance the water.
You out there,
The fishes and the dolphins and the corals and
the sponges and the rays,
Rouse my senses
I am part of you,
As much as you are part of me,
Moments, magic.
No future, no past.
Rouse my senses.
Cities of lights,
Busy citizens of the ocean world,
Different species but no nation,
Caress my mind,
And with all your beauty,
Rouse my senses.*

Sea Poets

*Sea poets,
A seaman feeds and lives through the elements,
Faces at sea reveal his degree of attention,
Spoken clouds,
And the cast of light,
Shaping, reshaping our illusory realities,
The wind plays the skin,
A cocoon, lazily telling you where you are,
Nowhere and everywhere,
Not in or out,
Not in any projections,
But that ethereal certainty of reality
That sea people like to call home,
The dwelling place of their freedom,
And the freedom of the seaman lies in the form
of the universe.
Melting pot of cultural dimensions,
Intersecting at crossroads,
A network of networks,
Constantly reshaping their structures,
Emergence of a synergetic culture,
Some will move up to the stars,
Some into the sea,
But sharing, in common,
The essence of a life's kingdom.*

Dance the Sea

*Stand still,
Smile,
And everything unfolds,
Get carried by the wind,
Let the waves play your mind,
Dance, dance,
Keep on dancing the sea.*

Batu Tara

*Like a huge sleeping dragon,
Batu Tara is barely asleep,
Puffing smoke through her nostrils.
From the center of the earth,
She keeps a connection,
And nature works on me,
I am one with it.*

Habit-Forming Creatures

*We are all habit-forming creatures,
The way we stand, move, play, affects our way
of thinking,
Different attitudes,
Different experiences,
Molding your body to fit the lifestyle,
I become water, I breathe the open sea,
Wind in my mind,
Stars in my dreams,
Freedom, the ultimate utopia,
Homo creativus,
Homo delphinus,
Homo oceanus.*

Mad for the World

*Mad,
Mad for the world,
No wisdom,
No, no, no.
Nothing there,
Everything everywhere,
The play in the labyrinth of information,
The word transforms,
Language grows,
And poetry will always rule.*

Tao Hommoceanus

*Tao hommoceanus, the way of the man of the
ocean,
Inside,
Outside,
Only concepts,
Everything connects,
Most of the time we are reactors,
But when a conscious actor takes the stage,
He can guide his play,
There is no control
Over reactions,
Control is illusion.
Guide and be,
Be what you believe,
Between the sky, the ocean, and you,
Universe unite,
Everything changes,
Rules are concepts, and concepts are not
realities.
Under the stars,
Certainty of truth,
Your soul speaks,
The language beyond words.
Space and time have come to try to rule us,
We are creating our own boundaries.
Within the power of play, with mind and body,
And body and mind,
Gifts from sea angels,
Free to create the myth of our imagination,
Creation,
Discipline,
To survive.*

*As much a kid as a sage,
Naive and full of insight,
We juggle the roads of the mind.
"come back to reality," I hear voices calling,
And in the depths of my soul,
I know they do not know.
Is the road always lonely,
Can the way of understanding move without
man?
Gods, are you still playing with me,
Why do I think some gifts go beyond reason?
Love is real,
Intensity hard to bear,
The courage to love, to love,
Beyond the judgment of cultures,
Man-made grids of illusion,
Can one know, and still be willing to play the
game?
Under the spell of oceanic beauty,
And the love supreme of a woman,
The earth becomes my lover,
Orgasmic, shining calls,
God of nature,
Part of me, part of all,
I bow to your mysteries,
I might be laughed at,
Creator of laughter,
But my love will reign supreme,
Because it can only encompass all, and
everything.
In the eyes of a whale, I saw wisdom,
Exchange of unspeakable truth,
Where can I go with what I know,
Where can I go with what I don't know?
My ignorance can be bliss,*

*In the realm of the dream warrior.
Still hunter-gatherer,
Information organically collected,
Infinite,
I am nothing in everything.
Song of a bird,
The flight of the albatross riding the winds of
the high seas,
Visions of forgotten lands,
Forgotten civilizations,
Knowing the limitations,
Riding them to the road of the unknown.
Voyages,
Inner and outer,
For the love of traveling,
Necessities,
Addictions,
Illuminations,
A mind gone wild,
But with the harness of a form,
Synergetically bound,
To the whole.
Insanity of the truly sane,
The dreamers, past, present, and future.
Silence of the void,
Sheets of delicious, ecstatic hallucination,
No reality, only realities.
Chemical transformation,
Mutation,
Simply the certainty of being alive,
Within, the passion burns,
Eternal fire, for a lifetime or for a day,
Water-spirit mentality,
Fluid, hydromania,
Tribal aquatic thoughts,*

*The "ivresse" of grand follies,
Like the civilization of a sea people,
Roaming in the illusory freedom of its
foundations,
Doomed to fail or succeed,
An experiment for the eyes of the world.
Enchanted playground of psychedelic mastery,
Lush coral garden,
Dolphins conspiring,
Aquatic magic,
Essence of the real.*

Oceano Fanatics

*Redefine the potentiality of evolution within the
form,
Celestial mechanics,
For oceano fanatics.*

Theater

*Theater,
Ancient Greek word meaning to see,
And how can man use,
Synergetically,
His senses to "see."
Incarnation,
With the help of visualization, intention, and
attention,
Studying history,
Studying the evolution of man.
I sit on the bow,
I could be a thousand years away,
Past or future,
Gazing at the stars.
Without communication with mankind,
And no information available but reason and
feeling.
I see that the stars move,
I can, after a day, locate an island,
And safely return to my starting point, using
observation alone.
But how much of that is drawn from know-how,
mathematical programs,
Theories already learned?
The evolution of a newborn is formed.
Through theater,
Man can mold himself into different forms,
Losing, or forgetting, the "I,"
To tap into the many "I's,"
Many eyes,
Many ways to see,
Theater, the art of different seeing.*

Causes and Effects

*Causes and effects,
Our human perceptions,
The play of our senses,
Magic mushrooms helping some apes?
A few artists in some cave in France,
A few skulls and artifacts here and there,
And theories on the move.
Reason, faith, imagination,
Man, the creature able to lie to himself,
A labyrinth of a mind gone wild?
Why do we want to know?
Existentialist,
Knowledge only through experience?
Are our intellectual games useless?
They hold wild power.
Dreams have moved mountains,
Brought man to the moon.
Dictatorship killed millions,
Revolutions and ethics,
Liberté, égalité, fraternité,
And god,
Nature's god,
The all-encompassing,
The sum of everything,
Creator,
Man in his footsteps,
Imitation, a creature observing,
Good and evil,
Dual forces in equilibrium,
Theories,
Then strategies,*

Questions,
 Man, the creature that asks why,
 And sets out to find out.
 Still in his infancy,
 He rides the evolutionary wheel,
 In a mad race for the survival of humanity,
 Eden is in the mind,
 Realities and realities,
 The question of what is truth,
 Thoughts,
 The power of thought,
 Shiva, the dance of destruction,
 To be reborn in a new light,
 Only to be destroyed again,
 Shaping new,
 Always the new,
 So as not to drown.
 Create, and run,
 Or it might catch up with you.
 Obsession, desire, passion,
 Fuel for our dreamlike illusion,
 The magician, creating realities out of illusions,
 Creating a world in his own image,
 Losing himself in the process,
 But you can rest, once out of sleep,
 Keep the attention going,
 Don't let it drop,
 Or big brother will hypnotize you in.
 Eden is here right now,
 Everywhere there is light,
 Don't let the sun not shine on you,
 Simply alive,
 Miracle,
 Supernature,
 Simply nature.

Silent Night

*Silent night,
The wind sleeps,
While the stars are dancing,
The moon hides,
But my heart rides,
The waves of eternity.
Got to make wishes tonight,
Shooting stars,
Superstition, or wishful projection.
In the depths of night,
When my soul is longing,
A caress of your love.
My Aphrodite,
I like to believe you hear me,
Compared to the stars,
You are not so far,
Just a few light-seconds away,
And still closer,
When I hear my heart beat your song,
Love is alive,
I dream of you,
My muse, my goddess.*

Dolphins

*Dolphins,
Brothers from the sea,
Friends of my mind,
Somehow I am not dreaming,
When you come to greet me,
My soul is feasting.*

Manus to the Solomons

February - April 2000

Tunnel Realities

*Opinions,
Tunnel realities,
Conversations,
Leave and take,
Information selection,
I select to create a reality,
Expand perception,
Without losing the foundation,
The rolling waves crashing the reef,
The halyard banging on the mast,
A page turned from a book,
The breath,
The stars and immensities of the universe,
Science as a stepping stone,
A tool, but just a tool, to understanding,
Marvel, mysteries,
An answer gives birth to more mysteries,
The dreams,
But still limited to their own perceptions,
Creativity is only a new combination of what
already is,
Infinities,
A concept man struggles to accept,
But seeks,
Immortality.
As a unique combination,
I live as an entity,
We broke through perceptions with
psychedelics,
But some visions are too far,
To play,
That we cannot yet understand,*

*I believe in a god,
Because I can,
I do not believe what I want, but what I can.
We are the dream of a dream,
Who dreamed us?
Who are we dreaming of?
Are we dreaming ourselves?
Our dreams are shaping the evolution of some
men.
Mutants,
Hommodelphinus, Hommoaquaticus,
Hommomarsus,
Hommo earth,
The sixth kingdom,
In its own creation process.
We transform our appearances,
Is it to be different,
Seeking what we are not,
Or becoming what we can be.*

A Synergetic Movement

*There is no first, only a synergetic movement,
Not independent,
A web,
Moving full speed ahead,
Moving with the flow.
The flow can be ethically repulsive,
Or paradisiacal,
Paradise, like beauty, is in the mind of the
beholder,
New civilizations merging,
Information madness,
A grid speeding the advance,
Information wars,
The quest for know-how,
Artificial intelligence, or simply a tool created to
free space in our minds?
On board, we are witnesses above all,
Sentinels of a planet gone mad,
Starting with being conscious of being alive.
It isn't a given,
But a discipline.
Did the myths foresee the future,
The centaur, half man, half bull,
Genetic engineering,
All our old tales recreated,
In a mass mutation, a manipulation,
The four-armed man,
Or the dance of Shiva,
Destruction,
Reconstruction,
The creation of dreams,
Science fiction, simply a possible evolution,*

*Evolution, the name of the game,
Are we really looking at the survival of the
species?
Not consciously,
Because man is an individual,
Domesticated, manipulated,
Through his own perception.*

The Blood of Planet Earth

*In order to save mankind, we need to take care
of the blood of planet Earth — the oceans.*

Observe the Sea

*Observe the sea,
She teaches,
A clear mind for clear thoughts.
The thoughts, observed.
Emotional rescue, boom, boom,
Pounding in my chest,
And the voice in my head,
Rising up to drive me mad.
Can't talk about it,
I'm considered crazy enough as it is,
But the ride of creative passion,
Alive,
So good to be alive.
A blessing,
An enchanted land.
I guess love is in the air,
For everyone,
After the storm comes the sun.*

OCEANIC DIALOGUES

Gizo, Solomon Islands

April - May 2000

Lady Moon

*Glorious moon,
Before they forgot about you,
When there was no other light to free the night,
Ténèbres,
Once a month you were conquered,
By a white lady,
Lady moon.
I'm gonna be a shark today.
Oh no, please, be a turtle.
Thursday night, Mount Analogue, chapter three.
The road less traveled,
Is the one man thinks impossible.
The road almost not traveled,
Is the one man cannot think.
The road never traveled,
Is the future.
A sailboat is a love affair with the wind and the
sea,
You can't know where you'll land,
The elements,
The masters,
Like a love affair,
You do not control,
You ride,
You ride until the end of your dreams,
Or the beginning of a new door,
Behind the door,
Another door,
Until you realize there are no doors,
You made those doors yourself.*

The Black Ship That Got Away

*Oh, the black ship that got away,
Let the song of the wind play with the rigging,
A solo of fragrant, linseed-oiled blocks,
A rope keeping the tempo on the mast,
Whistling through the booms,
And our natural voices filling the night.
Cry, sky, cry,
And let your sweet tears wash
The salt from my oceanic skin.*

Fly, Eagle Ray

*Fly, eagle ray, fly,
Current flowing by,
A dance of jacks and man,
Choreographed by nature's will,
I let the fluid mind go,
Space, dream of space,
A liquid rite of passage.
Diving in the storm,
You can hear the rain,
Hitting hard on the doorway.
Right down here below,
The waves run the flow,
And my mind is on the go.
Diving in the storm,
A whirlpool in the glow,
And all the fish will know,
While the light is getting low,
And my mind is on the go.*

Without Maintenance

*Without maintenance, man-made universes fall
back into nature's web.*

In the seeker's mind,

Truth, a glimpse of truth, is the paradigm,

*It reveals itself only to a true mind, heart, and
spirit,*

And courage,

It lives on the edge.

Gizo Week

May 2000

In Bliss Because My Best Friends Are Here

*In bliss because my best friends are here,
On the ocean,
Dreaming the future of mankind,
Dreaming our dreams,
Shaping our lives.
We observe cultures,
To better know ourselves,
My chest plays me tricks,
Pounding to the beat of the earth,
In the ocean I recollect myself.
Johnny, Gaie, and Lazer feed me my
intoxication,
Mind, body, and soul.
The crew shines, happy, happy.
I am not always sure if they know it themselves.
But I enjoy seeing it.*

Palawan

January 2001

One of the Richest Men

*I am one of the richest men in the world,
Although without any possessions,
I have all I need.
The biggest riches might be time.
And although I lose illusions every day,
I haven't stopped dreaming.*

The Underwater Cathedral

*Needles rising from the depths,
Shrimp nibbling at my toes,
I glide, weightless, through pinnacles.
An underwater cathedral, a monument to
nature.*

Break On to the Other Side

*Orion high in the sky, not a cloud, mysteries of
an open sky.*

Break on to the other side,

Mind, glide, free as can be for now,

The sea, flat, reflects the stars.

Simplicity,

No brain-fucked mind games,

No illusory, delusional belief,

Just the certainty of being alive.

A gift of time, a celebration for Kronos,

Kronos ticking,

Destruction of immortality,

The child comes,

Allowing the old ones to die,

Only to be reborn,

Globalization,

A cure or a cancer, feeding on our soul,

Transformation, liberalization,

A new jail, a new wall,

Or a superhighway?

Isn't the road itself the journey?

Destinations.

Love,

Real,

A chemical invasion,

For total ecstasy,

Give me some loving,

Says the earth to man,

Discovery,

A place,

Where one can remain free,

If freedom ever existed,

*Hosted by the origin of ourselves,
Guided by spirited intelligence,
Dolphins,
Sounds, vibrations,
Opening grids,
Transformations.
The way of a modern shaman,
Channeling the five gates —
Art, science, nature, love, and the technosphere-
shipsphere-island-home,
More gates still to be discovered,
Only to merge again,
To love again.
I learned to wait,
And, in part, I learned simply to be.
A dependence on energy,
My own dependence on the moment.*

Opening the Gate

*Opening the gate,
Opening the gate,
Entrance,
Perceptions,
Shift,
Move,
Twirl,
Spin,
Vibrations,
Energy,
Nothing,
Water,
Tree,
Wind,
Rock, needles.
Blur.*

A Celebration of the Moment

*A celebration of the moment,
Sparkles,
The sea glitters,
Drops sing their small songs as they meet the waves,
We enter the cathedral,
Carved from rock by the elements,
Greens playing psychedelic games,
The waves won't let you linger too long.
Like a sacred place,
An altar standing without an icon,
The icon is nature herself,
In all her beauty,
The sun playing designer,
Enchanted gold leaf laid over the rocks,
Reenacting old stories,
Lights!
The cliffs chanting their evening stars,
Sirius rising,
Children playing on a nearby beach,
An emotional ride,
The elements coming to the rescue,
The gong of beauty,
Always remembered the moment it strikes,
Like a blow,
You know you're alive in a place like this,
Love is everywhere,
Love is beside me and around me,
There is no around or beside — only
everywhere, all at once.*

Shooting Stars

*Stars,
Shooting stars,
Remembering,
Eros in full reincarnation,
Seizing a moment,
Sweat, movement, fluid as the sea,
Merging with the elements,
A ritual union with everything,
Losing it, touching it, feeling it, being it,
Only to lose it again.
Hands,
Caresses,
The wind on my skin,
Space.*

El Nido, Palawan

January - February 2001

Defeat Snatched from the Jaws of Victory

*Defeat snatched from the jaws of victory,
The guard dropped for one unexplainable
minute,
The Buddha with the burning candle never
found the answer,
But keeps asking the question anyway.
He follows me around in different postures,
The Zen master told me not to ask why,
While Descartes stepped in for a word.
Meanwhile, fighting guilt with humor for a
moment,
Action, action,
Rest only fuel for more action.
Consciousness regained with a slap to the face,
Humility forced onto the invincible fool,
Putting the mind back in its place.
No room here for mistakes.
Cause and effect, under the magnifying glass.*

All and Everything

*All and everything,
Visible and invisible,
Synergetically interconnected,
The truth of it all, comprehended and not,
The totality of thought,
Dream and imagination,
And their cause and effect,
Reaching to the universe,
And universes,
All infinities,
Known and unknown,
To every discovery man has made,
Past, present, and future,
To every thought man has had,
Past, present, and future,
To evolution itself.*

The Wind Shifts

*The wind shifts,
The watch on the helm slow to react,
The ship jibes.
Sun-weakened blocks and lines finally snap.
We tack back onto course.
An accident sequence,
The war against triggers,
Fought before they're ever pulled.
I take the lead,
Steering us back toward safety.
The swells keep rising, higher and higher,
Wind four points off.*

A Note on Return

These poems stop in Palawan, not because the voyage did, but because this is where the verse in the journal thinned out and the prose took back over. The Heraclitus sailed on, through Singapore, Malaysia, and Borneo, and the author with her — the fuller account is in *Expeditions Inner and Outer*.

What stays with me, reading these back now, is how little they resemble anything I would have set out to write. They arrived the way weather does — without asking, and only ever on their own schedule.

