

Paris 2013

July 3rd, 2013 – Paris

In Paris after many adventures.

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July 4th, 2013 – Paris

Does this Arc de Triomphe hat make my butt look big?

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July 5th, 2013 – Paris

Paris is Paris. There's no place like it. And, amazingly, we're lucky enough, for these three next months, to be living within a 10 minute walk of the Arc de Triomphe and the Champs de Elysees. More than luck, actually; more like the extreme generosity of our Parisian friend, Gerry.

I was jet-lagged and a bit ill-feeling the first two days we were here (We arrived on Tuesday, July 2nd). it was something I apparently picked up on the trip from San Francisco to here. So, our arrival day and the day following were a bit of a blur for me. But, beginning yesterday, I've been firing on all cylinders again and have discovered over and over again what a wonderful place I'm in.

We've yet to fully settle into a rhythm. But I know it's going to include exercise in the mornings; for Colette first-thing and mid-day for me. This to be done at the Parc Monceau which is immediately across the street from where we are. And then the neighborhood abounds with sidewalk coffee shops.

Mornings, for me aside from exercise, will be spent programming. I'm working on several ideas for Apple iPhones and iPads that I'm quite excited about. The balance of our days will be free to simply explore this city. Gerry has been very generous with his time and has invited us on several outing to explore within and without the city.

My impressions are overflowing. Virtually all the buildings here date back to at least the early 20th century. So most of what we see was standing when the Nazis occupied and marched through the city. Indeed, many buildings, like the one we are in, were standing when the Treaty of Versailles was signed.

Gerry told us a true story, which I gather has been made into a book and a movie, in which the Nazi generals, who were about to retreat from Paris, had been ordered by Hitler to burn the city upon their exit. But they did not. And when Hitler called to ask them if Paris was burning, they said it was. But, in fact, it was not. And so, because of that long-ago act of sanity in the midst of war, it all stands as we see it today.

Parisians eat late compared to American and Antipodean schedules. Getting an evening restaurant meal is an affair best conducted between eight and 10 PM in the evening. Conversely, the city begins slowly in the mornings. When we've gone Parc Monceau in the morning, just after its opening at 7 AM, it is sparsely attended by a few hardy morning runners. But if you return at noon, it is thronged.

Yesterday, Colette and I were sitting on a bench taking advantage of the Parc Monceau's free WiFi. And I told her the scene before, us of people sitting in groups on the park's gently rolling grass land, reminded me keenly of an impressionist painting by Monet, I think, in which he painted such a scene here in the city.

Our rooms are small but comfortable. We are on the seventh floor of a building built in about 1900, I believe. The first six levels seem to consist of generous apartments and the seventh floor was allocated for the maid's quarters back then.

The concept of "Maid's Quarters" has, of course, gone but the rooms remain along with a system of elevators which conform to a reversed notion of above and below Stairs in the British sense of "Downton Abbey" and "Upstairs Downstairs". Here, the servants lived in the peak of the building in small rooms with dormers just under the roof and they were served by small unadorned elevators whereas the lower floors had more nicely appointed elevators for their use.

The quarters we are in were formerly two rooms; now joined. This is all evidenced by the permanently closed off hall-way door leading to one of them and the newer opening between them. At a later date, a small bathroom and kitchen were built into one of the rooms and the other became the bedroom. Back in the day, the maids would have used common facilities somewhere down the hall and their rooms would have just been sleeping quarters.

I cannot help but think of the 100 years of people who've come and gone in these rooms and who've looked out these same windows onto so much history. And my mind frequently returns to WWII when the city was occupied and the world literally hung in the balance in a contest between the great powers of the time.

Gerry was alive through all of that and he's told us of his family's departure from the city in 1939. His own life has been deeply woven and re woven between the American and French cultures in all the years since. He's a citizen of both countries and is at home in either though he's been primarily settled here since the 1960's.

What else can I tell you? The weather's in the 70's F (low 20's C) and a bit humid. You can go from feeling a bit chill to shedding clothes at anytime during the day.

We look out from the windows of our rooms onto other similar windows across large open vertical courtyards. Above us is only sky as almost nothing here in this area exceeds seven stories. There's nothing new unless it is the furniture in view behind the windows around and below us. It is all stone and metal-plated roofs and iron grill-work. It has the look of being well tended and many times modified and repaired in its century of life and experience.

Just now, it's 8:15 AM and Colette's at the park exercising and I've just enjoyed a strong coffee and a bowl of Muesli with yogurt on it. We still haven't solved the problem of getting Internet access up here so in a few minutes, I'll walk to where I can see accessible signal and download this and post it along with a few pictures. Yesterday, we walked to the Champs de Elysees and I got a new SIM for my iPhone so I'm now on the Orange System here. I cannot call or text out of France but I can receive calls so if you want the number, please drop me a private E-Mail and I'll send it.

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Paris – July 8th, 2013

Our windows were open at 10:30 in the evening and soft voices from other windows in the courtyard drifted in; French, Italian. People were still having late meals or a glass of wine and socializing afterwards. The city, beyond, hummed softly under a late pearlescent sky still holding the day's last light.

The City of Paris is as far north as Vancouver, British Columbia in Canada; where we were just two weeks ago now. So, the evening's light, at this time of year, holds on until you begin to wonder if your watch is wrong. We'd showered early after a long day's walking and were sitting and talking with books in our hands. Our windows were all open letting in the evening's air, perfect and still softly moving at 24C (75F).

Yesterday, Gerry had taken us to The Louvre. It was to be just a small sampler of the Louvre's wonders as we were going this time to visit the Apple Store there, which is embedded within the shops of the Louvre itself. Even if it was a much abbreviated visit, it was breathtaking. The French truly know the secrets of grandeur, class and style.

Gerry is, and has been, a donor to the Louvre. His business ventures, I suspect, have treated him well over the years and he's chosen to give some back to his society.

As we entered, he had a special Louvre Donor Card in his wallet that allowed us to simply walk by the long line of people awaiting entry. He showed his card to the security folks controlling the entrance point and, "Voilà", we were in.

Hmmm. I'd better speed this story up or I'll be writing it all morning. We did so many things these last two days and here I am, 15 minutes along in writing about it all, and I've only covered the first bit. I'm too greedy to live the experiences, I think, to be willing to take so much time writing about them.

We sorted our business at the Louvre out; which involved Gerry looking at a MacBook Pro computer much like the one I'm writing on now. Then we returned to his place after a bit more touring (Gerry is an excellent and patient tour guide and he loves his city; so he's especially good).

At his place, we plotted about new computer systems and he ordered one. Much of the afternoon was spent this way as there were a lot of wrinkles to the situation.

Then, Colette and I took a walk down to Rue de Levis (pronounced Roo-d-levees) where there is a walking-only street full of a variety of shops and market stalls. It's a 10 minute walk and it is becoming a local favorite of ours since Gerry showed us the area. We bought some light stuff for our evening meal and then we were off home. I turned in early as I am still, three days after arrival, sorting out a bit of jet-lag.

Saturday morning (that's yesterday now, as I write this), we arose to a beautiful day without appointments. Colette had planned well for this (she's an excellent planner at all times). She had suggested a route for where to go and what to see on such a day.

First, as we've begun to do on many mornings, we went to the Parc Monceau for our daily dose of free WiFi (I'm still cogitating on how to secure reasonable access to WiFi in our rooms).

Today's outing was cribbed from an eight page document Colette prepared back in Christchurch before we traveled. She'd collected a fine group of things to see and do around Paris that are free for the doing/taking. In today's adventure, we were going to walk from our neighborhood, southward down Rue de Courcelles and then along Franklin Roosevelt past the Grand Palais and the Palais de la Decouverte to the Seine River and from there to turn eastward and walk along through the Jardins (gardens) des Tuileries where I had a bite to eat at an outside café.

After this, we continued eastward.

I'm making this sound like a casual stroll. It was more, for me, a gaping session as I looked at all the amazing

views and architectural wonders around me. See the many pictures, below, to get the drift.

Paris is amazing. If you come, give yourself ample time to wallow in it. You would, in my opinion, be doing yourself a crime to come for two days, ride a big tourist bus around with a gaggle of others and then snap a few shots out the windows as it all whizzed by.

Paris needs to be savored slowly. What are you going to do with all the money you'd save by not going? Buy a new living room rug where you can sit in comfort year after year thinking of all the things you didn't do?

As we got to the end of the Jardin des Tuileries, before us was the Arc du Triomphe du Carrousel and the Louvre (again). We walked slowly and lots of pictures were taken; as you might imagine.

I forgot an earlier vignette that I wanted to share. There's a lot of pick-pockets and other street swindlers about in the tourist areas here. We've been on our guard against them but we still encounter them. One ruse has to do with carrying a clip board, like those used to collect petitions. They hold the clip board, approach a tourist, perhaps gently bump up against them, and ask over and over again, softly, "Speak English?, Speak English?". One fellow was so persistent that I had to shout at him to "Get away!".

Another ruse is the "gold ring" ruse. We were walking along the Seine and happened to be alone as an older lady was passing the other way. Just as she got beside us, she bent down, as if she'd found something almost at our feet, and seemed to pick up a gold wedding band. She looked up at us like, "Is this yours?" I smelled ruse all over the situation even though it was well done and simply said, "Nope, not ours." and kept walking.

About ten minutes later, the same thing happened except this time it was a man. This time, when he bent down, I could see that the sidewalk he was reaching towards was empty and the ring only appeared as his hand touched down. He, as well, looked up like, "Is this yours?" Nope.

I don't know what the point of either ruse was but its best just to say 'no' and to keep walking. Once you stop and get entangled, these things can grow a life of their own right on the spot.

We sat in a nice small park where there's a tower, the Tour St. Jacques, and Colette had a small sandwich and we people watched.

After that, we crossed to the island where the Notre Dame Cathedral is and had a good look around at all of that. It is so very beautiful.

Finally, we were tired and caught the Metro home from the "Cite" Station.

What a Metro ride. I've never been on such packed trains. We were all literally pressed like sweating sardines against each other. I had my brown bag tight against the front of me and my hand on my wallet which I'd earlier transferred to my front pocket. But, nothing untoward happened. We had to make two transfers but, eventually, we popped up at the Courcelles Station a block from Gerry's building.

In the evening, we took chairs and laptops and went and sat in the Parc Monceau and fiddled with the Internet and watched people. Then, another walk to the Rue de Levis for some Chinese take-away and a beautiful day was winding down as when ... The windows were open at 10:30 in the evening and soft voices from other windows in the courtyard drifted in; French, Italian. People were still having late meals or a glass of wine and socializing afterwards. The city, beyond, hummed softly under a late pearlescent sky still holding the day's last light....

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Paris - July 11th, 2013 – Thursday

at [Place des Vosges](#)

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Paris - July 11th, 2013 - Thursday

It is a bit cooler here now; 18C (64F), which is nice for a change as it's been quite hot since we arrived.

Today, we decided to go to Place des Vosges which is a beautiful park that Colette tells me has been in many movies shot here in Paris. We rode the Metro from Monceau to the Hotel de Ville station after making one transfer and then walked east until we came to the park.

As always, simply walking down the street watching everything and everyone is a great pleasure. The park was beautiful. I shot a nice photo of Colette there and published it immediately on FB.

Today, we were less about getting to specific places and more about wandering and letting things happen. We wandered streets full of tourists such as along the Rue de Rivoli and then the streets one or two back from the buzz that belonged more to the locals.

The Place des Vosges Park is square and is surrounded on all four sides by a cloister. Colette explained to me that in this context a cloister means a series of arches that you can walk under like a covered sidewalk. Behind the arches and their massive stone coolness were shops and art galleries. We strolled and looked.

On one side of the square is the house that Victor Hugo lived in. It was free entry but they wanted us to check our bags before we could continue. I decided to pass. Security, sometimes, irritates me.

Then we struck out generally heading east paralleling the Seine and generally back towards our part of town. After awhile, we happened on the Musée Carnavalet (www.carnavalet.paris.fr) and decided to have a look. Again, it was free entry but this time they were willing for us to carry our bags in with us.

There was a lot of beautiful stuff inside. It covered Paris' history with a lot of emphasis on the 16th to 19th centuries.

Later, when we came out and sat and talked, I confessed I'd had a lot of mixed feelings about what I'd seen. I saw lavish furniture, elegant portraits of wealthy people, fireplaces you could put a Volkswagen in and massive buildings. The best, literally, that money could buy in those times.

But, behind those portraits of haughty pampered women and handsome hard-eyed men, there was much that existed that I knew was not being shown.

Many if not most, of the people of the lower classes who worked for these elegant people, lived or died by their whims. Perhaps, if you were a skilled tradesman who could make their elegant furniture or buildings or clothes, then you might carve yourself a place of relative stability and some affluence in their shadows. But, for the rest,

life was probably far more brutal than most of us can today imagine.

Most of the objects I looked upon probably commanded such sums in those days that anyone who was not hugely wealthy would probably have considered themselves quite lucky to even have gazed upon such objects in their lifetime.

So, the people who owned these things had fearsome power over those around them of less means. The reality of this idea is hard, today, for us to wrap our minds around. We all have such freedoms now that the lower classes then could not have imagined. Human rights and the Rule of Law are relatively new inventions. Reading of these periods and remembering, you know that life was cheap. Human rights and freedoms, as we know them today, had not yet come into existence.

So, that's a lot of what I saw and felt as I walked around and looked at all these things. I also thought about how important these folks thought themselves to be. And how the buildings they built were to impress their peers and as monuments to their egos.

And how they are all gone now; scattered into dust as we all must be in the end. And that all that remains cast in stone, plaster and wood are the forms of their cries, saying, "See me; I am important. Look what I built, what I had, what I am and who I was."

And all of it now, just in a museum for our entertainment.

Once outside after reflecting on these things, I thought as well about the growing erosion of human rights that is occurring right now in history; and also about the ever increasing gap between the power of the very wealthy and the rest of us.

Money and power are accumulating now in the hands of the very few and powerful and they are using it to protect and guarantee their positions by diluting the freedoms of the rest of us. These trends are ominous. Could such trends lead us back to days of injustice and inequality from earlier times such as I imagined in the museum?

I doubt it because people, once having been free, will not easily submit to giving it up. But that doesn't mean that those with great money and power aren't trying to make a world in which they have no one to fear. Currently, they still need to fear democracy and the power of the vote.

We walked along back past the Louvre and its glass pyramid. It's a thing for many people to see perhaps once in their lives. And here we were, lucky people, seeing it for the second or third time in a week and still months of time here in Paris remain before us.

We found a rack of public bicycles and shot a picture of Colette posed by them.

There's nothing much more to report. We watched people walking, had a coffee and a bagel sandwich in a Starbucks and strolled until we were tired of walking and then we caught the Metro back here to the Parc Monceau area.

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July 13th, Paris, France – the Latin Quarter

Today, Saturday, we had a very good wander around Paris.

We began, as we often do with a bit of research on the Internet. We haven't, as yet, worked out how to get reliable Internet in the apartment. So we shifted down the hall to sit in front of a window that overlooks the city and where we've found good Internet signal and we make our inquiries there.

Our first mission was to find The American Library in Paris. We've noted that libraries and library systems are quite different here in Paris and we're still trying to work out what's available to us.

The bad news when we arrived was that the American Library was closed until later in the day so we couldn't check it out. The good news was that the library was only two blocks from the base of the Eiffel Tower.

We walked over and had a look. The crowd queued up to ride to the top was already long and we're not into lines so we walked about, took a few photos and marveled at the tower.

Our next goal was to revisit a church Gerry had pointed out to us previously when we passed in his car. It was a church first built in the 5th century A.D. called St. Germain des Pres.

I like old things. Growing up in the United States and then later, living in New Zealand, I've spent most of my life in places with relatively short histories. Indeed, I lived in San Juan Capistrano, California for many years and it boasted the oldest building in California and that only dated back to 1700 something.

But, here in Paris, history runs very deep.

The church was originally built in 1546 or so but then it was razed in the Norman Invasions around 990 A.D. and then rebuilt again. The bell tower we see now dates from that second rebuild. To my knowledge, none of the original 5th century church survives now unless it is in stone blocks from the first church which were reused in the later ones.

It's a beautiful place to wander and we did so for about an hour. I stared entranced at the old stone walls and reflected at all they've seen and all the people, now long gone, who have gazed on them with eyes and world-views very different from my own.

The Dark Ages, the Plagues, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, Columbus's rediscovery of North America, the Enlightenment and on and on have all come and gone while these walls have stood. How many centuries witnessed and how many masses said and how much incense has been burned here? In it unimaginable even as you stand with your hand pressed against the cool stone trying to feel it. We who walk through these places are the shadows in spite of how seriously we may take ourselves.

From St. Germain des Pres, we walked towards the Latin Quarter and along the way we came to The Pantheon which is another old and fine building. It was closed so we looked around and took some photos from outside and marveled at the very large doors in front. Everywhere you look in the older parts of this city, you see statues and art carved into stone walls that just makes you stop and stare.

I dare say that some of their ideas of what makes a building impressive and ageless are going to last a hell of a lot longer than some of our current ones. I'm thinking now of much of our modern architecture and the huge and silly "Works of Arts" which are often placed outside them. These gee-gaws entertain us once or twice and then we ignore them - other than to think to ourselves, "Sheesh, my 10 year old with a crayon could have done

that!"

When you look at these old classic buildings in Paris, you will not find yourself thinking that. You will be in awe of the time and artistic skill that were lavished on them.

We strolled on still moving towards our goal; the Parisian Latin Quarter.

The Latin Quarter is part of what is more widely called 'The Left Bank'. And the word 'Latin', as in Latin Quarter, derives from the fact that in the Middle Ages, Latin was the international language of learning and education throughout Europe; hence the student quarter here is also known as the Latin Quarter.

The famous French University, the Sorbonne, is located here and it is an area of students, artists, leftists, book shops and small and quaint streets with interesting little restaurants. If one could actually sell 'atmosphere', I think they could do quite well selling it in little jars here.

We wandered this area for quite awhile and noted one particular street of little restaurants to return to and sample their wares with an idea that if we found something good, we'd return yet again and bring Gerry along to share the find.

Gerry's lived in Paris for many years but he cannot have seen and explored everything here and he's asked us to explore and to share our finds with him so he can discover yet new parts of Paris himself. It's a mission we've happily taken on.

We found a shop with a lot of jewelry and scarves and I bought one for Colette as a memento of our day and the quarter.

The Paris Metro is now our good friend. With a glance at the map on my iPhone, we located the nearest Metro station and with another look at a free app that sorts the Paris Metro out for you, we had our Metro routing worked out. One ticket each for 1.33 Euros later, we were at the station, through the turn-stiles, into the train (they arrive about three to five minutes apart consistently all day), zoom-zoom and out at Metro Monceau and Voila; we're home.

I made one more trip down the hall to check our E-Mail and to admire the sun setting over the city - and the day is ours.

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July 14th, 2013 – Bastille Day

Bastille Day parade, Paris, France. It was crowded as predicted. People 10 rows deep all along the L'avenue des Champs Elycees.

At 173cm I mostly saw bobbing caps and feathered hats marching long !

The tanks and trucks were bigger, more visible.

The fabulous 'fly-over' of the nine jets trailing tricolour smoke was the highlight. The parade, on a hot, blue sky day was quite a spectacle ceremonial marching of military personnel and hardware.

How differently countries celebrate their national day.

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July 20th, 2013

After two glasses of wine, Colette has noted that all power in our area of Paris are below the ground; no power poles! And it's true. Parisians are so smart. Bravo for Paris and wine! — with Colette Meehan at Le Village Café.

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July 20th, 2013

What a huge and (from my eyes) strange library. Truly epic in scale. Had to walk 1/8 of a mile to enter it after my 1st view. Then a security check in which I received a chit for my pocket knife. Then a 3.5 euro charge to access the study rooms and finally, wifi in only some locations. Still exploring. — at Bibliothèque François Mitterrand (métro de Paris).

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July 22nd, 2013 – Paris

Browsing on a new street - Rue Montorgueil

at [Cafe bianco Rue Montorgueil](#).

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July 22nd, 2013 – Paris

In response to the paparazzi, Colette has no comment on Kate's impending delivery.
at [Starbucks Montorgueil](#).

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July 24th, 2013

Life is made of small things that can please greatly. It's been very hot here in Paris since we arrived.

Yesterday, we bought a fan which makes sleeping sooooooooooooo much better.

And, yesterday, the weather broke and we had some really nice thunderstorms and summer rain.

Life is sweet. — with Colette Meehan and Gerald Briggs in Paris, France.

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July 24th, 2013

Fun in Paris at [Obélisque](#).

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July 24th, 2013

Getting close to the American Library in Paris. Passed a view of the Eiffel Tower on the way.

At the [American Library in Paris](#).

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July 28th, 2013

At Porte Maillot by Palais Des Congres. There's a (gasp) Starbucks here. We're happy to see the old corporation.

At [Palais des Congres](#).

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July 28th, 2013

Sunday morning mass at a very beautiful and famous church.

At [Basilique du Sacré-Cœur](#).

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July 30th, 2013

Just another sidewalk cafe with a good friend and my sweetie pie.

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July 30^h, 2013

Ah, another sidewalk cafe while colette shops for art supplies.

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August 4th, 2013

Paris Impressions - 4 Aug 2013

The Metro

We took a Metro trip. It had two transfers so we ended up riding on three trains before we arrived; all underground. On each, there was a musician playing in our car. It's a form of begging you see frequently on the Metro.

In addition, sometimes a person will get on and launch into an impassioned speech (in French so I don't know what they are on about) and then they will walk the length of the car soliciting money. The preceding speech is apparently the story of why they need our money.

Sometimes the trains are mostly empty and sometimes they are jammed full. It can be a comfortable ride with interesting people to watch or it can be a sweaty, jammed in business where you are thankful if the small windows are open and you can feel the rush of the incoming air as the train runs down it tunnel.

One day, it was jammed and Colette and I were sitting on two fold-down seats facing forward. We were in the space in front of the doors where all the standing passengers jam in when the trains are full. A pile of people came in and I ended up with a semi-heavy lady standing facing me just inches away. Her breasts were about a foot from my face and there wasn't much else to look at. I was thinking that if she didn't grab the hand-rail and brace herself when the train moved, she was going to fall into me. I was wondering how I was going to deal with this without getting entangled in her ... landscape.

But, it all passed without an international incident.

On another trip, we saw a hunched over old woman in a black abaya, hijab and niqab (an Islamic gown, head covering and veil). She was sitting on the steps leading down into the Metro boarding area and coughing her lungs out. You see a lot of poverty around Paris. I wondered as I listened to her if she might have TB.

We boarded our train and then a few minutes later we heard a terrible sound coming down the car towards us. It was the old lady very badly hunched over and wailing something unintelligible and full of pain and stumbling on her cane so that you wondered if she was going to fall into someone's lap. There wasn't much room to weave between people so it was a real concern. I gave thanks that she wasn't coughing as she passed and that she didn't fall on me. I've seen a lot of beggars here but I think she was the worst.

There's also crime on the trains and anywhere there are a lot of tourists.

Last weekend, we went on Sunday to listen to Mass at Sacre Coeur basilica in Montmartre. Coming back, we took the Metro. It was crowded. There was a press of people getting onto the train and I was ahead of Colette.

As I stepped onto the train, I felt some fiddling with my back wallet pocket and I quickly put my hand back there

to find that my wallet pocket was now unbuttoned but that my wallet was still there. Apparently, I'd reacted too quickly or the pick-pocket had been a bit clumsier than normal.

There were people pressed all around me but I was fairly sure who had been behind me and I turned and looked at him. He pressed by me without making eye contact and stopped just ahead and began talking with a woman who'd already been on the train sitting in a seat.

I realized then that Colette had also just had a struggle to get on the train. Colette said she had felt deliberately slowed down boarding the train.

I stared at the guy and debated making a scene. He outweighed me and he was a good twenty years younger. And I didn't have proof of anything concrete. So, I just watched him. He continued to talk with the woman and they both assiduously avoided eye contact with me. In a minute or two, we came to the next station and he and the woman both got off. I remember she had a long dragon tattoo on one side of her back.

Colette and I got off two stations later and then she told me that as I'd gotten on the train, she'd suddenly found someone forcing their way between her and I, delaying her and very nearly making her miss the train as the doors were closing. She hollered for someone to hold the door and some good citizen did and so she got on anyway. She hadn't realized any of what had been going on with me.

So, after we got off, we put it all together. There had to have been at least three of them working us. I imagine the two outside the train had selected us as we were approaching the car to get on. I'm not sure what the purpose of the woman on board was but she was definitely part of it.

If their plan had worked, one of them would have gotten my wallet, the other would have prevented Colette from boarding and it all would have happened in a second or two. I would have not realized my wallet was gone and I'd have been preoccupied that Colette had missed the train and I'd have gotten off at the next station never thinking about my wallet and they'd have been away free.

It was a close thing. And, in the end, I realized I was at fault. There I was in a packed area with a zillion tourists on a Sunday morning on the Metro and I wasn't even thinking about personal security. At the least, I should have had my wallet in my front pocket and I should have been more attentive as to who was around me and where Colette was. We live and learn.

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Paris - August 6th - A trip to Porte de Bagnolet

Paris continues to please and amaze.

We've settled into a pattern now, after being here for a month, of wandering the city one day and then staying around locally the next. And, most evenings find us at a local sidewalk cafe with a glass of beer for me and a glass of wine for Colette. There's some people watching and a discussion of the day. Some days, our Parisian friend, Gerry, accompanies us and on other evenings, it is just Colette and I.

Last Tuesday, August 6th, we picked a new destination for a trip into the city: Porte de Bagnolet.

To give you some sense of place, Paris has a core which is defined by a ring-road that goes right around the

center of the city. If you see the city and this ring-road as a clock-face, then the Louvre Museum would be very near the center. Gerry's place (and our's) lie at about 10 AM in the 17th Arrondissement and our destination for the day, Porte de Bagnolet, would be at about 2 PM on the other side of the city.

We've walked right across much of the city several times but generally the Metro is the best bet for traveling around unless you have a lot of time on your hands. I have a small app on my iPhone that lets me put in the Metro station I am near and the one I want to get to and it calculates the routing and tells me where to make the transfers and what names to watch for. It makes dealing with all the French place names a lot easier.

Our reason for going to Porte de Bagnolet was because we'd heard from a woman, at an American expatriate gathering, about a small neighborhood near Porte de Bagnolet called "La Compagne à Paris (the countryside in Paris)" that looked like a quaint French village right in the midst of the city. This sounded interesting because Paris is largely composed of Houseman era six and seven story stone apartment blocks. They are, our course, beautiful with all their ornamentation but they do go on forever wherever you look.

We took the Metro to the Porte de Bagnolet Metro station and then pulled out the maps to see what was next.

Maps are essential here. The idea of streets running parallel to each other in predictable patterns didn't arrive in the world until relatively recently and Paris is a lot older than that that date (what ever it might be). Roads here run at every possible angle to each other. Remember that all of this was laid out incrementally over centuries and long before anyone had even conceived of the idea of centralized planning. As a result, many of the streets can be quite narrow. They date from a time when there was nothing but foot, horse and carriage traffic.

We weren't sure where the La Compagne à Paris neighborhood we were looking for was; other than that we thought it must be quite close. As we looked at the maps, we saw two big churches that looked interesting and we decided to strike out for those and see if we could locate the neighborhood along the way. And off we went.

Well, we didn't get far before we came to one of the ubiquitous pastry shops which are called Patisseries or Boulangeries. We had to stop. Colette for her favorite; a Pain au Chocolat and for me a Pain au Raison. Yum! Most days see us frequenting one or another of these places so it is a good thing that we are doing so much walking.

After a good walk, we came to Notre Dame de la Croix on Rue de Ménilmontant; another beautiful church such as Paris is simply full of. But also a bit different in that we were now in a true residential area; not an area frequented at all by tourists. So, we were able to walk in without a crowd and see a place that exists for the local people and not in anyway for the tourists. We went in and admired it and took our usual collection of photos of all the beautiful bits.

Outside, I saw some political commentary on a wall near the church that I photographed to translate later. I'm always curious about such things.

We then began the long walk to the next church.

We retraced our steps back to Rue des Pyrénées which I'd noted on the way in. It looked like a pretty walking street with trees and shops all along the way. We turned left there and went north towards the next church.

It was as pretty a street as I'd hoped. And, as the entire area is well away from the tourist areas, that made it interesting as well. We found another sidewalk cafe along the street and coffee was ordered, a rest taken and people watched. Please understand, dear reader, that this is required behavior in Paris.

The next church was quite pretty as well and had more people about than the previous one as it was in a busier neighborhood. It was called Saint Jean Baptiste de Bellevue. We walked and shot another round of photos and admired it.

Then we went outside and we walked around the entire block it sat on to see it from all sides.

On the wall of a school building, The Ecole Maternelle, that stands behind the church was a sign that stopped me in my tracks. I can barely read French but I understood the sense of this one.

"In memory of the students of this school who were deported between 1942 and 1944 because they were born as Jews. These were victims of the barbaric Nazis with the complicity of the Vichy Government. They were exterminated in the death camps. 390 of these children lived here in the 19th Arrondissement."

We walked a little more in the area, feeling sober.

In fragments, I remember we saw a homeless man sleeping on the sidewalk at the side of the church and I recall a small shop that was closed with two small dogs inside barking at anyone that walked by; as if they were guarding the place. I found myself thinking of those lost children playing in this neighborhood before they were taken.

Continuing, we realized that we'd never actually seen the La Compagne à Paris neighborhood in spite of all the walking we'd done. So out came the maps again for a new plan.

And the plan was to catch the Metro back to where we'd begun at the Porte de Bagnole station and then, once there, to have a second look for the neighborhood.

A few minutes later, we'd reversed all the walking we'd done and were where we'd started. This time, we took our time and quickly found the place.

You wouldn't know it was there unless you walked up just the right street. All around the three square blocks or so of the neighborhood were the common six and seven story apartments with shops underneath. But there, in the midst of all that, was a small hill and when you walked up the steps to the top, there were several streets with two-storied terraced houses; totally different to the surrounding area and just like a small French village. It was a wonderful find and we walked up and down and admired it and took more photos. We both noted how quiet it was there after the normal cacophony of the city.

We walked down from the hill and the magic little neighborhood and walked towards the Metro station. All day, in this general area, I'd noticed references to Edith Piaf (1915 to 1963), a famous French singer who was considered by many to be the national Diva of France.

A closer look revealed that this neighborhood was one of her haunts. We found a square named after her with a statue of her and a bar called "Bar Edith Piaf" just beside the square I had Colette take a picture of me to capture the scene.

The day spent and the sights seen, we boarded the Metro back to the 17th Arrondissement where we're staying and another adventure in Paris was done.

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Paris - 15 August 2013

Paris is old, there is little doubt of that. It was here, in a lesser form, gathered around two islands in the Seine River when the Romans first arrived.

A few days ago we went to the Basilica of St. Denis, on the north side of Paris, where French kings have been buried since King Dagobert chose to be buried there in 639 A.D. Since then 42 kings, 32 queens, and 63 princes and princesses of France have all been buried there or have been moved there at some point after their death.

History at the Basilica of St. Denis goes back further than King Dagobert. St. Denis, the first Bishop of Paris, was martyred there in about 250 A.D. and it was his memory and popularity that has provided the sense-of-place that has held the popularity of St. Denis together, for the French royalty and everyone else, ever since. When you are there, you can feel that so much history has swept through the place. Looking back at the 12th century, the buildings of St. Denis are now considered the first masterpieces of Gothic Cathedral Art. And then, throughout the middle ages, it was renowned as one of the most powerful Benedictine abbeys of Europe. And indeed, so popular was it, that king after French king chose to be buried there.

But eventually it fell into decline due to various wars and then the French Revolution.

During that revolution, much was destroyed by the victors of the new-order just as the Chinese destroyed a lot of their own cultural heritage during the catharsis of their Cultural Revolution.

The royalty who were buried at St. Denis were dug up by the revolutionaries and disdainfully cast into a pit with quick-lime thrown in afterwards. This included the beheaded remains of Louis XVI and Marie-Antionette.

Later, after the winners and losers changed chairs a few more times, many of these exhumed bones were gathered together again by Louis XVIII and placed into a Royal Ossuary at St. Denis.

So, the history runs deep there at St. Denis but so does the evidence of how wars and revolutions can sweep things away very quickly.

Paris is old and the walls have stories to tell that span centuries.

There's another sort of timelessness here in Paris. Something that doesn't perhaps span as many centuries as my story about St. Denis; but timeless just the same. It's the sort of thing that we'd find quite rare in the Antipodes or in the Americas.

You feel it when you look at the buildings which are made of such imperishable stone on every street. You realize it when you learn that families will very often hang onto the same business or the same property for generations here.

You recognize it when you hear the story of how leasing a property works here in Paris. Such a lease generally comes up on a 3-6-9 schedule. That is, it has to be renewed every 3, 6 or 9 years. And, unless the building is being converted to some other use, renewals, when they come up, are nearly automatic. And the rent can only increase by law at a rate tied to inflation. So, the longer one stays, the more advantageous it is for them. So people stay in the same place for a long time and things turn over very slowly.

I feel it as well when I hear Gerry's stories.

Gerry, his older brother and his mother all grew up in this neighborhood. He shared with us a memoir his mother wrote for her family about her life here in Paris.

Her first memory, if I recall correctly, was about 1896. She remembers being wheeled around then as a young child in Parc Monceau just across the street. This was before electricity and telephones. This was when transport consisted horses and carriages. And the building I'm writing this in was standing here then.

Gerry grew up near here as well. And his family lived in these neighborhoods until they departed for America in the months before Hitler invaded France. His father had been in the cotton business and had become a comfortably wealthy man. But, there's no insurance that covers war losses and the family lost everything when they left.

Gerry returned later and he and his wife moved in 1974 here into this very building on the Boulevard de Courcelles just across the street from that same Parc Monceau that he and his mother were both wheeled about in strollers. Later, in 1998, Gerry and his wife, Viviane, shifted upstairs to the 5th floor into the apartment he's still in now. His wife passed away in 2005.

So, for me, there's a tangible difference in how time seems to flow here.

Here's a small example.

The other night, Gerry took us out for a steak dinner. It sounds like a fairly common and predictable experience, perhaps, to go out and get a steak. But there was a lot that was unusual about this restaurant and these differences tie back into my theories about time here.

The first thing was that Gerry has been coming to this restaurant and ordering the same meal since 1963. The establishment originally opened at this same location in 1959. That's 54 years ago. They only serve one thing at this restaurant and that's steak; you can have it rare, medium or well done.

Steak is all they have ever served in all the years they've been open.

They don't take reservations so when they open at 7 PM, you just show up and get into a line.

They are in a great location and you can sit inside or outside. They're in an old and well kept building. The restaurant occupies the ground floor and the floor above. If you want to eat upstairs, you have to negotiate a very small and steep staircase. I think that the waitresses must have thighs like linebackers since they go back and forth up and down all evening. But I digress.

When you sit, you'll have no menu. You just choose rare, medium or well-done. And there are two kinds of wine to choose from, so that's easy as well.

After a short wait, the wine comes and then some water as well. Then a nice salad arrives with a Vinaigrette dressing and crushed walnuts over it.

And then comes the steak. But not too soon as nothing is hurried here in all of this. There's plenty of time to talk and to savor things.

The steak is cut into strips for you and it comes with finely cut french fries. The waitress (for no men have ever

served there) pours a sauce with secret ingredients over the steak and you are away on a fine eating experience.

Given that the restaurant been doing this for such a very long time, they definitely have gotten it right. The steak, the fries and the sauce are all superb and it is real pleasure to dig in.

But wait, there's more....

When you've mostly cleared your plate, they will come around and check and, if you'd like, there's a second round. They will deliver fries, sauce and steak again for you; just as the first time. Mmm. A second chance - that's sweet.

Finally, a menu appears and we select a small French dessert known as 'Profiteroles'. These are little pastry balls filled with ice-cream and covered in a yummy chocolate sauce.

As we ate, Gerry told us how long he's been coming in there and how the restaurant has always operating exactly the same way. As I listened, I felt the timelessness of Paris come back again to me. They were serving steaks like this in there when the Berlin Wall fell, when men landed on the moon and when JFK was assassinated. They first open their doors when I was 12 years old and now I'm 66.

After an excellent meal we drove home. When you drive and look out the windows, you see the walls of buildings; many of which are more than 100 years old and such scenes set me to reflecting.

I remembered sitting and enjoying the Parc Monceau, which is across the street from Gerry's place, many times in this last month and a half. It was opened in 1779 when the world was so very different. The United States was just a fledgling then. There were large parts of the world map that had yet to be filled in.

When I walk through the Parc Monceau and see a small infant toddling across the grass with a young mother following close behind, I imagine how many times that scene has been enacted and how many of those people have grown to old-age and passed on in an inevitable cycle. I can see Gerry's mother there and Gerry and countless others.

There are older places than Paris to be sure but I can feel the age of this place in a way I cannot fathom in the New World.

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August 24th, 2013 – Croydon near London

In Croydon south of London sitting in a Starbucks while Colette and her sister, Jo-Anne, are shopping. Good people-watching on a rainy day.

At Starbucks Whitgift center.

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August 28th, 2013 - Brighton

We took the train to Brighton today and had a great walk around. Very nice town.

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August 28th, 2013 - Brighton

More Brighton fun today. Beautiful day and beautiful weather. Back to Paris tomorrow.

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August 30th, 2013

Visiting Chartres - beautiful

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August 30th, 2013

Back in Paris after eight days in the UK visiting friends and family.

Today's my grandson, Cody's, birthday. So, I want to make a big Shout Out to Cody from grandpa in Paris - "Happy Birthday, Cody!" I hope you have a great birthday - I'm sorry I can't be there. Love you. Grandpa Dennis

Ps, that's him in a picture taken back in June in the white tee-shirt along with his sister, Eden. Colette and I are there and Ann and Dan (Cody and Eden's parents), and Ann's dad, Bernie. We missed Sally, Bernie's wife and Ann's mother, on this one.

All such fine people that I am deeply happy to be associated with through family and emotional bonds.

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<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10200924199170688&set=a.2659598412657>

Sept 8th, 2013

Sunday morning laundry's done. Now it's time for a little coffee!

At Le Village Café.

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Sept 8th, 2013

Sitting and waiting on French time. The evening meal at eight or nine at night and then shops open by 10AM. Good people watching though. At Rue De Levis.

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Sept 10th, 2013

Shopping on a rainy Paris day. With Colette Meehan at Westfield Les 4 Temps (Westfield Les 4 Temps - 15 Parvis De La Défense, Puteaux).

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Sept 10th, 2013

Another fall evening in Paris. It all ends in a few weeks. Time to make the most of it. The good news is we're heading back to spring.

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Sept 19th, 2013

Driving here in Paris is an adventure I've not tried; and I don't want to either. It moves too fast and I don't get all the rules; official and informally agreed, that folks follow here.

We've been with our friend, Gerry, several times when he's entered the traffic circle that goes around the Arc de Triomphe. There are seven or so lanes of traffic whipping around it and everyone passing within very close distances of each other at speed.

The essential rule is that anyone coming in from your right (as in folks that are entering the circle) have the right of way.

Gerry just goes straight in from the outside to the inner circle at speed with hardly a look to the left. He just trusts that everyone already out there in the melee will honor the rule and not run into him. And, in truth, it seems to work well so long as there's no uncertain, cautious tourist-types loose out there. I can testify scares the bejesus out of me.

He's told us that the secret to Paris driving is to never waver, never falter, never pause or show indecision. The thought is, I guess, that if everyone follows the rules and keeps moving at a speed, then the impending chaos becomes a beautiful dance.

This seems to apply to crossing the street on foot here as well. Colette and I have gotten better and better as our time has gone by but it took us awhile to get brave. Red lights are, apparently, just to indicate who has the right-of-way (cars or people) if two or more of you show up at once. Other than that, they are safely ignored.

A subsidiary rule seems to be that even if the pedestrians have the right of way to cross, there's no reason why a car cannot drive right on through so long as they can safely pass the pedestrians by a foot or so in front or behind them. Yow!

But the other day, I had the best laugh. Apparently this confident bluffing even comes into play in parking here.

We were in Gerry's car with him and he was looking for a parking space in front of his building. As he cruised, he came across a fellow who was just settling his car into an illegal parking space.

Gerry stopped and engaged the fellow in eye-contact. And then, as he looked at the other fellow, he wagged his finger at him indicating non-verbally that,

"No, no, that's an illegal space. You shouldn't park there."

The man tried to ignore Gerry but Gerry just sat and waited where he'd stopped and each time the man looked up, Gerry wagged his finger at him some more.

Finally, the fellow just couldn't take it anymore and he abandoned the place to find one that was legal.

And that's when I roared with laughter.

Gerry pulled straight into the illegal space as soon as the man drove off and was well satisfied with himself. Paris. It's a funny place. Timid people need not apply.

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September 21, 2013

Perhaps one of our last walks on the Champs Elysees. With **Colette Meehan** at **Sur les Champs Élysées**.

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September 22nd, 2013

Another view on the Avenue.

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September 24th, 2013

Credit Card Fraud.

That's what's on my mind today. As in it has happened to me.

Actually, this is the second time this year (once in the U.S> and once here in France) and both had similar

aspects which I should learn from. And you too, as well, after I share them with you.

I found a 98 Euro charge I didn't recognize on my HSBC card today. I called HSBC and they told me that there were several others that were declined and there were yet others there that been charged that hadn't yet had time to make it to my account transactions listing on-line. Yow!

The card was cancelled ASAP and I'll have to go through some hassles to get refunded; but I will in the end.

After I go to the police station here in Paris and file a report, then I'm to send that into HSBC.

The bank folks tell me that this sort of thing can happen when you pay with you card and you let them carry the card off away from your sight to ring up the bill and bring you a receipt.

They are not charging you extra in the back room. They are writing down your C/C number *and* the three digit code on the back. Because, often, they can make purchases over the Internet with just these bits of information.

So, the moral of the story is never let them carry your card away. Have them bring the swipe machine to you or follow them to where it is. Watch that no one copies the three digit code on the back.

I'm a wiser man now.

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September 24th, 2013

Count down to the end in Paris . Soon we return to the Antipodes.

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Paris – 25 SEP 13

Doing something I dearly love to do and that is to go to a public square or someplace similar and just spend an entire day sitting and watching the life unfold around me. Today is the day for Paris and it is a beautiful day.

I'm here in a little square in the 5th sipping coffee, watching people and writing. And it is a day well spent.

There's some kind of a political or religious demonstration going on in the square just now and I've been watching it.

See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Place_de_la_Contrescarpe

Thoughts in a square:

In a part of Paris I like, there's a wall from about the year 1200. In truth, it is only a part of a wall; 40 feet long and maybe 20 feet high.

Near it is a story about the wall in French which I was able to partially read. It tells that when the local lord left

to go one of the Crusades, he had the locals build this wall to protect themselves until he returned.

Apparently, the center of what needed protecting was there at that spot then. Though now, the remains of the wall lie deep within the city almost forgotten, except for the sign on a side street next to it where it is jammed between newer buildings.

Newer is, of course, relative. Just now, I'm sitting in the Delmas Cafe a few blocks away having a coffee and writing this. Just across from me is a building which says it was built in 1748. It's an ancient looking thing from before the French Revolution. And yet, it is over 500 years newer than the wall. And the building is, itself, over 265 years old now. Don't get me started; there are Roman ruins here in Paris that I've admired, and reverently touched the stones of, that are almost 1000 years older than the wall.

Truly, every thimble-full of dirt under our feet here contains the memories and experiences of men and women beyond counting.

This bit of wall is on Rue Clovis between Rue Descartes and Rue du Cardinale Lemoine and not too far from the inestimable and quaint Rue Mouffetard. The latter, which much beloved by tourists, as a narrow walking street filled with interesting shops and pubs.

I'm sitting in this small square we 'discovered' at Rue Mouffetard and Rue Blainville having a coffee and ruminating on my time in Paris.

Just now, some tradesmen are working on the 1748 building and pulling what looks like very old beams out of it. Apparently, someone is having its interior reworked. Hard to tell how old such beams would be. I doubt that they would hail from 1748 but it would be interesting to know their age.

When the wall was built and the lord went off to try and wrest control of the Holy Land away from Mohammed's people, the Americas were untouched save for a few transient Viking villages in New Foundland. Fenimore's Mohicans still walked their ancient forest trails; never having dreamed of the white-man or of tuberculosis.

The Central and South American civilizations, with all their alien (from our POV) ways, still flourished and the history that they were evolving was still all theirs.

Deep in the Amazon, vast tracts had been cleared and a charcoal dependent form of agriculture was underway. All of which vanished thoroughly after the European's maladies swept the Americas. They vanished so well that for a long time, no one believes there had been anything there in the deep Amazon; so quickly did the jungle claim it all back.

We are a species of unintended consequences. Indeed, all of evolution is a dance of unintended consequences; other than the drive to proceed while there yet is energy.

The ancestors of these faces I see passing here were mostly here when the wall was built 800 years ago. Genetics doesn't change that much. It swirls into slightly different combinations of forehead and cheek, but it is all here.

You can see that the beauty in women and the strength in men was celebrated in their issue And Paris has a lot of all; beauty, strength and issue.

When the building and the wall were built, a few people held the power and, for the rest, life was an often brutal

business lived quickly and with little understanding; save what the church purported to explain.

I look at the faces here and try to see them as the workmen erecting the building then. And I gaze on the women and try to see them as the servant girls or as the wives of peasants and workers.

Occasionally, a face passes me here; haughty imbued with the power of money and self-possession. And I can see them here as well, then. Wearing fine silks and sleeves,. Sure of their God-given right to dominate

We've come such a long way in the years since the wall and the building went up. But we are still creatures of unintentional consequences; we always have been.

We've banished the darkness and fear of diseases not understood. And, though we still die, most of us know now, why and how. And we've saved ourselves, for the moment with antibiotics and surgeries, from those dark dreams and we live to see longer lives. But, on yet longer scales, we have also unintentionally enabled the increasing promulgate of genes of lesser and lesser fitness into the pools from which our future will be drawn.

We've conquered nature in that no other species can, in the remotest sense, stand against us.

We've worked out the division of labor for the greater good and most of us no longer hunt the food we eat nor build the homes we live in. Now, some grow, some build, some supervise and others organize. And all this has raised our standard of living and freed us to have more leisure and more children with less early mortality.

The armies went forth, the armadas went forth, the colonists and the colonizers went forth. And almost without impediment, we've nearly filled the world in a few short centuries. All we needed were a few enabling technologies because the drive to go forth was always there in our deep natures.

Technologies do not sleep. Technology begets technology and the increasing leverage, born of the more efficient division of labor, grows stronger for us with each iteration.

As we approach the full point of the world, we are moving faster all the time. There are more of us every moment. We communicate faster, we travel faster, we can make more and we can consume more.

The royal 'we' has no idea of what we are doing. Most of us are just lost in the dream of our current life. Our lives are before us and we live them. It's no one's fault that the rain forests in Indonesia are vanishing along with the Orangoutangs.

No one intended any of this. Nature and evolution intend nothing. Energy evaporates down gradients and little creatures arise in the backwash. All the philosophers and saints dancing on the heads of pins are not a pimple on the ass of this simple reality.

So, the morning's given way to the afternoon as I've sat here in the square, watching. The sun that once shone on Mesopotamia shines on me here. And the one that shone on the stones of this earth before the first little creatures crawled from the sea; that very sun shines on me here as well.

The building from 1748 across the square is ignoring me. And the waiter here at the cafe is only marginally better. The royal 'we' swirls around me. I intuit in them dreams of youth, of money, of love and a hundred other things in the mix of passing faces.

The simple stones in the building's wall have been here in the square longer than any of them have been alive; but every face is the center of its own dream. The "time past and time future" that Eliot mentioned are not here

for them. They inhabit the "time now and the time mine" and everything else lies frozen and nearly unseen around them. No Orangoutang calls pierce the square around them — at La Contrescarpe.

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Paris – 25 SEP 13

If you drink a bit of beer and listen, you can hear things that you would not otherwise hear.

Today, a friend wrote on Facebook (oh, the irony), that Facebook is beginning to mess with folk's activism by selectively suppressing Facebook posts and groups according to rules that Facebook has not revealed.

In one instance, a group was organizing to go and meet and demonstrate against Monsanto in St. Louis (their headquarters). Inexplicably, the entire group vanished off Facebook. Is it a coincidence that Monsanto advertises on Facebook and Facebook is a for-profit corporation?

One has to wonder.

One needs to wonder as well if it is time for a not-for-profit version of Facebook similar to Linux or Open Office.

Something funded by the community that does not lick the boots of its advertisers in the corporate world.

It's hard to speak truth to power when you are speaking through a megaphone owned by power.

— at **Place De La Contrescarpe**.

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