

ÉNRA

an autobiography

Preface

Now an old man, Énra felt he was dying. He was dying. Dying slowly, so slowly that only in recent years had he realized its power. It was the gradual decline in his physical strength that drew his attention to question. He was unable to do as much and for as long as in his earlier years. He became tired too quickly he thought and sought to nap where earlier he required none.

Énra sat on the floor, his thinning legs folded under his torso, his back gently supported by the edge of his bed, arms falling into his lap with his hands cupped on his groin.

He stared out the window of his house, sitting on a hill. His home had a sloping driveway to the street. He stared into the cul-de-sac that defined the front of his home.

Énra closed his eyes. He quieted himself, allowing the light canopy under his eyelids to raise skyward, until it seemed to disappear into the infinity. After some minutes the lightness blurred out to a brook. There he was, sitting under a tree, staring into a creek, and watching an unending retinue of walnut leaves on its surface slowly

moving past him, flowing down the creek. Indeed it was the autumn season and he felt a slight chill in the air. His looking alternated, bobbing about, between the water and elsewhere to a bush, a tree, or the source of a melodious sound.

Then he dwelled a long time. Caught it seemed in a trance. His life was filled with many sorrows as well as many joys. His illness had come as a great shock. His world was suddenly turned upside down. All the loves, belongings, dedications, and activities of his life felt like clothes tumbling around and around in a large dryer, ever turning without losing moisture. Everything felt heavier and heavier, until life itself felt overwhelming. He wondered how soon he was to leave this world and what was to become of everything he had known. As in his youth, he again yearned to leave everything like the snake sheds its skin, to walk, journey forth, and wander as a seeker. But again, as in his youth, he had not the courage. Now it was even more difficult, alone no longer in the world. He imagined and felt too much pain in the eyes of those who loved him and he them. He realized he had not followed the way of Siddhartha. And he had always admired the way of Gautama, the enlightened one. Though he was clearly nowhere close to either, he pondered deeply. He had always felt the One, as far away as he might be.

Suddenly, his being fell, fell into what seemed a beautifully warm magenta abyss, and it was revealed to him--the particulars of our paths cover over what is indeed at its core the same path.

Upon this insight his focus quickened and he felt his heart skipped a beat. He was immediately caught up again in the leaves whose variegated patterns of color captured his gaze repeatedly. Each passing leaf seemed to be calling, keeping his attention a moment as a butterfly crossing the road in bold staccato teases a passerby. He listened, listened acutely, but heard nothing. Only the smooth gentle babbling of the brook echoed in his ears. It seemed each leaf, as it sashayed from his left to his right was struggling in its swirl, desperately trying to tell him something. They were calling out to him in their final moments before they disappeared.

As he sat, gazing into the flow, it seemed unending. He had moved to Walnut Creek when a child of five years old. Now he was seventy-five. And now he was dying.

Seventy years had past since Énra had first met this creek. He was in awe, transfixed in this place. His life had past so fast, like the leaves flowing slowing, definitively, and down the creek. He had been away for so many years. And at the same time, it was as if he had not left at all. It was the first time, the first year he had met this creek. What had it all meant? What had he learned of life?

He decided to apply one of the many skills learned over his life, that of a writer. He would write something about each year, what he could remember, what had happened to him, though he realized like a leaf moving slowly on the surface of the stream, it could be only an impression, a feeble recollection of what actually happened to him. Moreover his memory remained strong. He knew all that had happened was still, patiently waiting for poignant arrows to hit the center of their targets to release them to his pen. He would remember what was important, and that was exactly the point of it--to reflect upon the essence of each year to come better to know and understand what had been and who he had become.

Besides the willful task ahead, he wanted his stream to unfold, to present itself fully and profoundly. He wanted a kind of map, a recordation of where he had been, so that he would by end of his climb be at his mountaintop. He knew in his heart of hearts he could survey, embrace, and complete his journey only then.

From his mountaintop he could move slowly down its slope, going forward toward tranquility. He was dying and longed for an ending that would bring acceptance and closure on his life. His desire was to look forward to dying like one welcomes the knock on one's door of a dear friend.

There was much to write of events Énra could recollect of his earliest years, but they were not those coming directly from his experience. They were manufactured memories told to him later in his childhood by his parents. He had a large pile of photographs, neatly ordered by them in albums collecting dust in his home, and a super 8 mm movie made by his father now converted to VHS in a cartridge.

Condensing them all into a few pages of text was sure to impede his progress, thus it became clear that writing his journey was not an endeavor to be accomplished chronologically. What came to mind would dictate his account. He need only tag and later sort all the fragments into a sensible order of events to foster his reflections upon them. And thus the way of his task became clearer, and as a result, unceasingly productive. He was determined there was no recollection, as painful or unpleasant as it may be, that would deter or halt his endeavor.

[add more here year one, look at photos, 6 mo hospitalization for peumonia, froggy]

Enra was unsure when it had occurred, most likely early in his second year of life, because he had just become mobile, standing upright and darting away from his mother quicker than she expected. His earliest recollection was waddling out on the porch of his first home on Spruce Street in Berkeley, California. He immediately was drawn to the blossoms of morning glory that hugged the rails on the westerly side of the balcony. The vine grew up the outside wall to the second story porch on the south side of the house. The light shown starkly through, highlighting their trumpets, sounding their brilliance. They dazzled him, overwhelming his senses, drawing him like a moth to the flame. He touched, fondled, and moved to taste. His mother having witnessed the event's end, saw and feared he would eat them. He probably would have, had she not jerked him suddenly away. Not knowing whether they were edible, she pulled him back into the bedroom.

He remembered that day. They glowed bright always in his thoughts whenever he wanted to see back as far as he could to his earliest memory. That blossom was like a torch that refused to fizzle. That flower became a source of inspiration to seek truth. It was a symbol of the source of all life he sought to know. It set him on a path for the rest of his life.