

CattedEar Street

By Jared Fischer

Lionnex, tell ma about the shops on CattedEar Street, my little half sister Kitty Broom meowed.

(Her father was Lionel
who left ma last year;
mine was Plucket
who left her when I was 1.)

(Kitty's 7 years younger
than me; she was 10 at the time
of this CattedEar story.)

You see, I took Kitty out; it was a November, cold morning; holding her hand, I walked down Cry-on-beaver-at-Moon Street. I was familiar with that one— Etnie Carrie lived there in the Cat Shoe Sell Out, and I thought to buy fat Timb boots while entertaining Kitty (a Josie ice-lick might satisfy her, I thought; they had them at Ice Lemon Hut, which was also on Cry, in the very middle). Etnie might have given her a Scroat skirt or made her laugh with a Ki Ki rabbit stuffed animal.

My baby kissing rabbit! Ding, ding, ding!

My baby kissing rabbit! Ding, ding!

My baby kissing— Etnie would sometimes coo at Kitty, teasing her little nose with a white rabbit plushy toy. And his singing floated every time, echoing like the stuff you'd hear over house music in the Zion Heart Reduction clubs down Maine-of-the-month Street, those windy, dark & pale lamp-lit, October, rave-ready, Friday nights.

(Mona-Etna of Ruin rested my sole rave kitten-x: which is what they call fierce female dancers who are mince and can dance out the lightning memory dance: which is all fast formal shaking. We clubbed hardcore, the Fridays I wasn't babysitting Kitty. You see, most times, ma cooked late at Rook College, cooked Lush Brand fried chicken for the fatties that ate even after midnight. Kitty would cry & call ma up, scared, if she was left home alone. That's why ma asked me to watch her. We had a high up apartment in the Teldésespoir Housing behind Cry. And I read Kitty her favorite novel in verse, *Cartoon of the Whale*. It took 2 readings for it to become her favorite! It was about a girl named Whale who went beyond her mom, went beyond housewifedom or wage earning, and made art and wrote poetry and won a Nobel Prize. It was blank verse with a bunch of slant rhymes and internal rhyming. In Coody High School, Ms. Greedyou spent two weeks on poetic terminology. When I aced the unit test, she pulled me aside after class and thanked me, giving me *Cartoon of the Whale*. That's how I happened to read it to Kitty, one rainy Friday night, my voice modified at times by mild sadness. Really, neither of us wanted ma away from home, out there— all the rain wetting her as she leaves the B kitchen at Rook & must catch an Elk bus out of Zone County where the college is... all the rain wetting

her hopping off the bus where it stops on the edge of the Else Quarter of Lone City... she runs, you see, crossing Cry, taking an alley back to the Housing, back to us... she'll hurry the keys at the Teldésespoir doors... it's after 2 o'clock; the black sky houses a flood, the loud beads balling, dropping heavier, soaking her smock tight to her running legs. Thus reading the Cartoon meant imagining two stories.)

But out walking at the beginning of Cry, brushing by flower pots, thin trees and paper trash all over the place (blowing round like insects or birds), Kitty squeezed my hand and ran to what she saw at the end of the street: another one, CattedEar Street. She pulled me; you could say a magnet named Kitty rushed (dragging me along) at the shiny metal things displayed attractively in the storefront windows of the towering Dorset 58: "Women of Superior Taste" building. This fantastic brick and brown metal façade (the windows rectangular, large, elegant) was the view straight ahead, at the east end of Cry: CattedEar ran perpendicular to it. When we got there, she gazed, almost bewitched, at all the shops and outlets getting bigger and more beautiful as CattedEar went on in both directions away from Dorset 58, which by comparison no longer could have been called "towering." No. Not in the company of such as the Mice Blanket House or the Ki Ki Rabbit Manufacturing House; at opposite ends, these sentinels rose and strove to keep the sun off the street. Etnie might have dug among his workshop mess and conjured up one Ki Ki, but CattedEar could have buried Kitty in a rainbow deluge of all the imaginable Ki Kis. I myself was struck by a particular discontinuity between the two streets: CattedEar lacked the bustling life of trash that Cry had! But I didn't even see a clean-up crew. Consumers, of the money-blood, with tasteful scarves and Lantern Ashel bags walked on fine cobbled sidewalks, threaded the shops and smiled fixedly at anything and everything. The street itself was a stream of BMW CAT Xs (the nicest cars!), reverently slow-moving like the funereal procession behind a hearse, but not as black-lunged or heavy on the sad side. Because they all (families, couples, lone hunters, gathers...) had nice things to buy if they could find parking. Cops rode on horseback, along the sides; they were hawk-eyed, alert, but pleasant like statuary. Still, I felt like Kitty and I were in some big, clean & greasy, heart pumping its unhealthy ordinary pump... any mention of risk, of an attack, like bad doctors' talk it's best to consider much, much later... maybe, after the first attack. Pleasant CattedEar Street! It made me think of the opening of a Coleridge poem Ms. Greedyou had read in class to give us an example of Romantic poetry:

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan

A stately pleasure-dome decree

Where Alph, the sacred river, ran

Through caverns measureless to man

Down to a sunless sea.

CattedEar Street was Romantic, I thought. I could buy Mona-Etna (if I had the flirt-bills or the talking-plastic) a million shiny things to please her. Here was pumping blood, money and pleasure and mass production like blood pumping at the heart, away from the heart, the little

Romantic carriers and consumers carrying their vital pleasure to the arteries, the extremities, little monogamous units, couples housed away from everybody, families couched, settled in finer and finer homes uphill, so they could send their kids to private schools; compete, compete! screamed the nuclear families buying apart the good world (Xmas was next month). That was my country at the artery level: buying & taking away... —thick-feathered birds beating wings, pecking out wormy blood-vessels of the Romantic Heart, taking in long beaks their squirmy finds back to snapping chicks waiting in intricate nests... —the dark exclusivity of up & upperhill... —almost to the sun or moon, this Romantic ambition to please and be pleased. Was it an indestructible system? Or did it have an expiration date? Because that was the blood coursing through (... in & out of...) CattedEar.

Here, look! I kept a journal/sketchpad at the time of our CattedEar adventure. You'll notice that in my quick sketch of the street, I ignored the police on horses and the cars and all the people out and about, the women shopping in fancy, downtown gowns; I couldn't hack figure drawing then— no, not even the fatties, their figures more big balls than anything else— you wouldn't think it difficult, but no: I ignored them. I drew my CattedEar Street like a ghost town... I didn't even make the merchandise or glamour apparent:

The building with two eyelike windows & a door-mouth is my very half-assed Dorset 58: you see, I actually made my landscape drawing on Cry, quite near the point of intersection with CattedEar. I stood on the trash-covered sidewalk to the left, & looking CattedEarward, I claimed the glass door of Dorset 58 for my vanishing point. The horizon line, in part, marks the street proper of CattedEar; however, as it discreetly bends diagonally, it becomes pluralistic in meaning, suggesting also building lines parallel to the curb lines of the sidewalks on Cry. Would an art critic like Greets Anders of Coody's Arts and Crafts department explain the ambiguity as a fallacy of amateur art or as the superb move of a NOUVEAU master, impressionistic, actiony, of a style rife with implicit rejection of numerous acquired rules? — I've often wondered. Listen to this:

“Turns out you didn't need all that training

To do art— that it was even better not to have it. Look at

The Impressionists— some of 'em had it, too, but preferred to forget it

In vast composed canvases by turns riotous

And indigent color, from which only the notion of space is

lacking.”— John Ashbery, “On Autumn Lake,” from *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*

I find I'm liking Ashbery more & more with age. But at the time of my drawing, I neither knew anything by him nor what he thought about art. I was influenced by other stuff I got from going to school:

“The master said You must write what you see.

But what I see does not move me.

The master answered Change what you see.” —Louise Glück, epigraph to *Vita Nova*.

And, you see, I had clipped those 3 lines of poetry into my journal (the name of which was *Dream: Martin Luther King Jr.*, written on the black & white marble cover in Kittenola, rouge scribbly-crayon, in the white space provided with 3 lines, the headings of which were Author, Title, Subject) a week or so after my walk with Kitty down CattedEar. Louise Glück’s *Vita Nova* was a poetry book Ms. Greedyou had let me borrow. I liked it generally... parts were visionary or dreamlike— but I guess the epigraph was what really remained fresh in my mind those days. I felt better changing CattedEar, sketching it impressionistically in black & gray Kalamakontri crayons. That is why neither “towering” Dorset 58 nor anything suggesting the bigger “Sentinels” blocks my curly-q sunshine (a signature of my better art). This idea of changing a dystopian reality (CattedEar secretly on the verge of cardiac arrest) into something utopian, or dreamlike, spilled over into my writing. You could say it became the theme of *Dream: Martin Luther King Jr.* – soon, I was writing a prose poem by the same name on wrinkled, Persian Ellen green tea stained page 4 of my TEXT.

“*Dream: Martin Luther King Jr.*”

A dream’s a thing, a pretty cat. I want more or less the big involved pear, like the King: *Égalité, Liberté, Fraternité!* Dreaming hard matters out of soft turns in bed (what was lived a day away from the line’s sun), I write myself many poetic lines with no sun, many times. There’s the chore of a voice: when? who let’s me speak and why? Voice, in an air that maybe something ethical might come about, and a fable roll off into the cupboard. But I try, hurt by George W. Bush’s incapacity of perceptiveness, to flirt with matters not whole, the dream, the hole of flowers at a stream changing in time to things I can’t solve or see; I want then to unfurl indirectly, and I’ve had bad wine, if a dream is so, shifting away, when I’m saying cat and eardrum when I want aloud meaning to give out to the Other the French deal with in time. Hey Coleridge, you fucked around to write a poem that was perceptive. I don’t think it’s artificial that I rip your approach off now, when the world isn’t a matter anymore. Who matters, Harold Bloom? A lot of people are in Harvard. Wasn’t America nearing the indiscriminate thing with Arabs? Some of my kitties have made a soup of dead things, this side of France. And Martin Luther King Jr. amused me into loving him when I did not know under the tree that maybe policing waters were hosing druid skeletons back below correct America. When I hated correction, wanted “unsolve” to play verb & suggest a way of life ... I asked myself if I could dream CattedEar away into something a King would know he could be himself in and happy, have his people eating big pears, ... To unsolve, allow the dream state (I read sometimes some of Geoffrey Hill’s *The Orchards of Syon*. That’s how I heard about “*La vida es sueño,*” or Life’s a dream; however, I’d amend the expression, according to my experiences: Life should be a dream. One must let it be so. Then the George W. Bush (Will-to-‘Strategy’) motive would fall off the face, fall below a New Street, like bad reality-chaff not even the donkey would kick in the eyes of the muddy pig.

Now would be a good time to explain what I meant by “solve” and “unsolve,” a sort of philosophical binary opposition I was developing & pondering a little before and even on CattedEar Street with Kitty. As you can see, my poem kind of revolves around the concepts. Look around, and I am sure you’d see solve at work where you were: the police, for example, out to arrest bad ass cats; mothers in grocery stores, hunched over empty carts, musing, Hmm... Now what fish should I get for baby’s din-din? ...; or the proposed, ignoble “Showdown with Iraq,” television speaking & showing idiocy: that was all solve; even telling ma about the shops on CattedEar Street seemed too much like solve, and I thought I could not bear it. Not entirely clear to me, rather solve sat heavy on me like a big, half-veiled, ambitiously catty bird; it clutched me ominously like a harpy song I liked, a lot of times. Because I had wanted to & tried to solve a bunch of things in my head... like the class issue, for example... by means of an educational revolution: I thought that a harsh Salem-witch-trial of blunt words could convince wealthy folks that private schools and zoning policies for public schools were “unethical,” “classist,” and by extension, “racist.” If pervert/priests intentionally hide out from their desires in snug presbyteries, then the youth of the rich (primarily WASP/Jewish), elite class likewise hide out from the poor classes of trailer park counties (with the strategically placed Shit Plants) and inner cities (with the strategically placed heroin, crack, and conspicuous dearth of WASPs, excepting token cops of that breed & persuasion). Segregation exists beneath the veils, thanks to solve: Mommy won’t let little darling go to public school, or Granny’s a gossip over Thanksgiving turkey: You won’t believe, Doris, where they’re bussing them in from, these days. Solve, solve, solving things for the little George W. Bushes! And everything’s so right with everyone, everywhere... under solve, that bird with American eagle, right, golden claws, ... right, even down into the rabbit’s fur. I wanted to force the rich to live among the poor, right there with them, their children going to school together. But that was solve vs. solve, & that was a pre-Camus-Sisyphus proposition: no stopping the punishing struggle up, no transcending (laughing at gods from the lowest point); I didn’t even read Camus: I listened to this boy Shy-Shane talk about it, lunchtimes at Cooby. My idol was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.; I took him up on my own, reading books & books about him in Cooby’s Heifer Library. I thought myself a direct descendent of him. But wasn’t he under solve? Only in part, or not primarily! You see, the Doctor’s largest contribution was a dream (poetic, extending out, out into the future, a dream of grave importance to all, promising, but uncertain), and I perceived dreams to be the distinct property of unsolve. Unsolve did not put forth with violence, harsh-willed. Unsolve was the expansive, fluid dream, stretching perception to the limits & shifting & at times, losing vision to blindness or too many visions; a dream’s a snaky path threading between continuity & discontinuity with reality. But unsolve was a putting forth, ingenious & poetic, to me, & so, non-violent. I rather wanted unsolve, even on pretty CattedEar Street.

Lionnex, tell ma about the shops on CattedEar Street! said Kitty again gleefully.

Ma was flipping our pancakes, a 6 a.m. breakfast called “Rise & Shine” with an iced pitcher of Vexy Orange Mango juice ready on the white-countered island of our three-room apartment’s modest kitchen compartment. She was almost completely dressed for work: she had the white uniform on, and her apron lay on the blue flowered ironing board. She looked at me; ...to please Kitty, she made an eager face, the smile fixed large to suggest attention, and the eyes somewhat wide for 6 a.m.

O, you know, ma, CattedEar's a nice place to buy things; many nice outlets & the people look alive and friendly, buying their things... or they're on the selling end in the big department stores, with bright & fancy clothes for all to try & buy... and it's such a fine autumn day one spends on CattedEar Street: you take something away... why it's like one loves CattedEar Street, so Romantic (I want to go back with Mona-Etna... to Geese Anon Flowers Spectacular, to buy her a geranium). ... And when Kitty and I were there, we went to the Ki Ki Rabbit Manufacturing House, and I bought her the Rainbow Gargantuan Ki-deluxe-Ki... right from out the huge display window. You remember I had saved \$200 from the times I trimmed Mrs. Henwin's rose garden (you know, the Elaine Street nice old lady who offered me that little summer job)... Ask Kitty—

Aye, ma. He did— isn't it the most deluxe! Look, ma, here it is... I snuggle my Ki Ki; hug it, hug, hug... 'My baby kissing rabbit! Ding! Ding! Ding!' Kitty was chanting like Etnie Carrie, making her own little vocal house, Eskimo kissing the big rainbow plushy.

Ma looked happy, pleased with the two of us, but beneath her wholesale, pearl smile, too wide almost, she seemed to restrain a look that said we were nuts. CattedEar Street! So much of solve! And solve was a shabby thing; how ridiculous it felt extolling such a street. Dreamless reality of buying & taking away. I felt ashamed, talking, talking up CattedEar to ma (my mouth, my garrulity like a shameful river running through the sewer Solve, I was a Sisyphus rolling a billfold up, up the escalator of Diamond Red Room Department Store, one of the real-ambitious damned).

I spent a day in my room, repentant, daydreaming of nothing in particular, a single incense stick burning that smelled like pot, burning on my rosewood armoire. What I had to do now to reassert myself as a dreamer/visionary/revolutionary (what I had to do now to realign myself with my predecessor Dr. King) was to communicate unsolve, my dream in pure, to the Other. But the Other, for me, was posterity. And what better way to reach posterity than by offending contemporaries like George W. Bush with a just dream... perceptiveness in words of an order mostly incomprehensible. I saw what I had to do for penance. So I wrote a nice letter to the president about my dream: I should mention that I pretended to be a fighter-pilot of the U.S. Air Force; you know, one of the lucky ones bombing Arabs today. Mona-Etna was Persian-Azerbaijani, & so the Showdown weighed extra-heavily on my daydreaming. As I sat down to write, I thought of her as my proper muse (and in my mental image, she did a lightning memory dance, fast with fire and green glow-sticks, so fierce, she was a source figure of the dream or pivotal point:

A damsel with a dulcimer

In a vision once I saw:

It was an Abyssinian maid,

And on her dulcimer she played,

Singing of Mount Abora.

Again, I found a correspondence between my experiences and Coleridge's poem Kubla Khan). I wrote the letter over a two-day period; and in my room, dirty, I fasted all the while. Here is the letter, as I sent it:

Honorable President George W. Bush,

Bombing Arabs... O swell, the days & nights pass over the brown clown desert, dear right-good President. Yes, you told us you'd have us killing all kinds of sand-niggers with the country's best and brightest resources at our disposal over the brown clown desert of Iraq: like a veritable Showdown, as you'd have it. O I heard they tried to kill your father. And you have us solving (right & timely... tout le monde d'accord, our resolve fortified, fortuitous, just like our American eagle) everything up here in the pleasant clouds above this dark-land, backwards desert. I want to thank you. My name is Lieutenant Sauver de Solve. We'll drop the rations just like you've suggested, when the bases are ablaze. Everything runs so smoothly that sometimes, I dream up here. Of my favorite girl, Mona-Etna, my fine Persian-Azerbaijani kitten-x. Or of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Sometimes, I just want to slip off into my dream, into something uncertain, unprotected & shifting with equal promise of vision and blindness. Unsolve! I know you'll understand why I write this to you.

Your servant,

Lieutenant Sauver de Solve

You don't imagine the sounds & brightness until you do & you must, a deluge of sensations & impressions committing you to the drawing of it out (—How goes the rendering? A real dreamy time: keeping dreams & reality apart, or letting them exist together, shift, collapse together, mix, singing the harmonies & discordances you hear, playing it by ear, ... it's like dealing with a mélange, ... and I even liked it better when ma would mix a bag of spinach with the ice-burg lettuce— I'm a vegetarian!): a Mastodon Festival boomed from CattedEar street, shaking our Teldésespoir apartment, the echoes, reverberations buzzing a Mastodon's image and likeness before me as I sat in my room, ... Ah! corrupting my daydream, this bass buzzing— 3 days had passed since I mailed my letter. I could not think. I could not read. Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* lay shut on my desk. I was made to hear the outside.

Etnie Carrie had explained to me once that a Mastodon Festival's a day fatties from far and near pack tight on the blocked-off street, eating meats, drinking a health, toasting anyone who likes to eat like they do, all the while listening to thunderous John Tesh piano— there's always such a remarkable sound-system sensationalizing the living street, giving momentous, dance-like formality to the carnivorous ones and the ones going into department stores to “have a look around,” sipping large iced-teas— some of the women have no necks, and even the elite obese port these gratuitous wedgies going up steps, he had told me. You see, I had always heard this annual boom, living behind Cry. But then Etnie fit an image to it... I have to tell you, that image of the Mastodon Festival (born of his Washington Irving-like adroitness at description, nay “sketching!”) did not exist alone in my head. Rather, a distortion occurred so that when I'd picture this festival,— inescapably, Hogarth's engraved “O the Roast Beef of Old England: The

Gate of Calais” superimposed itself on the Etnie Carrie tableau. That’s the one with a stout friar piggishly eyeballing the sizable slab of beef the poor of France have brought him for supper. I guess it was the girth and beefiness of both meat and friar that, by force, married those others of my impressions of this Mastodon Festival.

More of muffled, obscure John Tesh piano boomed & buzzed its way into my room. It must have hit Kitty’s room, too, because from the corner of my eye, I could now perceive loose colors of her form (at which point, I turned and looked at her: she stood like a small star in denim overalls, stretching at my doorway, clutching the jambs and leaning in— the childish preparation before a question). No longer at ease in my white wicker chair, I broke with my daydream, slouchy posture to attend Kitty.

You can come in if you want, Kitty. Really, I had kind of ignored her during the whole writing and mailing of the letter. Maybe, I needed her to break up the monotony of reflection— the grand piano groan of a Mastodon and this kittenish star, together, deflating the blimp to which my daydreams, even my anxieties had given flight.

Lionnex, what’s all that piano playing outside? I can’t sit in my room with it booming like that! Everything topples down when I try to play tea party with my Ki Ki rabbits. Is something special going on down CattedEar Street?

It’s the Mastodon Festival. Yes, it’s on CattedEar: they have music and food; a lot of people go, they block off the street so they don’t have to worry about cars, ... and more people can move from store to store that way. Interesting tents are sure to be set up on both sides, Etnie Carrie tells me. One tent even cooks a whole pig; they probably started cooking him last night! Odd, how easily I could fall to describing at length CattedEar. Its glamour, its attractions came easy, the words rolling off my tongue like a fit or an inspiration (in the old sense).

I’m really getting hungry, and ma gets off late tonight! Kitty exclaimed, hinting. I looked at her, and the insistence in her eyes, also the red of her cheeks threw my own expression into strange relief (that last bit of daydreamer drained out of me); pleading, Kitty could curb the reluctance of my smile, encourage its brotherliness instead. But then she came right out with it.

I want to eat pig! Come on! Let’s go to CattedEar Street! Now she was tugging my Horsy cardigan sweater. Come on, Lionnex, take me to the Mastodon Festival! I was now up from my chair, putting on my scarf (maybe, CattedEar Street was not 100% solve; daydreaming at a Mastodon Festival, that was a prospect! & couldn’t unsolve possibly exist there, too, with everything else... & Kitty had to eat. And a walk would not be bad for me? Here are my new Timb boots, I thought, & put them on. Should I bring a Coleridge book? Biographia Literaria? Nah! Too heavy, I thought).

I’m ready now, I have my scarf. All set? Let’s go, Kitty. We’ll get you some pig meat down CattedEar. I took Kitty’s hand— we were ready.